

The Pitcher



Dedicated to the dissemination of news for Presbyterian Women
Of the North Alabama Presbytery

September, 2009

Greetings from your Moderator:

Fall Gathering is almost here, and I think you will be pleased with our program this year. At our planning meeting, we read your evaluations from the last gathering and are going to try a few new things. Gathering this year will be on **September 15, at St. Andrew Presbyterian Church, 3310 Danville Rd in Decatur**. Registration and refreshments will begin at 9:15 with the program beginning at 10 AM. The cost remains at \$9.00. Your Cluster Leader will be in touch with all Church PW Moderators soon about registration. Deadline to register is September 6, which is not very long from now, so please start advertising in your local congregation. Soon you will also receive a formal invitation from Jan Foster, Moderator of St. Andrews, with more details and a map.

Seven women from our Presbytery were able to attend the Churchwide Gathering in Louisville this summer, and four will give short reports on various aspects of that meeting. We will give a short overview of the new Horizons Bible Study on **Joshua**, but much of our time will be spent singing. For years it seems that you have requested more singing, and there just never seemed to be enough time to get it all in, but this year, come prepared with the hymn numbers you want to sing, and we will draw several selections from a hat. St. Andrew has both the red and blue hymnal, so you can choose from either one.

Our NAP PW CT met Aug. 18, and have decided to try a few things different for the immediate future. We will designate our offering collected at the Gatherings to a mission associated with the Gathering Host Church. Together In Service is trying to emphasize finding missions in your home community that you can work with and support. We felt that this was a good fit with our Gathering offerings, while also benefitting the churches that go to the trouble of hosting Gatherings. The Fall Gathering Offering will go to the Community Church Cooperative of Decatur, which among other things provides two meals a week to area homeless. The local Presbyterian Churches were instrumental in establishing this multi-denominational service in Decatur.

Another change that came out of our CT meeting was that for the spring of 2010, we will not have a Spring Gathering. Instead, we want to encourage everyone to participate in the PW Synod Triennial Gathering that will be held at First Huntsville PC June 3-5, 2010. North AL Presbytery PW are so honored to have been selected as the site for this triennial event, and it is very important that you begin now to encourage as many as possible to make plans to attend. Stella Wilson from First Huntsville is on the planning team for this event and is going to need help from every Presbyterian Woman in North AL. We will need to provide between meal drinks and snacks for 200-300 women for the three day event. Stella is working on lists of what will be needed, and you will be asked at Fall Gathering to come prepared to sign up for something to provide. Some of

the program is already planned, but there is a planning meeting for that group next week. Stella will provide an update on what promises to be a very interesting event at Fall Gathering.

As we will not have Spring Gathering, we will need to meet during the triennial event for about 30 minutes for an abbreviated business meeting to elect and install new leaders. We will do this immediately following a plenary session when our guests leave for lunch. That will put us at the end of the lunch line, but probably we will spend less time standing in line than if we'd left with the others. In some of your evaluations, you asked for fewer announcements, so this will definitely be honored at this meeting. Any announcements or updates will be covered in handouts in a packet of information that will be distributed during the meeting.

ALABAMA / MISSISSIPPI WOMEN'S CONFERENCE

This year's AL/MS Conference was held in Starkville, MS, and was probably the best I've ever attended. The sad thing is that there were only two women from North AL Presbytery. Our organization spends \$400 a year to support this program which includes timely, thought provoking workshops and Bible Study, and we need a lot more participation from our women. This year's event included the author of our Horizons Bible Study on *Joshua*, Mary Mikhael who is the first female president of the Near East School of Theology in Beirut, Lebanon. She was born in Syria, is an elder in the Presbyterian Church in Beirut, and is a graduate of Columbia University and Union Theological Seminary. I think, as an Arab Christian, she'll bring an interesting focus to this year's Bible study.

Other hi-lights of the conference included presentations by college professors from Mississippi State University. Two of my favorite were Dr. Robert Wolverton, VP for Academic Affairs, who spoke on The Muddled Middle East, and Dr. James Hardin, Assoc Professor of Anthropology and Middle Eastern Cultures, who gave a presentation on an ongoing archaeological dig in Israel being conducted by MS State and Emory University.

I think the main drawing card for many was the Thursday Night Lebanese Banquet when several local husbands also attended. Pam McDonald, PWP Moderator of MS Presbytery is the wife of a retired Army Colonel who has traveled the world and is a former caterer. She prepared a banquet for 118 people that included several national dishes of Lebanon. The food was not only a lot of fun to try, but delicious. Participants went home with new ideas for ways to stimulate interest among the PW back home toward the book of Joshua and the area of Lebanon.

Each year at AL/MS there is a Gift Shop. Each Presbyterian Church is asked to send 10 hand-made items for sale. This year's gift shop sales collected \$1,538.25 which was donated to the Child Care Center of Starkville First PC for scholarships. The offering taken during the Communion Service was \$793 which went to Starkville FPC's Campus Ministry at MS State. \$164.67 was collected for cents-ability and went to Living Waters For the World.

Next years' AL/MS will be in July at Springhill PC in Mobile, so start making plans now for a trip to the beach. Planning for that event will be in October, so I'll have more information for you on that later.

2009 CHURCHWIDE GATHERING

I won't say too much about this since there will be presentations from four of our participants at Fall Gathering, but if you missed this, you missed one of the best

“mountain top” experiences our church has to offer. It was as professionally produced as any event I’ve ever attended. My minister was on study leave in Louisville during the

Gathering, and came to several plenary sessions and was “blown away” with what PW was able to do. I don’t think he fully realized how well organized and capable we can be

when a bunch of us put our heads together. Over 2,500 PW (and a few men) attended to explore the theme “God Will Do Wonders Among You.” During the business meeting, voting delegates made some significant changes to the way PW operates, but I’ll leave that to one of the Fall Gathering speakers. NAP was represented by seven women from three churches. I hope more of you will try to participate in the event that happens every three years. It’s an eye opening experience to meet and hear opinions from other Presbyterian Women from all over the world. The next one will be in 2012 in Orlando, FL, so start saving now and you won’t even notice the cost 3 years from now.

COLUMBIA FRIENDSHIP CIRCLE AND MISSION HAVEN

At the fall meeting of the Columbia Friendship Circle Board last year we voted to increase our contribution to the scholarship fund to \$60,000. We were able to raise that amount in time for the awards last spring, but it looked very “iffy” until the last minute. I would ask that you all remember to include contributions from your individual churches to these very worthy PW projects. Mission Haven is a function of PW, and it is our responsibility to meet their needs. Renovations of the apartments used by missionaries home on leave had not been updated or renovated in many years, and had become a critical issue. As we let you know the situation, it improved greatly, but continue to keep these organizations in your budgets as they have needs that have been significantly impacted with the economic times.

2009-2010 Horizons Bible Study

Joshua

A Journey of Faith

by Mary Mikhael

Suggestions for Leaders

by Joyce MacKichan Walker

In the nine lessons of *Joshua: A Journey of Faith*, Mary Mikhael invites us to explore the challenging, sometimes heartrending, book of Joshua. Pursuing such themes as leadership, the promise of land, the concept of “holy war,” and outsiders becoming insiders, we learn ultimately to find rest in the justice and mercy of God.

