



REV. RICHARD FRANCIS PRESBYTERY CHAPLAIN
PASTOR VAIL/WESTSIDE

A Theology of Abundance

Reading over the Gospel lesson for last Sunday (John 21:1-19, in case you've forgotten) I was struck by the connections between that story and other stories in the Gospel of John. Helping me with those connections was Gail O'Day's commentary on John in the *New Interpreter's Bible*, probably the best commentary I've ever used, not just on John, but on any book. But I digress.

O'Day points out that Jesus' first sign in John is a sign of the abundance: the turning of water into wine at the wedding in Cana of Galilee (John 2:1ff.). Transforming a cup or a bottle would have been enough to make the point about Jesus' power, but according to v.6 he made between 120 and 180 gallons—enough to keep the party going for several more days.

The Feeding of the 5,000 in John 6 also points to the abundance of the Kingdom. Only in John's reporting of this event is it Jesus himself who raises the question, "Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?" (John 6:5) John remarks in an aside, "He asked this only to test [Philip], for he already had in mind what he was going to do." (John 6:6) What he was going to do was to take the five barley loaves and the two small fish provided by a boy in the crowd and use them to feed everyone there, with food left over. (It's interesting that all the gospels report this event, and all of them report the amount of food left over after everyone had eaten: twelve baskets full. Abundance again!)

Finally, here at the end of John's story of Jesus, he leaves us with a story of abundance. The disciples have fished all night and caught nothing. Early in the morning they catch sight of a figure on the shore. He calls out to them to let the net down on the right side of the boat, and, John tells us, "When they did, they were unable to haul the net in because of the large number of fish"—one hundred fifty-three fish, as we learn later (John 21:11). The Church Fathers scrambled to find symbolic meaning in the number, but since several possibilities have been proposed it seems likely to me that someone simply took the trouble to count them. One hundred fifty-three fish is a lot of fish.

When Jesus has some time with Peter, he asks him three times, "Do you love me?" and Peter of course replies that he does. Jesus then tells him "Feed my lambs...Take care of my sheep...Feed my sheep." We could read this as John's version of the Great Commission of Matthew 28:18-20. Jesus' words are not just meant for Peter, but for us. We are supposed to feed Jesus' sheep.

We are, of course, no more adequate to the task than Peter was. That's why we look, not to our own resources, but to the One who made 120 gallons of wine, fed more than 5,000 people with five loaves and two fish, and sent the disciples back to the sea for one more cast that netted 153 fish.

One of the hardest promises for us to believe is that we will have enough to do everything God calls us to do. We are watching our resources shrink: most of our churches have fewer members and less money than we did a generation ago. Our facilities are not keeping up with our new situations. Our prospects for growth are not very good. We often find ourselves thinking what we could do if we only had the people, the money, the commitment, or the right kind of preacher. What we need is a Theology of Abundance: the belief that if God calls us to do something, God provides the resources to do it.

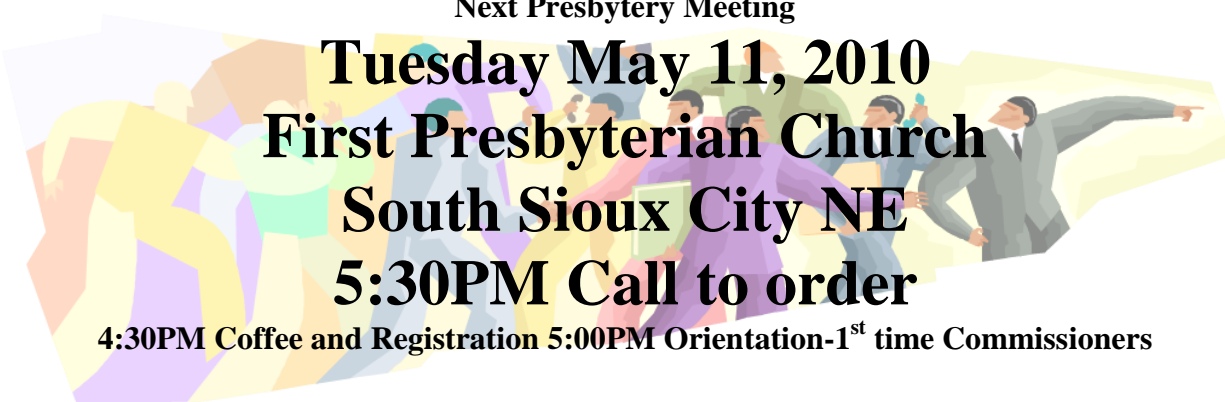
That, I believe is a message that runs through the Bible, from the story of the Manna in Exodus 16:18 to the words of Proverbs 11:24 ("Some give freely, yet grow all the richer; others withhold what is due, and only suffer want") to the words of the Apostle Paul: "And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 4:19)

We have lived with a Theology of Scarcity for too long. It's time to claim a Theology of Abundance: not for our personal desires, but for the mission of the Church of Jesus Christ.

Next Presbytery Meeting

Tuesday May 11, 2010
First Presbyterian Church
South Sioux City NE
5:30PM Call to order

4:30PM Coffee and Registration 5:00PM Orientation-1st time Commissioners





Visit www.prospecthillpresby.org/LAYACADEMY

LAY ACADEMY 2010/11

A joint ministry of Presbyteries of North Central Iowa and Prospect Hill



**PRESBYTERIAN
DISASTER ASSISTANCE**

OUT OF CHAOS. HOPE

The Presbytery of Prospect Hill has collected over \$6,000. You may continue to send your contributions to the presbytery office- Disaster Relief-Haiti DR000064.

Thank You April 8, 2010

Dear Friends, Words cannot express our gratitude for your compassion and generosity in response to the recent earthquake in Haiti thank you for your gift to Presbytery Disaster Assistance. Randy Ackley, Coordinator, PDA

Synod School 2010 – “Grace Notes” <http://www.lakesandprairies.org/school.html>

Registration is now open!

Synod School runs July 25-30 at Buena Vista University in Storm Lake, Iowa

Southeast Asian Christian Church

Egg Roll Sale

Monday, May 10 2010

4 pm to 6:30 pm

815 E. 5th Street

10 egg rolls \$10.00

Drive through E. 5th Street to pick up food

Tickets must be purchased in advance.

Tickets available at

**Lakeside Presbyterian Church, The United Methodist Church and Saint Mark's Lutheran Church
or from Nancy Alderton 712-732-1705 or nalderton@iw.net**

PW SPRING GATHERING	APRIL 22	CHEROKEE, IA	9:00AM
MINUTE REVIEW	APRIL 24	PRESBYTERIAN CAMP	10:00AM
SEARCH COMMITTEE	APRIL 26	PRESBYTERY OFFICE	5:30PM
JR. HIGH RETREAT	APRIL 30-MAY 1	CAMP ON LAKE OKOBOJI	
EGG ROLL SALE	MAY 10	STORM LAKE	4:00PM
COM	MAY 11	SO SIOUX CITY, NE	1:30PM
PRESBYTERY MEETING	MAY 11	SO SIOUX CITY, NE	5:30PM
CPM	MAY 18	PRESBYTERY OFFICE	9:00AM
PPH ANNIVERSARY	MAY 19	PRESBYTERY OFFICE	
MEMORIAL DAY	MAY 28-31	PRESBYTERY OFFICE	CLOSED
SYNOD PW GATHERING	JUNE 16-19	BUENA VISTA UNIVERSITY	
GENERAL ASSEMBLY	JULY 3-10	MINNEAPOLIS, MN	
INDEPENDENCE DAY	JULY 4	PRESBYTERY OFFICE	CLOSED
COM	JULY 13	PRESBYTERY OFFICE	10:00AM
TRIENNIAL	JULY 20-24	PURDUE, INDIANA	
SYNOD SCHOOL	JULY 25-30	BUENA VISTA UNIVERSITY	

Kay Lenhart



Presbytery Communications