

PRESBYTERY MEETING

Feb. 5, 2011

POSTLUDE

Commissioners vote down changes to proposed new form of government (nFOG)

By Elder Jane Larkin, St. Philip Presbyterian, Houston

Following an hour's discussion of the proposed new form of Government, facilitated by former stated clerk Elder Julie McLemore and a panel of four most familiar with the document, commissioners defeated the motion to adopt the proposed amendment to the constitution.

When the proposed new form of government (nFOG) was before the General Assembly in 2008, it was immediately referred back to committee as well as being sent to the presbyteries for study and comment. New Covenant was one of the presbyteries which formed a task force to review the document that provided feedback to the GA committee. The 2010 GA considered a revised nFOG, and the standing committee rewrote the document that was then sent to the presbyteries for approval.

While many agreed that our constitution needs to be simplified and streamlined, the vote reflects the concern that this document was not refined enough to accomplish the task. During the debate the major themes were :

- lack of requirements for Committees on Ministry (COM) and Committees on Preparation for Ministry (CPM),
- uncertainty surrounding the transfer of clergy between presbyteries,
- the possibility that interims or associate pastors could be elected

as Head of Staff in the church they were serving, and

- the time-consuming task for local congregations to write administrative manuals.

The motion was defeated by a vote of 44 to 186. Voting by all presbyteries will conclude in June of this year.



Julie MacLemore



Elder Jeanie Flowers, Elder Mary Mahlmann, Elder Gary Johnson, and Rev. Alan Trafford review proposed changes and field questions from commissioners during discussion of the proposed nFOG.

Morning Worship at First Kingwood filled with beauty and encouragement

After days of freezing cold weather, commissioners awoke Saturday morning hoping that the weather guys had gotten it right this time – that the freeze would be over by 10 o'clock. By the start of the meeting, only splats of water from overpasses and trees dripping fake rain gave any indication of the previous day's distress. Commissioners were led in morning worship and the Celebration of the Lord's Supper by a number of New Covenant pastors and the choir of First Kingwood. Rev. Richard Kleinman (Faith, Baytown) gave the morning message. The offering (\$1,746.82) was given to Interface- Samaritan Counseling Centers, a partner in ministry that offers high quality counseling services from a Christian perspective.



State of the Presbytery: Mike reveals view from the future

By Rev. Winfield "Casey" Jones, First Presbyterian, Pearland

Each year General Presbyter Mike Cole delivers a "state of the presbytery" address. This year, since some of the presbytery leadership has been engaging in an exercise called "futuring" (where, as a discipline, they imagine the possibilities and problems of some future time), Mike chose a time five years in the future for this year's address. He spoke to us as if it were already February 5, 2016.

Throughout the talk Mike did a good job of weaving in humor and light-heartedness. He began by talking about the presbytery meeting five years hence being available not only on Skype and Google, but also on Twitter, which though serious got a laugh. He ended the talk by rejoicing that on February 6, 2016, the Texans were playing in the Super Bowl the next day.

Mike envisioned so many things that I can only highlight some of them. Significant to me was that, in Mike's future imagination, in 2016 the presbytery's current vision, "growing congregations that passionately engage their community to make disciples," will have deeply informed its life in the intervening five years. The presbytery would be incubating many new congregations and fellowships, including an emphasis on starting Latino groups. The Presbytery would have addressed the problem in 2011—that 85% of its active pastors were 58 or older—by encouraging the emergence of young pastors and elders, by encouraging partnerships between younger leaders and those with experience, and by effectively utilizing retiring pastors and lay leaders in volunteer roles. Presbytery's staff would be smaller in 2016, but this would have happened in an orderly way, mainly through retirement or other attrition. Presbytery committees would meet face to face quarterly, with meetings in between by computer or video-conference.

I finish with eight surprises in 2016 in Mike's talk which, to me at least, show a shift of emphases from *recent*



Mike Cole describes the State of the Presbytery by showing how what is being done today extends into the future .

(not necessarily ancient!) presbytery or Presbyterian ways of doing things. (Emphases added):

- "We have *prayed and fasted* as we have sought the Lord's will."
- "We looked for God and joined the Lord wherever that was - in a *house church*, a multicultural center, an interfaith dialogue, an island that needed clean water, a call to equip younger generations for service, or an *openness to the movement of the Holy Spirit*."
- "As our churches were realizing that the church exists wherever the members are, not just at the address of the building, so our presbytery was tumbling to the fact that the presbytery is wherever our churches are."
- "In addition to session records review, we now do triennial visits, Pastor and Commissioned Lay Pastor examinations, Transition Teams, Future Story Teams and Vision Consultant Teams, pulpit swaps, officer enrichment, and educational events in geographical gatherings rather than in a centralized location."
- "Through all the changes in our

presbytery there have also been some other exciting developments. We sold some of the property we had on the market for years and partially replenished the Miller Vision Fund, which has now funded more than \$443,000 in projects in our churches."

- "In addition, we partnered with ten new faith communities who are meeting *in homes* throughout our presbytery seeking new ways of being the church."
- "We have moved to become a *more Sprit-motivated presbytery and less concerned with control...*"
- "It is exciting to be meeting in the Presbyterian Multicultural Center of Southwest Houston, on the land that was referred to back in 2011 as the Fondren/Fuqua property.... In addition to our covenant relationship in Central America with CEDEPCA and South America with the Presbytery of Juan Calvino in Lima, Peru, we have formed a covenant relationship with the Presbytery of Matanzas in Cuba.... Ten congregations in communities with at least 40% Latino population have responded to the challenge to initiate a Latino ministry."

We're serious about representation!

Not soon to be forgotten was the report from the Committee on Representation given by its chair, the Rev. Carol Tompkins, who delivered what has to be the unique committee report of the year!

Carol illustrated through audience participation ("Jesus Loves Me, This I Know") the variety of features that make up the diversity in our presbytery. She identified more than a dozen attributes. The Committee on Representation works with the Nominating Committee to uphold the challenge to nominate people who reflect this diversity.

Pathways comes of age

By Elder Tom Campbell, Memorial Drive, Houston



Rev. Shawn Kang, on left, invites members of Pathways to come forward to be recognized and celebrated for their work in mission to the world.

One of the most exciting things we can do as a presbytery is the chartering of a new church. Commissioners heard the request from Pathways Church of Houston to become our newest congregation.

Pathways is a small but vibrant congregation of 1.5 and second generation Asian Americans. (Those brought to U.S. as children are referred to as a 1.5 generation.). Now in its seventh year of “incubation” as a new church development, the group is eager to be a fully faithful and financially self-sufficient church.

Pathways grew from a nucleus of less than a dozen people meeting in coffee shops, restaurants, and sister churches to its current size of 80+ adults and numerous children. Most

recently, they had been meeting and worshiping at St. Luke's in Houston. As of January 30, they are sharing space and facilities at Heights Presbyterian.

When their young and enthusiastic organizing pastor, Hyun “Shawn” Kang, mounted the chancel, the delegates broke into applause as he was surrounded by a large group from Pathways, including several families with children. There were smiles all around as Shawn showed a video illustrating their many activities of fellowship, community service, and Christian outreach.

A motion to grant the charter was quickly followed by a unanimous shout-out of “Yea!” votes; a prayer was offered by the moderator, and together all sang “Blest Be the Tie that Binds.”

Encouraging report from Finance

By Elder Sharon Watson, Westminster, Houston

Pete Koester, Chair of the Finance Committee, reported that expenses are running under the budget, and revenue is slightly higher than anticipated at the mid-year point in the Presbytery's 2010-2011 budget. Total operating expenses at the six-month mark were nearly \$15,000 lower than the budget forecast. Operating revenues were about \$12,500 more than the budgeted estimate.

While the overall budget is still operating with a projected shortfall, the committee also reported that a total non-operating credit of \$22,031 was applied to that shortfall. This credit consists of proceeds from notes receivable of \$18,831 and a direct pledge of support to Heritage Presbyterian Church of \$3200. Applying these credits to the six-month net operating loss reduces it from \$63,777 to \$41,746.

Pete noted that \$10,949 in dividends and interest, plus \$104,750 in unrealized capital gains, has accrued in the investment accounts. The budgeted repayment of the ongoing copier leases should be completed in just 12 more months.

Approximately 33% of non-compensation expenses to date have been spent on behalf of the Presbytery's Ministries Division; of those, 85% have gone to the New Church Development program.

In Preparation for Ministry



Elizabeth Cluff

Elder Jim Bushong, chair of the Committee on Preparation, introduced Elizabeth Cluff (First, Bryan). Elizabeth spoke about her experience of knowing God's

grace and her call to ministry before answering the constitutional questions in a Service of Candidacy.

Surrounded by those who have accompanied and supported her during her time of inquiry, Elizabeth was enrolled as a Candidate for the Ministry of the Word and Sacrament, the next phase of her preparation for ministry.

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

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New minister-member re-introduced

Extending the right hand of fellowship to a new colleague, commissioners welcomed the **Rev. Dr. Frederick Seay** as pastor/head of staff at First Sugar Land—that is, welcomed his return to New Covenant.

Fred previously served in New Covenant as pastor at First Presbyterian, Navasota.

Fred is transferring from South Louisiana Presbytery where he served First Presbyterian in Lake Charles, LA. He received his MDiv and his DMin from Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary.



Rev. Dr. Fred Seay

Ken Jack Honorably Retired

By Elder Ron Johnson, First Presbyterian, Huntsville

The Rev. Ken Jack and his wife Janet were affectionately welcomed as they came forward to be recognized for their years of service in Christian ministry.

General Presbyter Mike Cole read Corinthians 12 and presented Ken



Rev. Ken Jack

mementoes in acknowledgement of his many years of service and ministry. Ken spoke strongly and expressed gratitude for the love and support that surrounds him, thanking particularly Diane Prevary for her service to First Huntsville during his illness.

Ken was born, ordained, served in ministry, and retired all within Brazos Presbytery, now New Covenant Presbytery. During his early years of ministry, Ken's became the "architect" in the development of Interface, which is now part of Samaritan-Interface.

Ken left full-time ministry and entered the business world, working especially in professional recruitment. For 30 years he continued to serve in part-time ministry as pulpit supply and as a parish associate. In 2001 Ken began part-time preaching at First Huntsville which led to his acceptance of a call from that congregation, where he served until his disability retirement last October. The Presbytery approved the request of First Presbyterian, Huntsville, to name Ken Pastor Emeritus.

CODA

Elder and minister commissioners received the following announcements and conducted the following additional business:

- Elected Elder Rhonda Haskins (First, Pasadena) and Elder Mike Floyd (Faith, Baytown) to the Nominating Committee, Class of 2013.
- Approved the request to petition the 2020th General Assembly to transfer United Korean (Presbyterian) Church of Houston from the Presbytery of Midwest Hanmi (non-geographic Korean) to the Presbytery of New Covenant. The congregation has purchased a former Lutheran church in Jersey Village.
- Approved the request to petition the 220th General Assembly to approve the Plan of Union between the congregations of Providence Presbyterian Church, Nederland, and Saint John Lutheran Church (ELCA), Port Arthur, to form a Union-Federated Church. Both congregations are come from the Reformed tradition.
- Approved permission for the congregation of Pinecrest Presbyterian Church to elect the Rev. Edward Triem as Pastor Emeritus.
- Approved permission for the congregation of The Woodlands Community Presbyterian to elect the Rev. Charles Hendricks as Pastor Emeritus.
- Committee on Preparation for Ministry enrolled Rebecca Provence (Memorial Drive Presbyterian, Houston) and Blake Swoboda (Grace Presbyterian, Houston) as inquirers.
- General Council elected the Rev. Winfield (Casey) Jones as vice-moderator of General Council.
- General Council has approved the formation of a team/board to proceed to explore a concept that has emerged from Thien An, First African, and Biyaya leadership for these three congregations to build facilities they would share.
- Board of Pensions Workshops will be held at the Presbyterian Center:
 - Mar. 14 – Post Retirement, 9:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.
 - Mar. 15-16 – Growing in Tomorrow – Retirement Planning, 8:30 a.m.-5:00 p.m.
 - Mar. 17 – Render Unto Caesar – Tax Workshop, 8:30 a.m.-5:00 p.m.
- The Church Professional/Clergy Retreat at Camp Cho-Yeh will be take place May 3-5.
- A search committee has been formed to seek a part-time (40%) stated clerk to be elected in June 2011 and installed October 2011. The Position Description and application for Stated Clerk is posted at www.pbyofnewcovenant.org. Applications are due by March 18.
- Vision Initiative Grant applications are due by March 31.
- New Life Grant applications are due by April 18.
- Social Justice Grant applications are due by March 31.