

PRESBYTERY MEETING

MAY 10, 2008

POSTLUDE

Inspirational worship leads commissioners into day's business

The glorious "Rhosymedre" by Ralph Vaughan Williams and the stately procession of First Presbyterian's Chancel Choir (Houston) gave preview to a brilliant time of worship that concluded with the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

Brass, flutes, and percussion accented the wonderful morning anthem, and pianist Linda McKechnie offered magnificent piano arrangements during the time of communion. Ten commissioners from New Covenant and our Youth Advisory Delegate (YAD) to the June meeting of the General Assembly were commissioned during the service.

The Rev. Lynn Hargrove illustrated her text, Matthew 9:35-10:23, with scenes from an episode of "Desperate Housewives," shown on large screen TVs. Where are we in this presbytery? asked Rev. Hargrove. Jesus went about the cities and villages, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and meeting the needs of the people he encountered. Jesus told his disciples to go find people. We must move out into our communities, equipped to tell our own faith stories of how God has intersected our lives, exhorted Rev. Hargrove.

The Morning Offering was given to Presbyterian Service Center for its ministry that provides low cost housing for those who are "differently-abled."

"The Spirituality of Stewardship" Tithing...an ancient spiritual discipline



The Rev. Karl Travis

In his keynote address the Rev. Karl Travis, pastor of First Presbyterian in Ft. Worth, spoke forthrightly and passionately on the subject of stewardship. "Key among the values

of our Presbyterian heritage is the joy of disciplined sharing," he began.

What followed was an inspiring and engaging talk about how stewardship is the church's theological antidote to the chief idols of our age: consumerism, materialism, and acquisition. Nothing is more liberating, said Rev. Travis, than to give something up, to sacrifice, and to discover contentment in doing so. It is countercultural to do so, but it is a central message of the Gospel and needs to be the centerpiece of our teaching about stewardship.

Our annual stewardship campaigns are not first about the church's need to receive. Stewardship is more about the individual's need to give. None of us deserve a single thing. How we respond to all that we have is the spiritual issue in our church. We must help one another "slip into the generous heart of God," said Rev. Travis.

Having studied Generational Theory for two decades, Rev. Travis described how the church must speak with each generation in distinct ways. There has been a generational shift away from stewardship as a means to preserve and promote an institution, towards stewardship as an act of personal spiritual devotion which secondarily benefits the church. The interests of younger Americans have been shown to be more personal; they are desiring to experience spiritual growth.

Presently, much of our stewardship conversation begins with the assumption that the entire endeavor has only to do with funding the church's mission. "In this day of shrinking membership and low institutional self esteem, we are sending many of our fifty-and-under members skulking away, their pristine checkbooks in hand." Our stewardship message is one that offers joy, excitement, and liberation!

It is an ancient spiritual discipline to tithe. It is a response to God's great love and generosity. Our stewardship is about thanking God by the way we live our lives and how we spend and share our money. Stewardship teaches us that in our giving, we become most like God.

*"Where your treasure is,
there your heart will be also."*

Matthew 6:21



Update from Heritage Administrative Commission/



Members of the Heritage Administrative Commission answer questions from the floor: Rupert Turner (chair), Mary Lee Going, Rev. Deborah Measells, Jeanie Flowers, and Mary Herlitz. Not pictured: Rev. Jack Lancaster, Rev. Casey Jones, Scott Meddaugh, and Jim Bushong.

In his report on behalf of the Heritage Administrative Commission, the Rev. Casey Jones (First PC, Pearland) thanked the many individuals and churches in the presbytery for the support given Heritage PC - physical, financial, prayer, and programming.

Six new members have recently joined Heritage PC, and a new dimension of responsibility and leadership is being seen among the members. Attendance on a recent Sunday was 110 and the offering that Sunday was \$5000. Two adult Sunday School classes are operating, as well as classes for ages K and older.

"Heritage has been through hot times, but refreshing winds are blowing," said Casey. He announced that Heritage PC has asked to host the February 2009 presbytery meeting.

Elders Jim Bushong (Westminster, Houston) and Mary Lee Going (Memorial Drive, Houston) have been appointed to the Commission by General Council. The Heritage AC assumed original jurisdiction of the session of Heritage PC and will continue to function as session until elders can be elected by the congregation.

Elders Rupert Turner (MDPC) and Sid Holderness (ChristChurch Bellaire) are helping to renegotiate Heritage loans. Members of the Commission answered questions from the floor.

Thien An NCD's request to charter approved



Praise the Lord! Hallelujah! exclaimed members of Thien An NCD in celebration and thanksgiving for their journey of faith!

It was a time for rejoicing as members of the Thien An NCD came before the presbytery to request approval to be chartered as a congregation of the PC(USA). Under the evangelization and



Rev. Viet Ho

leadership of their organizing pastor, the Rev. Viet Ho, this group of Vietnamese in the southwest area of Houston has been gradually increasing in numbers during the past ten years. "This is a red letter day, to be standing in front of

Of the 88 current members, all but 10 are former Buddhists who have now professed their faith in Jesus Christ and been baptized into the community of believers.

Thien An (which in English means "grace") will soon be the Thien An Presbyterian Church. They meet in a storefront property in southwest Houston. Their primary outreach to the Vietnamese community is through a computer lab and computer classes. They have weekly worship and Bible study groups. Rev. Ho thanked everyone in our presbytery and member churches who have done and given so much to make this new church a reality.

New Covenant Presbytery," said Rev. Ho.

Three pastors retire

The Rev. Gene T. Price was granted Honorably Retired status, effective June 30, 2008. Gene received her MDiv from Perkins School of Theology and was ordained in 1997.

Gene served as Associate Pastor at The Woodlands Community Presbyterian Church. She will be serving as a commissioner from New Covenant Presbytery to General Assembly in June 2008.

Gene's primary career was motherhood until her children were grown. After years of volunteer service and pastoral care, she served as a deacon and twice as an elder. She and her husband Bob are retiring to North Carolina.

Also granted Honorable Retirement are the Rev. Eugene B. Edwards, (chaplain) and the Rev. Bryan Kile (Gulf Prairie PC, Jones Creek) who will be recognized at the August presbytery meeting.



Rev. Gene Price

Synod Administrative Commission formed at request of South Louisiana Presbytery

by Elder Dick Baker, Postlude reporter



Sara Jean Jackson

Elder Sara Jean Jackson (St. Philip PC), commissioner from our presbytery to Synod of the Sun, reported on two major news items from Synod:

New Synod Design: After a yearlong study, the Synod of the Sun has approved a new mission statement, organizational structure, and staffing plan. The new mission statement is: "The Synod of the Sun is a missional body which exists to glorify God as it encourages and supports presbyteries within its bounds and as it provides a connection to the whole Presbyterian Church (USA)."

The new Synod Assembly is comprised of four commissioners from each of the eleven presbyteries, plus the presbytery executives as corresponding members. The

Assembly will meet three or four times a year to carry out the three primary functions of the synod: mission, communications and governance. Through these functions the synod will support the presbyteries through "synod mission networks" and will support covenant relationships with educational institutions, Mo Ranch, and service agencies. Preliminary staffing plans and budgets incorporating these changes have been developed for 2008 and 2009.

Administrative Commission for South Louisiana Presbytery: A new synod Administrative Commission has been formed to examine concerns regarding church property and presbytery leadership in the South Louisiana Presbytery. This commission was formed following the receipt of a letter to synod from a group of pastors and elders of South Louisiana Presbytery raising these concerns.

The commission will investigate and report to the synod at its next stated meeting. Elders Rupert Turner and Jane Larkin from New Covenant Presbytery are serving on the commission.

Body commends Casey Jones for Stated Clerk of 218th General Assembly

A motion to commend the placement of the name of the Rev. Winfield "Casey" Jones as a candidate for Stated Clerk of the 218th General Assembly was approved.

The Rev. Kevin Keaton, First PC, Sugar Land, speaking in favor of the motion, said that Casey would be an ideal candidate because of the great pastoral skills he has observed in Casey, particularly in his work with the Heritage Administrative Commission - his ability to reach across the table and his deep sense of fairness in dealing with people. This motion is made, said Kevin, not to endorse but simply to commend a brother in Christ to General Assembly.

The Stated Clerk Nomination Committee for G.A. has announced that three applicants, the Rev. Winfield Jones,

the Rev Edward Koster, and the Rev Dr. William Tarbell have declared to stand for Stated Clerk of the General Assembly against the committee's nominee, the Reverend Grady Parsons.

The Stated Clerk is the chief executive officer of the Office of the General Assembly, elected to serve a term of four years. The work of OGA is carried out under the direction of the Stated Clerk.

The election will take place at the General Assembly meeting in June.



Winfield "Casey" Jones

Fiscal 2008/09 budget approved

by Elder Dick Baker, Postlude reporter

Following a review of the presbytery's current financial situation with respect to its operating budget and its debt repayment schedule, the presbytery reviewed and approved the fiscal year 2008/09 budget.

The budget for the next fiscal year (which begins July 1, 2008) is a balanced budget of \$1,975,434, with revenues and expenses about \$65,000 greater than the current fiscal year budget.

The largest increase in revenues is projected to come from project support for new church developments, while most of the increase in expenses will go toward an approximate 5% increase in staff compensation. It was noted that, due to past financial difficulties, the staff has not received a pay increase during the past 3 years. The presbytery approved the new budget unanimously.

(Details of the current financial report and 2008/09 budget are available on the presbytery's website).

Recap of Pre-Presbytery meeting

On the day before the presbytery meeting, the Rev. Karl Travis fascinated his audience with his presentation about the differences to be seen among generations within the church and the implications these distinctions have on stewardship. Because of his study of Generations Theory, he has come to better understand the motivations behind the giving of various groups within our congregations. He adamantly states, "There is no one-size-fits-all stewardship program."

Karl described the characteristics of five generations and how their shared experiences influence their approach to stewardship.

- The GI Generation, born 1901-24
- The Silent Generation, born 1925-42
- The Baby Boomers, born 1943-60
- GenXers, born 1961-81
- Millennials, born 1982-2003

Watch for an expanded report of this gathering in the August Connections.

Special Stated Meeting
Presbytery of New Covenant
Sun., June 29
3:00-5:00 p.m.
General Assembly Debriefing
Pines PC, Houston

Examination sustained

Two candidates completed their ordination exams in preparation for the ministry of Word and Sacrament by preaching a sermon before the presbytery.

Noelie Day completed her ordination examination by preaching a sermon before the presbytery. After questions from the floor, a motion to sustain the examination was made and approved. Noelie, under the care of New Covenant Presbytery, has been nominated to serve as pastor of Oaks PC, Houston. She earned a BS from Louisiana State University, and MDIV from Austin Theological Seminary.



Noelie Day



Caressa Murray

Also preaching a sermon to the presbytery was **Caressa Murray**, candidate under the care of Grace Presbytery. Caressa has been nominated to serve as associate pastor for youth at Webster Presbyterian. Caressa received a BS from Centenary College of Louisiana and a MDIV from Austin Theological Seminary.

Welcome, Rev. Oglesbee!

The Rev. Steve Oglesbee was received by the presbytery, transferring from Whitewater Valley Presbytery, located in East-Central Indiana. He was installed May 18 as pastor of Clear Lake PC.

Steve received a BA degree from Indiana University and his MDIV from Princeton Theological Seminary. He and his wife have two teenagers.



Steve Oglesbee

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 May 10, 2008 meeting:

- Received the report that Alternate Commissioners to General Assembly who will replace primary Commissioners who are unable to attend are Elder Monica Lin (Formosan) and Elder Herb Myers (Fist, Alvin). Those not able to attend: Charles Stogner and Robert Adams.
- Congratulated Memorial PC, San Augustine, which is celebrating its 170th anniversary on June 1, 2008. Memorial PC was the first Presbyterian church in the State of Texas.
- Approved the request that the minutes of presbytery meetings be reviewed by the Ecclesiastical Affairs Committee, posted on the presbytery website for commissioners to review, and then approved by the presbytery at its next regular meeting.
- Approved as Principal Readers for the standard Ordination Examinations for Fall of 2008 and Spring of 2009: Rev. Kevin Boyd, Rev. Jake Gonzales, Rev. Kyle Walker, and Rev. Becky Downs. Alternate Readers will be Rev. Debbie Cenko, Rev. Bob Murphy, Rev. Marie Mickey, Elder James Bushong.
- Approved enrolling Jody Mass (Southminster PC, Missouri City) and Sally Wright (Covenant PC, College Station) as inquirers.
- Approved the names of 11 individuals who have agreed to serve on presbytery committees.
- Renewed the commission of Gene Marion to serve as CLP at St. Luke's Cleveland, effective 1/1/08 to 1/1/09 and granted permission to administer sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper, to moderate the session, have voice and vote in meetings of the presbytery, and to perform service of marriage.
- Renewed the commission of Imelda Carrillo to serve as CLP at Emmanuel, Galveston, and granted permission to administer sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper, to moderate the session, have voice and vote in meetings of the presbytery, and to perform service of marriage.

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

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Next Presbytery Meeting - Sat., Aug. 23
Grand Lakes PC, Katy