

## Mike Cole delivers 'State of the Presbytery' address Letter to 'I New Covenantians'

By Julia Ann Moffett, Atascocita PC and member of General Council

General Presbyter Mike Cole addressed the people of the Presbytery by borrowing the biblical style of the **Apostle Paul's epistle to the Philippians**. Reading from a scroll, Mike said he gives thanks to God for the faith of our congregations, their labor of love, and their patience of hope in following Christ Jesus. News of this faith in God has been noted by people far and wide, said Mike.

In this time of denominational-turmoil, a dismissal policy was developed and approved in December 2011. To date, no church has formally requested to use this policy. New Covenant remains strong in the Spirit and steadfast in our missional calling in **pursuing God's vision— "growing congregations who passionately engage their community to make disciples."** We Presbyterians are on a journey to discover the shape and nature of a connectional church in this changing time. We need to prepare **ourselves to do God's work in new ways**. We can be confident that God has plans for us.

Mike is grateful to God for the love and determination of our congregations to remain focused on **the church's essential mission**. Mike laid out some of what he sees as the work that lies ahead for us:

- Enhance and enlarge our covenant partnership with the Presbytery of Juan Calvino in Peru and establish one with a presbytery in Cuba;
- Rejoice in the presence of a mission of Hope for the Middle East in our midst and stand with Christians in Egypt as they struggle to live in a hostile environment;
- Support the seven communities of



Mike Cole

faith which aspire to be new church developments;

- Discover how to reflect the diversity God has placed in our own backyard; and
- Seek renewal and revival in our congregations with the guidance of the Holy Spirit to be disciples of Jesus Christ in order to pray for and address the crying needs of a world in agony.

Mike will begin a 3-month sabbatical on March 1. He will take time to renew, refresh, relax, and reflect so that he can return ready for four more years of mission and ministry and lead more efficiently. The presbytery staff and elected officials will continue to be available to all who need counsel and help. Postings on Facebook will allow anyone interested to keep up with **Mike's three-month experiences**.

Mike closed his epistle by reminding us to:

- Acknowledge and hold in regard those who work hard among us;
- Live in peace with one another;
- Warn those who are idle and disruptive;
- Encourage the disheartened and help the weak;
- Be patient with everyone;
- Do not pay back wrong for wrong, but always strive to do what is good for each other and for everyone else;
- Rejoice, pray, and give thanks; and
- Test all prophecies and hold onto what is good and reject what is evil.

### Discerning the Winds of the Spirit

On a day typical of Houston's on and off winter, more than 200 commissioners and teaching elders gathered at Memorial Drive Presbyterian (MDPC) for a day of fellowship, learning, and business. Morning Worship brought the assembly together with robust singing, prayer, music, and a **sermon by Frances Taylor Gench, the day's keynote speaker**. Dr. Gench is a well-known scholar and author, serving the church at Union Theological Seminary in Virginia. The theme for this year's presbytery meetings is "Year of Biblical Scholarship."

The morning offering (\$1,624) was designated for travel scholarships for the presbytery's New Church Developments, to help with the expenses of a 4-day conference this summer.

# Book of Acts offers new way to be the church today

By Ruling Elder Connie Nyquist—Clear Lake PC

In responding to the challenge to address the topic of how we, the church today, can be missional and connectional in a time of transition, keynote speaker, Frances Taylor Gench, the Herbert Worth and Annie H. Jackson Professor of Biblical Interpretation at Union Seminary in Richmond, led the commissioners back to the first century church as portrayed in the book of Acts.

As described by Dr. Gench the multicultural church which we find in Acts was seeking to negotiate its way faithfully in a fluid setting empowered by the Holy Spirit. People were seeking to be a continuation of all Jesus taught and did. Described as “The Way,” there

was a corporate sense of following Jesus. They saw what Jesus did and what they were doing as one continuous story in which they had a part to play. They lived with **confidence in God’s power to bring** them into that new way. The challenging question Dr. Gench put forth was: What is the source of our power today? Then as now, there was and is the reminder that we are not in charge; God makes the first move.

To make clear her point, Dr. Gench led the assembly through a study of Acts 6:1-7, using four different angles of vision illustrating the Post Modern understanding that where we stand affects what we see

and the questions we ask. As the commissioners gathered around tables, they discussed the different understandings of the scripture text and the connections they discerned between the story in Acts and life in their congregations and our presbytery.



Frances Taylor Gench

Anyone interested in obtaining a **copy of Dr. Gench’s keynote talk and discussion questions** should contact Janice Schessler at the presbytery.

## Welcome to New Covenant!



Michael O’Neil

**Rev. Michael O’Neil** – Michael has been called to serve as pastor at First Presbyterian, Angleton. He is transferring from Grace Presbytery. Michael received his MDiv from Columbia Theological Seminary in Decatur, GA, and a MA degree from Presbyterian School of Christian Education (Union Presbyterian Seminary) in Richmond, VA. After receiving a diploma in Christian Studies from Regent College in Vancouver, BC, Canada, Michael is continuing these studies with a church history emphasis.



Judy Liljestrand

**Rev. Judith “Judy” Liljestrand** - Honorably Retired and living in Bryan, Judy is transferring from Grace Presbytery. Judy’s degrees are from the U. of Texas at Austin, Corpus Christi State University, and Austin Presbyterian Seminary from which she received her MDiv. She is certified in counseling. Judy enjoys participation in community chorus and playing flute and recorder. As you might suspect, she has a particular interest in worship and music ministry. She has two grown daughters – one is an abstractor for University Title in Bryan and the other is pastor of Burnet Presbyterian Church in Mission Presbytery.



Paul Yeou

**Rev. SeungHun “Paul” Yeou** - Paul is serving as pastor of Love (Korean) Presbyterian Church in Jersey Village. He transferred to New Covenant from Midwest Hanmi Presbytery. (Presbytery approved the transfer of Love Presbyterian Church at the October 2011 meeting.) Paul is in process to receive a DMin from Reformed Theological Seminary in Atlanta, GA. His MDiv is from Talbot Graduate School of Theology in La Mirada, CA. He earned a BA degree in Theology from Hanyoung Theological University in Seoul, Korea.

Rev. Andrew Adair (no photo) - Andrew is transferring from Grace Presbytery and now serving as Executive Director of the Antioch Partners, a validated ministry. Andrew received his MDiv from Fuller Theological Seminary and a BA degree from Vanderbilt University. Traveling on behalf of Antioch Partners kept Andrew from being present at the presbytery meeting.

## Candidate completes ordination exams

After preaching a sermon before the presbytery, Mark Plunkett answered questions from the Committee on Examinations and the floor, thus completing his ordination exams. A motion passed to sustain his examinations in full.



Mark Plunkett

Mark has been an Inquirer in New Covenant, a Ruling Elder, a member of the Committee on Ministry, and a seminary student through Austin Seminary’s Houston Extension program. Last May, he received his MDiv from Princeton Theological Seminary.

Mark taught public school for 29 years. During his last year he won the Crystal Apple Award for Teaching. He and his wife moved to Houston in 1982 and became members of St. Giles PC, Houston.

Mark is serving as Transitional Pastor at Heritage Presbyterian, Houston. He will be ordained Sun, March 25, at 2:00 p.m.

# Presbytery approves Overture

By Ruling Elder Ann Bixby—MDPC

Commissioners approved an Overture brought forward by the sessions of Grand Lakes PC, Katy, and Covenant PC, College Station. Before the vote, Teaching Elder Dean Pogue and Ruling Elder Connie Brown presented reasons why the Overture should be passed. A floor discussion followed.



Dean Pogue



Connie Brown

The Overture will be presented to the General Assembly in June for the committee, Mission Responsibility Through Investment (MRTI).

The Overture asks that the committee “expend no further efforts” with respect to selected divestments of the denomination’s investments in multinational corporations operating in Israel. It furthermore calls for the General Assembly to “disapprove the MRTI’s recommendation of divestment from investments in the shares of Caterpillar, Hewlett Packard, and Motorola Solutions.”

Additionally, the Overture asks that future General Assemblies thoroughly document, discuss, and debate the rationale for any phased selective divestment of companies before initiating such a process.

Among other directives to the MRTI and the General Assembly, the Overture calls for more information in the future for the members of the PC (USA) that would clarify ethical investment and divestment and what the relationship is between ethical investing and the mission of peacemaking.

# Honorably Retired—Godspeed!

The status of Honorably Retired was given to five Teaching Elders:



Alice and Bernie Nord

Alice and Bernie Nord have completed their service as Interim Co-Pastors at St. Philip PC, Houston. Alice previously served New Covenant on various committees and commissions of the presbytery: Moderator in 1994; ruling elder, director of youth ministry, and candidate for ministry. She attended McCormick Theological Seminary in Chicago. Her first call was to a specialized ministry as director of alumni/ae and church relations at McCormick Seminary. She later served as co-pastor with Bernie in Virginia.

Bernie, too, previously served New Covenant churches: Lake Jackson, The Pines, Wood Forest, and Bellaire. He pastored churches in Arizona, Illinois, and Ohio, and worked at McCormick Theological Seminary in Chicago as vice-president for seminary relations. Bernie has served as a stewardship consultant for the PC (USA) and financial campaign director. He is an alumnus of Penn State and Pittsburgh Theological Seminary. Alice and Bernie have been married since 2003. Alice and Bernie are retiring in North Carolina.



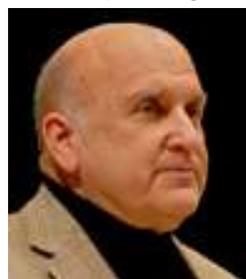
Daniel Intsiful

Daniel Intsiful—In 1978 the Presbytery of Liberia ordained Daniel Intsiful as an elder of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church which was affiliated with the Cumberland Presbyterian Church in the U.S. He was commissioned as a Lay Pastor in 1985 and studied at Memphis Theological Seminary from which he received his MDiv and M.A.R. He served at a church during the 1990s which joined the PC(USA). He has served Pinecrest PC, Houston, since 2004. Daniel will assume leadership of Christian Intervention Mission International, Inc., which has mission projects in Ghana and Liberia.



Philip Chiang

Philip Chiang—Philip was raised in Taiwan by Presbyterian parents and a grandfather who was a devout elder. He received his MDiv from Tunghai University, Taichung, and Tainan Theological Seminary, Tainan City. After serving two years as a Youth Minister, he traveled to Canada for study and received a STM degree in Karl Barth’s systematic theology. Philip has served as a full-time minister for 33 years - in Quebec, Montreal, New Brunswick, and Toronto, before coming to Houston in 2002 to serve at Grace Taiwan Presbyterian.



Jerry Hurst

Gerald “Jerry” Hurst—After Jerry’s graduation from college, he enlisted in the Army OCS program and was commissioned as an Infantry Officer. It was during his time South Korea that he received his call to ministry, due in no small part to the PC(USA) missionaries he met there. He enrolled at Union Theological Seminary in Virginia and completed an in-sequence Doctor of Ministry degree. He accepted calls to Arkansas and later to Jacksonville, FL, where he met his wife Pamela. Jerry was called to New Covenant to serve as the first called pastor of Southminster Presbyterian in Missouri City. Jerry later took an interim position in Sacramento, CA. He returned to New Covenant to serve as Designated Pastor at Heritage PC.

## Two Inquirers moved to Candidacy

With the recommendation from the Committee on Preparation for Ministry, Luke Gordon (Memorial Drive PC) and Amy Klinkovsky (First PC, Bryan) were enrolled as Candidates. The candidacy phase provides individuals a time for full preparation to serve the church as Teaching Elders.



Luke Gordon

came to understand, said Luke, that Christ's love compels us to live, not for ourselves, but for Him who died for everyone.



Amy Klinkovsky

Young people, she says, seem to fear articulating their faith. Her work in California seeks to help young people deal with the secular society in which they live today.

After answering the constitutional questions, Mark and Amy were charged by Teaching Elder Bob Murphy. He urged them during this time of preparation to place priority on their devotional life, to be open to God's spirit, and to keep serving others. "The minister you would become is the minister you are today," said Bob.

Next presbytery meeting  
Sat., June 9, 2012  
St. Andrew's PC, Houston

# CODA

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

- Will Briggs, (First PC, Kingwood), Brandon Gaide (Memorial Drive, Houston,) and Francisco Garibay (Grace PC, Houston) have been enrolled as inquirers.
- General Council has accepted the terms of a lease for the property used by Iglesias Latina, Houston.
- Contracts were renewed for Commissioned Ruling Elders between Jon Kotchavar and Advent PC, Spring; between Peter Holmes and Tiki Island, between Imelda Carrillo and Emmanuel PC, Galveston, and between **David O'Neal and Trawick PC.**
- Elected Laureen Suba (St. Philip PC, Houston), a student at Austin Presbyterian Seminary, as Theological Student Advisory Delegate to the 220th General Assembly; elected Jessica Edstrom (New Hope PC, Katy), a student at Fuller Theological Seminary, as Alternate Theological Student Advisory Delegate to the 220th General Assembly.
- Teaching Elder Michael Sydnor has transferred to Grace Presbytery; Teaching Elder Whitney Wilkerson has transferred to Coastal Carolina Presbytery, Teaching Elder William C. Browne has transferred to Mid-Kentucky Presbytery, and Teaching Elder Tim Galligan has transferred to Grace Presbytery.
- Teaching Elder Jonathan Murray has been called to serve as pastor at **St. Paul's PC, Needville.**
- Teaching Elder Nora Fitch has been called to serve as pastor at St. Thomas PC, Houston.
- An Administrative Commission has been established by General Council to dissolve the congregational relationship of LaMarque Presbyterian Church and to manage the assets.
- Statistical reports are due. Materials are posted on the Stated Clerk page of the presbytery website.
- Teaching Elder, Scott Cummings, Peace PC, Pearland, was elected to the Nominating Committee, class of 2012.
- Teaching Elder Susan Phalen was granted Honorably Retired status, effective February 29, 2012. A member of this presbytery, Susan has been serving in Australia.

*Postlude is published after each Stated Meeting.*

*Editor: Ruling Elder Helen Wolf  
Reporters: Ruling Elders Connie Nyquist, Julia Ann Moffett,  
and Ann Bixby  
Photographer: Scott Young, MDPC, Houston  
Circulation: Patricia Brantley and Sandra Lopez*