

PRESBYTERY MEETING

FEBRUARY 7, 2009

POSTLUDE

Presbytery votes against proposed ordination change

By Elder Dick Baker, Grace Presbyterian, Houston

Elder and pastor commissioners at the February meeting of New Covenant Presbytery passed all but one of the ten proposed amendments and four ecumenical statements that, if approved by a majority of presbyteries, will make changes in the *Book of Order*. A brief summary of each amendment was projected on screens as discussion and voting proceeded on each of amendment and ecumenical statement.

The amendment that did not pass, Amendment 08-B, concerned Ordained Officers. If approved by a majority of presbyteries, the wording would amend the required standards for ordination to the offices of deacon, elder, and minister of the Word and Sacrament by removing the present paragraph that requires, among other standards for ordination, “fidelity

within the covenant of marriage between a man and a woman, or chastity in singleness” and replacing it with a requirement to “live lives obedient to Jesus Christ the Head of the Church ... and to understand the Scriptures through the instruction of the Confessions.”

Prior to floor debate on this amendment, the Rev. Ted Foote (First PC, Bryan) laid out the case for the proposed amendment, and the Rev. Dave Peterson



Commissioners listen respectfully to hour-long floor debate.

(Memorial Drive, Houston), laid out the case against the proposed amendment. These presentations were followed by approximately one hour of floor debate, alternating between those speaking for and those speaking against the motion.

The Rev. Alan Trafford (First PC, Lake Jackson) and the Rev. Bill Poe (St. Philip PC, Houston) led commissioners antiphonally in prayer and silent meditation before balloting began. (prayer printed on page 2)

Results of the written ballot were 119 for (41%), 171 against (59%), and 1 abstention. This follows the same voting pattern when this issue has previously been debated in our presbytery.

Approval by a simple majority of the 173 presbyteries is required for enactment of the amendments and the ecumenical statements. Voting by the presbyteries is to be reported to Office of General Assembly by May 18, 2009.

The complete text of each of the proposed amendments, its rationale, and the latest vote tallies may be found at www.pcusa.org/generalassembly/amend.htm.

Time of worship begins day's business



Commissioners receive communion prior to day's business.

Morning Worship, led by an awesome praise team and a beloved preacher, gave a centered focus to the assembly of pastors and elders gathered at Grace PC, Houston, to conduct the business of the day.

Grace's Praise Team, combining traditional hymns and contemporary praise music, led God's people in heartfelt praise and worship. The Rev. Jack Lancaster (HR), preaching on I Peter 1:3-5, exhorted the body to put first things first, to put God before fears. “We have a living hope; it is a gift of God,” he reminded.

The Sacrament of Communion by intinction following Rev. Lancaster's message, gave visual witness to the communal celebration as commissioners moved from their seats to receive the elements. “...we, who are many, are one body in Christ.” (*Romans 12:5*) A spirited organ postlude energized all for the work that lay ahead.

A Prayer for New Covenant Presbytery: February 7, 2009

By Revs. William Poe and Alan Trafford

Mighty and gracious God,
You strengthen us by Your Spirit for our life and ministry together,
and You call us to love and serve You in ways
that are consistent with the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Today You call us to work together in seeking Your will
for our presbytery and our denomination on a difficult matter,
made more difficult because of differences among us
undertaken in good conscience and a striving for faithfulness.

So we ask You once again to help us.

Help us, in the midst of our differences,
to exhibit the love, care, and compassion
that we see in the life of Jesus,
who called into his circle of disciples
those with significant and strongly felt differences.

Take from us all fear,
and our tendency toward sinful factionalism.

Open us to the guiding presence of Your Spirit,
so that all that we do might be pleasing in Your sight.

Open us also to one another,
and help us to hear from each other
the faithful effort to discover Your will and way.

Confirm in us the reality
that the claim of Christ upon us is primary,
and that he is the One who calls us and binds us together.
Help us to see our agreements and disagreements
in their proper perspective.

Loving One, help us to embody in our words and actions
the grace and mercy You have so freely shown to us all,
and to the whole world, in Jesus Christ.
Rule over us, and move us into closer alignment with your will.

Grant, Almighty God, that as You have claimed us as Your people,
that we may show Christ-like kindness one toward another
and work for the upbuilding of Your Church.

Grant, O God, that we may show
by our life, worship, and work together
that we have not been called by You in vain,
but that we may live so in harmony with each other
that integrity and holiness may prevail among us;
and may we so strive to benefit one another,
that Your name might be glorified by us,
until having finished our life on this earth,
we reach the goal which You have set before us,
and may come to that blessed and joyous rest
which has been prepared for us in heaven by Christ our Lord. Amen.

Final stanza is adapted from John Calvin's "Brotherly Kindness," taken from
Devotions and Prayers of John Calvin, edited by Charles Edwards.

Examination sustained



Christa Brewer

Candidate Christa Brewer completed her ordination examination in preparation for the ministry of Word and Sacrament by preaching a sermon before the presbytery. She chose as her text, Exodus 32:1-14, a text that reveals how God works through relationships, giving love and grace even when His people disobey. After questions from the floor, her examination was sustained in full by the presbytery.

Christa is serving as associate pastor at The Woodlands Community PC in The Woodlands. She received her MDiv from Princeton Theological Seminary and received a MA in Christian Education from Stanford University. She will return to Sacramento Presbytery to be ordained in March.

Serve Your Community!

August 1, 2009

A DAY OF SERVICE

Register at...

adayofservice.org

713-526-2585

Make way for the work teams!

General Presbyter, Mike Cole, exuberantly announced that the first of two Volunteer Villages has opened in Texas City. The second village is expected to open in early March in Port Neches.

Work teams from across the country will now be able to stay in the Villages while here to help in hurricane long-term recovery. These villages are made possible by Presbyterian Disaster Assistance (PDA).

New Minister-Members introduced (rather reintroduced) to New Covenant Presbytery

Extending the right hand of fellowship to new colleagues, commissioners welcomed two pastors to New Covenant.



Rev. Marcia Miscall

The Rev. Marcia Miscall, has transferred from Grace Presbytery, via McAllen and Paris, Texas, to serve as pastor at First PC, Livingston. Marcia earned a BA in Christian Education before receiving her MDiv from Pittsburgh Theological Seminary. Marcia has served New Covenant at New Hope PC in Katy and Westminster PC in Houston. Welcome back to New Covenant, Marcia!



Rev. Christena Alcorn

The Rev. Christena Alcorn has transferred to New Covenant from Presbytery of Cincinnati. Educated in Texas, she received her BA from Austin College and her MDiv from Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary. "What a special treat it is to be welcomed during this presbytery meeting at which Rev. Lancaster preaches. He baptized me! I've truly come home," exclaimed Christena.

Word of appreciation to Presbytery of New Covenant

Diane Prevary, Stated Clerk of the Presbytery of New Covenant, read a letter sent to the Presbytery from the Stated Clerk of the PC(USA).

"On behalf of the General Assembly I want to extend a special word of appreciation to the Presbytery of New Covenant for your faithful stewardship in 2008. More than ever, maintaining the covenant connection that links together the body of Christ is crucial for the faithful witness of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

Your presbytery's full support for 2008 per capita apportionment is a tangible sign of commitment to that vision, and I am extraordinarily grateful.... We have sought to be good stewards of the resources that you have shared with the whole church and look forward to a continuing partnership in the Gospel with you in 2009."

Gradye Parsons, Stated Clerk

Westminster Presbyterian, Beaumont, to dissolve in May

The presbytery concurred with the request of Westminster PC, Beaumont, to be dissolved no later than May 31, 2009. The presbytery will assume responsibility for remaining property. A commission to oversee the details of the dissolution has been appointed.

It was in February 1880 when First Presbyterian Beaumont was organized. A year later a frame building was erected at the corner of Elizabeth and Main Streets, the same location where the church stands today. The church split into separate entities, then reunited in 1921 as Westminster Presbyterian. By December of that year, the church numbered 625 members.

Since then, the church has had a proud history of planting other Presbyterian churches in the southeast areas of Texas (Amelia, Pioneer, Robbins Memorial, St. Andrews, Second, Silsbee, Sour Lake, and Vidor) and supporting many local missions caring for the poor and homeless, as early as 1897. The congregation called the first woman in a pastoral position in the

PC(USA) – the Rev. Patricia McClurg became the assistant pastor in June 1967.

Also, part of the history of Westminster are its spectacular stained-glass windows (by Tiffany or one of his contemporaries) and its support of music – both within the church

and in the community through support of local symphonic students.

It is almost impossible to narrow down the history of 125+ years of a congregation that has richly served its community and God. The Rev. Carol Tompkins, pastor of the church for the last five years, reports that in spite of the difficulty of the decision, the congregation has made a courageous move.

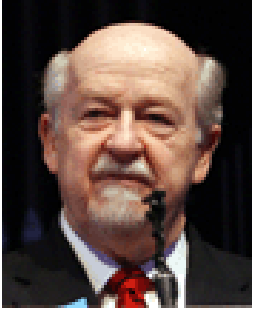


Commissioners surround Westminster members and pastor, Rev. Carol Tompkins (center) in prayer.

"It's an incredible congregation. Who knows in what way God will use it. What of Westminster is going to live in each member ... in a different form? You can't really be sure what the Resurrection will look like."

Following the approval of the motion to concur with the request, commissioners gathered around the members present and pastor Carol Tompkins in prayer.

Honorably Retired!

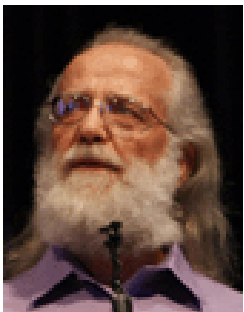


Rev. Larry Spencer

changed that future (“because of the Lancasters”) when instead he entered seminary, first at Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary and the last two years at Union Theological Seminary in Richmond, VA. He returned to Texas with a call to serve at Aldine PC (now Advent PC) that “loved me into ministry” and has finished with the same kind of loving congregations at St. Thomas PC in Houston and First PC in Galveston, “with lots in between.”

Rev. Lawrence (Larry) Spencer was granted Honorably Retired status, effective 3/31/09. He began his ministry at the February presbytery meeting 45 years ago when the presbytery was Brazos Presbytery, Presbyterian Church U.S.

Larry received a B.A. degree from the University of Texas in Austin and enrolled in Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis. He



Rev. Dr. Ed Schauer

the College of Juvenile Justice. “Never have I felt the call of God so strongly as when I was called to Prairie View,” attests Ed. His plans for retirement include a continuation of research and study of human marginalization and oppression, and a working with his daughter, Dr. Elizabeth Wheaton, in a nonprofit consultancy with that will help others do mission.

Rev. Ed Schauer was granted Honorably Retired status, effective 2/7/09. Ed was ordained in the Presbyterian Church in 1975 by the Presbytery of South Dakota and has served in three presbyteries.

Ed thanked New Covenant for trusting in him and allowing him to minister at a secular university, Prairie View A&M, where he is a professor in

Day of Thanksgiving



Rev. Jack Lancaster

Before the Rev. Jack Lancaster rose to deliver the morning’s message, General Presbyter Mike Cole reminded the assembly of its previous declaration that February 21, 2009 be a day of thanksgiving to God for the life and witness of John W. (Jack) and Helen Lancaster. A Gala Dinner and Silent Auction to honor them will be held that day to benefit a new endowment for campus ministry.

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 February 7, 2009 meeting:

- Granted Honorably Retired status to the Rev. Rebecca Harrison, effective 12-31-08. She will be recognized at the May presbytery meeting.
- Received the Finance Report, given by Elder Sid Holderness (ChristChurch, Bellaire). Sid reported on performance vs. budget, indicating that in the first 6 months of this fiscal year, the presbytery has received 45.3% of expected revenue, spent 46.0% of budgeted expenditures, and has received 23.9% of budgeted per capita. Sid also reported that the presbytery is performing in accordance with the Debt Repayment Schedule.
- Elected 38 individuals to serve on presbytery committees.
- Viewed a video presentation from the presbytery’s Stewardship Oversight Team about the work of the presbytery. It will be posted on the presbytery website and well as made available on DVD for any congregation that requests it. Call the presbytery office 713-526-2585.
- The Rev. Thomas Atkins has been called to serve as pastor of St. Thomas PC, Houston. He will be introduced at the May meeting of presbytery.
- General Council has approved the sale of the property of the former First PC, Liberty.
- General Council has approved and adopted the Guidelines & Application for the Lynn Johnson Social Justice Fund and constituted the Grant Committee: Helen DeLeon, Susan Wittjen, and Garry Schoonover. Information at www.pbyofnewcovenant.org
- The morning offering totaled \$3516.67 for our new international covenant with Juan Calvino Presbytery in Lima, Peru.
- The lunchtime Cents-Ability donations (\$236.10) will be given to West Houston Assistance Ministries

NOTE: Thunderstorms that blew through Southeast Texas on February 11 destroyed some of the Volunteer Village at Port Neches, which was still under construction. Teams are needed to complete the work. If you can gather a team of volunteers to work, call Wilf Wityshyn at 502-938-8093.

The Postlude is published after each stated meeting of the Presbytery of New Covenant.

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