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RCUS Synod Declares Views of Norman Shepherd to be Another Gospel

The 258th Synod of the Reformed Church in the United States (RCUS) voted on May 13, 2004, to declare the views of Professor Norman Shepherd to be another gospel. The RCUS took this action in approving the report of a Committee to Study the Doctrine of Justification, which it had established last year.

Without dissent, the court declared: "1) That we affirm the biblical doctrine of justification by faith alone, including the imputation of the active obedience of Christ as a necessary element in our righteousness before God, as it is expressed in the Three Forms of Unity. . . ;" 2) "That we find that Rev. Norman Shepherd for many years has taught a confused doctrine of justification, contrary to the Heidelberg Catechism, the Belgic Confession and the Canons of Dordt . . . ;" 3) "Therefore we also resolve that the teachings of Rev. Norman Shepherd on justification by faith are another gospel and we admonish Rev. Shepherd and call upon him to repent of his grievous errors"; and 4) "That the Reformed Church in the United States recognize these Romish, Arminian, and Socinian errors for what they are, and urge our brethren throughout the world to reject them and refuse those who hold them."

The Synod also expressed agreement with a 56 page

argued against "joining and receiving" between the OPC and the PCA because of how widespread his views had become in the smaller denomination.

The RCUS Synod took this action because Professor Shepherd's position on this key Biblical and Confessional doctrine has disturbed the peace of many churches, and also threatens fraternal relations with other conservative, Reformed denominations.

Also fueling the establishment and continuation of the RCUS Committee has been other controversial

vindication of their perspective. Several OPC presbyteries have been considering overtures to the OPC General Assembly, asking for a clarification of the denomination's understanding of the doctrine of justification.

In the PCA, Mississippi Valley Presbytery adopted the following motion: "That a study committee to lead the presbytery in an examination of what is referred to as the New Perspective on Paul and in the related teachings coming out of Auburn Avenue be established to facilitate the study of the issues by the whole of the presbytery through regular reports and/or instruction provided to each stated meeting of presbytery over the course of one year. The committee is to bring a report by the November 2004 meeting for action at the February 2005 meeting. The committee is to be composed of TE Ligon Duncan (chairman), TE Guy Waters, TE Matt Baugh, TE John Reeves, TE Jim Landrum, RE Ed Priscock, RE Ken Kammer, RE Lee Atkinson, RE Bob Cato, and RE Bebo Elkin."

The RCUS Committee's mandate for this coming year is to continue to study the matter, with special reference to the New Perspective on Paul.

The Reformed Church in the United States has German Reformed roots, and it represents the Calvinistic remnant that did not eventually merge into what is now the United Church of Christ, a very liberal denomination. The RCUS is a member of the North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council (NAPARC), as well as the International Council of Reformed Churches (ICRC); and the Synod voted to communicate its findings regarding Professor Shepherd to those organizations and their constituent denominations, as well as the CRCNA.



Stated Clerk Paul Treick and President Vernon Pollema are RCUS ministers in California.

positions being promulgated throughout Christendom, including especially Calvinistic churches. The New Perspective on Paul, championed by such churchmen as the Anglican, N. T. Wright, has made inroads in the confessing church. So too, what has become known as the Federal Vision, as set forth by those in favor of the Auburn Avenue perspective, has made a deep impact across denominational lines.

Concern has been expressed widely regarding these matters. Last year's OPC General Assembly sustained the appeal of Ruling Elder John Kinnaird, who had been convicted of teaching contrary to the historic doctrine of justification. Many in the OPC who are opposed to the views of Professor Shepherd have steadfastly maintained that the sustaining of the appeal was for procedural rather than theological reasons. Nevertheless, Shepherdites have claimed the outcome of the adjudication to be a



Celebrating its sesquicentennial, the Salem-Ebenezer Reformed Church, Manitowoc, Wisconsin, hosted the 258th RCUS Synod.

report from its Committee, which report contained the rationale for the resolutions. That report, which is now being editorially revised, is slated to be placed on the RCUS web site (www.rcus.org) sometime this summer.

The views of Professor Shepherd have generated controversy in the Reformed world for more than a quarter of a century. While on faculty at Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia, Professor Shepherd's views regarding justification were in the late 1970s the subject of a formal inquiry by Philadelphia Presbytery of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC), of which he was then a member. Many special meetings of Philadelphia Presbytery were held on the Westminster Seminary campus, for the purpose of considering various affirmations and denials which he had set forth. After finally being dismissed by Westminster Seminary in the early 1980s, Mr. Shepherd transferred his credentials to the Christian Reformed Church of North America (CRCNA), where he served as a pastor in Minnesota.

While the OPC never formally adopted Mr. Shepherd's views, many people in the Reformed community expressed concern regarding the prevalence of those views within that denomination. At the 1981 General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA), the Rev. Dr. O. Palmer Robertson, who had been a colleague of Professor Shepherd at Westminster Seminary,



Salem-Ebenezer's rooster serves as a reminder of Peter's denial of the Lord.

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Federal Vision or Federal Fog?

A review of *The Auburn Avenue Theology, Pros and Cons: Debating the Federal Vision. The Knox Theological Seminary Colloquium on the Federal Vision*. Edited by E. Calvin Beisner. Fort Lauderdale, Florida: Knox Theological Seminary, 2004. 331 pp. \$16.00.

The talks given at the 2002 Auburn Avenue Pastors' Conference (AAPC) at the Auburn Avenue Presbyterian Church in Monroe, Louisiana, raising questions about the orthodox Reformed doctrines of justification by faith alone, the covenants, election, perseverance, and the sacraments, have become well known subsequently throughout the Reformed community. The book we are reviewing here consists of the papers given on these and other related subjects, delivered at a specially called colloquium (hosted by the editor, Dr. E. Calvin Beisner) in Southern Florida during August 2003. The papers were exchanged and discussed by seven of the Auburn Avenue Theology/Federal Vision proponents and by seven of its critics. The former are John Barach, Peter J. Leithart, Rick Lusk, Steve M. Schlissel, Tom Trouwborst, Steve Wilkins, and Douglas Wilson. The critics of the Federal Vision are Christopher A. Hutchinson, George W. Knight, III, Richard D. Phillips, Joseph A. Pipa, Jr., Carl D. Robbins, Morton H. Smith, and R. Fowler White.

In a short review of this publication, it is impossible to go into a detailed analysis and criticism of the views expressed by the Federal Visionists on the vital doctrinal matters of the Trinity, the covenants, justification, election, the sacraments, perseverance, and the distinction between the visible and the invisible church. But the conviction of this reviewer is that the "Cons" have won the argument overwhelmingly against the Federal Visionists' position and that the latter are in the most serious danger of departing from Reformed orthodoxy into sacramentalism and even a form of works-righteousness, if indeed this has not already happened despite all their arguments to the contrary.

The Federal Visionists are reacting to problems in the contemporary American evangelical and Reformed churches, such as the rampant individualism, the neglect of the covenantal objectivity of salvation, an over-emphasized subjectivity in seeking assurance of salvation, the tendency towards antinomianism in some circles, and an inadequate view of the role of the sacraments as signs and seals of salvation.

Their pastoral concern in these matters is doubtless commendable, but the re-casting of the normal orthodox understanding of certain vital aspects of Biblical and Reformed theology (cf. the Westminster Standards) raises far more serious problems in the end, than the ones which the Federal Visionists claim to have solved.

For instance, there is an attempt to re-formulate the doctrine of the Trinity, to move away from the Reformation commitment to "forensic" justification (by assuming an over-reaction by the Reformers to Rome), to allege that Hellenism and the Enlightenment led to the "scholastic" propositional statements of Reformed doctrine in the Westminster Standards, to read Biblical history as "The Story" involving primarily personal relationships between God and His people (rather than a depository for doctrinal propositions), to deprecate the value of systematic theology, and finally to introduce different views of covenant, faith, baptism, the Lord's Supper, election, regeneration, apostasy, and sacramental efficacy. While it is claimed that all these re-formulations are within the parameters of the orthodox Reformed Faith, this reviewer has been left in no doubt that the Federal Vision is, in the end, contrary to the Westminster Standards. One of the critics, Dr. Joseph Pipa, in his response to Steve Wilkins' paper on "Covenant, Baptism, and Salvation," puts this point concisely in these words: "If I have understood Wilkins in this paper, the Federal Vision is a deviant, unbiblical view of salvation. . . . the proponents of the Federal Vision hold to a deviant view of the covenant, the active obedience of Christ, the way one receives salvation, justification, the role of baptism in conversion, the relation of the reprobate to Christ and the means of assurance" (p. 281).

There are at least three major causes for concern with regard to the Federal Visionists' presentations.

The first is methodological errors. As one of the critics has pointed out (p. 10), there is a tendency towards faulty hermeneutics and exegesis, implying that all Scriptural terms are always used in the same way (e.g., "baptism" always meaning water baptism), thus abandoning the Reformation principle of the analogy of faith. This same tendency leads to the redefining or ambiguously stating the doctrine of election, regeneration, justification, and adoption, and to a general low regard for any attempt to "systematize" theology.

The second is a loss of Biblical balance

in regard to covenant theology. Union with the (visible) church automatically implies union with Christ in the Federal Vision teaching, thus over-objectifying the covenant and failing to distinguish between covenantal union in the visible church from the saving union of the invisible church; and in emphasizing covenantal election, atonement, justification, and adoption at the expense of soteriological election, atonement, justification, and adoption (p. 12). There is an attempt to downplay the confessional distinction between the visible and invisible church and to propose another distinction in its place, the *historical* and *eschatological* church!

The third major cause for concern is the unquestionable incipient sacramentalism in the Federalist position. In reading paper after paper in this colloquium, the reader is left with the conviction that the Federalists impute the *efficacy* of the thing signified to the sign itself, whether in regard to baptism or the Lord's Supper. The sacraments can communicate blessings apart from faith, and baptism appears to be a converting ordinance. The Federal Vision states that the unbelieving feed upon Christ when they partake of the Lord's Supper, and that a person is given new life by virtue of baptismal union with Christ.

There appears to be an erroneous view of the doctrine of justification held by the Federalists, with the claim that one cannot understand Paul's teaching on justification apart from dealing with the Gentile problem and that in the Old Testament the instrument of justification was *covenant faithfulness* and not simply trusting in the promises of God. There also appears to be a denial of the role of merit in Christ's work and the imputation of Christ's righteousness in justification.

In conclusion, this reviewer is convinced that the carefully articulated

presentations of the great doctrines of the Reformed and Biblical faith in the Westminster Standards (on election, faith, good works, perseverance, assurance of salvation, the sacraments, etc.) provide still today the effective and truly adequate answer to the problems of the contemporary situation in the Reformed churches. Sadly, the so-called "Federal Vision" is no vision at all in the end, but a "Federal Fog", and that of a most serious nature indeed. One can only agree with the editor of this volume which is being reviewed here, Cal Beisner, when he writes: "Extensive study of their [the Federalists'] oral and written teachings on the special concerns of the Federal Vision convinces me that they have taught, alongside some wonderful truths, some serious errors about covenant theology and its implications for salvation, personal and corporate spirituality and piety, the use and understanding of the sacraments and the conduct of theology and biblical studies in general. Sadly, their mistakes undermine their very laudable goals. Their attempt to assure tender souls who doubt their salvation while they trust in Christ collapses and the poor souls are left more confused than before, because the objectivity of the covenant is inadequate to the task—while the presumptuous, who hear that aspect of their message may be led, inadvertently, to the false assurance of formalism. At the same time, their attempt to destroy the complacency of the presumptuous is in profound danger of promoting a false legalistic notion of works righteousness" (p. 306).

While we recognize that the Westminster Standards should never become an "icon" and that the *ecclesia reformata* is also subject to the *semper reformanda* principle ("always being reformed" according to Scripture), the Federal Vision teaching implies a wholesale denial of the Westminster soteriology.

Anthony R. Dallison

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Administrative Committee Announces Start of New Denominational Magazine

Subcommittee on PCA News, Dominated by Church Bureaucrats, Said to be Designed to Guarantee Independence, Protection of Truth, and Rising Above Self-Interest and Politics

The Administrative Committee (AC) of the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) has announced the start-up of *byFaith*, a new denominational magazine. This action comes in fulfillment of General Assembly action in 2002, which authorized the new publication, originally slated for 2003.

At last year's Assembly, a mock-up of the magazine was featured and distributed to the commissioners. However, the AC waited until this year for a full-scale launch of the denominational organ.

In 2003, AC appointed a Subcommittee on PCANews, "operating under and reporting to the Administrative Committee of the PCA." This Subcommittee, according to the AC's report to the 2004 General Assembly, "produced the Mission Statement for the PCANews magazine, established editorial policy, is securing the necessary financial funding, has employed an editor, and will direct the ongoing publication of the newsmagazine. The Subcommittee reports regularly to the AC through the Stated Clerk on the status of the magazine. Major actions of the Subcommittee are subject to the approval of the AC, but this Subcommittee has been given appropriate independence so that truth is protected and editorial opinion buffered from the waves of self-interest and politics which flow in every group of people."

The AC set the number of Subcommittee members at nine, including two *ex officio* members—the Stated Clerk of the PCA and the Business Administrator of the AC. The other members will serve four-year terms by appointment of the AC, from nominations arising from the Subcommittee. Individuals may not serve more than two consecutive terms on the Subcommittee,

without at least a year off; however, the *ex officio* members will be exempt from this requirement. The Business Administrator has been granted a vote only in the absence of the Stated Clerk, and will serve as the Chief Financial Officer for the newsmagazine.

The Subcommittee has been selected with a view toward independence in news gathering and reporting. The first nine members of the Subcommittee include one former and four present denominational administrators. They are Dr. Frank Brock, former President of Covenant College and current Chairman of the PCA's Strategic Planning Committee; Dr. Bryan Chapell, President of Covenant Theological Seminary; Dr. Paul Kooistra, Coordinator of Mission to the World; Dr. L. Roy Taylor, Stated Clerk of the General Assembly; and the Rev. Mr. John Robertson, Business Administrator. The other members named are Mr. Joel Belz, Moderator of the 2003 General Assembly, CEO of God's World Publications, and publisher of *World* magazine; Mr. John Prentis, former publisher of *World* magazine; Mr. Victor H. Hanson II, a ruling elder at Briarwood Presbyterian Church, Birmingham, Alabama; and Mr. Ed Harris, St. Louis, Missouri. Three of the original nine members are from St. Louis, including Dr. Chapell, Mr. Prentis, and Mr. Harris. The AC has reported that Mr. Harris has "found it necessary to resign from the subcommittee."

The AC has set as a goal for the Subcommittee on PCANews that "truth is protected and editorial opinion buffered from the waves of self-interest and politics which flow in every group of people." Four of the nine members of the Subcommittee—Dr. Brock, Dr. Chapell, Dr. Kooistra, and Mr. Prentis—are on the Steering Committee of the Presbyterian Pastoral Leadership

Network (PPLN). No one from other groups within the denomination, such as Presbyterian Integrity and Concerned Presbyterians, has been named to the Subcommittee.

According to the AC report, the position of editor "has been established and is overseen in the following manner. The editor serves at the pleasure of the Subcommittee on PCA News. The editor, operating under Sub-committee-approved policy, is solely responsible for the content and daily operations of the magazine. The editor will submit policy proposals to the Sub-committee for approval. The editor has the ordinary personnel and financial responsibility to manage the newsmagazine, and the authority to oversee and manage both is delegated to him. [Ruling Elder] Dick Doster has been retained as editor and [Ruling Elder] Nat Belz as associate editor."

The AC also notes: "PCANews.com and all related aspects of its operations function under the editor of the *byFaith* newsmagazine when established. These two instruments of communication are envisioned to complement each other and function together to inform the PCA and other interested constituencies of news and developments regarding the PCA and other relevant matters. The PCANews.com web magazine is being revamped to give it the look, philosophy, and substance of *byFaith*."

The last attempt at an official print magazine for the denomination, the *PCA Messenger*, ceased publication at the end of 1994. Huge operating deficits were the major reason for that publication's demise.

PCA General Assembly to Consider Relatively Few Presbytery Overtures

Protection of the Institution of Marriage Garner Top Billing

Ever since the first General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) in 1973, the court has entertained numerous overtures that have been presented to, and often adopted by, its presbyteries. At times, there have been scores of such overtures—forty or more—for consideration at the denomination's annual meeting. This year, however, only sixteen overtures have been reported as of May 21, 2004, on the official denominational web magazine.

The biggest concern, and the one which may generate the most discussion, revolves around the protection of the institution of marriage. Several presbyteries are calling for the endorsement of the Federal Marriage Amendment, while others are petitioning for other appropriate action to be taken by the church court.

The first version of this overture (Overture 12) calls upon the General Assembly "to declare its support for the Federal Marriage Amendment, which states: *Marriage in the United States shall consist only of the union of a man and woman. Neither this Constitution nor the constitution of any State, nor state or federal law, shall be construed to require that marital status or the legal incidents thereof be conferred upon unmarried couples or groups.*" The overture, which comes from James River, Rocky Mountain, and Mississippi Valley Presbyteries, also asks the 32nd General Assembly "to declare its support for this Amendment to the President of the United States, both houses of the U.S. Congress, as well as to all U.S. State legislatures, and to encourage its pastors, people, churches and institutions to exercise their appropriate and respective roles as citizens to further the process of the adoption of the Marriage Amendment to the U.S. Constitution."

Version two of the overture (Overture 13), from North Georgia Presbytery, changes the resolution part of the overture, so that the General Assembly is being petitioned not to advocate the adoption of any particular amendment to the U.S. Constitution, but rather "to call upon the U.S. Congress to provide a legislative and/or constitutional protection for biblical marriage consisting only of the union of a man and woman."

Version three of the overture (Overture 14), from Central Carolina Presbytery, contends that "the Federal Marriage Amendment protects the word 'marriage' from being used for same-sex unions," but that "the Institution of Marriage Amendment protects the very institution of marriage." Accordingly, the North Carolina court is overturning the General Assembly "to declare its support for the Institution of Marriage Amendment, which states: 'Marriage in the United States shall consist only of the union of a

man and a woman. Neither the United States nor any State shall recognize or grant to any unmarried person the legal rights or status of a spouse.'" Central Carolina's proposal also asks the 32nd General Assembly "to declare its support for this Amendment to the President of the United States, both Houses of the U.S. Congress, as well as to all U.S. State legislatures, and to encourage its pastors, people, churches and institutions to exercise their appropriate and respective roles as citizens to further the process of the adoption of the Institution of Marriage Amendment to the U.S. Constitution."

Version four, Overture 15 (from Missouri Presbytery), is asking the General Assembly "to declare that the definition of marriage presented in H.J. Res. 56 (S.J. Res. 26) to be in accord with God's revealed will concerning marriage, *to wit*: 'Marriage . . . shall consist only of the union of a man and a woman.'" The Missouri overture also says that "the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly should communicate the content of this overture to Senator James M. Talent in response to his request, as well as to the President of the United States, the President of the United States Senate, and the Speaker of the United States' House of Representatives to inform them of the unambiguous teaching of the Word of God on this important moral issue."

Overture 16, also from Missouri, addresses the matter of sexuality from yet another angle. That overture asks that the General Assembly "a) Humbly call on the federal governments of both Canada and the United States to act within their lawful powers and use whatever legislative and judicial instruments they deem most useful—even constitutional amendment, if deemed necessary—to ensure that marriage is legally defined and interpreted throughout their jurisdictions as existing exclusively between one man and woman; b) Humbly call on all provincial and state governments in Canada and the United States to act within their lawful powers to do the same; c) Resolve to find ways to strengthen the marriages in its own churches and exhort its elders to be bolder and more caring shepherds of Christ's flock that we might help stem the scandalous rising tide of divorce in the church; d) Resolve to encourage all men and women, boys and girls within the PCA to live chastely for the sake of the Savior who bought them, whether in marriage or in singleness, whether they must do battle against heterosexual or homosexual temptation in seeking to be faithful to their Lord who loves them."

Other overtures to the 2004 PCA General Assembly seek amendments to the *Book of Church Order (BCO)*. Overture 1 from Heritage Presbytery wants to add "knowledge of Holy

Scripture" as a specific requirement in the ordination of ruling elders and deacons. Overture 2 from Eastern Canada Presbytery is a perfection of its overture from last year, which seeks to clarify a situation in which there is a highly-divided vote in the election of a ruling elder or deacon.

Overture 6, from the Session of the Ellisville (Miss.) Presbyterian Church, was presented to Grace Presbytery, but

(Continued on page 4)

Administrators' Salaries Slated to Go Up, Again

If the 2004 Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) General Assembly approves the recommendation of the Administrative Committee (AC), the salaries of the denomination's Chief Administrative Officers will go up yet again. The AC is recommending that there be a 3% increase in the median salary, with the high and low ranges being 12% on either side of the middle figures.

The highest salary range is for the Coordinator of Mission to the World, with a high of \$171,000, a median of \$153,000, and a low of \$135,000. Next highest is the President of the PCA Foundation (with figures of \$170,000, \$152,000, and \$134,000). The President of Covenant College comes next (\$169,000, \$151,000, and \$133,000), followed by the President of Covenant Theological Seminary (\$166,000, \$148,000, and \$130,000), the Coordinator of Mission to North America (\$155,000, \$138,000, and \$121,000), the President of PCA Retirement and Benefits, Inc. (\$148,000, \$132,000, and \$116,000), the Stated Clerk, who is also designated as Coordinator for Administration (\$144,000, \$129,000, and \$114,000), the Coordinator for Christian Education and Publications and the Coordinator for Reformed University Ministries (each at \$140,000, \$125,000, and \$110,000), and the Administrator for Ridge Haven Conference Center (\$127,000, \$113,000, and \$99,000).

These compensation figures include "any income, or form of income, from the employer which the IRS considers taxable and all forms of non-taxable benefits, such as but not limited to, housing allowance, insurance premiums, and retirement-plan contributions. Moving expenses are not included in the definition of compensation."

Editorials

Confessions of a Middle-Aged Churchman

Perhaps it was my recent acquiring of “progressive lenses”—the modern version of bi-focals—which helped to impress upon me that I was no longer a young man. That, plus the aches and pains of body which start to take their toll. Yes, time is moving on—and Lord willing, I will hit “the big five-oh” come October.

It is upon momentous occasions like these that one tends to take stock of one’s self. This is especially true when one is contemplating a major change, such as that of not only changing jobs but switching denominations.

Even before reading the announcement found elsewhere in this newspaper, word may have reached many of you of my soon departure from the Presbyterian Church in America, and of the decision (by the Board of Presbyterian International News Service) to cease publishing *Presbyterian & Reformed News*.

I am quite certain that my departure from the PCA will come as quite a shock. The joke I have heard is that I would be the one to stay around to turn out the lights. Given what has been my denominational loyalty, and my championing of the PCA, I believe that it is incumbent upon me to tell you of my reasons for leaving the church which I sincerely thought that I would serve until the day the Lord took me home.

But before I do so, I have some confessions to make.

Over the past several years, the Lord has been molding and shaping and, indeed, chastening me. Through a number of oft painful experiences, the Lord has been conforming me to the image of Christ. Though those situations were not pleasant, God meant all of them for my good, and I praise His name for them.

Part of my self-discovery, which was also fostered by my preaching through Psalm 51 about a year ago, has been a deeper awareness of my total depravity. I have, of course, affirmed the doctrine for many years; but I have become humbled by means of a more profound understanding of my sinfulness. As Tim Keller is wont to say (in his presentation of the gospel), the bad news is that I am worse than I could have imagined.

Concomitant with that awareness of my own sin, I believe that I have become more patient with and understanding of others. I have also been challenged to reconsider whether or not some of my words in, say, editorials, were the best expressions of love and kindness. I hereby confess that they were not—that there were times when my honest convictions were not always expressed in love or in full realization that the battle is the Lord’s.

Simultaneously with my personal spiritual pilgrimage, I have also been thinking long and hard about the ecclesiastical scene. How should we conduct our church life?

For more than a quarter of a century, I have witnessed the political machinations within our denomination. From early on, I have watched the masters of the art of ecclesiastical politics ply their trade on the floor of the General Assembly. I confess that, having tried to emulate these establishment folk, I have participated as a partisan in many of these fights. I confess that, for too long, there has been a party-spirit in the PCA, in violation of the clear teaching of I Corinthians.

In this regard, then, let me applaud the folks in the Presbyterian Pastoral Leadership Network (PPLN) for their expressed vision of eschewing politics. The instinct is a good one, and, for most if not all of the PPLN people, genuine.

However, what perhaps has not been appreciated is the problem that the call for being non-political comes in a context not only in which one “side” (perspective) holds the upper hand and enjoys overwhelming advantages; but also in which the situation is intrinsically politicized. In other words, given the fact of permanent committees, trying to garner votes to elect this person or that is necessarily going to involve politics.

But perhaps an even more basic issue that has become evident in our church in recent days has been the lack of trust. We simply do not trust each other. And given the context—that of fellow elders in the same denomination—our lack of trust is a manifestation of our not loving one

another as we ought.

I confess that I have not always loved the brethren as I ought. However, while I do not want to plead, “the system made me do it”, is it not possible that the system under which we have operated from the start in the PCA has helped to cause the situation in which we now find ourselves? Is it not possible that the present system is seriously flawed? As soon as the emphasis is upon rules and regulations, rather than love, one becomes fixated on how to manipulate the system in order to achieve the desired end. As soon as the emphasis is upon positions of power within an organization, the goal becomes to achieve the requisite number of votes in order to occupy those positions of influence and control.

This leads inevitably to a type of power-religion, in which our noble, Biblical polity gets overwhelmed by the bureaucracy. In essence, the bureaucratic system becomes the polity.

Like any bureaucracy, an ecclesiastical bureaucracy exists to perpetuate its own interests. Breathing the pragmatic atmosphere of the age, the resulting structure constitutes a denial of the very Presbyterianism to which we claim to adhere.

The PCA began with so much promise three decades ago—and it indeed did demonstrate at times fulfillment of that promise—but it apparently got off on the wrong foot. And it did so because no one had thought through the polity. Everyone expected that there was a way of taming the permanent committees; no one had realized that such entities, by definition, cannot be tamed, but will eventually rule the entire organization.

As we look around at the PCA today, we see that bureaucratic rule has made General Assemblies increasingly irrelevant. We should also perceive that the very system shows more a reliance on the flesh than on Christ and His Word, and seems to foster a spirit of competition and mistrust that undermines Biblical love for one another.

The basic problem in the PCA, then, is not with personalities, but with the structure which allows a more ready expression of total depravity. Or, we could say that the structural problem is not the persons who occupy the positions of power; but whether there should be positions of power at all.

It is in this context that an opportunity presented itself to me, viz., to be the first pastor of a newly-organized congregation in Sheboygan, Wisconsin. The pulpit committee approached me, and the congregation has now enthusiastically extended a call. I have, with greatly-mixed emotions (particularly because of having to leave my dear congregation in Coeburn, Virginia), accepted the call, which will of necessity take me out of the PCA.

The Sheboygan church belongs to a small denomination called the Covenant Reformed Presbyterian Church (CRPC), which is also engaging in merger talks with two other groups, including the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Hanover Presbytery. I have been examined and approved by Hanover Presbytery, and, after transferring my credentials from the PCA to Hanover, will transfer my credentials from there to the CRPC.

The hope is that these two groups, which have much in common, can indeed be united in the not-too-distant future. What is especially attractive to me, as was evident by the meeting of Hanover which I attended in March, was not only the simplicity of its proceedings, but also that they lived up to their billing of doing things according to the principle of love. The Hanoverian approach takes seriously the regulative principle of polity as well as of doctrine and of worship—that is to say, simply doing things according to Biblical command; and does so in a welcoming way.

I have up until this point stayed with the PCA since her beginning, always seeking her good. However, at this point in my life and ministry, I have come to believe that it is in the church’s best interest for me to minister in a different polity context. In the same way that the PCA can serve as a stimulus throughout the Reformed world for evangelistic zeal, perhaps other expressions of Presbyterianism can serve that same Reformed world (including the PCA) by modeling a more Biblical approach to church life. Helping to promote that vision of church polity was an added incentive to accept the call to Wisconsin.

At the PCA’s First General Assembly, the nascent denomination adopted “A Message to All Churches of

Jesus Christ Throughout the World”—a document which largely reflected the statement adopted by the first Southern Presbyterian General Assembly in 1861. One hundred and twelve years later, the PCA declared: “To the Presbyterian Church in the United States, in particular, we express our continued love and concern. You are our spiritual mother, in your arms we were nurtured, under your ordinances we were baptized, in your courts we were ordained to serve our Lord and King, and to your visible organization we thought we had committed our lives. We sever these ties only with deepest regret and sorrow. We hope that our going may in some way recall you to that historic witness which we cherish as our common bond.”

In a similar way, let me, individually, say: “To the Presbyterian Church in America, I express my continued love and concern. You are my spiritual mother. My own parents sacrificed greatly to assist in your being organized. I was privileged to be your first ministerial candidate, and to write your first history. To your visible organization I thought I had committed my life. I sever this tie only with deepest regret and sorrow.”

I began with confession, and now I finish, more positively, with profession.

I profess my love of the church, and my love for the brethren.

I profess my love for my dear wife, who has stood with me faithfully through the trials and tribulations of church life. I profess love for our precious son, who likewise has been faithful and insightful in his work on the newspaper staff.

And I profess that Jesus is my faithful Savior, and my only hope in life and death. It is to His care that I entrust myself, for now and for eternity.—*Frank J. Smith*

Overtures

(Continued from page 3)

rejected. The Ellisville overture would amend several provisions in the BCO to restrict teaching elders voting in presbyteries and General Assembly to pastors and associate pastors only. The effect of these amendments, if adopted, would be that any minister not called by a congregation to a pastoral ministry would be disenfranchised from voting in church courts.

Overture 7 from James River Presbytery would add to BCO 57-5 an optional congregational vow when a member professes the faith, as follows: “Do you, the members of this congregation, agree to support [new member name(s)], encouraging and comforting [him/her/them] and urging [him/her/them] to ‘walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to Him’?”

In Overture 8, North Texas Presbytery would amend BCO 24 in order to remove the age requirement for granting emeritus status to ruling elders and deacons.

Nashville Presbytery’s Overture 10 would remove the Constitutional bar to electing more than one man from any presbytery to the Standing Judicial Commission (SJC). Noting the fact that often there are not a sufficient number of nominees from the presbyteries to fill the six slots every year for the SJC, this overture would amend BCO 15-4 so that it would read: “. . . Each Presbytery may have one Teaching Elder and one Ruling Elder serve on the Standing Judicial Commission, but no more at any one time. Yet, if a person is elected and changes Presbytery, he may continue to serve his full term. . . .”

Perhaps most controversial among the overtures asking for Constitutional amendment is Overture 9 from Grace Presbytery, which would undo the adoption of the “Good Faith” subscription amendment enacted last year, and which proposes new language to accomplish “the very same goal.”

Westminster Presbytery’s Overture 5 addresses the current lack of men with business experience on the Board of Trustees of Ridge Haven Conference Center. The overture asks the General Assembly “to take appropriate action so that the Ridge Haven Board of Trustees be restructured into a fixed division of three Teaching Elders and seven Ruling Elders with business experience, for a total of ten members in five classes of two.”

Two presbyteries are seeking the creation of new presbyteries, and another presbytery an adjustment in presbytery boundaries. Overture 4 from Southern Florida Presbytery would divide that presbytery to create a new Gulfstream Presbytery; and Overture 11 from Southwest Florida would divide that court to create a new Suncoast Florida Presbytery. Overture 3 from Fellowship Presbytery seeks the transfer of Lancaster County, South Carolina, from Palmetto Presbytery to Fellowship.

Whither the PCA?

In the early 1970s, men and women were contemplating whether to leave the Presbyterian Church in the United States (PCUS, also known as the Southern Presbyterian Church). To aid them in their reflection, the Continuing Presbyterian Church movement (which later became the Presbyterian Church in America) produced colorful tracts which used the word “whither” in their title. “Whither?” was the rhetorical question posed on a variety of issues—divorce, Scripture, worship, polity, etc.—as Biblical Presbyterianism was compared with the increasing liberalism of the old Southern Church.

While the PCA is not in as terrible a shape as the PCUS was a generation ago, nevertheless, we remain concerned about the PCA’s direction. In love, and as a bearing of prophetic testimony in the pages of this, the final issue of this newspaper, we would respectfully suggest that there are numerous matters which currently afflict the denomination.

With regard to theology, the PCA is presently infested with ministers who either do not understand the doctrine of justification, and/or are knowingly teaching contrary to Scripture and the Westminster Standards on this crucial doctrine. Furthermore, there is a very real problem of a new “social gospel” being promoted. Perhaps the basic problem is a failure by many of the PCA’s “leaders” to appreciate the totally objective nature of theology.

With regard to structure, the PCA has become hopelessly bureaucratic; and, in so doing, has compromised the genius of the Presbyterian system.

With regard to worship, many PCA services can properly be characterized as being substantially displeasing to the Lord.

With regard to judicial matters, the Standing Judicial Commission (SJC) rules in ways that are contrary to the historic Presbyterian faith, and cannot be counted on to give just judgment in any matters that come before it. This is perhaps the most significant problem for the denomination, especially since discipline is a mark of the church.

With regard to the politics of the situation, we live in a poisoned atmosphere, in which people are not listening to each other, and are refusing to learn from one another. Many of the most godly and scholarly men in the church—long-time churchmen who have much to offer the denomination—have been deliberately marginalized, and their counsel is being ignored.

In short, the PCA, in our view, is theologically, structurally, liturgically, judicially, and politically corrupt. These are the issues which we have tried to raise over the past nine years in the columns of this publication.

But not only will these issues almost certainly be problematic in the future; there are other pressing issues which also portend ill for the future.

We believe that the “women’s issue” is likely to become even more significant in the next few years. We believe that the ordination of women is a distinct possibility. We also believe that any changes will take place gradually, so that the rationalizations necessary to justify an increasing distaff leadership will benumb most of the PCA’s constituents and lull them to sleep. We simply do not believe that there is either enough will-power or theological conviction to mount effective defense against these new measures in the future.

We predict that the PCA will ultimately merge either with the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, or, perhaps more likely, with a remnant from the Presbyterian Church (USA). We do not believe that the emphasis on “Reformed ecumenicity” that one finds in PCA circles today is likely to lead to actual closer ties or organic union with the smaller, more doctrinally-oriented denominations (such as many of those in the North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council [NAPARC]).

We predict that the PCA, having forgotten its steadfast opposition to the World Council of Churches and National Council of Churches, will have no problem cooperating with personnel and churches affiliated with those liberal ecumenical organizations.

We predict that there will be an increasing toleration of “anything goes” with respect to worship practices.

And we predict that, despite the best of intentions among present leaders, the PCA will formally apostasize within a generation or two.

Of course, no one knows the future, and we would be very happy to be wrong in these predictions. Our hope is that, by raising these matters now, perhaps those who care about such things will be motivated to do something about them.

“Whither the PCA?” Time and providence will tell. But in the meantime, those who remain within her are obligated to seek her good, through reformation of her doctrine, polity, and worship.—*Bob Shapiro*

The Moscow Story

Writing the series of articles on the charges filed in Moscow, Idaho, against Douglas Wilson has been one of the most difficult tasks this newspaper has undertaken. This is true, not only because of the sheer enormity of the charges lodged against Pastor Wilson, but also because we wrestled long and hard with how (and even with whether) to tell the story.

We have long been aware of this story and were ready to go to press with it over a year ago; however, Mike Lawyer, Mr. Wilson’s personal assistant, implored us not to print the story until after a meeting between the Christ Church elders and the elders at the Evangelical Free Church in Pullman, Washington. (The Evangelical Free congregation has become involved in the matter, since one of its officers, Dr. Terry Morin, a former elder at Christ Church, has been attacked by Christ Church on its website.) Mr. Lawyer intimated that if we went to press before that meeting between the two sets of elders occurred, then it would show that we were really interested only in spreading gossip and not really interested in the news. Towards the end of that conversation in March 2003, he stated that the meeting had been set up “a couple of weeks ago.” When *P&R News* asked him for when that meeting was scheduled, he said, “Next week, or sometime.”

In point of fact, because of an impasse between the elders at Christ Church and the Evangelical Free Church elders, that meeting had not been scheduled and still has not been scheduled.

In the meantime, the rumors and reports about this “bizarre” situation (to use Christ Church’s own term) were and are continuing to circulate around the evangelical world; indeed, Christ Church’s own website contained much of the material which we have presented in these pages. We came to the conclusion that it is time to report the news.

But why would we, a newspaper which concentrates on the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA), print the story at all? It should be noted that we print news not only about the PCA but also of interest to the PCA, and, for the following reasons, we believe the story to be of great interest to our constituency and one which needs to be told.

One, we believe that Pastor Wilson himself is of great interest to the PCA. He has been a severe critic of the evangelical world in general and the PCA in particular, including with respect to leadership issues. Also, he has had a tremendous influence in our theological circles. Furthermore, because of his controversial doctrinal views, he has been embroiled in the recent controversy over justification and the nature of the church—a controversy

which seems destined to have a significant impact on the PCA.

Two, we believe that the extensive charges against Mr. Wilson illustrate behavior throughout the church at large. For example, we are aware of situations in the PCA where credible allegations of abuse of power, obstruction of justice, etc., could be lodged. Being able to understand the widespread nature of the problem might very well be of use in addressing it.

Three, there are ministers within the PCA who have explored the possibility of transferring to the Confederation of Reformed Evangelicals (CRE), the quasi-denominational structure which Douglas Wilson helped to form. It is important for everyone to appreciate how the CRE would handle these charges. Would this organization demonstrate integrity in investigating these matters? According to the CRE’s own web site, the charges, which were labeled “frivolous and unconstitutional,” were not even investigated much less adjudicated. Moreover, *P&R News* has discovered that the CRE’s minutes plainly contradict the facts at several material points in this scandal.

Four, we have not appreciated the manner in which Christ Church has conducted its public defense of Mr. Wilson. For example, consider Christ Church’s treatment of Terry Morin. On its web page, Christ Church attacked his character and the veracity of his affidavits. Dr. Morin’s elders have investigated the allegations against him and have vindicated him. The investigation by the Evangelical Free elders, which included interviewing two former Christ Church elders, raised the question of the legitimacy of two key documents cited by Christ Church—a copy of “minutes” from an elders’ meeting on June 25, 1993, and a letter purportedly signed by the four elders at Christ Church on December 17, 1993. Christ Church refused to produce the documents in question, and yet, despite its apparent inability (or unwillingness) to substantiate its position, did not change its web page for several months! And when they finally did change it, they continued to heap insults on Dr. Morin even after mildly conceding the documents’ legitimacy. (The church’s web page does not currently have links to the information regarding these charges.) We believe that our readers would appreciate our coming to the aid of those who have been unfairly attacked. In this regard, we would especially note Christ Church’s attacks upon its accusers (Messrs. Craig and Nolan), which have darkly insinuated that they are “off their rocker.” From our extensive dealings with these gentlemen, we have never had reason to believe anything of the sort, and have, to the contrary, found them to be quite sane and sober.

Five, our hope and prayer is that exposure of this

scandal will result in repentance. Pastor Evan Wilson, Doug’s own brother, is of the opinion that Doug and his colleagues need a wake-up call. Perhaps others do, too. Among other functions, the press does exist in order to prick consciences.

Six, it is surely worth noting that it is not the church that claims to be Reformed which looks good in this matter. Rather, the Evangelical Free congregation in Pullman, and Evan Wilson, a professed Arminian, have demonstrated more common and Biblical sense than have the elders at Christ Church.

This episode should serve as a sobering reminder to all of us to take heed lest we fall. May the Lord be pleased to bring about a happy resolution to this sad affair.

—*Frank J. Smith*

Newspaper to Cease Publication

The Board of Presbyterian International News Service, Inc., has announced that it will cease the publication of *Presbyterian & Reformed News*, effective with the latest issue. That issue is Volume 10, Numbers 1-4, dated January-December 2004.

The Chairman of the Board, Mr. Robert Shapiro, has stated that all paid subscriptions will be honored in one of several ways. Paid subscribers who are paid up past the current issue may exercise one of several options.

(1) They may receive a subscription to the *Christian Observer* magazine in order to finish out their subscription.

(2) They may receive a set of back issues of the newspaper.

(3) They may receive a refund on the unused portion of their subscription.

(4) Or, they may choose to forego any refund, and, upon application to the corporation, receive a receipt for tax-deductible purposes.

In a public statement, Mr. Shapiro expressed thanks and appreciation to the readers and sponsors. “Without our readers, there would have been no purpose to our labors. Without our sponsors, and others who gave money through the years for this ministry, we would not have been able to record the story of the Presbyterian Church in America, nor to disseminate that information to the denomination and beyond.”

CRE Will Not Proceed with Numerous Ethical Charges Against Douglas Wilson

Idaho Pastor and Author Charged with Lying, Obstruction of Justice, and Misusing Benevolence Funds

The Confederation of Reformed Evangelicals (CRE), the ecclesiastical group founded by the Rev. Douglas Wilson, pastor of Christ Church, Moscow, Idaho, will not proceed with ninety-four ecclesiastical charges which were filed against him. The charges allege various unethical practices, including lying, stealing, and the misuse of benevolence funds.

Several of the charges revolve around the giving of \$1,000 in benevolence funds in order to pay off gambling debts. Those charges focus on how the Christ Church Session dealt with an illegal gambling casino/wet bar (the Morton Street Casino), which was managed by a son of one of the church's elders, Dr. Roy Atwood.

Mr. Wilson is well-known in the Reformed church world for his writings, including books on doctrine, the church, and the family. His numerous articles have appeared in *Credenda/Agenda*, a magazine which he edits, as well as other publications, such as *Tabletalk*, the publication of Ligonier Ministries.

The Idaho pastor has been a controversial figure in Reformed circles, not least of which as a result of his severe criticisms of the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA). His theological views have also recently come into question, as he has been charged by the Reformed Presbyterian Church in the United States (RPCUS) with heresy with regard to justification and the nature of the church.

The charges comprise a document 106 pages in length ("Solemn Charges & Specifications of Sins Alleged Against Teaching Elder Douglas Wilson and the Christ Church Session" [hereafter SCSS]). Supplementing that document are another 334 pages of exhibits and evidence, for a total of 440 pages.

The charges can be broken down according to the various commandments which are allegedly violated.

With regard to the third commandment, there are eight specifications (six charges of a breach of the third commandment, one of ignoring Scripture, one of covenant-breaking).

There is one charge of violating the fourth commandment.

There are thirty-nine charges of breaking the fifth commandment; these include four general charges of a breach of the commandment, fifteen charges related to malfeasance, eight with respect to obstruction of justice, two charges of conduct unbecoming a gospel minister, six related to pastoral tyranny, abuse, and/or manipulation, two regarding Sessional tyranny, one charge of dereliction of duty, and one charge of violating Scripture with regard to the civil magistrate.

With regard to the sixth commandment, there are five charges of carnal threatening, four of sinful anger, and one of "railing."

With regard to the eighth commandment, there are three charges: one each of stealing, financial malfeasance, and violation of fiduciary trust.

There are thirty-two charges of having violated the ninth commandment, including twenty-one general charges of a breach of the commandment, eight charges related to slander, and three charges related to effecting and instituting a breach of the commandment.

There is also one stand-alone charge of hypocrisy, as well as several charges (embedded with those above) which speak of hypocrisy.

Many of the charges overlap, in that they deal with the same incidents, but from the perspective of various commandments of the Decalogue.

One of the first charges listed is "Effecting & Instituting Sessional Malfeasance: Failure to Discipline." Under this charge, it is argued: "In October 1999, the accused committed serious clergy malpractice and malfeasance in

sub-ethical leadership of the Christ Church Session when he failed to uphold the biblical and constitutional rule of Community Evangelical Fellowship (now Christ Church). Instead of applying scriptural discipline to the officers whose children participated in the New St. Andrews [College] drug ring, the accused gave 'leaves of absence.' In that 'leaves of absence' were not authorized by constitution or Word,



Anselm House

the accused usurped lawful rule of the church and instituted an *ad hoc ex post facto* system of government." The charge continues: "The accused's failure to apply biblical and constitutional discipline in the 1999 NSA [New St. Andrews] drug scandal established precedent for pseudo-disciplinary measures and laid the foundation for Dr. [Roy] Atwood's 'inactive status' in 2002" (SCSS, 2.2.1. and 2.2.2.). This charge alludes to the matter which began a series of events, eventually leading to the bringing of charges against Pastor Wilson. Dr. Atwood was an elder on the Christ Church Session; he and two other men were not removed from ruling office (and were instead given "leaves of absence") in conjunction with the 1999 drug scandal at New St. Andrews College. When the latest scandal with Dr. Atwood's son became manifest, and he was again not formally disciplined, three men in the congregation ended up filing charges against both Dr. Atwood and, eventually, the Session itself.

Several of the charges of obstruction of justice relate

to the failure to bring various members of the congregation to justice. One of those charges is as follows: "Credible evidence of gasoline bombs, pipe bombs, public drunkenness, lying, etc., was concealed, dismissed, or not pursued; though the accused says he 'chased down every lead he could.' The accused showed tremendous zeal in covering-up, listening to tape-recorded phone-conversations, giving false testimony, fabricating stories, suborning perjury, and smearing, extorting, and intimidating witnesses; however his zeal went no further" (SCSS, 55.2.3.). This charge is supported by, among other evidence, a Moscow, Idaho, police report on an arson investigation involving members of Christ Church and students from New St. Andrews College.

Another one of the charges of obstruction of justice deals with the interference of Mr. Wilson in the discipline of Mr. Tony Maneri, a ruling elder in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC) in Salt Lake City, Utah, who was tried and convicted of slander (SCSS, 3). Mr. Maneri had been advised by Mr. Wilson's personal representative not to submit to OPC discipline, based on his purportedly having removed himself from OPC membership prior to the filing of charges. [See "Presbytery of the Dakotas Takes on Doug Wilson and Christ Church, Moscow, Idaho," *P&R News*, April-June 2002, p. 12.]

One of the violations of the fifth commandment is the following: "During the Morton Street Casino scandal, the accused committed serious clergy malpractice when he failed to notify one of the participant's parents about the illegal gambling activity. It was only after he was alerted of the parents' knowledge of the casino that the accused notified them by email. The accused's action indicates dishonor for these parents' authority" (SCSS, 4.2.1.)

According to the charges, the "Morton Street Casino" was operated by Ethan Atwood, Dr. Atwood's son. One of the charges of "Effecting & Instituting Sessional Malfeasance: Failure to Discipline" says: "At the accused's recommendation, the session admitted Dr. Atwood's excuse—*Ethan had permission to manage an illegal casino/wet bar*—and thereby perpetuated the very neglect of Ethan which spawned the Morton Street Casino scandal." The charge continues: "Further, the session, under the leadership of the accused, rewarded Dr. Atwood for his lie when they kept him in the office of teaching elder with ruling responsibility" (SCSS, 14.2.1. and 14.2.2.).

Two sons of church leaders, and other young men,

Affidavit from the Owner of the Casino

The following is the affidavit sworn by the owner of the casino on February 12, 2003:

On December 19, 2001, I was dropped from Christ Church membership as a "member in good standing."

On or about May 31, 2002, [the church secretary] called me at my home on Morton Street and left a message saying that there was a check at the church office for me, and that I was to come and pick it up right away.

She called me again first thing Monday morning, June 3, 2002, and when I answered, she said, "There's a check here for you, can you come in and pick it up today?" I replied that I would pick it up at my earliest convenience.

On the following Friday, June 7, 2002, I went into the church office to pick up the check. I picked up the envelope with my name on it sitting on the front desk, and [another secretary] said, "Doug wants to speak with you."

I went into Pastor Wilson's office, and he told me that he wanted me to read the letter (dated May 30, 2002) that was in the envelope, and if I had any problems or questions about it, he wanted me to take it up with him. So I opened the envelope, and enclosed was a check and a letter. I took a moment to read the letter.

After I read the letter, I looked at the check and saw that it was issued from the Christ Church General Fund. This disturbed me greatly. So I asked Pastor Wilson, "You mean to say that this money is coming out of the church general-fund?" He unashamedly said, "Yes." I proceeded to ask him, "So everybody in the church is paying \$3 to me for this whole gambling thing?" And he simply said, "When people sin, everybody has to pay."

I was appalled. I visualized every family of the church walking up to me and handing me \$3 for debts that were cancelled by Pastor Wilson.

The meeting was no more than five minutes. No pastoral counsel or concern for my well-being was shown whatsoever. It had the tone of a business meeting. He finished the meeting by saying that if I had any further problems or questions, then I was to come to him directly.

were involved in the illegal gambling at the casino. After the second month of operation, the owner was owed about \$4,500 by those young men. The Session advised those young men that since the gambling was illegal, they did not have to pay the owner. However, he had paid out about \$900 in "winnings" to these same young men after the first month of operation. In order to put things back to the way they were before the gambling started, the elders at Christ Church decided to give the owner \$1,000 in order to cover what he was owed. One of the charges against Doug Wilson says: "The accused committed a crime against the Lord Jesus Christ, when on May 30, 2002, he stole money from God to pay off illegal gambling debts. The cited letter confirms that tithed funds from the church were directed to one 'Brett,' because he was 'the house' in the Morton Street Casino. When young men in the church pastored by the accused incurred gambling debts, the accused determined to illegally, immorally, and unethically dip into Internal Revenue Code Section 501(c)(3) designated funds, and pay off the private 'wasteful gaming' debts of the young men" (SCSS, 46.2.1.).

This charge of "Stealing" also mentions an allegation of unauthorized "loans" from church funds by the accused from 1991 to 1993. "The warning [issued by letter on June 19, 1993] was delivered by an elder from CEF [Community Evangelical Fellowship], and it specifically pointed to newspaper headlines: . . . 'The elders were concerned about Doug's lack of attention to repayment of the loan and instructed him to stop using church funds for personal causes. . . . In a personal letter to Doug . . . I wrote, 'I believe that you are in immediate need of a protective fence of real, toothed, continual accountability in certain areas. If you do not take steps to deal with this vulnerability I fully expect to pick up a newspaper someday and see your name added to the list of Christian leaders of national stature who are no longer above reproach'" (SCSS, 46.2.2. and following).

The matter of taking church funds to pay off these gambling debts is dealt with under several other charges. One of them says: "The misappropriation of funds to pay off private 'wasteful gaming' debts with publicly designated not-for-profit money is financial malfeasance of the rankest kind." Another related charge maintains that "the Church of God is not funded with money that can lawfully be applied to 'wasteful gaming' debts. Suppose, for instance, the sinning parties had contracted with a prostitute for services, but could not afford to pay the prostitutes. Should the Bride of Christ pay prostitutes? God forbid!" (SCSS, 47.2.1. and 48.2.2.).

A third related charge argues: "The governing law involving the use of 501(c)(3) money is unambiguous. Private use of the funds is illegal, and could result in the loss of the non-profit status for the entity whose leadership violates the tax-exempt requirements of the Internal Revenue Service." Among the evidence cited for this charge was US Internal Revenue Code dealing with "Fraud & False Statements," along with the comment: "Tax fraud is a felony punishable by 3 years in prison and a \$100,000 fine, with the costs of prosecution" (SCSS, 50.2.1. and 50.3.4.). A further charge argues that "when the session doled out charitable funds to pay off felonious 'wasteful gaming' debts—*funds which they knew God's people had given for the work of the ministry*—they recklessly exposed the flock of God to financial loss, by endangering the tax-exempt status of the church" (SCSS, 52.2.2.).

Other related charges state: "At least three of the players at the Morton Street Casino have left Christ Church

because of the accused's mismanagement of the scandal" (SCSS, 53.2.4.) (see sidebar, "Affidavit from the Owner of the Casino").

A charge of a breach of ninth commandment alleges that Pastor Wilson "never informed the members of Christ Church of the magnitude of sins committed at the Morton Street Casino. But the accused aggravated his sin when, in each HOH [Heads of Households] meeting from March through June, he represented Dr. Atwood's son to the congregation as repentant of his sins, despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary, such as the accused's knowledge that Dr. Atwood's son got drunk at a party just days after Dr. Atwood withdrew his first letter of resignation. By falsely representing Ethan's behavior, the accused obstructed justice and neglected the good of Ethan's soul" (SCSS, 59.2.1.).

One of the charges regarding pastoral tyranny argues: "When the accused expressly forbade a member in good standing from speaking to anyone in the church about the Atwood 'inactive status' decision, he trespassed his ordained authority and entered the realm of authoritarianism. Scripture forbids shepherds from 'lording' as much as it requires their households to be in order." The



Morton Street Casino

charge continues: "Tyrannical abuse of power like this was the trademark of Jonestown and the Branch Davidians. It is not acceptable behavior for evangelical ministers of the gospel. Ministers may not bind adherents beyond the limits of Scripture; and Scripture encourages rather than suppresses communication between sheep and shepherds." The charge also alleges: "The accused aggravated his offence when he failed to notify the session of the gag order" (SCSS, 39.2.).

Another charge of "Pastoral Abuse and Manipulation" claims: "The accused committed serious clergy malpractice when he threatened a member in good standing with personal attacks. The accused said, 'Some of the elders are ready to *ad hom* you,' and 'It's going to get ugly.'" The charge argues: "If the session was ready to engage in *ad hom* attacks, the accused should have corrected them, rather than use their sin as a threat against members of the flock" (SCSS, 37.2.1. and 37.2.2.).

Under a couple of the charges dealing with carnal threatening, it is alleged that Pastor Wilson used the following language: "people are going to get splattered"; "People in the church are going to get hurt; families are going to be destroyed"; and "when I swing, people shatter" (SCSS, 71.2.1. and 78.2.1.).

A related charge is the following: "On July 14, 2002,

the accused bore false witness when he said, 'This is not a local problem; there are going to be big-time lawsuits.' The accused's 'big-time' assertion, was a fabrication, *ex cathedra*, designed to manipulate those who brought charges against Dr. Atwood" (SCSS, 69.2.1.).

Under a charge of "Conduct Unbecoming a Minister of the Gospel," it is argued: "the behavior of intimidation, manipulation, and hurling invectives to assassinate the characters of members in good standing is reprehensible" (80.2.1.).

One of the breaches of the third commandment which is alleged is that of "Perverting Scripture": "On September 27, 2002, the accused further demonstrated his contempt for God's Holy Word when he put the second chapter of St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians on the rack. In his mock revision of 'Gallatians' [sic], the accused 'misinterpreted, misapplied, and perverted Scripture to a profane jest,' vaunting himself, belittling fellow believers, and taking the name of the LORD God in vain" (92.2.1.).

Numerous charges allege hypocrisy, including "Failure to Live Up to Self-Professed Written Standards." Quotations from Mr. Wilson's writings are sprinkled liberally throughout the charges.

One charge states: "Through the ministries of Canon Press and *Credenda/Agenda*, the accused has played the Rabshakeh to the 'modern evangelical church' for at least a decade. His position on elders' qualifications, ministers' standards, and church discipline is plain, well documented, and clear. He has repeatedly called upon the Church to repent for its woful failure in the matter of ministerial standards—especially among officers' children."

" . . . Therefore in 1999, when Christ Church officers' children were discovered in the New St. Andrews drug ring, the accused had a perfect opportunity to show the watching world that he was not a dissembler: but he did not. He slipped off point. The accused circumvented the Bible, the constitution, and his own written record; and he granted 'leaves of absence' in lieu of biblical discipline.

" . . . Moreover, in 2002 when an officer's son was caught managing the illegal Morton Street Casino, the accused had another opportunity to demonstrate that he was not a 'modern evangelical.' But as before, he dissembled.

" . . . The accused, therefore, committed a serious crime against the Lord Jesus Christ when he abandoned his self-professed standards and contended for a 'disqualified' man to remain in the ministry—with *ruling authority*. In so doing, the accused violated the primary rule of discipleship—self-application. 'Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself?' (Rom. 2:21). In the words of the Lord Jesus, 'They say, and do not' (Matt. 23:3)" (SCSS, 33.2.).

Another related charge says: "Over ten years ago, the accused wrote a book entitled *Law and Love: Constructive Criticism for Reconstruction*. The book called Gary North and James Jordan to repentance; North for his harsh mean-spirited attitude, Jordan for his loose hermeneutic.

" . . . As demonstrated by his treatment of Evan Wilson (his 'own mother's son'), the OPC, the RPCUS, [the casino owner], and members in good standing of his own congregation, the accused is the embodiment of the mean-spiritedness for which he rebuked Gary North" (SCSS, 94.2.1 and 94.2.2.).

The final charge is that of "General Dereliction of Duty." The charge states: "The accused has violated the general parameters of duty articulated and defined by the 'Duties of Church Officers.' The mass and burden of the said charges demonstrate not only a predilection to breach affirmative duty, but dereliction to fulfill his stated duties as elder."

The charges conclude: "Therefore, may the accused be awakened to the extent and depth of his sins, offenses, and crimes against the Lord Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church (Eph. 1:22), and come to a full, true, and life-changing repentance (I John 1:9) and complete restoration (Gal. 6:1)."

The charges were filed on February 26, 2003, with both the Christ Church Session and the Confederation of Reformed Evangelicals (CRE), an organization of ministers and churches which operates in a manner akin to a presbytery. Douglas Wilson was one of the progenitors of the CRE.

Signing the charges were Charles Nolan and Charles Craig, two of the three men who originally brought charges against Dr. Atwood and the Christ Church Session. In a letter to the Christ Church membership, also dated February 26th, the Craig and Nolan households say: "Not only does Doug [Wilson] have a well-established pattern of self-willed lawlessness, he also has a pattern of reviling those who confront him. We have had our characters maligned and our motives questioned. Doug has painted us as 'wooden,' 'litigious,' 'perfectionistic,' and 'self-willed autonomists.'

Church Letter Conveying the \$1000

The following is the May 30, 2002, letter to the owner of the Morton Street Casino:

Enclosed please find a check for \$1000. As you recall, after the gambling fiasco, we as elders had asked those who had received payment from you to return that money to you, and this has not yet occurred. In order to keep this from becoming a point of stumbling, we have decided to give you an amount in excess of what should have been returned to you.

Part of the reason for this delay is that [one of the young men in debt] had (on two occasions) heard from you that you did not want to be paid back. But the recent email I received from you indicated the contrary. So rather than sort this out, we would like to simply give you the money.

I am copying [three of the young men who were in debt] with this letter to let them know what we have done. As they feel led, they may (if they wish) donate an appropriate amount of money to the deacon's fund.

In closing, I want to thank you for your seeking of forgiveness at the HOH [Heads of Households] meeting, and remind you of your responsibility to walk in love in an on-going way. As these events have so plainly demonstrated, a failure to love rightly has devastating consequences.

Cordially in Christ,
Douglas Wilson, on behalf of the elders

The letterhead says, "from the ministries of Christ Church." The top of the stationery identifies Christ Church as being "A Member of The Confederation of Reformed Evangelicals."

To the contrary, our desire was, and still is, to see Scripture applied to the sacred offices of the church, to see biblical order restored, and to protect the members of Christ Church from great legal liability for the unlawful acts of Doug Wilson.

“Christ Church is an unincorporated non-profit association. If Doug and the session have committed tax fraud, then they have placed the 501(c)(3) exemption of the church at risk. When Doug acts in capacity of his office and slanders an individual, as he has done more than once, he jeopardizes all of Christ Church’s assets by means of slander, defamation of character, and libel lawsuit. These facts should weigh heavily on all members.

“In July 2002, the CRE moderator, Mr. Brett Baker, directed us to ‘tarry’ with the session. In submission to the CRE, we have tarried. In October 2002, Mr. Baker instructed us to compose a list of charges against the session if the matter remained unresolved. Today, in submission to the CRE, we have done just that—we have formally charged Doug Wilson and the Christ Church Session with crimes against the Lord Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church.”

The letter continues: “We have resigned our membership from Christ Church because of the gravity of the evil. Retaining our membership would mean that we are commiserating in and collaborating with sins too egregious for lawful church government. We can no longer submit to the session while at the same time submitting to the Lord Jesus Christ.

“Our love for Doug and the session is undiminished; we bear no ill will toward them. Our hearts’ prayer is that these charges will bring forth fruit meet for repentance. Please know that you are welcome in our homes. We love

you dearly; and we long for godly reconciliation, unity among the saints, and peace in the church.”

A copy of the charges in their entirety can be found on the internet at www.geocities.com/solemncharges/. At that web site, a cover letter, giving an overview of the scandal (“Survey the Scandal”), can also be accessed.

The “Survey” explains: “In October 2001, the first month of high-stakes gambling, the Morton Street Casino ‘house’ lost about \$1,000; and ‘the house’ faithfully paid its debt. In November, however, the tide turned. Casino management served free liquor to the players, and as inhibitions lowered, wagers increased. By the end of the month, ‘the house’ won about \$4,500. In December 2001, when the casino was discovered, Douglas Wilson and the Christ Church Session cancelled all debts and instructed the players to get back to the status quo ante.”

In the view of this “Survey,” embarrassment is the factor which caused the scandal to burgeon. First of all, there was the embarrassment to Pastor Wilson, who had already given Dr. Atwood a “leave of absence” in 1999 over the New St. Andrews (NSA) College drug ring scandal. Secondly, there would be embarrassment to the new college, as well: “The dean, Dr. Roy Atwood, was the chief figure for NSA at two critical points—money and accreditation. At the time of the casino, NSA was trying to buy the Verizon building (later in 2002 they bought it for about \$750,000), and they were also in the process of accreditation. A casino scandal could hurt both the money flow and the accreditation process. Moreover, who would send their child to a school where the dean’s son was caught managing a casino, getting people drunk, and gouging them out of thousands of credited dollars?—especially if the school’s motto is ‘Truth, Beauty, Goodness.’”

According to the “Survey,” in order to try to remove the heat, Pastor Wilson concocted the notion of “inactive status” for Dr. Atwood. “But,” says the “Survey,” “Douglas Wilson still had one lingering problem: the Morton Street Casino ‘house’ was down \$1,000; and since [Pastor] Wilson did not discipline Dr. Atwood or his son, he could not discipline the players who were in debt to the ‘house.’ He had no leverage; worse yet, the ‘house’ had leverage on him. He was completely compromised.

“Therefore, on May 30, 2002, Douglas Wilson and the session took \$1,000 from the Christ Church General Fund and paid it to the Morton Street Casino ‘house.’ Douglas Wilson and the session stole \$1,000 from the tithes & offerings to pay off felonious gambling debts. Douglas Wilson and the session robbed the Lord’s treasury. And Dr. Roy Atwood was a ruling/voting/disciplining member of the Christ Church Session when the theft occurred. As Scripture says, ‘Money answers everything,’ and it’s always easier to play with someone else’s chips. (Eccles. 10:19) But the \$1,000 payoff was not revealed to the members of Christ Church; it was covered up.”

The letter concludes: “In 2002, officers’ children from the 1999 NSA drug ring resurfaced in the Morton Street Casino scandal. Once again, rather than ‘sort this out’ and apply biblical discipline, [Pastor] Wilson blamed it on his brother, circumvented Holy Scripture, invented ‘inactive status,’ and took \$1,000 from the church to pay off the casino ‘house.’ He stole from the tithe to pay off felonious debts at an illegal casino—a casino that was managed by a Christ Church elder’s son.

“In the end, the bottom line of the Morton Street Casino scandal is this: When Douglas Wilson refused to discipline sin, he had to buy it. Bizarre indeed.”

Christ Church Responds to the Charges

The same day that the charges against Douglas Wilson and the Christ Church Session were received, Mr. Wilson responded. The next day, the Session also responded to the charges.

In a letter dated February 26, 2003, Pastor Wilson categorically denied the charges. He stated: “I am sorry to be put in the position of having to say this, but the charges are false.” He also expressed concern for the Craig and Nolan households, and asked the congregation “to pray explicitly and fervently for them.”

The next day, a letter from Doug Jones, on behalf of the Session, gave three basic points. First, under “Our Broader Response,” the elders state: “Up to this point, the elders have been corresponding with Charlie Nolan and Charlie Craig and waiting for a response to our November 11, 2002 letter, in which we answered many of their charges. Rather than interacting with our response, they have raised their charges again, this time for a public audience, in this February 26, 2003 letter. Because their most recent letter merely extends or duplicates their previous concerns, we would like to make available to anyone interested our prior response. We therefore publish to you our November 11, 2002 letter, which addresses the core of many of the charges that they have laid open to the public. This will help you can get a handle on how we have already answered the main accusations.” Secondly, “In the way the vast majority of the charges are set forth, the Charlies Nolan and Craig have made their judgment the pivotal point around which most of the charges turn. For example, the majority of charges concern the interpretation of principles, Scripture, constitution, and private statements, not matters that can be proved by two or three witnesses. Instead, we have a clash of interpretations between the elders and Charlies Nolan and Craig, with the latter charging the former with failing to heed their interpretations. Since their perceptions, judgments, etc. are so central to these charges, and yet at the same time, so very bizarre in the judgment of the elders, we wanted to go the extra mile in figuring these questions out.”

Thirdly, “We also have concerns with the unbiblical nature of many of the charges. For example, at least 29 of the personal charges (or duplicated variations of the core handful) are new and have never been brought before the accused or the elders, and yet they have been made widely public. Scripture requires that if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him *alone* (Mt. 18:15). No presbyterian court would be allowed to hear

such charges.

“In addition, Christ Church elders are not morally able to consider many of the charges raised because the claims depend upon one person’s witness alone (some of their multiplied affidavits notwithstanding), and Scripture declares Do not receive an accusation against an elder except from two or three witnesses (1 Tim. 5:19). Again, no



New Saint Andrews College

presbyterian court would be allowed to hear such charges.

“And finally, the authors have resigned their memberships and unilaterally declared that in regard to them Christ Church, Moscow, no longer possesses, maintains, or may exercise spiritual, ecclesiastical, or religious jurisdiction of any kind. Though in the covenant bond of membership, both sides are obligated to agree to severing membership covenants, the elders of Christ Church will not fight to force these families to keep their vows and deal with these issues. We have not seen any progress in these discussions [with them] over the years that would give us hope, and we do not want to bind those who yearn to leave so strongly.

“The elders have accepted their resignations. Nonetheless, their unilateral declaration of independence removes them from accountability with us and any standing in the higher courts of the CRE where such things could have been adjudicated carefully. Procedurally, they have set themselves up as judges of their own complaints, they

have sped past a constitutional adjudication of these matters (which we the elders have repeatedly asked them to pursue), and have replaced due process with a self-declared verdict in their own favor. The social and legal effect of these charges, then, is to spread them to as wide an audience as possible with all means of accountability removed. In short, we have brothers who are sowing discord and running away (Prov 6:19).”

In a “pastoral” letter to the congregation, also dated February 27, 2003, Doug Wilson asked the people to bless God for the present trial, and expressed thanks for the fact that the ministry of Christ Church is held in such esteem as to be worthy of such an attack. He wrote: “As Spurgeon put it, ‘The more prominent you are in Christ’s service, the more certain are you to be the butt of calumny. I have long ago said farewell to my character. I lost it in the earlier days of my ministry by being a little more zealous than suited a slumbering age.’ Any faithful servant of God must grow accustomed to the high mountain air of public calumny.” He asked for prayer, both for the ones bringing the charges and for those who are attacked.

All of these letters were for several months posted on the Christ Church web site (www.christkirk.com), and could be accessed by clicking on the link labeled “Bizarre Charges.” (It was right under the one labeled, “Reformed Dust Ups,” which included the recent charges, as well as Christ Church’s response to the heresy charges from the Reformed Presbyterian Church in the United States.)

Imprecatory Prayer Meetings

According to a church official, Christ Church engaged in praying prayers of imprecation last summer against its enemies. At a Heads of Households meeting, Douglas Jones introduced the notion of imprecatory prayers, describing them as seeking God to bring down temporal judgment into a particular situation. Mr. Jones announced at that meeting that an imprecatory prayer time would be held every weekday at 2:00 P.M. at Anselm House throughout at least the months of June and July.

According to Douglas Wilson, one of the purposes of the prayer meetings was to bring low the men who had brought the charges against him and the Christ Church Session.

Preliminary Reply to Three of the Accusations

On behalf of the elders at Christ Church, Doug Jones presented a "preliminary reply" to three of the accusations at the Heads of Households (HOH) meeting on March 4, 2003.

The first accusation dealt with was that "Doug Wilson borrowed from the church for personal needs." The reply says: "The accusation gives several false impressions. The first is that Doug Wilson borrowed money for purely personal reasons in order to fund, perhaps anything, groceries, bills, gas, etc. It also suggests that the initial borrowing to cover taxes was due to a financial failing of his own and not a church mistake; it also suggests that he had direct access to Church funds and that all this was done without ultimate elder approval. The records show that none of this is true.

"The initial loan of \$1659.00 to pay taxes was due to an understandable miscalculation on the part of the church to withhold the proper amount of taxes from Doug Wilson's paycheck. Though Doug Wilson was within his rights to have asked the church to cover its miscalculation, he did not. He requested a loan; the mindset of the church at that time (1989) did not presume to cover its mistake. The elders now think that such a request for a loan would be denied and the miscalculation paid as our own mistake. We would not have indebted a pastor for our failing. If anything, the current elders might consider rectifying that situation by returning the initial amount borrowed.

"The other expenditures (totaling \$208.51) were drawn not for personal expenses but for costs related to other ministries and projects with which the church was involved (ACCS, Logos, U.S. Taxpayers Party). Though the church has since drawn lines between ministries and grown in our understanding of the tax code, at that time, the division between the pulpit and cultural work of the church was more murky and unclear. All potential church ministries started out with church funding. At that time this 'overlap' question arose, the church had already been regularly gifting Logos School \$400.00 per month, even though Logos fell under the category of 'personal' interest of Doug Wilson in the accusation. In the minutes of the June 25, 1993 elders' meeting at which these loan issues were discussed, we read that 'the elders expressed their satisfaction with the explanation.'

"At one point during the discussions in 1993, Doug Wilson did apologize for the perceived impropriety in overlapping church and cultural ministry funds, though the elders had never before drawn such lines, despite various requests by Doug Wilson for a job description; in addition, at the time of the apology, Doug Wilson included a loan repayment check (including the \$208.51) with an additional \$200.00 in order to aim to be 'above reproach' (correspondence June 21, 1993). Contrary to the recent allegation, then, Doug Wilson did not merely refer 'to his behavior as not appropriate,' he repaid a loan he shouldn't have needed to request and with more money than was owed. Later elder actions, though, suggest that this was unnecessary."

The second accusation dealt with was that "Doug Wilson rebelled against elder authority in our congregation." This accusation has to do with the manner in which Pastor Wilson led the church to turn from being Baptist, to being Reformed with regard to baptism. The document claims: "The charge is false, then, because Doug Wilson could not 'rebel' against a Confession of Faith that was agnostic on the question of baptism, and the only sin repented during that time was the gross lack of wisdom in sending out a letter to the congregation that did not speak for the whole elder board. The affidavit of Terry Morin [an elder at the time—Ed.] itself has to be called into question not only for being an unbiblical accusation against an elder by not having two or three witnesses but also for revealing the conflict with the letter he signed on December 17 affirming Doug Wilson's good character and fitness for office."

The third accusation is with regard to the \$1,000 taken to pay off the casino house. The document states: "As before, this accusation is also ripe with falsehoods. First, Doug Wilson did not act alone, the issue of the \$1000.00 was brought before the whole elder board and voted on as a body. Second, Doug Wilson did not invent 'inactive status;' for good or ill, it is a common category in most

presbyterian books of church order.

"The rationale behind the elders' decision to pay [the casino owner] \$1000.00 is the following. When the elders learned that the betting between church members had resulted in some of them incurring an indebtedness that they could not afford (in the thousands), we made the following decision. The elders determined that all the money should go back the way it was before the ungodly betting started, back to the status quo ante. In our decision, we decided that those who owed [the casino owner] money that had been created out of 'credit,' did not owe the money, and that all actual money that had been paid out by [the casino owner] should be returned to him. We did this because the betting was against the law of Christ in its manifest lack of love, and because the betting was against the laws of the state of Idaho. Our determination was that



all money should go back to the owners who possessed it before the sinning started."

The letter also incorporated a letter from Douglas Wilson to the congregation, in which he wrote: "Without commenting on why someone might want to do this, if you were to throw a plate of spaghetti against the wall, a few of the noodles might stick. Sadly, given the overall state of the church in America today, one of the charges recently made against us about financial irregularities might be just such a noodle in the minds of some. The specifics of that particular charge are addressed by the elders elsewhere and I gladly refer you to their answer. And without getting into it, I just as gladly deny any financial dishonesty whatever. If I might adapt John Bunyan's defense of his character, if every embezzler in America were hanged by the neck until dead, Douglas Wilson would be alive and well.

"At the same time, this attack on our ministry means it is necessary to provide some broader context, which is what I want to do here. The apostle Paul was willing to defend his person if that was the only way of defending the ministry. He had to warn the Ephesian elders about one potential financial slander against him. 'I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel' (Acts 20:33). He had to be financially upright at a time when many were not. 'Unlike so many, we do not peddle the word of God for profit' (2 Cor. 2:17, NIV). He hastened to assure the Philippians that he was *not* talking about money in that letter because he

was hinting at a gift (Phil. 4:17).

"So when forced to it by slander, the apostle was willing to defend the ministry by defending himself. For over twenty years, I have self-consciously tried to imitate the apostle's attitudes and heart with regard to finances because the one who sows sparingly will reap sparingly. But imitating him includes echoing his words in a similar defense—I am out of my mind to talk this way.

"That said, over the course of many years I have donated both full and part time teaching work to Logos School. I donated the royalties from my portion of a Logic text to Logos School. Over the course of eight years, I have donated full time teaching work to New St. Andrews College without pay. The writers for *Credenda* are paid by the column for their work, but I and a few others are not, and I have been writing multiple columns each issue for fifteen years. There is more like this, but you get the drift. All of these were offerings, and not reckoned as part of our tithe. We are talking about donations that if totaled would be over half a million dollars, which is the kind of amount that the unique focus of a paper clip counter might miss.

"This is not said so that anyone might feel sorry for me; this was all done with glad intent. This is not said to get any money back—I was happy to give it. I would give it again, and probably will. As Paul would say, I would rather die than be deprived of this boast (1 Cor. 9:15). As recent events have shown, such an attitude of zeal to defend this kind of boast is most necessary. It is in the Scriptures for a reason."

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'How Christ Church Got a Charlie Horse'

*While running our race in the kingdom of God
A cramping sensation came, striking and odd.
The cramps were insistent, nothing by halves,
And tried to tie knots in both of our calves.*

*But despite bizarre charges from Nolans and Craigs
We still have the freedom of both of our legs.
Our God is still sovereign and gave a good will,
So we shall keep running, and take the next hill.*

*And you, in the meantime, if you have any questions,
Or perhaps a concern, or even suggestions,
Please go to our site, click below on the link,
Wade through our answers and see what ya think!*

The preceding poem was posted on the Christ Church web site, in response to the charges lodged by Charles Craig and Charles Nolan. An "apologia" for this poem argues: "the poem is all parry and no thrust. Slanderous charges of an exorbitant nature are now circulating around the country. When curious individuals come to our web site to find out what is going on, the *second* thing we want them to find out is that the charges are false. The *first* thing we want them to find out is that the charges are frivolous, irresponsible, and bizarre. There is a way of denying charges like this (with furrowed brow, concerned indignity, and Nixonian I-am-not-a-crookness) that actually lends such charges a certain measure of authority. And then the inquirer walks away thinking something like, 'Well, the charges look false but they might have been true.' Or, 'perhaps there is *something* to all this.'" The "apologia" calls the charges "bizarre", and adds: "they [i.e., the two Charlies] by their actions have made it necessary for us to represent what they are doing accurately to the world. And unfortunately, that requires the meters of Dr. Seuss."

CRE Dismisses Charges Against Douglas Wilson and Christ Church

The Confederation of Reformed Evangelicals (CRE) has formally dismissed the 94 ecclesiastical charges that had been brought against the Rev. Douglas Wilson and the Session of Christ Church, Moscow, Idaho. The action by the CRE came at the meeting of its seventh presbytery on October 16-17, 2003, in Houston, Texas.

As finally adopted, the motion to dismiss the charges reads: "that the Presbytery commend Moderator Brett Baker for his handling of the Christ Church affair and accusations and that the Presbytery engage in a season of prayer for Brett's blessing and for prayer for Christ Church that God would confound her enemies now and in the future, and Presbytery affirms the actions of the Moderator in rejecting the accusation of . . . Charlie Nolan and Charlie Craig which we believe to be frivolous and unconstitutional."

Prior to the adoption of this motion, Mr. Baker gave a report on his involvement in the matter. Many of his statements are agreed to by all parties as being accurate. However, several of his key statements have been called into question by one or more of the principals in the controversy.

Mr. Baker stated that his initial meeting with the men who were concerned about the various ethical charges occurred in November 2002; however, an email from Mr. Baker to Mr. Nolan indicates that that meeting occurred in October 2002.

More significantly, Mr. Baker contends that he "had virtually no contact with the Charlies [from Fall 2002] until the end of January when [he] received nearly 600 pages of documentation addressed to the Christ church session." However, those charges were filed in late February 2003, and there were just over 400 pages of documentation.

Of that packet of charges, Mr. Baker stated: "It appeared to me to be simply these men keeping me abreast of the interaction they are having with Christ Church." However, Mr. Nolan has stated that Mr. Baker, at that October 2002 meeting, had encouraged him, Mr. Craig, and one other gentleman (who has since formally dropped his complaints) to file the charges with Mr. Baker, who gave assurance that the CRE would adjudicate them. Moreover, an email from Mr. Baker to Mr. Nolan immediately after the receipt of those charges lends credibility to Mr. Nolan's understanding; in that email, Mr. Baker wrote: "I received your packet of documentation regarding Christ Church. I will begin looking through it. I am right in assuming that you have sent a similar package to the Session at Christ Church?" Mr. Nolan responded via email as follows: "Yes, a complete hard-copy package is in route via same-day delivery to both Douglas Wilson and the session moderator Matt Gray. When we have proof of delivery on those packages, we will PDF the charges to the rest of the session via email." Mr. Nolan's response indicates that Mr. Baker was the first and therefore the primary recipient of the charges, with Christ Church Session and Mr. Wilson being copied on them.

Furthermore, an email exchange a few days later (between one of the named witnesses in the charges and Mr. Baker) also lends credence to the idea that there was knowledge that the charges had been filed with the CRE. That witness copied Mr. Baker on email correspondence between himself and Douglas Wilson, in which Mr. Wilson stated: "There is no appeal, no judicial proceeding, no trial pending or possible. You have been badly misled. Charlie and Charlie refused to appeal to the CRE, and this was despite our commitment to submit to a negative judgment against us (and their refusal to). They removed their memberships from Christ Church making such an appeal impossible." The witness stated in his email to Mr. Baker, "I understand that, as Moderator of the CRE, you are in receipt of documents containing charges against Douglas Wilson and the Christchurch, Moscow, session." When this witness pointed out the contention by Mr. Wilson, viz., that there could be no judicial proceeding under CRE rules, Mr.

Baker responded by writing: "With regard to Mr. Wilson's representations, he is correct in stating that currently there is no provision for the presbytery to receive appeals from non-members of the church. Article III, paragraph Q of our constitution states that such appeal to presbytery can only come from members of the church of the accused session." He added: "Naturally, my hope is that this situation can be resolved by brothers demonstrating patience, longsuffering and Godly wisdom."

In his statement to the CRE, Mr. Baker stated: "In early April of 2003 I was asked by Charlie Nolan why I had thrown out the case. I explained to him that I had done no such thing because I had never received any formal request for the latest documentation to be considered at the CRE level. I had not thrown out the case because I had never been asked to take up the case. My assumption up to this point was that the Session at Christ Church was the primary party responsible for addressing these concerns. He agreed that he had failed to address any cover letter to me nor articulated any formal request for such involvement." Responding to this statement, Mr. Nolan stated that he did acknowledge that they had not included a formal cover letter to Mr. Baker with the charges, but that they had omitted such since they believed that Mr. Baker would have understood that they were simply following Mr. Baker's prior directions to them. Furthermore, Mr. Nolan said that he had phoned Mr. Baker in order to inform him that Christ Church in its defense had been using invalid documents.

Mr. Baker has stated that in June 2003, he convened a group of five men within the CRE to consider what should be done with the charges. After seeking the wisdom of that group, Mr. Baker states that he "agreed to go to Moscow to meet with the Charlies and plead with them to reconsider their charges." However, the accusers' recollection of that meeting is quite different. According to Messrs. Nolan and Craig, Mr. Baker, during that meeting in July 2003, acknowledged that a number of the charges were quite valid and should be heard. During the discussion of the "unconstitutionality" of the charges (because of the accusers no longer being members of Christ Church), Mr. Nolan asked Mr. Baker if he could bring the charges as Moderator of the CRE, to which he responded affirmatively. According to Messrs. Nolan and Craig, Mr. Baker declined at least three times to answer the question as to why he would not pursue the matter himself, in the interests of justice.

Furthermore, an email from Mr. Baker to Mr. Nolan, for the purpose of arranging the meeting, gives no indication that Mr. Baker was seeking that meeting in order to "plead with them to reconsider their charges." That June 30, 2003, email reads as follows:

Charlie,
As we discussed last week on the phone, my objective in coming over to meet with you is: 1) Share some concerns with the case in its present form. 2) Discuss my request for an abstract of the case and the other requested information. 3) Discuss any alternate paths to reconciliation.

As I said, I am willing to meet briefly with other parties, but my goal is really to meet with the two of you. I am not conducting an investigation and do not want to give anybody the impression that I am taking depositions. Christ Church does know that we are meeting.

Also, Dave Hatcher has again requested to come along and I thought that it might be helpful. We are supposed to land Saturday at 11:00 AM and we very much appreciate your hospitality.

Mr. Baker also reported to the CRE: "The question was how to get the Presbytery to hear enough of the case to evaluate the merits of the case without actually hearing the entire case. The solution was to request a 5 page abstract of the charges from the Charlies and subsequently a five page response from Christ Church for the presbytery to review." With regard to the aforementioned

meeting in July 2003, Mr. Baker reported: "they both refused to reconsider their charges and to prepare an abstract of the case. Given this, I felt that there was only one option and that was for me to reject the case on behalf of the presbytery." However, Mr. Nolan has stated that he and Mr. Craig did initially agree to prepare a five page abstract of the charges; but that after that agreement had been reached on such, Mr. Baker stated that Christ Church Session was also going to be given opportunity to prepare its own five page abstract, in reply to the accusers' abstract. Given the change in the agreement, and given the apprehension by Messrs. Nolan and Craig that Mr. Wilson and Christ Church would thus have opportunity to "spin" the scandal, the accusers declined to prepare the abstract. Mr. Craig has stated that it is "very important" to note that the proposal regarding an abstract initially was in order that "there would be a quicker understanding" among the men of the CRE as to what the charges were all about. "The abstract was not to be a re-presentation of the charges." However, Mr. Baker refused to have Mr. Wilson and Christ Church prepare their own abstract simultaneously with the abstract from the accusers; giving Mr. Wilson and Christ Church the last word would institute a procedure which, according to Mr. Craig, would give an unfair advantage to Mr. Wilson.

The minutes of the CRE presbytery meeting read: "Mr. [Chris] Butaud wants the word frivolous stricken. He asserts that everyone has likely not read it, and that he thinks there may have been pastoral miscues.

"Mr. [Marlin] Detweiler disagrees with Mr. Butaud, stating that he did investigate at least one issue, and is satisfied that it is frivolous; therefore we can use this word.

"Mr. [Randy] Booth suggested to Mr. Butaud that at least one statement being frivolous means the word can be used."

According to Mr. Craig, "Mr. Detweiler never called me to ask us any questions about anything."

Mr. Booth, from Grace Covenant Church, Nacogdoches, Texas, was towards the end of the meeting elected Moderator of the CRE.

CRE's Standards

The following is taken from the Preamble of the Constitution of the Confederation of Reformed Evangelicals (CRE), the organization to which Christ Church, Moscow, Idaho, belongs.

With patterns of church order and confessional standards, one of the fundamental requirements of Scripture is that of honesty (Ex. 20:16). Consequently, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we charge you, the generations who will follow us in this confederation, to submit to the Scriptures with sincere and honest hearts, and to the standards of this confederation as consistent with the teaching of Scripture. When a portion of our order and confession is found to be out of conformity to Scripture, we charge you to amend it honestly, openly, and constitutionally, as men who must give an account to the God who searches the hearts of men. We charge you in the name of the Lord to abhor all forms of ignoring our intentions in what we have set down through dissembling, reinterpretation, dishonesty, relativism, pretended explanations, presumed spiritual maturity, assumed scholarly sophistication, or outright lying, so that the living God will not strike you and your children with a curse. We charge you to serve Him in all diligence and honesty, so that the blessings of the covenant may extend to your children for a thousand generations.

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An Interview with Doug Wilson's Brother

The Rev. Evan Wilson, like his father and his famous brother, Doug, is a minister. Raised as a Southern Baptist, he is an "evangelical Arminian," and currently the pastor of All Souls Christian Church in Moscow, Idaho. He has also been recently open to "Open Theism."

Evan has real affection for his brother. But his love for Doug has not prevented him from being critical of certain of his actions and attitudes.

Of the recent scandal, Evan says that "good men find themselves doing foolish things. Folly follows folly. You can't stuff things back in the box."

Regarding the charges, Evan says that he "agreed with the general thrust" of them. Some of the things alleged he was not privy to, and some of the allegations he thought were "a little overly-specific."

In his estimation, one of the prime problems was that Christ Church had not heard the objections of the Craig and Nolan families (the ones who had brought the charges). Furthermore, "all the expressions [in response to the charges] seemed to be very rapid" in saying that "they're bizarre or out to lunch."

Evan noted: "We Wilsons have a gift of gab to respond quickly, sometimes not wisely. I know I can outtalk my opposition."

In Evan's view, the primary issue is not the paying of the casino. "I don't think there's a moral issue to the \$1,000." He added, "I don't agree with the handling of that situation"; and stated that the Christ Church leaders were "naïve about tax laws."

"I'm not saying it was wise," said Evan. However, he also stated, "I don't see it was pillaging the church funds." In his opinion, the church "should have required the young men to pay their debts, because they were debts of honor."

Evan's major concern has to do with the "attitude arena." He believes that his brother has a "way of speaking to others that is just very pugnacious."

Coupled with an unwillingness to admit errors or to take any steps backwards, his brother and his followers, Evan believes, suffer from the "folly of their hermeneutic." They are heavy "on the allegorical and poetic." At the same time, they will attack anyone who tries to lay out a careful case in opposition to their position, as imbibing of "Post-Enlightenment Rationalism."

Evan stated that the "hubris of the teacher and the credulity of the audience" has led to a "certain disconnect" between their theological views and Reformed orthodoxy.

The arrogant attitude and allegorical approach have had an effect not only theologically, but also on ethical issues, such as those raised in the charges. "I don't think they're liars," Evan claims. Rather, he thinks that they are "naïve" and "revisionists." In his view, "revisionists select real events that transpired and write the history on those selective real events. . . . But, it's not everything [that transpired]. Facts and data don't seem to be as critical to these people."

According to Evan, Doug and company have tried to shift blame in the past onto himself. Evan has for twenty-four years operated the Big Haus, a place where young people can hang out and discuss theology. Christ Church has tried to attribute some of the corruption of its youth on the ideas they have heard at the Big Haus. However, as Evan noted, the Christ Church leadership blamed him for the condition of these children, but would not ask the father who was an elder at Christ Church to step down.

Despite the criticism he has suffered, Evan emphatically declares, "My brother's a real nice guy." In Evan's eyes, Doug "is operating consistently with how he has defined his world. He is far more concerned about where I am, than I am concerned about where he is. It's out of his piety, that's been pronounced since he was four, that [his actions come]."

Why is he sarcastic, but doesn't appreciate being treated in kind? According to Evan, Doug believes that he has allowance to be sarcastic, while his critics do not, because he is defending the things of God and believes that he is "right."

"The guy is sincere as it gets. He's encouraged by his success."

Evan does believe, for several reasons, that the story of the ecclesiastical charges needs to be told. For one thing, parents who would send their kids off to New St. Andrews College "need to know this is not a second Geneva in the Palouse."* For another thing, Evan believes that a full exposure of this matter may lead to the softening of hearts which he believes is necessary. Evan said that they've "been praying" for Doug and his followers. "We just asked God that someday, somehow, something would come along to awaken their consciences. . . . What I would like to see is that they need to answer these things before the Holy Spirit, maybe not before their presbytery."

Evan believes that telling the story may give Doug "time for reflection and examination." Simply setting forth the facts publicly and fairly could be worthwhile. "You don't want to destroy lives if they don't deserve to be destroyed on either side of this conflict," Evan said. Speaking of Charles Nolan, one of the accusers, Evan stated, "Charlie's a neat guy."

Evan Wilson believes that "these guys [at Christ Church] are individually pursuing their walk with God. But when they get together, Team Presbyterian can be pretty malicious."

He added, "I'm just praying that [the present situation] resolve itself in repentance." Responding to a direct question as to whether he thought his brother Doug should repent, he stated, "Yes, I do."

[*The Palouse is a region in northern Idaho and eastern Washington, also known as the Inland Empire.—Ed.]

Christ Church Response to the Press

[NB: About a year ago, *Presbyterian & Reformed News* carried a brief article on the developing story in Moscow, Idaho, with regard to the charges filed against the Rev. Douglas Wilson and the Session of Christ Church. In accordance with our custom, we forwarded a copy of the proposed article to Mr. Wilson, and received the following reply from Mr. Douglas Jones.—Ed.]

Greetings Frank Smith and Bob Shapiro,

Thanks for forwarding a copy of your planned story in P&RNews [sic] titled "Controversy in Idaho."

The Christ Church elders have resolved to deal far more aggressively in responding to the gross lies raised against pastor [sic] Wilson, and that includes filing charges against anyone who has some sort of ecclesiastical accountability. We all should be accountable for our words, and with the publication of this story and its ugly distortions, I will advocate that we do whatever we can across denominational lines to file charges against you both. This is not a vain, hasty threat; perhaps you get judicial threats like this regularly in your work as a journalist. That's fine. We are willing to go to the mat on this issue and will pursue public vindication wherever possible, starting with you.

If you're willing to stand by words in this story, could you both please notify us of what session or sessions we would go in order to file charges. You can forward the addresses to me here, as chair of our judicial committee. If filing charges proves impossible, we will use every biblical, public means to highlight your lies.

If you phone me to try to clear up the ugly falsehoods in your story, I will not be willing to offer any corrective advice to help you in your public talebearing. As part of your story, though, do feel free to mention that I as chair of the Christ Church judicial committee have threatened ecclesiastical charges against you for your public lies. That's certainly part of the story here, and I'm glad to go on the record on that point.

[Have you at all examined the background of those bringing the charges? Do you have any biblical obligation to do that? You men appear to have absolutely no sense of basic biblical justice as it relates to journalism.]

Yours in Christ,
Doug Jones

[NB: Three points need to be made. (1) The story that actually ran a year ago was modified from the initial proposal which was forwarded to Christ Church. (2) We find it unconscionable that one that is being reported on would not help a journalist to tell the story accurately. (3) And, yes, for the record, we have investigated the character of those who brought the charges, and have found those gentlemen to be quite credible.—Ed.]

'Understanding the Situation'

[The following was part of the response posted on the Christ Church web site in response to the charges lodged by Charles Craig and Charles Nolan.—Ed.]

Whenever two sides come together in conflict, both sides should want to pick both the weapons and the terrain. We have a name for the one who neglects or otherwise fails to do this—loser. We have been challenged by Charlie and Charlie to engage with them in a place of their choosing and in a manner of their choosing. I have listed below five reasons why we should refuse to do so.

In making this refusal, we are taking a scriptural and principled stand. When chopping down a tree, the axe is laid at the root. We have no obligation to chop up every little twig and leaf. We do have an obligation to chop through the trunk. Here are the trunk issues:

1. Strategic: we should refuse to get dragged into this morass for strategic reasons. This is a feint, a trick, and we have work to do. "And I sent messengers unto them, saying, I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down: why should the work cease, whilst I leave it, and come down to you?" (Neh. 6:3). This has been emphasized also in counsel received from other pastors who have dealt with similar

issues. Their point is to distract us; be not distracted.

2. Procedural: we should refuse to get dragged into the morass for reasons of procedural justice. The Scriptures require us to throw this case out of court. "Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses (1 Tim. 5:19). The Bible does not say that if there are not enough witnesses, the case should be referred to the CRE or an independent tribunal. There are two key words here: "receive not."

3. Accountability: we should refuse to get dragged into the morass because the accusers have disqualified themselves as accusers. The Bible requires that accusers submit themselves to the possibility of a negative judgment against themselves. In principle, Scripture requires that an accuser be able to turn into the defendant. "And the judges shall make diligent inquisition: and, behold, if the witness be a false witness, and hath testified falsely against his brother; Then shall ye do unto him, as he had thought to have done unto his brother: so shalt thou put the evil away from among you" (Dt. 19:18-19). By refusing to submit to a negative judgment against themselves while they were still members, and by making these charges while fleeing accountability, these men have destroyed the possibility

of them bringing a biblical charge.

4. Psychological: we should refuse to get dragged into the morass because in the midst of controversy it is easy to forget how bizarre and inconsistent the charges actually are. We do not want to be tricked into accepting the slanderers' "realm of discourse" by trying to debate them on their terms. A desire to appear even-handed and judicious in the eyes of men who are demonstrably neither will never bring about resolution, but rather the reverse. We know these men are unstable, and should be treated as such. To entertain ridiculous charges will only serve to unsettle people "in the middle" when they see us treating the charges as though a responsible party had brought them.

5. Moral: we should refuse to get dragged into the morass because the men bringing the charges threatened to bring a civil suit against us. "Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints? . . . I speak to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you? no, not one that shall be able to judge between his brethren? But brother goeth to law with brother, and that before the unbelievers (1 Cor. 6:1,5-6). This open, flaming rejection of biblical authority brings their entire project under rightful suspicion.

Mississippi Church Leaves PC(USA) for PCA

First Presbyterian Church of Charleston, Mississippi, has voted to join the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA). The congregation, which had been affiliated with the Presbyterian Church (United States of America), or PC(USA), voted 75-1 by secret ballot to affiliate with the more conservative denomination.

Mr. Otey Sherman, an elder in the church and a respected banker in the community, said in an interview regarding the decision to join the PCA, "We just feel so good about it. We're just more together. . . . You can really get excited again" about being identified as "Presbyterian."

Mr. Sherman stated that when the PC(USA) and Presbyterian Church in the United States (PCUS) joined, the Charleston Session and congregation were against that merger. He noted that there had been an eight year window of opportunity for congregations from the PCUS (the "Southern Presbyterian Church") to withdraw from the merged denomination, with their property. However, their beloved minister, who was conservative, "convinced us that the left-wing direction of the denomination didn't affect us."

But, according to Mr. Sherman, after that minister's sixteen year tenure came to a close, and the congregation started to look for a new minister, the liberal orientation of the "mainline" denomination indeed became an issue, with the congregation being thwarted in its efforts to find a new pastor for the flock.

Mr. Sherman said that the congregation came to feel that "we should have gotten out, and we didn't, but now, let's do it!"

Even with a firm resolve to separate from the PC(USA), there was still pain associated with the decision. "All of the congregations [in St. Andrews Presbytery] were just like us, we loved them, and had a good working relationship with them. It was kind of like getting a divorce while you're in love," said the banker.

Key to convincing the PC(USA)'s presbytery in north Mississippi to grant a release to the church, was the fact that the presbytery's Administrative Commission could not find one person who did not want to separate. Mr. Sherman explained that he had informed the congregation that the "only chance we got is to be with one accord." In point of fact, all 105 communicant members in the congregation last December approved the plan for separation.

That plan itself reflected an attempt at face-saving by St. Andrews Presbytery. At first, the congregation had been told that it could not simply be "dismissed to nothingness," according to Elder Sherman, and that it had to select a denomination. However, towards the end of the process, the presbytery stated clerk came up with a plan whereby all of the individuals in the church would renounce the jurisdiction of the PC(USA), and the presbytery would thereupon sell the property, for \$75,000, to a new corporation, comprised of members of the church. In the words of Mr. Sherman, "the odd thing is, that's what we wanted to do from the start."

In the fall of 2003, St. Andrews Presbytery approved the recommendation of its Commission with regard to allowing the congregation to take its property, upon payment of the \$75,000 ransom. On December 5, 2003, the Presbytery was provided with certification of a voluntary renunciation of jurisdiction, and the Administrative Commission dissolved the church as a congregation of the PC(USA). On January 15, 2004, the money was paid to the Presbytery. Mr. Sherman stated that the congregation, effective that date, changed the By-laws of the non-profit corporation and amended its charter to remove all references to the PC(USA)'s *Book of Order*.

The choice of which denomination to

Mr. Sherman said that the Charleston church was "probably the first congregation in this presbytery"—i.e., St. Andrews Presbytery—to have women elders. However, "After studying it, we really see why the PCA does [not have women officers], and all of our members, women and men, agreed that [joining the PCA] was the thing to do."

For Mr. Sherman, Pastor Bumpas "made some statements that just solved" the issue of distaff officers for the congregation. Mr. Sherman quoted him as saying, "we in the PCA hold such a high view of Scripture that we're not going to let culture and changing times and political correctness to change Scripture." Mr. Sherman stated that of the eight elders and

According to PC(USA) denominational statistics, the total church income in 2002 was \$83,283. The \$75,000 paid to St. Andrews Presbytery came from a bank loan, which Mr. Sherman hopes will be paid off in two years.

Filling the pulpit for the last year has been the Rev. Dr. Paul Long, Jr., a PCA veteran missionary who has been doing graduate work at Reformed Theological Seminary in Jackson, Mississippi. Mr. Sherman praised the Mission to the World missionary, saying that he is "the best preacher I've ever heard in my life. He's wonderful, and talented." His talent includes musical talent. Mr. Sherman said that Dr. Long got a band started at the church. There might be six to eight guitars, banjos, dulcimers, and other instruments, played as special music during a service. "Paul plays his violin almost every Sunday, along with the piano and the organ," said Mr. Sherman. The 58 year old banker is also thrilled that he has been induced to take up the bass guitar, in order to add its sound to the church band.

As late as 1996, communicant membership at

Charleston's First Presbyterian was over 150, with average attendance that year of 90. The turmoil and uncertainty regarding denominational affiliation over the past several years has contributed to a drop in attendance, to an average of about 60; communicant members at the moment total exactly 100.

However, despite the net loss of members over the past several years, the church has continued to offer a full range of programs, including Sunday School at 10:00 AM, worship at 11:00 AM, a Trailblazers Youth Group (grades 7-12) on Sunday evenings at 5:00, a Pathfinders Youth Group (grades 1-6) on the second and fourth Wednesdays at 5:30 PM, a Young Adult Bible Study and Supper on the first and third Thursday nights at 7:00 PM, an Open Bible Study on Mondays at 5:00 PM, a Women's Bible Study on Tuesdays at 6:00 PM, a Presbyterian Women's Circle on the third Monday at 7:00 PM, and Aerobics on Mondays and Thursdays at 5:00 PM. A new Young Adult Sunday School Class, led by Mr. and Mrs. Mac Venable, is studying the topic, "The Home and the Family."

Located about 75 miles south of Memphis, Tennessee, the town of Charleston has a population of about 2200. Like much of the area, the town's economic picture has not been rosy, as reflected in income levels below the state average. But the congregation of First Presbyterian Church, having separated from liberalism, has embarked on a new course—one which it hopes will reap rich spiritual rewards in the flatlands of the Mississippi Delta.

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The congregation of First Presbyterian Church of Charleston, Mississippi

join had been deliberately left until after the decision to leave the old denomination. "We didn't want [it] to be perceived that any denomination was trying to pull us out," said Mr. Sherman. He noted that there had been "hard feelings", especially in the Magnolia State, about the activities of the PCA in particular. "We were accused of it [i.e., of having been courted by a denomination], but we could defend ourselves," he averred.

When it came time to choose a new affiliation, the congregation established a Denominational Research Committee. Leaders in the church, including Mr. Sherman, considered two options—the Presbyterian Church in America, and the Evangelical Presbyterian Church (EPC), a less-conservative denomination which allows the ordination of women to all ecclesiastical offices.

Mr. Sherman stated, "We visited each presbytery [i.e., Covenant Presbytery of the PCA, and Presbytery of the Central South of the EPC] and met with presbytery execs, and visited and shared and interviewed. We invited each denomination to come to our church on successive Wednesday nights," in order to present that denomination. On the following Lord's Day, a congregational meeting was held in order that the people might openly discuss and debate the matter.

Representatives from the PCA's Covenant Presbytery included three pastors—Ed Norton, Wally Bumpas, and Laurie Jones—and a lady from Independent Presbyterian Church, Memphis, Tennessee. Mr. Sherman noted that inviting that lady was his idea. A staff member at Independent Church, she was herself a former elder at the PC(USA) congregation in Germantown, Tennessee. Since the Charleston, Mississippi, congregation has had women officers, Mr. Sherman believed that having that lady come and explain the problems with having female elders might help his congregation should that issue arise.

nine deacons, some are women; but that they will resign from the Session and the Board of Deacons when the congregation formally joins the PCA.

Besides the greater respect that was generated for the more conservative PCA (in contrast to the EPC), another attractive feature was the fact that Covenant Presbytery was more local and not spread out as much as its EPC counterpart. The end result was an overwhelming vote for the PCA, and just one vote for the EPC.

Also influencing the decision to join the PCA is the reality that there will be a great number of potential candidates from which to choose for the pastorate at Charleston. "The thing we're excited about the PCA is, we will have a bunch to look at," declared Elder Sherman, as he noted the "availability of good, young, aggressive PCA ministers." The ruling elder stated that PCA General Assembly Stated Clerk Dr. Roy Taylor claimed that he could immediately send the resumes of a hundred such men.

"I want us to be real proud of the first one we get when we come to the PCA," said Mr. Sherman, with anticipation that the congregation's relationship with the PCA would be a long one.

The decision to join the PCA is unusual for churches which have recently left the PC(USA). According to *The Layman Online*, three other congregations which have departed the mainline group in the last couple of years—Circleville (N.Y.) Presbyterian Church; Rivermont Presbyterian Church, Lynchburg, Virginia; and Norcrest Presbyterian Church, Findlay, Ohio (which, after its property was seized by the liberal presbytery, was reconstituted as Findlay Evangelical Presbyterian Church)—have opted for the EPC.

The Charleston congregation, according to Elder Sherman, is just big enough to afford a full-time minister. He stated that the church should be able to offer a salary package of somewhere from the \$40,000 range up to possibly \$50,000.

Presbyterian Sports News



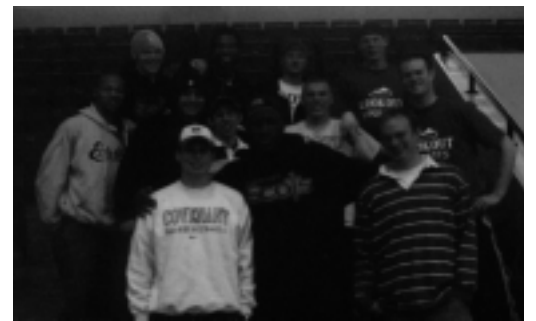
Among the cheerleaders at Wise County Christian School are Laura Couch and Emily Williams, members of Coeburn (Va.) Presbyterian Church.



Coach Roy Heintz huddles with the Covenant College women's basketball team.



The junior varsity Deacons from St. Paul (Va.) High School, in action, and in huddle with their coach



Covenant College men's basketball team

Opening tip-off as the Covenant College Lady Scots take on Bryan College at the Appalachian Athletic Conference tournament



Coach Chris Clay keeps close watch over his team, and after a victory gets a hug from his favorite cheerleader coach.



Coach Chris Clay brings to his job of coaching a considerable expertise in sports and athletics. Chris attended Coastal Carolina University, Conway, South Carolina, before transferring to and graduating from Lincoln Memorial University, Harrogate, Tennessee. At both schools, he excelled as a pitcher on the baseball team. For this academic year, Chris has begun his teaching career in the field of mathematics at St. Paul (Va.) High School, while at the same time coaching j.v. basketball and j.v. and varsity baseball.

Chris and his folks are long-time members at Coeburn (Va.) Presbyterian Church, where his father, Philip, is a deacon and the Sunday School Superintendent. In December 2002, Chris married another school teacher, the former Miss Candace Blackwell, who also happens to be a cheerleader coach at a rival high school.

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Ocean City Church Secedes from OPC

A congregation of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC) in Ocean City, New Jersey, voted on March 28, 2004, to secede from that denomination. Westminster Orthodox Presbyterian Church, located in the seaside resort community, cited four reasons for its departure.

First, the congregation noted the failure of counter overtures in the Presbytery of New Jersey and Presbytery of Philadelphia to correct compromised confessional witness on justification by grace through faith alone at the 2004 General Assembly.

Secondly, the congregation stated its opposition over individual ministers in the OPC being associated with "multi-faith" groups.

Thirdly, the congregation cited the divestiture from the gospel ministry of Rev. Bradford Freeman by Midwest Presbytery without due process, whilst in transfer to the Presbyterian Reformed Church with intent to call from that denomination's Columbus, Indiana, congregation.

Fourthly, the congregation averred that it cannot support as a whole the missions of the OPC.

The reasons for disaffection thus involve two basic issues—the gospel and purity of worship.

The justification controversy revolves around the overturning of the case against Ruling Elder John O. Kinnaird, who had been convicted of teaching contrary to the historic understanding of the doctrine of justification. While many observers would maintain that the OPC was not declaring Mr. Kinnaird's beliefs orthodox, but was rather sustaining the appeal for more technical reasons; others have expressed concern that the effect of the General Assembly's action was to put the OPC on the wrong side of this key Biblical doctrine of how a man can get right with God.

The association of individual ministers with "multi-faith" groups also entails, in the eyes of the Ocean City church, a denial of the gospel.

Concern over purity of worship was brought to a head by the divestiture (though without censure) of Mr. Freeman, who is committed to the historic Presbyterian practice of "exclusive psalmody"—that is, singing the 150 Psalms to

the exclusion of hymns of human composition in public worship. Although most scholars of the Westminster Standards believe that that was the view expressed in the documents of the Westminster Assembly, most evangelical Presbyterian denominations do not interpret the Standards in that way, and certainly do not enforce that Puritan understanding.

However, within both the OPC and the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA), there are congregations which have maintained that stance. In the OPC, the churches in Fall River, Massachusetts; Lisbon, New York; Laytonsville, Maryland; and Landsdale, Pennsylvania, either have in the past or currently do take that position. In the PCA, there are at least four congregations which also maintain exclusive psalmody for public worship: Covenant Reformed Presbyterian Church, Aurora, Ohio; Brainerd Hills Presbyterian Church, Chattanooga, Tennessee; Coeburn (Va.) Presbyterian Church; and a mission work in Greenville, South Carolina, under the oversight of Woodruff Road Presbyterian Church, Simpsonville, South Carolina.

The Ocean City church's citation of the removal of Mr. Freeman's credentials appears to insinuate that the action by Midwest Presbytery constituted an implicit attack on those who advocate and practice exclusive psalmody. However, it is not clear what role his views on worship played in the decision. According to the Rev. Dr. Rich Edwards, pastor of Calvary Orthodox Presbyterian Church, Cedar Grove, Wisconsin, the Presbytery acted to divest Mr. Freeman because of a sincere belief that he lacked adequate pastoral gifts, and that his views on worship played no role in the decision. Mr. Freeman was reinstated in August by the Presbytery of the Presbyterian Reformed Church, and was installed in his new pastorate in Indiana in September.

The Ocean City congregation is pastored by Rev. George Bancroft. Formerly a missionary to the Middle East, Mr. Bancroft is the author of a book advocating a traditional understanding of the ministry, including the three-office view (minister, elder, deacon), rather than a two-office view (in which minister and ruling elder are viewed as occupying

the same essential office, but with distinct functions).

According to church member Brian Hanley, the congregation is exploring at least two denominations—the Presbyterian Reformed Church and the Free Church of Scotland Continuing.

Founded in 1965 by the late John Murray, professor at Westminster Theological Seminary, the Presbyterian Reformed Church was an attempt to unite all psalm-singing congregations in North America with Scottish roots in one body. Currently, there are Presbyterian Reformed congregations in East Greenwich, Rhode Island; Des Moines, Iowa; Portland, Oregon; Charlotte, North Carolina; suburban Washington, D.C.; Chesley, Ontario, Canada; and England; as well as the new one in Indiana. The new church in the Hoosier state has been formed from former members of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America congregation in the same city of Columbus.

The Free Church of Scotland Continuing was formed in 2000 after the discipline by the Free Church of Scotland of a number of its ministers. The issue was over those ministers continuing not to accept the acquittal of theology professor Donald MacLeod after charges of sexual abuse were lodged against him. At present, its only congregation in the United States is in the suburbs of the nation's capital, and pastored by the Rev. Sherman Isbell, formerly a pastor in the PCA and the OPC.

Mr. Hanley has stated that both the Presbyterian Reformed Church and the Free Church of Scotland Continuing have expressed interest in receiving the Ocean City church, and the expectation is that the currently unaffiliated congregation will associate with a Presbyterian denomination within a year. Mr. Hanley, who had served as a ruling elder at Emmanuel Orthodox Presbyterian Church in Whippany, New Jersey, has only recently transferred his membership to Ocean City.

Westminster Orthodox Presbyterian Church (unaffiliated)
Mail: 453 West Avenue, Ocean City, New Jersey 08226
Rev. George Bancroft; 609-814-1896
web site: www.wopc.org

American Presbyterian Church Meets in New Jersey

The Presbytery of the American Presbyterian Church (APC) met at its Bordentown, New Jersey, church on April 24, 2004. The Rev. Allan Wagner delivered the opening devotion, based on Romans 3, with the topic being the current controversy in Reformed and Presbyterian churches concerning the doctrine of justification by faith alone. He noted that it is incredible that this doctrine could be questioned and that it needs to be revisited. He reviewed the Reformed teaching on justification from chapter 11 of the Westminster Confession of Faith, and stated that this doctrine was under attack by several groups. One group was identified as Professors Norman Shepherd and Richard Gaffin. A second group was identified as N. T. Wright and James Dunn, the latter teaching that obedience to the law is required for remaining in the covenant and obtaining the life to come. Pastor Wagner stated that Professors Shepherd and Gaffin taught from Romans 2 that men will be judged at the last day by their works, the latter explicitly affirming that this is a judgment of believers and not of unbelievers. Dr. Gaffin's views were more thoroughly exposed by reading some of the transcript of John Kinnaird's trial before the Philadelphia Presbytery of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

The minutes of presbytery for December 20, 2003, were read and approved as read.

Dr. Charles Butler read the letter he was commissioned to write on behalf of presbytery to extend its thanks to Robert Eisenzoph for his diligence and faithfulness in his care of Rev. John Morrow during the latter's prolonged illness.

The Treasurer's report was received.

The Rev. Louis DeBoer, Editor of the American Presbyterian Press, reported on that agency's work. The publication of his book, *Hymns, Heretics, and History*, is in final states of proofreading and editing, and an appendix on the *Trinity Hymnal* is being added. The publication of an extract from Charles Hodge's *Constitutional History of the PCUSA*, covering the Great Awakening and the Schism of 1741, and containing his defense of the Old Side position, has been scanned into an electronic copy and only the typesetting and the writing of an introduction remain to be done. *The Death of a Church*, by the late Dr. Carl McIntire, which documents the continuing apostasy of the PCUSA after the conservatives had separated, has been scanned

and posted on the APC web site; this continues the series of posting electronic versions of books covering the history of Presbyterianism in America. A series of articles condemning the recent film, *The Passion of the Christ*, and defending the historic Reformed faith with respect to idolatry, the meaning of the second commandment, and images of deity, were also posted on the web sites. A number of new book reviews, some dealing with the ongoing controversy over justification by faith alone, were also posted. The Presbytery voted to disburse \$500 to cover past expenses for and future advertising of the web sites.

The Rev. Raymond Dymond, Treasurer, gave the report of the Investment Committee. The interest on all of Presbytery's accounts are very low.

Mr. DeBoer presented the report of the Interchurch Committee. He presented a report from Dr. Richard Bacon of the American Reformation Presbyterian Church on the status of that church as well as on their mission to Myanmar. The latter continues to be plagued by the mindset of the "Reformed" community that is disposed towards "rice Christianity." Dr. Bacon's hope is for the coming generation of younger leaders that will share the vision of the three "selves": self-supporting, self-governing, and self-propagating. Currently there is a Psalter for the Chin people in their own language (Falam) in typesetting, and the plan is to continue to support the Reformed community there with instruction, guidance, and Reformed literature in their own language. It was approved to send a \$500.00 gift to support this mission to Myanmar, especially to underwrite the production of a Psalter in the Chin language.

The Rev. David F. Elmer of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church was granted an opportunity to report on his denomination. He discussed the efforts of the OPC New Jersey Presbytery to pass a resolution condemning the theology of Norman Shepherd. He noted the confusion at the OPC General Assembly with respect to the Kinnaird case, and that the New Jersey Presbytery failed to pass another resolution on the issue (offered by the Rev. George Bancroft) because of confusion as to what actually occurred at the 2003 Assembly in the Kinnaird case.

Mr. Calel Butler, who has been licensed by the Presbytery to preach, and has been assisting in the Bordentown congregation, is planning to relocate to Ohio.

It is hoped that once he is established there, he will be able to labor towards organizing an American Presbyterian Church there.

Elder Forney spoke briefly on his proposal for financing a ministerial retirement fund. All who are willing and able to do so, may work with him to implement his proposal.

Pastor Wagner spoke to the issue of whether ruling elders may preach, and noted the Scriptural distinction between ruling elders and those who labor in word and doctrine. He also noted the historic practice of, whenever a teaching elder is not available, having a ruling elder read a sermon prepared by a teaching elder. Finally, he noted that the denominational standards require a man to be licensed to preach before he may do so, and that ruling elders are not licensed to preach. Dr. Butler spoke to the other side of the issue, noting that the Pilgrim Church allowed ruling elders to preach based on the text that all elders are to be "apt to teach." After further discussion, a motion to study the issue further, and present papers on the matter, failed, and the current Constitutional position was sustained without need for further study.

The Moderator was authorized to prepare a schedule for Presbytery meetings for the coming year to be presented to the body at the December meeting. This will replace the current method of deciding the time and place of the next meeting at the end of each meeting, and will allow for better long-range planning.

It was decided to hold the 25th anniversary meeting of the Presbytery at the West Wyoming, Pennsylvania, church next September 18th, D.V. There will be an anniversary banquet the evening before and there will be special presentations on the history and work of the American Presbyterian Church.

Mr. Joel Butler, a candidate under care of the Presbytery, has just completed his second year of seminary studies, and is planning on a summer internship at a congregation of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America (RPCNA). As this may occasionally involve preaching, he needs to be licensed to preach by the Presbytery. Joel is to be examined on most parts of his trial as soon as he returns from seminary and in order that he may receive temporary licensure so he can proceed with

(Continued on next page)

Hanover Presbytery Receives Well-Known PCA Churchmen

The Reformed Presbyterian Church—Hanover conducted its annual stated presbytery meeting on Friday, March 19, 2004. Presbytery met at Calvary Memorial Church in Roanoke, Virginia.

As standard practice, The Rev. Dr. Edwin Elliott, pastor and publisher of *The Christian Observer*, gave an overview of Hanover's customs and usages which emphasize principles of constitutional presbyterianism based on a return to Biblical simplicity in polity and practice.

The Rev. Dr. David Moshier was elected to serve as moderator for the meeting. Hanover Presbytery regards the moderator as functioning only for the actual meeting. According to Hanoverian custom, the Presbytery is called to order by the oldest minister present, not by the former moderator.

Elected again for the position of Stated Clerk was The Rev. Dr. Allen Church. Elected as Recording Clerk was the Rev. Dr. Joseph Gatis, formerly a minister in the PCA. Mr. Ben Gordon, teenage son of a minister in the Presbytery, was elected to serve as Page.

Worship was led by the Rev. Dr. Frank Smith and the sermon was preached by Dr. Roger Schultz. At its presbytery meetings, only Psalms are sung during the worship.

When business reconvened, a number of well known pastors were received by Hanover.

An elder in the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA), Dr. Roger Schultz, was examined, unanimously sustained, and received. Dr. Schultz will begin the development of a mission congregation in the Lynchburg, Virginia area. He is well known as a historian, writer, and chairman of the History Department at Liberty University. For many years, while on the faculty at Virginia Intermont College, Bristol, Virginia, he was a ruling elder at Westminster Presbyterian Church, Kingsport, Tennessee. He also served two terms on the PCA's General Assembly Theological Examining Committee.

Dr. Frank Smith was examined, unanimously sustained, and received pending a call. He has served many years as a pastor, historian, and publisher in the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA). It was noted that Dr. Smith's reception into Hanover Presbytery did not affect his membership in the PCA, and that its "pending" status meant that it would not affect his current position as pastor of Coeburn (Va.) Presbyterian Church. As Hanover Presbytery normally meets only once a year, his reception at this meeting was designed so that a called meeting would not be necessitated should he receive a call at a future date.

Dr. Joe Renfro was also examined, sustained, and received. He is a professor, writer for *The Christian*

Observer, and a former Evangelical Presbyterian Church (EPC) pastor.

The Rev. Dan Gibson, a delegate from the Covenant Reformed Presbyterian Church (CRPC) and pastor of that denomination's congregation in Janesville, Wisconsin, was warmly received at the meeting. The CRPC sent a proposal to Hanover to pursue talks for possible union. A motion was adopted, that "The Reformed Presbyterian Church—Hanover joyfully enter discussions with the Covenant Reformed Presbyterian Church with the goal of future



Ben Gordon, Joseph Gatis, Allen Church, and David Moshier

cooperation." Members of Hanover were encouraged to attend the meetings of the CRPC national presbytery whenever possible.

Hanover's Stated Clerk, the Rev. Dr. Allen Church, who had served as a delegate to the CRPC national presbytery meeting in February in Fellsmere, Florida, was appointed to serve as a superintendent over all inter-church relation efforts regarding Hanover. Dr. Church was formerly chairman of the Interchurch Relations Committee of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church (ARP); and, in that capacity, served for several years as the ARP's liaison to the PCA and its fraternal delegate to the PCA General Assembly.

Dr. Edwin Elliott presented a series of propositions to further define Hanover's principles and help develop inter-church efforts. After explanation and discussion the following was adopted:

1. That the Rev. Dr. Dick Bacon be appointed as superintendent of a project to produce a simple apologetic of Hanover's position on church government/polity.
2. That the Rev. Dr. Frank Smith communicate the product of Dr. Bacon's efforts to the other Reformed and Presbyterian jurisdictions and make it available as well

to the declining denominations.

3. That the Rev. Rick Light of the Presbyterian Evangelistic Fellowship be appointed to superintend under the guidance of PEF such conventions that would provide for special interest seminars and fellowship.

4. That Dr. Roger Schultz prepare a manifesto on the historical roots of constitutional presbyterianism.

5. That Dr. Allen Church write a paper on the ubiquity of eldership and the Hanover distinctive of allowing dual ecclesiastical credentials.

(Dr. Bacon, referenced in the first motion above, is pastor of First Presbyterian Church, Rowlett, Texas. Formerly a member of the PCA's North Texas Presbytery, the suburban Dallas congregation helped form a new denomination in 1994, currently called American Reformation Presbyterian Church. Dr. Bacon, whose varied interests include assisting the development of a Reformed Presbyterian denomination in Myanmar [formerly Burma], wrote his doctoral dissertation on a polity concept that has sometimes been dubbed "Biblical Presbyterianism"; it is an attempt to bring the regulative principle of Scripture to bear on church polity, and thereby avoid the extra-Scriptural bureaucracy that has come to characterize much of contemporary Presbyterianism.)

After further business, reports from Congregations and Ministries were received.

Among the visitors were representatives from several PCA congregations, and a married couple interested in the possibility of helping to organize a congregation in the Winchester, Virginia, area.

Founded in 1985, Hanover Presbytery currently has congregations and ministers in several states, including Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa, Illinois, North Carolina, Virginia, and Maryland. Many of its ministers and key personnel were formerly in the PCA, including Dr. Elliott, who for many years was the Recording Clerk of the General Assembly.

All inquiries about the Reformed Presbyterian Church—Hanover can be directed to Dr. Allen Church, Stated Clerk.

Dr. Allen Church, Stated Clerk

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[Editor's note: We want to thank Dr. Church for having submitted this report, as well as the one on the National Presbytery of the Covenant Reformed Presbyterian Church.]

Covenant Reformed Presbyterian Church

The beautiful little hamlet of Fellsmere, Florida is most known for its Frog Leg Festival. But on February 17-18 the action was at the King's Reformed Presbyterian Church as the Covenant Reformed Presbyterian Church (CRPC) convened as National Presbytery for two days of intense work.

After greetings by the host pastor, the Rev. Geoffrey Donnan, the Rev. Rudy Poettcker was elected moderator. Appointed as Secretary was Elder James Brown and the Rev. Dan Gibson was elected preparer of the Short Report. Guests were warmly welcomed. And according to custom, reports were received from member congregations.

A major emphasis of this meeting was inter-church relations. A written overture from the Covenanting Association of Reformed and Presbyterian Churches (C.A.R.P.) petitioned for the continued development of a relationship with the CRPC. Also, a representative of the Reformed Presbyterian Church—Hanover Presbytery (RPCHP), Dr. Allen Church, brought greetings from Hanover and presented for information an overview of its distinctions. He proposed a similar relationship to the CRPC as had the C.A.R.P. The Rev. Todd Ruddell, an associate pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Rowlett, Texas (a congregation of the American Reformation Presbyterian Church), attended as an observer and participated in discussions.

Responding to the C.A.R.P. and the RPCHP, the presbytery directed the Correspondence Secretary to send a letter of greeting and notification that Presbytery has established a committee for contact and discussion with them. Overall the tone of the inter-church relations discussions demonstrated a desire for greater and stronger

relations among the micro-Presbyterian and Reformed churches.

Concerning further business, the Covenant Reformed Church of Port Washington, Wisconsin, was reported to have been dissolved and the Covenant Reformed Church of Sheboygan, Wisconsin, was established in its place and received into the CRPC. The Providence Reformed Church of Greeley, Colorado, was reported to have been dissolved as a particular church. Its members were received into membership by Covenant Community Reformed Church in Janesville, Wisconsin. The work in Colorado continues as a mission work of the Janesville church under the direction of the Rev. James Connely.

All actions changing the *Book of Church Government* from the November 2003 Presbytery were ratified. Also adopted was a motion to create an appendix in the Directory of Church Order for a checklist and questionnaire for church officers to be considered for ratification at the next presbytery.

Information for inclusion on the denominational web site (www.covref.org) was also approved.

Motions were passed that refined the examination process for candidates for licensure or church office. These motions will be presented for ratification at the next presbytery.

The CRPC adopted June 29-30 as the next National Presbytery meeting. The Janesville, Wisconsin, church will serve as host.

[At a called meeting of the CRPC Presbytery on May 14th, 2004, Dr. Frank J. Smith was unanimously received and approved to be pastor of the Covenant Reformed Presbyterian Church of Sheboygan, Wisconsin.]



One of the vehicles seen in the parking lot at the recent meeting of the Synod of the Reformed Church in the United States (RCUS) in Wisconsin

(Continued from page 14)

his training and internship.

The Presbytery authorized the clerk to send a letter to the Clerk of the Presbyterian Reformed Church, expressing concern for the state of Dr. William Young's health and prayers for his full recovery. A retired philosophy professor, Dr. Young, who has been hospitalized recently and is currently undergoing rehabilitation, is pastor of the Presbyterian Reformed Church of Rhode Island.

Presbytery was adjourned by the singing of Psalm 133 and with prayer offered by Dr. Butler.

The American Presbyterian Church was formed in 1979 by ministers formerly in the Bible Presbyterian Church. Among its distinctives are a *capella* exclusive psalmody, total abstinence, and historic premillennialism.

Open Forum

The Standing Judicial Commission: an instrument of injustice in the PCA

Psalm 89: 14 "Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne." Psalm 101: 7 "He who works deceit shall not dwell within my house. He who tells lies shall not continue in my presence."

Ten years ago and more, when I was the editor of the *Presbyterian Advocate*, I attempted to bring to the PCA's attention the consistent failure of the General Assembly's Standing Judicial Commission (SJC) to do justice, measured both by the standard of Scripture and by its subordinate standards, to which all elders by their ordination vows have agreed to subject themselves.

The General Assembly of 2004 will shortly be informed of the SJC's decision in Judicial Case 2002-14, relating to my own appeal. In what follows I would bring to your attention yet another egregious failure of the SJC to do justice and would urge upon you that in allowing and endorsing such decisions of the SJC the General Assembly (and through it the PCA as a whole), corporately and individually, becomes party to the sin.

Put most simply, the Decision's 'Statement of Facts' both distorts and misstates the facts and includes commentary wholly inappropriate to a statement of facts. The 'Reasoning and Opinion of the Court' is either a deliberate and calculated lie or a demonstration of the SJC's complete incompetence.

1) The 'Statement of Facts' includes many of the most inflammatory and unsubstantiated accusations of the Prosecutor, the Session, and a ruling elder in the church, but nothing of what the Appellant wrote in reply. Space precludes multiple examples of misstatements (and the whole of the SJC removed some of the more obvious ones made by its panel, apparently doing so in response to the supplemental brief submitted to it by the Appellant). One must suffice: in its point 24 it says that "the Session produced additional documents." However, the Session merely sent a letter summarizing attendance records, but did not produce the required documents (ROC 334-337).

The Statement of Facts (and the SJC's decision as a whole) completely fails to give any hint of the sins with which the Appellant was charged. This is astounding: in both my extensive acquaintance with judicial cases in the PCA and in my extensive reading in church history I have never before seen or heard of a decision in which there was no mention of the nature of the charges.

2) In its Reasoning and Opinion the SJC asserts that the appellant "sought to have the decision reversed . . . for one primary reason, . . . [that] the session had failed to present a single witness to prove his guilt." The merest glance at the Appeal (which included the Appeal submitted to Philadelphia Presbytery) and the Briefs (both preliminary and supplemental) submitted to the SJC would show that this assertion is untrue, as a multiplicity of reasons is given as to why the decision should be reversed and the matter of witnesses which the SJC asserts is the primary reason is neither first nor last, nor is it emphasized above the others.

Further, even in respect to the matter of witnesses, the 'reasoning' of the court ignores both the facts and, also, the appellant's argument. All but one of the witnesses brought by the appellant were brought in reference to the first of the 39 specifications (these were under three charges, the third having six parts). That they did not testify in regard to any of the other specifications is plain from the Record of the Case (ROC), but is ignored by the SJC, as it is not convenient to its 'reasoning'.

Likewise the fact that the Prosecutor's interpretation of documents was strongly contested by the appellant should have made witnesses necessary; but the Prosecutor was uninterested in examining the appellant as to his meaning in said documents and did not care to establish his interpretations by reference to anyone else. That this is the case is evident from the most casual reading of the ROC, as well as the Prosecutor's explicit statements. The Prosecutor stated that he was prosecuting the case "solely, exclusively, and without exception on the basis of written documentation alone, . . ." That the Court recognized and accepted this is reflected in such offhand statements as that of its Moderator: "The prosecutor has laid a case here based upon your correspondence. . ." (ROC 112 & 207). The SJC, however, claims "that there were multiple witnesses to the appellant's guilt in these matters"; that the witnesses did not so much as speak to the appellant's guilt or innocence of the charges and specifications evidently means nothing to the SJC. The simple fact that witnesses were present at some point in the trial suffices; to the SJC the content of their testimony is irrelevant.

Further, in its 'Reasoning' the SJC alleges that "the session followed all the principles of Matthew 18 before proceeding to trial" and speaks of the patience exercised by the Session and Philadelphia Presbytery in the matter. However, as the SJC does not bother to reference the ROC to illustrate this alleged following of Matthew 18 nor of the patience exercised, perhaps a few examples would be helpful:

First, the principles of Matthew 18: 1) the Prosecutor, then Associate Pastor at Calvary Presbyterian Church, Willow Grove, claimed that, after having a severe disagreement with the Appellant, he had followed the Lord's instructions in Matthew 18 by "seeking and receiving the help of two other godly men" (ROC 23). But he did not go to the appellant with these unnamed "godly men" and refused to meet with the appellant and TE John Yenchko when requested to do so; 2) a ruling elder on the Session acknowledged that he never made any attempt to speak with the Appellant privately, but asserted that his occasional leading in worship and his participation in Session meetings constituted adequate pastoring of the appellant and that there was no need for him to approach the Appellant privately (ROC 127-128); 3) no witness or member of the Session asserted that at any point at any time he had either gone to the Appellant alone or with witnesses about anything at all and, consequently, there is nothing in the ROC to this effect to which the SJC could refer.

Second, patience: the Session after first intimating to the Appellant that he would be acceptable to serve again on the Session (after a year's mandatory sabbatical) invited him to meet with it to confirm this. But then, without advising him in advance that there was any problem, it had its clerk read the following statement to him on January 7, 1997: "We agree as a Session in order to preserve the peace and unity, . . . best interests of the church, not to approve David Lachman as a nominee to the congregation for reelection to the session" (*sic*). The Session then dismissed the appellant without allowing any questions or discussion whatever, refusing to comment on or discuss the prepared statement. On further consideration, two weeks later it met again with him and advised him, in a semi-organized way, that its problems with him were essentially fourfold: a perceived attitude of superiority, a lack of submission to the Session, philosophical differences, and a bad influence on the Session's morale (ROC 119).

As a result of this meeting the Appellant initiated meetings with those elders who would speak with him, in an attempt to reconcile any differences or hard feelings. In this he met with varying success. One ruling elder refused to meet at all; another ruling elder was unwilling to meet by himself and two other elders were quite hostile. None had previously indicated that he had any problem with the Appellant and none initiated any contact with the Appellant over the next 16 months. Nor did the Session contact the appellant further. It was only in the context of the Appellant's asking the Session to bring about a reconciliation between a ruling elder and the Appellant that the Session had any further communication with the Appellant.

All this is simply to illustrate the extent of the patience and pastoral care exercised by the Session in relation to the Appellant in the period in question. It only remains to be said that, with the exception of the Prosecutor (who was called as Associate Pastor in the intervening period), none of the elders, whether teaching or ruling, individually approached the appellant in regard to any spiritual matter in the period between January 1997 and 8 November 2000. And that Associate Pastor only did so in regard to another matter entirely (see the correspondence included in the ROC). It was only when the Appellant applied to the Session for help in restoring brotherly relations with a fellow ruling elder that the Session, refusing the request, took action to discipline the Appellant for his temerity in asking such a thing.

Second, the Presbytery's patience is illustrated by its refusal to entertain a Memorial submitted to it by the Appellant (or even so much as to hear the content of the Memorial; to this day only a small handful of the members of Philadelphia Presbytery have any idea of the substance of the Memorial). When, after the trial, the Session's decision was appealed to the Presbytery, the Presbytery without so much as looking at the substance of the appeal (it has not done so to this day), appointed a Commission. The Commission did not so much as meet for over four months and then, though the Appellant had strongly objected that the ROC submitted by the Session was seriously deficient, only most reluctantly requested the missing material from the Session. The Session refused to submit said material and after several months was requested again to submit the material. When the Session submitted bare attendance records some five months later the Commission accepted them as if they were the requested material. It then hurried to a decision (including having a conference call 'meeting') without exhibiting the slightest interest in the substance of the appeal. The Commission's decision is full of 'legalisms' (the phrase "there is no evidence given or offered" is used nine times) and evasions, and it wholly ignores the appellant's multitudinous references to the ROC. The ineptitude of the written opinion can perhaps be best accounted for by the fact that while the majority of the voting members of the Commission were lawyers, the opinion

was written by the chairman, a minister recently received from the Reformed Episcopal Church who is, shall we say, grossly unfamiliar with Presbyterian polity. Nevertheless in its conclusion the Commission asked the Session if perhaps more patience in the handling of the Appellant's concerns and a seeking of counsel from brothers in the Presbytery might have been a better way of proceeding than judicial process (p. 4).

The SJC asserts that the Session and the Presbytery were patient "to an extreme", but the facts of the matter exhibit no patience whatever on the part of either.

What, then, you may wonder, was the case about? One would not have the slightest idea from a careful reading of the decision of the SJC. But though there were three general charges with 39 specifications, essentially the sins with which I was charged were violations of the Fifth Commandment (failure to submit unquestioningly to the Associate Pastor and the Session), of the Sixth Commandment (using words which provoked) and the Ninth Commandment (primarily speaking untruth, though also breaching lawful vows in failing to submit).

The charges relating to submission are substantial only if one believes that an elder's ordination vow of submission to his brethren in the Lord means not what it has historically been construed to mean (submission in matters determined by Scripture), but as unqualified submission to one's Christian brethren, without reference to Scripture. The charges of using provoking words are only of substance if it can be proved that words were used sinfully—and the Prosecutor instead focused on the question of whether or not the Session felt offended. The particular question of untruth (there were multiple specifications, but essentially only one substantial allegation of untruth) was that the Appellant falsely charged a fellow ruling elder with slandering him by speaking negatively about him to others outside of Session meetings; when questioned as a witness in respect to this exact point that ruling elder said he may well have spoken negatively in regard to the Appellant outside of Session meetings (ROC 191), thus completely removing the basis for the Prosecutor's charges and specifications relating to the Ninth Commandment.

It may have been this that led Presbytery's Commission to say that it probably would have been better if the matter had not been brought to trial. But the real motive for the whole trial seems to have been the Prosecutor's animus toward the Appellant, culminating in his final plea to have the defendant deposed and excommunicated.

Both Scripture and the rules of discipline in the PCA *Book of Church Order* are such that the whole of the above should not be allowed to happen, particularly not when such a travesty of justice reaches the higher courts on appeal. While Philadelphia Presbytery has a long history of having its decisions overruled at the General Assembly level, it notoriously being a Presbytery in which 'pastoral considerations' and 'feelings' are allowed to trump constitutional requirements and Biblical commands, the situation at the General Assembly level ought to be such that such wrongs will be made right.

Instead the situation is such that the SJC systemically administers injustice, not only ignoring the teachings of Scripture when they are inconvenient, but also ignoring the plain requirements of the *Book of Church Order* when it suits its purposes. On the other hand, it is often insistent on the letter of the law, most carefully construed, when that produces the desired result. Often, quite legitimately, constitutional considerations (sometimes violations of requirements clearly stated in the BCO and necessary to a fair trial, but sometimes minor failures to comply with the SJC's rules and regulations) are the determining factor in deciding cases. But considerations which are held to be determinative in one case are in another ignored entirely, seemingly depending entirely on the result which the SJC wishes to achieve. An example of this is found in the SJC's concern in 2002-5, in which in returning the case to Presbytery for reconsideration it suggested that BCO 12-1 and 12-3 were violated in that a TE had not moderated the whole of the trial. But the SJC expressed no concern whatever that a ruling elder moderated the larger part of my trial and that the matter was thus heard and decided by ruling elders only.

As I said repeatedly in the *Presbyterian Advocate* some ten years and more ago, the SJC appears to act as a deliberate instrument of injustice in the PCA. In my extensive personal experience most elders, both teaching and ruling, are only interested in matters judicial when it is their own ox being gored. But Scripture makes it plain that God is most interested in matters of righteousness and justice (and I do not mean the liberal perversion of 'justice' to mean 'social justice', a euphemism for the state's robbing the more well-to-do to give to the relatively poor). If as a church the PCA's concerns do not reflect God's concerns, how

can it expect Him to bless it? Or is the PCA so wrapped up with its own power and glory that it does not care about God at all?

Jeremiah 6: 5, "I will get me unto the great men, and will speak unto them; for they know the way of Jehovah, and the justice of their God. But these with one accord have broken the yoke, and burst the bonds." Matthew 23: 30-31, "... and say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we should not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets. Wherefore ye witness to yourselves, that ye are sons of them that slew the prophets."

The following list of reasons why the Session's verdict should be overturned was submitted in the preliminary brief the appellant submitted to the SJC; additional reasons were given in the appeal which was submitted to the SJC on 12th October 2002 and in a supplemental brief submitted in requesting a rehearing of the case by the full SJC.

1) the Session has failed to submit complete Minutes, as required by the Book of Church Order:

Submitted Sessional minutes are seriously deficient in that they do not include any reference to a consideration of alleged sins on the part of the Appellant in respect to the Fifth, Sixth or Ninth Commandments or to a possible trial in the several months prior to its decision to bring him to trial; they do not include the *Book of Church Order* required transition between finding "it necessary, for the honor of religion, itself to" proceed and the laying of a charge(s) (*BCO* 32-2 and 32-3), but rather appoint a prosecutor (without detailing the circumstances of said appointment) and entertain no charges until over 2 months later; in May through July 1999, they do not include records of any arrangements for a trial and do not mention the reception (or approval) of charges as received from the prosecutor; for the most part they include no mention of the trial as it proceeded and drew to a dilatory conclusion (the latter part of 1999 and most of 2000); they do not record the reception of the Appeal to Presbytery nor the assignment of a person or committee to draft a reply (though they do record the discussion of said draft and approval of it); the minutes of the Session as a trial court are attendance records only, compiled under duress in the early months of 2002, and do not contain the material it promised would be in them in the course of the trial, including particularly any rationale for the Moderator's repeated ruling questions and lines of questioning of witnesses out of order; there are no minutes of what transpired in the various executive sessions of the trial court.

In summary, the Session has denied it has kept records of many of the actions which were necessary to its bringing the matter to trial and of its actions and decisions in the course of the trial and its appeal.

The *Book of Church Order* mandates that "Minutes of the trial shall be kept by the clerk" and specifies that these shall be included in the Record of the Case (32-18). Further, the *Book of Church Order* specifies that "If a lower court shall neglect to send up 'the Record of the Case' or any part of it, to the injury of the appellant, it shall receive a proper rebuke from the higher court, and the judgment from which the appeal has been taken shall be suspended until 'the Record' is produced upon which the issue can be fairly tried" (42-7). See also the requirements of the Manual of the Standing Judicial Commission, which the Presbytery in its instructions bound the Commission to observe: 8.2 A specifies that "The Record of the Case in an Appeal shall be prepared in accordance with *BCO* 32-18 and 42-5 which shall include: (1) a copy of all proceedings in connection with the case, such as the Minutes of the trial before the lower court, . . ."

2) the Session failed to follow the sequence mandated by the Book of Church Order in the bringing of charges: *BCO* 32-2 requires that "Process against an offender shall not be commenced unless some person or persons undertake to make out the charge; or unless the court finds it necessary, for the honor of religion, itself to take the step provided for in *BCO* 31-2 (which provides that when there is a "strong presumption of the guilt of the party involved, the court shall institute process, and shall appoint a prosecutor to prepare the indictment and to conduct the case"). In either case the "charge" is supposed to exist, "reduced to writing", before the appointment of a prosecutor. The indictment is then to be drawn and is, with the names of witnesses known to support it, to be served on the accused.

In the present case the Session minutes mention unnamed offenses against the Fifth, Sixth and Ninth Commandments, but no charges as such are said to have been brought and no witnesses are cited as supporting it. A Prosecutor was appointed, but was assigned the task of drawing up charges—charges which were never formally received or endorsed by the Session. Essentially the Session gave the Prosecutor carte blanche to draw up what charges he liked and notified the Defendant that a trial would be held, but without telling him what the charges were to be. In the event it was two months before he was given any indication of the nature of the charges being brought against him—and a further month before specifics were given (in the Prosecutor's presentation on 12th August).

Such a procedure essentially precludes the possibility of a fair and constitutional trial, particularly in that:

3) the Session appointed as Prosecutor one whom it should have known (from written documentation previously distributed to it; Session Minutes 19th November 1998, p. 3) **had serious personal differences with the Accused**; though in the course of the trial the Prosecutor asserted his love for the Defendant (e.g. his opening statement on July 27th, in which he asserted his "love [for] David Lachman"), his underlying malice was evidenced in his claim (in his closing argument on 23 March 2000) that in his "pastoral judgment . . . according to the power of order which *BOCO* 3-2 gives me. . . [David] has been deceived by the serpent's cunning." He urged that the Court seek "to reclaim his spirit from the deception of the evil one, who has had Dr. Lachman under clouds of deception for some time now." Thus he requested not only that a guilty verdict be rendered, but that the Session should suspend indefinitely from the Lord's table, with excommunication in the event of continuing impenitence. He also urged that the Defendant needed to be deposed from his office of ruling elder, as being unfit for said office.

In this the Session failed to heed the *BCO*'s restriction of 31-5, in which "those to whom private offenses are known cannot become prosecutors without having previously endeavored to remove the scandal by private means." The Prosecutor in this case deliberately refused contact with the Defendant, even when the Defendant attempted to go to him privately with a witness (TE John Yenchko). Thus the Session also defied *BCO* 31-8, in appointing a Prosecutor who was "deeply interested in any respect in the conviction of the accused."

4) the Session allowed a case to go forward in which the Prosecutor brought no witnesses. That the Prosecutor had the Defendant testify that the documents he wrote, signed and sent were indeed his is nothing to the point, as the Prosecutor did not examine the Defendant as to the meaning of the documents, but interpreted them definitively himself, without reference to the Defendant's protests (see, e.g., p. 15 of the Prosecutor's presentation of 12th August 1999, in which he repeatedly characterizes the Defendant's assertions as untrue, but without reference to either the Defendant or any witnesses; he plainly expected the Court to believe the Defendant had spoken untruth simply because the Prosecutor asserted that it was so). That the Defendant brought witnesses is also nothing to the point, as the Defendant only attempted to question them as to a few of the specifications and not as to the great bulk of them AND as the Prosecutor did not even attempt to use them to prove the charges and specifications.

This is an exceedingly serious error; see the *Minutes of the 29th General Assembly*, Case 98-8, p. 218ff, in which it is specified that corroborative witnesses are required in order to prove any allegation of sin.

5) in considering and deciding the case, the Session failed to follow Robert's Rules of Order, which requires that each specification of error be considered and voted on separately; by its own testimony the Session did not consider the 39 specifications separately and sequentially, but only discussed and voted on the general charges. Section 60 in respect to the conduct of a trial states: "When the closing arguments have been completed, the accused must leave the room. . . . The chair then states the question on the finding as to the guilt of the accused, . . . Each of the specifications, and then the charge is read, opened to debate, and voted on separately—although the several votes can be delayed to be taken on a single ballot."

This is of considerable importance since a general charge is only supported by proven examples of specific sin; in considering the case the Session seemingly failed to appreciate that it was not voting on a general impression of the Defendant's sinfulness, but rather were called on to deliberate and decide if he had committed specific sins. By ignoring its responsibility so to proceed it failed to take the individual allegations of sin seriously. One consequence of this is that the Defendant was convicted of no particular sin, but rather of a general sinfulness in certain areas, thus making it impossible for him so much as to consider if he had been guilty in any particular. The other consequence is that the trial was not brought to a constitutional conclusion, with the consequence that the verdict rendered ought not to be sustained on appeal.

A further consideration: I should say that I had no expectation of receiving justice at the hands of the SJC. Too many of them were personally too offended with me in respect to the *Presbyterian Advocate* for me to expect my appeal to be sustained, though I must admit I hoped that the constitutional case I brought would compel them to sustain the appeal. I had not expected, however, that the content of my appeal would be ignored entirely.

One final note with regard to the procedure of the SJC panel: at the beginning of the hearing, the panel vehemently insisted that only one of my representatives be allowed to speak in my defense—an interpretation of our church's Constitution which not only was novel but was totally unexpected. This gambit at the very beginning of the hearing not only served to throw us off stride, but also was a harbinger of things to come. Another question quickly arose regarding what the panel chairman had

done in respect to the state of the Record of the Case. Fully in accord with the requirements of the SJC Manual, I requested both additions to and a chronological ordering of the documents in the *ROC*. The Stated Clerks of Philadelphia Presbytery and of the General Assembly agreed to this. I put in order all the relevant documents and took them to TE Frank Moser (Philadelphia's Stated Clerk) who said he would forward them to TE Roy Taylor. But when the chairman phoned me after his returning from a trip to Russia on 21st May, he said he did not have the revised *ROC*. I told him I was leaving for England in a few hours and he promised me he would make sure that a revised *ROC* was obtained and distributed. But when the panel met in Charlotte in June he said he had phoned me before (not after) his trip to Russia and had told me I would have to make sure a revised *ROC* was produced. Also, my counsel was threatened with expulsion from the hearing if he said anything further about the matter of the contents of the *ROC*. This was of some importance, as the unrevised *ROC* both still lacked essential documents which the Session had failed to produce AND included only some of the documents relating to my appeal to Philadelphia Presbytery and those in a chronological jumble, essentially making them incomprehensible to any not completely familiar with the case. But overarching all technical considerations is the fact that the panel's high-handed behavior lacked anything approaching either charity or justice, and is illustrative of why the SJC desperately needs to be replaced.

David C. Lachman

Copies of the appeals and briefs submitted in this case will be sent by e-mail to any who request them.

RE (Dr.) David C. Lachman served on the General Assembly's Judicial and Constitutional Business Committees for five years, and in Philadelphia Presbytery as Moderator for the year 1985, as Parliamentarian for over ten years, as a member of its Judicial Business Committee for over ten years (most of the time as its Chairman) and on a variety of committees and commissions as well. He edited the *Presbyterian Advocate* for nearly five years. He may be contacted at dclachman@nni.com.

The Rev. Mr. Dewey Roberts, who was chairman of the SJC panel, provided the following response to this Open Forum piece:

Every case that comes before the SJC is adjudicated with complete fairness and justice. In handling an appeal, the SJC reviews only the official Record of the Case, gives the parties an opportunity to submit written briefs, to present their reasoning by oral argument in a hearing before a 3-member panel, and then to have the whole reviewed by the full SJC before a final decision is made. In spite of Mr. Lachman's protestations, his case received the most careful review by PCA elders who have taken an oath to judge cases in the Church with justice and equity. If any PCA member is in doubt about this case, the full Record of the Case is available along with the written decision of the SJC. It is understandable that Mr. Lachman is distressed that he and his case did not prevail in any church court, whether the Session, Presbytery or General Assembly. It should also be noted that there were two other members of the panel that heard Mr. Lachman's appeal at the General Assembly last year and they voted unanimously to deny his appeal.

It seems interesting that P & R would go to print with accusations which were not addressed according to Matthew 18. That contention was the supposed lynchpin of Mr. Lachman's appeal, even though his church had worked with him for many years and many persons were involved. There is a reason that Lachman never went through a single step of Matthew 18 with me—he had no evidence of my wrongdoing to present to me, notwithstanding the supposed "many witnesses" you say there are to these matters. If there are many witnesses, why didn't they pursue the matter through the process of Matthew 18? I don't have to prove my innocence to false charges. My guilt, if there is any, does have to be proven. Instead the first I learned about these accusations is when you emailed me today. In this respect, Mr. Lachman is doing the same thing he has done to every other court which has decided against him. Thus, I would like this to be added to my response.

[NB: With regard to "multiple witnesses," we have confirmed that the process at the judicial hearing as described by Dr. Lachman has been attested to by more than one person.—Ed.]

Dr. Lachman responded to Mr. Roberts with the following rejoinder:

The reader should note that Mr. Roberts' request for a continued blind trust in his and the SJC's integrity and impartiality, is a large part of the reason the SJC regularly administers injustice. In the Church of Christ no one person or body should be completely unaccountable to the whole.

News From the Presbyteries

Central Carolina

October 2003

The 95th stated meeting of Central Carolina Presbytery was hosted by the Norman (N.C.) Presbyterian Church on October 25, 2003. In the absence of the Moderator (Ruling Elder Flynt Jones), the Vice-Moderator, the Rev. James Watson, called the meeting to order, welcomed the Presbytery, and opened with prayer. The Rev. David Frierson led a worship service, and the Rev. Dean Faulkner preached from I John 4:1-7. The Moderator appointed the Rev. Dan King as Parliamentarian and the Rev. Charles E. Hill as Timekeeper. All visiting teaching and ruling elders were given the privilege of the floor.

The following commission reports were received to be spread on the minutes: the Installation Commission for TE Sneed; the Installation Commission for TE Brown; the Commission to Organize the Redeemer Church; the Ordination Commission of Mr. Lindsey Williams. The Chairman of the Commission to visit the Westminster Church, the Rev. Steve Stout, gave a brief verbal report, that the Commission will be meeting with the congregation whenever this can be arranged.

The Presbytery heard from the following Reformed University Ministries (RUM) campus ministers: David Speakman (Davidson College); Will Faires (UNC—Charlotte); and Ben Inman (UNC—Chapel Hill).

The Stated Clerk, Mr. Frierson, noted that the name of University City Presbyterian Church, Charlotte, has changed its name to Stonebridge Church Community.

As a second reading, Presbytery approved unanimously the second vote to amend "The Standing Rules Section V. Meetings. Paragraph A. Stated meetings," to read, "WINTER STATED MEETING: 9:00 AM, fourth Saturday in January with the Lord's Supper and worship."

Ruling Elder Paul English was given permission to display his "Noah's Ark Kits."

Presbytery voted to approve the proposed amendment to BCO 58-5 (regarding the administration of the Lord's Supper), 55-0-1.

Presbytery approved by the second and final vote to amend the Standing Rules VI B. Docket to replace # 14, 11 "Report of the Administration Committee," with "Report of the Bills and Overtures Committee," and replace item # 16, 12 "Bills and Overtures Committee" with "Report of Administration Committee." This change would allow more flexibility in docketing of the presbytery scheduling.

Presbytery approved the first vote to amend the Standing Rules X.C, to add the following, "However, the quorum for a commission appointed as an Interim Session shall be as specified in BCO 12-1." This change is designed to bring Presbytery's Rules into conformity with BCO 15-2 with regard to a quorum for a commission appointed as an Interim Session.

A Constitutional Inquiry from the Session of Bible Presbyterian Church, Concord, North Carolina, was sent to the Presbytery, with regard to the administration of the Lord's Supper. The Inquiry noted: "Whereas chapter 58 of the BCO is a part of the Directory for the Worship of God that is binding; And Whereas BCO chapter 58 lays out many details which seem to be required at every administration of the Lord's Supper; And Whereas BCO chapter 58 seems to apply at least in some instances to an infrequent observance of the Lord's Supper; And Whereas at Bible PCA in Concord, NC, the session has elected to celebrate the Lord's Supper weekly; And Whereas the session of Bible PCA has a concern that the sacrament not become simply a ritual devoid of meaning; Therefore the session of Bible PCA requests the Presbytery of Central Carolina to advise on the following points or to forward this request on to the appropriate committee of the General Assembly. Question 1: Does the binding nature of BCO 58 require a session to follow the spirit of what is laid out in the chapter, or does it require an exact following of the direction to the letter, such as when 58-5 says that the table is to be 'decently covered.' Does this in fact require that there be some sort of cloth on the table in order to be in conformity with the BCO on this point? Also, the chapter repeatedly refers to wine. Does this require the exclusive use of wine or is grape juice allowed? Question 2: Does the binding nature of BCO 58 require the minister to read the words of institution at every administration of the Lord's Supper? The concern of the session is that since the congregation hears these words every week, they will stop hearing them as they become so familiar. While the session

does not desire to stop having the words read entirely, we wonder whether the session and minister have the latitude to sometimes not read the words, particularly, for instance, if the sermon just preached related directly to the sacrament. Question 3: Are the words in Bold Print in chapter 58 absolutely required to be said verbatim, or can there be variation, as long as the essence is the same. It is also not clear whether the prayer in 58-7 is required or suggested. Again, the desire of the session is that this not become simply a rote exercise for the people but a refreshing means of grace every Lord's Day. Question 4: Is it required that the minister formally fence the table against those who are not communicant members of an evangelical church, when he knows that in fact there are no such people in the congregation? We are a small church, and it seems strangely cold and formal for the minister to repeat these words when everyone sitting in the pews knows that there are no such people there."

In answer to Question 1, the Presbytery answered: "as we see it, BCO requires a session to follow the spirit of what is written. The new BCO amendment would seem to indicate that." In answer to Question 2, the answer given was, "Yes. That has been a reformed understanding that the words of institutions help describe the significance of the sacrament. The proposed BCO amendment allows more flexibility here." In answer to Question 3, the higher court said: "It reads like the Words of Institutions are verbatim, and the rest of the bold print is for guidance." Question 4 was referred back to the Bills & Overtures Committee for a response.

The report of the subcommittee to deal with Mr. Robert Yost was heard, and the following recommendations were approved: Presbytery appointed a Judicial Commission for the purpose of restoring Mr. Yost to communing status with the Church, per his request; the Shepherding Committee was instructed to "develop some procedures for ministering to a disciplined Teaching Elder as well as his family"; Presbytery accepted the apology of Mr. Stout "for his apparent failure to notify the Freedom Session of the actions of presbytery regarding Mr. Yost"; the Presbytery voted to "ask forgiveness of Robert Yost, Kris Yost and her sons for our lack of structured efforts to minister to them over the intervening years." The subcommittee was dismissed.

Presbytery examined and approved the Rev. Cameron Kirker for transfer from Palmetto Presbytery to receive the call of Mission to North America Committee to the Salisbury (N.C.) Mission. Visiting brothers Peter Cannon and Bill Lowry from Palmetto Presbytery were invited to participate in the installation service.

Mr. B. J. Buracker was examined and received as a ministerial candidate. Presbytery approved the internship of Mr. Bryan Clarke, who has transferred to Pacific Northwest Presbytery. Also approved was the transfer of Candidate Matt Guzi, pending his release from Piedmont Triad Presbytery.

The report of the Thanks Committee noted with gratitude the tenth anniversary of Mr. Frierson's service as Stated Clerk of the Presbytery.

The following officers were elected for next year: Moderator, Mr. Watson; Assistant Moderator, Ruling Elder Jim Mezzanotte. Mr. Frierson was elected as a Trustee, Class of 2006.

Presbytery heard a report from the Rev. Bill Henry regarding his new work in Geneva, Switzerland, with SIM. The Rev. David Nelson reported on his recent mission trip to Scotland; and the Rev. Lonnie Barnes encouraged churches to partner with churches in Scotland and with Highlands Theological College.

Mr. English gave the report of the Stewardship Committee. It was moved and seconded that Presbytery return the surplus money from the GA host committee fund to the churches in the same proportion in which it was given. A substitute motion was made that some of the surplus funds be used to charter a bus to the next General Assembly, and some of those funds be given to the 32nd General Assembly host Committee. The substitute was defeated, and the main motion was approved.

Presbytery approved the 2004 budget. The Rev. Tom Hawkes reported on nine mission works, two of them new ones (Christ Central and North Hills in Salisbury). Presbytery appointed an oversight team for the Salisbury mission. Presbytery appointed a Commission to particularize the Church of the Redeemer Mission, Monroe, North Carolina, with the Rev. Bruce Marcey being invited as a guest. Presbytery also approved the call from

the Monroe mission to the Rev. Dean Faulkner, who has been organizing pastor, to be pastor.

Presbytery voted to conclude the process to divest the Rev. Joe Sullivan without censure. There are no charges against him and he has reported by letter that he is unable to serve in the PCA due to a change in his view of baptism, as reported at the July 2003 meeting of Presbytery. He is not attending a PCA congregation. Presbytery voted to begin the process of divesting the Rev. Danny VanZant without censure at his request. He has been on the rolls for five years, is not pursuing a call, and has no expectation of receiving one.

Presbytery dissolved the relationship between Pastor Bruce Marcey and Christ Covenant Church, Matthews, North Carolina, and transferred his credentials to the Mid Atlantic Presbytery of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church (EPC). The congregation has concurred in his resignation.

Presbytery dissolved the relationship between the Rev. Cary Holbert with the New Hope Church and transferred his credentials to the EPC's Mid Atlantic Presbytery, to be a church planter in Columbia, South Carolina. The New Hope Church concurred in his resignation.

Presbytery transferred the Rev. Peter Dietsch to Central Georgia Presbytery pending reception; he has been called to the North Macon (Ga.) PCA as assistant pastor.

The Presbytery removed from the rolls the Castanea Presbyterian Church, Stanley, North Carolina, as it has informed the Presbytery that it has voted to withdraw from the PCA and intends to join the EPC.

It was moved and seconded to permit the Rev. Daniel Jarstfer to seek tent making employment to supplement his income as pastor as needed. A substitute was moved and seconded, to increase the 2003 Shepherding Budget \$1,500, to give \$500/month to Mr. Jarstfer through the end of the year. The substitute became the main motion, and was adopted.

Presbytery voted to create a Christian Ed email newsletter, with funding to come from sources outside the budget. It was moved, seconded, and carried to send a questionnaire to churches in order to determine the Christian Ed needs of the congregations.

January 2004

The 96th meeting of Central Carolina Presbytery was held at the Carolina Presbyterian Church, Locust, North Carolina, on January 24, 2004. Moderator Flynt Jones called the meeting to order, welcomed the Presbytery, and opened with prayer. The Rev. Patrick Womack, host pastor, led the communion service and preached from Hebrews 8:1-6. After a season of prayer, the Moderator called for a ten-minute recess.

Presbytery elected the following officers: Rev. James Watson, Moderator; Ruling Elder Jim Mezzanotte, Assistant Moderator; Rev. David Frierson, Stated Clerk; Rev. Stephen Stout, Assistant Clerk; and Rev. Lonnie Barnes, Assistant Clerk Pro-Tem for this meeting. The Moderator turned the gavel over to Mr. Watson, who thanked Mr. Jones for his service as Moderator for the 2003 year. The new Moderator appointed the Rev. Dan King as Parliamentarian, and the Rev. Andrew Webb as Timekeeper.

Guests were introduced and welcomed, and all teaching and ruling elders were given the privilege of the floor.

The Commission to visit Westminster Church has not met. The installation of Cameron Kirker was not yet completed; nor was the particularization of the Church of the Redeemer in Monroe. The Yost Commission has completed its work, and their report was approved as the action of the court and spread upon the minutes.

The following missionaries addressed the court: the Rev. Bill Evans, MTW—Scotland; Mr. Greg Senter, MTW—Chile; Mr. Alex Agha-Khan, serving with Enterprise for Christian-Muslim Relations; and the Rev. Calvin Jett, MTW—Senegal. Mr. Robert Rahaim, also with MTW—Scotland, had set up a display in the dining area, but did not speak.

Presbytery approved the recommendation of its MTW Committee, regarding the Minuteman appeal for Iran. The chairman reported that the Mayab Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church of Mexico had asked the Presbytery to help train some pastors in the Yucatan, Mexico; it is anticipated that there will be two trips per year. The Presbytery approved this leadership project. A brief report from the Rev. Tim Barton on the work in Utah was also presented.

Presbytery voted to go into executive session in order to hear a reference from the Session of one of its churches,

and a Memorial from a member of that congregation. All non-voting elders and guests were dismissed from the floor. The Memorial was read and was received by the court. The reference was found in order and a Judicial Commission appointed to hear this reference. The members of this commission are the Rev. Mike Cara, the Rev. Bill Heard, the Rev. Dan King (convener), the Rev. Mark Weathers, Ruling Elder Trent Burleson (Carolina Church), Ruling Elder Howie Dunahoe (Christ Covenant Church), Ruling Elder Land Ligon (Sovereign Grace Church, Charlotte), and Ruling Elder David Sachsenmaier (Uptown Church, Charlotte), with a quorum of two teaching elders and two ruling elders. The Memorial was referred to this commission. Presbytery then rose out of executive session. Later in the meeting, the Presbytery voted to dissolve the Mentor/Intern relationship between the pastor of the church (per his request), and the person who had complained against the congregation by means of memorial. The former intern was removed from the roll of candidates for the Gospel ministry in Central Carolina Presbytery. The court also replaced Mr. Dunahoe on the Judicial Commission, with Mr. Mezzanotte, also an elder at Christ Covenant Church.

It was noted that in three of the committee reports, the votes were not recorded on the recommendations, as required by the Presbytery by-laws for proper committee reports. The Moderator admonished committees to be sure to record votes as required.

Mr. Nick McCollum was examined and received as a ministerial candidate.

Messrs. Daniel Kang and Mike Moreau were examined and approved for ordination. Mr. Moreau's call by the Goshen Presbyterian Church, Belmont, North Carolina, was approved, but with the following advice: "that Goshen PCA do its very best to improve the call of Mr. Moreau to the best of their ability, and as soon as possible, and that they consider extending his vacation to 4 weeks." Dr. Douglas Kelly, Dr. John Oliver, and the Rev. Rod Culbertson, all associated with Reformed Theological Seminary in Charlotte, were invited as participating guests in the ordination and installation service. The ordination of Mr. Kang will not become effective until he receives a call as a military chaplain; upon his ordination, he will be appointed by the Presbytery to do the work of an evangelist (per BCO 8-6) to preach the Word and administer the sacraments in foreign countries or the destitute parts of the Church.

The fourth question from the Constitutional Inquiry from Bible Presbyterian Church, Concord ("Is it required that the minister formally fence the table against those who are not communicant members of an evangelical church, when he knows that in fact there are no such people in the congregation?"), was answered as follows: "Yes. Some members may be unrepentant of private sin and should not take the Lord's Supper. (WCF 29.8). Not fencing the table would be out of accord with BCO 58-4."

The court voted, as a first reading, to amend Manual Section V. A. Stated Meetings, changing "Summer Stated Meeting from Third Saturday to Fourth Saturday." The rationale was that the Presbyterian Evangelistic Fellowship (PEF) has changed its meeting dates to the second weekend in July, and there is therefore no longer a conflict with the PEF conference. This change brings in line all the stated meeting dates to the same Saturday. And, having the July meeting so closely follow the General Assembly has

created some problems for committees and the Stated Clerk.

The court approved, on a final reading, changing the Manual to state that the quorum of a commission serving as an Interim Session shall be as specified in BCO 12-1.

The call of SIM to the Rev. Bill Henry was approved.

Presbytery voted to have the Shepherding Committee visit the following delinquent Sessions and Teaching Elders between now and the Fall Meeting of Presbytery in October 2004. At that time, the Committee "will give a detailed report as to why they have missed so many Presbytery meetings and why they are not financially supporting Presbytery." Those Sessions with three to four unexcused absences are as follows: East Belmont, Belmont; *Faith, Charlotte; Faith, Mt. Mourn; Harvest, Lincolnton; *Sandhills, Southern Pines; *Stonebridge Community, Charlotte; Shearer, Mooresville; *Westminster Reformed, Concord. The minutes note that those churches "with an * have not consistently attended in several years. You will notice that these are some [of] our newest established church that we help start. Presbytery needs to know what is going on." The following ministers were noted as having three to four unexcused absences: Bill Bivans, Tom Shields, and DongMin Shin. Ministers with two unexcused 2003 absences were as follows: Wayne Zaepfel; Phillip Nelson; Rick Harper. The court also noted that the following churches have not supported Presbytery financially in 2003 and some for many years: Faith, Mt. Mourn; Faith Liberation, Charlotte; Freedom, Charlotte; New Hope, China Grove; SouthLake, Huntersville, StoneBridge Community, Charlotte; and Westminster Reformed, Concord. The minutes state: "As you can tell from these lists there is a correlation it seems between participation and financial support to the work of Presbytery. 2004 will be a particularly difficult year financially if more churches do not support presbytery at her askings. 2003 was one of, it not the lowest attendance years in our presbytery. Two of the four meetings had attendance in the low 50's when the attendance should be in the 70's to 80's."

When the order of the day arrived for adjournment, it was moved, seconded, and carried to suspend the rules of Presbytery with no mention of adjournment and to complete the work (i.e., the Docket).

Presbytery voted to concur with the dissolution of the pastoral relations between the Rev. Tom Henry and Christ Covenant Church, Matthews, North Carolina, and to approve his severance package. Mr. Henry is now on the rolls of the Presbytery without call.

Presbytery voted that "due to the financial needs of Bible Presbyterian Church that an appeal be made to the churches of the Presbytery for a onetime gift to assist in this matter." The court recommended that Pastor Jarsfer seek bi-vocational labor to supplement his income. The court also recommended that the Mission to North America Committee "meet with the congregation of Bible Presbyterian Church concerning spiritual and numerical growth."

Presbytery approved the change in terms of call by Countryside Presbyterian Church, Cameron, North Carolina, to the Rev. Jack Bowling.

The Presbytery extended a call to the Rev. Barry Stubbs to serve in the chaplaincy of the U. S. Naval Reserve.

The assistant pastoral relationship between the Rev. Steve Hill and the Sandhills Presbyterian Church, Southern Pine, was dissolved, and the severance

package approved. Mr. Hill is placed on the rolls without call.

Per the request of the Rev. Danny VanZant, he was divested without censure from the ministry. It was noted that he had been without call for some time (approximately five years) and that he currently attends an evangelical non-denominational church in Charlotte.

The Shepherding Committee report concluded with a special season of prayer for the Rev. Steve Jackson and his family. Pastor Jackson's wife, Candy, went home to be with the Lord in December.

Mr. Paul English, chairman of the Stewardship Committee, discussed the current financial situation of the Presbytery. "If giving does not increase, presbytery may hit the \$10,000 reserve before the end of the year. Churches were requested to honor their givings to presbytery."

As a first reading, it was moved, seconded, and carried to amend Presbytery's Manual, Section IX.F.11, Stewardship Committee, by deleting the fourth sentence in the paragraph, viz., "This Committee shall then contact each church by the first week of January in the budget year concerning what decisions it has made regarding their support of the budget, and present a revised budget to Presbytery if the situation warrants."

The Presbytery voted to fund PRESWIC in the amount of \$600 for their fall retreat, and to provide \$500 for the July programming expenses. PRESWIC President Renee Coleman addressed the court regarding that organization's work.

Ruling Elder Sang Lee was added to the oversight team for the Moak Young Mission. It was moved, seconded, and carried to approve the Treasurer setting up a designated account (i.e., a line item) for the Salisbury Mission.

The court adjourned at 5:10 PM.

Covenant

October 2003

The 99th stated meeting of Covenant Presbytery was held on October 7, 2003, at St. Andrews Presbyterian Church, Cordova, Tennessee. During the worship service, the Presbytery sang a hymn, "O Sacred Head Now Wounded," written by a Roman Catholic mystic, Bernard of Clairvoux. The Rev. Douglas Barcroft read from selected verses in II Timothy, and also brought the message. Host pastor Wayne Herring administered the sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

The following commission reports were admitted to record, their actions approved, and the commissions dissolved: Reports from the Hot Springs Commission meetings to examine elder candidates and to particularize the church; Reports from the Trinity Grace Commission meetings to examine elder candidates and deacon candidates and to particularize the church.

It was reported that there was a beginning balance of \$35,688.36 on January 1, 2003. Receipts from January 1 to August 31, 2003, included \$35,222.61 undesignated and \$41,550.00 designated. Total expenditures for the same period were \$48,560.86, and disbursements of designated funds totaled \$16,583.20, leaving a balance at the end of August of \$25,483.71.

The court voted to approve the amendment to *Book of Church Order* 58-5 (regarding the administration of the Lord's Supper), 57-1-3.

The Presbytery, without discussion, approved the report of the Chin commission, and the commission was dissolved with thanks.

The Church Care Committee reported that it had acted as a commission to dissolve the assistant pastoral relationship between the Rev. R. McKay Caston and the Lawndale Presbyterian Church, Tupelo, Mississippi. The Westminster Presbyterian Church, Greenwood, Mississippi, has extended a call to Mr. Caston, and permission was granted to him by the commission to move onto the new field. Later in this meeting, Presbytery approved the call to Caston from the Greenwood congregation.

Per the recommendation of its Mission to North America Committee, it was moved and seconded that Presbytery close the mission work in Conway, Arkansas, as of October 12, 2003. The Rev. Glen Durham reported on the problems at Conway, while Mr. Kirk Jordan presented the perspective of the core group. After discussion, the recommendation was defeated. Presbytery voted to continue Mr. Durham's financial term of call up to February 29, 2004, or until he receives another call, whichever comes first. Presbytery approved the Committee recommendation to "use any remaining funds in the Conway account to repay the MNA Lamb Fund, and to replenish the Lamb Fund from our budget over the coming years." The court also approved a recommendation that the \$500 per month designated for Mr. Durham be used to pay off funds owed to Trinity Grace PCA, Rogers, Arkansas, once Mr. Durham's salary is satisfied.

Mr. Mark Anthony Swain was introduced to the court, and he shared his vision for a new work in the Hickory Hill area. Presbytery voted to approve the Hickory Hill work as a mission of Covenant Presbytery.

The Rev. Julian Russell reported on New Beginnings Community Church in Memphis, Tennessee.

Presbytery approved the 2004 MNA budget.

It was moved, seconded, and carried that "an account be opened with Covenant Presbytery for the purpose of receiving funds for an envisioned east Memphis church plant, and further, that if for some reason the east Memphis church plant does not occur in the future, these funds can be used in any PCA ministry upon the advice of the East Memphis core group." Also, the court voted that the \$500 designated for a Jonesboro, Arkansas, church plant, which never came to fruition, be used instead for the Hickory Hill mission.

Presbytery approve the call of Jay Outen to the military chaplaincy as presbytery evangelist.

Mr. Guy Richardson, Vice President of Reformed Theological Seminary, Jackson, Mississippi, addressed the court regarding the progress and needs of that school. He thanked the Presbytery for the support which it had given the seminary.

The Rev. Matt Schilling of the Administration Committee reported that "Covenant Presbytery Pastor's scholarship of \$1000 to help with college tuition for the children of pastors attending college who have not previously received it. One award will be made."

Presbytery approved the 2004 Administration Committee budget as follows: Stated Clerk expenses, \$2,000; Committee expenses, \$750.; Administration salaries, \$10,300; Accounting, \$2,400; Liability insurance, \$900; General Assembly Floor Clerk, \$1,000; Tuition scholarship, \$1,000; Total, \$18,350.

Presbytery approved the recommendation that the reimbursement for mileage for Presbytery business be set at the current IRS allowable. Salaries for the court's officers were set as follows: Stated

Clerk, \$5,800 (+\$500); Recording Clerk, \$3,100 (+\$300); and Treasurer, \$1,400. At the Treasurer's request, the proposed \$300 raise was applied to Accounting.

The following amendments were proposed for the Presbytery Standing Rules, as a first reading.

Add the following: "7-1.c. General Assembly expenses incurred by the Floor Clerk(s) shall be paid up to the amount designated in the annual budget of Presbytery by the Treasurer when approved in writing by the chairman of the Administration Committee. If two or more individuals serve as Floor Clerks, the funds shall be allocated proportionally among those reporting their expenses in writing." Add the following: "5-6. Conducting Business by Teleconference, Videoconference, Postal and Electronic Mail, and Facsimile (FAX) Presbytery committees and commissions may vote on motions by e-mail, postal mail, telephone polling, facsimile or any combination thereof at the chairman's discretion unless one-fourth of the committee or commission membership (with alternates allowed to object and included in calculating the number needed to prohibit) inform the chairman upon receiving the call that they object to using this method of voting because they do not believe the vote can be conducted properly without deliberation or with only the information provided by the chairman in the call. In these calls, the chairman needs to indicate which committee member or alternate is making the motion to be voted on, and which committee member or alternate is seconding the motion. Presbytery committees and commissions may conduct business by teleconference or videoconference at the chairman's discretion unless a majority of the committee membership (with alternates allowed to object and included in calculating the number needed to prohibit) inform the chairman upon receiving the call that they object to using this method of deliberation and voting for that particular meeting." Add the following: "5-4.h. The Church Care Committee shall send a written record of the review approved by presbytery to the clerks of session of churches reviewed."

Presbytery amended the proposed 2004 budget to include the following budget request from the court's MTW Committee: \$1,000, MTW National Conference; \$2,000, Vision Trips; \$2,500, Presbytery missionary support and short term projects. Presbytery was informed that Independent Presbyterian Church, Memphis, Tennessee, had offered to contribute \$2,500 if the Presbytery would adopt the higher MTW budget for 2004.

Presbytery then adopted the 2004 budget as a whole. The budget for 2004 totals \$92,950, an increase of \$5,300 over the 2003 budget of \$87,650. The Presbytery asking for 2004 is \$13.67 per communicant member.

Mr. Schilling reported that the Administration Committee had studies moving the time of the May stated meeting of Presbytery as directed, and had concluded that the May meeting time remain the same. The rationale given was as follows: The time chosen for the May meeting in our standing rules enables Presbytery to examine for ordination newly graduated seminary students promptly after graduation. Thus the May meeting time does not conflict with final examinations or graduation, nor does it unduly delay moving on to the field of service."

The Rev. David Smith was approved to attend the Stated Clerk's meeting in Atlanta, December 5-6, 2003, in Atlanta, as the Presbytery's representative, with actual expenses reimbursed.

The following officers were elected for 2004: Moderator, Ruling Elder Clarence Beckham, Jr.; Vice-Moderator, Rev. Tim Reed; Stated Clerk, Rev. Grover E. Gunn, III; Recording Clerk, Rev. David Smith; Treasurer, Ruling Elder Lee Mattox; Parliamentarian, Rev. Jim Codling.

Presbytery dissolved the pastoral relationship between the Rev. John Hunt and First Presbyterian Church, Water Valley, Mississippi, and Mr. Hunt was allowed to remain on the rolls of Presbytery without call. Presbytery approved the call of the Rev. Doug Barcroft as Associate Pastor of St. Andrews Presbyterian Church, Memphis, Tennessee. The Rev. Joe Donahue, a minister in the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church, was invited to participate in the installation service as a guest.

Mr. Jeremy Cheezum, a student at Reformed Theological Seminary in Jackson, was examined and received under care as a ministerial candidate. An internship for Mr. Cheezum was approved, and the Rev. John Reeves, pastor of Providence Presbyterian Church, Clinton, Mississippi, a member of Mississippi Valley Presbytery, was approved as his mentor. Mr. Chad Bailey was received as a ministerial candidate pending his dismissal from Mississippi Valley Presbytery.

Presbytery examined and received by transfer from Presbytery of the Southwest of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, the Rev. Doug Nystrom. His call as assistant pastor

at Covenant Presbyterian Church, Fayetteville, Arkansas, was approved.

Mrs. Edna Gleason, PresWIC President, presented the report to the Presbytery. The court was encouraged to send college students to a conference in Memphis, December 28-30, 2003.

The Rev. Ford Williams reported on his trip to the Czech Republic to visit Carl and Becky Chaplin. The Presbytery voted to support the Rev. Grover Gunn for \$850 from the budget for a short term project in Haiti.

The Rev. Alan Cochet, chairman of the Presbytery Mission to the World Committee, encouraged Presbytery-wide prayer and support for missionaries who are members of Covenant Presbytery. He expressed appreciation to individuals and churches who supported and participated in MTW and other short term mission projects last summer and encouraged prayer for and participation in a Presbytery-wide short term project. He reported that the MTW Committee is looking for individuals with a heart for Christ, a burden for missions, and a willingness to actively serve on Presbytery's MTW Committee.

December 2003

A called meeting of Covenant Presbytery was held on December 18, 2003, at Riveroaks Reformed Presbyterian Church, Germantown, Tennessee. The Moderator, the Rev. Tim Reed, called the meeting to order at 1:00 PM and opened with prayer. The purpose of the meeting was to "respond to recommendations from the Church Care Committee, as well as any additional related motions from the floor, regarding the confession of a Teaching Elder made in accordance with BCO 38-1."

The court went into executive session "to read a statement of the facts approved by TE David Bryan for the purpose of permitting the court to render judgment without process (BCO 38-1) and to form a quasi committee of the whole to adopt a recommendation regarding [various] recommendations of the Church Care Committee." After coming out of executive session, the quasi committee of the whole reported its recommendation, viz., to adopt the recommendations of the Committee. Those recommendations are as follows: "That TE David Bryan be indefinitely suspended from the sacraments (BCO 30-3, 36-5)." "That presbytery assign the Church Committee to provide oversight of TE Bryan (BCO 37-9a)." "That the pastoral relationship of Mr. Bryan and Independent Presbyterian Church [Memphis] be dissolved effective 11/20/03." "That TE Bryan be deposed from the office of Teaching Elder (BCO 34-7)." "That Mr. Bryan be assigned membership at Riveroaks Reformed Presbyterian Church subject to the approval of that Session (BCO 46-8)."

All members of the Church Care Committee were granted access to the minutes of the executive session. The Moderator then read a declaration regarding Mr. Bryan, deposing him from the ministry for the sin of adultery, and also suspending him from the sacraments of the church. The Moderator also called upon several commissioners to pray for Mr. Bryan, his family, and the affected church.

Houston Metro

The first stated meeting of Houston Metro Presbytery was held at Oaklawn Presbyterian Church, Houston, Texas, on January 30, 2004. The convenor, Rev. John-Gregory Farrell, called the meeting to order at 1:00 PM with the singing of "A Mighty Fortress is our God" and prayer.

Mr. Farrell was elected by acclamation as Moderator; also elected by acclamation were Ruling Elder E. R. McDaniel (Stated Clerk) and Ruling Elder John Durie (Treasurer). The new Moderator read from I Corinthians 12. The new Stated Clerk then called the roll and determined that a quorum was present, which fact was declared by the Moderator.

The Presbytery adopted the Rules of Presbytery Operations and the committee memberships that were approved at the October 2003 stated meeting of the South Texas Presbytery (out of which Houston Metro Presbytery has been formed). Among the provisions of the Rules of Presbytery Operations are the following: the Moderator is elected for a one-year term, and the office is to be alternated between teaching elders and ruling elders; the Stated Clerk is elected for two-year terms; the Treasurer is elected for three-year terms, and is to serve no more than two consecutive terms (but can be again re-elected if he is out of that office for at least a year); each of the permanent committees (except for the Administration Committee) shall be comprised of no more than two persons from a particular church; a teaching elder who serves out of the geographical bounds of the Presbytery is not eligible to serve on a Presbytery committee; a ruling elder is eligible for election

to a presbytery permanent committee only if he is presently serving on a Session, or if a Session declares him by resolution to be eligible. The Rules also state that "Each evangelist of Presbytery is required to prepare a written report, in English, concerning his work. These reports are to be submitted quarterly to the chairman of the Mission to North America Committee." With regard to Judicial Process, the Rules provide that a judicial panel may be appointed by the Moderator upon recommendation of the Administration Committee (that is, apart from the approval of the Presbytery). Each panel is to consist of two teaching elders and two ruling elders, with one teaching elder and one ruling elder as alternates. Any teaching elder in good standing and not directly involved in the judicial matter is eligible to serve; a ruling elder is eligible to serve "if he is a member in good standing of a Presbytery committee or a past moderator of the Presbytery and is not directly involved in the judicial matter at hand." The report of the panel is to be treated in a similar way as that of a commission appointed by the Presbytery: the report must be voted on, without amendment, for approval; if the Presbytery does not approve the report, it may instruct the panel to continue working on the matter, or may appoint a new panel, or may adjudicate the matter itself. [Editor's note: The power to find a complaint in order or to process judicial charges has, historically, been the prerogative of the court itself. Furthermore, one of the reasons why the PCA was formed from the Southern Presbyterian Church in 1973 was because of the increasing tendency toward centralization and the use of ecclesiastical commissions. Also, the *Book of Church Order* provides that when a commission's report is voted down by a Presbytery, the court has two options: either to commit the matter to a new commission, or adjudicate the matter itself; there is no provision for re-committing the matter to the same commission.]

Ruling Elder Lee Joseph reported that the articles of incorporation have been approved by the Texas Secretary of State.

Upon motion from the Ministerial Relations Committee, the Rev. Aureliano Tan was denied an excused absence. It was reported that Mr. Tan's complaint against the South Texas Presbytery had been ruled administratively out of order by the Standing Judicial Commission officers.

Presbytery voted to dissolve Trinity Presbyterian Church, Houston, Texas, per the request of the Trinity Session and congregation.

A Report to the Presbyteries on the activities of the Southwest Church Planting Network for the fourth quarter of 2003 was received. The report stated that Network's assets as of December 31, 2003, were \$504,460, and noted: "A full financial statement is available upon request to the Network." Rusty and Cristy Mosley move to Temple, Texas, in late October to plant a new church there, as a daughter congregation of Redeemer Presbyterian Church of Waco, Texas. The Network approved a new Mother/Daughter church plant of Oaklawn Presbyterian Church, Houston, subject to approval by Houston Metro Presbytery; this would be a cross-cultural church plant in the Northwest area of the city. A new church plant is being planned for Flagstaff, Arizona, in 2004. Also approved by the Network is a new church plant in San Marcos, Texas, in 2004, a city about 30 miles south of Austin and the home of Texas State University. University Presbyterian Church of Las Cruces, New Mexico, has been approved by the Network for a Mother/Daughter plant in that city. Christ the King Presbyterian Church, a daughter congregation of Redeemer Presbyterian Church, Austin, Texas, was particularized in December 2003, and the church planter, John Ratliff, was installed as the new pastor. Mr. David Hall, in his second year at Covenant Theological Seminary, was approved by the Network to be a summer intern at Faith Presbyterian Church in San Antonio, Texas; his "main assignment will be to assist Faith and Steve Cairns in testing the feasibility of a new PCA church" in Boerne, Texas.

Dr. Jim Bland reported on his labors as Coordinator of Mission to North America, Lawrenceville, Georgia. The Rev. Alex Villasana has been appointed by the denominational committee as the national movement leader for Hispanic church planting. MNA will host its third annual Hispanic church planting convocation at Oaklawn Presbyterian Church, Houston, in October 2004.

Presbytery voted to recognize Hosanna Community mission (under the authority of the Oaklawn Session) as a mission church of the Presbytery.

The Rev. Pat Roach reported on his labors as a Reformed University Ministries campus minister at Rice University. The Rev. Bill Fitzhenry "encouraged the RUM committee to establish an RUM presence at Texas Southern University and other traditionally black universities and colleges." Ruling Elder Don German "encouraged the

committee to establish an RUM presence at the University of Houston," which is "one of the most diverse campuses in the country."

The Rev. Larry Ruddell, chairman of the Mission to the World Committee, reported on mission activities across the world. Mr. Kurt Peistrup, who was given the privilege of the floor, reported on his labors and MTW's labors with Persian people.

Mr. Julian Zugg, a licentiate of South Texas Presbytery, was brought before presbytery to be examined for ordination. He expressed no exceptions to the Westminster Confession of Faith, the Larger Catechism, and the Shorter Catechism. His examination was approved, as was his call to be assistant pastor at Covenant Presbyterian Church, Houston.

Mr. Fitzhenry, chairman of the Ministerial Relations Committee, reported on that committee's investigation of Mr. Tan's call and credentials. The Presbytery voted "to fall into executive session." After coming out of executive session, the Ministerial Relations Committee was suspended, and the members excused from the floor in order to consider committee business. Towards the end of the Presbytery meeting, the court again went into executive session, and, upon coming out of executive session, voted to instruct the Ministerial Relations Committee to prepare an indictment reflecting two counts: "Count 1: TE Tan's failure to respond to a request dated October 8, 2003, to cease circularizing members of the Houston Metro Presbytery (and South Texas Presbytery.). Count 2: TE Tan's failure to appear before the Houston Metro Presbytery (and South Texas Presbytery) pursuant to notices given August 1, 2003, and November 10, 2003." The Stated Clerk was instructed to deliver a summons to Mr. Tan, instructing him to be present at a called meeting of the court on March 26, 2004, to act on this indictment. Ruling Elder Lee Joseph (or other such person appointed by the moderator) was appointed prosecutor per BCO 32-3.1 to prepare process.

The Rev. Jeff Candell, chairman of the Christian Education Committee, reported that a Presbytery-wide youth retreat would be held on March 5-7, 2004.

The court approved the amendment to *Book of Church Order* 58-5 (regarding the administration of the Lord's Supper), 20-0-2.

The first stated meeting of Houston Metro Presbytery adjourned at 4:30 PM, three and a half hours after its convening.

James River

The One Hundredth and Twelfth Stated Meeting of James River Presbytery was held on October 18, 2003, at Westminster Presbyterian Church, Suffolk, Virginia. The Moderator, Ruling Elder Ron Rice, opened the worship service with a prayer and a hymn, and preached from Philippians 2:5-11 on Gospel Restoration of genuine ministry.

Presbytery approved the report of the commission to install Rev. Kevin Collins as pastor of West End Presbyterian Church, Hopewell, Virginia; as well as the report of the commission to organize the Trinity Presbyterian Church, Norfolk, Virginia, to ordain and install officers and the Rev. L. Jackson Howell.

The court approved the amendment to *Book of Church Order* 58-5 regarding the administration of the Lord's Supper, 30-0-0.

The Treasurer, Charles R. Parker, reported that the beginning balance for the year is \$9,702.50; receipts through September 30th total \$25,839.06, and disbursements total \$19,348.82, leaving a balance at the end of September of \$16,192.74. Presbytery amended its budget to increase the Reformed University Ministries budget to \$36,000. The budget was also increased by \$1,000 for the Spring Presbytery Youth Retreat, and by \$20,000 for seed money church planting. The following motion was referred to the Court Duties Committee: "That as direction for the Treasurer that priorities for payment be set as follows: That the budget of the stated clerk's office and Committee operating expenses be paid in total, then RUF be funded up to 75% if there's money left over then Grace Covenant Mission be funded up to 75%, if there are money's left over then RUF be funded up to 100%, if there are money's left over then Grace Covenant be funded up to 100%, if there are money's left over then MTW scholarships be funded up to 100%, if there are money's left over then Any other budgetary items be funded." The Presbytery also voted that the Treasurer "should maintain an operating reserve equal to one and a half month's average amount of the approved budget for each year."

Dr. Don Clements of Blue Ridge Presbytery gave a report on his Metokos Ministries.

A complaint filed against Centralia Presbyterian Church, Chester, Virginia, was found timely filed and in order. Both sides were given five minutes to present their case, which centered around the omission of efforts to dissuade the majority from pursuing a call to the Rev. Dan Lipford. The presbytery ruled that though this omission was "lamentable," it "did not impair the good order and integrity of the vote to call Mr. Lipford"; the court also urged "both parties to patience and forbearance in the continuing ministry of Jesus at Centralia Presbyterian Church." [Editor's note: A complaint is properly against the action of a court; there is no provision for a complaint to be made against a congregation or a congregational meeting.]

The Presbytery examined Mr. Lipford and approved him for transfer from the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, in order to become pastor at the Centralia Church.

The terms of call to the Rev. David Bentz, organizing pastor of Grace Presbyterian Church, King George, Virginia, were changed, as follows: \$50,000 salary and housing allowance; \$8,500 medical expenses; \$500 in disability; \$5,750 Social Security payments; and four weeks of vacation.

Mr. Dennis Bullock, a pastoral assistant at All Saints Reformed Presbyterian Church, Richmond, Virginia, was examined and licensed to preach. Mr. Chris Daniel, a candidate under the care of North Georgia Presbytery, was received as a candidate in James River Presbytery; and an internship plan was approved. Messrs. Joel Traylor and Christian Finnigan were also received as candidates for the ministry. Presbytery approved Mr. Robert Rumbaugh's internship plan including testimonial; and extended Mr. Robert Rink's internship plan to December 31, 2003.

Mr. Tom Taylor was re-elected as the Presbytery's Recording Clerk.

The Rev. Dr. Richard V. Horner was transferred to North Florida Presbytery. The Rev. Fred Sloan's status was changed from laboring out of bounds, to without call. The call to Andy Paul as stated supply at River's Edge Bible Church, Hopewell, Virginia, was extended for another year. The resignation of the Rev. Rusty Mosely from Calvary Presbyterian Church, Norfolk, Virginia, was accepted, pending his reception in North Texas Presbytery.

The Rev. Tom Darnell was nominated as moderator in nomination.

Susquehanna Valley

Susquehanna Valley Presbytery met for a stated meeting on February 21, 2004, at Wheatland Presbyterian Church, Lancaster, Pennsylvania. The Moderator, Ruling Elder Chris Menges, called the meeting to order and presided. He began the service of worship by leading in the singing of the hymn, "We Will Glorify." Licentiate Candidate David Kieffer delivered a sermon from Luke 10:38-42, followed by a hymn of preparation for receiving the Lord's Supper, "Lamb of God." The Rev. David Anderson officiated during the sacrament of communion, and Mr. Menges concluded the service with the singing of "May the Mind of Christ My Savior" and with prayer. During the last hymn, an offering was taken in the amount of \$157.

The Stated Clerk reported that he had received a December 22, 2003, letter from the Rev. Paul Kim "which notes congregational actions taken against [Ruling Elder] Peter on December 21, 2003." The letter was referred to the commission dealing with this situation.

The Clerk also reported that he had received a motion from the Rev. Bob Eickelberg regarding the celebration of his father's birthday and parent's wedding anniversary, to take place on February 21, 2004.

Ruling Elder Fred Gaston presented the Treasurer's Report. At the end of 2003, the balances were as follows: General Fund, \$56,310.54; Investment Funds, \$200,802.68; Others' Investment Funds, \$20,503.55. As of February 21, 2004, the balances were as follows: General Fund, \$58,724.47; Investment Funds, \$202,163.49; and Others' Investment Funds, \$25,703.55. It was moved and carried to adjust the February 21, 2004, negative committee balances by redistributing the \$21,820.24 positive balance in the General (Undesignated) Fund; this was accomplished by removing the negative balances in Administrative and Stewardship (-\$4,870.83), Education and Conference (-\$5,506.56), Church and Ministerial Oversight (-\$70.77), and Reformed University Ministries (-\$7,439.06); and adjusting the General Fund positive balance to: General Fund, \$3,933.02.

The 2004 budget was approved, at a level of \$83,500 in both income and expenses.

It was moved and carried that Presbytery have the moderator appoint an Auditing Committee, consisting of three members to perform the audit as detailed in Robert's Rules and report their findings at the May meeting of Presbytery. The Audit Committee will be comprised of three ruling elders, viz., Jeff Barrall, Mike Miller, and Bill Warfel.

The Rev. Bruce Hartshorne and Ruling Elder Chris Menges were elected to the Administration and Stewardship (A&S) Committee, Class of 2006. Mr. Menges was also elected to be a floor clerk at the General Assembly meeting in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, in June 2004.

Presbytery voted to approve the A&S Committee's proposal to establish a unified budget and to modify the Presbytery's practice of receiving designated contributions in support of Presbytery committees. The proposal reads: "1. To receive all funds, (with the exception of Loan Repayments and contributions to the Revolving Building Fund or contributions to the short term special projects approved by Presbytery) beginning February 21, 2004, as non-designated. 2. To require that each committee annually, beginning with and for the year 2004, prepare and submit to the A&S Committee a detailed budget showing anticipated expenditures by month. 3. To maintain and present CP&O "savings" account (\$63,007.00) as earmarked for CP&O use only and incrementally add to that account from the General Fund over the next two months (*February 21, 2004 through April 20, 2004*), a sum equal to the CP&O balance showing as of February 21, 2004 (or \$54,791.45) 4. To require that only special projects, not anticipated and identified in the annual budget presented by CP&O, be funded from the CP&O savings account, with and after presbytery approval. 5. To require that at the February Presbytery meeting each year the A&S Committee offer a recommendation to the Presbytery regarding the disposition of any remaining balances (or deficit) resulting from the prior year's operation. The A&S Committee will be required to apportion in its recommendation a minimum of 75% but not more than 95% of any such balances to the CP&O savings account.

The Rev. Dr. Rod Mays, National Director of Reformed University Ministries, gave a report on the ministry and vision of his agency, including the fact that RUM would be starting at several more university campuses in Fall 2004. Mr. Robert Bishop, Senior Field Coordinator of PCA Retirement and Benefits, Inc., reported on the new health insurance plans available to PCA teaching elders and church workers as well as other insurance products such as term life insurance and long term disability.

The following churches of Presbytery gave reports (with representative in parentheses): Harrisburg (Midtown)—The City's Gate (Rev. Chris Perrin), Faith—Quarryville (Rev. Dr. John MacRae), Shippensburg—Hope Reformed (Rev. David Fidati), Shrewsbury—Immanuel (Ruling Elder Dave Cornwall and Rev. Jim Tyson) and State College—Oakwood (Rev. Carl Derk and Ruling Elder Conal Carr).

The minutes of the Commission to Organize the Hanover Valley Presbyterian Church, Hanover, Pennsylvania, were approved, and the Commission was dismissed with thanks. The order of service indicates that Rose Astrin gave a testimony of God's grace. The guest preacher was the Rev. Craig Higgins of Metro New York Presbytery.

The Commission to Organize Harvest Presbyterian Church, Lampeter, Pennsylvania, reported that it had examined and approved Messrs. Jon Sneller, Lee Troup, and David Waterman as ruling elders. Mr. Joel DiBernardo, who had been examined and approved to be a deacon, asked to be taken off the report. The actions of the Commission, which included conducting the service of organization for the church, were approved, and the Commission was dismissed with thanks. No Psalms were sung during the service of worship.

A brief report from the Commission to Address the Situation at First Korean Church, Dillsburg, Pennsylvania, was presented by the Rev. James Bates, who reported that the work of the Commission was continuing. The Presbytery directed the Commission "to meet before the end of March 2004 and to communicate clearly to the church, to [Teaching Elder] Paul Kim, and to the [Presbytery] what needs to be accomplished and, if conditions are suitable, to release [Teaching Elder] Paul Kim and the First Korean Church to the Capital Korean Presbytery."

The Rev. Gary Griffith reported on behalf of the borrowed Session of Kirkwood (Pa.) PCA, which met on December 4, 2003. The Kirkwood congregation had voted on January 11, 2004, by a vote of 20-0, to withdraw from the denomination, per *Book of Church Order* 25-11. This

decision to separate was made without prior consultation or consent of the borrowed Session. It was moved, seconded, and carried that "in light of Kirkwood's congregational meeting and vote, the [Presbytery] moves to accept Kirkwood PCA's letter of dismissal and be dismissed to independency with regrets." The actions of the borrowed Session were approved, and it was dismissed with thanks.

Candidate David Matthew Kieffer was examined and approved for licensure. Candidate William Tuck (Tucker) York was examined and approved for ordination. His internship, previously approved by South Texas and Missouri Presbyteries, had already been approved by this Presbytery. Presbytery approved the call to Mr. York from the Session of Westminster Presbyterian Church, Lancaster, Pennsylvania, as assistant pastor.

The call of Wheatland Presbyterian Church to the Rev. David Anderson as associate pastor was approved and placed in his hand.

The call of Harvest Presbyterian Church, Lampeter, to the Rev. William D. Massey as pastor was approved and placed in his hand.

On a first reading, by the requisite three-fourths vote, Presbytery approved the following change to its Standing Rules, viz., to amend its "Policy and Guidelines for Starting a Daughter-Mission Church" as follows: the provision that "The mission church shall elect" is being changed to "The organizing pastor and the temporary governing body shall appoint an Administrative Committee to administer the program of the church, and to handle the details of finance." This change will be presented for final ratification at the May 15, 2004, stated meeting of Presbytery.

The Rev. Dale Buettner gave an encouraging report on the work at New Life Presbyterian Church, a mission work in York, Pennsylvania. Ruling Elder Troy Hostetter gave an encouraging report on the progress of the investigative Bible study in the Chambersburg, Pennsylvania, area, a prospective area for church planting.

The Rev. Gary Griffith reported for the Education & Conference Committee. Mrs. Ruth Hook reported on the Presbytery's Women in the Church ministry, highlighting the Spring Luncheon on March 13, 2003, featuring Mrs. Linda Boice.

At 4:00 PM, the Rev. Mr. Bates gave the roll call. It was moved, seconded, and carried to extend the presbytery meeting time for 7 minutes.

The Rev. Scott Johnston presented the report of the RUM Committee. It was moved, seconded, and carried to approve the 2004 budgets for the RUF works at Millersville and Penn State. The Rev. Tom Becker gave a brief report on the campus work at Millersville (Pa.) University, and the

Rev. Chad Brewer reported briefly on the work at Penn State University, State College, Pennsylvania.

The motion written by Mr. Eickelberg and distributed to the Presbytery was ruled out of order by the Moderator.

The Stated Clerk read the roll. It was moved, seconded, and carried to adjourn at 4:15 PM.

Westminster

January 2004

Memorial Presbyterian Church, Elizabethton, Tennessee, hosted a stated meeting of Westminster Presbytery on January 10, 2004. Host pastor Dr. Curt Rabe brought a message that touched on Confession of Faith Chapter XXXIII and led a worship service, including the administration of communion. No Psalms were sung during the communion service.

The Rev. Ross Lindley was nominated and elected Moderator by acclamation.

By a vote of 32-1-0, the Presbytery ratified the amendment to *Book of Church Order* 58-5 regarding the administration of the Lord's Supper.

Presbytery approved the reports of the Nominations, Stewardship, and Budget Committees. Regarding the budget, it was noted that the only increase was for the salaries of the Stated Clerk and Treasurer amounting to \$600 per year.

Mr. Gregory King was examined and taken under care as a ministerial candidate. Changes in call to the Rev. Steven Warhurst (Westminster Presbyterian Church, Kingsport, Tennessee) and the Rev. Curtis Stapleton (Westminster Presbyterian Church, Johnson City, Tennessee) were approved; both of these men, who had been assistant pastors, have now been called as associate pastors.

The Rev. Alan Waldecker, a member of Northern California Presbytery who has been living in Abingdon, Virginia, addressed the court for five minutes regarding his intent to serve with World Harvest Missions in England.

Presbytery received a formal objection from the Session of Westminster Presbyterian Church, Kingsport, regarding the approving of the complaint of Nathan Blevins and Paul Seufert at the October 2003 stated meeting. Also before the court were two complaints against the approval of the Blevins-Seufert complaint—one from the Westminster Session, and one from Assistant Pastor Steven Warhurst. The Presbytery voted to sustain Mr. Warhurst's complaint, items 1 and 2, and to commit the substance of the Blevins-Seufert complaint to a commission for adjudication. The Moderator and the Stated Clerk were authorized to appoint that commission, which is to report at the April stated meeting.

The complaint from the Westminster Session was answered by reference to the action on Mr. Warhurst's complaint, and was also referred to the commission.

The Rev. David Balzer, RUF worker at East Tennessee State University and King College, reported on his ministry.

April 2004

Sandlick Presbyterian Church, Birchleaf, Virginia, hosted the April 17, 2004,



Sandlick Presbyterian Church, Birchleaf, Virginia

stated meeting of Westminster Presbytery. The Moderator, the Rev. Ross Lindley, called the meeting to order. The Rev. Dion Marshall, host pastor, conducted the worship service; and the Rev. Jim Powell preached from Chapter 1 of the Confession of Faith, "Of the Word of God," using Isaiah 55 for his text. No Psalms were sung during the communion service.

Mr. Lindley, who was Moderator-in-nomination, was re-elected Moderator by acclamation.

Reports from several of the churches were heard, including the following: Coeburn (Va.) Presbyterian Church (Ruling Elder Kirby Holbrook); Covenant Presbyterian Church, Cedar Bluff, Virginia (Pastor Carl Howell); Edgemont Presbyterian Church, Bristol, Tennessee (Pastor Larry Stallard); Eastern Heights Presbyterian Church, Bristol, Tennessee (Pastor Rick Light); and Memorial Presbyterian Church, Elizabethton, Tennessee (Dr. Curt Rabe).

The Presbytery declined to put on its minutes any rationale for the change in date from the regular second Saturday in April, to the third Saturday. The Stated Clerk, the Rev. Dan Foreman, had by circular letter changed the date on his own authority. A multi-part motion that would have called attention to the change in date, to the fact that it is only the Moderator who has authority to change the date of a stated meeting between meetings of the court (cf. BCO 10-3), and that said change should be only for reasons of "emergency" and not for reasons of convenience, was overwhelmingly defeated.

The report of the Audit Committee, presented by its Chairman, Frank J. Smith, was approved without discussion.

Presbytery heard the report of a commission that had been appointed to hear the substance of the Blevins-Seufert complaint. Messrs. Blevins and Seufert had complained against the Session of Westminster Presbyterian Church, Kingsport, Tennessee, for its having declined to restore a woman to the Lord's Supper. The Session's action came after the Presbytery had, in February 2003, ruled by means of her complaint that she had just grounds for divorce because of her husband's persistent practice of pornography. In the Session's view, the

woman had been convicted of matters other than those revolving around whether she could justly file for divorce.

The current commission ruled that the Blevins-Seufert complaint, since it allegedly tried to overturn the result of a trial held many months prior to the filing of the complaint (and therefore past the thirty day time limit for complaint against an action), was out of order. This 4-2 ruling by the commission came, despite the fact that the

Presbytery itself had, in October 2003, ruled the complaint timely filed and in order.

The Rev. Dr. Phil Blevins, President of Graham Bible College and father of one of the complainants, presented his own complaint, which asked that the Presbytery overturn the ruling of its commission. After a spirited debate, the court voted down a substitute motion that would have sustained the complaint and committed the matter to a new commission, as well as voted down a substitute for the whole that would have sustained the Blevins complaint and the Blevins-Seufert complaint (i.e., returning the situation to that of the status quo as of October 2003, when the Blevins-Seufert complaint had initially been sustained by the Presbytery).

The Rev. Brent Bradley, pastor of the Kingsport congregation, said that the proper way of handling the case was for the woman to appeal to the Session that there was new evidence warranting a new trial. If that were to occur, Pastor Bradley, who declared that his Session was tired of dealing with the issue, stated that he was confident that the Session would formally refer the whole matter to the Presbytery, since the Presbytery seems to have such a zeal for it.

After voting down both the substitute and the substitute for the whole, the court voted not to sustain Dr. Blevins' complaint.

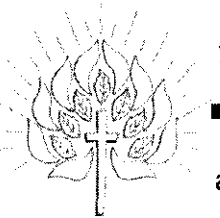
Also before the court was a Memorial from the Rev. John Gullett, pastor of Princeton Presbyterian Church, Johnson City, Tennessee, who had served on the commission which had reported. Troubled in his conscience by seeming inconsistencies in the record of the case, Mr. Gullett stated that filing a Memorial (per BCO 40) seemed to be the only route open to him, in order to ask the higher court to deal with alleged irregularities committed by the Westminster-Kingsport Session during the woman's trial two years ago.

The Overtures and Judicial Business Committee recommended that, even though the Memorial was timely filed and in temperate language and respectful to the court, the Memorial should not be published in the Presbytery's minutes. During debate on the matter, the Rev. Steve Warhurst, Associate Pastor at the Kingsport church, went through Mr. Gullett's points, in an effort to discredit them. The Presbytery

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finally adopted a substitute motion, offered by Dr. Frank J. Smith, that spread the Memorial on the record, but also declared that the gross un-Constitutional actions which had been alleged could not be demonstrated, and which also noted the Constitutional provision (BCO 39-3) that normally the higher court should defer to the lower court in judgment calls such as the credibility of witnesses. A further motion spread Mr. Warhurst's written comments on the minutes. At the very end of the Presbytery meeting, the Rev. Larry Ball rose to file a formal dissent against the action of Presbytery in not taking cognizance of what he considered un-Biblical process by the Westminster—Kingsport Session, in that there were not at least two or three witnesses in order to convict the woman of sin. [Editor's Note: The PCA *Book of Church Order* does not require two witnesses; according to BCO 35-3, it is necessary to have at least one witness, but that witness's testimony can be considered adequate if there is corroborative evidence. The nature of that corroborative evidence is not specified, but it presumably could include documentary evidence.]

The Christian Education Committee presented the Rev. Dion Marshall, director of this summer's Presbytery youth camp. Mr. Marshall reported on the efforts being made to increase the spiritual emphasis for this year's camp, and also on the measures being taken to ensure that unchurched young people who attend the camp are given adequate supervision. The Rev. Theo van Blerk, pastor of Meadow Creek Presbyterian Church, Greeneville, Tennessee, will be the assistant director for the camp.

The Rev. David Balzer, Reformed University Ministries campus worker at East Tennessee State University and King College, reported on his activities. He has recently undertaken open-air preaching at the state university in Johnson City, Tennessee.

Presbytery examined and received under care two young men for the gospel ministry: Mr. Jeff Guinan, a member of the Abingdon (Va.) Presbyterian Church, and Mr. Jason Housewright, a member of Westminster Presbyterian Church, Kingsport, Tennessee.

Presbytery approved, after the fact, the dissolution of the pastoral relationship between the Rev. Richard Hicks and the Dickenson First Presbyterian Church, Haysi, Virginia. Mr. Hicks was received by Western Carolina Presbytery to become pastor of Dillingham Presbyterian Church, Barnardsville, North Carolina. Presbytery approved the dissolution of the pastoral relationship between Dr. Curt Rabe and Memorial Presbyterian Church, Elizabethton, Tennessee. Dr. Rabe had been examined just a year ago by Westminster Presbytery, to become pastor of the approximately 350 member church. He will remain on the roll of the Presbytery without call. One of the elders of the Memorial Church rose to assure the court that there had been no ethical or moral grounds for requesting Dr. Rabe's resignation. To the contrary, he explained, Curt Rabe is a wonderful human being, and "a good PCA Presbyterian," and he had offered his resignation after the elders had concluded that he was not a good match at that congregation. Presbytery approved the

dissolution of the pastoral relationship between Dr. Frank J. Smith and Coeburn (Va.) Presbyterian Church, effective June 15, 2004, and transferred him to the Reformed Presbyterian Church—Hanover Presbytery.

Westminster Presbytery took the extraordinary measure of not approving the call from the Session of Memorial Presbyterian Church, to the Rev. Jim Thornton, as an unpaid assistant pastor. Mr. Thornton has been without call for just over three years, and according to *Book of Church Order* 13-2, the Presbytery is obligated to investigate ministers without call for that long, to inquire as to whether they have been derelict in their duty, or perhaps are not really called to the ministry. The Presbytery voted overwhelmingly to begin the process of divesting Mr. Thornton without censure, which process entails citing him to appear at the next stated meeting of the court in order to answer on these matters, per BCO 34-10. The Rev. Jeff Fulford, who has been without call for almost three years, was also cited to appear at the July 2004 stated meeting.

Quotes from the Quorums

"Larry [Ball] mentioned that he just finished twenty-three years [in his current pastorate]. I just finished thirty. Nixon was President."—Tom Sullivan, Pastor of Seven Springs Presbyterian Church, Glade Spring, Virginia, at the January 2004 stated meeting of Westminster Presbytery.

Heard on the floor of the April 2004 stated meeting of Westminster Presbytery:

"Having grown up in Pike County, Kentucky, just over the line from here, it's good to hear the voices of conservative, Reformed, Presbyterian men—people that sound a lot like my kin folk. As a matter of fact, some of you probably are my kin folk. . . . Greetings from your cousin."—Glenn Ferrell, an Evangelical Presbyterian Church (EPC) pastor from Kentucky who had been granted the privilege of the floor.

"Mr. Moderator, I know we just voted on it [a motion], but can I read it [to make sure I got it right]?"—Stated Clerk Dan Foreman.

During the examination of a man to be taken under care as a ministerial candidate: "Jason, what's the airspeed of a swallow in flight?"—Steve Warhurst. "Thirty-two micrometers per second."—Jason Housewright. [NB: Mr. Warhurst is a pastor at Mr. Housewright's church.]

"They wouldn't be paid, but their way would be paid. . . . Canteen is twice a day, be sure to tell them: two candy bars a day."—Dion Marshall, director of the Presbytery camp, regarding participation by RUF college students as camp counselors.

"I know you all object to this, but we'll approve it anyway."—Moderator Ross Lindley regarding the motion to appoint Theo van Blerk as an assistant to Dion Marshall.

"I move the nominations [for Moderator for next meeting] be suspended."—Brent Bradley. "Somebody will be surprised. . . . Spread the love around."—Moderator Ross Lindley.

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Meeting at Costa Mesa 7th Day Adventist Church, 271 Avocado St./Costa Mesa
S.S., 11:30 AM; Worship, 9:30 AM
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610 North Glendale Avenue/Glendale
S.S., 10:00 AM; Worship, 11:00 AM
(818)244-3747

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17680 NW 78 Avenue/Hialeah
S.S. 11:20; Worship 10:00 AM/5:00 PM
(305)821-5761

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44 Southview Avenue/Valparaiso
S.S., 9:15 AM/Worship, 10:30 AM
Third Sunday Service and Supper, 6:00 PM
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Crawfordville
S.S., 10:00 AM;
Worship, 11:00 AM (2nd Sunday)

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One Harker Road/Ft. Oglethorpe
S.S. 10:00 AM; Worship, 11:00 AM/6:00 PM
(706)866-2521

BETHANY PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
Bethany Church Road/Greensboro
S.S., 10:00 AM; Worship, 11:00 AM (4th Sunday)
(706)486-2682

SOUTH LIBERTY PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
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Worship, 11:00 AM (1st/5th Sun.)
(706)456-2377

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S.S., 9:15 AM
Worship, 10:30 AM/6:00 PM
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S.S., 11:15 AM; Worship, 9:30 AM
Sunday Evening Bible Study, 6:00 PM
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295 E. Williamsburg Road/Collins
S.S., 10:00 AM; Worship, 11:00 AM/6:00 PM
Wednesday prayer meeting, 7:00 PM
(601)765-6437

<p>FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH East Beach Blvd. at 24th Ave./Gulfport S.S., 9:30 AM; Worship, 11:00 AM/6:00 PM Wed., Family Dinner (6:00)/Bible Study (6:30) (228)863-2664</p> <p>ST. PAUL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH 5125 Robinson Road/Jackson S.S., 9:45 AM; Worship, 10:55 AM/6:00 PM (601)372-7497</p>	<p>TRINITY REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH 3701 South College Road/Wilmington Worship 10:30 AM (910)395-1252</p> <p>NOVA SCOTIA BEDFORD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH 49 Nelson's Landing Blvd./Bedford S.S., 11:30 AM; Worship, 11:00 AM/7:00 PM (902)864-1587</p>	<p>CALVARY PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH 9201 Old White Horse Road/Greenville S.S. 10:00 AM; Worship 11:00 AM/6:00 PM Wednesday Prayer Meeting 7:00 PM (864)294-0895</p> <p>SECOND PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH 105 River Street/Greenville S.S., 9:45 AM; Worship, 11:00 AM/6:00 PM Wednesday, 5:45 PM (864)232-7621</p> <p>TENNESSEE BRAINERD HILLS PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH 6388 East Brainerd Road/Chattanooga S.S., 9:45 AM; Worship, 10:45 AM/6:30 PM (423) 892-5308</p>	<p>WESTEND PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH 1600 Atlantic Street/Hopewell S.S., 9:45 AM; Worship, 10:50 AM/6:00 PM Wednesday Prayer Meeting, 7:00 PM (804)458-6765</p> <p>CORNERSTONE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH Seventh Day Adventist 9858 Fairmont Avenue/Manassas S.S., 11:15 AM/Worship, 9:30 AM Wednesday Bible Study, 7:00 PM (703)368-8594</p> <p>KNOX REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH 4883 Southard Lane/Mechanicsville S.S., 9:30 AM; Worship, 11:00 AM Sunday Evening, 6:00 PM (804)779-7608</p>
<p>COVENANT PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH 625 N. Church Ave./Louisville Worship 11:00 AM and 6:00 PM 2nd Sunday, Fellowship Meal, 12:15 PM, Evening Studies at 1:00 PM. Wed Supper 6:00 PM; Prayer Mtg, 6:30 PM (601)773-5282</p> <p>PEARL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH 2933 Old Brandon Road/Pearl S.S., 9:45 AM; Worship, 11:00 AM/6:00 PM (601)939-1064</p> <p>TCHULA PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH 109 E. Main Street/Tchula S.S., 10:00 AM; Worship, 11:00 AM/5:00 PM Wednesday Prayer Meeting, 7:30 PM (601)924-7334</p>	<p>OHIO FAITH PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH 2540 S. Main Street/Akron S.S., 9:30 AM Worship, 10:45 AM/6:00 PM Wednesday, 7:00 PM (330)644-9654</p> <p>CHRIST COVENANT REFORMED (PCA) 14787 Palmer Road SW/Reynoldsburg Psalter Service, 9:30 AM Worship, 10:45 AM Thurs. Bible Study, 7 PM (740)964-0889</p> <p>OKLAHOMA BEAL HEIGHTS PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH 614 SW Park/Lawton Worship, 10:45 AM and 6:00 PM (580)355-4702</p>	<p>MIDWAY PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH 4011 Old Jonesborough Road/ Jonesborough S.S., 10:00 AM; Worship 11:00 AM/7:00 PM (423)753-941</p> <p>BRIDWELL HEIGHTS PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH 108 Bridwell Heights Drive/Kingsport S.S., 9:45 AM; Worship, 11:00 AM/6:00 PM (423)288-3664</p> <p>FELLOWSHIP PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH Highway 25/70/Newport S.S., 9:30 AM/Worship, 11:00 AM/7:00 PM Wednesday Prayer Meeting, 6:00 PM (423)623-8652</p>	<p>IMMANUEL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH 4700 Colley Avenue/Norfolk Worship, 10:30 AM/6:30 PM Wed. Christian Education Classes, 7:00 PM Sat. Prayer Meeting, 7:00 PM (757)440-1100</p> <p>TRINITY PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH† 108 Hill Street/Tazewell S.S., 9:45 AM; Worship, 11:00/7:00 PM (540)988-9541</p> <p>WASHINGTON WESTMINSTER PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH 2700 Andresen Road/Vancouver Worship, 10:00 AM Sunday Bible Study, 6:30 PM (360)254-1726</p>
<p>NEW JERSEY LOCKTOWN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH 197 Locktown-Flemington Road/Flemington S.S., 10:30 AM; Worship, 11:00 AM (908)996-7707</p> <p>MOUNT CARMEL CHURCH† 350 Franklin Blvd./Somerset S.S., 10:00 AM; Worship, 11:00 AM/6:00 PM (732)846-8777</p> <p>EMMANUEL ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH† 325 Whippany Road/Whippany S.S., 9:30 AM; Worship, 11 AM/6:15 PM (973)539-1171</p>	<p>PENNSYLVANIA NEW LIFE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF HOPEWELL TOWNSHIP 2795 Patterson Drive/Altoona S.S., 9:30 AM; Worship, 11:00 AM (724)378-4389</p> <p>LEHIGH VALLEY PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH 31 S. 13th Street/Allentown S.S., 9:45 AM; Worship, 11:00 AM/6:00 PM (610)797-8320</p> <p>FAITH REFORMED CHURCH 2953 Saltsman Road/Erie S.S., 9:45 AM/Worship, 11:00 AM (814)899-3037</p>	<p>WESTMINSTER PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH 900 Watauga Street/Kingsport S.S., 10:00 AM Worship, 11:00 AM/7:00 PM (423)247-7341</p> <p>TEXAS COLLEYVILLE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH 715 Cheek Sparger Road/Colleyville S.S., 11:10 AM; Worship, 9:30 AM/6:00 PM (817)498-2626</p> <p>COVENANT PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH 2701 N. 7th Street/Harlingen S.S., 9:30 AM; Worship, 11:00 AM Midweek service, 7:00 PM Wednesday (956)425-3136</p>	<p>PROVIDENCE REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH 5865 Davis Creek Road/Barboursville S.S. 11:30; Worship 10:00 AM/6:00 PM (304)736-0487</p> <p>WISCONSIN CALVARY ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH† 136 West Union Avenue/Cedar Grove S.S., 10:30 AM; Worship 9:00 AM/7:00 PM (920)668-6463</p> <p>REFORMATION PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH† Aurora Medical Center, I-94 at Highway 164/Waukesha Bible Study, 10:00 AM; Worship, 11:00 AM Wednesday Prayer Service, 7:00 PM (262)246-2421</p>
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<p>WHITESIDE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH Highway 74/Cashiers S.S., 10:00 AM; Worship, 11:00 AM Wednesday, 7:00 PM Prayer Meeting (828)743-2122</p> <p>WHITE OAK PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH 699 Polly Watson Road/Fremont S.S., 10:00 AM; Worship, 11:00 AM (919)284-4196</p> <p>HAZELWOOD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH 117 E. Main Street/Hazelwood S.S., 9:30 AM; Worship, 11:00 AM/6:15 PM Wednesday, 7:00 PM (828)456-3912</p>	<p>LIBERTY SPRINGS PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH 200 West Liberty Springs Street/Cross Hill S.S., 10:00 AM; Worship, 11:00 AM Wed. Bible Study and Prayer Mtg. 7:00 PM (864)998-4884</p> <p>REEDY RIVER PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH 46 Main Street/Conestee S.S., 10:00 AM; Worship, 11:00 AM/6:30 PM (864)277-5455</p> <p>GRACE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH 1955 Riverside Drive/Conway S.S., 9:30 AM; Worship, 10:45 AM (843)347-5550</p>	<p>NEW HOPE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH Fairfax Fire Station #3 (Williams Memorial Hall), 4081 University Blvd./Fairfax S.S., 11:15 AM Worship, 9:30 AM/5:30 PM (703)385-9056</p> <p>CALVARY REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH 403 Whealton Road/Hampton S.S. 10:00 AM; Worship: 8:30 AM/11:00 AM Evening Gathering: 6:00 PM (757)826-5942</p> <p>DICKENSON FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH Main Street/Haysi and Big Ridge S.S., 9:45 AM; Worship, 10:00 AM (Big Ridge Chapel), 11:15 AM (Haysi Chapel) (276)865-5650</p>	<p>We are pleased to have congregations and organizations join us as cosponsors of this venture. If you would like to become a sponsor, just let us know: PINS Financial Office, P. O. Box 60, Coeburn, VA 24230. Checks should be made payable to Presbyterian International News Service. † Indicates a non-PCA church.</p>
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