

# NATIONAL X PRESS

THE NATIONAL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH NEWSLETTER

JAN/FEB 2008 | VOL. 6

## ADULT CLASSES

Starting January 6, 2008  
Worship at 9:15 & 11 a.m.

### Sunday Adult Classes

Classes at 9:15 a.m.  
January 6 – February 3

### Guided Tour of the Bible:

#### Pauline Epistles

Teacher: R.V. Seep  
Agencies Bldg., Rm. 101  
January 20 – February 10

### Living Together as Presbyterians: How do we do church in order to do mission?

Herb and Terry Schlossberg,  
Wrestlers Class  
Lower Level, Agencies Bldg.

### Wednesday Adult Classes

from 7 to 8 p.m.  
January 9 – 30

### Guided Tour of the Bible: Poets

Keith Patman, Donna Marsh  
Church, Rm. 5

### Give It a Rest: A Biblical Look at Sabbath

Eunice McGarrahan  
Church, Parlor.

## NATIONAL X PRESS

### DEADLINES

**March/April:** February 1  
**May/June:** April 1  
**July/August:** June 1  
**September/October:** August 1  
**STAFF**

**Editor:** Richard Armstrong  
**Staff Editor:** Kate Brinkley  
**Desk Editors**  
Worship: Sally Kaplan  
Outreach: Keith Patman  
Congregational Care: Sonny Rimback  
Nurture: open

## Metanoia Ministries Comes to National Making Peace Seminar Scheduled for January 12 at NPC

In an effort to address the continuing decline in attendance and faith giving at National Presbyterian Church, the Session voted unanimously in October to retain the services of Metanoia Ministries.



Jim Van Yperen

Founded in 1993, Metanoia (which is a Greek word meaning “to change one’s mind”) is a New Hampshire-based consulting firm specializing in conducting church interventions that are designed to help a church “see itself truthfully, think biblically, and act redemptively.” Metanoia has served more than 75 churches of all denominations,

conducting more than 7,000 personal interviews in the process, and training hundreds of pastors throughout the world.

Under the leadership of Jim Van Yperen and his wife Sharon (Jim is the author of the critically-acclaimed book *Making Peace: A Guide to Overcoming Church*



Sharon Van Yperen

*Conflict*), Metanoia Ministries employs a unique approach that involves the participation of trained volunteers from around the country who will conduct on-site interviews with NPC’s elders, trustees, deacons, pastors, staff, members, and former members. These

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## An Interview with Pastor Icenogle Part Two of a Candid Conversation with the Senior Pastor

*Part One of this interview was published in the November/December issue of the XPress. The full interview is available on the NPC website: [www.NationalPres.org/Icenogle\\_Interview.pdf](http://www.NationalPres.org/Icenogle_Interview.pdf)*

**XPress:** Congregational care is one of the most important “services” the church provides. But we’ve not only had to lay off Jean Coyle, we’ve also been forced to cancel our search for a full-time associate pastor in charge of care. Some people think this was the last place where cuts should’ve been made. What do you think this says about our priorities and about the future of congregational care at NPC?

**Icenogle:** First of all, many people forget it’s only been in recent years that we’ve had a full-time pastor in charge of congregational care. I believe Clarence Payne

was the first. Secondly, the three current pastors have agreed to do a lot more care giving in order to make up the difference. In the short run, I believe we’re going to be able to absorb the additional work and do a good job.

While June Traylor may not be a pastor, she’s been increasing her efforts and doing the things she does very well. We’re sad to hear about June’s resignation and upcoming move to Florida. With June’s departure we have a huge gap in caregiving leadership on our staff. We plan to make up the difference with more help from volunteers and our three parish associate pastors. We will be in significant conversations with our Personnel Committee about a long-range solution.

For the long term, as soon we get on a  
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# Making Disciples: Our Church as a Mission

## *Where Does Our Growth as Personal Disciples Lead Us?*

by Matt Teems

For many years, our congregation has devoted significant resources to sending missionaries to introduce people of different languages and cultures to our Savior Jesus Christ. In doing so, we seek to fulfill the command in Matthew 28:19, to “go and make disciples of all nations.”

The trap, though, is to limit our part to funding missions. What more can we do, with our own voices and our own hands, to reach God’s children in need?

On Sunday evening, November 11, NPC launched a series of “Church-as-a-Mission” events with a potluck



dinner that provided a sense of close community we sometimes miss in a congregation our size.

Interestingly, the idea for the series grew out of conversations among our Outreach team

and the discipleship group of our executive pastor, Dr. Doug Learned. Over the last year, Doug, Clay Sell, David Schauer, and I have met on Wednesday mornings to study God’s Word, share our struggles, and provide each other with accountability. Our discussions led to the need for us as a group of believers to take action ourselves to reach people in need with God’s love.

At the same time our discipleship group was asking the question, “Where does our growth in personal discipleship lead us,” the Outreach Pillar was looking for a way to connect more members and friends of NPC with mission activities.

“I was hoping for a strong response,” said Doug Learned, “and was grateful when our online registration went so well. The Holy Spirit was up to something good.”

More than 150 people crowded into Stone Hall with their donations. The room had a special energy, not just because of the good food and fellowship, but for the significance of the effort. Before



us stood two, long rows of tables, overflowing with donations of food and supplies of all kinds. “There was a delightful frenzy of activity at the tables where the kids were putting together the kits,” explained Doug Learned. “It looked like Christmas morning at the tables. Only the ‘gifts’ were being wrapped, not opened.”

To remind us of the focus of the evening, Rev. Art Brown from the Urban Prayer Breakfast spoke of the men and women he sees every day who are struggling for lack of those things we take for granted.

Then it was time to work. We gathered around the tables with a line that would have made Henry Ford proud. As each bag moved down the row, in went a bottle of shampoo, a razor, soap, toothpaste, and more. Another line packaged juice, canned foods, and cereals.

Even though our children didn’t get to meet the people who would eventually benefit from the supplies, I sensed they understood. They seemed to appreciate how much

God has blessed us all and how that blessing came with a responsibility. In some small way, we were collectively teaching our children—and reminding ourselves—of the power and joy that come through serving.

“My hope is that people would not only hear about the Pathway of Christian Discipleship (Worship – Grow – Serve) through this event, but experience it as well,” said Doug Learned. “I love the idea

of missions growing out of our discipleship of Christ, and that concept was at the heart of this event.”



*Where does our growth in personal discipleship lead us?*

## Metanoia Ministries *Continued from page 1*

volunteers are themselves members of churches who have undergone this process in the past and who feel so strongly about its value that they have agreed to help NPC on their own time.

"We got a very strong feeling that Metanoia doesn't just see this as a business," said Clerk of Session Janice Feather. "It's a mission for them. They have a passion for it, and their passion sparked an enthusiastic response from every member of Session."

Although Metanoia has already begun gathering information about NPC, including written surveys of members and leaders who have left the church, their formal work will begin on Saturday, January 12, when every NPC member is invited to participate in a full-day seminar on "Making Peace," conducted by Jim and Sharon Van Yperen. The seminar will be held in the sanctuary with a luncheon served in Stone Hall.

Throughout the following week, the Van Yperens and their team of volunteers will meet with elders and trustees (Monday), staff members (Tuesday), pastors and their spouses (Tuesday afternoon), and deacons (Tuesday night). On Wednesday morning, they will meet with individual program directors.

Then, beginning Thursday morning (January 17), Metanoia will conduct a series of interviews with any NPC member who wishes to share his or her thoughts about our church and its future. Members may choose to be interviewed individually, as couples, or in small groups of approximately 25 people. "Whichever method makes you feel most comfortable," says Clerk of Session Feather, "we urge as many members as possible to participate."

By Saturday, January 19, all the interviews will be completed, and Metanoia volunteers will process what they've learned, share their observations, and make some general recommendations.

Jim Van Yperen will preach at NPC on Sunday, January 20, and there will be a Town Hall meeting in the sanctuary following the second service, where the Van Yperens will report on their initial findings.

But the process doesn't stop there. Three weeks later, Metanoia will provide NPC with a 60-to-70 page report that will contain a summary of their findings, their professional evaluation of NPC's strengths and weaknesses, and their recommendations for what NPC will need to accomplish in the months and years ahead in order to grow as a church and a Christian community.

The Van Yperens will return on the weekend of February 23 to meet with pastors, elders, trustees, and deacons to further explain the report and answer questions. Finally, on Sunday, February 24, there will be another Town Hall meeting in the sanctuary, following the second service, to present Metanoia's final report to the congregation. At that point, it will

be up to NPC's pastors and leadership to sort through the recommendations, decide which ones should be implemented, and set priorities.

What will all this cost the church?

The Session has authorized the payment to Metanoia Ministries of \$28,500, which includes pre-assessment planning, on-site data gathering, on-site follow-up, and telephone consultation during the implementation phase. The trained volunteers who assist Metanoia in this process are not paid for their time but will receive compensation for their travel expenses, meals, and lodging while in Washington, DC.

The good news is that the entire amount has already been paid in full by the generous gift of an anonymous donor to the church, who left a significant contribution in his will earmarked for the continuing health and vitality of NPC. After a conversation between Dr. Icenogle and the donor's family, it was mutually agreed that paying for Metanoia's services would be an ideal way to use the gift.

"None of us knows what ideas or recommendations Metanoia Ministries will come back with," said Janice Feather. "But we're open to whatever they may be. We see this as a discernment process. Our goal is to find out what God is doing in this church and what he wants for our future."

## Icenogle Interview *Continued from page 1*

more stable financial footing, I believe we need to resume our search for a fourth pastor and pursue it vigorously.

**XPress:** What do you think are the primary reasons our faith giving is running under budget?

**Icenogle:** I think some people are not giving as much as they could because they are not happy with what's happening in the life of our church. There are others who contribute in a marginal way because they don't feel sufficiently connected to the church and, as a result, don't have a strong desire to support it. Of course, we have some who have recently moved, as well as some very big givers who have recently passed away. There are a number of smaller contributors who have chosen to leave the church. On the other hand, a number of people have increased their support because they are happy with the direction of the church. I think the faith giving for 2007 will exceed that of 2006.

**XPress:** That raises an important question. Many people think we have more of an attendance problem than a stewardship problem. What do you think are the reasons attendance is dropping?

**Icenogle:** There are several reasons. There has been some frustration with the change in preaching style and content. People who loved the preaching of Craig Barnes may not connect with me in the same way as they did

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## Icenogle Interview *Continued from page 3*

with him. The change in senior pastor has been hard on those people.

I believe it may also have something to do with the restructuring of our Sunday worship schedule. In fact, the largest drop in attendance occurred when we changed from three services to two. Then we also made a second change in the time of the early service, and that may have had an negative impact as well. I've heard from a few families with small children that the old schedule was ideal for them and the new one causes problems. We went through two changes in worship schedule in a short amount of time, and both of them affected our attendance negatively.

I also believe that there has been a somewhat negative conversation in the life of our church over the past few months. That in itself can add to the malaise and to a decline in attendance. Some have told me that they don't want to attend a church that's in conflict or talking about our pain. However, during the last few weeks, especially since the anniversary celebration of October 28, I hear people saying, "we've turned the corner" toward a better atmosphere and attitude.

**XPress:** Given that, what do you think we can do to increase our attendance levels. What have other churches in this situation done?

**Icenogle:** They take a good look at the criticism to discern what is valid and what is not. They listen to the concerns. They look at how they're doing worship. And they try to rethink how their worship services connect with people. I believe we need to pause and listen and make some adjustments.

For example, one of the things I'm personally doing is to re-examine how I come across to people in worship, my preaching, in particular. I am making some changes in how I prepare and deliver sermons.

I think we need to take a hard look at ourselves and make sure we are a church that is attractive to people. We need to reaffirm what we have to offer. We need to work

at strengthening our invitational message and expand our commitment to be a welcoming church. In order to do that, we'll need to work through our problems and become a church of peacefulness and stability again. People aren't attracted to a church that's in conflict and turmoil. If we can regain a congregational commitment to cooperation, common purpose, and common direction, I think we'll become a more attractive church and our attendance will go up as a result.

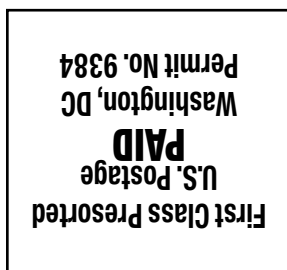
**XPress:** Some people have attributed falling attendance specifically to your preaching style. Granted it's impossible to please everyone, but are there things you can do to change or improve your preaching style that would put more people in the pews?

**Icenogle:** Yes, of course. I am listening and I am committed to improvement. But there's a larger philosophical question here I don't want to miss. Is the primary goal of this church to put people in the pews to hear good preaching?

Don't get me wrong. I am committed to excellent preaching. And I'm working hard to improve my own preaching. But if we're building the church solely around a charismatic preacher, it's not really not a church so much as it is a preaching chapel. As long as we're driven primarily by the desire to have someone who performs well in the pulpit, we diminish some of our ability to do the other things that a church is supposed to be and do.

We must ask ourselves who we want to be: a church built around a great preacher or a church built around Jesus Christ and the loving community the Spirit of God nurtures into service and mission. I hope we move into being the community of ministry and mission. I came to NPC because I believe we can be a discipling and missional community.

I think the very soul of our church is at stake here. Will we be a church centered around great preaching? Or will we become a church that exists for the purpose of discipleship, nurturing, mission. Will we accept the full responsibility of being Christians in today's complex world?



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