

connections

Newsletter of the Presbytery of New Covenant

Growing congregations that passionately engage their community to make disciples.

Year of “Making Disciples” draws to a close

Commissioners and guests will gather at the Indian reservation in Livingston for the upcoming Presbytery meeting Saturday, November 15. The theme for 2014 has been “Making Disciples” which is the third part of the mission statement of the presbytery: “Growing congregations which passionately engage their communities to make disciples.” The Ecclesiastical Affairs Committee (meeting planners) has worked hard this past year to bring meetings which are interesting and engaging around this theme.

Here are some highlights for the upcoming meeting. We will be hearing from TE Jeff Smith, pastor at St. Andrew’s, Houston. Under Jeff’s leadership, the congregation

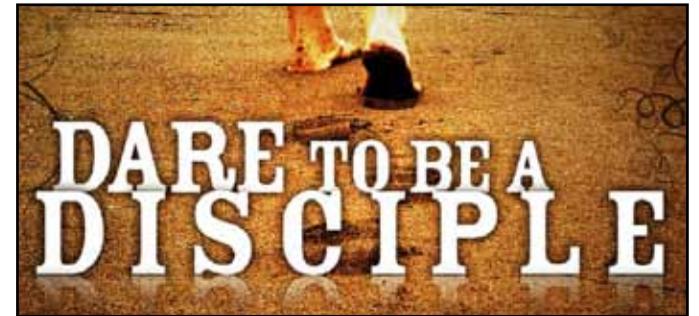
has taken this commitment seriously, with the “7 Marks of Discipleship” being prominent in their life together. Many, including Jeff, have been on the “Faithwalking” journey, which has been life changing for all who have participated.

We will vote on amending *The Book of Confessions* to include the “Confession of Belhar.” TE Greg Han will present information about the confession and its potential impact for us today. Study materials are available on the PC(USA) website (see article below).

Other business includes a first reading of the newly revised “Gracious Reconciliation and Dismissal Procedure” which has included suggestions from across the

presbytery. The vote on these revisions will be at the March 2015 meeting. There is also a new policy from the Committee on Ministry regarding ethics for Teaching Elders while in the discernment process outlined in the GRDP. Information can be found in the presbytery packet online at www.pbyofnewcovenant.org.

We will have the privilege of hearing a candidating sermon from Lauren Suba, who has been called to be the Executive Director of United Campus Ministries of Greater Houston. She hopes to complete her examination which would lead to her

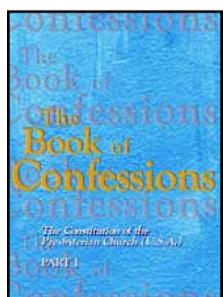


ordination to the office of Teaching Elder. There will be other recognitions and celebrations. The Offering has been designated for “Powerful Tools for Pastoral Caregivers” and the Presbyterian Mission Agency Special Offerings.

Here’s hoping for a joy-filled day as New Covenant gets together in Livingston!

Polity Lesson: Amending the *Book of Confessions*

In this next year, presbyteries across the country will have the opportunity to participate in the process of amending our *Book of Confessions*. This procedure is outlined



in Chapter 6 of our *Book of Order*.

Step 1: The proposal to amend is approved by the General Assembly for study in the

church.

Step 2: The General Assembly appoints a committee of ruling elders and teaching elders, numbering not fewer than fifteen, (not more than two from any one synod), to consider the proposal. The committee shall consult with the committee or council from which the proposal originated and report its findings to the next General Assembly.

Step 3: The next ensuing General Assembly considers the

report of the study committee and approves the proposed amendment and recommends it to the presbyteries for vote.

Step 4: The proposed amendment receives approval in writing of two thirds of the presbyteries.

Step 5: The proposed amendment is approved and enacted by the next ensuing General Assembly following the amendment’s receipt of the necessary two-thirds approval of

the presbyteries.

We are in the middle of this process to amend the “Confession of Belhar”. Step 3 happened in July at the 221st General Assembly, and we are now to Step 4, where the presbyteries will vote. The Presbytery of New Covenant will vote at its November 15, 2014, meeting which will be held at Indian Presbyterian Church in Livingston. We are one of 172 presbyteries across the country. A two-thirds majority equals 115.

See Why Belhar? Why Now? on page 3

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NEW COVENANT CONNECTIONS

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From the Cole Mine

Rev. Mike Cole, General Presbyter
Presbytery of New Covenant

“In the Blink of an Eye”

It was a normal morning. I was sitting at a left turn signal at a busy intersection in my neighborhood, listening to jazz and enjoying the start of a lightly raining new day. The signal light for oncoming traffic turned yellow and that’s when I noticed a truck speeding up to make it through the intersection, the middle of which had a significant rise to it. When the truck hit the hump in the street, it went airborne, careening toward the left turn lane in which I sat.

The mind is a marvelous thing. It can take in all sorts of data and create multiple scenarios in the span of a hummingbird wing beat. As I sat helplessly watching a large truck flying through the air, tires spinning on the wet pavement, I said a prayer, which was probably more like, O my God!, thought of Ellie at home still in bed, wondered what was so important to the driver to speed through the intersection, and pondered where the truck would hit – all in the blink of an eye.

When the truck touched the pavement again, the driver tried to steer away from the line of cars waiting with me to turn left. There was a wide concrete median curb and a light pole just to my left



and behind me. The skidding truck slammed into the curb, glanced off the light pole, and rebounded in the opposite direction where it slammed into a tree. The left turn signal turned green and the car ahead of me did a U-turn and I followed, navigating my way through strewn truck parts.

I parked, called 911 to report the accident, and asked for an ambulance. Meanwhile, others came to help the young men in the truck, who amazingly had no external injuries. The driver and passenger were wearing their seatbelts and the airbags deployed, which I’m certain saved their lives. The ambulance arrived and tended to the driver while the passenger declined medical help.

Then the mom of the driver arrived on the scene. She was a combination of scared, distraught, angry, and panicked. When her son saw her, he said, “I’m sorry, Mom. I’m sorry.” She stood there for a few moments and I could see the inner conflict – “Do I yell at him or hug him?” Unfortunately, she chose some angry words and I cringed, knowing the lasting effect of words said in haste, all in the blink of an eye.

As the EMT’s wheeled the driver into the ambulance, I looked the mom in the eye and told her I would be praying for her son and her. She nodded her head and made a

phone call, and I returned to my car to reflect on what I had witnessed and to pray for the young men in the truck and their families.

As I sat still, my heartbeat slowly decreasing, I thought of those I love and made some quick phone calls and sent text messages to tell them I love them. I realized that despite my desire to be in control of my life, there are too many variables that prove just the opposite. Everything can change in the blink of an eye. I also recognized that I don’t tell the people who are important in my life often enough how important they really are.

So here goes. Presbytery of New Covenant, all 96 congregations and 28,000 members of you who are such diverse, wonderful, obstinate, passionate, committed, argumentative, evangelical, progressive, outspoken, introverted, youthful, experienced, cynical, trusting, quirky, humorous, serious, theologically astute, naïve, prayerful, joyous, and loving followers of Jesus – I love you!

In Christ,

Why Belhar? Why now?



“The Confession of Belhar” comes out of South Africa at a time when the church dared to speak with unusual clarity about apartheid. It focuses the confession of the church on its own life rather than looking outside the walls to find fault, while ignoring its own sin. It helps us to see how our witness has fallen short of the gospel.

The themes of unity and reconciliation are key in this confession. We are called to be united in the one triune God. We are offered new life in Jesus Christ which breaks down dividing walls of hostility within humanity and transforms hatred into love. Unity is God’s will for humanity which reaches beyond differences of gender, economics, nationality, ethnicity, and race.

Belhar’s witness to the unity of God and the unity created by the good news of Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit calls us to the hard work of spiritual transformation and surrender to the way of Jesus Christ who came to unite all believers in the visible communion of the church. We look first at ourselves when faced with church division, rather than moving quickly to blame others.

We have seen people in our country in conflict over differences in race, issues of war and peace, poverty,

and abundance, political viewpoints, and sexual relationships. Where we find reconciliation is in the gospel of God, who alone can bring us together as one family in Christ. We hear the message that all are welcome at the Lord’s Table. In Belhar, we are confronted with our own lack of welcome, our arrogance, and our prejudices.

“The Confession of Belhar” grew out of the struggle of South African Christians to give witness to the gospel in the face of apartheid. So, too, we are called to give witness in the face of the injustices we see here in our own country. Belhar reminds us of the biblical principles of unity, justice and reconciliation, which we then can demonstrate in our discipleship and mission in the world as we proclaim “Jesus is Lord.”



For more information, please see the PC(USA) website (www.pcusa.org). There are resources there for further study on the “The Confession of Belhar”, including “Why Belhar, Why Now: Belhar and the U.S. Context”, which provided information for the writing of this article.

recently ordained

TE Amy Klinkovsky

July 26, 2014, at First PC, Bryan. Amy has been called to serve as an Evangelist in Los Angeles.

TE Brian Long

July 26, 2014, at Atascocita PC. Brian is serving as Designated Pastor of New Hope PC, Katy.

TE Kathleen Davies

August 24, 2014, at Community of the Servant Savior PC, Houston, where she is serving as Designated Pastor.

TE Kristi Click

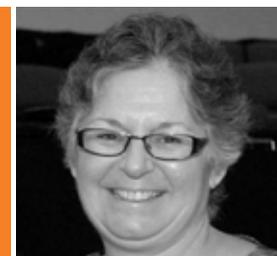
August 10, 2014, at North Park PC, Dallas. She is serving as Designated Associate Pastor at Spring Branch PC, Houston.

TE Brandon Gaide

August 10, 2014, at Memorial Drive PC, Houston, where he is serving as Associate Pastor for Next Generation.

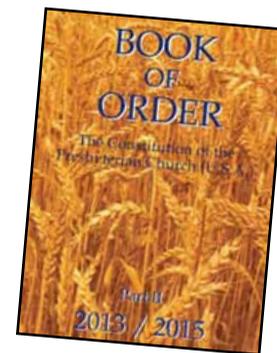
Clerk's Corner

Rev. Lynn Hargrove, Stated Clerk
Presbytery of New Covenant



A Brief Look at the *Book of Order*

The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is made up of two parts: *The Book of Confessions* (Part 1), and the *Book of Order* (Part 2). *The Book of Confessions* contains the eleven creeds, confessions, and catechisms adopted over the years to declare to our members and to the world who and what the church is, what we believe, and what we resolve to do. The statements come from across the history of the Christian church beginning with the Nicene Creed (dates to 325 CE). The most recent addition is the *Brief Statement of Faith* which originated with the reunion of the northern and southern churches to form the PC(USA).



The *Book of Order* has four sections: (F) Foundations of Presbyterian Polity, (G) Form of Government, (W) Directory for Worship, and (D) Rules of Discipline. Each of these sections contains chapters.

The F section contains three chapters on the Mission of the Church, the Church and Its Confessions, and the Principles of Order and Government. Chapter 1 reminds us that the mission of God in Christ gives shape and substance to the life and work of the Church, (F-1.01) and that Jesus Christ is the head of the Church (F-1.02). The Church is called to be a community of faith, hope, love and witness (F-1.03), open to the guidance of the Holy Spirit (F-1.04).

The G section contains six chapters. The first, Congregations and Their Membership, outlines the mission and fellowship of a congregation, as well as what it means to be a member. Guidance for congregational meetings is included in this chapter. The second, Ordered Ministry, Commissioning, and Certification, explains the roles of deacons, ruling elders, and teaching elders, as well as the preparation for ministry process. Ordination, pastoral calls and installations, and pastoral dissolutions are found here, as well as guidance for commissioning a ruling elder to particular pastoral service. There are church staff positions which offer certification, including Christian Educators.

Chapter 3 is titled Councils of the Church which addresses the work of sessions, presbyteries, synods and General Assembly, as well as the work of an Administrative Commission. Chapter 4, The Church and Civil Authority, addresses incorporation and church property, as well as the need for mandatory reporting of harm (or the risk of harm) related to the physical abuse, neglect, and/or sexual molestation or abuse of a minor or an adult who lacks mental capacity. Chapter 5, Ecumenicity and Union, includes how we relate to other denominations. The final chapter, Interpreting and Amending the Constitution, explains the process for amending *The Book of Confessions* and *The Book of Order*. We will be voting on amendments to both of these at the November 2014 and March 2015 meetings of presbytery.

The W section (worship) contains seven chapters and includes who is responsible and accountable for the various elements of a worship service, as well as the order of worship in the Reformed tradition. We gather around the Word, proclaim the Word, respond to the Word, seal the Word through the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord’s Supper, and bear and follow the Word into the world. Other services such as commissioning or ordination are included here, including the questions that are asked and answered.

See *Book of Order* continued on page 9



Mary's Musings

Mary Marcotte, Associate General Presbyter
Presbytery of New Covenant

Me (explaining how I understand the connection of the variety of ministries I am called to support via my position description as Associate General Presbyter for New Covenant): "I coach and resource individuals and congregations in a variety of practices that contribute to congregational vitality."

Visiting keynote speaker: "So, do you have vital and vibrant congregations?"

Wow! That cut to the chase and initiated a good bit of internal thought as the dinner conversation moved on. It's a question that continues to inspire and challenge me.

I'm convinced there are markers aside from attendance, building, and cash that reflect vitality. As a matter of fact, I'm leading a workshop at the Association of Presbyterian Church Educators Annual Event in February 2015 on some alternative means of evaluation.

I read a good bit of research and let it guide, inspire, and challenge me. Particularly, as I work with our New Worshiping Communities, I look at accountability and sustainability markers. These metrics absolutely have carryover value for all our churches. I've been particularly interested in following the UK's Fresh Expressions movement. Recognizing that the Church there was in freefall decline, about ten years ago an initiative was begun JOINTLY by the Wesleyans and Church of England to encourage communities of Fresh Expressions of faith. They have experienced both success and failures along the way, and we Presbyterians have learned from them and were inspired to begin the 1001 movement.

Now, ten years in, some interesting findings are emerging, according to a UK Fresh Expressions research study. The churches where both young people and the non-churched come and stay in higher than usual numbers have these things in common:

- However well they do events, most of their energy goes into developing friendships;
- People are welcomed and supported at times of challenging life-change;
- Newcomers are quickly enfolded into existing relationship networks;
- There is space, time, and permission to struggle with big questions;
- Acceptance and belonging is not dependent on orthodox belief;
- Responsibility is expected; the right and privilege of those who belong;
- Worship is inspiring and helps connect people with God, whatever the style;
- Leaders are accessible, open, honest, trustworthy, and facilitative.

Put another way: Relationships matter. Faith growth is ongoing. People may well belong before they believe. Questions are welcomed. Transformation is expected. Church is not just where friends hang out but where we are equipped to live life more deeply, thoughtfully, generously, and worshipfully.

There are many biblical images that can inform the questions we ask about our congregations, but perhaps one of the simplest is in God's call to Abraham and Sarah – Blessed to be a blessing. God, it has been argued, was doing a profoundly new thing here. (Thank you, John Stonecypher of geekedoutsoul.com for the schematic!) Instead of a cycle of people giving sacrifices to God and God blessing them so they give more to God to get more blessings for themselves, God changes the trajectory OUTWARD. God blesses Abraham and Sarah. Then God, Abraham, and Sarah work together to bless the world.

So what might it look like if session meetings featured stories of the ways God is blessing the mission and ministries of the church AND how the church is intentionally partnering with God to bless not just the particular congregation, but also the larger community? What if sessions INTENTIONALLY looked at how their congregation was living out those eight Fresh Expressions markers and made plans for how to live into them as a means of blessing the next generation?

Try it. You'll be amazed at the energy that is produced. And I'd love to hear your stories.

community news

What follows is a post by our Peacemaking Associate at the Hand in Hand School in Jerusalem.

Humans of New York and the World

By Kathi Neubert,
Peacemaking Associate

"When you are a child, and you walk outside, and see that your neighbor's house is gone, it puts something in you deep down. All the small children have fear. It's always with us. Weddings, graduation parties, these are happy events. But something is always missing. We always feel it. Life is very complicated now. There are checkpoints and police harassment. We live like second-class citizens. The Arabs are afraid of the Israelis. The Israelis are afraid of the Arabs. Arab children are afraid of bombs. Israeli children are afraid of rockets. And it's not like one side can win. The Israelis can never kill all the Palestinians. The Palestinians cannot kill all the Israelis. Only peace can end it. I'd say eighty percent want peace. The rest are crazy religious." Humans of New York (Jerusalem)

Just before I came to Israel I was introduced to a Facebook page called Humans of New York. If you haven't heard of it, I recommend a visit. It is listed as an Arts and Humanities website, but I find that it is much more. In the description, Brandon, the founder explains, "I started HONY because I thought it would be really cool to create an exhaustive catalogue of New York City's inhabitants, so I set out to photograph 10,000 New Yorkers and plot their photos on a map. Somewhere along the way, I began to interview my subjects in addition to photographing them. And alongside their portraits, I'd include quotes and short stories from their lives."

Humans of New York has become a daily reminder for over six million followers on social media, that everyone has a story, and those stories, captured in photos and quotes are sometimes happy, sometimes sad, always moving. Currently Brandon

is finishing up a 50 day trip to 10 countries, ending here in Israel, including the story above.

What a profound reminder of why I am here, and why the Hand in Hand schools are so vitally important, not only for Israel, but truly for the world. This model is another, better way to deal with the evil of hate and division.



Kathi Neubert

Just before the start of what was to become the First Gulf War, another Navy wife friend confided in me that she couldn't understand why she was completely indifferent about her husband's deployment and possible death. His job in the military required him to have hands on, front line duties that she believed should have caused her some concern. In her defense, she grew up in Belfast, Northern Ireland. She had shared stories of growing up that included bombings and death, walking to school and seeing bodies hung from lamp posts, watching neighbors' homes burned to the ground. I would say that it 'put something in her, deep down' that changed the way she dealt with life.

The universal problem of evil is easier to see in some places than others, but the effects are profound in those who experience it. Once planted, the seeds are hard to stop. Isn't it time we stopped planting those seeds of fear and division? Isn't it time we found another way?

Follow Kathi's blog
at <http://theinvestmentreport.blogspot.com/>

highlights

Save the dates for these Interfaith Ministries events!



Share a meal with people of different faiths and learn about what unites us! On Thursday, November 13, there will be an interfaith dinner at Zarathustri Heritage and Cultural Center, 8787 West Airport Blvd., 6:30-9:30 p.m. The Zoroastrian faith was formally founded in the 6th century BCE and influenced later religions including Judaism, Gnosticism, Christianity and Islam. It is currently estimated that there are between 145,000 and 2.6 million Zoroastrians worldwide. Dinner will be guided by a trained moderator who will provide us with a safe space to learn about how this ancient faith is practiced today.

Register at <https://www.imgh.org/ddz/>.

In collaboration with other local partners, IM will present a workshop on how to prepare your house of worship to respond to an emergency. “Faithful Readiness: An Emergency Preparedness Workshop for the Faith Community” will be held Saturday, November 15, 9:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m. at El-Farouq Islamic Center, 1207 Conrad Saur Dr. 77043.

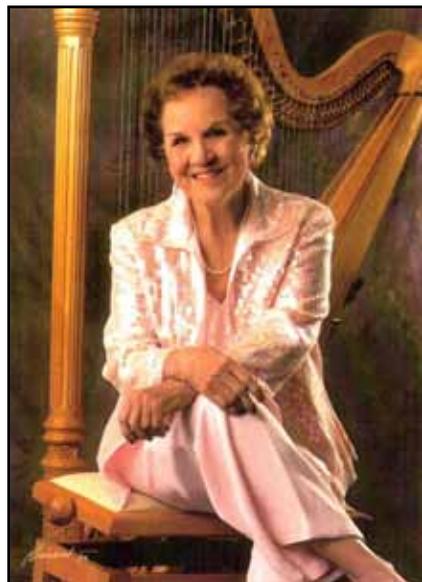
Register at IMGH.org/Disaster



Harp of Many Colors

Nationally known harpist Louise Trotter presents “Harp of Many Colors” on two harps Tuesday, November 18, at 10:30 a.m. in the Fellowship Hall of Memorial Drive Presbyterian, Houston. Enjoy music from Broadway, pop, jazz, ragtime, plus a “Name That Tune” contest for prizes! This concert is presented by MDPC Prime Timers, a senior adult fellowship group of Memorial Drive PC, Houston.

Lunch (\$9.50) will follow the program. Please RSVP by Wednesday, November 12, by contacting Carol Ann Shipp at catowl@aol.com or 281-627-2596.



Louise Trotter

Making History Today

Rev. Dr. James S. Currie, Executive Secretary
Presbyterian Historical Society of the Southwest



“A Matter of Perspective”

Winston Churchill is reputed to have said, “History is written by the victors.” If that is true, it may be because the losers are not around to write it, or it may simply be that they were outvoted. Churchill’s statement implies that, whether written by the winners or the losers, history is written with a particular perspective. Neither victor nor vanquished has a corner on the market of accuracy. Each would tell the story differently.

I wonder what the Philistine side of the story might have been had they had the opportunity to record their experience of being overrun by Joshua and the Israelites. As Americans observe Columbus Day, we are occasionally reminded that the Native Americans could offer a minority report on the “settlement” of this land. And I suspect that the Brits have a different take on the Fourth of July from that of the Americans.

Even from a theological point-of-view, the story is told from the perspective of the winners. For example, in 664 at the Synod of Whitby it was decided that, among other things, the Augustinian understanding of human sinfulness would prevail in western theology over against the Celtic (and Pelagian) view of human goodness. Only in recent years has the Celtic view begun to re-emerge. Among other writings, J. Philip Newell’s *Listening for the Heartbeat of God* (1997) attempts to integrate the virtues of both perspectives into one.

Most church histories and most histories of churches are not written from the point-of-view of winners and losers, of victors and vanquished. Most are written in an attempt to record, faithfully, the witness of past generations to the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and to show how that witness has contributed to who we are and why we are where we are, “warts and all.”

Nevertheless, in trying to record some aspect of the church’s past, the writer must make decisions about what to include and what to exclude. Deciding what to leave out can be as important as deciding what to include. Even in the Gospels we don’t have the whole story of Jesus’ life (cf. John 20:30).

One of the fascinating aspects of Scripture is that it is the story of God’s faithfulness to God’s creation and God’s people. Its focus is on a small group of people in an out-of-the-way part of the world that had no political or military power and lived, for the most part, at the whim of world powers that rose and fell over the centuries.

The central figure of the faith was born in a small town to two peasants. He never wrote a book or traveled more than a couple hundred miles from his home. He cultivated a group of followers who did not fully understand what he was about and one of whom betrayed him to the authorities who then conspired to execute him for sedition and blasphemy. In their eyes he was a loser. And yet, your life and my life are far different because of this one who “overcame the world.”

As we make history today, may we do so with a keen awareness of our limited perspective and of the fact that someone else might tell the story quite differently. We might not be wrong, but the larger picture might need the contributions of others as well.

New Covenant Youth in Washington



Ready for a different (or first!) experience of our nation's capital? Washington, DC, is full of beautiful monuments, fantastic museums, and wonderful green space. But it is much more than that. It is the place where decisions are made that affect people around the nation and around the world. Government is not just our elected leaders – it is about all of us. Faith isn't just about church. It is about social justice. From Moses to the prophets and beyond, people of faith have been led to speak to voices of power, and to seek social justice for all God's people.

Government is not just our elected leaders – it is about all of us. Faith isn't just about church. It is about social justice. From Moses to the prophets and beyond, people of faith have been led to speak to voices of power, and to seek social justice for all God's people.

High school youth from our presbytery have the unique opportunity to learn where and how faith and politics intersect, and how to participate as responsible citizens in the legislative process. Open to 20 youth at a cost of \$1555/person (all inclusive), the group will spend seven days and six nights exploring our nation's capital. Mark July 11-17, 2015, on your calendar and reserve your space now! Deposit of \$500 required.

For more information, contact:

TE Cassandra Dahnke

pastor@woodforestpc.org (713-444-1254) or

TE Tomas Spath, Parish Associate

familyministries@woodforestpc.org (281-782-4454)

Next Connections deadline

The next *Connections* copy deadline is Wednesday, December 3, for the January/February 2015 issue. Please send articles and photos to Helen Wolf at any time hwolf@pbyofnewcovenant.org.

mission and

CEDEPCA Becomes a seminary!

Our friends at CEDEPCA (Protestant Center for Pastoral Studies in Central America) have proudly announced that its Biblical and Theological Education Program has become a seminary.

Judith Castaneda, Director of CEDEPCA, said, "This project began two years ago. During that time we collected the dreams and ideas of our students, professors, and friends of CEDEPCA who motivated us to develop ourselves, along with the help from an expert in the field... We thank God for making us part of God's

mission and for directing our path."

Next July, there will be opportunity for a group from Presbytery of New Covenant to travel to Guatemala to see firsthand all of CEDEPCA's

programs at work: its

"seminary on wheels," empowerment ministries for women, and disaster work in partnership with Presbyterian Disaster Assistance. Contact Sharyl Davis for trip details at sharyl@northwoods.org or 281-444-8861.



Connecting, Equipping, Empowering... Synod grant supports Foster Care Adoption Program

Recently, Presbyterian Children's Home and Services (PCHAS) was awarded a grant from the Synod of the Sun in support of its new Foster Care and Adoption Program in Austin. Launched this past January, this program joins five other similar PCHAS programs located across Texas. Families in the program

are carefully screened, selected, trained, supervised, and supported so that children can receive care in safe and loving homes. Group homes for boys and girls in the Austin area have been repurposed for foster families.

More than 1000 children were in CPS foster care in Travis



County alone. Rev. Peter Crouch, Vice President for Development in PCHAS, speaking about the Synod grant said, "It again lets us know that our friends in the Synod and across Texas support the mission of helping at-risk children and families, like finding foster parents for foster children waiting for a place to call home." Contact person for this program is Adam Crawford. adam.crawford@pchas.org.

and ministry

youth news

What's going on at First PC, Jasper?

A new initiative to become a Missional Church

By RE Hill Kemp

Most of you have heard of Jasper, Texas, and its history of racial strife. From the Byrd murder several years ago to the city recently having to pay nearly a million dollars over the racial firing of an African American police chief, Jasper lives somewhat in another time if not in another country.

We at First Presbyterian Church, Jasper, feel called to help our community move beyond its heritage of strife toward a community life where prejudice and distrust do not drive the discourse. To that end, with our pulpit empty, we have launched onto a path to become a Missional Church aimed at changing relations between the races. The traditional rift between black and white is now setting the tone for relations with the growing Hispanic population.

We have our MIF (Ministry Information Form) out for national consideration by pastor candidates; ours is not quite the usual MIF. We are seeking a pastor for half-time as minister of our church and half-time as Director of our new organization, Peace Beyond Understanding, LLC (PBU).

What passes for racial peace in Jasper now is now the absence of open conflict. We are aiming for the peace set out in Philippians 4:7 *the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.* We plan to dedicate a professional minister for half time in Jasper to identify those ready to move beyond racial mistrust and help to build a loving and including community. We see this as a task of education, motivation, and prayerful urging.

We also aim to renew our

congregation and grow a church fully reflecting the whole community. We now are small and all white. By moving out into the community with PBU we believe that our ministry will attract people that we know are open to this initiative. When we were considering several possible future directions, our session members independently and unanimously chose this move. We already host a Hispanic Pentecostal congregation in our fellowship hall.

We hope to be part of the leadership of bringing change to our region. Interestingly after we launched our initiative, two civic moves have been announced. The Jasper Mayor has announced the formation of a Race Relations Board and is in the process of filling that board. Further, the Mayor has appointed the new Police Chief to coordinate with the U.S. Justice Department to begin Racial Sensitivity classes later this year. We will work with any and all of our neighbors who support our vision.

We are soliciting grant and other funding to facilitate the PBU mission. Response thus far has been good, but we still seek financial help for the PBU mission.

www.fpcjasper.org

PBU Vision:

We envision the Jasper Texas area as a beacon of true racial peace that goes far beyond absence of conflict. Relations between individuals and families are supportive with mutual concern and without regard for the racial make-up of the members. People of all ages are fully informed, clear about the socially corrosive aspects of prejudice, and committed to rid Jasper of all vestiges.

Editor's Note: The editor of Presbyterian Today magazine, Rev. Patrick David Heery, comments on this article: "I am blown away by your congregation and its commitment to seeing racial justice equality and harmony lived out. This is really inspiring... Thank you for this prophetic ministry."

Conclaves 2015: REGISTER NOW!

Conclaves are fun, faith-filled weekends at Cho-Yeh Camp & Conference Center in Livingston, TX, which enable youth to grow closer to God and connect with other young people from all over our presbytery. The weekends provide time for middle and senior high youth and adult advisors to engage in small groups and Bible study, to experience dynamic worship, to participate in a mission project, to explore ways to connect with God in the Spirituality Center, and of course to have a blast playing games and making new friends! These weekends are led by Presbytery's Youth Connection Council (PYCC). Make plans now! Dates are February 20-22 and February 27-March 1.

Cost: \$130/person, includes lodging, meals, a Christian concert, and conference t-shirt. Registration Packet available at: www.pbyofnewcovenant.org. Register online at: www.cho-yeh.org/texas-retreats/conclaves. Registration DEADLINE: Monday, January 20, 2015. *Adult advisors must be 21 and older; the ratio for the weekends is one adult to every five youth.



Summer 2015 Youth Opportunities

Mission Trips

Want to team up with other youth groups (junior and senior high school) and go on a mission trip this summer? Contact Caressa at the Presbytery Office to get connected! One opportunity: June 14-20 to New Orleans to work for Project Homecoming. Other opportunities include trips to Austin, Dallas, Fort Worth, San Antonio. Contact Caressa Murray, cmurray@pbyofnewcovenant.org

Synod Youth Workshop

July 20-25, 2014, at The University of Tulsa; High school youth <http://synodsun.com/?p=696>

Mo-Ranch Summer Youth & College Conferences:

June 7 - June 12, 2015	Mo-TLC "Teen Leadership Conference"
June 21 - June 26, 2015	Youth Celebration (high school)
June 28 - July 2, 2015	Junior High Jubilee I
July 2 - July 5, 2015	Multi-Cultural Youth Conference
July 5 - July 9, 2015	Junior High Jubilee II
July 20 - July 24, 2015	Young Disciples Camp

<http://www.moranch.org/Camps-Conferences/Youth-Adult>

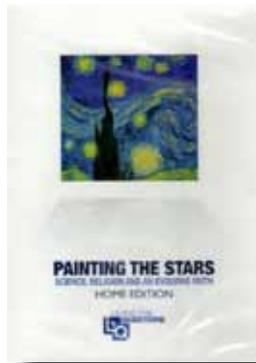


Camp Cho-Yeh

Summer camp for ages 6-16. Also, "Christian Leadership Training" for 16 and 17 year-old campers. www.cho-yeh.org/summer-camps-in-texas

Montreat

High school conferences:
June - July
Middle school conference:
July 22-26
www.montreat.org/current/2014-youth-conferences-at-montreat



Painting the Stars: Science, Religion and an Evolving Faith

7-session DVD curriculum

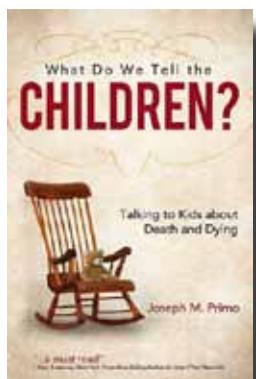
This challenging and thought-provoking series celebrates the communion of science and faith. The twenty minute video segments for each class are supported by photocopy-ready readings that explore the topics: healing the rift, a renaissance of wonder, getting Genesis wrong, an evolving faith, and more.



Saving Jesus: Redux

12-session DVD

Ever feel like Jesus has been kidnapped by the Christian Right and discarded by the Secular Left? "Saving Jesus: Redux" is a total revision of Living the Question's DVD-based small group exploration of a credible Jesus for the third millennium. Join Brian McLaren, Diana Butler Bass, Robin Meyers, Marcus Borg, Walter Brueggemann, John Dominic Crossan, Matthew Fox, and Amy-Jill Levine for a conversation around the relevance of Jesus for today. The 12-session program includes a new printable participant reader and a facilitator guide with discussion questions for exploration of the 30-minute video segments.



What Do We Tell the Children? Talking to Kids About Death and Dying

By Joseph Primo

Talking about death is rarely easy – and it can be even harder to do well with children. Pediatric grief therapist Primo offers practical tools, up-to-date research, and helpful ways to create a safe space for age appropriate grieving. Filled with stories of real families, the text offers solid guidance for those who care about children and who wrestle with their own feelings about grief and loss as well.

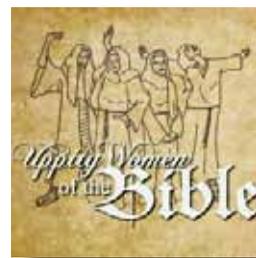


Animate: Practices

7-session DVD curriculum

The good folks at Sparkhouse are back with another entry in the Animate series which is designed for young adults but can be used with many age groups. A seven-session adult introduction to the central practices of the Christian faith, the 8-10 minute videos feature leading speakers of today. The facilitator's guide offers solid suggestions for discussion.

Brian McLaren on *Prayer: Oriented Toward God*
Sara Miles on *Food: Eating With Jesus*
Mike Slaughter on *Worship: Seeking God's Presence*
Phyllis Tickle on *Sacraments: A Tapestry of Traditions*
Shane Claiborne on *Money: The Joy of Sharing*
Enuma Okoro on *Service: The Needs Right in Front of You*
Doug Pagitt on *Community: An Unexpected Family*



Uppity Women of the Bible

4 separate DVD studies

Hebrew Bible professor, Dr. Lisa Wolfe, combines careful scholarship with humor and fresh insights as she addresses implications of historical context and original languages. While the visuals are less than stellar (just a talking head), Dr. Wolfe presents her material in a lively and engaging manner, and the short (5–15 minute) clips should stimulate excellent, lively and thoughtful discussion. A facilitator's discussion guide is available for each session.

Ruth (7 sessions)

The Song of Songs (6 sessions)

Esther (6 sessions) – Esther's story unfolds in an exotic and fanciful Persian kingdom complete with a dim witted king, a defiant queen, an egotistical lieutenant and a loyal uncle and features lavish banquets, extreme beauty treatments and danger at every turn. Come to a better understanding of the role Esther's story plays in Judaism, especially in Purim celebrations.

Judith (6 sessions) – Judith, who appears in the Apocrypha, helps us explore a story rife with warfare, lust, espionage, and intrigue and raises questions about what actions an empowered woman might take to combat oppression.



Being Presbyterian: Preparation for Ordered Ministry

Preparing and training Church Officers is what this new entry in the hard copy of Theocademy's digital resources are all about. The series name reflects the language of the *Book of Order* and serves as a reminder of the common vows taken by Teaching Elders (aka Pastors) and Ruling Elders (aka Session members). Each video segment is between 12 and 20 minutes long. Download discussion guide/ lesson plans at www.theocademy.com. All Theocademy video and print resources are available online, free of charge, but for those who might have inconsistent or no wifi in classrooms and meeting rooms, these hard copy disks are helpful.

Volume 1 includes Ordered Ministry, Being Leaders, Who is the Church? and What is the Church?

Volume 2 includes Being a Confessional Church, The Confessions, A Brief Statement of Faith, Principles of Order and Government, and The Councils of the Church

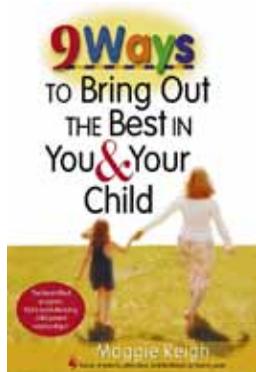
Volume 3 includes The Dynamics of Worship, The Word in Worship, The Sacraments in Worship, and Prayer and Song in Worship. It would make a significant contribution to the life of Worship committees and planning teams.



Stop Bullying

22-minute DVD

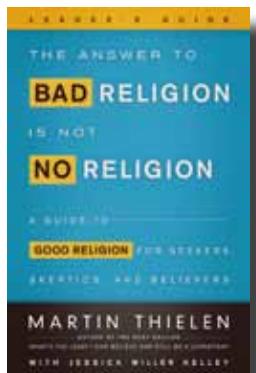
This updated look at bullying reflects the rise of bullying using social media. It both addresses the causes of bullying and offers four helpful techniques for handling bullies. This could be an excellent springboard for discussion among youth/and or their parents. The resource could be used in either one or two sessions.



9 Ways to Bring Out the Best in You and Your Child

By Maggie Reigh

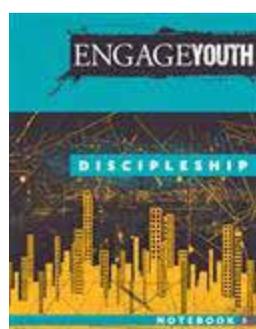
Parenting is a matter of the heart; it is about empowering parent and child by turning power struggles into powerful relationships. Filled with both profound insights and practical ideas, the author shows parents how to raise respectful, responsible and resilient children, and at the same time adding more laughter and joy in the mix. Chapters address mutual respect, bringing value to life, mutual empowerment, communication, encouragement, and more. This could make a wonderful nine-week study resource with parents committing to practicing each area of suggestion and sharing their results.



The Answer to Bad Religion is Not No Religion

By Martin Thielen

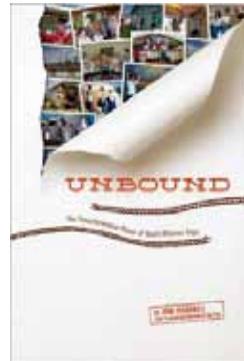
Subtitled a “Guide to Good Religion for Seekers, Skeptics, and Believers,” the author uses personal stories to illustrate the dangers of religion that is judgmental, legalistic, and anti-intellectual. Yet rather than simply list the church behaviors that have contributed to the growing numbers of nones (people with no religious affiliation), the book argues for religion that promotes grace, love, and forgiveness. Part One explores the cost of bad religion, Part Two addresses the problems when one opts for no religion, and Part Three explores ten gifts that the author considers ‘good religion.’ These markers include engaging in community, prophetic witness, respectful evangelism, and open mindedness.



EngageYouth: Discipleship

The workbook 6-session study

Specially designed for use with youth, this new resource from the Office of Evangelism offers an exploration of the meaning of Christian discipleship that helps youth answer – with integrity – the question of membership *Will you be Christ’s faithful disciple, obeying his Word and showing his love, to your life’s end?* Bible study and reflection plus developmentally appropriate and relevant activities for real life application should make this a useful resource for teachers and youth leaders.



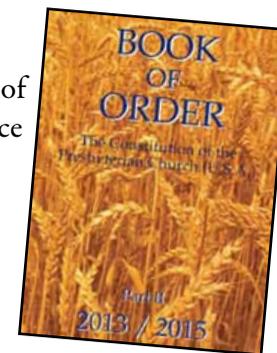
Unbound: The Transformative Power of Youth Mission Trips

By Jann Treadwell

This is the rare volume that both explore a theology of youth ministry and provides helpfully detailed materials on the logistics of planning. The title is inspired by the raising of Lazarus and taken from the author’s conviction that we are called to unbind one another for full life in Christ. It is filled with stories and testimonies of young people and adults whose lives have been profoundly changed as a result of their experiences on mission trips.

The Book of Order *continued from page 3*

The **D section** (discipline) includes fourteen chapters, beginning with the reminder that “the purpose of discipline is to honor God by making clear the significance of membership in the body of Christ; to preserve the purity of the church by nourishing the individual within the life of the believing community, to achieve justice and compassion for all participants involved; to correct or restrain wrongdoing in order to bring members to repentance and restoration; to uphold the dignity of those who have been harmed by disciplinary offenses; to restore the unity of the church by removing the causes of discord and division; and to secure the just, speedy, and economical determination of proceedings. (D-1.0101)



This section defines the judicial process of the PC(USA), as well as the two types of cases, remedial and disciplinary. A remedial case is one in which an irregularity or a delinquency of a lower council, the Presbyterian Mission Agency, or an entity of the General Assembly may be corrected by a higher council. (D-2.0200). A disciplinary case is one in which a church member or a person in an ordered ministry may be censured for an offense. (D-2.0203) Guidelines for investigating any allegations are found in this section, as well as those for setting up an ecclesiastical trial. Although this is the section with the most chapters, thankfully, here in New Covenant, it is the one we use the least!

The Book of Order is available for download for free from www.pcusa.org. There are resources for church officers available at the Presbytery Center. A new resource is a video series called “Theoacademy” which includes short lessons on the *Book of Order* as well as *The Book of Confessions*. These DVDs are also available for free download from <http://www.theoacademy.com>. In January of each year, the Church Officer Enrichment event is held with workshops on topics such as these. Watch for more information about that event.

The Book of Confessions and the *Book of Order* give shape to who we are as Presbyterians as we seek to live out the “Great Ends of the Church” (F-1.0304). Hope you’ve enjoyed this quick tour!

2014 calendar

November 1-December 2

Worship Art Workshops
Atascocita PC
Houston, TX

November 1-8

Presbytery Trip to Israel

November 6

POP 40th Anniversary
Butler's Courtyard
League City, TX

November 15

Presbytery Meeting
Indian PC
Livingston, TX

November 20

Retiree Luncheon
St. Philip PC
Houston, TX

November 26-28

Thanksgiving Holidays
Presbytery Center closed
Houston, TX

December 2

Worldwide Giving Day
Presbyterian Mission Exchange

December 4

Presbytery Open House
Presbytery Center
Houston, TX

December 24-26

Christmas Holidays
Presbytery Office closed
Houston, TX



January 30-31

Church Officer Enrichment
ChristChurch
Bellaire, TX

February 20-22

Youth Conclaves
Cho-Yeh
Livingston, TX

February 27-March 1

Youth Conclaves
Cho-Yeh
Livingston, TX

what's happening ... upcoming events and gatherings

November 5



COME CELEBRATE with Presbyterian Children's Homes & Services!

The dedication and open house of the Single Parent Family Campus, made possible by Presbyterian Children's Homes & Services and St. John's Presbyterian, Houston, will be held Wednesday, November 5, at 10:00 a.m. You are invited to attend this wonderful celebration! Be part of the festivities surrounding the completion of the campus and the opening of this critically needed ministry for struggling single moms and their children.

If you would like to attend, please RSVP by contacting Donna Lujan by Friday, October 30, at Donna.Lujan@pchas.org or (800-888-1904, ext. 12). The Single Parent Family complex is located on the campus of St. John's Presbyterian, Houston, 5020 West Bellfort Ave., Houston (in the Meyerland area).

<http://www.stjohnspresby.org/>

November 23



LIVING GIFT MARKET

The 25th annual Living Gift Market at St. John's PC, Houston, will be held Sunday, November 23, 11:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m. This market is unique because it offers affordable, socially responsible, and handcrafted gifts for the entire family - just in time for the holiday season.

The participating organizations are all involved in providing services which meet human needs in real ways. Giving generously to improve lives expresses the true meaning of Christmas. You may want to consider making donations in honor of family members and friends in lieu of traditional commercial gifts.

Delicious homemade soup will be served. Booths include: 10,000 Villages, Heifer International Project, Delicious Peace Coffee, Anchor House Ministry, Living Waters for the World, and Houston Seafarer's Ministry . . . just to name a few.

St. John's is located at 5020 W. Bellfort Street, Houston 77035 www.stjohnspresby.org

what's happening ... upcoming events and gatherings

December 2

#GIVINGTUESDAY™



Worldwide Giving Day!

In the days following Thanksgiving, there's already Black Friday, Small Business Saturday, and Cyber Monday to kick off the holiday shopping season. Now, a group of charities and corporate sponsors is urging Americans to make the Tuesday after Thanksgiving just as powerful a day of giving to those in need. It's called #GivingTuesday, and organizers say it is gaining momentum as the holiday shopping season approaches.

On Tuesday, December 2, join other Presbyterians and participate in #GivingTuesday Day by supporting mission and ministry at home and around the world.

The Presbyterian Mission Exchange, operated by the Presbyterian Foundation, makes it easy to do all of your online giving in one place. The Exchange provides a secure online giving platform. Donors can use the site to make online gifts via debit or credit card or electronic funds to any PC(USA) congregation and to dozens of Presbyterian-related mission organizations – regional, national, and international. Funds raised for your congregation will be delivered by check within two weeks. Applicable credit card processing fees will be deducted from the total raised. (If your church is a PMX partner, monies raised will be deposited in your Ministry Partnership Fund.)

For details, visit <https://www.presbyterianmissionexchange.org/coming-soon-giving-Tuesday>

January 30-31

SAVE THE DATE! EMPOWERING Leaders for the 21st Century!



A multi-presbytery event for Church Officer Training and Enrichment - co-sponsored by Presbytery of New Covenant, Presbytery of South LA, Mission Presbytery, and the Synod of the Sun - will be hosted by ChristChurch PC, 5001 Bellaire Blvd., Bellaire, January 30-31. The church is conveniently located just outside Houston's 610 Loop.

On Friday, January 30, there will be a BBQ dinner, live music, conversations on leadership, mission displays, and Evening Prayer. Saturday, January 31, will feature Morning Prayer, a keynote presentation by Dr. Cynthia Rigby on *Being Reformed in the 21st Century*, and your choice of two of the following workshops:

- Beyond the Worship Wars
- Calling, Equipping, & Nurturing Volunteers in Ministry
- Confronting the Cross
- How Firm a Foundation
- Making Meetings Meaningful and Memorable
- Moving Beyond Fear, Obligation, and Guilt... Serving the Church
- Without Losing Your Faith
- Seeing the Neighborhood with God's Eyes
- Team Strength: The Empowered Church Officer
- Times, They Are A-Changin': Proposed Amendments to the *Book of Order* from the 2014 GA
- What Every Elder Should Know About Church Finances
- Benedictine Spirituality for the 21st Century
- Managing Conflict: A Referee's Experience/An Educator's Perspective
- Mission Networks, Grants, and More
- Science or Faith? Science and Faith!
- Vision Clarification... its more than words
- What's Up with 1001 – and why it's good for all congregations
- Whose Job Is It, Anyway?
- You Want ME to Lead a Bible Study?

Scholarships are available to help defray food and housing costs of those traveling 100 miles or more each way, courtesy of a Synod of the Sun Mission Partnership Grant. Cost for the meals for Friday and Saturday is \$25. Cost for the meal Saturday is \$10. Childcare will be provided upon prior request.

For more information, contact Mary Marcotte, mmarcotte@pbyofnewcovenant.org or 713-526-2585, x224.

December 7

MDPC CONCERT SERIES: *Christmas*



All are invited to attend "The All-American Holiday Concert" at Memorial Drive PC, Houston, Sunday, December 7, 7:00 p.m. in the Sanctuary, Charles Hausmann, conductor, with organist Kathryn White and a professional orchestra. The prolific K. Lee Scott and distinguished symphonic composer Christopher Rouse will be featured. Scott's "Christmas Cantata" is a glorious proclamation of the season, while Rouse's unusual, "Karolju," based on original music, captures the charm of centuries-old international Christmas carols in bright new settings. The concert is free.



In Our Thoughts and Prayers

The family of RE Thalia Bunnell – Thalia died July 24, 2014. She and her husband were founding members of St. John's PC, Houston.

Family and friends of RE Karen Bates, First PC, Sugar Land. Karen died July 21, 2014. She and her husband Rick were youth advisors for many years at Westminster PC, Houston.

Candidate Ray and Greta Henderson, Northwoods PC, Houston – their young grandson Reed died August 12, 2014. Ray and Greta are charter members of Northwoods PC.

TE Eid and Naven Abdelmassih – a son, Yousef, was born August 4, 2014.

Family and friends of TE William Lytch, HR – William died September 12, 2014. He served New Covenant as pastor of Memorial Presbyterian in San Augustine, TX.

Family and friends of RE Floyd Tate, University PC, Houston – Floyd died September 16, 2014. Mr. Tate served on many committees at the Presbytery as well as his home church.

TE Rachel Poysky – Rachel's mother died in September. Rachel is the Children's Ministries Director at Memorial Drive PC, Houston.

Family and friends of RE Harold Rosenberg – Hal died September 26, 2014. He was a founding member of Clear Lake PC, Houston.

Family and friends of RE Richard Schlissler, St. Philip PC, Houston – Dick died September 27, 2014.

Family and friends of RE Bill Carlson, St. Philip PC, Houston – Bill died October 3, 2014

Family and friends of CRE George Davis – George died October 3, 2014, in Fredericksburg. He served New Covenant Presbytery as a Commissioned Lay Pastor and as pastor of St. Luke's PC, Cleveland, TX. He was one of the first Lay Pastors in the presbytery.

RE Eileen and Dr. Robert Moore (St. Paul PC, Houston) – Robert is now at home with hospice care.

HR = Honorably Retired | TE = Teaching Elder (Rev.) | RE = Ruling Elder | NWC = New Worshipping Community



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