

# PRESBYTERY MEETING

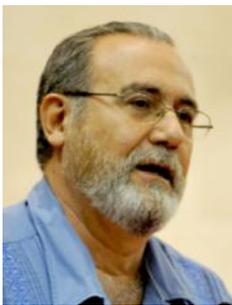
June 11, 2011

# POSTLUDE

## Keynote address: State of the Presbyterian Church in Cuba

By Elder Walter Going, Postlude Reporter

Commissioners to the June 11 Presbytery meeting were blessed to hear **Reinerio Arce-Velantin** deliver an informative and engaging keynote address about the Presbyterian Church in



Cuba. Dr. Arce-Velantin is Rector (President) of Seminario Evangelico Teologia and the immediate past-Moderator of the Presbyterian-Reformed Church of Cuba,

established in 1890 as a presbytery of the New Jersey Synod(!). The presbytery has been independent since 1967. The church has remained alive and faithful in sharing the gospel throughout the 52 years of political isolation resulting from the emergence of Communist rule in Cuba, said Dr. Arce-Velantin.

In so many ways his address confirmed the universal nature of the church and the challenges it faces in Cuba in sharing the good news of the gospel. In the early decades of Communism, churches were restricted to witnessing within their property but are now able to minister within the community by meeting people at their level of need. The discrimination endured in those years served to strengthen the church.

Cuban churches have been growing since the 1990s, and a result many more leaders are needed. Today, like American congregations, the church ministers to people who are facing loss of jobs and economic uncertainty. Reinerio shared his conviction that that which unites us surpasses anything that divides us and that we are challenged to find ways to bring down the walls between us.

Before his selection as Rector of the seminary in 2006, Reinerio was the President of the Cuban Council of Churches. He is a member of the

Luyanó Church and a Ruling Elder.

In 2010, he hosted a visiting U.S. delegation of presbyters that included General Presbyter Mike Cole.

## 'Come all you people, Come and praise your maker!'

By Elder Margaret Swarts, Postlude Reporter

Elders, pastors, and visitors began the day in spirited worship in the sanctuary of Spring Branch Presbyterian. The service centered on the unity of the Pentecost experience, when the Holy Spirit filled the people and gave them joy.

Standing beneath the large cross at the front of the sanctuary, Meliza Gomez (Music Director, MDPC Fuente Ministries) epitomized that joy with her singing and guitar playing. The assembly responded to her heartfelt praise and clear voice with strong congregational singing. The



call to worship and reading of the scripture (Acts 1:1-23) effectively featured a variety of voices and accents speaking from different parts of the sanctuary, emphasizing the scripture message: "There are varieties of gifts but the same Spirit."



**Rev. Mauricio Chacon**, associate pastor of MDPC Fuente de Esperanze Ministries, delivered the sermon, emphasizing that Pentecost is the day when the church goes out to preach the gospel to the world because of the unity and spirit of joy given by the Holy Spirit. He noted that many have marveled that one man, Peter, preached the gospel and 3000 people responded. "Today we preach 3000 sermons and only one person is changed... Let us go out and preach the gospel!" Mauricio encouraged.

The congregation responded with enthusiastic singing of "Every Time I Feel the Spirit" to a lively piano accompaniment by Spring Branch pianist, Kerry Talley.

An informative Minute for Mission told much about a program supported by the presbytery that ministers to seafarers from around the world. The International Seafarer's Board works to bring support to our two ordained chaplains at the Port of Houston, the Revs. Ben Stewart and David Wells. The morning offering (\$2,603.67) was designated for their support.

# Commissioners vote against proposed amendment to add Belhar

By Rev. Mary Currie, First PC, Navasota

Commissioners considered the final proposed amendment to the Constitution from the 219<sup>th</sup> General Assembly. Three presenters provided background information and arguments for and against adding The Belhar Confession to the *Book of Confessions*.

Sylvia Washer, retired executive of Mission Presbytery, church educator, and leader at all levels of the PC(USA) reminded us that most confessions arise from times of conflict when the church is called to address the situation around it. Thus our confessions help define who we are; what we believe to be true about God, the world, and the church; and what we resolve to do, given who we are and what we believe.

The Rev. Ted Foote (First PC, Bryan) speaking in favor of adoption, reminded us that what others have done or decided has no bearing on our conscience unless we allow it. To include the Belhar Confession would be

a liberating expression of our identity with the ministry of Christ; an alignment with the church—and with people—in a different time, place, and circumstance from our own; and could be a prayerful action that encourages unity.

Rev. Gayle Grubbs (HR), speaking against adoption, asked us to consider whether we need another confession—and if we do, is Belhar the one that is needed? The Belhar Confession, when compared to others, seems limited in time, place, and political situation; limited in scope (dealing only with apartheid) and seems to itself to be discriminating.

Although enough presbyteries have voted already to defeat the proposed amendment, New Covenant proceeded to vote so that its vote would be recorded. After floor discussion and a standing vote, the amendment was defeated with 54 in favor of adoption and 134 against.

## Three complete ordination exams, enrolled as Ministers of Word and Sacrament

After preaching sermons to the presbytery (required as part of their ordination exams), Shane Webb, Jane Pettit, and John Dearman answered questions from the Committee on Examinations and the floor. Motions to sustain the examinations in full were approved, and each of the candidates was enrolled as Minister of Word and Sacrament and welcomed into the presbytery.



Shane Webb

The Rev. **Shane Webb** has been called to serve as Mission Associate Pastor for the PC(USA)/First PC, Pasadena. He will serve as a missionary in Peru for 12 months with the PC(USA) Young Adult Volunteer Program. He received his MDiv in 2011 from Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary.



Jane Pettit

The Rev. **Jane Pettit** has been called to serve as Associate Pastor for Congregational Life at Grace PC, Houston. Jane received her MDiv in 2010 from Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary. Jane will be ordained at Grace PC at 11:15 a.m. on **July 17, 2011**.



John Dearman

The Rev. **John Dearman**, who has been under care of Mission Presbytery, has been called to serve as Associate Pastor at First PC, Conroe. He received his MDiv in 2010 from Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary.

## In Preparation for Ministry

**Chad Erb**, First PC, Kingwood, was approved and enrolled as a Candidate for the Ministry of Word and Sacrament after speaking about his call to ministry and answering the constitutional questions in a Service of Candidacy.



Chad Erb and family

“The gospel of Jesus Christ has always been part of my life,” said Chad. “The Holy Spirit has led me along a creative path. Music is a vital part of my life. I am humbled by the Jesus revealed to me over the eight years I have served in the student/music ministry of First PC, Kingwood. I have learned to live a missional life serving others.”

Surrounded by those who have supported him during his time of inquiry, Chad was enrolled as a Candidate for the Ministry of the Word and Sacrament. He was charged by the Rev. Julie MacLemore. “Remember, your significance is that you are a beloved child of God,” said Rev. MacLemore. “We believe that the Holy Spirit is calling you.”

## Moderator calls Presbytery to prayer

“John Calvin taught us that prayer is the chief duty of faith. He also said it is the primary way we receive God's benefits,” said Moderator Pat Clark. In honor of Pentecost and the earliest Christians, Pat called the presbytery to 50 days of prayer (now until July 31) for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon us. Those in attendance were urged to pray this “for the presbytery, your church, and yourself.”

Commissioners paired themselves into prayer partners and were asked to check in with one another once a week during this season of prayer.

## Two pastors Honorably Retired

The Rev. Connie Alexander and the Rev. Tom Atkins were recognized for their years of ministry and granted Honorably Retired status by the presbytery. Connie remarked that she thought the presbytery should make a new rule that when one pastor goes out, that pastor should bring in another. "I have," laughed Connie, referring to her husband Paul who was welcomed to the presbytery during the morning.

The Rev. Connie Alexander was ordained as an elder when she was 17. She says she may have heard God's call as a 17-year-old, but she waited to answer the call until after successful careers as a banker and a high school teacher. She received her MDiv from San Francisco Seminary and DMin from McCormick Seminary. Connie has served



churches in Plainview and Dimmitt, Texas, and Ruston and Winnfield in Louisiana.

It was on a flight to Jordan with

a group of Presbyterian pastors that she sat with two other pastors, John and Paul Alexander. "The three of us began to talk," reports Connie, "and we have been talking ever since!" Connie and Paul married in January 2007. Connie came to Texas as pastor for Drake Memorial Presbyterian in Orange. In retirement, she intends to keep enjoying her love of opera, biographies, and travel. "How blessed I am – living in interesting places,

doing very satisfying work, and finding the love of my life at age 60 when I least expected to!" says Connie.

The Rev. Tom Atkins was born to Salvation Army officers who were missionaries in Mexico City and Laredo.

After serving in Vietnam, teaching in secondary schools, and working with the Salvation Army, Tom



received his MDiv from Columbia Theological Seminary. Because of frequent encounters with U.S. Navy chaplains from the Naval Air Station in Corpus Christi, Tom decided to serve as a chaplain.

"I had the privilege of working in the world's largest youth ministry – the U.S. Military!" remarked Tom. "There was no way I could have anticipated such tremendous fulfillment and challenge in my ministry to Sailors and Marines."

Tom served as pastor in Sarasota, FL, and at St. Thomas PC in Houston. "At St. Thomas, I have been richly blessed by the regular prayer gatherings that have undergirded every expression of worship, study, outreach, fellowship, and service in that family of faith. I will forever remember the incredible privilege and thrilling journey that God has afforded me as a pastor."

## New Life Grants announced

The Rev. Scott Cummings, on behalf of the Evangelism & Renewal Committee, announced the recipients of the New Life Grants. These grants, made possible by Westminster Presbyterian, Beaumont, upon dissolution, were designated to be used to bring new life and renewal to congregations, guided by the missional shifts described in Reggie McNeal's book, *Missional Renaissance*. There were 15 applications, totaling \$451,184, but the Committee had only \$50,000 to distribute. Recipients of these grants are:

- **Pinecrest PC, Houston** - after-school program
- **San Pablo+Trinity PC, Houston** – music classes for children in the community
- **St. Giles PC, Houston** – facility renovation to better serve the homeless
- **Westminster PC, Houston** – English Language School for diverse community

## Stated Clerk elected

Mary Lee Going, Chair of General Council, placed the name of the Rev. Lynn Hargrove in nomination for the office of Stated Clerk of New Covenant

Presbytery, a part-time position. Lynn will continue to serve as Stated Supply at St. Giles PC, Houston. The motion to elect was passed, and the terms of call



Rev. Lynn Hargrove

approved. Lynn was warmly welcomed by the presbytery as she came forward after the voting. She will begin serving as Stated Clerk of New Covenant Presbytery October 1, 2011, for a term of three years. Lynn's installation is scheduled for the October 22, 2011, at the stated presbytery meeting.

## Nominating Committee at work

With a wide range of gifts and from thirteen New Covenant churches, fourteen individuals agreed and were elected to serve on presbytery committees.

Elders and pastors were asked to submit names for consideration as General Assembly Commissioners. One elder and one pastor yet remain to be identified for the 220th General Assembly meeting June 30-July 7, 2012, in Pittsburgh, PA. Alternates are needed for the 2014 meeting. (June 14-21, 2014, in Detroit).

Call 713-780-2138 to tell Bart Henson, Chair of Nominations, your suggestion.

Next presbytery meeting

Sat., Oct. 22, 2011

Clear Lake Presbyterian

Keynote speaker:

Pedro Arana Quiroz,

Moderator from Peru

## New minister-member welcomed

The Rev. Paul Alexander, Counselor at Interfaith, Beaumont, was introduced and welcomed into the presbytery as Member-at-Large. He is transferring from Indian Presbytery.

Paul grew up in St. James PC in LaPorte. He is the husband of the Rev. Dr. Connie Alexander.



Rev. Paul Alexander

## Proposed overture from New Covenant sessions

Chair of the Ecclesiastical Affairs Committee, the Rev. John Jo, introduced a proposed overture from the Sessions of First PC, Pasadena, and First PC, Bryan, to be passed on to the 220<sup>th</sup> General Assembly. The proposal would add a question to the ordination questions asked of all church officers in the PC(USA).

“Do you promise that if at any time you can no longer accept the Lordship of Christ or the authority of Scripture or the guidance of our confession in their essentials, you will on your own initiative make known to \_\_\_ (for ministers: the Presbytery; for elders and deacons: the Session) the change which has taken place in your convictions since the assumption of this ordination vow?”

The Rev. Jim Currie, First PC, Pasadena, and the Rev. Ted Foote, First PC, Bryan, spoke to the reasons for bringing this overture for consideration. During floor discussion, a substitute motion was made to send the proposal back to the sessions to be rewritten and presented again at the October 22, 2011 presbytery meeting. The substitute motion was approved by a standing vote.

*Postlude is published after each Stated Meeting of the Presbytery of New Covenant.*

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*Photographer: Elder John Mizwa (Spring Branch PC, Houston)*

*Circulation: Patricia Brantley and Sandra Lopez*

# CODA

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

- Elected to the Nominating Committee: Class of 2012: Rev. Charles Hendricks (HR) and Rev. Jonathan Murray (St. Paul's, Needville); Class of 2013: Elder Doug Arrick (First Kingwood) and Rev. Dean Pogue (Grand Lakes, Katy).
- Approved an updated Sexual Misconduct Policy, previously adopted in 1993.
- Committee on Ministry added this guideline for the Installation of a Pastor: “... shall take place in a timely fashion, ordinarily within 3 months of beginning service.”
- Final payment has been made to General Assembly to repay the Special Offerings that were owed (\$163, 270).
- General Council is developing a draft policy on reconciliation, which will be forthcoming in the fall for a first reading. The policy statement will provide encouragement to and a path for reconciliation for dissenting churches of our presbytery toward reconciliation with the PC(USA), or failing that, provide provision for seeking dismissal.
- Readers for the Standard Ordination Examinations for fall 2011 are Rev. Dr. Kyle Walker, Rev. Jolene Currie, Rev. Kevin Boyd, and Elder Jennifer Plummer. Alternates are: Elder Pam Stoops and Elder Jim Bushong.
- Elder Sharon Darden (Coordinator for Committees on Ministry and Preparation for Ministry) is expected to be elected Secretary of the Presbyterian Church Business Administrators Association at its July meeting.
- Rev. David McKechnie has transferred to the Presbytery of Southern Kansas.
- Rev. Doug Ensminger has transferred to Transylvania Presbytery/
- Rev. Michael Umbenhaur (First, Orange), Rev. Kent Landry (Southminster, Missouri City), and Rev. Linda McCarty (Member-at-Large) have been elected to serve on the Permanent Judicial Commission.
- Joshua Silva-Noah (Heritage, Houston) has been enrolled as an inquirer.
- Julie Odle (St. Andrew's, Beaumont), Diane David (Covenant, College Station), and Gail Moore (St. Andrew's, Beaumont) have been enrolled as inquirers in the Lay Pastor process.
- The Rev. Brian Wiggins has been called to serve as Designated Pastor at First PC, Lufkin, effective July 1, 2011.