

PRESBYTERY MEETING

NOVEMBER 14, 2009

POSTLUDE

Connected through Heritage, Tradition, and Service

By Elder Mary Lee Going

The presbytery began its November meeting in the sanctuary of St. Paul PC, Houston, as the incredible St. Paul's Praise Band prepared those gathered to worship our risen Lord with inspirational, participatory music. The diverse styles in Saturday's morning worship flowed seamlessly as commissioners clapped and swayed to the African rhythms of the Calabash choir, sang traditional songs in rich and sonorous fullness, and raised hearts and hands in joyful response to the music of the St. Paul Praise Band.

Dressed in gold-trimmed garb, trimmed in royal blue filigree designs, the Calabash Choir processed (African-style) down the aisles, leading the worship leaders to the podium. Organized in 1997, Calabash is a group of African members and friends of the church who sing the songs of the rich African culture and heritage in worship.

Interspersed between stanzas of "O Worship the King, All Glorious Above," the commissioners and visitors were immersed in the great legacies of the Reformed tradition.

The Rev. Dr. James S. Currie spoke about the *Legacy of Theology* in "Reflections

on John Calvin." Jim spoke about 5 areas that are parts of Calvin's gift to us. Calvin's views on:

1. The importance of scripture and how it is to be interpreted;
2. How the role of the preacher is to be the messenger, ambassador, or courier - importance placed on the message not the messenger;
3. The role of the church as the external means by which God invites us into the society of Christ and holds us therein;



Members of St. Paul Praise Band

4. The reformed understanding of grace;
5. Calvin's belief that hard work comes out of gratitude and devotion to God.

In the *Legacy of the Saints* we honored our pastors, elders, deacons, and trustees who have joined the Church Triumphant, concluding the necrology report with the powerful singing of "Blest Be the Tie That Binds."

The Rev. Judy Fletcher, Executive, Synod of the Sun, honored us with an inspiring sermon during the *Legacy of Worship*. Using scripture passages from Deuteronomy, John, and II Corinthians, she highlighted



St. Paul Calabash Choir

passages about what our attitude should be concerning tithing and giving. We need to say "yes" to compassion and discipleship and "thank you" for the blessings of life. In doing so, we put God and others before our own needs and wants. We are transformed and the world is transformed. Judy challenged us to identify how we are rich and blessed.

During the *Legacy of Service*, we rejoiced and remembered our Day of Service and Celebration. The Rev. Noelle Day, Oaks PC, Houston, spoke about how her congregation made a difference in the life of a school and challenged all of us to get out of the boat and join Jesus in the water.

Ike Recovery Coordinator Kendall Boyd shared a video about the recovery work, a video that is being shared with each church in the presbytery. Kendall reminded all that "we must stay the course," that there are four more years of recovery work yet to be done. The morning offering, totaling \$4,011.64, will be given to Ike recovery work.



Commissioners and visitors begin day in worship

AUGUST 7, 2010

Day of Service

AUGUST 15, 2010

Day of Celebration

State of the Presbytery in a Nutshell

By Elder Susan McPhail Wittjen

The presbytery meeting started with an uplifting and meaningful worship service that focused on our Presbyterian legacy of theology, worship, and service in the reformed tradition. General Presbyter,



Mike exuberantly began: "I have no crisis to announce!"

Mike Cole, then put these elements into practical terms in his State of the Presbytery address. His eloquent presentation, "Blessed to be a Starfish Presbytery," can be found in its entirety on the presbytery website, but here are a few of the highlights.

Mike began by ticking off 11 things

that the presbytery has done over the past year. He spoke of our work on recovery from Hurricane Ike as well as our service in many communities during the Day of Service and Day of Celebration. Within the presbytery, he noted that we have balanced our budget, made our finances transparent, and have debated controversial issues in "a civil and respectful manner."

Next Mike turned to who we are and listed 10 virtues that he sees exhibited in our presbytery. Ultimately, he told us that we are known "around the denomination for our character, integrity, and missional leadership" and as "one of the most innovative and energetic presbyteries." Of course, Mike did not include the fact that these qualities are exhibited in our top level presbytery leadership who set the example for all of the rest of us.

After setting forth the challenges that are before this presbytery, Mike said we can go about meeting them, *if we become more like a starfish than a spider!* Read Mike's address online to understand this better, but the point is that a successful organization needs to be decentralized and flexible, as well as able to share knowledge, power, and

communication.

Mike presented ways in which we can question our assumptions about how we do and what we do, so that we can be open to the change into which God is leading us. He outlined ways that God is leading us to lead others in our denomination in demonstrating how to: be permission-giving, rely on trust not compulsion, encourage diverse communication, regenerate growth, accentuate those things that unite us, stand together in times of crisis, passionately engage our communities, and equip churches for discipleship and evangelism.

Whatever we call it - missional, transformational, apostolic - Mike concluded that the presbytery needs to change how we serve the church and the world. We need to connect through "trusting relationships brought into existence and gathered by God for a purpose - to demonstrate the kingdom of God to a cursed world that desperately needs a blessing." In order to be a re-formed/re-forming church and presbytery that is starfish-like in character, we need to be "decentralized in its power and knowledge..., able to regenerate new life even when losing part of its body..., flexible and fluid, where relationships and trust matter more than structure and statutes."

Kingwood Overture to the 219th General Assembly approved

By Rev. Patricia Clark, St. Stephen PC, Houston

By a secret ballot vote of 107 to 86, commissioners approved an overture to the 219th General Assembly to: 'joyfully reaffirm the historic, biblical and Christological teaching of the Church on the topic of marriage as a gift from God to bless humankind. As God created man and woman, so does God call some men and women to live together as husband and wife. God's very order and design defines the institution of marriage.'

The overture was presented by the Rev. Dr. Jim Davis, pastor of the First PC, Kingwood, where the session had approved it unanimously. The Session of Grand Lakes PC, Katy, also voted unanimously to concur with the overture.

The Rev. Dr. Davis cited three reasons for the action by his session:

1. His congregation wanted to know where the presbytery stands on this issue.
2. The committee studying the issue of marriage and civil unions at the General Assembly level asked for feedback.
3. The overture provides a proactive response instead of responding after a General Assembly action.

A handful of speakers spoke both for and against the proposal. After a time of silent prayer, tellers collected the written ballots and tabulated them. The Presbytery of New Covenant will now forward the overture to Louisville where it will be considered at next year's General Assembly meeting in July in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

In preparation for ministry



Barbara McClintic

Barbara McClintic was enrolled as candidate in preparation for Ministry of Word and Sacrament. A graduate of PSCE and a certified Christian Educator,

Barbara has been taking courses at Fuller Theology Seminary for 5 years while serving on the staff at Pines PC. "I didn't think I needed a title, but God kept nudging me," declared Barbara.

The Rev. Marie Mickey charged the new candidate to remember to love God, love all of God's people, have a sense of humor, and take time to take care of herself!

New Minister-Members to New Covenant

Extending the right hand of fellowship to new colleagues, commissioners welcomed seven pastors to New Covenant Presbytery.

Rev. David Leard has been called to serve as Associate Pastor of Discipleship at Northwoods PC, Houston. He has transferred from Indian Nations Presbytery. His MDiv is from Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, CA. Before coming to Houston, David served as Director of Family Ministries at First PC, Edmond, OK. He and his wife Kristin have two children. Kristin is a teacher and Christian Educator.



L to R: David Leard, Jolene Currie, Kristy Forbes, and Jim Birchfield

Rev. Jolene Currie is working as Chaplain with Compassionate Care Hospice Foundation in Dickinson. She is transferring from Presbytery of San Gabriel. Her MDiv is from Fuller Theological Seminary. Said Jolene, "I don't think I'm related to the Currie family in New Covenant, at least not that I know!"

Rev. Kristy Forbes is serving as Interim Associate Pastor with St. Philip, Houston. She is transferring from Giddings-Lovejoy Presbytery after 11 years there and returning "home" to where she grew up. Kristy received her MDiv from Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary. Kristy and her husband Logan have a 4-year-old son.

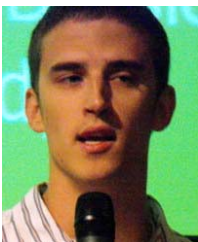
Rev. James Birchfield has been called to serve as pastor of First PC, Houston, transferring from Presbytery of Los Ranchos. His MDiv and DMin are from Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, CA. Prior to entering the ministry, he held positions in the advertising and magazine publishing businesses. Prior to coming to New Covenant, Jim served as executive pastor at St. Andrew's PC in Newport Beach, CA.

Rev. John Melsness is serving as Associate Pastor of Discipleship at St. Andrew's PC, Houston. He attended Faculte de Theologie a Vaux sur Seine, France, Semester of Missiology, and received his MDiv from Princeton Theological Seminary with a concentration in Christian Education. He and his wife Monica have a 4-year-old daughter.



Lynn Hall Buckridge

Rev. Lynn Hall Buckridge, who grew up in this presbytery and was ordained here, is transferring from Mission Presbytery. She is serving as parish associate at Southminster PC, Missouri City. Lynn received her MDiv from Princeton Theological Seminary. She is mother to a 2½-year-old.



Ryan Cook

Rev. Ryan Cook, who completed his ordination exams at the July meeting of presbytery and was ordained here, is serving as Associate Pastor at Grand Lakes PC in Katy. He was a candidate under care of Western Colorado Presbytery. He received his MDiv from Dubuque Theological Seminary.



John Melsness

Next Stated Meeting New Covenant Presbytery

Sat. Feb. 6, 2010

St. Philip PC, Houston

Pre-presbytery Event
Friday afternoon, Feb. 5
at MDPC, Houston
featuring the keynote speaker
for the presbytery meeting
the following day -
Rev. Eric Hoey, PC(USA)
Director of Evangelism &
Church Growth

Examination sustained



Rachel Grassley Young

Candidates Rachel Grassley Young and Jonathan Murray completed their ordination exams in preparation for the ministry of Word and Sacrament by preaching sermons before the presbytery.

After questions from the floor, motions to sustain the examinations in full were approved.

Rachel will serve as Associate Pastor of Spiritual Formation at Clear Lake PC, Houston. Rachel was under care of Grace Presbytery before coming to Houston. Her MDiv is from Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, CA.



Jonathan Murray

Jonathan will serve as Designated Pastor at First PC, Needville. He received his MDiv from Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary. Under care of Grace Presbytery before coming to Houston, he now joins his wife, the Rev. Caressa Murray who serves as associate pastor at Webster PC.

General Council actions taken on behalf of the presbytery

The Director of Business Affairs and Finance has been instructed by General Council to pay 2008-2009 benevolences and per capita to General Assembly, as budgeted.

A study/discussion group, Beyond Per Capita, has been formed to consider issues related to the ongoing conversation about whether or not to support per capita to the Office of the General Assembly. Members are Wayne Eberly, 2009 moderator of the presbytery; Garry Schoonover, 2010 moderator; Ann Hardy, chair of Administrative Division Steering Committee; Mort McPhail from General Council; and pastors Ted Foote (First, Bryan) and Casey Jones (First, Pearland).

A task force has been formed and will report to General Council through the Nominating Committee to study and discuss the concern raised by First PC, Lake Jackson, about the way nominees for General Assembly commissioners are selected.

General Council has approved ten Vision Initiative Grants for the 2009-2010 and six Lynn Johnson Social Justice Fund Grants for 2009-2010. Details will be in the next issue of *Connections*.

Midpoint Report on Heritage Presbyterian

The Rev. Jerry Hurst, called in June to serve as designated pastor of Heritage PC (now at the midpoint of support by the presbytery), spoke of the church's continued progress in the growing Copperfield community. Between 70 and 80 worship there every Sunday; the church has welcomed 25 new members, and offers a full-range of programs, including a midweek service, plus many outreach activities in the community.



Elder Garry Schoonover was installed as 2010 Moderator of Presbytery, and the Rev. Patricia Clark, St. Stephen PC, Houston, was installed as 2011 Moderator-Elect.

CODA

Elders and minister commissioners to the November presbytery meeting received the following announcements by presbytery agents on behalf of presbytery and conducted the following additional business:

- Granted Honorably Retired status to the Rev. Ray Harper and the Rev. Gerald McKenny.
- Approved that the Rev. Tomas Spath, now serving as Temporary Supply at First PC, Crockett, be allowed to be called as the next installed pastor of First PC, Crockett.
- Approved the Proposed Minimum Terms of Call for 2010.
- Approved the dissolution of the Emmanuel Church of South India, a union church of the PC(USA) and the Church of South India, effective Dec. 31, 2009. The congregation has moved to another congregation affiliated with the Church of South India.
- Approved the second vote of Restated Bylaws of the Presbytery of New Covenant.
- Elder Bart Henson, MDPC, has been added to the Nominating Committee.
- Elders Janice Schessler and Carrie Walker were recognized for their completion of Level III Certification by the Administrative Personnel Association (APA).
- Commissions of Bob David and Lynn David to serve as Commissioned Lay Pastors at First PC, Pearland have been renewed, effective 6/15/09 to 6/15/12 with permission to do baptisms and the Lord's Supper.
- Commission of Imelda Carrillo to serve as Commissioned Lay Pastors Emmanuel, Galveston, has been renewed, effective 11/1/09-10/31-10 with permission to do baptisms, the Lord's Supper, perform marriages, and have voice and vote at presbytery meetings.
- Requests for Validation of Ministry have been approved between the Rev. Dr. Andy Dearman and Fuller Theological Seminary as director of the regional campus in Houston, between the Rev. John Wheeler-Waddell and The Antioch Partners, and between the Rev. Jolene Currie and Compassionate Care Hospice Foundation.
- Elizabeth Cluff (First, Bryan) and Murice "Brian" Long (First, Kingwood) have been enrolled as inquirers.

Postlude is published after each stated meeting of the Presbytery of New Covenant.

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