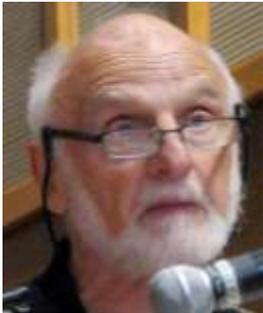


Walter Brueggemann discusses 'Prophecy and Alternative Imagining'

By TE Becky Downs — John Knox Presbyterian, Houston

Dr. Walter Brueggemann brought “**evocative, provocative**” words to his keynote address at the Presbytery meeting on June 9. Brueggemann argued that the reason that gospel ministry is so difficult and so urgent is that the gospel truth contradicts our cultural truth. He outlined three elements to this contradiction, as seen in the writings of the Old Testament prophets.



Walter Brueggemann

The first truth that he suggested is that the prophets lived in an illusionary ideology of exceptionalism in which kings are given permanent status and

unbridled power by the people. In the same way, the United States lives under the illusion that we are entitled to everything we can get our hands on **because of our status as “God’s chosen people.”** The prophets—then and now—bear witness against the ideology of exceptionalism. Prophets practice REALISM to contradict this illusionary ideology. They are obliged to give the real names of things rather than using euphemisms. Call it like it is, said the prophets, rather than using code words.

Second, Brueggemann said that practitioners of this illusionary ideology engage in lots of denial. We hear—and we say-- “**everything is fine here...**” as the world falls apart around us. How many times have our leaders told us that the economy has bottomed out and **everything’s going to be okay?** 9/11 was a watershed moment for our society

because it exposed the fact that we are vulnerable. Brueggemann suggested that the gay/lesbian issue which has consumed the Presbyterian Church for so long is really not about sexuality at all, but rather about guarding the way things used to be. God has suddenly (we think) put us in a different world with brothers and sisters who we must acknowledge.

The appropriate prophetic response to this denial is to practice GRIEF. Prophets must help people acknowledge their new reality, and to moan, cry, grieve the world that is lost. Jeremiah 9 uses funeral imagery for people in exile, as does the book of **Lamentations.** **Today’s prophets need to recapture that practice, helping people to say, “Is there any sorrow as great as our sorrow?” We need to be with people and listen to them as they say, “I want my old world back.”**

The third element of the **culture’s illusionary ideology is** despair.



When denial was broken and Jerusalem was destroyed, the people of God sank into despair. They could no longer seem to connect with God, and they believed truly **that God’s hand had been “shortened” as opposed to “outstretched.”** In their minds, God had no new gifts to give. Our culture also lives in despair, and so we have turned to violence, both random and systemic. We have adopted the belief that there is not enough of anything to go around; violence is justified and normal, because we are no longer the masters of our world.

HOPE is the prophetic response.

Continued on page 3

With God at Our Side

Morning worship uplifted and refreshed the spirits of those attending the meeting at St. Andrew’s Presbyterian, Houston. The heartfelt leadership of St. Andrew’s Praise & Worship Team, Mike Cole’s sermon, and the Commissioning Service for New Covenant’s commissioners to the General Assembly gave praise to our loving God and set the tenor for the day’s business.

A Minute for Mission during worship was given by Joe Williams (Joe Williams Ministries) and Martin Dale (Youth With a Mission Houston) about their work in the Montrose community. The morning offering (\$2,677.67) will be given to this ministry.



Montrose Street Reach offers new way

By RE Ann Bixby—MDPC, Houston

During morning worship, Joe Williams (Joe Williams Ministries) and Martin Dale (Youth With a Mission Houston) described how they have partnered to form Montrose Street Reach. This ministry focuses on the many forgotten and ignored street kids and the older homeless in Montrose, near downtown Houston— and the offices of Presbytery of New Covenant.

“Pastor Joe” and Martin presented compelling portraits of the lives of the people they reach and described practical steps taken with the hope of transforming lives.

“Street Church” has been meeting in the parking lot of the Presbytery Center for the past ten years. About 120-150 street kids and older homeless people along with groups from area churches gather Wednesday nights for singing, a hot meal, and a healthy dose of the good news that invites them to lead a new life through Jesus Christ.

The goal of this ministry is to get youth off the streets and into productive lives. Thanking the Presbytery for its generosity, Pastor Joe spoke of the importance that this stability has meant in building relationships with those who come to Street Reach. <http://montrostreetreach.org/>.

Walter Brueggemann remarked in his keynote address that **when he saw the word “reaches” on the screens during this presentation, his mind saw “re-aches,” which he thought would be God’s response to this story and also that of anyone in the audience.**

The morning offering was given to Montrose Street Reach. Commissioners also donated items useful to the homeless through this ministry in our “backyard.”

Seeking God’s guidance for a renewal experience

TE Ryan Cook (Grand Lakes, Katy) and TE Chris French (Grace, Houston) outlined the upcoming Whistle Stop Tour planned by the New Church Development Committee. In response to the PC(USA)’ challenge to plant 1001 new churches in ten years, The committee has chosen the book, *Unbinding the Gospel* by Martha Grace Reese, has been chosen as a tool for discussion throughout the presbytery.

Pick the stop on the Whistle Stop Tour that works best for you and enjoy a great lunch with colleagues in ministry while learning about *Unbinding the Gospel!* Each stop is at noon.

June 18 St. Andrew’s PC, Beaumont
June 20 Covenant PC, College Station
June 21 Pines PC, Houston
June 25 Webster PC, Webster
June 26 Northwoods, PC Houston

Let us know you are coming by contacting Carlton Currie, Chair of the New Church Development Committee, (hccurrie@gmail.com) or Mary Marcotte, Associate General Presbyter, (mmarcotte@pbyofnewcovenant.org).

New Covenant Commissioners to General Assembly and their committee assignments:



FRONT ROW:

RE Jason Reed, First, Pasadena (work of permanent committees); TE Jeff Smith-St. Andrew’s, Houston (health issues, including how we treat people with disabilities and reproductive rights); RE Jennifer Carr-Webster (immigration issues); TE Mary Currie-First, Navasota (church growth and the Presbyterian Investment and Loan Program); RE Nell Schwartz-Southminster, Missouri City (Confessions of the Church, including a new translation of the Heidelberg Catechism, and a reconsideration of the Belhar Confession).

BACK ROW:

TE Blake Brinegar-Westminster, Houston (issues dealing with peacemaking efforts in the Middle East); TE Bob Murphy-First, Conroe (work of the Board of Pensions, the Presbyterian Foundation, and the Presbyterian Publishing Corporation); RE Gail Northern-St. Giles, Houston (committee considering a redefinition of marriage and civil unions); RE Jim Allison-Pines, Houston (social justice issues, including overtures on racism, poverty, corporal punishment, and other imbalances of power and authority); TE Vicky Jones-MDPC, Houston (work of Christian Education committee, which includes theological seminaries and other educational institutions).

Welcome to New Covenant!

The presbytery extended the right hand of fellowship to 3 new and 2 returning pastors to New Covenant Presbytery.



Robert Rush

Rev. Robert Rush is serving First Presbyterian, Tomball, as Stated Supply for one year. He is stated clerk of Trinity Presbytery, Cumberland Presbyterian Church and has been nominated to serve as moderator. He received a BDiv degree from Cumberland Presbyterian Theological Seminary (now Memphis Theological Seminary) and a DMin from McCormick Seminary.

Rev. Andrew Adair is Executive Director of The Antioch Partners, a missionary sending agency based in Houston which partners with local Presbyterian churches in the U.S. Andrew is passionate about cross-cultural engagement and mobilizing others to participate in **God's mission in the world. He and his family served as Mission Co-workers in Central Asia for nine years.** Andrew received his MDiv from Fuller Seminary (Pasadena campus) with a concentration in Cross-cultural Studies.



Andrew Adair



Tim Marquez

Rev. Timothy Marquez has been called to serve as Stated Supply at First Presbyterian, Sealy. He was ordained in the United Church of Christ South Central Conference. Timothy was educated at Silliman University Divinity School, Trinity College of Quezon City, and the Far East Bible Institute and Seminary – each located in the Philippines.

Rev. Sam Knight is serving as Interim Pastor at Grace Presbyterian, Houston. Raised in Wales, **Sam received his formal education at Regent's Park College at Oxford University, Pontypool College, and Jones' West Monmouth School.** Sam is transferring from Central Florida Presbytery where he served First Presbyterian in Orlando. He was formerly a minister-member of New Covenant when he served at First Presbyterian in Orange.



Sam Knight



Kevin Keaton

Rev. Kevin Keaton, another who previously served in New Covenant, is now Regional Representative of the Board of Pensions of the PC(USA). He is transferring from Presbytery of Missouri River Valley (Nebraska) where he served as Executive Presbyter. Kevin received his MDiv from Austin Theological Seminary and his BA from McNeese State University in Lake Charles.

Others who transferred to New Covenant are Rev. Linda Herron, Rev. Honorio Neto (both transferring from Grace Presbytery) and Rev. John Wurster transferring from Mission Presbytery.

Called Meeting

For hearing the reports of G.A. Commissioners

Sunday, July 15

3:00-5:00 p.m.

Love Presbyterian Church
8101 Senate Ave., Jersey Village

Brueggemann cont.

Prophetic themes

Isaiah quotes his people saying, **"My way is hidden from the Lord, and my right is disregarded by my God,"** and responds to them saying, **"Have you not known? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable.** (Isa. 40: 27-28)

After outlining these three understandings of the contrast between cultural truth and Gospel truth, Brueggemann proposed that the question for us becomes whether or not the church can come to the bottom of grief to get to the hope.

Illusory ideologies make sense if one worships dead gods. But truth-telling realism, grief, and hope is a story that is possible because of the living God. These prophetic themes can become our practices of ministry, knowing that the living God stands with us. Our alternative imagining is that **God is God and that God works "abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine" (Ephesians 3:20).** We are challenged to engage in true talk, breaking out of the illusory ideology that keeps us from knowing where God has put us.

Honorably Retired



The Rev. Patricia Clark, St. Stephen's, Houston, received the status of Honorably Retired, after first receiving a colorful butterfly balloon and hug from her

daughter. Mike Cole presented Patricia a certificate and book from the presbytery in acknowledgement with gratitude for her **faithful service to Christ's church.**

Patricia enrolled in Houston's Quaker seminary, the Houston Graduate School of Theology, and transferred to Austin Seminary after her call to ministry. She has served eight churches and was a pioneer in the days when there were few women in the pulpit.

'You are all very special to us'

The Presbytery enrolled four new Candidates. This phase provides individuals a time for full preparation to serve the church as Teaching Elders. Each spoke briefly about his/her faith journey and God's call to ministry.



Brian Long

Brian Long, a member of Atascocita Presbyterian, said he did not grow up in the church. "But now I know that Christ was always with me." He credits his experience on mission trips for teaching him to share his faith and the joy he knows in Jesus Christ. "Now I'm listening to Christ." Brian has been approved by CPM for a CPE (Clinical Pastoral Education) program.



Andrew Keyes

Andrew Keyes, a member of Westminster, Houston, came to Christ at a young age because of his family and church. His college years strengthened his faith, but it was through meaningful relationships at Camp Cho-Yeh that God's call became a reality. His internship at Westlake Presbyterian in Austin brought him to obedience to

Christ.

Becky Provence, a member of MDPC, Houston, is in her third year at Fuller Seminary in California. She was born to parents who were both pastors. It was during her years in youth ministry at MDPC that she realized that God was calling her to more study. "My faith has grown as I realized how broken I was," said Becky.



Becky Provence

Victor Harris, a member of St. Andrew's, Houston, spoke how God's call was rather inconvenient. He knew how his life was going to be. He was in the business world when God interrupted him. "God kept nagging me," Victor said. He talked things over with his pastor, TE Jeff Smith, who told him that he had been in ministry all of his life. That thought freed him from the fear that was keeping him 'in the boat.'



Victor Harris

The Candidates with their supporters surrounding them answered the constitutional questions. They were charged by TE Bob Murphy to remember four things during the time of preparation. 1) Be intentional in your devotional life with God; 2) Be ministers now, remembering that we affirm the priesthood of believers; 3) Be positive in a world of negativity; 4) Be authentic – God has created you in a unique way.

CODA

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

- Also receiving Honorably Retired status but absent from the meeting are Teaching Elders Lonnie DuVall, Richard Kleiman, and Mark L. Cooper
- TE Jane Pettit (Grace, Houston) was elected to the Nominating Committee.
- Parish Associate covenants were approved by the Committee on Ministry between David Goodall and St. Thomas, Houston; Linda Herron and St. John's, Houston; and Tomas Spath and Woodforest, Houston.
- TE Tom Sharon was given permission to participate in a year-long CPE program at St. Luke's Episcopal Hospital, Houston.
- TE Carol Burgess and TE David L. Jones have transferred to Mission Presbytery
- RE Julie MacLemore, TE Jolene Currie, TE Kyle Walker, and TE Kevin Boyd have been elected as Ordination Exam readers for 2012-2013. Alternates are TE Kristy Vits and TE Barrett Ingram.
- Approved that Commissioned Ruling Elders may be commissioned to ministries beyond the congregation that have been validated by the Committee on Ministry.
- Daniel Aikins (MDPC, Houston) has been enrolled as an inquirer.
- TE Howard Reed is laboring out of bounds in an interim position in Eastern Oklahoma Presbytery.
- Elected eleven individuals to serve on presbytery committees.
- Congregations are encouraged to use the Mystery Guest form located on the presbytery website for self-evaluation or to request a mystery guest visit by contacting Mary Marcotte or Ok-Kee Kim (Evangelism and renewal Chair).
- Two of our faith communities are featured among the twelve listed in Twelve Dynamic New Racial Ethnic and New Immigrant Communities of Faith distributed by the PC(USA). They are Thien-An and Fuente de Esperanza Ministries, a ministry of MDPC, Houston.
- TE Honorio Neto will be serving as pastor/evangelist of the Presbyterian Brazilian NCD, Houston, effective 7/1/12.
- Committee on Ministry has validated Tim Phillip's ministry with InterVarsity Christian Fellowship.

Postlude is published after each Stated Meeting.

Editor: RE Helen Wolf

Reporters: RE Ann Bixby and TE Becky Downs

Photographers: Kristy Juzswik and Joanne Anders ,

St. Andrew's, Houston

Circulation: Patricia Brantley and Sandra Lopez