

# CONNECTIONS

Growing congregations that passionately engage their community to make disciples.

## Presbytery to consider proposed changes to the constitution



The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is comprised of two parts: Part I, *Book of Confessions*; Part II, *Book of Order*. The *Book of Confessions* 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 Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). The *Book of Order* is comprised of three parts: Form of Government (G section), Directory for Worship (W section), Rules of Discipline (D section).

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 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).

The business sent down

from the 219th General Assembly will be considered by our presbytery over the next three presbytery meetings. The Ecclesiastical Affairs Committee of New Covenant has scheduled consideration of this business as follows:

- ♦ **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

### Proposed Amendments

The booklet of Proposed Amendments to the *Book of Order* will be sent to presbyteries in early September and in turn, will be sent out to our churches - as many copies as each church is allowed commissioners. This booklet will also be accessible online through a link on our presbytery's website. At the November 2010 meeting the Ecclesiastical Affairs Committee will

present each proposed amendment with relevant information but without recommendation one way or the other. Presbyters 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.

### Proposed New Form of Government

Looking ahead, there will be several opportunities to prepare for the GA business coming to the February and June meetings in 2011.

- ♦ November 6, 2010: The Moderator of the PC(USA) will be in Houston and has accepted our presbytery's invitation to meet and speak to all who can gather at ChristChurch PC, Bellaire, on Saturday, November 6, from 10:00 a.m. to noon. Elder Cynthia Bolbach was co-chair of the task force that drafted the proposed new Form of Government. She 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 printed study guide will soon be available for sessions to examine the proposed new

Form of Government. All sessions are urged to engage in this study. Links to study materials are already on the home page of the presbytery website.

- ♦ A workshop on the proposed new Form of Government will be offered at Church Officer Enrichment in January 2011.

### The Belhar Confession

- ♦ A link to the Belhar Confession study materials is posted on the home page of the presbytery's website. Sessions are urged to avail themselves of these materials to study this confession.
- ♦ A workshop on the Belhar Confession will be offered at Church Officer Enrichment in January 2011.
- ♦ The Preface to the *Book of Confessions* is an excellent tool for preparation to consider any additions to Part I of our Constitution.

Resource persons are available: ten persons elected by the presbytery to serve as commissioners to the 219th General Assembly, as well as presbytery staff members and elected presbytery leadership who were in attendance in Minneapolis. For a list of these persons and their contact information, contact Stated

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# FROM THE COLE MINE

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



## NEW COVENANT CONNECTIONS

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HELEN WOLF  
*Editor*

CARRIE WALKER  
*Layout*

PATRICIA BRANTLEY  
*Circulation Manager*

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Email: [hwolf@pbyofnewcovenant.org](mailto:hwolf@pbyofnewcovenant.org)

The Presbytery of New Covenant  
[www.pbyofnewcovenant.org](http://www.pbyofnewcovenant.org)

## "A Dream Presbytery?"

I awoke with a start. The dream, a nightmare really, seemed so real. My heart was beating wildly and my breathing was shallow. I had lived a few terrifying moments in another world where I knew I didn't belong. The details of the nightmare don't matter, and in fact, I don't even recall them. What matters is that I experienced it as though it were real. Fortunately I did wake up and re-enter the real world, a place where I belong and with which I am familiar.

Before my long road-trip vacation and journey to Minneapolis for General Assembly, I was wearing down and wearing out. I was not exactly in a nightmare (although I may have been behaving beastly), but I found myself in a place where I didn't belong and I knew I needed a reality check. On our four thousand mile journey through the Mountain West and Midwest, I got a chance just to "be" and not "do." Letting the miles roll by without making plans, casting vision, and keeping appointments, gave me a chance to recover myself and re-enter ministry.

Then I went to General Assembly... a weeklong affair of the head, heart, and spirit. It wasn't everything I had hoped for, but neither was it everything I had feared. Overall, it was a GA that tried to balance all perspectives and hold the church accountable for doing theological thinking.

Recognizing that the GA speaks *to* the church not *for* the church, here is what the GA spoke *to* the church. Yes, we'll have another vote on G 6.0106b, but the GA vote on the issue was fairly close. No, the GA didn't redefine marriage, but they did commend two study papers representing very different perspectives to the church. No, the GA didn't refuse the report from the Middle East Study Committee,

but they did significantly improve it to make relations with our Jewish brothers and sisters less tense. Yes, the GA voted to denounce Caterpillar, but they didn't vote to divest. Yes, GA voted to seek the presbyteries adoption of the Belhar Confession as part of our *Book of Confessions*. Yes, GA approved sending the new Form of Government to the presbyteries for a vote, but they did address many of the concerns raised during the period of study. Yes, the GA did approve establishing a commission for Middle Governing Bodies, but they made sure that the commission would be working in response to initiatives from middle governing bodies rather than initiating actions themselves.

In spite of the cycle between angst and relief at GA, I returned ready to re-engage ministry in New Covenant Presbytery. One of the first things that happened upon my return was a visit from a Presbytery Executive. This executive was here to interview staff and elected leaders to learn how we do what we do and report back to his presbytery. The report he produced is informative and full of insights (a few of which I wish weren't so insightful).

I was pleased that our emphasis on trust, transparency, relationships, and hospitality emerged through the interviewer's observations. I was also encouraged that our leadership could articulate our vision and how we are advancing the vision through everything we do. The report details how our presbytery meetings have changed over the last six or seven years to be more focused on mission, vision, and community-building. The fact that the executive noted our permission-giving style as being an integral part of who we are was confirmation that positive change has happened. On the other hand, our colleague detected areas

for improvement – accountability for communicating the vision, low giving to Synod and General Assembly, and a lack of emphasis on justice ministry.

The experience of observing ourselves through an observer made me proud to be a part of this ministry. I feel blessed among my colleagues to be in a presbytery that is not afraid to be "transformed by the renewing of our minds." I love working with an outstanding staff and a group of elected leaders whose love and commitment shows through everything they do. I thoroughly enjoy the laughter and playfulness of our staff and leadership who take their work but not themselves too seriously.

Working in the Presbytery of New Covenant is a privilege and in some ways a dream call. I get to do what I love, with people I love, in congregations I love. We may not be a "dream Presbytery" yet, but at least we are a presbytery that dreams. That's a great place to be.

In Christ's service,



**PS** – Somebody (probably Hallmark, but it's still a good idea) designated October as pastor Appreciation Month. Why not show some special appreciation to your pastor(s) in October to affirm that your church is a great place to be, too?

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Clerk Diane Prevary at the presbytery office. These fellow Presbyterians may be invited to speak to your session or congregation about their experiences at General Assembly and share their knowledge and insights about the business coming to our presbytery.

*From Stated Clerk, Diane Prevary: I cannot remember a time when as many proposed changes to our Constitution have been sent*

*to presbyteries for vote. While commissioners to presbytery shall not be instructed in their vote on any issue, study and dialogue with fellow Presbyterians are essential. Sessions and perhaps churches 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.*

*The following is taken from the PC(USA) website. Two study papers on civil union and marriage (majority and minority reports) will be sent to churches for study between now and the next GA with no time sensitivity other than the 220th GA.*

## Civil Union and Marriage Issues: Questions and Answers What did the General Assembly do? What has changed?

The General Assembly approved both the Final Report and the Minority Report of the Special Committee to Study Issues of Civil Union and Christian Marriage and ordered they be sent out for study by the wider church. The vote was 439 in favor, 208 against, with 6 abstentions.



By this action (sending both reports for study) the Assembly maintained the definition of marriage as "a man and a woman." With the action to send the reports for study, no change has occurred, or is pending.

### What does it mean?

The Special Committee Report provides descriptive material on the historical and theological aspects of marriage, as well as a look at current laws on same-gender partnerships and their children, and the place of same-gender covenanted relationships in the Christian community. They commend to the church their covenant, "Those Whom God Has Joined, Let No One Separate" as a guide for Presbyterians to come together to discuss difficult

issues when there is disagreement. The Minority Report, also approved for study by the Assembly, concludes that Scripture is clear that marriage is between a man and a woman only and does not support any kind of sexual behavior outside marriage. The minority report also contains a covenant for the wider church to use.

### What next?

The Special Committee Report and the Minority Report will be prepared for distribution as one document to the wider church. By sending both reports to the wider church, it is the hope of the Assembly that Presbyterians will find helpful background information on civil unions and marriage, as well as material to help individuals and groups remain together as they work through these difficult issues.

### Where can you learn more?

Special Committee report:  
<http://www.pc-biz.org/Explorer.aspx?id=3333&promoID=168>

Minority report:  
<http://www.pc-biz.org/Explorer.aspx?id=3333&promoID=169>

## clerk's corner

By Rev. Diane Prevary, HR  
Stated Clerk of the Presbytery  
of New Covenant



I spent a week in July with our eight-year-old granddaughter, Ainsley, on what we named "Ainsley's and Nana's Big Adventure." Ordinarily she comes to Texas and spends time with us here, but this year I picked her up in Virginia and we went on a road trip to see some friends and family in North Carolina. The accommodations during our travels made us roommates most nights, and I found that our conversations after the lights went out to be very interesting, and to this grandmother, heartwarming.

Each night before Ainsley would allow me to announce "it's time to go to sleep," she would ask me to tell her a story about when her daddy was growing up. Sometimes she wanted it to be about him and his sisters; sometimes it was to be about being in school; sometimes about being at church; sometimes what he did that got him into trouble! Regardless, each night we engaged in this time of remembrance. By the end of the week, she had come to know her father in very different ways than her own experience permits.

Churches are not unlike families. New members come into our church family and know only what is visible to them and what they experience, unless we share with them who we are and where we have been. Of course, I know that some churches are too much about the past and not enough about God's vision for the future. In general, however, I believe we can be strengthened as congregations if we maintain a healthy balance of tradition with new directions for ministry.

When I meet with clerks of session for their annual records review, I emphasize to them that they are "keepers of the tradition." In keeping the records of the church accurate and up-to-date, clerks are preserving the history of their congregations – capturing important moments in the life of the congregation(s) that can be passed on to future generations. At the same time, they are also recording the decisions sessions and congregations make about the future into which God is calling them.

The clerk of session is not alone, however, as keeper of the tradition of a congregation. Visitors and new members of a congregation will learn more about a church in a brief conversation with a seasoned member than any other way. Such a conversation will reveal facts about the church, but more importantly, the way the seasoned member feels about the church. In the same way that Ainsley discovered who her father was as a boy growing up as a preacher's kid (PK), so did she discover something about the depth of my love for him, as well as my convictions about family, faith, discipline - and sports (but, that's another story).

I urge us, as members of faith-families, to share our stories about where we have been as well as where we believe we are being called. These stories are our witness!

*"Pay close attention, friend, to what your father tells you, never forget what you learned at your mother's knee. Wear their counsel like flowers in your hair, like rings on your fingers." (Proverbs 1:8-9)*



Ainsley and Nana

## CALLED PRESBYTERY MEETING

General Council has called a special meeting of the presbytery on Thursday, September 9, at 1:00 p.m. at St. Stephen PC, Houston, to consider for adoption of a proposed budget for FY 2010-2011. The call for the meeting, the proposed budget, and directions to St. Stephen PC are posted on the presbytery's website.



## Mary's Musings

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

### Still learning after all these years...

Although the temperature continues to hover near the three digit mark, congregations are preparing for their "program years." From my years serving in congregations I know that CE committees are working at full throttle to complete the recruiting and training of teachers, as well as considering potential midweek study options as well. Part of me is "in my element" as we anticipate new students, new teachers, and classes. Each year I have a little prayer in mind: please, Lord, let no one be content to be a Sunday school graduate!

At a recent Committee on Ministry consultation hosted by our Synod, one of the topics addressed was the importance of continuing education for clergy. It is a required part of every pastor's call. Sadly, there are far too many folks who do not take advantage of that stipulation. Sometimes this is because the pastor does not find something of interest, but far more often it is because the congregation sends the message – either spoken or implied – that they think this is frivolous or that they just can't let the pastor be gone that much time. Other pastors and congregations thrive on the implications of being a learning congregation; they fully support time spent by their leaders in continuing education and see benefits for the congregation's vitality when their pastor is fed and challenged spiritually and mentally regularly.

The conversation then moved on to talk about what made for positive continuing education. Significant features included intentionality of the study process - a study that would hold participants to a level of responsibility for completion of the work and who would be enriched by the ways in which they processed what they had heard. There was conversation about groups that had been gathering for decades and continued to grow deeper in faith, practice, and community.

Some of the folks involved in that COM conversation made some interesting comments at the end of that session as they shifted their thoughts to the positive impact of challenging Sessions to get involved in significant continuing education in the faith. We talked about the power of creating a climate of learning and were convinced of the hunger that could be awakened for continuous learning by exposure to first rate teachers and challenging ideas.

As I have said before, I am a self-confessed learning junkie. I deeply appreciate time spent in book conversation groups. I realize that in some ways I have the luxury of serving in a call in which this kind of ongoing instruction is a part of my job description. Not everyone may have as much space built into daily life to engage in these practices. But here are just a few options readily available in this region over the coming months, in addition to wonderful classes and study groups available in your own congregation:

1. FOCUS - Oct. 2 at First PC, Pasadena (page 7)
2. Presbyterian Women Fall Conference - Oct. 15-16 (page 11)
3. Meet Cindy Bolboch, new Moderator, Nov. 6 (page 5)
4. Join a reading group. Current recommendations: Phyllis Tickler's *The Great Emergence*, Brian McLaren's *A New Kind of Christianity*, or Bob Sitz's *It's Not Too Late: A Field Guide to Hope*
5. And always, always, always – go back to scripture rather than relying on books about scripture, and collections of prayers rather than books *about* prayer.

# Community News

## New Church Development

Each of New Covenant's new church developments (NCD) is a fascinating story of how Christ is working in diverse populations, cultures, and locations in southeast Texas. What is Christ calling you to do to assist as His hands and feet in these areas of ministry? A common need of each group is additional funding to reach more people. If you would like to make a gift to support any of these ministries or the New Church Development work of the Presbytery, we would welcome your resources.

If this ministry is of interest to you, we are constantly seeking members for the New Church

Development Committee at the presbytery. We meet the third Tuesday of each month at the Presbytery Center. Come and join us for a meeting. We would love to hear your ideas! Each member of the committee has the privilege of mentoring at least one new church development.

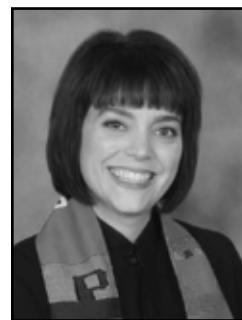
Everyone can be involved in this ministry by praying for these fellowships, churches, and the committee itself. If you have questions or would like additional information, contact Associate General Presbyter, Rev. Wendy Bailey, at the presbytery office.

## Query from the Stated Clerk

Are there software programs for keeping membership information that are particularly helpful? I am being asked by some churches what other churches are using, so please allow me to be a vehicle for sharing this information among the churches of New Covenant. Contact me at [dprevary@pbyofnewcovenant.org](mailto:dprevary@pbyofnewcovenant.org); [dkprevary@gmail.com](mailto:dkprevary@gmail.com)

## Guest pastor comes to town

The Rev. Shannon Johnson Kershner, pastor of Black Mountain PC in North Carolina, will preach



Rev. Shannon Johnson Kershner

at St. Philip PC, Houston, on Sunday, November 7. Shannon received her MDiv from Columbia Theological Seminary, located in Decatur, GA, in 1999, where she was awarded the Columbia Leadership Award for demonstrating the greatest

potential for future leadership with the PCUSA.

Shannon is no stranger to Texas. She worked at St. Philip for several years before seminary and served as an associate pastor at Woodlands Community Presbyterian, as well as Woodhaven Presbyterian in Irving, TX, before her call to Black Mountain Presbyterian. Shannon and her husband Greg met in college and attended seminary together. Greg grew up at MDPC, Houston, where his family are members. Shannon's father, the Rev. Jimmie D. Johnson, is a Presbyterian minister currently serving in Waco.

# E Highlights

## Welcome the Moderator!

Elder Cynthia Bolbach, Moderator of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), will be in Houston in early November and has accepted our invitation to meet with all from New Covenant who are interested. On Saturday morning, November 6, 10:00 a.m. to noon, Moderator Bolbach will be at ChristChurch Presbyterian in Bellaire. 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 in February 2011.



Cynthia Bolbach will be at ChristChurch Presbyterian in Bellaire. 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 in February 2011.

Says Moderator Bolbach: "Having served for four years

as co-moderator of the Form of Government Task Force, I can't pretend to be neutral on this issue. The proposed new Form of Government is not the solution to all our problems, by any means, but it is a necessary step toward establishing a constitutional structure that will allow us to flexibly and creatively rethink the roles of presbyteries and synods."

Mark your calendars now and plan to spend two hours with the moderator of our denomination on November 6! If possible, send those from your church who will be commissioners to the February 2011 meeting of the presbytery, who will be voting on the proposed new Form of Government.

The church is located at 5001 Bellaire Blvd. in Bellaire.

## 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. Jensen is a theology professor at Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary and 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

presbyters will vote on proposed amendments to the current *Book of Order*, Mike Cole will deliver his State of the Presbytery address, and presbyters will elect a number of persons to serve in the leadership of the presbytery from 2011 through 2013.



Dr. David Jensen

## 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](http://www.pbyofnewcovenant.org), or by emailing Helen Wolf at [hwolf@pbyofnewcovenant.org](mailto: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.



## Making History TODAY



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

## Stories in the Windows

"If these walls could talk ..." Have you ever wondered what tales we might hear if the walls that surround us, wherever we find ourselves, could talk? Imagine the tales that prison walls could tell? And what kind of conversations might the walls of Congress have witnessed over the years? Many church walls would have some fascinating, both inspiring and perhaps not so inspiring, tales to share, if only they could talk.

Well, some church walls do talk! In the pastor's office at First Presbyterian Church, Pasadena, there are three panels of a stained glass window that were part of a larger stained glass window when the church was at a different location. Engraved in the window are the words: "In Memory of Rev. William Plummer Jacobs, D.D., L.L.D. (1842-1917)" and "Mrs. Mary Dillard Jacobs (1843-1879), Clinton, South Carolina".

After a little investigation on the computer, I learned that William Jacobs not only founded Presbyterian College in Clinton, South Carolina, but that he was also instrumental in founding a Presbyterian orphanage in South Carolina. But the question remained in my mind as to why a church in Pasadena, Texas, would have a stained glass window dedicated to the memory of two saints from South Carolina who, apparently, never set foot in Texas.

From the work of a historian in the Pasadena church, Mrs. Diane Hall, I discovered that the entire stained glass window (most of which is beautifully preserved and presented in the narthex of the current church building), known as "the Jesus window" or "the Good Shepherd window" was given by Mr. and Mrs. T. O. Thompson who came to Pasadena from Canton, North Carolina, to open the Champion Paper Mill in 1937. They were, of course, Presbyterians and members of First Presbyterian Church. It turns out that Mrs. Thompson grew up in the orphanage that Jacobs had helped establish. Later she became a nurse with the help of Rev. Jacobs and delivered Mrs. Hall's sister, Sherry, in North Carolina. When the building on Harris Street in Pasadena was constructed, the Thompsons gave the window to the church. When the church relocated to its current location on Preston Avenue, it was important to include this window in the new building, and another church member, Mrs. Diane Tovey, labored to restore the window to its current state of good repair.

There are countless stories in the church that are fascinating and tell the gospel in a variety of ways. John Calvin whitewashed many of the walls in St. Peter's in Geneva because he thought there should be nothing that distracted those present from worshipping God. But many lovely windows point to the stories in Scripture that share the gospel, and other windows remind us of people no different from you and me who have made their own witness to that gospel.

What stories do the walls in your church building tell? Perhaps if you listen closely enough, you can hear those who have gone before speak to us. As we make history today, may we listen and learn and be inspired by those who struggled as we struggle, who wondered as we wonder, who doubted as we doubt, but who, ultimately, lived by faith in the love, grace, and presence of the risen Christ.



## Wendy's Bailey-wick

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

Years ago a church member approached me with a concern that she didn't know how to respond to her adult children who were active in a non-denominational church in their community. She said, "I know I don't believe what they believe, but I don't know what to say we DO believe." It was the same in a church I was a part of in the north. The congregation was a large church living in the shadow of a larger congregation that had left the denomination a decade earlier. So much of their self-identity was defined by what they *weren't* rather than by what they *were*, what they *didn't do* rather than by what they *did*, what they were *against* rather than what they were for. And here in the Bible Belt, Presbyterians often have a sense that our denomination and reformed heritage offers an alternative understanding of sin, hell, salvation, and biblical authority than the "folk-religion" of our communities, but can we articulate it in a way that says what it is we DO believe in? Do we express it in ways that are welcoming? Loving? Hopeful? And Life-giving?

Unfortunately, Christians have a reputation these days among non-church-goers (as well as some church-goers) of being unloving, intolerant, and anti-just-about-everything. This summer, in fact, Ann Rice, a popular novelist, announced on Facebook that she was quitting Christianity: "Today I quit being a Christian. I'm out. I remain committed to Christ as always but not to being "Christian" or to being part of Christianity. It's simply impossible for me to "belong" to this quarrelsome, hostile, disputatious, and deservedly infamous group..." In a later post she said it was all the "anti-'s" that she could no longer live with. She had returned to the Roman Catholic faith of her childhood only a few years ago because she had rediscovered her faith. And in the many Facebook posts and TV interviews that followed, she was clear that she was still devoted to Jesus Christ; she just could no longer be a part of a church that defined itself by what it was against.

Diana Butler Bass followed up Ms. Rice's announcement with a blog post on Beliefnet saying: "[Rice] has been aching for a faith that is open and not anti-everything; a faith that demonstrates the love, kindness, and mercy of its founder and not the "quarrelsome disputations of Jesus' all-too-human followers." Sympathetic to that longing, Bass finished her post writing, "Well, Anne, I'm with you. But I want to change Christianity, not reject it. It is time for a new reformation - a reformation of generous and open faith - a sort of Christianity that loves God and neighbor as Jesus commanded."

Me, too. I want the Church to be the people of God joining Christ's mission. I want us to be both imitators of Christ as well as advocates of grace. I want us to be clearly able to articulate what we're FOR not just what we're against. I want us to offer a hope-filled salvation story, not a story of fear or apathy or argument or hostility.

And believe it or not, I witnessed that kind of church in Minneapolis this summer. It wasn't during a sermon or a speech or during debate on the floor of the General Assembly. It was in the lounge of the downtown Hilton. There, late on a Wednesday night, I had the opportunity to overhear one of our commissioners make a clear and concise statement about what we're all about as Presbyterians. After allowing a lonely business traveler to share his fears and pains and shortcomings, and in response to his somewhat narrow depiction of Presbyterians, she said, with an attitude of kindness and love, "well, the way I see it, we're all about grace." Now that's a church I want to be a part of!

# Mission &

## From Texas to Belfast to Romania and back again

By the Rev. Whitney Wilkinson

What a summer it's been! It has been a whirlwind few months with a children's festival (think VBS), community arts festival, preaching, and the biggest—our youth mission trip to Romania. Now it seems that my time left in Belfast is slipping through my fingers, as I only have about a month left here. Two years have truly flown by!

We had a life-changing experience on our trip to Romania. Twenty-four of us arrived in Budapest, with this lil' Texan as the tour guide. As one who once got lost in tiny Alice, Texas, I'm pretty darn proud of myself for not getting us all hopelessly lost! We visited churches, castles, bridges, parks... all in 90° heat! Arriving by bus to Tileagd Baptist Church, we learned that we had a 2-hour Sunday service to fill the next day all by ourselves. Our resilient group of teens dived in and crafted one of the most poignant, creative, and thoughtful worship services I've seen in a long time.

We put on a Vacation Bible School at two churches and visited some of the sick in the church, which was a humbling and life-altering experience for many of our young people. The experience of deep peace and joy in a person who is suffering immensely with illness and poverty moved us all.

We also visited an orphanage and a Roma village. The village was one of the largest slums—nearly 4,000 people live in an area of ramshackle houses with open sewers and no running water. This is where many Roma who come to Belfast are from. We expected to see despair and hurt all around us, but instead, children flocked to us. Throwing their filthy arms around our legs, holding our hands, smiling and laughing, they led us through their village. One little



The Fitzroy Youth Romania Team

girl held my hand most of the time, smiling up at me, genuinely thrilled that I could be there. I looked at her and sadly thought that she would never receive such a warm welcome in Northern Ireland or America.

I won't forget that little girl. I later shared with the young people how she was a reminder to me of how we in this world as God's children belong to each other. She is a part of me and I'm a part of her. If her bare feet are dirty, if she doesn't have enough to eat, if she's subjected to dehumanizing trials because she's a woman, this is my problem. I'll try to think of her while I discern where I'm called next, seeking a church that is missional and radically engaged with the poor. I'll think of her when I'm tempted to buy something I don't need or when I'm tempted to get caught up in status or making a name for myself. Blessed are the poor. Blessed am I by them. I hope they're blessed by me.

As I prepare to leave Belfast, I know that the relationships I've built here, the respect and friendship I've discovered, the overwhelming generosity in a place that gets far too much bad press, the power of humor to heal, the re-creative movement of the Spirit here and within me... these things will not be lost. Like the little girl who held my hand in the Roma slum, like you, they are a permanent part of my story and I'm a part of theirs. Thanks be to the God who binds our stories together and gives us the courage to share them.

# Ministry



## FOCUS 2010

### Light for a Weary World

*"Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me - watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly."*

*Matthew 11:28-29, The Message by Eugene Peterson.*

There are many ways to learn the unforced rhythms of grace. We can worship, play, pray, sing, learn something new, and spend time apart, even as we spend time with friends. And all of these things can be found at New Covenant's annual fall gathering, FOCUS: Light for a Weary World, on Saturday, October 2, at First Presbyterian Church, Pasadena.

Dr. Mel Bringle, professor of philosophy and religious studies at Brevard College, and noted hymn writer, will be the keynote speaker and worship leader. Mel is a delightful speaker and will have us sitting on the edge of our seats listening and then rising to join her in song as she inspires and refreshes us. You don't want to miss an opportunity to be with Mel.

Participants will also get to choose two workshops from the twenty-five choices on a variety of topics including nurturing families, Bible study, spirituality, healthy (and green) living, and social justice offered by a distinguished faculty coming from near and far.

Brochures with complete workshop descriptions and registration details are available at your church, can be accessed online through a link on the home page of the presbytery website or in "Tuesday Connect," or by contacting Carrie Walker at the presbytery.

Early registration until September 15: \$30.00.

#### MEN'S BIBLE STUDY - OCTOBER 30-31

The men of First PC, Pasadena, invite other men to join them for a weekend with the Rev. Dr. Jesse Truvillion, Bible Study Leader at the 2010 Mo Ranch Men's Conference. No reservations necessary. A treat's in store for you!

Friday, October 29, 6:00 p. m. - Meal and Bible lesson

Saturday, October 30, 8:00 a. m. - Men's Breakfast and Bible Lesson

Saturday, October 30, 6:00 p. m. - Meal and Bible Lesson

Sunday October 31, 11:00 a.m. - Worship Service



Members of First Presbyterian, Pasadena, pose with Dr. Jesse Truvillion on the right.

## Classifieds

### Job Opening: Music Director - Angleton

First PC in Angleton, just south of Houston, is seeking a part-time Music Director. This position, in addition to some administrative duties pertaining to those of a music director, will also provide musical leadership for both traditional and contemporary Sunday morning services, adult Chancel Choir, handbell choir, and (hopefully) a children's choir. The candidate should be Christian with a personal relationship with God, have an educational background in music, and have a desire to contribute to the overall ministry of First Presbyterian.

Contact the church, 130 S. Arcola, Angleton, TX 77515, 979-849-5722, or email [angpres@att.net](mailto:angpres@att.net).

### Job Opening: Music Ministry Director - Needville

St. Paul's Presbyterian Church, Needville, is seeking a music ministry director to direct weekly choir rehearsals for Sunday services at 9:00 a.m. This position will require approximately 8 hours a week for planning, rehearsal, and presentation. Contact [pciampil@comcast.net](mailto:pciampil@comcast.net), if interested.

### Job Opening: Director of Adult Ministries - Houston

Memorial Drive PC (MDPC), Houston, is seeking a director Adult Ministries. The purpose of this full-time position is to implement and coordinate a variety of adult ministries at MDPC. The person in this position will carry out duties which seek to enhance the quality and quantity of MDPC's ministries to adults.

For a detailed job description, visit [http://www.mdpc.org/pages/page.asp?page\\_id=43742](http://www.mdpc.org/pages/page.asp?page_id=43742). Submit resumes to Karen at [kwinship@mdpc.org](mailto:kwinship@mdpc.org) or fax to 713-953-2577

### Job Openings: Director of Music and Part-time Organist - The Woodlands

The Woodlands Community PC, is seeking a full-time director of Music and a part-time organist. For a detailed job description, please contact either Jim at [jholly@crestedirectional.com](mailto:jholly@crestedirectional.com) or Rev. David F. Jones at [djones@wcpc-tx.org](mailto:djones@wcpc-tx.org).

### Job Opening: Church Organist/Pianist - Galveston

Historic First PC, Galveston is seeking a part-time organist/pianist. Hours are Sundays 9:30 a.m. to Noon with a few additional special services during the year. Please email resume to [scoggin@galvpres.net](mailto:scoggin@galvpres.net) and/or call the church office at 409-762-8638.

### Needed: Van or Bus

The United Ghanaian Presbyterian New Church Development (NCD) is looking for a van or bus to pick up members for worship on Sundays. If you know of someone who has a van or bus and is willing to make a donation to this NCD, contact Wendy Bailey at 713-526-2585 or [wbailey@pbyofnewcovenant.org](mailto:wbailey@pbyofnewcovenant.org).

### Available: music for choirs

St. Philip PC, Houston, has a lot of music - books and sheet music - to give away, from both Central Presbyterian and St. Philip. They would like to distribute this music to other churches. Contact Kristy Forbes Vits, if interested, at [kristy@saintphilip.net](mailto:kristy@saintphilip.net).

### Available: Small Organ

The Rev. and Mrs. Tim Galligan (Member-at-Large) have a small organ in their home which they no longer want. Any small church interested? Contact them at [tgalliga@yahoo.com](mailto:tgalliga@yahoo.com).

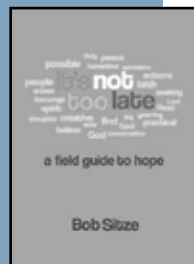
### Available: Sunday School Books

Brazoria Presbyterian has adult Sunday School books (2008 and 2009), that they no longer need. If anyone could use them, please call 979-798-7757. Leave a message if you are interested.

### Free to good church home

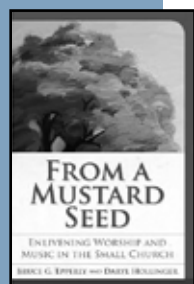
A member of Grace PC, Houston, has a Lowrey Organ, 1995 Holiday NT 300B, to donate. Can be serviced by Benton Electronics, Deer Park, 281-479-3939. Contact Evelyn Minnick at 281-493-4344.

## New Resources



### **It's Not Too Late: A Field Guide to Hope** By Bob Sitze

This little book is crammed with words of encouragement and challenge to show what it means that hope lives within each of us and how we become better instruments of hope in the lives of others. Based on practices of positive, asset-based thinking and action, it offers gifts in action for anyone and everyone in both secular and congregational life. Each entry is no more than two pages long and includes a link to scripture as well as a helpful reflection question. Reflections are grouped under the topics of contexts, openings, bogs, skills, actions, and connections.



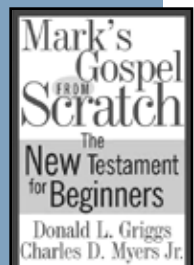
### **From A Mustard Seed: Enlivening Worship and Music in the Small Church.** By Bruce Epperly and Daryl Hollinger

Written by a pastor and musician, this book presents what has been called an excellent and honest guide to deepening worship and looking realistically at the future. Includes chapters on planning for worship, encouraging congregational singing, an exploration of theology and worship in the small church, and the true story of two congregations transformed by vibrant worship practices that honor the old and embrace new possibilities.



### **The Preaching of Jesus. Gospel Proclamation Then and Now** By William Brosend

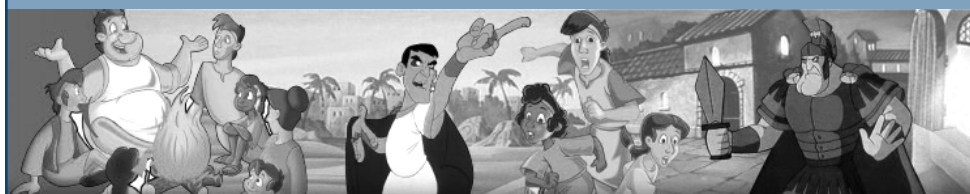
This book for preachers and students of preaching reveals four distinct aspects in the rhetoric of Jesus: preaching in response to challenges and questions, making bold and authoritative statements, speaking about himself, and making use of metaphor. Contemporary sermons illustrating each of these types are included from such well known and respected voices as Fred Craddock, Tom Long, Bishop Michael Curry, and Barbara Brown Taylor.



### **Mark's Gospel from Scratch: The New Testament for Beginners.** By Donald Griggs and Charles Myers, Jr.

This is an expansion on the very popular overview of the testaments for basic introductory study, *The Bible from Scratch*. This single-volume includes all participant's and leader's materials, making it appropriate for either individual or group study with shared leadership. The six sessions are solid in their approach and help participants develop skills in biblical interpretation as they examine not only the story of Mark, but unique themes and structure. Helpful forms are included for use by participants.

## DVD Series for kids



**The Storykeepers Collection** tells the adventures of a group of Christian children living in Rome in 64 AD who hear the stories of Jesus and are inspired by faithful adults to live their faith in dangerous times. Designed for students 6-12 years old, these action-packed adventures can be used as a part of an ongoing series or stand-alone classes that relate to special liturgical season emphases. Framing materials tell the story of an underground

church that seeks to keep the message of Jesus alive. A detailed one volume Teacher's Guide is also available. Each adventure is 25 minutes long. Individual titles include:

- **Breakout!** – Feeding of the 5000, Zacchaeus, Jairus' Daughter, Jesus Teaches Crowds
- **Raging Waters** – John the Baptist, Calming the Storm, and the Gerasene Demoniac
- **Catacomb Rescue** – The Good Samaritan, the Sower, and the Unmerciful Servant
- **Ready! Aim! Fire!** – Jesus Blesses the Children, Blind Bartimaeus, The Man With a Paralyzed Hand
- **Sink or Swim** – Pharisee and the Tax Collector, Two Houses, and Healing the Paralytic
- **Starlight Escape** – Magi, Flight into Egypt, the Announcement and Birth of Jesus
- **Roar in the Night** – Lost Sheep, Healing, and the Widow's Mite
- **Captured!** – Faithful Centurion and the Prodigal Son
- **Trapped** – Transfiguration, Entry into Jerusalem and Parable of Wicked Tenants
- **Betrayed** – Plot to Betray Jesus, Last Supper, and Peter's Promise
- **Nabbed by Nero** – Trial and Arrest
- **Getaway** – Crucifixion and Burial
- **The Final Conflict** – Post Resurrection, Easter stories, and Ascension.

There is an additional special Easter Story Keeper that includes all Holy week and Easter stories on one DVD, 70 minutes long.

## DVD for adults

Designed as a five or six session study to introduce ancient spiritual practices that could easily be extended to a 10-week study using the suggestions in the accompanying Leader's Guide. Discussion is hosted by Jonathan Wilson-Harper, founder of the new monasticism movement, and Lauren Winner, assistant professor of Christian Spirituality at Duke Divinity School. Gain insight into some of the ancient-future practices that are having a profound influence on growing numbers of Christians today. Topics are drawn from the wisdom of desert fathers and mothers, St. John Chrysostom, St. Benedict, the Cloud of Unknowing and The Imitation of Christ. In each case the presenters connect these very ancient writings with today's spiritual hungers. Total length is 92 minutes.

# what's happening!

## Just for **MEN**

September 14  
through March 1



Men are invited to attend "Men's Life: Back to Basics," a 21-week series that will help men explore new opportunities and better understanding for all their relationships. Men's Life meets Tuesdays, September 14 to March 1, 6:15-7:45 a.m. at Memorial Drive PC in Fellowship Hall. Men's Life, originally based on the Men's Fraternity series developed by Robert Lewis, has changed countless lives, strengthened marriages, and reunited broken families. It starts with a desire for something REAL that draws men to seek a deeper meaning in their lives and helps clarify God's intended purpose for them. No cost.

More information and registration at [www.ml.mdpc.org](http://www.ml.mdpc.org).

September 19



## Come home!

Former members and family of St. Andrew's PC, Houston, are invited to come to its Homecoming and Reunion Sunday, September 19, at 12:30 p.m. to celebrate the completion of St. Andrew's latest remodeling. Join the St. Andrew's church family past and present to hear the history of St. Andrew's through film, photos, and story. Traditional worship at 11:00 a.m. and lunch at 12:30 p.m. Connect with old friends and see what the St. Andrew's community has been doing since you left!



GUATEMALA  
June 18-25, 2011

Sign up by  
March 1, 2011

## Partnership trip to Guatemala

Make plans now to join in a partnership trip to Guatemala June 18-25, 2011. It will be an immersion trip, which past participants have described as "a conversion experience; a renewing of faith." Our delegation will travel through Guatemala to see firsthand the work of Presbytery of New Covenant's partner ministry, CEDEPCA (Protestant Center for Pastoral Studies in Central America), as well as to witness the presence of the Presbyterian Church there.



Trip Leaders: Julia Ann Moffett, retired PC(USA) Mission Worker in Central America, and Sharyl Davis, Co-Chair of CEDEPCA Partnership Network of Presbytery of New Covenant and missions director at Northwoods PC, Houston.

For more information, contact Sharyl Davis at 281-444-8861 or [sharyl@northwoods.org](mailto:sharyl@northwoods.org). Deadline for application and deposit is March 1. Cost is \$900 plus airfare; no Spanish necessary.



Take me out to the  
ballgame!

September 11

This year, Presbyterians will gather for Presbyterian Night at the Astros on Saturday, September 11, at 6:05 p.m. Astros vs. LA Dodgers game. And you are invited to this special Presbyterian Night of fellowship and fun! Get your discounted tickets (\$9 to \$24) NOW through the link on the presbytery website ([www.pbyofnewcovenant.org](http://www.pbyofnewcovenant.org) > News and Events > Presbytery). Use the password presbyterian to receive the discount!

## WANTED: Happily Married Couples

October 8-10

Find the happiness God wants for you on a Worldwide Marriage Encounter weekend! Marriage Encounter is 44 hours where married couples can get away from jobs, kids, chores, and phones - and focus only on each other. If you'd like greater depth, growth, and enrichment in your relationship, you'll like the difference a Worldwide Marriage Encounter weekend can make!

The next Presbyterian Marriage Encounter weekend in Houston is October 8-10 at the Crowne Plaza Greenspoint. Registration for this weekend will close September 23. For more information and to sign up, visit <http://www.presby-me.org>.



### September 9

Called Presbytery Meeting  
St. Stephen PC, Houston

### September 11

Presbyterian Night  
at the Astros  
Astros vs. LA Dodgers  
Minute Maid Park, Houston

### September 11

Session Records Review  
Clusters 1 and 4  
First PC, Alvin

### October 2

FOCUS 2010  
First PC, Pasadena

### October 8-10

Presbyterian Marriage  
Encounter

### October 12-15

Presbyterian Older Adults  
Conference  
Orlando, FL

### October 15-16

PW Presbytery Fall Retreat  
Cho-Yeh Conference Center  
Livingston, TX

### October 18-20

Being Reformed Workshop  
Austin Presbyterian Seminary  
Austin, TX

### October 30

Session Records Review  
Clusters 5 and 12  
First PC, Sugar Land

### 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

SEPTEMBER 19

## Coordinator of CAMPAIGN FOR FAIR FOOD to speak at St. John's

The Rev. Noelle Damico, national coordinator of the PC(USA)'s campaign for fair food, is coming to Houston to participate in Faith and Freedom Weekend, an interfaith initiative to begin dialoguing, uniting, and acting to raise awareness of the injustice of human trafficking. With millions living in slavery around the world, communities of faith play a key role in uniting for freedom.

Rev. Damico will speak Sunday, September 19, at an interfaith service at St. John's PC, Houston, at 3:30 p.m. on the appropriate response of faith communities to the reality, injustice, and inhumanity of human trafficking. Her talk kicks off Human Trafficking Awareness Week in Houston.

She will also preach Sunday, September 19, at St. John's 10:30 a.m. worship service. Everyone is invited to attend these events. The church is located at 5020 W. Bellfort, Houston.



Rev. Noelle Damico

## Mobile museum is raising awareness among consumers

A mobile museum, now traveling through the northeast, is raising awareness among consumers about the brutal exploitation behind the fruit and vegetables we eat and promoting the PC(USA)'s Campaign for Fair Food. Presbyterians across the northeast are busy hosting and promoting the Modern Day Slavery Museum. The centerpiece for this mobile museum is a replica of the cargo box truck in which farmworkers were held against their will in a recent slavery case in Florida, bringing the reality of slavery's ongoing practice to the public's attention.



OCTOBER 12-15

## MINISTRY WITH OLDER ADULTS: Conference and resources



Presbyterian Older Adult Ministries Network (POAMN) is a network of persons who are engaged in ministry with older adults. These people work in presbyteries and synods, are leaders in congregations; or serve in specialized ministries such as chaplains in care facilities.

The theme of the Oct. 12-15 conference, to be held at the international Palms Resort and Conference Center in Orlando, FL, is *Connecting the Generations: Models, Methods, and Mentors in Ministry*. Rev. Dr. Eileen Lindner will be the keynote speaker. For information and registration, visit <http://www.poamn.org/>.



Rev. Dr. Eileen Lindner

OCTOBER 15-16

## New Covenant Presbyterian Women gather for Fall Conference

The PW Presbytery Fall Conference begins with dinner Friday, October 15, 6:00 p.m. at the Cho-Yeh Conference Center. Meetings begin at 7:00 p.m. and end no later than 5:00 p.m. Saturday. Featured speaker will be the Rev. Pat Felter, a second career pastor and wife of the Rev. Shane Whisler who is communications director for the Synod of the Sun. Information about workshops and registration can be found on the Presbyterian Women page of the presbytery website (use Quick Find on the home page).

Registration deadline is September 10.

### WORKSHOPS:

Workshop A: *What's Golden About the Golden Years?* presented by Rev. Connie Alexander

Workshop B: *What is Your SPARK?* presented by Mary Marcotte

Workshop C: *Stretching Body and Soul* presented by Dell Schooler

Workshop D: *We Built It, but They Didn't Come: Renewing Our Relationship Between Young Adults and the Presbyterian Church* presented by Rev. Kyle Walker



OCTOBER 21



## Seasons of Caring Luncheon honors Presbyterians

Jim and Martha Hunt from Grace PC, Houston, and Pattie Dale Tye from First PC, Houston, will be honored at Interface-Samaritan's annual Seasons of Caring luncheon on Thursday, October 21, at River Oaks Country Club. They are the 2010 recipients of the Samaritan for All Seasons award, honoring those individuals whose personal and professional lives exemplify Christian concern



Jim and Martha Hunt



Patty Dale Tye

and compassion for others, who actively demonstrate a strong sense of community and civic responsibility, and who have the unique ability to encourage and motivate others to take Samaritan roles in their lives.

Jim and Martha Hunt both serve as Elders Grace PC. Other Presbyterian ministries that they have been actively involved in include: Brazos Presbyterian Homes, Cho-Yeh Camp and Conference Center, Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary, and Presbyterian Pan-American School in Kingsville. Pattie Dale Tye, President of Humana of Houston, has been an active community leader through her involvement with the American Heart Association, Baylor College of Medicine, and the United Way. Randy Tabor, former CEO of Star of Hope, will be the keynote speaker at the luncheon.

Proceeds from the luncheon enable Interface to provide counseling and educational services from a Christian perspective. For information on how to purchase a ticket or make a donation in one of the honoree's names, contact Ana Schick at 713-626-7990, ext. 104 or [aschick@interface-samaritan.com](mailto:aschick@interface-samaritan.com).

OCTOBER 18-20

## Being Reformed: A Pastoral Theology for a Dying and Rising Church

Austin Presbyterian Seminary is offering a workshop, "Being Reformed: A Pastoral Theology for a Dying and Rising Church" October 18-20 that will consider challenges that face local congregations.

While many decry the seemingly imminent demise of the Presbyterian church, citing diminishing numbers and decreased (if not extinguished) cultural clout, the Rev. Alex Thornburg (Westminster PC, Madison, WI) and the Rev. Ted Foote (First PC, Bryan, TX) are convinced that the Reformed tradition is uniquely placed to respond to the crosswinds and forces of today's world.

Using insights from Scripture, sociology, history, and social psychology, they will explore with workshop participants how a worldview from the Reformed faith tradition can shape our responses to challenges of fundamentalism, relativism, consumption, and hopelessness.

This event is sponsored by Austin Presbyterian Seminary in partnership with First PC, Bryan, and is open to all interested persons. Visit the seminary's website, [www.austinseminary.edu](http://www.austinseminary.edu). To register, click on Continuing Education > Christian Leadership for more information.



Rev. Ted Foote

NOVEMBER 4-6

## National conference to meet in Houston

The 2010 Covenant Network Conference, "We Are Family: Celebrating the Whole Household of God," will be hosted by St. Philip PC, Houston, November 4-6. St. Philip has the honor of being the first church in Texas to host this national meeting. Serving as a Local Arrangements committee will be St. Philip's Peacemaking & Social Justice Committee.



The three-day conference brings to Houston many nationally recognized preachers and speakers. Plenary speakers include Dr. Margaret Aymer, Professor of New Testament Interdenominational Theological Center; Dr. Robert Dykstra, Professor of Pastoral Theology, Princeton Theological Seminary; and Dr. David Myers, Professor of Psychology, Hope College.

Preachers at the conference will be the Rev. Katie Morrison, United Church of Christ; the Rev. David Van Dyke, Pastor of House of Hope Presbyterian Church, St. Paul, MN; and the Rev. Cliff Kirkpatrick, President of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches.

# *In Our Prayers*

*The Rev. Viet Ho (Thien-An PC, Houston) – Viet's father died June 6, 2010.*

*Commissioned Lay Pastor (CLP) Debbie Battise-Kleinman (Indian PC, Livingston) and former presbytery moderator – Debbie's cousin, Lillian Batisse, died June 24, 2010.*

*Elder Margaret Swarts (St. Paul PC, Houston) and former director of New Covenant's Resource Center - Margaret's sister-in-law died June 23, 2010.*

*Family and friends of Elder Rick Due (Northwoods PC, Houston) - Rick died June 27, 2010.*

*The Rev. Dean Pogue (Grand Lakes PC, Katy) - knee replacement surgery during the summer*

*The Rev. Belinda Windham (New Hope PC, Katy) - knee replacement surgery during the summer*

*The Rev. Ken Jack (First PC, Huntsville) - health concerns.*

*The Rev. Coval MacDonald (HR) – health concerns*

*Family and friends of Elder Sid Holderness, clerk of session at ChristChurch PC, Bellaire, and active on many presbytery committees – Sid died July 11, 2010*

*Pastors who have recently moved to New Covenant Presbytery: the Rev. Joe McDonald, serving First PC, Livingston, as of September 1; and the Rev. Bob Bullock, serving as designated pastor of West Isle PC, Galveston*

*\*HR = Honorably Retired*



## PRESBYTERY OF NEW COVENANT

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