

PRESBYTERY MEETING

FEB. 9, 2008

POSTLUDE

Faithful and effective ministry in the 21st century

Transforming congregations and renewing presbyteries

Sunny skies arched above the beautiful campus of Central PC as 92 ministers and 90 elders gathered for the meeting of the Presbytery of New Covenant. Among the numerous guests at the meeting were the confirmation classes of First PC in Tomball and First Westminster in Baytown who were present to see “how we do polity.”

Central PC was founded in 1894 and moved to its current location in 1960. (Do you know that 24 of the 105 churches in New Covenant Presbytery were founded between 1838 and 1898?) Welcoming the assemblage were the Revs. Howard Reed, (pastor at Central PC) and Shawn Kang (organizing pastor of Pathways NCD, which shares ministry at Central PC).

Keynote speaker Rev. Jill Hudson (Middle Governing Body Relations Coordinator for the PCUSA) gave a clear and urgent message about transformation that is the heart of our call to witness to Christ in a postmodern world. “We must make this a high priority,” Jill encouraged. “We must have a fearless commitment to

take risks – to face failure, for that is how we learn,” she continued.

The postmodern church is built on the love of Jesus Christ and a desire to make faith relevant to today’s culture.

We must understand this postmodern time in which we live, said Jill, and learn what faithful and effective ministry looks like in the 21st century. Rev.

Hudson reviewed three periods in our culture, defined the populations in our churches, identified markers of the postmodern world, and described the characteristics of the postmodern church and its leaders.

A copy of Rev. Hudson’s PowerPoint presentation is available at the Presbytery Center. To have a copy emailed to you, please contact Wendy Bailey at wbailey@pbyofnewcovenant.org or Mary Marcotte at mmarcotte@pbyofnewcovenant.org

For further reading: *When Better Isn’t Enough: Evaluation Tools for the 21st Century Church* by the Rev. Jill Hudson.



Rev. Jill Hudson

Bob Poteet Honorably Retired

by Elder Dick Baker, Postlude reporter



Carol and Bob Poteet

The Presbytery bestowed the status of “Honorably Retired” on the Rev. Dr. Robert M. (Bob) Poteet after 41 years of dedicated service to the Lord. A native of San Antonio, Bob was ordained in 1967 after receiving his MDiv from Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary.

During the following ten years, he served in pastorates in the North Texas area. While serving as Minister of Education at First PC in San Antonio, he earned a DMin degree from Union Seminary. He later served as Associate Presbyterian for Orange Presbytery in NC.

In 1988 Bob returned to Texas to serve at Grace PC in Houston as Associate Pastor for Education and Executive Pastor.

Bob and his wife Carol have three children and four grandchildren. Their son and his wife are both ordained PC(USA) ministers serving in the Philadelphia area. Bob and Carol are both musically talented — Carol as a member of Grace’s Chancel Choir and Bob as an occasional organist and choir member.

Bob reflected on his blessings during his 41 years of ministry and was presented with gifts of appreciation from the Presbytery.



Central Presbyterian, Houston, hosted the February meeting of New Covenant Presbytery.

Morning offering of \$1532.44 was given to Presbyterian Outreach to Patients.

Windwood Overture deferred

By Elder Dick Baker, Postlude reporter

A motion from the Session of Windwood PC, Houston, recommending that the Presbytery endorse a proposed overture to the 218th General Assembly pertaining to the rights and disposition of church property, was deferred to later consideration. The overture, if passed by the General Assembly and a majority of the presbyteries, would amend the *Book of Order* to clearly set forth the rights which local churches have to their property and to establish procedures for the disposition of a local church's property under certain circumstances. The intent of the overture is to bring peace, unity, and purity to the denomination by avoiding disputes and civil action regarding these matters.

A motion was approved to defer consideration of the overture until such time as the Presbytery has no active cases involving church property. The concern was expressed that consideration and a vote on this overture could prejudice the current work of the Heritage PC Administrative Commission. However, it was noted that by deferring consideration of the overture, it will delay action by the General Assembly until 2010. The motion to postpone consideration of the overture was approved by a vote of 96 For, 49 Against.

ChristChurch Overture approved

By Elder Dick Baker, Postlude reporter

A motion from the Session of ChristChurch Presbyterian, Bellaire, recommending that the Presbytery endorse a proposed overture to the 218th General Assembly, pertaining to habilitative services for children with developmental disabilities, was approved by a unanimous vote of the presbytery.

This overture was originated by the Presbytery of Central Nebraska. It calls on the PC(USA) Board of Pensions to expand the denomination's medical plan to include habilitative services such as occupational therapy, speech therapy, and physical therapy to children with developmental disabilities such as Down Syndrome and Autism.



Biyaya Community NCD



Peace Presbyterian NCD

At the very end of the day of business, commissioners approved one last motion - to grant the requests of not one but two of New Covenant's NCDs to charter as congregations in the PC(USA). Then the celebration began, as Biyaya Community and Peace Presbyterian told the stories of their journeys to become chartered churches in New Covenant Presbytery.

The Rev. Sam Fabila, Organizing Pastor of Biyaya NCD, spoke with evident joy about the eight years of prayer and effort during which Biyaya has ministered to the Filipino community in Houston. "We have a large family - fourteen Bible studies and prayer meetings now meeting," reported Sam. He thanked Southminster PC in Missouri City for the use of its facility that gave Biyaya a place of its own to worship and other churches that have helped Biyaya through the years. Also included in his thanks was Clif Peabody "who taught me to drive." Said Sam, "We have much evangelism

to do, for there are 60,000 in the Filipino community in the Houston area."

And then the Rev. Jim Gill, on crutches, slowly climbed to the podium. No knee surgery could keep this organizing pastor from this day when Peace Presbyterian NCD would make their formal request to charter. Five years ago, said Jim, Peace began with an evening service of prayer and praise. A year later an anonymous donor made it possible for them to move to a location where they could hold morning services. In 2005 they moved to the present storefront location in Pearland; in 2006 they began two worship services; and now there is choir, drama group, five committees and four ministry teams.

Few dry eyes could be seen as members of Biyaya and Peace Presbyterian NCDs filled the front of the sanctuary and sustained applause resounded. Broad smiles said it all.

General Presbyter Cole unanimously reelected

The Rev. Mike Cole, who is completing a 5-year contract this month, was reelected General Presbyter, effective February 9, 2008, to an indefinite term. The approved motion also called for his Terms of Call be unchanged from 2007 except to include a sabbatical, as recommended by the Sabbatical Guidelines of the Presbytery.

Dave Johnson of the Personnel Committee reported that questionnaires requested by the Personnel Committee cited Mike's deep love for Christ, his ability to connect with people, the balance and transparency he maintained during the recent financial crisis, his selflessness, his passion for growing disciples, and his commitment to the presbytery vision.

Note: Mike was not present at the meeting because his wife is recovering from recent surgery.

New Minister-Members introduced to New Covenant Presbytery

The Rev. Becky Ardell Downs was received as member-at-large. Although transferring from East Tennessee Presbytery, Becky has roots in Texas, as she grew up in Timber Ridge PC when it was in Spring and worked at one time at Southminster PC in Missouri City. She received her MDiv from Columbia Theological Seminary in Decatur, GA. Becky is the wife of the Rev. Mark Downs, pastor at Heights PC, Houston.

The Rev. Jim Davis who is serving as pastor of First PC, Kingwood, was officially introduced to the Presbytery. He has transferred from Seattle Presbytery. Jim attended New College Divinity School at Edinburgh University in Scotland, and received his MDiv from Trinity Evangelism Divinity School in Deerfield, IL. He earned a PhD in New Testament at the University of Nottingham in England. "I got here as soon as I could," quipped the native of Ohio.



Rev. Rhonda Detenbeck

The Rev. Rhonda Detenbeck was received into the Presbytery as member-at-large. She is working as Stated Supply at First PC, Rosenberg. Rhonda grew up in Buffalo, NY, and worked at the former Braeburn PC here in Houston. Rhonda earned a BS degree in Christian Education from Houghton College in New York and a MDiv from San Francisco Theological Seminary. She has transferred to New Covenant from South Louisiana Presbytery where she served in New Orleans.

FOG draft to be sent to committee in April

Elder Susan Wittjen reported on behalf of Ecclesiastical Affairs that Session Records Reviews are scheduled to be held April 26, August 16, October 25, and November 8.

The Rev. Carl Travis of First PC, Ft. Worth, will give the keynote address, "A Call to Stewardship," at the May Presbytery meeting. He is a Generation X'er and a disciple that is possessed of the idea that stewardship is the foundational concept for mature faith.

Elder Julie MacLemore reported that a draft of the FOG Task Force's review of the proposed changes to the *Book of Order* is posted on the presbytery's website. Please send comments and observations to Julie.MacLemore@ElPaso.com by March 31. The report will be finalized and given to Ecclesiastical Affairs in April.



Rev. Becky Downs



Rev. Jim Davis

Report on Presbytery's Finances

by Elder Dick Baker, Postlude reporter

Elder Sid Holderness reported on behalf of the Presbytery Finance Committee that all funds being currently received by the presbytery for Denominational Offerings are being paid to the General Assembly on a monthly basis.

Debt repayments for past due denominational offerings have been made to General Assembly in accordance with the Debt Repayment Schedule. By March 2008, an excess of 50% of the total amount owed to General Assembly will have been paid, with the remainder to be paid over the next three years.

During 2007, the number of copier machine leases was reduced from six leases covering eleven machines to four leases covering six machines. Three of the copiers are being used by churches in the presbytery for a usage fee and three are located in the Presbytery Center. One of the copiers at the Center is available for use by a member church for a fee. All lease payments are current and are being paid monthly.

Although the Operating Fund had an excess of expenses over revenues for the six months that ended 12/13/07 (\$16,489), the deficit of 1.7% is a substantial improvement over the six months that ended 12/31/06.

It is of concern, noted Sid, that the presbytery is contingently liable as a guarantor on about \$10,246,000 of member church loans. Work has begun on developing the 2008-09 Operating Budget.

Next ...
Session Records Review
Saturday, April 26
10:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.
First PC, Livingston

Clerks are asked to pre-register with Janice Schessler, 713-526-2585 or jschessler@pbyofnewcovenant.org.

Examination sustained

Barrett Ingram completed his ordination examination by preaching a sermon before the presbytery, using Matthew 25:14 as his text, the Parable of the Talents. Afterwards, with no questions



Rev. James Harper and Barrett Ingram shake hands upon approval of Barrett's examination.

Student at Chicago Theological Seminary and Columbia Theological Seminary.

from the floor, a motion to sustain the examination was made and approved.

Barrett was under care of South Louisiana Presbytery and has been nominated to serve as pastor of Westminster PC, Galveston. He will be ordained and installed at Westminster PC, Galveston, on February 16, 2008.

Barrett earned a BA in Religious Studies from Millsaps College and an MDiv from Vanderbilt University Divinity School. He has been a Visiting

Status report from Heritage AC

The Rev. Casey Jones, Chair of the Heritage Presbyterian Church Administrative Commission (AC), presented a brief status report of the commission's activities and asked for continued prayers for all the parties involved. In January, the Commission met with the Stated Clerk of the Presbytery to review relevant sections of the *Book of Order* and the Presbytery's "Process for Addressing Churches within the Presbytery of New Covenant Seeking Withdrawal from the PC(USA)".

The AC has also had meetings with the steering committee representing the Heritage minority (those members of Heritage not desiring to leave the PC(USA) and with the presbytery's three-member team from the Committee on Ministry (COM) established to work with the Heritage minority. The Commission has also met with the Heritage Session, representing the majority who desire to leave the PC(USA). The substance of these meetings remains confidential.

The Commission intends to continue meeting with the various entities involved on about a weekly basis and provide periodic status reports to the presbytery.

Professionalism in the office

Carrie Walker (presbytery staff) and Karla Collins (Brenham PC), who was represented by the Rev. Jim McLeod, were recognized for their certification by the Administrative Personnel Association (APA), a professional association for administrative staff of churches, governing bodies, agencies, and institutions of the Presbyterian Church (USA). They were congratulated for their study and commitment to the understanding of the issues, polity, history, and theology of our the church.

CODA

Elders and minister commissioners to the presbytery meeting received the following announcements by presbytery agents on behalf of presbytery and conducted the following additional business at the Feb. 9, 2008 meeting:

- Elected Lindsay Hatch (Clear Lake, Houston) to serve as Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary's Alternate Theological Student Advisory Delegate to the 218th General Assembly, June 21-28, 2008, in San Jose, CA.
- Elected the Rev. Deborah Cenko (First, Wharton) to serve on the Nominating Committee of the Presbytery, Class of 2009.
- Approved the request of Advent Presbyterian Church to purchase property located at 903 Spring Cypress Road, ½ miles west of Old Town Spring, to be financed at \$650,00 out of current monies of the church and a loan from First Community Bank.
- General Council authorized the Finance Committee to list for sale the property of the former First PC, Liberty.
- General Council approved Presbytery Loan Guaranty Guidelines and filed the Restated Articles of Incorporation with the Secretary of State for the State of Texas. Churches were reminded to hold an annual meeting of the corporation and to file appropriate reports with the Secretary of State to avoid being labeled as "dissolved."
- Granted the Rev. Robert Covington (First PC, Kingwood) and the Rev. Robert Poteet (Grace PC, Houston) Honorably Retired status, effective March 31, 2008.
- Approved the motion from General Council to establish the majority vote required to dismiss any church from the Presbytery to be a simple majority of those present and voting.
- Approved the names of 22 individuals who have agreed to serve on presbytery committees.

The Postlude is published after each stated meeting of the Presbytery of New Covenant by the presbytery's Communications Committee.

Editor: Helen Wolf

Reporters: Elder Dick Baker - Grace PC, Houston

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Next Presbytery Meeting
Sat., May 10 First PC, Houston