Meet the keynote speaker!

Meet the keynote speaker for the March 22 presbytery meeting – Robert Hall - author, CEO of an international relationship management firm and speaker on relationships.

Not long after Robert led this year’s General Council Retreat, it was clear that he should be asked to be the keynote speaker in an address to the presbytery! During the past decade, Robert has mentored inner-city homeless families and helped pioneer a relationship-centric model for addressing homelessness. His hands-on experience has given him a tapestry of vivid stories, startling facts, and strategic insights that he will share with us at the presbytery meeting.

His latest book, This Land of Strangers, addresses society’s “breathtaking relationship collapse.” When coupled with years on a mission to assess the cost, cause, and cure of our relationship undoing, Robert concludes that relationship decline is ‘the single most destructive trend that threatens our lives and connections.’

Keynote speaker continues on Page 3

Jews and Arabs – learning together, living together – and changing the world together

Out of the Presbyterian/Jewish Dialogue group, which has been meeting in Houston since 2004, came the plan to place a volunteer “on the ground” in Israel to work with an organization dedicated to improving the relationships between Israelis and Palestinians. Kathi Neubert will be that person, serving in Jerusalem for a year as Peacemaking Ministry Associate.

The organization chosen, Hand in Hand: Center for Jewish-Arab Education in Israel, is building peace, partnership, and equality through a network of integrated, bilingual schools. Hand in Hand in Jerusalem is a school where Jews and Arabs study together. They learn both Hebrew and Arabic. They learn about and observe each other’s holidays. They learn to appreciate and celebrate their own cultural traditions and that of one another. They learn to examine things from different perspectives, to ask questions, to discuss, to listen. They learn to debate and to disagree, and how to continue in this inclusive framework.

Kathi Neubert (Peacemaking Ministry Associate) will be adjunct to the faculty and staff at the Hand in Hand school in Jerusalem for a year, engaging with the students as directed by the school’s faculty and staff. Kathi is the wife of a Presbyterian pastor in Illinois who has longed to serve in some capacity in Israel.

Representatives to visit New Covenant!

Two representatives from the Hand in Hand school will visit the presbytery February 28-March 2. Rebecca Bardach (who is a U.S. Jew living in Israel), is the director of resource development and strategy at the school, and Siwar Eid (who is a Palestinian Christian) is a graduate of the Hand in Hand school. On Friday, February 28, they will meet with rabbis and ministers for breakfast and to discuss, to listen. They learn to debate and to disagree, and how to continue in this inclusive framework.

On Sunday, March 2, Rebecca and Siwar will attend the 9:00 and 11:10 worship at St. Andrew’s PC, Houston. At 3:30 p.m. that afternoon, everyone is invited for dessert and extended conversation at St. Thomas PC, Houston, 14100 Memorial Dr., TX 77079.

Rebecca Bardach has seventeen years of experience working in the fields of international migration, development, conflict resolution and foreign aid. She directed refugee assistance programs in Hungary and in Bosnia. Rebecca moved to Israel in 1998, where she worked with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) determining asylum claims and helping the government of Israel establish refugee policies and procedures, and then with the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) to establish its Center for International

Learning continues on Page 3
“A Word”

By Rev. Mike Cole
General Presbyter,
Presbytery of New Covenant

My class at the recent Officer Enrichment event was going very well. I had a room full of folks excited to learn about casting vision for their local church. We were engaged in a lively discussion about one church in particular, when one of the members said, “we had six guests last month,” and I said, “That’s great!” But when I looked around the room I saw everyone looking at me rather quizzically. When I saw that the pastor who was horrified by what I said, I knew that my ears had played a trick on me. Quickly I thought about what the member said and realized that she had not said “guests.” She had said “deaths.” No wonder everyone thought I had lost my mind. Fortunately, we were able to laugh about the mistaken word.

What a difference one simple word made in what was an otherwise normal presentation! Words do make differences in our lives. We Presbyterians are really good at using words, but sometimes we don’t listen so well to what effect our words have on others.

It’s a tense time for some in the life of our denomination and presbytery as folks sort through a variety of issues that lead them to believe they should separate from a denomination with whom they have been in a covenant relationship since before they were born. In a recent meeting, as I sat listening to speakers extoll the virtues of their new “love” (another denomination), I had the sinking feeling of a person whose spouse has just announced an intention to divorce and marry someone else; someone without all the baggage, distractions, and disagreements that accumulate over a long relationship. Uncomfortable is not a strong enough word to describe how I felt as I heard speaker after speaker declare that life would be so much more fulfilling with this new “love” who is young and unsullied by arguments over things both inconsequential and significant.

One of those who spoke in favor of leaving for another denomination commented to me afterward that the pain on my face was evident and evoked a realization that separation, when it is not mutual, is good only for the one departing. Those who are left behind suffer the consequences of a broken covenant and an unfulfilled promise.

During the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, I participated in an ecumenical prayer service at the Co-Cathedral of the Sacred Heart. Pastors of Methodist, Lutheran, Baptist, Roman Catholic, Episcopal, non-denomination, and other Christian churches lifted up the name of Jesus in song, prayer, sermon, and scripture. It was a wonderful affirmation of the unity of the body of Christ despite our denominational differences. Afterward, I mused that it’s interesting that we Presbyterians can be so respectful and generous of spirit when dealing with other denominations and non-denominations, but we throw around terms like apostasy, heresy, and sinful when working within our own tribe. Words do matter.

A few weeks ago, when I was feeling a bit blue, and wondering if holding this part of the body of Christ together was really what God intends, I received a word. This was a word from a most unusual source – my son, who does not normally comment on church life. Out of the blue (very appropriate considering how I was feeling) a text message arrived from Papua New Guinea, where Colin was working. Here’s what he said: “I read an article on churches leaving ur church. I just wanted to tell u I’m proud of u not going with the crowd and sticking to what u believe in. I think it’s good that the church is evolving. Yes there is some ideas I don’t agree on but I think it’s great that’s y all believe in them and are willing to embrace the new ideas and run with them. Keep up the good work dad!”

Now, there’s a word to relieve the blues and warm a father’s heart.

Warmly,

Mike
Learning together

Meet the keynoter

Presbytery meeting… from page 1

Siwar Eid

Meet the keynoter

Presbytery meeting… from page 1

Siwar Eid, age 19, started at the Hand in Hand school in 1st grade, growing up as the school did and graduating in 2012. She is currently preparing for entrance exams to architectural school and hopes to attend either Tel Aviv University or the Technion. Having spent twelve years growing up in the school, Siwar observes: “Going to the school changed me completely. I know it from the beginning. You go to school and you know the people and teachers around you and the people here are your best friends. You meet Jews and Arabs and it feels like something natural. But when you graduate and you meet people you never met before, whether they are Arab or Jewish, you realize that this school really changes people. You realize you have experienced something that is not the norm – it is amazing and it changes you. You keep these twelve years in your heart and mind and do not forget that you have been in a special school and that it should help you in your path.”

Welcome, Rebecca and Siwar!

2014 Standard Mileage Rates

The Internal Revenue Service has issued the 2014 optional standard mileage rates used to calculate the deductible costs of operating an automobile for business, charitable, medical, or moving purposes.

Beginning on Jan. 1, 2014, the standard mileage rates for the use of a car (also vans, pickups or panel trucks) will be:

- 56 cents per mile for business miles driven
- 23.5 cents per mile driven for medical or moving purposes
- 14 cents per mile driven in service of charitable organizations

The business, medical, and moving expense rates decrease one-half cent from the 2013 rates.

With the birth of our first grandchild, I have been thinking about new life. Having had two children of my own, I know a bit about the mystery of growing a human being. Many times finding out one is pregnant is a big surprise! And then this new life develops and grows. Sometimes it feels like an alien inside; there is a lot of unknown. When the time is ready, the baby is born and the new life begins. (This is not a political statement on when life begins.)

I wonder how this translates into our congregations. I know it happened for the building at 5900 Pinemont when St. Giles generously gave their property to Pathways. I have heard stories from others on how it happens. Unfortunately, sometimes people are resistant to the possibilities. “We’re too old… we don’t have enough money… we tried this once and it didn’t work.” The excuses go on and on, and congregations wither.

Sometimes the possibility of new life is threatening. It disrupts the status quo. That certainly happens when a new baby comes home. We can see this happen when a young family comes into a church for the first time and find that no one is ready for them. Since there are no children in the congregation, there is no child care or Christian Education available. I have heard people complain about the noises that children make,”Can’t they make that two year old behave in worship?” How welcome that family must feel. But I continually hear congregations say that they need young families to keep the church alive.

Why is it that the congregation as we know it has to stay alive? As the pastor, I was told once after a memorial service, “I guess that’s why you’re here, so that you can bury us.” I was surprised by those words and think I said that was not why I was there. If that is the reason for existence, to care for the members in their time of death, then it seems that the congregation has already made a decision – to keep the status quo.

If a congregation is willing to extend itself to try something new and different, to reach out into their community to build relationships, then new life has a chance of being born. Like a pregnancy, it will not happen quickly, but it can happen. Hospitality is one key. Compassion is another. Generosity and risk taking are other factors. Being passionate about our growing as disciples leads us to going out in mission to make more disciples.

This year the theme of our presbytery meetings is “Making Disciples.” We will be offering different opportunities for education and mission. We are excited to bring Robert Hall to keynote our March 22 meeting. He is the author of This Land of Strangers – The Relationship Crisis that Imperils Home, Work, Politics and Faith. Please consider coming to hear him. All are welcome – you don’t have to be a commissioner.

Relationships are at the center of new life. Whether it is parents welcoming a new baby or a congregation seeking growth, relationships matter. People are longing to be known and affirmed in who they are. Let’s make our churches places where that can happen… and let’s watch as signs of new life begin all over southeast Texas.
I think if my 2014 has a theme word, it will be connected. It is closely related to the key word of my Rule #1 – It’s all about the relationships.

We are connected as a called out people to and by our Triune God. It’s a scripture thing!

We are connected as a presbytery not only through our polity, but through our ministry, vision, and mission. I see signs across our structure of an emphasis in making this an increasingly relational reality rather than an “on paper” emphasis. General Council was led in its kick-off retreat by Robert Hall, a Presbyterian Ruling Elder and author of This Land of Strangers. He helped us better understand how counter to our culture the idea of community is these days and how we are paying the cost – both as a society and the church – for our relational deficits. You will want to hear what he has to say when he keynotes our March 22 presbytery meeting.

We are connected as a denomination. When General Assembly meets in Detroit June 14-21, commissioners will gather from across the country. Our theology celebrates the wisdom of group discernment of God’s leading. There will be worship and study, elections and overtures, conversation and controversy at that gathering. The theme for the recent Association of Presbyterian Church Educators (APCE) Annual Event in San Jose, CA was connected, a tribute both to our location in Silicon Valley and the fundamental importance of connection in the theology and practice of Christian education and formation. For four days we explored various aspects of connected education ranging from digital formats to face to face interactions. The final plenary presentation by former Moderator of the PC(USA) Bruce Reyes Chow lifted up a cautionary note of ways we unintentionally disconnect with the next generation. These bolded observations particularly resonated with me...

We disconnect from the next generation when we invite so we can avoid death rather than welcome in order to know new life. There is a profound difference between a mindset that seeks out younger members simply to keep our church running the way it always did because we are too old or too tired to keep it running the way it always did. Do we welcome children because we yearn to gift them with knowing God’s love and experiencing a nurturing faith community, or do we tolerate them as a noisy distraction from our cherished traditions? Do we welcome the inquiring minds and passionate response of youth, or do we decry their preference in worship music?

We disconnect from the next generation when we assume and demand authority because of longevity and credentials or when we withhold wisdom and insight gleaned from meaningful life experiences. The church is one of the few places in American life today where the generations can really gather around a shared identity and learn from one another in the process. We are all children of God with unique gifts that can build up the body of Christ.

We disconnect from the next generation when we forget to articulate our beautifully complex faith in Jesus Christ and when we fail to uphold the ideals, convictions, and faith that we seek to pass on. One of the difficulties of our Presbyterian and reformed faith is that it is not easily reduced to sound bites. We need to find a voice to articulate a faith that is deep enough and true enough that it demands conversation rather than simple bullet points. And then we need to...

continued on the right

TPF announces new VP of Finance and Treasurer

Beth Wilt, who has served Texas Presbyterian Foundation for fourteen years, is now Vice President of Finance and Treasurer, overseeing the Foundation’s institutional and individual client services team, the accounting department, and all financial reporting. Her primary focus is the successful account administration for all TPF partners.

“Beth has served TPF for fourteen years in various capacities and has been the consummate professional, continually leading her

Welcome, Rose!

TE Rose E. Niles is our new Development Officer in the Houston area representing the Presbyterian Church in the Bronx. She comes to us from almost seven years as Associate for Theological Education and Seminary Relations for the Committee on Theological Education and the Presbyterian Mission Agency in Louisville, KY.

Rose is transferring from Hudson River Presbytery where she served as Pastor at the First Presbyterian Church of Mount Vernon, NY, for eleven years, after previously serving four years as Pastor of Emmanuel Presbyterian Church in NYC. She also served as Vice Moderator and Moderator of the Synod of the Northeast.

Rose has an AB in Comparative World Religion from Harvard University, her MDiv from Harvard Divinity School, and DMin from New York Theological Seminary. Rose was baptized and reared at University Heights Presbyterian Church in the Bronx. She has an adult daughter living in Philadelphia, PA.

Stop by to greet Rose in her office at the Presbytery Center.

live our lives in a manner that honors those convictions. I’ve longed believed that one of the great gifts of our young people is their very accurate capacity to register hypocrisy... Shame on us if our actions indicate any disconnect between our faith and our daily walk.

Make this a year where you deepen your connections with God and neighbor, across generations and cultures - and be the ambassador for Christ and the member of the household of God you are called to be
Grant applications now being accepted

The Presbytery of New Covenant is now receiving applications for grants from two different sources: the Vision Initiative Fund and the Lynn Johnson Social Justice Fund. Application forms are available on the presbytery’s website, www.pbofnewcovenant.org, along with more information about the grants. Completed application forms should be emailed to Jody Harrington, Moderator of the Ministry Division Steering Committee, at jody.harrington@gmail.com, by April 1, 2014.

Priority in funding grants from the Vision Initiative Fund will be given to activities that have the goal of increasing disciples (whether by development of new churches or worshipping communities), redevelopment of established churches, general outreach to unchurched individuals, or other proposals that are within the mission of the presbytery. Members of the Ministry Division Steering Committee review and award the grants within the guidelines set out by these funds. Grant awards will be announced at the July presbytery meeting.

Lynn Johnson Social Justice grants are available to fund ministries of social justice, particularly but not limited to issues concerning equality and inclusion of all persons regardless of sexual orientation. Grants can be made from the Lynn Johnson Fund for up to $1,000 per application.

We are grateful to God for the generosity of Cris Miller, who endowed the Vision Initiative Fund, and Lynn Johnson. A rising stock market and other factors increased the amount of funds available from the Vision Initiative Fund for the coming year. All congregations are encouraged to think about applying for a grant to expand the ministry of their church.

“GOD-COLORS”

In Eugene Peterson’s rendering of Matthew 5:14 (“You are the light of the world” in the NRSV) we find these words: “You are here to be light, bringing out the God-colors in the world.”

Have you known someone who brings color to life in what is often a black-and white world, someone who not only lives the Christian faith, but who finds joy in it? One such person, I believe, was Andy Edington. While I did not know Andy well, I did have the occasion to hear him speak as the Bible study leader at several Mo-Ranch Men’s Conferences in the late 1990s.

Born and raised in Mobile, Alabama, Andy was president of Schreiner from 1950-1971 (until 1971 Schreiner was a military institute/junior college). In 1973 Schreiner phased out its high school curriculum and strengthened its college curriculum. In 1981 it became a four-year institute of higher learning.

In addition to serving as president of Schreiner, Andy, a member of First Presbyterian Church in Kerrville, also delivered Bible studies that were broadcast over KERV radio station in Kerrville. In 1988 he published The Word Made Fresh: A Down to Earth Version of the Bible in which he provided “selected scriptural accounts using today’s images as vehicles for the timeless truth” (from the Foreword by Sam Junkin).

In his retirement Andy began to serve as a volunteer assistant to the chaplain to death row inmates at the state penitentiary in Huntsville, Texas. His lively Bible studies at the Mo-Ranch Men’s Conference drew heavily on his experiences there. They were filled with humor, tension, and poignancy. According to one account, Edington, alone with several prisoners prior to a Bible study, had sat down in a seat that was customarily occupied by a large, burly, intimidating inmate. When the prisoner showed up and stood in front of the much smaller and thinner Bible study leader, Edington, unaware of this man’s reputation, simply stood up and hugged him. That broke the tension in the room and endeared Edington to all who were there, including the much-feared inmate.

The annual gathering of the Presbyterian Historical Society of the Southwest will be held March 7-8 at Mo-Ranch and will focus on the life and ministry of this gifted man who exhibited the “God-colors” of the gospel. He would have turned 100 years old in January. Anyone wishing to receive printed transcripts of the presentations may insure this by joining the Society: $20 for an individual, $25 for a couple, and $50 for a church or an institution.

Checks may be made out to PHSSW and mailed to: Dr. James S. Currie, 4647 Preston Ave., Pasadena, TX 77505.

Note: new mailing address

The mailing address for First PC, Sealy, is no longer a P.O. Box number. Effective mid-February the mailing address will be the same as the church’s physical address: 172 Selman Dr., Sealy, TX 77474.
Synod of the Sun mission story: THE BEST NEWS OF ALL

NOROC’s (New Opportunities for Romanian Orphaned Children) greatest achievement is that the hearts and minds of children have been opened to hear the best news of all: Whatever has happened to them and whatever their experience of family has been, they are members of the Family of God. In this family, they have a new name, and that name is “Beloved.” NOROC’s full time Presbyterian mission co-worker Liz Searles with husband Rev. Douglas Searles are sharing the good news about the unconditional love of Jesus Christ which extends God’s family to each one of these children of NOROC and teaching that NOROC’s special people love and care. All of this activity is to the glory of God!

Recently NOROC recognized in many cases that speech was the only handicap that some children have, and a new speech therapy program was initiated. Daniela Trandafir, a gifted and God-sent psychologist, speech therapist, and tutor, began working with ten kids. Now 30 more children are added to the waiting list. The first, a boy named Cristi, depends upon body language and humor to get his points across. He has asthma and is a bit behind in school due to his medical issues. Being very bright and motivated, he struggles hard to perform at grade level. The institutions often track students such as Cristi into trade programs without encouragement for further education.

NOROC is committed to Cristi, and other children, as they develop, to provide speech therapy, medical assistance, tutoring, support, and hope so that they may reach their highest potential. “Working to lift up children of trauma,” Liz says, “I feel a trusting hand reach up to grasp mine, or feel the bear-hug embraces of the kids who swarm the orphanage gate to greet me. These lift me up. When I’m feeling less than hopeful, the tenacious striving of children against handicaps of body, mind or spirit restore my own optimism and energy. Spontaneous smiles come from little ones who have experiences so unspeakable as to make one mute and morose. These ‘Alleluias’ of the dark night affirm afresh that transformation is possible.”

Liz is supported by Palo Duro Presbytery, the General Assembly and a mission grant from the Synod of the Sun.
A mustard seed becomes a great tree!

By Katherine Doehring, Director of Campus Ministries, United Campus Ministries of Aggieland  
revkatherinedoehring@gmail.com (910-520-5224)

Read Katherine’s entire article on the presbytery website, www.pbyofnewcovenant.org. Click on Ministries>Networks for Mission>Local Covenant Agreements

This past September, when I accepted the call as Director of Campus Ministries of UCM Aggieland, I had no idea what the next few months might bring. The ministry had been without a campus minister in a professional capacity for nearly nine months, and two very devoted Texas A&M students remained as the core leaders of a campus ministry that had changed their lives.

In one semester’s time, I have watched a core team grow, learn, serve, laugh, love, and share richly with one another. Starting as a faith-filled mustard seed, our UCM fellowship has become a great tree with branches extended! We know that the genuine communion of our group is a special gift of the Holy Spirit, and we only expect to continue to grow and share the good work God is doing among us!

Like good Texas Aggies, we value tradition, and so we have held on to one particular UCM staple: Thursday Night Aggie Suppers, prepared and served with love by one of our faithful local sponsoring congregations: First Presbyterian and Faith United Church of Christ in Bryan and Covenant Presbyterian Church and Friends Congregational Church in College Station. After supper, we study and discuss various biblical topics and theological issues that challenge us to live more Christ-centered lives.

We have made an intentional effort to partner ecumenically with our friends in campus ministry: the Treehouse Lutherans and the Canterbury Episcopalians. Together, we participated in an interfaith dialogue panel, hosted theological film viewings, and gathered monthly for Theology on Tap nights at a local pub. In addition to our commitments to worship and study—we have also learned the holy calling of silliness and fun!

The ministry of UCM Aggieland serves students from churches in our presbytery, as well as throughout the state of Texas. As local Presbyterian and Congregational churches in the Bryan/College Station community continue to support UCM, we believe that our ministry to students from all corners of Texas and beyond truly makes UCM a ministry of the wider church. We invite you and your congregation to join our efforts to support students spiritually during one of the most influential and formational times of their lives. Prayerfully consider God’s call upon the life of your congregation to financially contribute to the ministry of United Campus Ministries of Aggieland. Your gifts will help students to continue discerning God’s call upon their lives and remain active, vital participants in the body of Christ.

Most importantly, if you have students from your congregation planning to attend Texas A&M, please send them our way and allow us to give them an official Aggie welcome! We ask for your prayers and continued support as we journey into the future.
## New VBS, Sunday School and Small Group Studies

### Vacation Bible School Curriculum

**New Examination Kits for 2014**

The new examination kits for 2014 are for reference use in the Resource Center ONLY. Several recent years of curriculum choices may be checked out and adapted for use.

**NEW for 2014 Group Wilderness Escape:**

**Where God Guides and Provides**

In Group’s Wilderness Escape VBS, Moses comes to life and teaches kids what happened after he led the Israelites out of Egypt. Kids will join one of the twelve Tribes of Israel and visit Moses’s Tent to hear miraculous Bible stories. In the Israelite Camp they will play high-energy games, make crafts, and learn why we should trust God today like Moses did in Bible times. Daily themes include: God is with us, God gives us what we need, God gives us strength, God saves us, and God guides us.

**NEW for 2014 Cokesbury Workshop of Wonders**

At Cokesbury’s Workshop of Wonders (WOW) VBS, kids will discover how to imagine and build with God! At WOW VBS, discover how the ordinary becomes extraordinary with God. Experience the love of Jesus. Start an adventure. Use your imagination and creativity to build your faith. Meet people from the Bible who used what they had to produce something amazing with God. Use your heart, mind, and imagination to participate in the creative life of God, the one who works wonders! Daily themes are drawn from Old and New Testament stories that call us to Imagine, Build, Grow, Work, and Walk with God.

### Sunday School and Small Group Studies

#### Faith Questions: Temptation

This 6-week study designed for older youth would be ideal for Lent and combines solid Bible study with age-appropriate life applications. Study includes a classroom format which makes use of a variety of learning styles and activities as well as access to a "coffee house" format which is more of a discussion-only format.

Additional **Being Reformed** titles for adult study are now available. Student resource includes short weekly reflection pieces and accompanying Leader’s Guide provides helpful lessons plans for addressing the materials with head and heart.

#### Illuminating Lent

**by Donald McKim**

This 6-week study begins with a look at the traditions of Lent and Lenten spiritual practices and then examines the upward/inward/downward/forward/onward dimensions of the Christian life through the lens of the Lord’s Prayer.

#### The Spirituality of Dietrich Bonhoeffer

**by John Burgess**

Beginning with an understanding of spirituality grounded in “the way of Christ,” this 6-week study addresses the dual call to be grounded in the word of God and to care for and engage the world. It addresses the role of community, the cost of discipleship and what it means to be a disciple in a religionless world.

#### Wise Church: Exploring Faith and Worship with Christians Around the World

**by Emily Brink and Paul Detterman**

Drawn from the work of the World Communion of Reformed Churches, this study text is suitable for either 5 or 10 weeks of study on the elements of reformed worship and offers examples from the global community. While it would be helpful reading for individuals planning worship it could be an especially good resource for teams planning worship together.

#### Leaving Egypt: Finding God in the Wilderness Places

**by Charles DeGroat**

This 16-chapter resource is filled with stories from today which link back to the biblical narrative of the Exodus. Four segments are related to each of the book’s four themes: Facing our Fear, Receiving our New Identity, Entering the Furnace of Transformation, and Experiencing New Identity and Mission. Each chapter concludes with questions that make this an easy to use resource with small groups or for individual reflection.

### Practicing God’s Radical Hospitality: Exploring Difference, Change, and Leadership through the Spiritual Discipline of Hospitality

**by Teresa Chavez Saucedo**

This special study from the office of Presbyterian Women combines Bible study and group process. The resource is built on the assumption that welcoming and thriving on difference leads to transformative change as we come to better understand how our own experiences have shaped us and to develop skills that will allow us to better understand the factors which have shaped others. This is an excellent tool for developing skills in cultural proficiency and should definitely not be perceived as for women only.

### Dwell: Play (35-week preschool curriculum)

This new entry to the Dwell family of resources is designed as an evergreen resource: non-dated, unbound materials can be ordered to fit any calendar year. Churches can buy the kit once and just purchase story packs each year for children. The 35-week leader’s kit offers everything needed to introduce 3 and 4 year olds to God’s big story from Creation through Acts. Lessons include a fun welcoming activity, listening to God’s story together, and responding to the story in fun ways. Kit includes detailed lesson plans and storytelling helps, a CD of music and a sample of the take-home cards. Thoroughly Reformed in its outlook, solidly age appropriate.
New Book Resources

WE resources
From Faith Alive publishers offer “events in a box” designed to promote cross generational learning centered on a shared meal. Art work, camera ready resources for the event as well as take home devotionals are included. A special event CD includes reproducibles, publicity helps and presentation powerpoints. (Please remember the Resource Center also owns WE: the Epic Story)

WE: Enter the Tabernacle includes five events which explore building the Tabernacle of the Old Testament and how it is expressed in the New Testament as part of God’s salvation plan, pointing the way toward Jesus and demonstrating how much God loves us and want to dwell with us.

WE: Expectations can help educate a multiage group in your congregation about the themes of Advent. Everything needed for a Jesse Tree study is included in this detailed instruction guide. Also included is a plan for a bonus follow-up event which explores the great cloud of witnesses in Hebrews 11.

WE: The Unshakable Promise explores the theme of covenant in events that are centered in the stories of Noah, Abraham, Moses (and the ten commandments), birth of Jesus, the Lord’s Supper and the Holy Spirit. Lessons are best used as a series but could be used individually, especially the unit on communion.

Home Grown
Study guide and DVD (7 sessions)
Children’s faith grows primarily at home and many parents aren’t exactly sure how to help make this happen. This helpful, practical study offers suggestions which empower parents with children across the age spectrum to make good choices and build their confidence as they respond to questions of faith and engage in practices which deepen faith. DVD serves as a great jump start for conversation.

The Challenge of Jesus
(16 session study)
Scholar John Dominic Crossan serves as guide through this thought-provoking, lushly photographed study. Exploring the matrix of Jesus’ unique time and place, Crossan helps viewers better understand the multi-faceted connections between Greeks, Romans, and Jews that speaks to our understanding of Jesus today. Extended text and photo-ready handouts are included for each session. Themes explored include The World of Jesus, The Life of Jesus, the Death of Jesus, and the Resurrection of Jesus. The 16 DVD segments average 15 to 16 minutes, thus allowing plenty of time for discussion.

Who, Me? Series for Youth
This series for youth explores the lives of biblical characters, highlighting God’s faithfulness and the ways God calls and uses ordinary people to carry out God’s mission in the world. This resource circulates in a notebook of printed materials downloaded from the accompanying cd-rom. Includes both lesson plans for leaders and student handouts for each session.

Who, Me? Joseph, God’s Messy, Complicated, Perfect Plan (6 sessions)
Patient faith and God’s grace shine through the story of Joseph’s journey of betrayal, enslavement, temptation, and abandonment to help us see that God is with us, even when things seem far from perfect. Sessions include Rivalry, Temptation, Abandonment, Opportunity, Revenge and Reunion.

Who, Me? Mary, Surprised by God
(4 sessions)
Mary was called to more than motherhood and her story shows the many ways that we can fulfill God’s purposes throughout our lives. Sessions include the annunciation, birth, the wedding at Cana, and at the foot of the cross.

Who, Me? Peter, Rocked by God
(6 sessions)
From fair weather follower to a founder of the church, Peter and his story show God’s grace working through our doubts and denials to form us into disciples of Christ. Sessions include Follow ME, Walking on Water, A Confession of Faith, Denial, and Breakfast on the Beach.

Visit the Resource Center in person or online!
Books, DVDs, equipment, and curriculum - it’s all available for churches and individuals to borrow! See the Resource Center database on the presbytery website www.pbyofnewcovenant.org. Click resources at the top of the homepage or contact Patricia Brantley at pbrantley@pbyofnewcovenant.org.
February 28-March 2
Visitors from Hand in Hand School in Jerusalem
Houston

March 6
Workshops: “Preparing Your Savings for Retirement” and “Confident Investing in Any Market”
Presbytery Center
Houston

March 13
Fresh Elastic for Stretched-Out Educators
Presbytery Center
Houston

March 22
Presbytery Meeting
Korean Central PC
Houston

April 5
PW Spring Gathering
Spring Branch PC
Houston

Night at the Museum
Children’s Museum
Houston

April 29-May 1
Clergy Retreat
Cho-Yeh Conference Center
Livingston

May 3
Youth Worker Gathering
Atascocita PC
Atascocita

June 14-21
General Assembly
Detroit, Michigan

June – July-August
Peru Mission Trips

July 19
Presbytery Meeting
Covenant PC
College Station

July 21-26
Synod Youth Workshop
University of Tulsa

July 29-31
Weekday Ministries Conference
Houston Marriott Westchase

MARCH 13

Fresh Elastic for Stretched-Out Educators

Connect with others involved in education and discipleship in this presbytery as we enter the beautiful spring season! Take some time to refresh and renew. It’s what keeps your ministry the best it can be! If you are a paid staff person, a volunteer, a teaching elder or just plain curious, you are invited to come to the Presbytery Center, 1110 Lovett Blvd. Thurs., March 13, 11:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m.

We will welcome Laura Mendenhall to our March gathering. Laura has been a Church Educator serving as a DCE, as an educator for a presbytery, as the leader of youth groups/VBS/Sunday School for all ages, as a pastor, as president of Columbia Seminary, and philanthropic advisor with the Texas Presbyterian Foundation. She will be sharing “Living Generously” with us, a curriculum she designed to open up conversation across the generations on how to deal with money and generosity. The curriculum is Biblically based, has tracts for all ages, and deals with the question How much is enough? in many different areas.

Come prepared to share ideas about what has worked in your church in the areas of Vacation Bible School, summer Sunday School and programming, as well as mission trips and projects. Our best ideas come from each other!

Lunch will be served, complete with a beverage and dessert.

This session will be facilitated by folks with a seasoned heart for education. Please feel free to contact any one of them if you have questions.
Jo Ann Currie (jascurrie51@yahoo.com),
Connie Nyquist (lnyquist@sbcglobal.net)
Kim Shrull (kshrull@earthlink.net)
Anne Wilson (anne.aiko.wilson@gmail.com)

Your RSVP will assist our planning. Please send replies to anne.aiko.wilson@gmail.com by Monday morning, March 10.

APRIL 5

CHILDREN’S Night at the Museum

Children’s Museum of Houston

You are invited to an evening of fun and play at the Children’s Museum of Houston from 6:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m., Saturday, April 5. Come experience everything the museum has to offer. The whole family (children ages 4 months to 14 years,) can enjoy TotSpot, Kidtopia, the Building Zone, Cyberchase, FlowWorks, PowerPlay and more. Snacks will be available. Admission and parking is FREE.

Please RSVP by March 31. Call Carrie at the Presbytery office at 713-526-2585, ext. 205, for more information.

You can register online at http://cnatm.eventbrite.com

Wonderfully Made
Weaving Families Together

Saturday, April 5
Children’s Museum of Houston

You are invited to an evening of fun and play at the Children’s Museum of Houston from 6:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m., Saturday, April 5. Come experience everything the museum has to offer. The whole family (children ages 4 months to 14 years,) can enjoy TotSpot, Kidtopia, the Building Zone, Cyberchase, FlowWorks, PowerPlay and more. Snacks will be available. Admission and parking is FREE.

Please RSVP by March 31. Call Carrie at the Presbytery office at 713-526-2585, ext. 205, for more information.

You can register online at http://cnatm.eventbrite.com

This private event is brought to you by The Presbytery of New Covenant, Presbyterian Children’s Homes and Services and the Weekday Ministries Conference.
**MARCH 6**

The Board of Pensions

Retirement Savings Workshops

The Board of Pensions and Fidelity Investments presents “Preparing Your Savings for Retirement” and “Confident Investing in Any Market,” Thursday, March 6, 1:00 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. Administrators, treasurers, finance and stewardship chairs as well as plan members are encouraged to attend. This event will take place at the Presbytery Center, 1110 Lovett Boulevard. Please RSVP by February 28 to Carrie Walker at cwalker@pbyofnewcovenant.org or 713-526-2585, ext. 205.

**APRIL 5**

Presbytery Presbyterian Women invite ALL WOMEN to a

Spring Gathering

Presbytery Presbyterian Women invite all women to Spring Gathering, Sat., April 5, 9:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m. at Spring Branch PC, Houston. Come be intellectually stimulated, physically nourished, and spiritually fulfilled as we listen, discern, break bread and worship together.

RE Anne Wilson (President of the Association of Presbyterian Church Educators) will give the keynote address, speaking on “Why Cut Off Both Ends?” RE Mary Marcotte (Associate General Presbyter of New Covenant Presbytery) has chosen the topic, “It’s a Whole New World - Understanding the Speed of Change” for her presentation during “Dessert with Mary,” and TE Ann Marie Quigley-Swanson (Northwoods PC, Houston) will be the Worship Leader.

Details about mission opportunities for attendees, the new registration fee, meals, child care, and registration can be found on the presbytery website, (www.pbyofnewcovenant.org – click on Ministries on the top of the homepage). Mail registration to Star Starling, Treasurer, 201 East Feagin, Livingston, TX 77351-2422. Registration deadline is Saturday, March 29.

All women, regardless of whether in PW or not, are invited to come—the inspirational program will touch women of all ages in all walks of life!

**APRIL 26**

#BigSteadyLove

Houston-Area Presbyterian Junior and Senior High Retreat

Saturday, April 26, 2014

4:40 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.

Pines Presbyterian Church

12751 Kimberley Ln., Houston, TX

www.pinespc.org

Energize, sing, pray and play, as you consider the lessons Jonah learns about the consistency and scope of God’s love. And, yes - there will be tweeting. Event leaders will be Austin College ACTivators, a group of Austin College students who work with host groups to choose scripture-based themes for youth events.

**MAY 3**

youth worker gathering

As Youth Workers doing ministry alongside one another, we aspire to cultivate a colleague group that will focus on and give opportunity for: connecting, sharing, resourcing, learning, inspiring, and encouraging one another. Join the next gathering on Saturday, May 3, 11:00 a.m.–1:00 p.m. at Atascocita PC (19426 Atasca Oaks Drive, Atascocita, 77346). Lunch will be provided. Please RSVP by Monday, April 28, to Caressa Murray at cmurray@pbyofnewcovenant.org or 281-798-5993.

All paid staff and volunteer Youth Workers are welcome! Youth Workers are strongly encouraged to bring their adult volunteers, especially those participating in summer trips. Topic for the Day: Equipping!

1. Equipping Volunteers to lead and guide youth during summer trips;
2. Equipping Parents in Faith Conversations with their teen.
In Our Prayers

Family and friends of Rev. Hudson McNair (HR) – Hudson died January 3, 2014. A memorial service was held at First Presbyterian, Houston.

Commissioner Ruling Elder Anna Marion, St. Luke’s Presbyterian, Cleveland – Anna’s mother, Mary Ann Marion, died December 5, 2013. Mary Ann was the wife of Gene Marion, now deceased. For many years, Gene and Mary Ann served together in a ministry of hospitality and discipleship.

RE Edwin and Janie Battise, Indian Presbyterian, Livingston – their son, Brian Eric Battise died January 17, 2014.

Tina Battise (Indian Presbyterian, Livingston) and family – Tina’s husband Brian Kirk Battise died January 21, 2014. Tina is the Chairperson of the Board of Deacons.

TE Eid Abdelmassih Hanna (Arabic Fellowship) – Eid has been diagnosed with Hepatitis C and is beginning a treatment course.

TE Jon Burnham St. John’s Presbyterian, Houston, and family – Jon’s brother Tim died in January 2014.


The nation and the church in South Sudan. Because of the tense situation there, our Co-Mission Workers, Jacob and Aliaamma George, were evacuated in December 2013 and are now safe in Ethiopia.

RE Bill and TE Lynn Hargrove and family – Bill and Lynn’s first grandbaby, Louise Olivia Raspino, was born February 3, 2014, to Lindsey and Michael Raspino. Bill serves on the Committee on Preparation for Ministry and Lynn is the Stated Clerk of New Covenant Presbytery.

TE Michael Chen and the congregation of Formosan Presbyterian, Houston. Michael was installed as Pastor of the church February 16, 2014.

Miles Harper IV (age 13) - son of RE Miles Harper, III, and Katheryn Harper, Grace PC, Houston, and grandson of TE Doug (Parish Associate at Grace PC) and Emily Harper - had surgery for a brain tumor in February. He has been released from the hospital, and the biopsy results show the brain tumor was benign.

Family and friends of RE Janie B. Battise, Indian PC, Livingston – Janie entered the Church Triumphant February 16, 2014. Janie was active in the Presbyterian Women, serving as PW Moderator in New Covenant Presbytery and as a member of the Synod PW Coordinating Team.


*HR = Honorably Retired  *RE = Ruling Elder