

PRESBYTERY MEETING

MAY 8, 2010

POSTLUDE

Request for action failed

By Elder Walter Going, Memorial Drive, Houston, Postlude Reporter

In February, John Knox Presbytery (includes portions of Minnesota, Iowa, and Wisconsin) approved Scott D. Anderson for ordination as a Minister of Word and Sacrament. Ordinarily, this action would not be out of the ordinary, but Scott has clearly acknowledged that he does not meet the provisions of the *Book of Order* and has no intention to be compliant with them. First PC, Kingwood, brought forth an action item which was discussed and voted upon at the May 8th presbytery meeting.

Action Item: To approve adding the Presbytery of New Covenant to the list of complainants in the remedial complaint filed with the Stated Clerks of John Knox Presbytery and the Synod of Lakes and Prairies concerning irregularities in the approval of the ordination of Scott D. Anderson to be a Minister of Word and Sacrament at the meeting of John Knox Presbytery on February 20, 2010.

Elder Chip Benton, First PC, Kingwood, presented the motion and asked the commissioners to join in the complaint against John Knox Presbytery. A floor discussion followed. Moderator Garry Schoonover asked the Stated Clerk Diane Prevary to respond to process questions. In response to a floor question from an elder, Diane explained that a single complainant would move the action forward in the judicial process.

Elder Benton responded to another question from the floor, noting that New Covenant's affirmative vote in this action would not incur any financial liability to PNC.

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Growing the Church Deep and Wide - a Multicultural Worship Celebration

By Elder Phyllis Freeman, St. John's, Houston, Postlude Reporter

A Multicultural Praise and Worship service, filled with energy, joy, and love, spotlighted the wonderful diversity of our congregations. We asked the Holy Spirit to open our minds to celebrate the differences in culture and background, knowing that the Lord's spirit was present for all people.

Leading the morning worship were pastors and lay members of Pathways, San Pablo+Trinity, Pinecrest, Indian, Thien An, St. Paul's (Houston), Young Nak Korean, Arabic NCD, Fuentes de Esperanza NCD, First African NCD, and United Ghanian NCD. Wow! When the Lord's Prayer was spoken at once in all the different languages (Pentecostal cacophony), what a real thrill!

Colorful native dress, multiple languages, testimonies, drama, sounds and rhythms from unfamiliar instruments, exuberant singing, and joyous dancing –

repeatedly told the story of the opening hymn, "In Christ There Is No East or West."

Some highlights: boys from Young Nak Korean who read scripture and gave moving testimony to what their church has meant to them; the Lord's Prayer in different languages led by the Alabama Coushatta youth in sign language; Pinecrest's Choir singing "Pray for Me and I'll Pray for You;" St. Paul's Calabash Choir with golden smiles and dress; the young faces of Pathways Praise Team; Indian drums calling us to worship; the outreach drama by youth of Thien An...and the spirit seen as we "danced" our offerings to the front of the church. The offering of \$2,051 will be directed to presbytery's Multicultural Café.

The uplifting and inspirational service deepened our understanding of who we are and reminded us of the strength we have as we worship and do God's work together.



Request for action failed *continued . . .*

Comments against and in favor of the motion were made eloquently and respectfully. Those comments against the motion noted our need to focus on love and sharing our love and that it is not our decision to question God's calling someone to the ministry. Also stated was the need to include the Permanent Judicial Commission in our prayers and to leave it in their hands. Other commissioners spoke in favor of the motion with supporters principally citing the obligation to uphold constitutional standards for ordination and adherence to biblical teaching.

Following prayer offered by the Rev. Debbie Measells, First PC, Brazoria, the body voted with written ballot against the motion by a vote of 88 to 84. Those wishing to declare respectful dissent could sign their name on a list at the Stated Clerk's desk.

Overture from First Pasadena approved

Elder Jason Reed spoke to the Overture to the General Assembly from First PC, Pasadena, asking the Presbytery of New Covenant to request the establishment of a process to evaluate the current call system of the PC(USA) for changes that will shorten the length of time a church seeking a pastor is ordinarily without an installed pastor.

The average time to conduct and complete the search for a new pastor is from 18 months to 2½ years. While there is a provision for temporary pastoral leadership during these times of transition, many congregations feel as though they are always living in transition and that their constant focus is upon who will be the next pastor, not what God is calling them to do in ministry and mission. The motion was approved by the presbytery.

Focus 2010

Mel Bringle, Keynote Speaker
25 Workshops!
Saturday, Oct. 2
First PC, Pasadena

Deep and Wide through diversity

The Rev. Dr. Laura Mendenhall is past president of Columbia Theological



Rev. Dr. Laura
Mendenhall

helped us to think theologically about how we grow the church deep and wide through diversity.

Elder Jo Ann Currie's reflections upon hearing Laura's presentation are printed on page 5.

Next presbytery meeting

Action items have been added to the agenda for the presbytery meeting on Sunday, July 18, that make it necessary for churches to elect commissioners to the meeting. Pinecrest PC, 4913 Market St., 77020 - 3:00 - 6:00 p.m.

Ike Recovery continues

The Rev. Tom Sharon, (First PC, Freeport) spoke passionately about the witness to the Resurrection that the work of



Rev. Tom Sharon

Ike Recovery is, not only for homeowners but for the volunteers. It is not just about building homes but living witness to God's love through his people. Information about opportunities for mission teams can be found on the Ike Recovery website, www.ikerecoverytexas.org. Small churches can get involved by joining with others for a work team. Contact Kendall Boyd to schedule a work team 281-229-1834 or kboyd@phyofnewcovenant.org.

Funds are still needed for long-term Ike Recovery work.

Update on Community of the Servant Savior

Rev. Alan Brehm, pastor of Community of the Servant Savior, thanked the presbytery for its prayers and support after the devastating fire that completely destroyed the church building on April 8. They intend to rebuild. Currently the congregation is



Rev. Alan Brehm

meeting in a nearby elementary school, but plans include occupying a temporary building sometime in June. "We have been overwhelmed by your support and encouragement," said Rev. Brehm.

Postscript: After the presbytery meeting, we learned that the church will be worshipping in a temporary building as of May 30! It should be constructed and in place by May 26. At that time they will be able to receive your offers of assistance.

- Chairs, about 50 (preferably the molded kind, but any will do!)
- Folding tables
- Presbyterian Hymnals and Bibles (NRSV)
- Small, portable lectern, preferably one that sits on the floor

If you are able to donate or lend any of these items, contact Alan at 832-865-9354 or alanb1961@comcast.net.

Candidate for Ordination

Laura Grice completed her ordination exams by preaching a sermon before the presbytery and answering questions from the floor. Presbytery sustained her examination in full.



Laura Grice

Laura received her MDiv from Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary in 2008, while under care of Mission Presbytery. Laura has been called to serve as Associate Pastor at Faith Presbyterian, Baytown.

Candidates for CLP

Floor examinations were sustained for **Elder Dr. Mark Smith** and **Elder Melissa Brown** to serve as Commissioned Lay Pastors.



Dr. Mark Smith



Melissa Brown

Mark will serve at First Kingwood, effective 6/1/10-5/31/11, and Melissa will serve at Grace Presbyterian, Houston, effective 7/1/10-6/30/11.

Both will serve in the ministry for mission trips/retreats. They were granted permission to administer the Sacrament the Lord's Supper when on mission trips/retreats and no ordained clergy is available, and to preach.

Candidate for Minister of Sacrament and Word

With the recommendation from the Committee on Preparation for Ministry, **Ray Henderson**, member of Northwoods Presbyterian, Houston, was approved and enrolled as a Candidate. The candidacy phase provides individuals a time for full preparation to serve the church as minister of the Word and Sacrament.



Ray Henderson

After answering the constitutional questions, Ray was charged by Elder Jim Bushong to continue his good work and faithful service as a member of a congregation during this time of preparation.

The Rev. Harry Yates concluded the service with prayer.

Ministers welcomed to New Covenant

Rev. Eid Hanna was received as Member-at-Large from Cairo Presbytery. He received a degree in Theology from Evangelical Seminary in Cairo and a Bachelor's Degree of Philosophy from Cairo University. Eid is working with the Arabic-speaking faith community in Houston. This New Church Development is meeting each week at First PC, Houston.



Rev. Mark Stoub

Rev. Mark Stoub, pastor of First PC, Bay City, has transferred from Palo Duro Presbytery. "It's good to be back to trees and water," said Mark. He received BA from Maryville College in Maryville, TN, his MDiv from Louisville Presbyterian Seminary, and his DMin from McCormick Theological Seminary in Chicago.

Rev. Gayle Perkins, Honorably Retired, has transferred from Palo Duro Presbytery. Her MDiv was granted by Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary. She was ordained here in New Covenant Presbytery. Currently, Gayle works with the Prime Timers at Woodlands Presbyterian Community Church and teaches in an after-school program at St. Anthony Padua Catholic School. Her calling now is to her four grandchildren who live less than a mile from her!



Rev. Eid Hanna



Rev. Gayle Perkins

Two pastors retirements recognized

The **Revs. Harry Slye** and **Gayle Grubbs** were honored for their years of faithful ministry during a Service of Retirement. Each received a plaque and gift from the presbytery in acknowledgement with gratitude for their service to Christ's church.



Rev. Harry Slye

It was during his college years that Harry served as leader for a high school Young Life Club. He postponed a call to full time ministry to join the staff of Young Life "for a few years," which became 27 years!

Harry was area director for Young Life in East Texas from 1962-1970 and Director of Young Life's Southern Texas Region in 1979. He and his family joined Grace PC, Houston, where he was elected elder and later invited to join the staff as director of congregational life.

He received his MDiv from Austin Presbyterian Seminary and served as associate pastor at Grace. In 2004, he became pastor for Grand Lakes NCD, which was chartered a PC(USA) congregation in 2005.

Standing beside his wife Audrey, Harry spoke about their partnership in ministry. "We have lived for the glory of God and have been His servants. We give thanks to you for your support and what God has done through you."

After graduating from seminary in 1986, Gayle was ordained by South Louisiana Presbytery. When her husband was transferred to Houston, she enrolled in the Department of Religious Studies at Rice University from which she received a PhD in Religious Studies in 1996.



Rev. Gayle Grubbs

Gayle taught Philosophy, Ethics, Medical Ethics, and Introduction to World Religions in the Lone Star College System until May 2009 at which time she retired from teaching.

Gayle is currently serving as Vice-Chair of the Administration Committee of COM and as Moderator of the Session at Shiro Presbyterian. Gayle intends to continue her service to the presbytery, provide pulpit supply, teach Church School, serve Shiro PC, and be grandmother to her twin 3-year-old granddaughters.

Going forth, guided with the power of the Holy Spirit

Elders and pastors who have been elected from New Covenant Presbytery to attend the 219th General Assembly (GA) meeting in July were commissioned at the presbytery meeting.

Elder Doug Gleditsch from Grace Presbyterian, Houston, was elected to serve as commissioner in place of Elder Will Groton (Clear Lake Presbyterian, Houston) who resigned because of a conflict in scheduling.



GA Commissioners present at the meeting: l. to r. Elder Shelley Hernandez (*St. Giles PC, Houston*), Elder Ginny Raska (*First PC, Brazoria*), Rev. Michael Fry (*Associate Pastor, Grace PC, Houston*); Rev. Marie Mickey (*Associate Pastor, First PC, Bryan*); Rev. Steve Newton (*Pastor, Westminster PC, Nacogdoches*); and Rev. Greg Han (*Minister Member-At-Large and Parish Associate, St. Philip PC, Houston*)

FYI: Commissioners to the GA meeting are selected through guidelines that have been approved by the presbytery. Each of our congregations are assigned to one of three groups with approximately equal representation of large, medium, and small churches. Each group includes one of the three largest churches in the presbytery.

Each class of commissioners to General Assembly is elected from one group on a rotating basis. Under these guidelines, both small and large churches are eligible to have representation every three years at the meeting of General Assembly.

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CODA

Elders and minister commissioners to the May presbytery meeting received the following announcements by presbytery agents on behalf of presbytery and conducted the following additional business:

- Approved Candidate Shane Webb as a Theological Student Advisory Delegate to the 219th General Assembly, representing Austin Theological Seminary.
- Granted Honorably Retired status to the Rev. William Hause, effective June 30, 2010; the Rev. Harry Slye, effective April 30, 2010; the Rev. Gayle Grubbs, effective May 15, 2010; the Rev. Douglas Ensminger, effective May 31, 2010; and the Rev. James McLeod, effective Feb. 1, 2010.
- Approved Proposed Changes to the Standing Rules for the Meetings of Presbytery.
- Elected 11 people to serve on presbytery committees or related Boards.
- COM renewed the commission of Gene Marion to serve as Commissioned Lay Pastor at St. Luke's, Cleveland, 3/10 to 3/11; and granted permission to administer the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, moderate session meetings, have Voice and Vote at presbytery meetings, and perform services of marriage.
- General Council, on behalf of our presbytery, sent a \$3,000 grant to the Presbytery of South Louisiana, taken out of the budget line item for legal expenses; authorized spending at the level of the 2009-2010 Budget until a new budget is approved; and authorized Center Operations to borrow up to \$150,000 for needed repairs and maintenance of the Presbytery Center. The intent is to pay the loan out of the budgeted line for building maintenance.
- Rev. Becky Downs has been approved to serve as Stated Supply at First Presbyterian in Sealy.
- Members of the 2010 Vision Initiative Grants Committee are Rev. Hmingi Browne, Elder Mary Herlitz, Elder Nancy Penney, Rev. Dr. Kevin Boyd, Elder Ben Svoboda, and Rev. Lacy Sellars.
- Day of Service - Aug. 7, 2010 and Day of Worship and Celebration - Aug. 15, 2010. Regional gatherings will be scheduled for the afternoon of Aug. 15 to celebrate the service conducted on Aug. 7.

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

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Reformed and Always Reforming

Reflections on the keynote address by the Rev. Dr. Laura Mendenhall

By Elder Jo Ann Caldwell Currie, Postlude Reporter

Laura, mother to Mauri and Matt,
pastor, president, director, and always pray-er,
who speaks from the heart as well as the head,
reminds us that every 500 years, or so,
the faith goes through a significant upheaval,
an upheaval that grows our faith deep and wide.

She reminds us that between the times of upheaval,
there are two Churches really,
the Church that we know
and the one that is emerging, birthing into a new age.

When we hear the word “reformation”, we think back to John
Calvin,
the one who believed that the Holy Spirit empowered all,
the one who encouraged ordinary folks, folks like you and me,
to read, to study and to pray directly to God.

Five centuries later, these ideas still shape who we are.
Today, we find ourselves at a meeting
and offer our praise and thanks to God before we begin our work.
We have a role to play, a priestly role.
Reformed by the Word of God, empowered by the Holy Spirit,
we wonder *How we are to live as God's free and forgiven people?*
For answers, we look to stories from scripture and from those
around us.

We ask *Who is my neighbor? Who are the leaders of the new
reformation?*
From the pulpit, she questions her ability to be the Samaritan.
*Like the learned man in the story, she confesses,
I know the law, but I do not always keep the law.* Those in the pews
nod our heads.
*But from the ditch, I know I must depend on others, she says,
that Jesus is all I have, indeed all I need, to extend hospitality, deep
and wide.*
*While we still struggle with issues of ordination, she continues,
we see that we HAVE reformed over the years;
and the diversity in our culture has encouraged me to offer my life
to Jesus Christ.*
And with both boldness and humility,
this woman who could not have preached just a few generations
before,
shares stories of the new reformation.

We hear of a family living on a garbage dump in Mexico.
While her own children played with others,
our guest tells of holding three month old Natalie,
whose mother had lost two other daughters.
I wept for the mother who no longer had tears...or joy.

*I wept for babies who cry because there is no milk,
while I thought of the abundance just across the Rio Grande.
I wept and held and remembered and prayed for Natalie and her
family,
knowing that my prayers would forever change me on behalf of
them.*

Reformation.

On another trip, this time on a mission to paint a school,
she learned from the host that the greater gift was the gift of
accompaniment.

This community in Guatemala taught our speaker
about the power of walking with those whose lives are at risk.
She learned how in times of doubt, God's people keep on going,
leaning into the faith of those who accompany us.
Reformation.

We hear of lessons and lives changed through other encounters...
about the power of prayer from homeless boys in Zimbabwe,
of being startled by scripture in a Christmas night service in Egypt,
and a pastor's surprising change of call in Korea.
While climbing his way up the ladder to a mega church career,
this young man stumbled and fell, literally, over a homeless man,
and discovered that he could not put his soup pot down.
God replaced his dream with a new one.
And twenty years later, he is still feeding the hungry and healing the
sick.
Reformation.

*What will those who come 500 years from now see when they look
back at us?
Will they see that this, too, was a time of reformation?*
We pray they will see a people open to different ways of being
Christ's Church;
a people open to experiencing the Gospel through one another
...poets, musicians, engineers, pastors, artists and architects; young
and old, rich and poor.

We are challenged to remember that *Reformation*
is not just a memory of the past but a reality of today.
We are charged to listen to voices that whisper, sing, shout, and pray;
to wonder who God has used, and is using, in our lives today,
for reformation is about God changing us, taking us to places
beyond what we know.
We are reminded that opening these doors may frustrate life as we
know it,
but that we do not go through these doors alone.
We are accompanied, by God and one another,
as we move beyond our dreams and into God's.