

CONNECTIONS

Growing congregations that passionately engage their community to make disciples.

First African gives to community



Members of First African church give to their community through free car washes.

On the far southwest side of Houston about 75 people are worshipping in rented space in an office building. Most of these families have immigrated to Houston from Nigeria, although they intentionally reach out to immigrants from other regions of Africa. Many were Presbyterian in Africa and want to continue growing in their Christian lives as Presbyterians in the U.S. This is First African Presbyterian Church (FAPC), and they are worshipping under the leadership of organizing pastor, Rev. Aluu Williams Nnali. Rev. Nnali is assisted by an active Steering Team of five members.

FAPC is in the fifth year of a five-year grant from Presbytery and

General Assembly. Sunday morning worship service and Bible classes held in English are only the beginning of regular weekly activities. Wednesday evenings find members attending Bible study and prayer meetings. Monthly events include a 3-hour prayer service, a Faith clinic including fasting and special prayer, and a Saturday morning Men's Breakfast. First African starts each month by celebrating our Lord's Supper on the first Sunday.

Members of all ages give back to the community by holding free car washes, distributing Christian literature while washing cars. Revivals are held each year, and as they are able, FAPC provides necessary

assistance to people in need.

Rev. Nnali says that current goals include "increasing membership, reviving the spiritual lives of members, and having more evangelism programs." The congregation hopes to charter in 2011 and eagerly looks forward to having property and a permanent worship space. Although current economic conditions have made these challenges more difficult, the people of First African Presbyterian remain undeterred in their excitement and commitment to spiritual growth and reaching out to others with the gospel of our Lord.

To learn more about First African PC, you may contact Rev. Nnali at nnaliaw@yahoo.com.

Hidden Losses: emotional challenges in ministry

Interface-Samaritan Counseling Centers (4803 San Felipe), will present "Hidden Losses: The Risks for Clergy, Clergy Spouses, Congregational Leaders, and Grief Professionals" on Tuesday, November 9, 12:00-1:00 p.m. Often, those providing service to congregations and people dealing with grief have to keep their own grief to themselves. You are invited to this lecture which explains how hidden grief can lead to compassion fatigue or burnout. Discussion will include healthy coping skills to help manage the emotional challenges that we face in ministry.



Presenters will be the Rev. Dr. Steve Spidell, BCC and Executive Director of Presbyterian Outreach to Patients, and Diane Lamberson, LCSW, Interface-Samaritan Counseling Centers. No charge. Space is limited. Complimentary lunch will be available at 11:45 a.m.

Please RSVP to Ana Schick by Friday, November 5, 713-626-7990 x104 or aschick@interface-samaritan.com.

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FROM THE COLE MINE

By Rev. Mike Cole, General Presbyterian, Presbytery of New Covenant



NEW COVENANT CONNECTIONS

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"Being At Peace"

It began as an offhand comment that has haunted me for the last two weeks. The pastor of Peace Presbyterian Church in Pearland invited me to speak to the congregation about the actions of the General Assembly. I was glad to do so and told him that it had been a while since I had visited the congregation. But the way I said it is what has captured my attention. I said, "It has been a long time since I have been at Peace."

A question generated by that comment off the top of my head (which is a dangerous place to be because it tends to slip off or out) has become the focus of my recent daily devotions and reflections: "What does it take me to be at peace?"

Although I was tempted initially to echo the familiar chant of the 60's, "All we are saying is give peace a chance," as if peace automatically comes when we relax and just let life happen. But peace doesn't happen that way for me. Peace begins with my relationship with God. When my day starts with some good conversations between me and the Lord (I try my best to make them

one-way monologues, but God keeps speaking to my heart over the din of my blabbering). When I read God's word, pray and reflect, I generally have a more peace-full start to my day.

The relative health and fulfillment (to be contrasted with happiness, which eludes most of us) of my family is critical to my being at peace. When I know that my wife and my son are settled within their spirits and my extended family beyond them as well, a sense of peace enfolds me like a down comforter on a crisp, cold morning. Some would call it being co-dependent, which it may be, but it is also a consequence of my profound love for my family.

My peace is tied to others in my community, however widely or narrowly I define it. It's ironic that the more I focus on myself the less at peace I am and the more I attend to the needs of others, the more at peace I am. This is very consistent with Biblical teaching about caring for others, even the outsiders and our "enemies," but it certainly flies in the face of what our culture teaches. In a culture that teaches that I can have it my way and that it really is all about

me, it seems the height of folly to think that when I serve others, my need for peace is also served. Doesn't God have a fascinating sense of humor?

I also derive peace from the church. I realize what an almost ludicrous statement that is for a church that is besieged at the national level by internal conflict, but it's the truth. The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is my mother church. I care deeply for her and want what's best for her. When she is in turmoil, I am not at peace. That's a major reason that I continue to care about her mission and the decisions she makes. The "peace, unity, and purity" of the church is not just a slogan for me – it is something to which I aspire.

Perhaps, as we prepare to celebrate the birth of the Prince of Peace, it's a good time to make peace personal by posing the question, "What does it take for me to be at peace?"

Peacefully,

Work of Commission on Middle Governing Bodies begins soon

The newly formed Commission on Middle Governing Bodies, which was authorized by the 219th General Assembly, will consult with sessions, presbyteries, synods, and the wider church on the mission and function of middle governing bodies (synods and presbyteries), and "develop models that reflect the roles of middle governing bodies in PC(USA) polity and the changing context of our witness in the U.S. and their relationships with other governing bodies."

The Commission has been

given the authority to act as the General Assembly (upon a majority affirmative vote of the affected presbytery/presbyteries or a majority affirmative vote of the presbyteries in the affected synod or synods). It may:

- "Organize new synods and divide, unite, or otherwise combine synods or portions of synods previously existing" (*Book of Order*, G-13.0103m);
- "Approve the organization, division, uniting, or combining of presbyteries or portions of presbyteries by synods"

(G-13.0103n).

The Commission will prepare a report of its findings for the 220th General Assembly (2012) with recommendations for future roles, responsibilities, and changes in middle governing bodies. The Commission begins its work November 4-6.

For full story and names of those serving on the Commission, visit www.pcusa.org and search on "Commission on Middle Governing Bodies."

Be an informed Presbyterian!

The 219th General Assembly approved a number of proposed amendments to our Constitution that require further approval by the 173 presbyteries of our denomination before being enacted. Amendments to the *Book of Order* require a simple majority vote (87 presbyteries); amendments to the *Book of Confessions* require a super majority or 2/3 vote (115 presbyteries).

Materials related to these items of business have been mailed to ministers and clerks of session. See elsewhere on this page information about getting additional copies.

All Presbyterians can keep informed about these items by reading the same study materials online. Links to these materials are posted on the home page of the presbytery website, www.pbyofnewcovenant.org.

The business sent down from the 219th General Assembly to be considered by our presbytery will be voted on over the next three presbytery meetings:

- November 13, 2010 Proposed Amendments to current *Book of Order*
- February 5, 2011 Proposed New Form of Government (nFOG)
- June 11, 2011 Proposed Adoption of Belhar Confession

NOVEMBER: Proposed Amendments

At the November meeting each proposed amendment to the current Book of Order will be presented by the Ecclesiastes Affairs Committee with relevant information but without recommendation. Commissioners will vote by voice on all, except the proposed amendment to replace the language of G-6.0106b, which will be taken by a written ballot.

A helpful resource, "Analysis of the Proposed Amendments," published by the Association of Stated Clerks in the PC(USA) has recently been added to the materials on the presbytery website.

FEBRUARY: Proposed New Form of Government

There will be several opportunities to prepare for the February meeting:

- November 6: The Moderator of the PC(USA) will be in Houston and has accepted our presbytery's invitation to speak at a gathering which is open to everyone at ChristChurch PC, Bellaire, on Saturday, November 6, from 10:00 am to noon. Elder Cynthia Bolbach will share background information as well as the reasons she believes this is the time to make such a significant revision to this part of our *Book of Order*.
- A study guide about the proposed new Form of Government is available for study in print and online, just as for the proposed amendments, through links on presbytery's website and in *Tuesday Connect*, so that everyone

can be informed.

- A workshop on the proposed new Form of Government will be offered at Church Officer Enrichment on Saturday, January 22, at St. Luke's PC, Houston.

JUNE: The Belhar Confession

The Book of Confessions of the PC(USA) contains eleven confessional statements of belief, representing particular theological and historical eras of the Christian church, and adopted as standards of our faith by the PC(USA). General Assembly has asked presbyteries to study the Belhar Confession, which is posted on the home page of the presbytery's website, along with other study helps.

- A study guide and the Confession itself are available in print and online - through links on presbytery's website and in *Tuesday Connect*. Everyone will want to be informed about this proposed addition to our *Book of Confessions*.
- A workshop on the Belhar Confession will be offered at Church Officer Enrichment on Saturday, January 22, at St. Luke's PC.
- The Preface to the *Book of Confessions* is also an excellent tool for preparation.

While commissioners to presbytery meetings shall not be instructed in their vote on any issue, study and dialogue with fellow Presbyterians are essential. Individual sessions and perhaps churches gathered together within Clusters are urged to avail themselves of the resources to become informed, and to help commissioners be as prepared as possible for the next three presbytery meetings.

Dr. David Jensen to speak at next Presbytery meeting

The next meeting of the presbytery will be hosted by St. John's PC, Houston, on Saturday, November 13. Dr. David Jensen, theology professor at Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary, will be the keynote speaker. He will focus our attention on confessional statements of our reformed tradition and how they affect our living as Christians

and Presbyterians. Also at this meeting, commissioners will vote on proposed amendments to the current *Book of Order* and will elect a number of persons to serve in the leadership of the presbytery from 2011 through 2013.



Dr. David Jensen

Additional Copies of GA Study Materials

There are limited, additional copies of the materials from the 219th General Assembly available in the presbytery office. Clerks of sessions may request up to six extra copies for their session's study by contacting Diane Prevary, dprevary@pbyofnewcovenant.org. To avoid additional postage costs, arrangements will have to be made for pick-up.

Materials may be ordered directly from the Office of the General Assembly, for the cost of postage. Hard copies of nFoG (Part 1 of proposed amendments) are available through PDS (1-800-524-

2612). You may also order nFoG online by going to <http://store.pcusa.org> and search by item # or title. The



item number is OGA10041 (no dashes between numbers). The title to search for is "Proposed Book of Amendments." Part 1 of 3 of the proposed amendments is the "Foundations of Presbyterian Polity and Form of Government"; Part 2 of 3 is the "Belhar Confession"; Part 3 of 3 is the "Proposed Amendments to the (current) Book of Order."

Welcome the Moderator to Texas!

Come meet the new Moderator of the PC(USA), right here in Houston, or rather in Bellaire! Elder Cynthia Bolbach will speak at ChristChurch Presbyterian in Bellaire on Saturday, November 6, 10:00 a.m. to noon. She will share her insights as Moderator since being elected in July, and in particular will present background on the proposed new Form of Government on which our presbytery will vote on in February 2011.

The church is located at 5001 Bellaire Blvd. (corner of South Rice and Bellaire Blvd. in Bellaire).



Moderator Cynthia Bolbach



Mary's Musings

By Mary Marcotte, Associate General Presbyter, Presbytery of New Covenant

What does it mean to be a Christian?

One might think this is a question that is easy to answer. As Presbyterians, when we join a congregation we profess our faith by affirming that Jesus Christ is our Lord and Savior. But that response may belie a more closely held and more shallow understanding of what it means to be Christian.

Challenging insights have been revealed in the major study of the National Study of Youth and Religion. Telephone interviews were conducted with 3290 English and Spanish speaking youth, ages 13-17. Of these youth, 75% identified themselves as Christian. Yet conversation with these young people made it clear that their theology was what author, teacher, and researcher Kenda Creasy Dean (Princeton Seminary) calls "Christian-ish" in her insightful new book *Un-Christian: What the Faith of Our Teenagers is Telling the American Church*.

A major finding of the Study indicates that the vast majority of youth who identify themselves as practicing, believing Christians adhere to "a do-good, feel-good spirituality that has little to do with the Triune God of the Christian tradition and even less to do with loving Jesus Christ enough to follow him into the world." Religion, these young people will tell you, is a "nice thing." To be a Christian is to "be good and do good." And Dean asks us how many of our adults really believe anything different. The core religious beliefs expressed by the vast majority of those interviewed have been described as "moralistic, therapeutic deism" and include affirmations that:

- A god exists who created and orders the world and watches over human life;
- God wants people to be good, nice, and fair to each other as taught in the Bible and in most world religions;
- The central goal of life is to be happy and feel good about oneself;
- God is not involved in my life except when I need God to resolve a problem;
- Good people go to heaven when they die.

These young people are not rebellious against the church, but they are largely indifferent to it and see it as a good thing that is the equivalent of many good extra-curricular activities. When describing their own religious beliefs, many practicing religious youth said they had none or described beliefs that their own churches would call heretical.

When we wonder where the children, youth, and parents are in our churches, it may be time to be paying close attention to the findings of this research and engage the dialog opened by Dean and others.

We can pay attention to the ability of highly devoted teens to have an "articulated God story, i.e., a statement of belief, a deep sense of belonging in their faith communities, a clear sense of a God-given purpose, and an attitude of hope that the world is moving in a good direction because of God's action in the world. We can engage in conversation about faith that is intentional, serious, and ongoing. And if we are investing in these strengths and these congregations, perhaps what we will experience is a renewal of the whole church.

Read Dean's book – or read any of a number of articles and summaries that will show up in an on line search of The National Study of Youth and Religion. It will give you food for thought and a direction for nurturing more authentic disciples of all ages.

Community News

Solar-powered water treatment installed in Haiti

Clean fresh well water is flowing at the JeLA orphanage and school as well as supplying water to the surrounding village of Limbé, about 40 miles from Port-au-Prince! A solar-powered water treatment system was installed at JeLA in August thanks to a team made up of members from ChristChurch Presbyterian Bellaire, St. John's Houston, First Presbyterian Angleton, and Bellaire SWHouston Rotarians. The water system was made possible by contributions from members of St. John's, ChristChurch and the Community of the Servant Savior Presbyterian, Pearland, two Houston Rotary Clubs, New Covenant Presbytery, Living Waters for the World and Solar Under the Sun.

The JeLA orphanage and school has about 150 regular students and its ranks had swollen due to the earthquake early this year. Prior to the installation of the water treatment system, the only source of drinkable water was a small spring whose flow had dwindled to a trickle. People had been drinking from a small river that



Carrying water from the river.

is also used for washing and bathing. Each day, people walked about a half mile to get water, carrying water buckets on their heads.

Other schools and villages in Haiti are in desperate need of water systems. The Presbyterian Houston Living Waters for the World/ Solar Under the Sun team is meeting to plan the next installation. It welcomes other congregations or individuals to join the effort. Members are also available to make presentations to congregations or Church School classes. For information contact John Freeman: freeman@rice.edu or 713-776-3548.

A great testimony to the spirit of Central PC!

The spirit of Central Presbyterian lives on! Ninety-eight percent of the items offered to our community by Central Presbyterian have found homes, with most going to more than thirty churches and not-for-profits. The pews are seating new

worshippers, windows and art pieces have new eyes viewing them, and myriads of classroom and office items are energizing mission and ministry work throughout the region! We give thanks for Central's ministry and stewardship of its material things!

Free flu shots

The Board of Pensions has announced that free flu shots are available to ministers, their spouses and dependents, and all who have Express Script cards - at Walgreens,

Rite Aid, CVS, and most other large drug stores. Simply show your Express Scripts card, and there will be no charge for the shots.



E Highlights

Documentaries follow stories of hope

PC(USA) has supported the production of two documentaries on stories of hope in the face of disaster. *Coming Home: Hurricane Katrina Five Years Later* explores the relationships between volunteers and hurricane survivors and includes stories about three New Orleans homeowners and the transformation of their homes and lives through the help of Presbyterian Disaster Assistance (you will recognize the blue shirts). It is a story about how the Presbyterian Church stayed with the survivors long after the news teams left. It is a story about how thousands of ordinary Presbyterians made an extraordinary difference in providing hope for the real people who lived through the hurricane and its destruction.

Kepulihan: Stories from the Tsunami is a film about long term disaster recovery as seen through



David Barnhart, a McCormick Theological Seminary Bowen Scholar, is producing and directing documentary projects for Presbyterian Disaster Assistance.

the eyes of three people whose lives were forever changed by the tragic tsunami in 2004. They tell their stories of loss, hope, and recovery in this documentary which has been screened at the Carter Center in Atlanta and selected to be part of the Martin Luther King, Jr., National Historic Site.

NBC has the rights to air *Coming Home* until March 2011. ABC has the rights to air *Kepulihan*, beginning November 21, 2010. Help rally support for these documentaries by contacting your local affiliate stations and asking them to air these stories of hope. If these films are aired, encourage your congregation to watch together and discuss them in small groups.

Coming Home information: <http://www.interfaithbroadcasting.com/program.aspx?PID=326> and trailer: <http://vidego.multicastmedia.com/player.php?p=z25czg71>

Kepulihan information and trailer: <http://thetsunamifilm.com/>

If you would like to talk to someone about these documentaries, contact Steven Leach (St. John's PC) at shleach@gmail.com.

Reminder: Presbytery Cross Wall

Carpeting and painting of the Presbytery Center is almost complete. The last part of this process will be displaying the crosses provided by member congregations in the east stairwell of the center. To date, forty-nine congregations have submitted these unique symbols of our faith – no two crosses being exactly alike. If your congregation has not submitted a cross for display, there is still time to do so. To determine whether your congregation has submitted a cross, go to <http://www.pbyofnewcovenant.org> and click on [Presbytery Cross Wall Submissions](#).

The presbytery is also

offering, to those congregations who wish to have one, a wood cross of the same style used that appears on our letterhead, website, and other materials.

Production of these wood crosses has not yet started but will in the near future. If your congregation has provided a cross to the presbytery and you desire to have a presbytery cross for your congregation's cross wall or other display, please contact Moderator Garry Schoonover at gs249@att.net.



Making History TODAY



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

Tradition or Traditionalism?

In his 1984 book, *The Vindication of Tradition*, Jaroslav Pelikan, the eminent historian at Yale University for many years, wrote: "Tradition is the living faith of the dead; traditionalism is the dead faith of the living."

That is a succinct and helpful distinction for us in the church. Tradition, or history, represents the faith of that great cloud of witnesses, as the writer of Hebrews put it, a faith that sustained them through thick and thin. Traditionalism, on the other hand, holds onto the past without engaging in thought or reflection or conversation. It expresses the seven last words of the church: "We've always done it that way before," or "We've never done it that way before."

It's always interesting to go into a church and learn something of its story. That helps us be in conversation with those who went before us, but it also helps us understand better why that congregation is the way it is. If the people are alive, energetic, and forward-looking, the chances are that they know their history and that enables them to move forward into the future with a sense of purpose and excitement. They can leave their past behind, but they know that they have been informed and shaped by it.

If, on the other hand, a congregation does things only because they've always been done that way, if there is little or no sense of mission, then Pelikan would identify them as traditionalists, holding on to a dead faith.

Some people claim that history is boring. But history comes alive when we see real people with faces and voices and idiosyncrasies who deal with real issues. Soon they begin to look a lot like us. When we engage them in conversation by learning as much as we can about them, then their faith comes alive, and we begin to be influenced by them.

History is far from boring, especially if it's seen as an ongoing conversation between us and that great cloud of witnesses. It's far from boring if we see it as part of our story, as part of the story of God with God's people, and we are part of God's people.

Do you know when your church was organized? What kind of contributions to mission has it engaged in over the years? Has it supported missionaries, helped start new churches, supported a local ministry beyond its own property, taken mission trips (either local or beyond your town or city)? Who have been some of its leaders, both lay and clergy? Has your church been involved in presbytery activities? What has been unique about your church and its history?

In light of that, how do you see your church's future? Is the challenge the same as it was when it was organized, or is God calling it to a new challenge?

In order to answer those questions, we must first address the question that Pelikan poses: Is ours the living faith of the dead or the dead faith of the living? As we make history today, may we be alert to the new possibilities and opportunities God sets before us and our generation, but we can only do that responsibly if we have explored and learned something of the living faith of those who have gone before us.



Wendy's Bailey-wick

By the Rev. Wendy Bailey, Associate General Presbyter, Presbytery of New Covenant

"I arrived in town with nowhere to live, no job, and only my car and the things in it. At first I resisted stopping in, but when I was at my wits end, I decided to see what was going on in there. Within two weeks I had a job, a place to stay, and a new family. I owe my life to [this place]."

"I was a miserable child, but in [this place], someone had pity on me and gave me something to work towards. Something very important happened; year after year I kept returning... I grew up in [this place] and it has shaped me to become the woman I am today."

"[This place] has filled my heart with joy and helped me to be a better mother and wife. I was so excited when I brought my son to [this place] and he wanted to be a part of it too!"

"When I joined, I instantly belonged. There was no awkwardness, no judgment; I was accepted for the odd kid that I was – even encouraged to be that odd kid. All that summer I lived for [this place]... from the first day I was filled with joy and adrenaline as I experienced the extraordinary feeling of being connected to something bigger than myself."

When I heard these testimonies, I cried. In part, I cried because I knew these people and had witnessed their stories. In part, because I, too, felt that this place had healed, forgiven, restored, and called to life so many people, including me.

As part of a capital campaign for the community theater of which I am a member, we have been gathering "stories of success," expecting accounts of theater majors and people "making it big" in show business... like the triplets who got to star in a movie with Kevin Costner after being in shows at our theater. We weren't expecting to hear heart-changing, life-changing stories of Christ-like compassion. When I heard them, I saw Christ's love at work - not through the performances at the community theater, but through the relationships, the friendships, the trust, the faith, and the challenges that come when people are connected to something larger than themselves.

These are the kinds of stories of faith and grace all church members should be encouraged to share about the work of Christ through the people in their community of faith. It's in the relationships we form that Christ's love is made real and touches lives. Ask a church member about a memory they have from Sunday School, and it's most likely going to focus on a person... a teacher who loved them no matter what, who accepted them when they felt like an "odd kid," or who gave way beyond Sunday mornings to make a difference in their life. Our church programs and mission are really all about building grace-filled, Christ-like, spiritual friendships that change lives.

Whether it's in the relationships we have in the soup kitchen, the talk with the teenager after a youth outing, or encouraging a co-worshiper to accept the invitation to preach one Sunday - it's in the community, the coming together of people in our brokenness and in our abundance, that we experience God's saving grace time and time again.

Mission &

A Mission Minded Bunch!



First Sugar Land youth rock!

The Middle School youth from First Presbyterian in Sugar Land love to lend a helping hand! The group's name, PALS (Presbyterians Are Loving Souls) really applies! This summer, they single-handedly raised over \$400 to contribute to the Stop Hunger Now program. They were

back at it again this September, with a weekend trip to Mo-Ranch to help clean up the grounds. They, along with their Senior High counterparts, will be organizing a Thanksgiving food drive and working with the Mission Committee on the Alternative Gift Market in December.

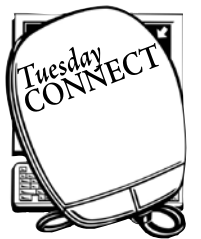
Do you receive presbytery's e-newsletter

Tuesday Connect, presbytery's weekly e-newsletter, is sent to all who subscribe to it. You may subscribe to it on the home page of the presbytery website (lower left side), www.pbyofnewcovenant.org, or by emailing Helen Wolf at hwolf@pbyofnewcovenant.org.

Each announcement is short and concise, possibly with a link to

more information. Prayer concerns are listed each week. You may send information (may include links, photo, logo) to Helen Wolf at any time. Final copy for each Tuesday Connect is completed by noon on Monday.

Recipients may Unsubscribe at any time.



Sharing your faith journey with your friends, neighbors, and co-workers begins with the relationships you already have with them. Consider asking them conversationally about their own values, thoughts, and beliefs when discussions arise around events or situations that you all have in common. Listen, ask open-ended questions, and accept their beliefs and values without judging. This is one way to earn the trust and feeling of safety your friend will want before he or she may ask about your values or beliefs.

Ministry

Texas City Village has new leadership

The Presbyterian Disaster Assistance group at the PDA Village in Texas City has new management staff. Effective January 1, the Presbytery of New Covenant and the Ike Recovery Team will be in charge of the Village, working with First Presbyterian, Texas City. There will be no visible changes in how things work. A new Memorandum of Understanding has been developed that the three groups will be working under.

New site managers have arrived. Jim and Marilyn Marble from Dearborn, Michigan, are experienced volunteer Village leaders and have worked in the Port Neches village.

The usual blue PDA t-shirts will still be seen. The Texas City Village has bookings through mid-November. Starting in December, the Village will gladly host weekend work groups, usually arriving on Friday evening or Saturday morning (depending on occupancy) and leaving after Worship with the First PC,



Village volunteers share a meal.

Texas City congregation on Sunday.

Many weeks through Spring of 2011 already have space reserved by Mission Teams from across the country; however, no week is yet booked to capacity.

To make a reservation, contact Ashley Gill, PDA Call Center Manager at 866-732-6121 or pdacallcenter@sbcglobal.net. Contact Kendall Boyd, 713-526-2585, ext. 213, or 281-229-1834 (cell), New Covenant's Ike Recovery Coordinator, with any questions. The work continues!

NOVEMBER 4-6

Conference worship services open to the public



The 2010 Covenant Network Conference of Presbyterians,

“We Are Family: Celebrating the Whole Household of God,”

will be hosted by St. Philip PC, Houston, November 4-6.

Worship services are open to the public (no conference registration necessary).

- Thursday, November 4 - 7:30 p.m. – Rev. Katie Morrison (United Church of Christ), preaching, with music by Bering United Methodist Choir
- Friday, November 5, 8:30 a.m. - Prayer Service led by Rev. Alan Brehm, with music by Community of the Servant Savior Orchestra
- Friday, November 5 - 7:30 p.m. - Rev. Cliff Kirkpatrick (President of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches) preaching, with music by St. Philip Presbyterian Choir
- Saturday, November 6 - 11:00 a.m. – Rev. David Van Dyke (House of Hope Presbyterian Church, St. Paul, MN) preaching, with music by Woodlands Community Presbyterian Choir and Salvation Army Harbor Lights Choir

For details about the conference, see <http://www.covnetpres.org/conferences/2010-covenant-conference/>

Transitions

Rev. Brent Hampton

has been called to serve as pastor at Brenham PC.

Rev. John Hirling

is serving as Interim Pastor at ChristChurch Presbyterian in Bellaire.

Rev. Jim Currie

has been called as Designated Pastor to First PC, Pasadena

Rev. Galen “Joe” MacDonald

was installed as pastor at First PC, Livingston, Oct 24, 2010.

Christina Stone Chambers,

FPC, Houston, has received a call as Chaplain at Holy Cross Medical Center in Mission Hills, CA. She will be ordained Sunday, October 24, at First PC, Houston.

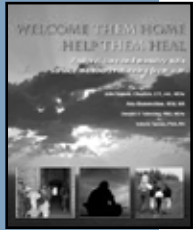
Rev. Lindsay Hatch,

Clear Lake, Houston, has received a call as pastor of Mt. Zion PC in Sandy Springs SC.

Rev. Mark Keffer,

St. Andrew's, Beaumont is now serving Grace PC in Plano, TX as Associate Pastor for Discipleship

New Resources



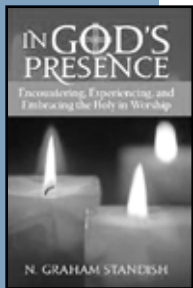
Welcome Them Home, Help Them Heal: Pastoral Care and Ministry with Service Members Returning From War By Sippola, Blumenshine, Tubesing, and Yancy

Military chaplains at GA were encouraging use of this helpful book, especially for use with those returning from deployment as National Guard personnel in warzones. In addition to providing insight into the particular needs of those who have served in Iraq and Afghanistan, both in terms of transitioning back to civilian life and understanding the physical, psychological and spiritual wounds of war, there are chapters that specifically address the church's role. These chapters include basic principles for reaching out, creating a healing environment, and healing rituals throughout the year. Appendices include helpful quick screening tools for PTSD, depression and traumatic brain injury. There are also tips for making effective referrals through the Veterans Administration.



Gifts of God: the Sacraments DVD

This new DVD features two six-minute presentations which would be ideal for confirmation and new member/inquirer classes. The baptism segment could be helpful when meeting with parents before the baptism of their child. Each segment makes solid use of scripture, visuals, and engaging speakers to address our Presbyterian understanding of the sacraments. Churches can secure their own FREE copy of this excellent resource (PDS#844695-10) at <http://store.pcusa.org>

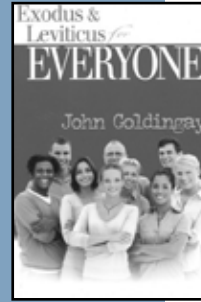


In God's Presence: Encountering, Experiencing, and Embracing the Holy in Worship By N. Graham Standish

Does our worship help people experience God? Does our worship open people to the presence of Christ? Does our worship encourage people to become available to the Holy Spirit? *In God's Presence* makes the case that congregations must restore intentionality and authenticity to worship in a way that will open people to the Holy. Standish contends that intentionality reflects a deep understanding of what tradition has attempted to do, what contemporary people are hungry for, what is going on in our culture, and how to connect the three.

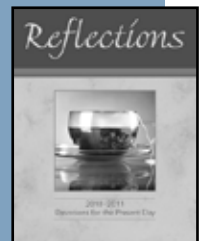
Standish advocates what he calls an "integrated" approach to worship, one that maintains the distinctiveness of each element of worship as a counterpoint to other elements. Conceive worship with an emphasis on restoring the Holy to worship. He offers practical advice on how to lead a congregation to consider new ways of worshiping, opening people to an encounter with the Holy in worship.

New Resources



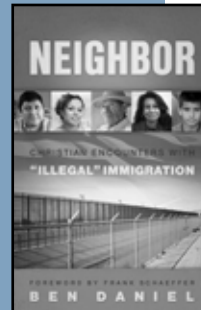
Exodus and Leviticus for Everyone By John Goldingay

This book continues the popular new series of accessible, engaging guides to Hebrew scriptures. It can be used for daily devotions, Sunday school preparation, or in concert with brief personal visits to the Bible. This volume covers the action-packed adventures of Exodus and an overview of Jewish law laid out in Leviticus.



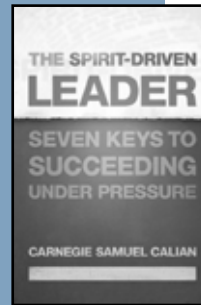
Reflections: Devotions for the Present Day Witherspoon Press

This new daily devotional guide for 2010–11 offers a single page meditation for each day which is linked to a short scripture passage and concludes with a one-line prayer. This dated resource begins on the first Sunday of Advent and offers a refreshing pause in the Word. Readings were selected with a desire to inspire moments of consideration and celebration of the human spirit that will challenge and nurture your faith.



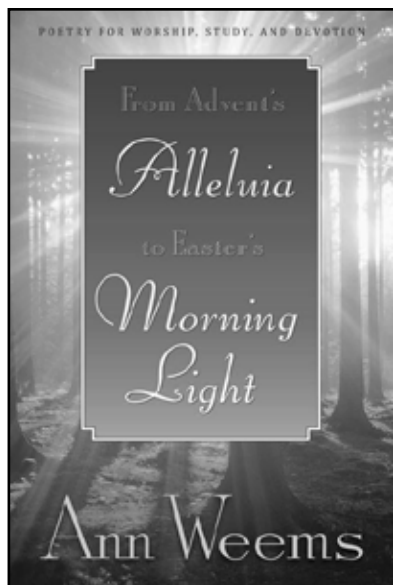
Neighbor: Christian Encounters with "Illegal" Immigration By Ben Daniel

This Presbyterian pastor and regular contributor to the UPI's online religion and spirituality forum offers a primer on immigration issues that includes theological reflection, historical and political analysis, and the compelling stories of those who live out the dilemmas and yearnings of immigrants and those who walk beside them. The three-part structure of the text would make it ideal for a multi-week study.



The Spirit-Driven Leader: Seven Keys to Succeeding Under Pressure By Carnegie Samuel Calian

Exploring personal values that inspire hope (creativity, competence, commitment, and character) as well as organizational practices that build community (collegiality, compassion, and courage), the president of Pittsburgh seminary outlines how these seven key practices can help leaders under pressure manage to succeed. Filled with telling anecdotes, this book would provide fertile discussion material for a clergy peer support group. Excellent resources to fuel discussions are included in the Appendix.



From Advent's Alleluia to Easter's Morning Light: Poetry for Worship, Study, and Devotion

By Ann Weems

Ann Weems' newest collection of poetry is designed for both personal devotionals and public worship, but may well generate some lively discussion as well. The poems explore the intersection of faith and life with the constant refrain, either implicit or expressed: It's all about Jesus. Titles like "Sticky-note the Church," "Angels Still Appear," and "Diluting the Gospel" will give readers a sense of the riches in store.

New Resources



Razing Hell By Sharon Baker

What do we make of the doctrine of Hell? It provides a challenge to those who struggle to reconcile Jesus' sacrifice and a loving God with the prospect of eternal damnation and punishment. Baker, a theologian and teacher, explores traditional views of God's wrath and judgment, and suggests fresh ways to think about the violence of God, the justice of God, the image of God, and the forgiveness of God that are well-grounded in scripture. The book concludes with a new view of hell grounded in a challenge to live in accordance with the building up of God's kingdom.

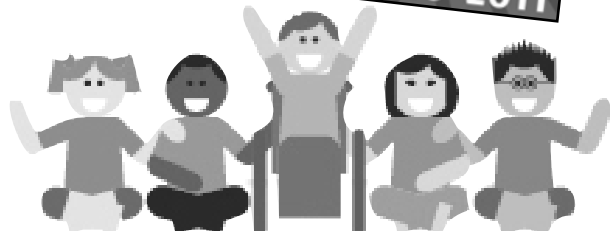


Call to Worship Journal of Liturgy, Music, Preaching and the Arts Developed by PC(USA) Office of Theology, Worship and Education. *Available for use in the Resource Center*

Volume 44.1 contains lectionary aids for the year A cycle which begins November 28, 2010. Includes music suggestions related to the lectionary texts for each Sunday drawn from hymnals, contemporary, and global songs; appropriate anthems for choirs large and small, adult, youth and children; handbell and organ music; as well as suggestions for Call to Worship and Prayer of Confession.

Volume 43.2 contains resources for use in services of healing and wholeness. Volume 43.4 contains essays and reflections on Hymns, Psalms and Spiritual songs.

In Our Reference Section



Winter Quarter Curriculum from **We Believe** (Toddler and Preschool), **We Believe** (Younger Elementary, Older Elementary and Broadly Graded), **FAQ** (Faithfully Asking Questions) for younger or broadly-graded youth, **Faith Questions** (designed for older youth) mini-studies on Reformed Theology and Gospels as well as the new titles in the excellent adult series, **Being Reformed**.

Being Reformed's new six-week studies on Stewardship of Creation, A Brief Statement of Faith, Wisdom from the Early Church, and Recognizing God's Grace are outstanding studies for Sunday school classes, small groups, new member classes, or even Sessions wishing to engage in serious study. **The Present Word** continues for those who wish to engage in the popular, long-lived Uniform Lessons approach to Bible study.

Consultations about how your congregation can use these resources or locating the best materials for the particular needs of your students can be arranged by contacting Mary Marcotte, mmarcotte@pbyofnewcovenant.org.

November 4-6

2010 Covenant Network
Conference
St. Philip PC, Houston

November 6

Meet Moderator of PC(USA)
Cynthia Bolbach
ChristChurch PC, Bellaire

November 13

Stated Presbytery Meeting
St. John's PC, Houston

November 13

Session Records Review
Make-up
Following presbytery meeting
St. John's PC, Houston

November 16

Retired Clergy and Church
Professionals Lunch
St. Philip PC, Houston

December 9

Christmas Open House
11:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m.
Presbytery Center

2011

January 22

Officers Enrichment
St. Luke's PC
Houston

June 18-25

CEDEPCA Partnership Trip
Guatemala



Next Connections deadline

Wed., December 8, for the first
issue of 2011.

NOVEMBER 6



Christmas Bazaar & Mission Market

Don't miss the 4th annual Christmas Bazaar and Mission Market at First PC, Brazoria, on Saturday, November 6, 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. The Fellowship Hall will have twenty booths with items such as woodcarvings, totes, quilts, children and dog clothes, bows, handmade crafts, jewelry, candles, and much more!



The Lunch Café will be open during the event. Proceed from the chicken and tuna sandwiches and soups (all homemade) will go toward support of one of the PC(USA) missionaries and Youth and Family Counseling Services. Of course, there will be wonderful desserts and tamales for sale, too! A portion of the booth fees will also benefit the missions.

The church is located at 310 S. Virginia St., Brazoria.
Phone 979-798-7757.

NOVEMBER 13

Last Session Records Review of 2010!

Clerks, here's your final opportunity to have your session records reviewed – Saturday, November 13, at St. John's Presbyterian, Houston (immediately following adjournment of the presbytery meeting). Bring your Minutes Book *and* Church Register. Don't forget the stamped page from the last review (or a copy of it) and all minutes since that review. There are two new checklists for 2010. One is for the minutes; one is for the Church Register. Bring them with you, ALREADY COMPLETED! If you cannot find the copies sent to you last December, you may download them from the presbytery's website – Office of the Stated Clerk.

Pre-register by contacting Janice Schessler at jschessler@pbyofnewcovenant.org or 800-444-1278, ext. 209.

DECEMBER 5

MDPC Sanctuary Choir performs Handel's Messiah



Considered one of the great masterworks of the repertoire, Handel's beloved oratorio has continued to inspire generations of listeners since its first performance in 1742. Handel's musical and theatrical genius interprets Christ's birth, passion, and redemption through narrative recitatives, lyrical arias, and dramatic choruses. The free concert on Sunday, December 5, at 7:00 p.m. will include all of Part One, the Advent and Christmas stories, and highlights from Parts Two and Three, including the popular Hallelujah Chorus. It will be performed by the MDPC Sanctuary Choir, soloists, and orchestra conducted by Dr. Charles Hausmann. All are welcome!

The church is located at 11612 Memorial Dr.

NOVEMBER 4

ASA HUNT LECTURE IN PASTORAL MINISTRY

The Rev. Dr. David McKechnie will be the inaugural speaker for the Asa Hunt Lecture in Pastoral Ministry, sponsored by Presbyterian Outreach to Patients. Dave's presentation, "Shaping the Future Today," will be given at 7:00 p.m. November 4, at First PC, Houston. Dave served New Covenant as pastor of Grace PC, Houston, and interim head of staff at First PC, Houston. He is the President of the Texas Theological Foundation.



Rev. Dave McKechnie

Following his address, the POP Lay Minister of the Year will be announced, and POP Lay Ministers will meet with Dr. McKechnie to discuss pastoral care issues that arise from their visitation of patients and families.

There is no charge to attend this lecture. Those wishing to support POP by underwriting this public service event may do so by making a tax-deductible contribution to the Presbyterian Outreach to Patients, "The Asa Hunt Fund," P. O. Box 667118, Houston, Texas 77266-7118.

FEBRUARY 25-27

SAVE THE DATE

February 25-27, 2011
(Friday evening through Sunday morning)

Spiritual Renewal Weekend with the Rev. Bruce Reyes-Chow

Southminster Presbyterian Church,
Missouri City



JUNE 18-25

GUATEMALA PARTNERSHIP TRIP

JUNE 18-25, 2011



The Apprentice Basic Conference



James Bryan Smith

To be held February 18-19 at Clear Lake PC, will unpack the foundational ideas of the Apprentice Series that lead to transformation in people's lives. These ideas include: understanding our narratives, the role of spiritual practices in our lives, the importance of community in life change, and the impact the Holy Spirit has on all these areas. Eight hours of teaching and experiential learning will be combined with worship and small group experience.

Rev. Dr. James Bryan Smith and members of the Apprentice Series Team will facilitate the workshop, lectures, and worship. James Bryan Smith is a founding member of Richard J. Foster's spiritual renewal ministry, Renovaré. He is an ordained United Methodist Church minister and is a theology professor at Friends University in Wichita, KS.

For details on the conference go to www.clpc.org.

Members of Presbytery of New Covenant are invited to be a part of an immersion experience, organized by our presbytery's Central America Partnership Network and hosted by the Protestant Center for Pastoral Studies in Central America (CEDEPCA).

- Witness what our partner ministry, CEDEPCA, is doing in Central America and hear from its staff and the people whom they serve.
- Worship and dialogue with Guatemalans for a glimpse into what it means to be God's people outside of our U.S. context.
- See the work of PC(USA) mission workers and how our church is alive in Guatemala.
- Learn about the Maya, their history, culture, and spirituality, and how Presbyterian Maya integrate their heritage.
- Hear about the current social, economic, religious, and political situation in Guatemala since the signing of the Peace Accords after a brutal 36-year civil war.

Cost is \$900 plus airfare (tax-deductible). Scholarship assistance may be available. For more information and registration details, contact Sharyl Davis (281-444-8861; sharyl@northwoods.org) or Julian Ann Moffett (281-361-5105 JAMfftt@gmail.com).

In Our Prayers

Family and friends of the Rev. Rodney Sunday, former pastor at St. Andrew's, Houston, and the founding pastor of Pines PC in Houston - Rodney died Sunday, October 3, 2010.

Barbara McClintic and Steve Retzloff were married Oct. 10. Barbara is Director of Discipleship and Education at Pines PC, Houston, and Steve is an elder member at MDPC, Houston.

Rev. Bryan Kile (HR) Parish Associate at First, Kingwood, and family – Bryan's brother Ron died October, 10, 2010.

Rev. Howard Reed and family – Howard's mother, Virginia Ann Jackson Reed, died October 10, 2010. She was an elder and member of First Presbyterian in Eagle Lake. Howard, former pastor of Central Presbyterian, is serving as Interim Pastor of Immanuel United Church of Christ in Needville, TX. You may contact him at Immanuel UCC, P.O. Box 505, Needville, TX 77461-0505 or johnhowardreed@juno.com.

Elder Rupert Turner, former Moderator of New Covenant and member of MDPC – continuing health concerns

Rev. Tim and Teresa Phillips, Multicultural Café – grandparents of Thaddeus Micah, born October 13, 2010, to the Phillips' daughter.

Rev. Belinda Windham, New Hope Presbyterian, Katy, and family – Belinda's husband, Darrell, died unexpectedly October 15. Just previously, their son Sam received good news about his cancer treatment - a clear PET scan.

Rev. Ken Jack (HR) and his wife Janet – Ken is recovering from a successful lung transplant in mid-October.

Rev. Jack Haberer, Editor of The Presbyterian Outlook – recovering from surgery October 19, 2010.

Elder Dave Johnson, Chair of Ike Recovery Committee and member of Clear Lake PC – recovering from surgery October 20, 2010.

Rev. Mark Staub (First PC, Bay City) – celebrated 35 years in ordained ministry in October.

Pinecrest PC, Houston – celebrating 85 years of ministry

Elder George Dobbins – recovering from liver cancer surgery October 28. George is the former chair of presbytery's Committee on Ministry and member of St. John's PC, Houston.

*HR = Honorably Retired



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