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# DREAM ACRES



Official Newsletter of the First Presbyterian Church Omro

January 2011

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## **From The Desk of Pastor Ed:**

Dear Friends in Christ,

Here is my last sermon to you...a poem for December 26<sup>th</sup>, 2010. Merry Christmas and many blessings in the New Year! Thank you for everything!

“Life means change. And today marks a big change for you and me. After serving the Lord Jesus faithfully for 24 years and 4 months together, we have come to the end of our ministry together. I will retire on the 31<sup>st</sup> and we will go our separate ways. This is nothing new. Change is part of life.

After Jesus was born, life changed for Joseph and Mary. Warned of Herod's threats, they fled to Egypt. They were displaced from their home.

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Worship/Sunday School: 9:00 am

Contact us at: [1stpresomro@sbcglobal.net](mailto:1stpresomro@sbcglobal.net)

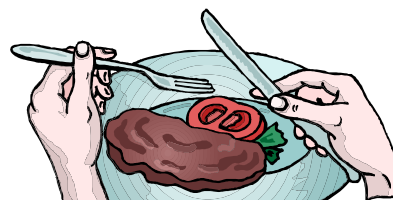
In case of emergency: call the office at 920-685-2610

Check our website at: [omropres.com](http://omropres.com)

Or the Presbytery at:  
[winnebagopresbytery.org](http://winnebagopresbytery.org)

## **January 30<sup>th</sup>!**

*Ephiny Brunch and annual meeting of the congregation will be held following worship on January 30<sup>th</sup>!*



## Continued from page 1

They became refugees. But their faith in God told them God was with them. And so they went into the future without fear. God was still with them.

And then there was Paul. On his way to Jerusalem, he stopped in Ephesus to say goodbye to his friends there...to the church he served. It was a tearful goodbye of affection and faith. Paul wound up in Rome.

And today we say goodbye. Change has come to us too. But God is still with us and will be with us through every change. We know this because God says so. Jesus said, *'Do not be afraid, I will be with you even to the end of the age.'* And again he said, *'I'm going ahead of you to prepare a place for you.'*

So even though we go to a new place, Jesus will be there ahead of us.

And remember how Paul said, *'I have become absolutely convinced that nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.'*

So let us go into the future with faith in Christ. His promises are our strength and hope in the days ahead.

And let us remember with gratitude all that God has done with us. Let us remember all the blessings and love we have shared in Christ. One person in the congregation asked, *'You aren't going to defriend me, are you, Pastor?'* No, I will never defriend any of you. We love you. You will always be our friends in Christ. So let us always love each other. My last sermon is a poem for you today on the next page."

Blessings in Christ,      Pastor Ed

## PRAYER CHAIN

Let us keep the following members and friends in prayer:

FOR HEALING: Tricia Wright, Catherine Hoeft, Dave Collier, Rich Steif, Darwin Lovell, Debbie Schilder, Bob Wing, Patty Fauk, Amber Jahr, Jean Koon, Nona Erickson, Dan Pistohl

FOR STRENGTH AND SAFETY: Members of the military and their families

HOMEBOUND: Addie Keller, Marge Hellwig, Bettie Nipko, Joan Moon

If you'd like to include a prayer request for the weekly bulletin, please call it to the office by Wednesday noon. Let us access God through the power of prayer each week. Names will remain on the list for two weeks, unless we are notified otherwise.

If you would like to place someone's name on the prayer chain, you may call the church at 685-2610 or Rozanne Werzinske at 685-6074.

When you call the prayer chain, we will assume that it's okay to print the name in the bulletin and newsletter unless you say otherwise.

## PRESBYTERIAN MEN'S GROUP MEETS

Presbyterian Men meet the second Saturday of each month for breakfast and fellowship. All men of the church are invited to attend. Come for breakfast at Horan's, Saturday, January 8<sup>th</sup> at 8:00 a.m.

## ATTENTION CONFIRMATION CLASS STUDENTS AND HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS:

We'd like your help in taping our worship services. If you'd like to learn how, please talk to Mr. Huebner or Erin Baltes.



## “Twas The Day Before Retirement”

Twas the day before retirement and all through the house  
Not a feature was stirring, nor computer mouse;  
The boxes were stacked o’er here and o’er there,  
For we have been packing since Grandpa had hair.

Our children all moved to their own warm homesteads,  
While visions of freedom danced in our heads.  
And Jan in her robe and I in my jeans,  
Had just settled down for an evening of dreams.

When out in the yard there came such a silence,  
I jumped from my ‘cliner to soak up the quiet.  
Away to the window I flew like a bird,  
Pulled open the curtains, but said not a word.

For the star of God’s promise in heaven above  
Shone the light of salvation in my heart here below.  
When what to my wondering eyes should appear,  
But a passel of memories of friends there and here.

With so little “k”, so much slower and thick,  
I knew right away it would be a great trick  
To remember the blessings of all you who came  
To my last day in Omro, unless we called them by name:

“So now Session and Deacons and Sunday School too!  
Confirmation and choirs and worshippers true!  
Remember the blessings we’ve shared from above,  
And Praise away! Praise away! Praise God with love!”

As all of our days change by ticks and by tocks,  
So the future will change here, for His dear little flock.  
And so too we must change for the new story frames  
That will bring joy to our hearts and give hope a new name.

And then in a twinkling, we will hear from His tower,  
The ring of new life filling us with God’s power  
To build up His church in surprising new ways  
That will bless many people who yearn to be saved.

We must all dress in love from our heads to our feet,  
And show His compassion to each one we meet.  
Then bundles of joy will be ours to give back,  
To all God hears crying, “Alas and Alack!”

Our eyes how they'll twinkle, our foreheads how cheery,  
As we share God's goodness and mercies like berries!  
Our soft, gentle voices, speaking God's Word  
Will bring comfort and hope to those who are hurt.

And the Word of the Lord is as good as it gets,  
For it lifts folks like us back to their feet and  
Fills hearts with hope that can never be beat.  
And so we will all have great days up ahead  
Because we have chosen to follow the Lord.

And He is faithful and true to the end  
For he gave himself for us that we might amend.  
His word from the cross and a twist of the stone,  
Gave us to know that we're never alone.

He spoke many words and did all of God's quirks  
To fill us with power to do His good works.  
And raising his fingers above us in pose,  
And saying a prayer, up to heaven He rose.

For He sprang from the cross to give His church blessings  
And so we come here to hear His live missals.  
And now as we leave one another this morn,  
And go at the last from each other's kind sight,

Our Lord Jesus says to each and to all:  
"Have no fear of the future,  
Stay with Me and my church  
and all will be right." Amen

#### **REMINDER REGARDING "SEPARATION ETHICS"**

As Pastor Ed noted in his letter to members this fall, our presbytery has a Separation Ethics Policy that addresses the relationship between a retiring pastor and congregation: For us, this means that:

1. Our pastoral relationship with Pastor Ed ... and his responsibilities to our church and congregation ... end on December 31, 2010.
2. He will not be involved in any way in the selection process of our next pastor or the search team or pastor nominating committee.
3. After leaving, he will not engage in conversation with church members or staff about the congregation or subsequent pastors.
4. Any future desire for Pastor Ed, after leaving, to participate in congregational life or services should not be discussed with him, but, rather, with our next pastor.

5. Pastor Ed may participate in a wedding, funeral, or baptism of the congregation only by invitation of our next pastor, who shall be the officiant.

The pastoral functions of counseling, calling, conducting weddings, funerals, and baptisms will no longer be appropriate; but personal friendships need not end. Friendships are priceless and are to be preserved, and must not be confused with the pastoral relationship.

We have had a wonderful 24+ year relationship with Pastor Ed and Jan, but it is important that we all respect these terms so that we can move forward to the next phase of our congregational life.

*-The Session*



### **WINTER WEATHER ANNOUNCEMENT**

If a decision is made to cancel worship due to snow or ice, an announcement will be placed on the church answering machine by 8 a.m. and will be communicated to WFRV (5), WBAY (2), and WLUC (11) as soon as possible. It will also be posted on the church's Facebook page. Please check one of these sources before heading for church if we have questionable weather.

### **WONDERFUL WEDNESDAY YOUTH GROUP NEWS**

- January 19** – Sledding
- February 9** – Making Valentine cards
- February 23** – Movie night
- March 16** – to be announced
- April 6** – Making Easter cards (tentative)
- April 20** – to be announced
- May 11** – Bike ride and picnic (tentative)

A second adult is required to help Jessie with the meetings. **If no one signs up to help for a particular meeting, that meeting will be cancelled.** This policy must be followed, not only because it is too much for one person, but because it is required by our Congregational Protection Policy.

**THANK YOU** for supporting the Christmas Green and Christmas Joy offerings. The Christmas Joy offering totaled \$229.00 and will be shared by the PC(USA) Board of Pensions to assist retired ministers and by Presbyterian-related racial ethnic schools and colleges; and \$644.00 will be added to the general fund as a result of your donations to the Christmas Green offering.

### **SESSION NEWS**

- We continue the search for an interim pastor. Terri Groth, Lisa Baltes, and Sue Walther have been interviewing interested clergy and conducting negotiations since appointed by session in November.
- Authorized renewal of membership in the Omro Chamber of Commerce
- Annual Meeting of the Congregation to be held after Epiphany brunch – January 30, 2011
- New Elders and Deacons will be ordained and/or installed in worship, Sunday, December 26, 2010.
- Received thank you letter from Casa Esther for the use of land for their garden the past two years. They have made other arrangements for 2011 and will not be using our space.

- Authorized renewal of the church copyright license for music and videos.
- Will not renew contract for insect/pest control in 2011, but will arrange for service on an as-needed basis.
- Purchased a 22" flat screen TV for the nursery/parent's room. (Bob Walther found a deal for \$100!)
- Covenant Renewal service with St. Mary's Church will be held here, Sunday, January 16, 2011 at 5 p.m. with a chili supper to follow. Please bring a pot of chili to share and sign up to bring cornbread and/or brownies or other bars.
- Bell Choir Christmas program has been rescheduled for Sunday, January 2. Elders and lay members will lead the service.
- Communion in January will be on Sunday, the 9<sup>th</sup>.
- Pastor Nelson Craig will be guest preacher Sunday, January 9<sup>th</sup>.
- Sunday, January 16<sup>th</sup> is Family Worship Sunday and will feature a sermon drama and be led by elders and lay members. The Alleluia Family Choir will rehearse at 8 a.m.
- Worship on January 23 and January 30 will be led by a guest preacher (TBA) ... or our interim pastor if our search is successful by then.
- Per Capita for 2011 is \$29.65 (*please ignore the incorrect amount noted in the December 26 bulletin!*)
- Blue recycling containers have been placed at the door(s) for your worship bulletins if you don't wish to keep them. PLEASE DO NOT use these containers for tissues, plastic, food, plates, etc. or other non-recyclable items.
- Interested in joining the Church? Please call the office.



**PRAYER SHAWL MINISTRY** (*submitted by Cindy Doughty*)

I learned about prayer shawl ministries at Synod School last summer and in August received permission from session to find out if there is an interest in the congregation to form such a group.

Care and the love of knitting (and crochet) combine into a prayerful ministry that reaches out to those in need of comfort and solace. [*Shawls may also be quilted, sewn, woven, etc.*] Many blessings are knit into every shawl. The knitter begins each shawl with prayers for the recipient, and prayers are continued throughout the creation of the shawl. When the shawl is completed, it is usually blessed in a special ritual before being given away.

*"Shawls ... made for centuries universal and embracing, symbolic of an inclusive, unconditionally loving, God." "They wrap, enfold, comfort, cover, give solace, mother, hug, shelter and beautify." "Those who have received these shawls have been uplifted and affirmed, as if given wings to fly above their troubles..."*  
*[source: www.prayershawlministry.com]*

For those who prefer smaller projects, prayer shawl groups also make "prayer squares" for our military, dish cloths, socks, mittens, hats, scarves ... anything that will bring God's love, comfort, and peace to the recipient.

**You are invited to attend a meeting after worship – Sunday, January 23, 2011 – to learn more about prayer shawl ministries and talk about forming a group.**

**NEED A RIDE TO CHURCH?** Do you need a ride to church for worship on Sunday? Do transportation problems keep you from worship? Are you homebound? Shut in? Call the church office if you would like

a ride to church for worship. On the other hand, would you be willing to give someone a ride to church for worship? Call the office to be put on the Deacon's Transportation list. Thank



## A LETTER FROM ALICE WINTERS IN COLOMBIA ADVENT 2010

Dear friends,

Many have asked how we celebrate Christmas in Colombia. Let me share with you some of the ways:

### **IMMACULATE CONCEPTION, THE BEGINNING OF THE CHRISTMAS SEASON**

The first thing to realize about Christmas here is that it begins December 7. This is not Christmas, technically, but it formally opens the Christmas season. It is the celebration of the Immaculate Conception, the conception of the Virgin Mary held by the Catholic Church to be without sin, thus "immaculate." In colder climates such as Bogotá (8,600 feet above sea level) candles are put in the windows of people's homes, but here in Barranquilla (a few inches above sea level and warmly tropical) you put the *velitas* ("little candles") on the walk in front of your house and they are covered with colorful windbreakers like Japanese lanterns. Windbreakers are a necessity because December is the start of the famous *brisas* (breezes, often very strong breezes) that come in off the Caribbean Sea and continue till March. On the night of the *velitas* people visit their neighbors, sitting around the front door with something cold to drink and then going on to the next house. It is a pleasant custom, and the *velitas* are so pretty that Protestant children have a hard time understanding why their families don't have *velitas* like all their friends.

### **DECORATIONS: THE CRECHE**

By this time every house is decorated for the season (often starting in early November). The most important and traditional decoration is the *pesebre* or creche. You can buy a *pesebre* or build your own. Many families hand down the figures of the manger scene from generation to generation and prize them as families in the States prize the special ornaments they hang on the Christmas tree.

### **DECORATIONS: THE TREE**

Many homes here do have a Christmas tree or *arbolito* ("little tree"). Nowadays it is common to see artificial trees, some green, some another color. Barranquilla has a tropical climate so we have no evergreen trees. The artificial trees are a fairly recent development, however. When I came to Colombia, over 30 years ago, the *arbolito* was a tree branch without leaves, gathered out in the country. It was decorated with Christmas cards and colored lights like the ones you have on your tree at home. But Colombia is having a recession like the one in the States, so hardly anybody sends Christmas cards any more — if they do, it's probably one of those electronic cards on the Internet, not easy to hang on an *arbolito*. So the *arbolito* is decorated mainly with lights. People who have lived in the States may have a few ornaments as well, but these are not common.

### **DECORATIONS: OUTDOOR LIGHTING**

But lights are not found only on the tree. After all, relatively few people will see the tree. But all across the city colored lights decorate the *outside* of homes and businesses. Some are like outdoor decorations in the States, but for many people the idea is to have as many lights as possible. They outline the roof with lights, often with lights dangling down at regular intervals. They outline palm trees or the trunks of regular trees. You can buy figures of reindeer, Santa, snowmen (!) or just a big star outlined in lights. These outdoor lights are not usually colored; they are white or red or green (very occasionally blue).

### **SANTA CLAUS, PAPA NOEL, THE GOD CHILD**

I'm not sure that all Colombians know that the little figure of a four-legged animal is a reindeer; it could be a pony or a big dog, judging by looks alone. Santa Claus is not part of the Christmas tradition in

Colombia. He has been brought in quite recently by the stores here, but here he is known as Papa Noel. Much of the Santa Claus publicity (as is the case also with Halloween and the “Day of Love and Friendship” — Colombia’s version of Valentine’s Day) was first brought in by international chain stores and then adopted by more local enterprises. Do kids here know Santa travels by sleigh? Do they know what a reindeer is or what it has to do with Christmas? I doubt it.

Anyway, Papa Noel doesn’t bring any presents. The publicity usually shows him with a big bulky bag over his shoulder, but every kid here knows it is *el Niño Dios* (the God Child) who brings you presents. You write him a letter and tell him what you want and Christmas morning you hope to find it under your pillow or at the foot of your bed. This is the Catholic and secular concept. Protestant children know it isn’t the God Child; God was only a child for a few years, and baby Jesus was not a bringer of gifts — he was God’s gift to us. Who brings the presents then? Your family, especially Mamá and Papá, and maybe some friends. That’s if you are well off. Poor kids may get nothing more than an orange or a piece of hard candy, unless a radio or TV station, a charity or a church brings gifts for the family. All Presbyterian congregations here make up *anchetas* or gift baskets for needy families in the congregation and the surrounding neighborhood.

### SEASONAL ACTIVITIES

Lots of other things happen in December besides Christmas, many of which are more common in May or June in the States. The school year ends in November, and summer vacation for most Colombian children is December and January. December, then, is the time for graduation ceremonies in high schools and colleges — and graduation parties. (The university where I teach had its graduation ceremony last night and many of those who graduated had *fiestas* at home or in a restaurant afterwards.) Weddings often take place in December as well.

This is the time for “collective vacations.” Schools, many public institutions and even the courts shut down around December 15 and open up again a month later, so all employees take their vacation at the same time. Also traditional in Colombia is the *prima* or bonus paid every six months. Thus, if you work here you will probably be on vacation (unless you work in a store selling Christmas gifts right up to the last minute), you will have extra money in your pocket, and you will be able to travel. People come from all over to spend the holidays with their families, including those who live far away.

### THE NOVENA

Another special activity in the days leading up to Christmas is the *novena*. This was originally a Catholic tradition: home worship services focusing on the meaning of Christmas for the nine days from December 16 to 24. For years Colombian Protestants wouldn’t do this because it was considered “too Catholic.” But now many Protestant churches, including Presbyterians, hold novenas. In our churches this is the time for Vacation Bible School, which ends with a program presented by the children for their families and friends on Christmas Eve, often a pageant about the Christmas story. One unforgettable Christmas in the country the kids used a real donkey for the flight to Egypt, going up the center aisle. But Herod got a little carried away and jumped off the platform and started beating all the kids sitting in the front pews!

In the apartment building where I used to live, the novena was hosted each evening by a different family. We would read and discuss a passage of Scripture and sing *villancicos* (Christmas carols) and then have light refreshments. Sometimes a whole block in a residential neighborhood will share in the novena. Different places have their novenas at different times, usually in the evening — even shopping centers and malls hold novenas (so you can attend and then continue your Christmas shopping). Kids learn the schedules and sometimes go from one novena to another to get in on all the refreshments.

### DECEMBER 24

Finally it is Christmas. You would call it Christmas Eve, but to Colombians the holiday is December 24. The 25th is a day to sleep in after all the activity of the previous evening, just like January 1. There used to be a tradition that you went to church at midnight because it was believed that Christ was born at that hour. I think Catholics still go to the midnight mass on Christmas Eve. I don’t know the origin of this tradition; there is nothing to that effect in the Bible. Our churches have the Christmas Eve service early so people can

go home and spend the evening with the family. Remember, this is vacation time for adults *and* children, so it is usually the occasion of a big family reunion. You wear your best clothes, new if at all possible. The celebration starts with a big dinner at around 9:30 or 10:00 p.m. A traditional food here on the Caribbean coast is the *pastel* (chicken or turkey or pork surrounded by specially flavored rice or cornbread and wrapped in a big banana leaf). The presents are opened at midnight. Why? Many Protestants were raised Catholic as children, and midnight is still a special hour on Christmas Eve. Some might even say it's because that's when Christ was born. They never checked out this particular tradition after joining a Protestant church. Even if they know it's not in the Bible, it is an old tradition, hard to break — and He *could* have been born at midnight, couldn't He?

### AND AFTER CHRISTMAS...

The holidays are only half over. Next, of course, we have New Year's Eve. This time we do use the word "Eve." Christmas is a quiet religious holiday for most folks, but New Year's is wilder. Churches know that traffic is dangerous as the New Year comes in and is celebrated by many people with alcohol. Very little public transportation is available, so if our churches have a service on New Year's Eve it is early, probably before dark, so people can get home before the streets become too problematic. Some churches have their New Year's service on the 30th to avoid any problems.

There are some interesting New Year's traditions: At Christmas you wore new clothes, but for New Year's you wear new underwear too, and it really ought to be yellow. You eat 12 grapes at midnight (you should see the displays of grapes in the supermarkets!). If you hope to travel in the new year, you take a suitcase and run around the block. There used to be big displays of *pólvara* (fireworks) starting before Christmas and culminating on New Year's. It sounded like a war zone. There are more controls now, but you do still get some backyard fireworks at New Year's, especially right at midnight. Also bells, sirens, buzzers, etc.

### AND WE'RE NOT DONE...

We have one more holiday, the visit of the three kings. In many Latin American countries this is the time to exchange gifts, but not in Colombia. But this is a Monday holiday, so you get a long weekend. In fact, this is a holiday to rest or, if you've been visiting relatives, to head home so you can go back to work. With four holidays in five weeks, you can see why December is a good time for a vacation! And while the holidays are over (all but the bills), in Barranquilla we have Carnival coming up. (Tell you about that another time!)

Blessings on you...  
Alice Winters



### WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION NEWS

The Women's Association packed 16 containers of cookies and 2 fruit baskets for our church members and friends. Many thanks to Jan Slusser, Sue Walther, Jeanne Faust, Cindy Doughty, JoAn Kolodzik, Dorothy Beebe, Donna Matulle, Doris Strehlow and Marsha Stiller providing cookies and Barb Bidwell, Ethel Benjamin and Jean Koon for money donations. To Doris Strehlow, Donna Matulle, Jeanne Faust, JoAn Kolodzik, Sue Walther and Marsha Stiller for packing the cookies and "THANK YOU" to those who helped distribute them.

LOOKING AHEAD: Christmas decor will be taken down on Monday, Jan. 10th 9:00 am...(Please check with Marsha as they may be taken down after church on that Sunday, Jan 9th.....)

# January 2011

| Sunday  | Monday   | Tuesday                              | Wednesday                       | Thursday  | Friday | Saturday  |
|---|--|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------|---|--------|---|
|   |  |                                      |                                 |   |        | 1<br>Happy New Year!<br>*David Morrison                                   |
| 2<br>Wor/SS-9<br>Bell Choir Concert   | 3<br>*Carole Laager                                      | 4<br>Deacons-9                       | 5<br>Mission-6                  | 6<br>Bells-6<br>Administration-6<br>Choir-7                               | 7      | 8<br>Presbyterian<br>Men@Horans-8<br>*Lloyd & Linda<br>Kutchenrter-17 yrs |
| *9<br>Wor/Comm/SS-9<br>w/Rev. C. Nelson<br>Craig  | 10<br>Women's Assoc<br>take down tree-9<br>Celebration-6 | 11<br>*Terri Groth<br>*Joan Albright | 12                              | 13<br>Bells-6<br>Choir-7  | 14     | 15<br>*Victor Page  |
| 16<br>Alleluiah Choir rehearsal-8<br>Wor/SS-9<br>Covenant renewal w/St.<br>Mary's & chili supper-5<br>*Donna Mantle | 17<br>Session-6  | 18                                   | 19<br>WWYG-3:15 for<br>sledding | 20<br>Bells-6<br>Choir-7  | 21     | 22<br>*Vernia Fink  |
| 23<br>Wor/SS-9  | 24   | 25<br>*Josh Koon                     | 26                              | 27<br>Bells-6<br>Choir-7<br>*Erica Ellis<br>*Donna Donke<br>*Cheri Poratz | 28     | 29  |
| 30<br>Wor/SS-9<br>Epiphany Brunch &<br>annual congregational<br>meeting after worship                               | 31<br>*Lenora Tritt                                      |                                      |                                 |   |        |   |