

Presbytery of Boston E-Connection July 2, 2010

One in the Spirit

The following items are from “One in the Spirit,” a monthly email from Linda Valentine, “strengthening community between the General Assembly Mission Council and Middle Governing Bodies.”



Chaplain Jim Edwards plays the guitar

Remember our Presbyterian military chaplains on

July 4 – As we approach the annual observance of Independence Day on July 4 – when we will recognize the service of our military chaplains during opening worship at the 219th General Assembly (2010) – may it be for us Presbyterians not only a special time to remember the freedoms that we enjoy, but also to pray for those among us

who serve faithfully as military chaplains, called to embody the hope of Jesus Christ in some of the world’s most perilous places. Through our prayers and our gifts, together we can make a difference to those whose ministry touches so many.

Haiti Relief and Recovery – By June, response by Presbyterians to the recovery efforts in Haiti passed \$10 million. \$4 million has already been committed to relief and recovery. We continue to assess needs and venues for long term recovery – including the possibility to begin hosting teams of mission volunteers by the end of the year. We are working carefully with partners to determine host sites where there is real need, a capacity for visitors and a context that will provide safe and meaningful experiences for participants. To learn more, visit the Presbyterian Disaster Assistance website <http://gamc.pcusa.org/ministries/pda/>. We are grateful for the commitment and generosity of so many Presbyterians!

pcusa.org gets an extreme makeover – A complete overhaul of the denomination's web presence has resulted in a new look, feel and functionality for the site, which will have its formal premiere on Saturday, July 3, during the General Assembly Mission Council’s presentation at the 219th General Assembly (2010). The fresh new design is coupled with a new content management system, which serves up content in more dynamic and flexible pages that are geared to help users quickly find relevant and helpful

information. New tools to aid conversation around each story have also been incorporated, offering the site as a place to share ideas about ministry and mission as well as to find and share resources to inspire and equip congregations for the church's work.

The home page is designed to serve as a gateway to the church, with stories of Presbyterians and our love for the church, an introduction to the PC(USA) for first-time visitors, helpful links to popular pages from all of the national offices, and new tools for finding events, news and information, resources, and products available for purchase in the church store. Because it's been ten years since the denomination's last major web design project, we hope that you will plan to log on after July 3 for the ultimate Presbyterian web experience!

Gulf Coast Oil Spill Tragedy - Read a reflection from the NCC Eco-justice office and articles from leaders in the faith community responding to the gulf coast disaster and download worship resources to help facilitate a prayerful response to this tragedy. Summer 2010 edition of the Eco-Justice Program's newsletter, *Capsules* at <http://ncecejustice.org/Capsules/capsulessummer10.php>.

The Tragedy in the Gulf from an Eco-Justice Perspective

Psalm 24:1 - "The Earth is the Lord's and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it"



"An oil rig explosion in the Gulf of Mexico on April 20, 2010 marked the beginning of one of the worst oil spills in US history. Eleven workers were killed and 17 were injured. In addition, at least 783 birds, 353 turtles and 41 mammals have died so far. This oil spill has already caused billions of dollars worth of damage and continues to wreak havoc on an area that has suffered more than its fair share of disasters. Even though British Petroleum (BP), the company responsible for the rig, put a containment cap to help capture some of the oil, it is estimated that anywhere between 42,000 and 10.5 million gallons still leak into the Gulf of Mexico every day.

The daily discoveries from the oil spill investigation can be discouraging and hard to believe. It seems that the more information that is released about the disaster, the more questions arise. How did this happen? What caused this to happen? What does this spill mean for our country's energy and economic futures? How can we prevent a disaster like

this from happening again? What does recovery look like for those who have been and will be affected? Many people are asking questions like these, searching for answers and wanting to know how they can help. While those in the Gulf Coast experience directly the impacts of this disaster, the effects are also being felt on a national and global level. In addition to all the physical damage that has occurred, the spirits and hopes of millions of people have been crushed, and the future consequences are uncertain and ominous.

While it might be difficult to process all of the details of the oil spill, it's encouraging to know that the faith community is reaching out to help with the response. As people of faith, we are called to encourage our leaders to stay strong in the journey ahead. We can continue to pray for those in harm's way and for those who are working tirelessly to stop the oil from spreading. We can also continue to pray for those who have the power to make important decisions and for those who have the chance to impact the future of our society. Additionally, we can take the time to learn as much information about the spill as possible. The more we learn, the better equipped we are to respond. By understanding what is happening in the Gulf Coast, we can learn from our mistakes and find out how God is calling us to live in ways that show our concern for Creation.

The Role of Eco-justice

Eco-justice is focused on creating a unity between humans and the environment by making sure that justice is provided for all of



Creation. Eco-justice can be a challenging principle to uphold, but the tragedy in the Gulf Coast highlights the need for individuals and communities to be focused on an eco-justice way of life. Studying the oil spill from an eco-justice perspective means drawing ties between the impacts on Creation and how the situation is managed via governmental and administrative processes. While everyone is affected by the oil spill disaster, the impact is felt most by communities that don't have the resources to adapt to the situation. Resources in this context can refer to more than just financial support and a strong economy. It can also refer to connections these communities need such as accessibility and information. For example, this disaster, as with others in the past, has had an unfair impact on immigrants (many of whom are not native English speakers), low-income families and communities of color. In order to be effective, disaster response must appropriately reflect the needs of various communities.

Of course, it's not just communities that are having trouble receiving resources. Many scientists have been denied access to areas impacted by the spill and are unable to obtain the necessary samples to study the effects of this disaster on God's Creation. Not having

access to this information hinders their ability to help guide us on how to best respond to this crisis.

Over the years, disasters like this oil spill solemnly remind us that taking the time and resources to address challenges and risks before they turn into problems is a much better approach than waiting until disaster happens and paying the costs afterward (some call this the precautionary principle). A situation like this is particularly heartbreaking because of the challenges in measuring the full costs of the cleanup. How do you measure the cost of some of the exposed injustices? Is it even possible to put a price tag on or measure all of the costs of what that has happened and will happen? Even though BP has promised that it will compensate victims for all “legitimate claims,” many of the costs will never be completely repaid, simply because it is impossible to put a price tag on them.

Human/Environmental Health Impacts



It is important to understand how the oil spill harms human health and the health of all Creation. Currently, workers, communities, and the ecosystem are exposed to harmful chemicals in the oil and the oil dispersants. Crude oil, which is the unprocessed oil leaking into the Gulf of Mexico, contains dangerous chemicals such as benzene, toluene, ethylbenzene, xylene, and naphthalene. Many of these chemicals can cause serious harm to God’s Creation. These chemicals can increase risks of cancer and can cause harm to the liver, kidney, nervous system, and reproductive systems. They also evaporate into the air that we breathe. Wind currents move these chemicals to other parts of the world without any barriers or forewarning. In addition, water currents are spreading the oil around the Gulf region. With the peak of hurricane season almost here, it’s scary to imagine where the oil and dispersants might spread in the upcoming months.

The dispersants being used to break up the oil also contain toxic chemicals that can harm many of the same organs as crude oil. Due to a weak federal chemical policy-the Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA) of 1976-it has been difficult to learn just what chemicals are in the dispersants, what the health impacts are, and how we can require BP to use healthier alternatives. The public has not had access to important information such as dispersant ingredients or concentrations. Under the TSCA, companies are not required to prove that chemicals are safe before using them and they can claim trade secrets on chemicals to avoid having to release any information about whats in various products. Congress is currently working to reform TSCA so that the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has greater authority to remove dangerous chemicals from the market and

it can ensure more accountability on behalf of chemical companies to provide health and safety data to the public and ensure chemicals are safe. This will ensure that vulnerable human populations and God's Creation are safe. Congress has also begun to give scientists greater access to the oil spill area, while also requiring scientific and federal agencies to make more information viewable to the public. The [National Council of Churches \(NCC\)](#) has been working to educate people of faith and engage them in repairing U.S. chemical policy.



Impacts on Biodiversity

Hundreds of animals have been found dead or injured as a result of exposure to oil and oil dispersants. For those creatures that have survived, it's still unknown how they will be affected in the future as a result of this exposure. What is known right now is that ecosystems are being destroyed and biodiversity is being decreased. [Biodiversity](#), which is the variation of life forms across different ecosystems, is one of God's greatest gifts. Biodiversity provides many economical, social, environmental, spiritual and aesthetic benefits. Some of these benefits include medicine, food, fuel, and a better quality of life. Biodiversity helps ecosystems provide services such as clean air, a stable climate, and water purification so that Creation can function in a healthy, sustainable way. To see God's gift of biodiversity in decline is particularly worrisome, and it provides strong incentive to respond appropriately and quickly to this crisis.

Eliminating Oil Dependency

A community of faith living out eco-justice principles can create positive change in society by reducing our oil dependency and incorporating clean, [renewable energy](#) sources into society. Oil dependency and renewable energy are topics that have been discussed in this country for years, but this disaster has rightfully placed them as the number one concern right now. Scientists and experts have warned for years about the future oil crisis our country would face and the dangers oil dependence could impose on society. Since the 1950s, we have known that oil is a finite resource and oil production has been shrinking ever since.

Our dependence on oil and other fossil fuels is directly related to climate change. Which is a big concern from an eco-justice perspective. Oil is a fossil fuel, which means it comes from the remains of past living organisms that get buried in the ground over millions of years. Burning fossil fuels such as oil (most commonly in the form of gasoline) releases [carbon dioxide](#) into the atmosphere. This causes the Earth's climate to

Ecumenical Prayer Vigil

The Massachusetts Council of Churches invites you to gather in prayer as a witness of deep concern in response to the tragic events in the Gulf.

On **July 7th at 7:00pm in Old South Church at 645 Boylston Street in Boston**, we will come together to pray, to deepen our solidarity with those directly affected, and to present a unified Christian witness to God's love and righteous indignation in the wake of this event as well as the hope we have for the restoration of all things in Christ. Plan to join us and recruit others from your church to attend.

Prayer Concerns & Celebrations

From Elliott Hipp: "We would appreciate the prayers of the Presbytery for my wife, Nell Scudder, and her family on the death June 26 of her mother, Priscilla Scudder, after a brief illness. Priscilla lived near her son in Davidson, NC, but was a native and long-time resident of Cotuit on Cape Cod, and her memorial service will be scheduled sometime in July in Cotuit."

Carole Parrish

From Bethany Church: "Prayers of gratitude to God for Sang (Sam) Yoon and his wife Tina's 15 years of service to Bethany (well before it was chartered), and prayers for their family's transition to the DC area." The following link provides further information: <http://thephoenix.com/BLOGS/talkingpolitics/archive/2010/06/27/exclusive-sam-yoon-leaving-boston.aspx>

Prayers for General Assembly

Presbytery of Boston Meetings

JULY

6– Nominating Committee, 11:00, NPC

8 – S&B, 7:00, NPC

13 – Reports Deadline

19 – CEM, 1:30, NPC

20 – Supplemental Packet Deadline

26 – Stated Meeting of the Presbytery of Boston, Korean Church of Boston, Brookline

LinkedIn, A Networking Tool

Members of Boston Presbytery,

In an effort to facilitate communication between members and ministers, the Council has approved a LinkedIn group for Boston Presbytery. If you are not familiar with LinkedIn, it is a networking tool for professionals, and can be used to share information, post job openings, start ministry related discussions, and increase our connectivity. If you are a member of LinkedIn, take a moment to join the group "Presbytery of Boston (PCUSA)."

If you are not a member but are interested, it's free and easy to join LinkedIn and you are in complete control of your information.

If you have any questions, please contact Cindy Kohlmann at ckohlmann@mac.com.

219th General Assembly Website

Follow the events of GA through their official website:

<http://www.pcusa.org/ga219/>

Synod of the Northeast Newsletter

By Nancy Lomberk

The June 2010 Nor'E-News is now available to download. This is a two page (front and back) communication instrument we hope you'll use to share information about the Synod's life and mission throughout your presbytery.

Please send it along to churches, ministers, CLPs and elders with the suggestion that they consider using it in one or more of the following ways:

1. Print and include with next church newsletter.
2. Attach front and back side by side to one or more bulletin boards.
3. Send as electronic attachment to the church mailing list.
4. Make copies and leave them in prominent places for people to pick up such as in a magazine rack, in the narthex, or at the rear of the sanctuary.
5. Use as bulletin insert on Sunday morning.
6. Print multiple copies for use as placemats during congregational dinners.

The newsletter contains the following articles:

- Murder of Minister in Madagascar Illustrates Crisis Getting Worse There ~ Synod Delegation Meets with Ambassador at the United Nations
- Tri-Synod Latino Leadership Enhancement Initiative
- Inside Albany Immersion for Adults and Youth ~ September 18, 2010

To access the newsletter, go to the Synod's website <http://www.synodne.org/> and scroll down the home page until you see the heading "June 2010 Nor'E-News" and its link.

The Nave Gallery Presents

"Elements: Line, Color & Form." Artists Ron Brunelle, Alisia Dworsky and Kathleen Finlay on exhibition at the Nave Gallery, Church of the Covenant, Somerville, MA. July 8 through July 25. Opening Reception, Thursday, July 8, 6 to 8 p.m. Followed by a special performance by Skinny Emu at 8 p.m., an improvisational music-dance-spoken word quartet. Gallery hours: Friday 6-8 p.m./Saturday & Sunday 1-5 p.m. www.navegallery.org. 617-625-4823.