

# CONNECTIONS

Growing congregations that passionately engage their community to make disciples.

## Church Officer Enrichment: Change



New Covenant's annual Church Officer Enrichment event returns Saturday, January 21, 9:00 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. at St. Andrew's PC, 5308 Buffalo Speedway in Houston. Registration begins at 8:30 a.m. The time is designed to equip, enrich, and encourage all Church Officers, both those newly ordained and those with years of experience, for the calling of spiritual leadership.



Tod Bolsinger

The 2012 event features a keynote presentation with Teaching Elder Tod Bolsinger who is a Presbyterian pastor, author, blogger, consultant, executive coach, and sometime professor of practical theology. He regularly works with creative teams of people to figure out the kinds of systems that make for really healthy, productive communities of people. He is a gifted and articulate speaker who helps clarify the challenges, demands and possibilities for leaders in the church today. Tod serves as a coach and advisor to the Mid-Council

Commission of the PC(USA). His keynote address is entitled "Canoeing the Mountains: Leading in Times of Radical Change."

Workshops will help officers and pastors to be better prepared to live out their responsibilities as officers and leaders and to be more fully engaged in the principles of the Reformed Tradition. Participants may choose to attend two learning options in addition to the thought-provoking keynote presentation.

- ♦ **The ABCs of the Confessions: From the Apostles' Creed to the Brief Statement of Faith,** with Teaching Elder Dr. James Currie
- ♦ **How Firm a Foundation (The new section F of our Book of Order),** with Ruling Elder Bill Hargrove
- ♦ **Shaping our Life Together: the Directory for Worship,** with Teaching Elder Laura Grice
- ♦ **Kneeling at the Foot of the Cross: Leading with a Servant Heart,** with Ruling Elder JoAnn Currie
- ♦ **What's Up with the PC(USA)?,** with Teaching Elder Jack Haberer

- ♦ **New Technology, New Choices: And Facing Your Own Mortality,** with Teaching Elder Linda Sharon
- ♦ **Boundary Training and Ethics for Church Officers,** with Teaching Elder Kristy Forbes Vits
- ♦ **If You Dread Meetings, You Will Love This Workshop,** with Ruling Elder Anne Wilson

PLUS two specialized options:

- ♦ **Session Records Review and Clerk's Forum** with Teaching Elder and Stated Clerk Lynn Hargrove
- ♦ **I Am a Treasurer. Now What?** with Ruling Elder Forbes Baker, New Covenant's Director of Finance

The event is free. Childcare is available with pre-registration. You may reserve a \$10 meal ticket or feel free to bring your lunch or slip out to a nearby restaurant. Purchase meal tickets at registration. Full details and registration information is available at [www.pbhofnewcovenant.org](http://www.pbhofnewcovenant.org). Plan to attend and bring your entire leadership team for a day of learning and fellowship.

Teaching Elder (TE), formally TE

## Remembering the Forgotten Storm

By Members of the Ike Recovery Team

### The Ike Recovery Team

Shortly after Hurricane Ike struck Texas in 2008, New Covenant's General Council established the Ike Recovery Team (IRT) to lead the Presbytery's efforts. It was charged with stewarding the Ike Recovery Fund, which was established through donations from presbyteries, congregations, individual donors, and Presbyterian Disaster Assistance, to help with the rebuilding and restoration process.

The IRT has been active since then in recovery efforts for eight counties, serving as a member of the Long Term Recovery Committee for Galveston, Harris, Brazoria, Liberty, Chambers, Orange, Angelina, and Polk Counties. The primary work with these organizations came through organizational assistance, volunteer coordination, and grant advocacy. Five primary worksites were established to help repair homes for families with few resources: Jefferson/Orange counties from the Port Neches Village, Galveston County from the Texas City Village, Bolivar Peninsula from the Presbytery's High Island Retreat Center, Brazoria County, and weekend teams traveling from Houston to Polk County.

Please see FORGOTTEN STORM on page 9

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# FROM THE COLE MINE

By TE Mike Cole, General Presbyter, Presbytery of New Covenant



## NEW COVENANT CONNECTIONS

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## “It’s 20what?!”

Back when I was in high school, I read George Orwell’s novel 1984 with rapt attention because it seemed so bizarre and futuristic. I recall a debate in my English class among those who thought Orwell was right in his predictions and those who thought we could never end up in a controlled society where the government intruded into every aspect of our lives. I think the “Orwell was wrong” folks won the debate, but based on my experience today, the “Orwell was right” folks were much closer to the truth.

However, this is not a big government bashing column (I actually think the government does have a significant role to play in mitigating inequalities in society) but a reflection on what lies ahead and how we got where we are. In the 1950s, 1984 seemed like an eternity away. I remember thinking, “I’ll never live long enough to see 1984,” and now here I am further on the other side of an unimaginable date than I was when I was looking at it through teenage eyes.

A lot has happened in the last fifty years. Here are just a few. The 1960s gave us Astroturf, soft contact lenses, pop top cans, basic computer language, permanent press materials, the handheld calculator, and valium. The 1970s gave us the microprocessor, video games, post-it notes, the Walkman, and the MRI. The 1980s gave us the first PC, a vaccine against Hepatitis B, disposable cameras, and the Doppler radar. The 1990s gave us the world wide web, cable TV, the

DVD, and Google. The 2000s have given us worldwide cell phone use, airport security, apps, blogs, social networking, reality TV, texting, and Wikipedia.

One would think that during this same timeframe the church would have undergone similar seismic shifts, but the truth is that change in the Presbyterian Church has been mere tremors on the Richter Scale compared to what society has undergone. In the last fifty years we’ve: utilized technological advances in communication at a pace about ten years behind the latest developments; become less formal in our Sunday worship service attire; avoided some polarizing issues, and have thrown ourselves with abandon into others; introduced guitars, keyboards and drums into some worship services; and adapted our structures to be more corporate while corporations are adapting their structures to be more relational. Not exactly an earthshaking list for those who are supposed to be “Reformed and always reforming,” is it?

Fifty years ago I couldn’t even imagine what it would be like to write a date in the year 2000 and now we are entering our twelfth year after Y2K. The question I keep asking myself is, “Have we utilized the time we’ve been given to the advantage of the Kingdom of God?” It’s not just a matter of using technological advances. It’s a matter of advancing the Realm of God by shifting our focus from inward to outward. Utilizing all the advancements of the world in the Church means nothing, if they don’t help us serve others.

Many parts of the Church have been so consumed with not

allowing the culture to creep into the Sacred that we have forgotten that Jesus called us to be disciples to infiltrate the culture. It’s not Church vs. Culture; it’s Church into Culture that Jesus preached. If technology and other advancements allow us to do a better job of reaching out, then I don’t think the culture is infecting us – we are affecting the culture.

Someone once said only partially in jest, “If the 1950s roll around again, the Church is ready for it.” The dilemma for us as we enter the sixth decade after the 1950s is what can we do to be ready for 2012 and the opportunities to look beyond the walls of our churches to serve others?

In Christ’s service,



## Interfaith activities post gain since 9/11

The decade after 9/11 has seen an increase in ecumenical and interfaith activities, according to a recent survey. The Cooperative Congregational Studies Partnership revealed that the number of PC(USA) congregations involved in such activities increased 50% during this period. Activities have included multi-faith educational and cultural events, fairs, and worship services.

According to an article in the Houston Chronicle in September, many multi-faith activities are begun at the grass roots level. "For every posed photo of a pastor, imam, and rabbi, there are dozens of local interfaith groups that gather for volunteering, neighborhood activities, or even just dinner," wrote Kate Shelnutt.

General Presbyter Mike Cole reports, "Almost every congregation I visit in every community is involved in grassroots ecumenical work - shared worship, joint service centers, and community outreach. In years past, denominational leadership urged and coordinated ecumenical involvement, but today our congregations are committed not only to ecumenical but also interfaith involvement."

Local resources that promote interfaith dialogue are Compassionate Houston, the Sikh Coalition, Salam Houston), Interfaith Ministries of Greater Houston, and the Islamic Spirituality Center.

See the article on page 5 "More Interfaith News" about a New Covenant Interfaith Experience.

## Louisville Seminary to provide full scholarships

In what many are calling an historic decision, the Board of Trustees of Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary has approved a new strategic plan that has as its core the provision of full scholarships for all students in the school's master's degree programs by Fall 2015. The

seminary master's degrees include Master of Divinity (MDiv), Master of Arts in Marriage and Family Therapy, and Master of Arts in Religion. A summary of the seminary's Covenant for the Future is available online at <http://www.lpts.edu>.

## Looking forward to serving with you in the New Year!

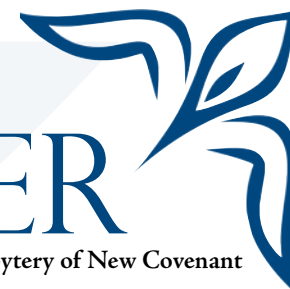


The newly constituted presbytery staff on retreat at Tiki Island Chapel in November. Front row, l. to r. - Carrie Walker, Sharon Darden, Patricia Brantley, Sandra Lopez, and Janice Schessler. Back row, l. to r. - Helen Wolf, Mike Cole, Caressa Murray, Forbes Baker, Lynn Hargrove, Mary Marcotte, and Kendall Boyd.



## CLERK'S CORNER

By TE Lynn Hargrove, Stated Clerk, Presbytery of New Covenant



The church is an interesting organization from a business standpoint. We don't have a product to sell. We don't provide services for which we charge by the hour. We rely on donations to function. Sometimes this works well, and sometimes it seems like a crazy way to do business. In these days where we are living in what is known as post-Christian times, the business of church can be difficult. We see congregations making decisions about their future based on whether or not they can pay their bills. It is a challenging time for us!

One of the ways that we support the denominational structures is through our per capita giving. When one withholds per capita due to disagreements with the decisions made at General Assembly, there are other layers that are being hurt financially. Our per capita giving funds things like the Church Leadership Connection which assists congregations and pastors in the call process; Leadership Development through events like the annual polity conference and the moderators conference, and support for committees on ministry and for preparation for ministry; the Presbyterian Historical Society which collects and stores our church records; understanding immigration issues which help congregations across the nation with advice and counsel on dealing with people who are not from our country; the Office of the General Assembly in Louisville; General Assembly publications; working in the ecumenical world; communications including the PC(USA) website; sending commissioners to serve at General Assembly; and travel expenses for the Moderator and Vice Moderator of the General Assembly who travel worldwide representing us as Presbyterians.

Some say that "per capita is the glue that holds Presbyterians together." It is a way that we all share in the costs that belong to the whole church, and we stay connected to all of our core structures. It allows us to work with other churches to further the mission of Jesus Christ around the world. The General Assembly rate for per capita (per member) for 2011 is \$6.50, and will rise by \$.13 for 2012. Compared to other ways that we spend our money, it is a good value for the services provided.

A discussion on per capita also points out the need for accurate annual statistical reporting. You might ask why we need to update our statistics. It is a sign of the health of your congregation! Imagine you are searching for a pastor, and your statistics have not been updated on the PC(USA) website. What will that person think about you as a congregation? The correlation between worship attendance, educational attendance, and giving can demonstrate areas for growth in a congregation, or the need to clean the church rolls. As fast as our society is changing outside the church, having accurate statistics gives us a snapshot of how the church is responding to their communities. Looking at the diversity of the church membership can be revealing. And having accurate statistics help a congregation to pay the right amount in per capita giving. Do you have a lot of people on your rolls that you don't consider active, but you might still be paying for them? Taking a new "snapshot" every year is helpful to you as a congregation and to the church at large.

Please consider the impact of both keeping accurate annual statistics and paying your per capita. Together we are the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) joined in witness to our risen Lord! Thanks be to God for this privilege!

I am grateful to be your Stated Clerk!

PS - For more information about per capita, visit [www.pcusa.org/percapita](http://www.pcusa.org/percapita), and while you are there, check out your church's statistics! ([www.pcusa.org](http://www.pcusa.org) - use Find a Congregation box).



## Mary's Musings

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

With the New Year upon us, there are those who make resolutions for how they will live more healthily, or more joyfully, or more faithfully. Sometimes these resolutions bear fruit; often these commitments crash and burn. I find myself asking "What might we have done as a congregation to help those renewed commitments gain traction?"

**Do we have clearly identifiable entry points for new and/or less than fully engaged folks?** Early January is a great time to start a new study. Are our existing classes visible enough – and their topics clear enough – that a newcomer would feel welcome to join? Many churches do a great job of promoting study options at the beginning of a new program year in September, but less so throughout the year.

**Are study options clearly understood to play an important, life-giving role in the ongoing development of disciples?** Is this message clearly articulated from the pulpit as well as in newsletters and bulletin announcements? I love worship and believe it is the central activity of the gathered people of God, but I confess that while worship supports my faith, it rarely grows it in the same way that study, discussion, and mission engagement does. Some adults will never attend a Sunday morning class; what are the midweek options available to them? Same rules for clear entry points apply here.

**Are our study options meaningful?** If you weren't going to be sitting next to a good friend, would you still go? I am a big believer in the power of community and the importance of relationships. Groups bond over shared learning, and the life of the group is impacted by the study and the study is impacted by the life of the group. But when a Bible study becomes more about supporting a community of students, we need to be clear that this is a fellowship time rather than a study, and recognize how hard it will be for a newcomer to feel welcome. It also lessens the incentive to return for someone who made the effort to risk breaking into an established group, if they really don't feel like they have learned anything or wrestled with anything.

**Are our study options balanced?** If there is an identifiable segment of the congregation that is not participating, what study might intrigue them or meet the needs of their current life situation? Is there real variety among the options both in content and in presentation style? The classic Christian education text, *Mapping Christian Education: Approaches to Congregational Learning*, can offer helpful guidance to understand four different emphases: transformation of society, building the faith community, personal spiritual growth, and religious instruction or "homemaking." Similarly Corinne Ware's *Discover your Spiritual Type* identifies head, heart, mystic, and kingdom spiritualities which may reflect differing programmatic approaches.

**When was the last time we tried something new?** It can be easy to fall into a predictable pattern. Patterns breed comfort, but perhaps not excitement. What if you shook things up with an "experiment" during a particular season each year? Making changes for a limited "season" reduces anxiety. I know a church that offers something special each January as a time of special renewal. It could as easily be done during Lent or Advent. Such a planned break allows groups to develop fluidity and make a big impact on congregational life without overly disrupting cherished traditions.

# Community News

## Engaging your community: maybe your congregation could try it!

By TE Jackie Hannan, Atascocita PC

The presbytery's Evangelism and Renewal Committee has been discussing easy ways to reach out to neighbors while doing the things we may already be doing, but doing them with Gospel Intentionality. To do that means we respond:

- In the normal rhythms of life pursuing to meet and engage new people.
- Prayerfully watching and listening to discern where God is working.
- Boldly, humbly, and contextually proclaiming the Gospel in word and deed.

Below are some ideas that have been helpful in stimulating my thinking about becoming more outwardly focused. This list was actually much longer and put out by the website, VERGE. I chose a few and pray there will be at least one thing on this list that may help you to engage your neighbors.

- ✦ Walk your dog regularly around the same time of the day in your neighborhood.
- ✦ Do a food drive or coat drive in winter and get neighbors involved.
- ✦ Grow a garden and give out extra produce to neighbors.
- ✦ Have an Easter egg hunt on your block and invite neighbors to use their front yards.
- ✦ Create a block/street email and phone contact list for safety.
- ✦ Organize a backyard movie night for kids on your block.
- ✦ Prayer walk and talk to people you come across.
- ✦ Organize an effort for neighbors to help take care of the elderly in the neighborhood.
- ✦ Start a neighborhood Facebook/ Twitter.

I would love to hear stories of how you have lived out these ideas, or other ways you have engaged your neighbors!

## This may be your last printed Connections!

*New Covenant Connections* has undergone quite a few changes in the past decades – beginning with a letter-sized, photocopied newsletter and evolving into a professionally printed tabloid newspaper with color. These changes are obvious, but one hidden change has been the great increase in its circulation list.



In 2012, we plan to continue to publish *New Covenant Connections*, but to free resources for other ministries, the presbytery will mail printed issues of *Connections* only to...

- ✦ Those who request them, and
- ✦ Members of the following groups: Teaching Elders, Candidates, active Ruling Elders, Educators, Youth Directors, and current Presbytery Committee Members.

**If you wish to continue receiving a printed Connections** and you are not in one of the above groups, please contact Patricia Brantley at [pbrantley@pbyofnewcovenant.org](mailto:pbrantley@pbyofnewcovenant.org) or 713-526-2585.

# E Highlights



Front row, l. to r. - Baptist, Muslim, Jew.  
Back row, l. to r. - Muslim, Quaker, Jew, Presbyterian, Muslim, Unity

## More interfaith news!

By TE Louise Row, HR

Several times in past issues of *Connections* (as well as this one) people have written about experiences of interfaith connections—between individual congregations and other faith traditions, or between our presbytery and other traditions. As I involved myself in some of these projects, I came to know a Muslim woman who knew a Jewish woman who knew a member of Unity who knew a Catholic, all of whom wanted to go deeper into interfaith understanding.

We began what we called WIN (Women's Interfaith Network), an intentionally small group (7-8) whose members committed to meet regularly (once a month for eight months) to eat together, pray together, share personal stories, and discuss issues of importance to our different religions. Five years later that group is still going strong! Some women moved away but keep in touch (there is now a WINcalgary in Canada); new people have joined; affection and trust has deepened; and our respect

for one another's faith traditions has grown.

I cannot invite any of you to join us because WIN thinks it important to keep the group small and diverse (one Presbyterian is enough!). But I and my interfaith friends are willing to help you begin a WIN of your own. We could meet with you and tell you about the things that have been of special interest to us: speaking from our various points of view about forgiveness, prayer, or the afterlife; seeing and discussing the films "Precious Life" and "Arranged"; reading and reacting to the book *Getting to the Heart of Interfaith*; and hosting our gatherings in different homes or houses of worship. Always important has been the personal sharing at the meetings and our support of one another through email between meetings.

WIN is a small step (but for me, wonderfully enriching) towards understanding and peacemaking. If you are interesting in learning more, contact me at 281-489-1066 or [vlmrow@earthlink.net](mailto:vlmrow@earthlink.net)

## Making History TODAY



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

## Who Writes History?

Recently I came across a quotation from Chinua Achebe, a Nigerian writer whose first novel was *Things Fall Apart*. It was written in 1958 but became popular in this country only a few years ago. Achebe said, "There is that great proverb – that until the lions have their own historians, the history of the hunt will always glorify the hunter."

Imagine how differently history would have been written if the South had won this country's Civil War. Or, suppose the Reformation had not succeeded to the extent that it did. How would the history of the church since the 16th century been written? Or, what if Constantine had not given his stamp of approval on Christianity in the 4th century? How would the course of history be changed, and what would that record of history look like?

By and large, history is written by the victors of human struggles and conflicts. It's too bad that the minority report is not recorded more often. Members of the minority are called heretics. But the losers in the debates and schisms in church history may contribute as much to who we are as the winners.

The history of the church is messy – just as church life in our own time is messy. Issues are not always clear-cut any more than the issues at the Council of Nicaea in 325 were clear cut. Issues were decided by a vote of the council. There were persons of deep convictions on all sides of the debate. And yet, orthodox theology was decided by a vote.

In 664 at the Synod of Whitby, the future direction of western theology was determined by a vote of bishops – those from Rome prevailed over those from Scotland and Ireland. Had the vote gone differently, Pelagius might be viewed as orthodox and Augustine the heretic. Celtic theology would be the norm while Roman theology would have lost, at least in much of the western world.

It makes a difference who writes history and how it is written. If you were to write the history of your congregation, how would you decide what to include and what to leave out? How do you decide what persons and what events should be narrated and which ones must, unfortunately, not make the cut?

History must be written. But as we write it, perhaps we need to remember, with gratitude, those persons who are now among that great cloud of witnesses whose views were far different than our own and did not prevail. Maybe we need to remember the perspective of the lion that is hunted rather than simply glorify the hunter.

# Transitions

## Meet New Covenant's newest pastors

**TE Craig S. King, Sr.**, pastor at First PC in Alvin, is no stranger to the area. Craig grew up in Galveston and attended Galveston College. He spent 15 years as a police officer in Galveston Co. and received a BS degree from the U. of Texas Medical Branch at Galveston School of Allied Health Sciences. Craig received his MDiv from Austin Presbyterian Seminary. Prior to coming to Alvin, he served congregations in Arkansas and Missouri. Craig enjoys golf, fishing, and other outdoor activities. Married to his childhood sweetheart for 36 years, he and his wife Catherine have a married daughter and a son in college.



Craig King

**TE Dr. Brian Wiggins**, pastor at First PC, Lufkin, was raised in Dallas and received a degree in Business from the U. of Texas at Austin. He spent five years working in the corporate world before discerning a call to ministry. He received his MDiv from Princeton Theological Seminary and has served a congregation in Florida. The call "to get back to Texas as soon as he could" led him to serve a church in Brady, Texas, in Mission Presbytery, where he served as Moderator. Brian received a DMin from Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary. He and Virginia Gartman were married Aug. 20, 2011.



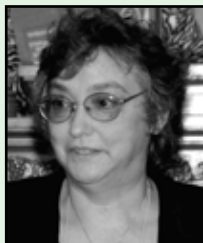
Brian Wiggins

**TE Kristin Galle**, Interim Pastor at Covenant Presbyterian in College Station, received her MDiv from Austin Presbyterian Seminary in 2001 and was ordained in the UCC-South Central Conference. Kristin is from the Marble Falls area. She has served as an associate pastor, a hospice chaplain, and an interim pastor. Kristin is married to Dr. Brent Hampton, pastor of Brenham Presbyterian. They have three daughters and two cats. Kristin enjoys wildflowers, cooking, reading, games, travel, and movies.



Kristin Galle

**TE Tracy Williams**, Member-at-Large, came to Houston last July after marrying minister-member of New Covenant Presbytery, the TE Bruce Williams, HR. They live in West Columbia. Previously, Tracy served a congregation in Harmony, Arkansas. Tracy received her MDiv from Austin Presbyterian Seminary and attended General Assembly in 2006 as a theological student (TSAD) from Austin Seminary. Gardening is one of Tracy's great joys - as is her dog Sophie!



**TE John Dearman**, associate pastor at First Presbyterian, Conroe, received a BA in History from the U. of Texas at Dallas and his MDiv from Austin Presbyterian Seminary. Having a passion for missions, John went to La Paz, Bolivia, for two years after college, where he worked on discipleship and leadership development. While there he met his wife, Vanessa. John enjoys playing soccer and racquetball and spending time with his family. He and Vanessa have twin boys, age 3.



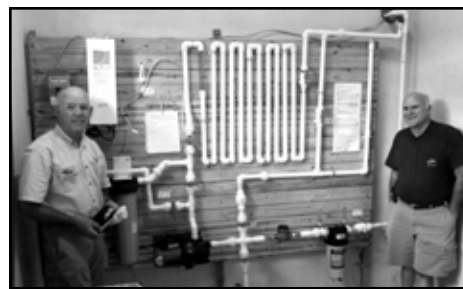
John Dearman

See **TRANSITIONS** on page 7

# Mission &

## New Covenant Water Mission Update: Cuba 2011

**One of every six persons on the planet does not have access to safe drinking water. In Cuba, 90 % of the population does not have free access to pure water.**



Living Waters of the World team.



Following water installation missions in Mexico and Haiti, the Houston Presbyterian Living Waters for the World safe water mission team was inspired by General Presbyter, Mike Cole, who had recently visited Cuba, to consider Cuba as the next venue for installing water treatment systems. A 15-person team consisting of members of ChristChurch, Bellaire; St. John's PC, Houston; and Clear Lake PC, Houston, installed water systems in Cuba at Iglseia de La Playa and the Kairos Center in Matanzas. Each of these systems provides at least 300 gallons of clean water each day at each site. The team members also provided health and sanitation education for members of the local communities of each church.

But the mission is not just about the water and health education; it is about showing support for our brothers and sisters in Christ. Following a relaxation of restrictions against religion, the Christian Church in Cuba is growing dramatically and the Presbyterian Reformed Church in Cuba is helping to lead the way.

Elder Reinerio Arce-Valentin, President of the Matanzas Evangelical Theological Seminary (where we stayed in Matanzas), had recently visited New Covenant and been the keynote speaker at a presbytery meeting. The Seminary itself sits on a high hill overlooking Matanzas and

serves as a beacon of light to the city. The grounds are beautiful and the Seminary grows all of its own food. One is struck by the thought that "surely God is in this place."

We found the Cuban people to be warm, appreciative of our gift of clean water, and very excited about the work of the church. The Kairos Center particularly was a constant beehive of activity led by dedicated persons and populated by enthusiastic volunteers and parishioners. Nowhere did we see any signs of a repressive regime - no display of force beyond the usual municipal police. Our hosts spoke openly. We felt that our mission there was led by God and was for the people and in no way political. It was a moving experience to witness the work of the Seminary and play a small part in building the relationship between NCP/PCUSA and the people of Cuba.

While we were there, several of our team surveyed other prospective sites for water installations in Matanzas Province. The team hopes to return next year. If you or members of your church are interested in participating in future water missions, please contact Sherri Verdone at Clear Lake PC (281-488-6731) or Karen Persley at ChristChurch PC, Bellaire (713-667-6574).

# Ministry

## Report on New Life Grant: Lots of Joyful Noise unto the Lord!

“What happens to the children who can’t afford music lessons?” the concerned grandfather thought as he watched his own grandchildren play their musical instruments for him. This grandfather and Ruling Elder Noe Gaznares, from San Pablo + Trinity Presbyterian in Houston, not only asked the question, but with the help of other church elders developed an answer to it. The Harmony School of Music, A Christian Ministry, began with a New Life Grant from the presbytery and the vision of a grandfather. The answer to his question would touch many lives of families who otherwise would not be able to afford music lessons for their children.

On September 24, 2011, The Harmony School of Music opened its doors to seventeen students.

Every Saturday morning boys and girls arrive for classes in piano and guitar; the instruments are provided. To date, twenty students, including two mothers, have joined the music ministry.

Parents have stated in the past that they could never pay for music lessons, but \$10 for 10 lessons made it affordable. The students truly enjoy not only learning to play a musical instrument but also the interaction and loving environment that they experience.

The school expects to expand the next cycle and offer two classes per instrument because of the anticipation of the students already on a waiting list. The school had its first music recital December 17. The children were excited to show off their new talents!

## Northwoods receives grant from the National Clergy Renewal Program

Northwoods PC, Houston, has received a grant to enable the TE Ann Marie Quigley-Swanson, to participate in the 2011 National Clergy Renewal Program funded by the Indianapolis-based Lilly Endowment Inc. Northwoods PC is one of 158 congregations across



Ann Marie Quigley-Swanson

the country that will support their ministers in this program, which allows pastors to step back from their busy lives and renew their spirits for the benefit of their ongoing ministries.

Now in its 12th year, the program provides a time for ministers to gain the fresh perspective and renewed energy that a carefully considered “sabbath time” of travel, study, rest, and prayer can provide.

## 2012 Connections copy deadlines

Wed., Feb. 8	(Mar/Apr issue)	Wed., Aug. 8	(Sept/Oct issue)
Wed., Apr. 11	(May/June issue)	Wed., Oct. 10	(Nov/Dec issue)
Wed., June 6	(July/Aug issue)	Wed. Dec. 5	(Jan/Feb issue)

Please send articles and photos (if possible) to Helen Wolf at [hwolf@pbyofnewcovenant.org](mailto:hwolf@pbyofnewcovenant.org).

## Classifieds

“...The Lord bids each one of us in all life’s actions to look to his calling...It is enough if we know that the Lord’s calling is in everything the beginning and foundation of well-doing.”  
(Calvin. Institutes. 3.10.6)

### Position Opening: Children’s Director

Young Nak Presbyterian Church, located in the Spring Branch area of Houston, is seeking a part-time Children’s Director for a multicultural Children’s Ministry. This position will require leading children’s worship, planning and teaching Sunday School, and organizing creative activities for children. Bilingual (English and Spanish) speakers are preferred but not required.

For further information or to submit resumé, contact the TE Paul Hoang at [paulkhoang@gmail.com](mailto:paulkhoang@gmail.com) or 713-226-9302.

The church is located at 10005 Neuens Road, Houston 77080. Phone 713-464-1744; Fax 713-464-1849.

### Job Opening – President of Presbyterian Pan American School

Seize a unique opportunity to lead Presbyterian Pan American School, a college preparatory boarding school for young people from the Americas and beyond. The school is a mission agency of the Synod of the Sun, affiliated by covenant agreements with the Synod, the Presbyterian Church (USA), and with the national church in Mexico. Located on 670 “ranch country” acres near Kingsville, the school is at an exciting point in its 100-year history. An on-campus home is provided. For more information, visit [www.ppas.org](http://www.ppas.org).

Send letters of inquiry to Barbara W. Kiser, Search Committee at [barbarawkiser@gmail.com](mailto:barbarawkiser@gmail.com) or 1911 San Carlos Ave., Allen, TX 75002.

### Pump Organ

Heritage Presbyterian is selling an antique D.W. Karn & Company pump organ. Contact Pastor Mark Plunkett at 281-463-3875 for more specific information.

### Remember...

Church jobs openings are listed at [www.pbyofnewcovenant.org](http://www.pbyofnewcovenant.org). Church Jobs > Pastors, Educators, Other Church Professionals, and Support Staff.

## TRANSITIONS continued from page 6

Isabel S. Rivera-Velez has been serving Juan Marcos PC, Houston, since September as Stated Supply. She received her MDiv in 2010 from Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary and has been approved for ordination. Isabel’s special interests include creating hymns and recording hymns to be used during worship services, using a potter’s wheel to create pots, bowls, pitchers, and cups for Bonsai plants, and quilting baby quilts. Isabel and her husband Hector have three children.



Isabel Rivera-Velez

TE Katrina Pennington will be installed January 15 as associate pastor at Clear Lake PC. “Mission and outreach are in my DNA,” says Katrina who has been working at the church for eleven years. Katrina loves to cook, travel, read, and watch (baseball’s a favorite) and participate (snow skiing) in sports. One year Katrina rode in the MS150. She has two grown children – one in San Antonio and one at Chapman University in California.



Katrina Pennington

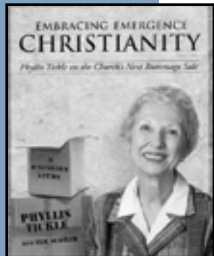
TE Judy Liljestrand, Honorably Retired, is now living in Bryan. She received degrees from the U. of Texas (Austin), Corpus Christi State University, and Austin Presbyterian Seminary. Judy enjoys participation in community chorus and playing flute and recorder. As you might suspect, she has a particular interest in worship and music ministry. She has two grown daughters – one is an abstractor for University Title in Bryan and the other is pastor of Burnet Presbyterian Church in Mission Presbytery.

# In the Resource Center

## NEW Resources in the Resource Center

### Embracing Emergence Christianity

6 session DVD study



Featuring Phyllis Tickle, author of *The Great Emergence*, this study leads participants in an examination of the changing face of Christianity by placing some of the great tensions of our religious conversations today into historical context. Sessions include an orientation to what is meant by Emergence Christianity, issues related to authority, gifts from other times, and questions about how we now live. Tickle's analysis of the cycles of change is amazing, and her session that runs through the major culture changing shifts of the last century is even better. Each video session starts with 10-12 minutes of Tickle speaking, followed by conversations with a group of panelists. Circulates with study guide.

### Why? Making Sense of God's Will

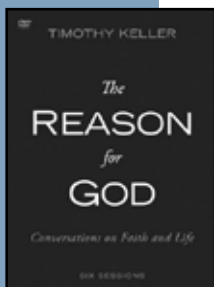
4 session DVD study



This study features popular author and teacher Adam Hamilton. The DVD components are each under 8 minutes, allowing for plenty of time for group discussion. Topics are Why do the innocent suffer? Why do my prayers go unanswered? Why can't I see God's will for my life? and Why God's love prevails. Includes an excellent leader's guide. There is a book (not in our collection) that could be read by groups during the study which would deepen the class conversations.

### The Reason for God: Conversations on Faith and Life in an Age of Skepticism

6 session DVD



The study segments, 20 minutes each, are fascinating conversations between Pastor Tim Keller and 6 skeptics – mostly 30-40 somethings. Nice respectful dialog and a chance to hear the voices of folks who are unchurched or de-churched, the sessions address issues of Biblical reliability, faith and science, human suffering, response to injustice, perceptions of Church hypocrisy, and the challenge of a God of love who is also a God of wrath. The series circulates with a discussion guide. Keller's book of the same name (not in our collection) could be read by groups during the study which would deepen the class conversations.

### Everything Must Change

8 week DVD study



The study features author Brian McLaren and is based on his book of the same name. He brings a strong Christian faith into conversation with global environmental and economic crises as well as threat of catastrophic war. Some will find the study provocative and others will find it refreshing, but it should generate solid discussion on what should be the Christian response to these issues of compassion, peace, and justice.

### A Thrill of Hope

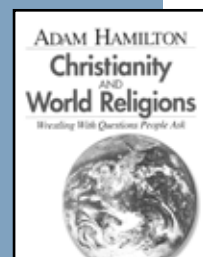
DVD, 50 minutes



This rich resource can be reviewed in one sitting or can be viewed in any combination of 6 chapters. It features 6 stunning pieces of art by John August Swanson and commentary by six professors of the Candler School of Theology as well as the artist. Building on the birth and infancy narratives of Luke and Matthew, this offers fresh and challenging insights into beloved texts.

### Christianity and World Religions: Wrestling with Questions People Ask

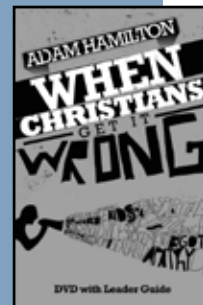
6 session DVD



Adam Hamilton provides a series of six short talks on distinctive beliefs of Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, Judaism and Christianity, plus an intro session on differing ways Christians have understand religious pluralism. While respectful of each tradition, he does not present these differing religions in a harmonized, "they are all the same any way" fashion that really fails to honor the unique differences.

### When Christians Get It Wrong

6 session DVD with Leader's Guide



Designed to address the problems that more and more young adults articulate for why they have opted out of Christianity and the church – the behavior and attitudes of Christians who they see/hear/experience being in their judgment un-Christian. Topics include such topics as dealing with Christians, Science and Politics, when bad things happen, and dealing with homosexuality. The final session is an affirmation of Christians getting it right. Video segments are 15–20 minutes long, and there is more than enough material in the leader's guide for multiple sessions on each topic. There is a book of the same name, not in our collection, that would strengthen the impact of this series.

### The Open Table: An Invitation to Know God

5 session DVD with Leader's Guide



Each lesson is a free moving discussion facilitated by Donald Miller (who wrote *A Million Miles in a Thousand Years* and *Blue Like Jazz*.) Each segment centers around one question: What do you think of when you think of God? Do you think life is what it ought to be? Will God break into our lives? Can I know God? How do we follow Jesus? As those who know Miller's work might expect, this models some basic faith conversation for more progressive Christians.

# The Forgotten Storm, *(continued from page 1)*



Daryl Ready, and Jim and Marilyn Marble

Currently, the Ike Recovery Team is led by a Steering Committee that consists of Ruling Elder David Johnson (Chair), Ruling Elder Barbara Wilson (Secretary), TE Tom Sharon, Ruling Elder Randy Dietel, and presbytery sponsor, TE Mike Cole (New Covenant General Presbyter). Professional support for the IRT is provided by Ruling Elder Kendall Boyd (Ike Recovery Coordinator). Jim and Marilyn Marble served as long-term volunteers at both the Port Neches and Texas City Volunteer Villages, spending more than eighteen months as Worksite assignment Managers and Volunteer Village Managers.

## Volunteers Made the Ministry Possible

To say that the volunteers made Ike Recovery possible is an understatement. The cost of building materials, tools, permits, and project management to repair the homes and churches was paid for by donations to the Ike Recovery Fund. The labor to conduct the repairs was provided by volunteers from all over the United States, Canada, Sweden, Indonesia, Australia, and Great Britain. A true blessing!

Volunteers participated in this ministry at their own expense: traveled to the area, gave of their time and talent, and paid an average of \$20 per day for food and lodging. During the time the volunteers were in the

work area, many of the volunteers spent time ministering to the families they were helping. On the other hand, the IRT focused on ministering to the volunteers, working to ensure they had a meaningful and spirit-filled experience: made certain their accommodations were comfortable, hosted fellowship events, facilitated prayer time each morning and evening, and saw to it that great food was served (as can be expected from any group of Presbyterians!). Shortly before leaving, it is not unusual for a volunteer to say, "I feel like I am taking more home than I left behind."

More than 4,700 volunteers served for more than 168,000 hours, which can be valued at approximately \$3,900,000 to our communities.



Brazoria County Youth in action.

Many thanks to Trinity PC in Port Neches and First PC in Texas City for hosting Volunteer Villages on their campuses. We appreciate the long weekend of work in Polk County done by volunteers from Northwoods PC in Houston. A special thank you to Clear Lake PC and First PC in Freeport for hosting many volunteer groups and for their dedication to the IRT.

## The Families

Through long-term recovery organization partnerships, we have participated in home repairs for about 1,000 families. During our time with the families, the team focused on more than repairs to their home.



The Seng Family.

One family lived in a mobile home that was damaged beyond the point of repair. This home was literally being held together with duct tape and bailing wire. The mold in the home was so intense that the children living in the home were ill and missed a great deal of school. For this family, the IRT was able to procure a gently-used 2006 model mobile home to replace the existing home. By the time our project was complete, the children were vibrant, the parents exhibited "perma-smile," the family was healthy, and the children were eagerly reading the Bibles we gave them and attending Vacation Bible School at their neighborhood church.

The home of a farming family in Rosharon was so significantly damaged that the repair team ended up rebuilding almost every part of the home. During the course of the project, the head of the household asked us why we were helping them. Our reply was simple: Jesus taught us to love and help those in need. The husband kept saying through tears of joy as he helped the volunteers that he did not know that there were such people in the world, strangers that would give their time to help someone they did not know. By the end of our project, we were told by this family that they had asked for and received Christ.

## The Ike Recovery Ministry – Made a Huge Difference

The Ike Recovery Ministry has indeed made a huge difference in many ways: helping create a "new normal" for the communities in which we focused, rebuilding the homes and lives of the families we helped, and to the lives of the volunteers that came to work beside us; many of who have been forever changed and are now committed to making disaster recovery a part of their plans each year. Most profound, however, is the difference this ministry has made to the Body of Christ and to the lives of those that decided to invite Christ into their life during this period of recovery.

When called to serve with the Ike Recovery Team, most of us had no idea of how this experience would impact us personally. Yes, it has been a great deal of work. Yes, it has also been hard to continually see families living in such difficult conditions. We have all added thousands of miles to our vehicles and spent countless hours in meetings coordinating recovery efforts for families that may or may not even know of us. Without exception, however, each member of the IRT agrees that this experience created change that is difficult to explain but is deep, lasting, and spirit-filled.

**December 26**

Presbytery Office closed  
Christmas holiday

**January 2**

Presbytery Office closed  
New Year's holiday

**January 6**

Coaching Seminar  
Memorial Drive PC  
Houston

**January 21**

Officer Enrichment  
St. Andrew's PC  
Houston

**February 11**

Stated Meeting  
of the Presbytery  
  
Session Records Review  
Memorial Drive, (MDPC)  
Houston

**February 14-16**

Youth Conclave  
Cho-Yeh  
Livingston

**February 24-26**

Marriage Encounter

**March 2-4**

Youth Conclave  
Cho-Yeh  
Livingston

**June 9**

Stated Meeting  
of the Presbytery  
  
Session Records Review  
St. Andrew's Presbyterian  
Houston

**July 15**

Stated Meeting  
of the Presbytery  
  
Post-GA meeting  
and Session Records Review  
Love PC (formerly United  
Korean)  
Houston

## JANUARY 6

## Empowering your team through coaching



Dave, Kim, Kyra and  
Zane Zovak



Watch your staff or team members transform before your eyes as you learn to release their God-given talents, passions, and problem-solving abilities through coaching. Revs. Dave and Kim Zovak will lead a seminar, co-sponsored by the Presbytery and Memorial Drive PC, that will teach you a simple, but powerful framework for coaching as well as provide you the skills to begin coaching right away.

The seminar will be held Friday, January 6, from 8:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. at MDPC. Register online at [register.mdpc.org](http://register.mdpc.org) – Leadership Seminar. Do yourself and those you lead a favor, Learn to Coach!

Drs. Dave and Kim Zovak are ordained PC(USA) pastors serving with CRM (Church Resource Ministries) in Australia and SE Asia. They coach, train, and empower Christian leaders throughout Australia, Asia, and beyond.

## JANUARY 20

## The Collective Soul Symposium...

designed for chaplains, clergy, and spiritual caregivers, will be held Friday, January 20, 7:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. at M.D. Anderson Cancer Center. Its purpose is to broaden the understanding of the needs of patients and families as end-of-life approaches. The symposium is offered by the department of Palliative and Rehabilitative Medicine at M.D. Anderson.

Cost: If postmarked by 1/6/12 - \$25; If postmarked after 1/6/12 - \$45. Contact Rev. Steve Thorney, Staff Chaplain, at M.D. Anderson Cancer Center, at [sthorney@mdanderson.org](mailto:sthorney@mdanderson.org) or 713-563-3988. Online registration at [www.mdanderson.org/conferences](http://www.mdanderson.org/conferences).

## JANUARY 27-29

In 2008, Craig and Nancy Goodwin and their two daughters embarked on a yearlong experiment to consume only what was local, used, homegrown, or homemade. His book, *Year of Plenty*, is a timely tale of Christians exploring the intersections of faith, environment, and everyday life.

They will be speakers at **Weekend in the Word** at Clear Lake PC, Houston Friday-Sunday, January 27-29. The Goodwins will explore how our problem is not that we have too little but rather that we have too much. We lose out on the potentially positive experiences of being limited. They will be exploring the Christian tradition of setting limits in pursuit of spiritual growth and formation.

Craig and his wife Nancy are pastors at Millwood Presbyterian Church in Spokane, Washington, and formerly associate pastors at Clear Lake Presbyterian. Craig has a DMin in Missional Leadership from Fuller Seminary and is a contributing author for an upcoming Alban Institute book on the use of Appreciative Inquiry in churches. Craig is a farmers' market manager, a master food preserver, and a fire chaplain.

There will be sessions Friday night (7:00-8:00 p.m.) and Saturday morning (8:30-11:30 a.m.). Childcare will be provided for preschool age children and a special program will be offered for elementary age children. Please call the church for reservations for children, 281-488-6731.

The Goodwins will preach Saturday night at 6:00 p.m. and on Sunday at 9:00 and 11:15 a.m. The church is located at 1511 El Dorado Blvd.



Craig and Nancy Goodwin



## Pursuing a Life of Plenty in a World of 'Not Enough'



FEBRUARY 26 or MARCH 2-4

## CONCLAVES 2012 February or March

By TE Caressa Murray, Coordinator for Youth Ministry



Calling all youth groups of our Presbytery! Join us for fun and faith-filled weekends at Camp Cho-Yeh February 14-16 or March 2-4! Presbytery's Youth Connection Council is planning two retreat weekends that will enable your youth group to grow closer together, connect with other youth from all over our presbytery, engage in small groups, experience dynamic worship, and of course have a blast playing games and making new friends!

Our theme is *Born God's Way...Stay God's Way*. We will take a unique look at the Parable of the Prodigal as we discover more about who we are and how to live out the faith in our daily lives. Youth will participate in a global mission project for Stop Hunger Now as we package 20,000 meals each weekend and explore ways to connect with God in our Spirituality Center.

Each weekend is open to youth of all ages (6th – 12th grade). Small groups will be assigned by age. Registration each weekend is limited to 175 participants per Conclave. We will be holding to this limit in order that the weekend will be a quality experience for all participants. Register



EARLY to guarantee the dates you desire. Bring youth the weekend that works best for you – either with middle and high school youth attending separate weekends or the same weekend. Groups of more than 15 are encouraged to come over two weekends to avoid multiple members from your church in the same small group.

All registrations are handled through Camp Cho-Yeh. The registration fee of \$125 per person includes lodging; breakfast, lunch and dinner on Saturday; breakfast on Sunday, a Christian concert, and the T-shirt that all participants will receive. Registration deadline is Friday, January 20, 2012.

Register at [www.cho-yeh.org](http://www.cho-yeh.org) (Click on Conclaves box on the homepage.)

Additional information about the event, including the weekend schedule, can be found on the presbytery website, [www.pbyofnewcovenant.org](http://www.pbyofnewcovenant.org).

FEBRUARY 26-28

## Duerr Lecture Series 2012

The speaker for the 15th annual Duerr Lecture Series, February 26 -28, will be the TE Dr. Samuel L. Adams, Assistant Professor of Biblical Studies at Union Presbyterian Seminary, Richmond, VA. His lectures, "Confronting the Economic Crisis: the Biblical Witness on Wealth and Poverty," will address what the Bible has to say about economic life in both the Old and New Testaments. Throughout the series he will consider the relevance of this witness as we struggle with contemporary questions about fairness, corruption, and the gap between rich and poor.



Samuel Adams

A lifelong Presbyterian, Dr. Adams was raised in Atlanta, GA, and received degrees at Davidson College, University of Chicago Divinity School, and Yale University (Ph.D.). Before joining the faculty of Union Presbyterian Seminary in 2006, Adams served as Instructor at Yale College and Yale Divinity School and also served churches in Chicago, IL, and New Haven, CT.

Mark your calendar and plan to attend the lectures to hear this engaging speaker help us understand the Biblical witness to our understanding of these contemporary issues. Dr. Adams will preach Sun., February 26, (8:30 and 11:00 a.m. services) and present lectures each evening at 7:00 p.m. All lectures are free and open to everyone. Child care is available for all ages for each lecture by calling the church office, 713 622-4807. St. Philip is located at 4807 San Felipe at Loop 610.

## New Covenant Authors



New Covenant authors displayed their books at the Presbytery Open House on December 8. Authors present at the time the photo was taken: l. to r. Jim Currie (*The Kingdom of God is like... Baseball and Planting Trees: a History of Presbyterian Pan American School*), Katherine Swarts (*Where Light Dawns: Poems of Hope for Hurting Hearts*), Mark Stoub (*Blood Under the Altar*), and John Freeman (*Storms in Space*, English and Spanish versions). Missing from the photo: Karen Young (*Missing Max*), Alan Trafford (*Child of Hope*), Dave Nelson (*Finding Elim*), and Kemp Hill (*Lucky Penny*).

# In Our Prayers

Gene Marion, Commissioned Ruling Elder at St. Luke's Presbyterian in Cleveland – Gene is dealing with a diagnosis of lung cancer.

Family and friends of Eric Jenett – Eric died in October. His wife, Jeanne Dauphinee Jenett, served in New Covenant as secretary for former General Presbyter, the TE Dick Siciliano.

TE Mark Downs, Director of Church and Corporate Relations at CanCare – now feeling “better than I have for years,” after receiving a stent in November.

TE Jacqueline and Jim Hannan, Atascocita Presbyterian. Jim's father, Joseph Hannan, died November 17, 2011. Joseph's grandson, Jamie Hannan, is youth director at Northwoods Presbyterian.

TE Dave Barnes, HR – Dave suffered a stroke in November.

TE Jim Aubey and family – Jim's wife Lori died unexpectedly from a heart attack on Thanksgiving Day. Jim, former pastor of Needville Presbyterian, is now serving as pastor of First Presbyterian in Auburn, Kansas.

TE Jack Kennon, HR – health concerns

Dorothy Kennedy, member of Webster Presbyterian – health concerns.

TE Travis Fletcher was ordained Nov. 20 and is now serving as associate pastor of First Presbyterian in Grand Junction, Colorado. Travis is the son of Lane and Keith Fletcher and grandson of Betty Ferrero (all elders and members of Grace Presbyterian, Houston).

Ruling Elder Ann Earnest, Development Officer for the Presbyterian Foundation and member of Grace PC – Ann is now in remission.

Family and friends of Darlyne Stewart, member of St. Giles Presbyterian, Houston, and wife of the late TE Tom Stewart (longtime chaplain at the Port of Houston – Darlyne died December 1, 2011).

Ruling Elder Mike Allison and family, LaMarque Presbyterian – his daughter Lisa was hospitalized recently with a traumatic brain injury.

TE Dr. Ben Stewart, Seafarers Chaplain – Ben's mother-in-law, Virginia Gregory, died December 5.

Rhonda Haskins, Director of Christian Education at First Presbyteriana, Pasadena – Rhonda's mother, died December, 15, 2011. Rhonda serves on the presbytery Nominating Committee.

\*HR = Honorably Retired



## PRESBYTERY OF NEW COVENANT

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