

# GOOD NEWS FROM GREAT RIVERS

January 26, 2010



[PRESBYTERY OF GREAT RIVERS](#)

1230 W Candletree Dr, Suite D, Peoria, IL 61614

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## Helping Haiti

For Haiti updates, bulletin inserts, Haiti resources or if you would like to make a donation, [click here](#).

## Mark Your Calendar

### Nominating Committee

Tuesday, January 26  
10:00 - 2:00  
PGR

### COM

Tuesday, January 26  
10:00 - 3:00  
Northminster, Peoria

### Elder Training

Saturday, January 30  
8:30 - 3:00  
United, Biggsville

### Clergy Group

Thursday, February 4  
10:00 - 11:30  
PGR

### Assembly Papers on Website

Friday, February 12  
after 3:00pm

### COM

Tuesday, February 16  
10:00 - 3:00  
Northminster, Peoria

### Supplemental Papers on Website

Friday, February 19  
after 3:00pm

### CPM Meeting

Tuesday, February 23  
8:30am  
FivePoints Washington

## General Presbyter's Perspective

Rev. Susan Krummel

The disaster in Haiti has produced some amazing images over the last two weeks. It is almost unimaginable--over 100,000 people dead, many more homeless, people who need medical care, food, water, shelter, etc. etc. when their government, their church and the United Nations all lost their leadership to some extent. Surely the country of Haiti will never forget the early weeks of 2010.

But the images from Haiti have not been the only ones that have been amazing. Surely you have heard by now that a very visible Christian leader blamed the disaster on the Haitians themselves, saying that they made a pact with the devil which led to this horrible result. How sad for people who do not know about the gospel if this is their only exposure to the Christian church in response to this tragedy!

Yet, if people have been watching news coverage on the traditional news outlets, they may have been surprised, as I have been, by other evidence of believers interpreting these events within the context of their faith. Over and over again, I have seen images of Haitians who have suffered great loss gathering together to sing songs of praise to God. I even saw one story of a woman who had been trapped for days in the bank where she worked. When her husband's pleas for help were finally answered by those who had the equipment to dig his wife out, she emerged from her premature tomb singing songs of praise to God.

Even that is not the most amazing image I have seen. I sometimes end my evening by watching the beginning of the Daily Show with Jon Stewart. I have seen some reports that say that more young people watch him than real news reports. If you have never seen this show, this is not a recommendation. Many words are bleeped and Mr. Stewart, his writers and the other comedians who are playing news reporters and commentators on this show are sometimes quite cutting in their humor and show little sympathy for those who become their targets. And yet, soon after the famous Christian leader made his remarks blaming the Haitians, there was Jon Stewart with an open Bible in his hands quoting from the Psalms and Isaiah the passages that remind us that even when disaster strikes, God is still in charge and will comfort us. I believed at that moment that maybe I had seen it all. Sarcastic Jon Stewart with the language that often needs to be bleeped reading scripture as a way to

Assembly Meeting  
Tuesday, February 23  
9:30am  
FivePoints Washington

Annual Stats DUE  
Tuesday, February 23

comfort hurting people and to rebuke those who would presume to blame the victims of a tragedy which none of us could even imagine!

How, then do we interpret evil? The technical term for this kind of discussion is "theodicy." It is the kind of discussion that can go on for years. If God is all good and all powerful and all loving, then how can a tragedy like Haiti happen? I would not presume to be able to answer that question when great theologians have struggled. There is, however, a story in the gospel of John which can be instructive for us, I think. In the ninth chapter, Jesus and his disciples are walking along and the disciples see a person who has been blind since birth. They turn to Jesus and say " Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" Ah, now maybe we will get the answer we are seeking! But, no, Jesus does not allow himself to get drawn into a theological discussion when there is a person in need right in front of him who can be helped. Instead, Jesus says, " Neither this man nor his parents sinned; he was born blind so that God's works might be revealed in him. We must work the works of the One who sent me while it is day; night is coming when no one can work. . . " When I preach on this passage, my paraphrase of Jesus' words goes something like this:"Really. You have seen me perform miracles. You have some sense of what God can do. Here is a person who needs my help. And all you can think to do is have a theological discussion? Let's get to work!" Of course, at the end of this story, the man can see.

Why did the earthquake happen? The only kind of reason I can think to give has something to do with tectonic plates. The more important question is, "How do we bring the truth of the power and love of God to bear in such a way that we can help to bring hope in the name of Jesus Christ?"

### Elder Training

This Saturday is the last training which will be held from 8:30am - 3:00pm with lunch served at noon. **Registration is required** for the purpose of preparing the meal and providing training manuals. Registration is accomplished by contacting [Julie](#) at the presbytery office.

January 30 @ United, Biggsville **RSVP Today**

### 2010 Presbyterian Youth Triennium (PYT)

If you have youth attending the 2010 Presbyterian Youth Triennium, at Purdue University, July 20-24, 2010, please fill out the [PYT Registration Application](#) **completely** and return to Julie at the Presbytery of Great Rivers office.

**Application Deadline** for Presbytery of Great Rivers is **Monday, May 24, 2010.**



### ATTENTION Clerks of Session!

The annual stats are due! The deadline is February 23, but the earlier the better!!!

### Green Energy By Laurie Vial

*"The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it; for he founded it upon the seas and established it upon the waters."* (Psalm 24:1-2) (New International Version)



The Presbytery of Great Rivers has made a commitment to environmental stewardship, energy

conservation and related matters by creating a new position dedicated to these concepts. I'm Laurie Vial and I recently came on board to fill this exciting new role. I'll tell you more about myself in the last paragraph.

But first, what does this mean for the churches of the Presbytery (and here we really are talking about the church buildings)? I'll be providing special resources about energy audits, grants, new technology, programs provided by utility companies and many other topics to make God's houses more efficient. This saves resources and money and helps preserve our environment for future generations. It's a win, win, win.

Some of these options will provide special resources to individuals and groups who are tasked with caring for our church buildings such as Session or building committees, custodians and pastors. Some of these options will be available to congregations. For instance, I will be available as a speaker to interested groups.

What does this mean for members and regular attenders of our 108 congregations? This column will have suggestions for becoming greener in our personal lives. Subtle and not-so-subtle changes, once adopted, can preserve our planet for the future. Collectively we can make a bigger difference.

These resources will be available *later* on the [presbytery web site](#) and articles will be provided for your newsletters; as well as other formats. Encourage everyone to sign up for the Presbytery of Great Rivers electronic newsletter by e-mailing [Julie](#). Send your concerns and ideas for future columns to [Laurie](#).

I am a member of St. Luke Union Church in Bloomington, IL, one of the churches in the Presbytery of Great Rivers. We have a long history to funding missions with a community paper and aluminum recycling program. Our nickname is the "recycling church" which we think is a great compliment. Our bumper stickers state "Recycle Religiously at St. Luke Union Church." I previously did marketing for an electric utility company where I promoted energy conservation. I have a son who a junior in college and a daughter who is a senior in high school. I've been recycling since our 4-H clubs had paper drives and collected "cullet" glass in the 1970s. Let's all strive to be good stewards of God's earth.

### We Prayed For You This Week

During our staff meetings each week, the presbytery staff prays for some of our churches. We are sharing those churches with you, so that you, too, can pray for them. How strong we all are through the power of prayer.

Delavan, [First Presbyterian Church](#)  
Divernon, First Presbyterian Church  
East Moline, First Presbyterian Church

### Do You WANT Your Church to Grow?

Have you or members of your congregation registered for The Magnetic Church event April 23-24? COME! Be challenged, motivated, and enthused, as Andrew Weeks, a lay speaker and author, presents fresh ideas for fellowship, community, spiritual growth, and personal connections.



[Click here](#) for more information and [Brochure](#)

### Presbytery Night at the Ballpark

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

**Friday, June 11, 2010**

*If your choir would like to sing the National Anthem before the game, contact [Julie](#) by March 25.*

Your Preaching and Your Leadership

## Preaching and Leading for Lent and Easter

A Workshop for Commissioned Lay Pastors  
Presented by the Synod of Lincoln Trails

**Saturday, February 6, 2010**  
**10 a.m. to 3 p.m.**  
**Champaign/Urbana, Illinois**

**Registration Deadline is Wednesday, February 3.**

[Registration Form](#)

### **MALT Interim Pastor Training and Interim Executive Training**

#### **Interim Pastor Training**

May 3-7, 2010

Mercy Center, St. Louis, MO

Registration Deadline is April 5, 2010. Registration is limited, sign up early.

#### **Executive Training**

November 5-9, 2010

Mercy Center, St. Louis, MO

Registration Deadline is October 10, 2010. Registration is limited to 12 participants, sign up early.

[Click here for Flyers and Registration Forms](#)



### **Spring Into Faith!**

Middle school students in the Synod of Lincoln Trails are invited to Spring Into Faith on **March 12-13, 2010** at Knox Presbyterian Church, Naperville, Ill. Activities will include fellowship, a mission project, worship, and lots of FUN! [Download a brochure and registration form.](#) Contact [Julie Shannon](#) (317-283-5025) or [Kristi Miller](#) (317-923-3681/800 566-5996) for more information. **Register by March 1 and save \$10 per person!**

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