

# Presbyterian & Reformed News

Recording the  
Story of the  
Presbyterian  
Church in America

\$2.75 per issue/\$15.00 per year

Volume 6 Number 3

Published by Presbyterian International News Service, Inc., Lawrenceville, Georgia

May-June 2000

## PCA Assembly To Meet in Tampa Annual Meeting Will Feature Loaded Docket and Numerous Controversial Matters

For the first time in its history, the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) will meet in Tampa, Florida. The perennial event is slated to convene on Tuesday, June 20th, and adjourn on Friday, June 23rd.

This will mark the third time, however, that the PCA's highest judicatory has been in the Sunshine State. In 1981 and 1996, the Assembly was hosted by Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church in Fort Lauderdale.

This year, the commissioners will be able to enjoy the gulf breezes as they stroll between their hotels and the convention center which will house the Assembly. The men and their families will also be able to experience the bustling downtown section of this major city—a city with an historic and colorful past.

Once the haunt of buccanniers, Tampa turned into a major port. By the early 1900s, the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad provided rail service to the north.

Among the many ethnic groups represented are those who have immigrated from Cuba, including those who have established a vibrant cigar industry. Also found in the historic Ybor City district are many well-known Latin restaurants.

Tampa's strategic location led to the establishment, during World War II, of MacDill Air Force Base on a point of land jutting out into the Bay. The base today houses the



The Tampa Convention Center will host the PCA General Assembly.

continued: "In the struggle to beat the competition, worldly or ecclesiastical, some have exalted form above faith. This is not to suggest that all who have adopted new ways have forsaken their faith. However, the necessity of innovative forms to keep people actively interested is a sign of serious spiritual sickness." He concluded: "Those who have a church that offers expository sermons at least weekly and who have discovered the joy of knowing the Lord will never trade this heritage for a bowl of psychedelic pottage."

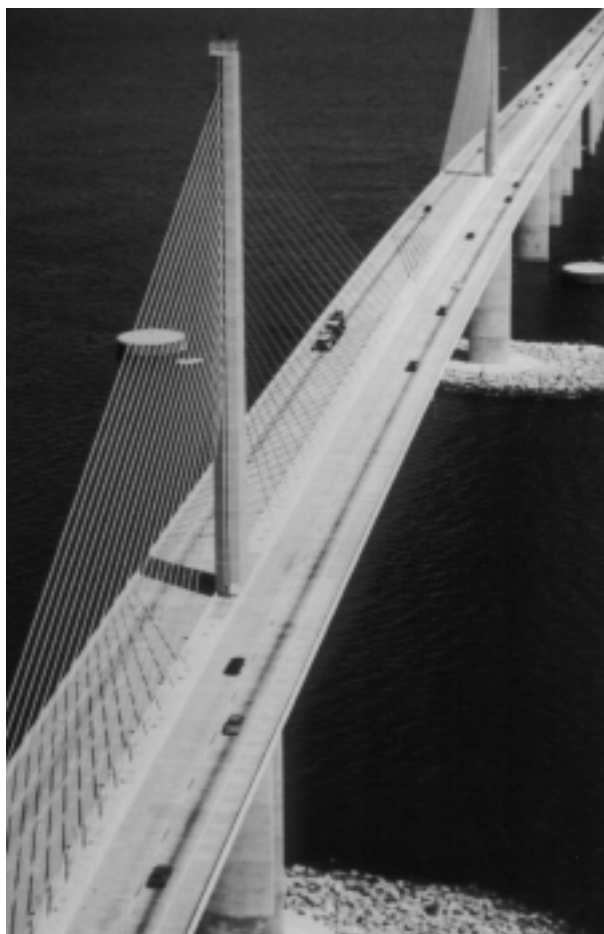
Today, Tampa Bay Presbyterian (organized in 1982) and Holy Trinity Presbyterian Mission of Tampa join Seminole in reaching out to the city proper. Other area PCA churches include: Westminster Presbyterian and Redeemer Presbyterian in Brandon; Cornerstone Presbyterian in Lutz; Christ Community Presbyterian in Clearwater; Grace Presbyterian in Pinellas Park; and Community Presbyterian in Safety Harbor.

headquarters of the Southern Command.

When the PCA was formed in 1973, one of its first churches was Seminole Presbyterian, which had been organized in 1919. This congregation was one of twenty-nine which called for a Convocation of Sessions in 1973 as a prelude to ecclesiastical separation from the Southern Presbyterian Church. Seminole's pastor at the time, Richard Watson, was not shy about his commitment to Reformed worship. In an article called "Innovative Worship" which appeared in the September 12, 1973, *Presbyterian Journal*, he wrote: "If you have a worldly group of unbelievers who will not be converted to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, other forms of stimulation will be necessary to hold them in church. It may even be necessary to use white pigeons, balloons, rock bands, or dancing girls, as recently observed in a 'worship' service conducted at a presbytery meeting." He



The Tampa skyline presents a dazzling scene at night.



The Sunshine Skyway Bridge spans the mouth of Tampa Bay.

Photos courtesy Tampa Convention and Visitors Association

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Major Issues at this Assembly.....	2	Christian Education and Publications.....	7
RUM, Women, and Song.....	3	To Ukraine With Christ.....	8
CCB Declines to Answer Questions.....	3	Redeemer to the Rescue.....	9
Creation Study Committee Report.....	4	Interfaith Celebration and the PCA.....	10-11
Southeast Alabama versus the Press.....	5	Editorials and Letters.....	12-13
Westminster Overtures Re Protest.....	5	News from the Presbyteries.....	14-17
South Coast vs. Central Florida.....	6	Church Sponsors.....	18-19

# MAJOR ISSUES AT THE 2000 ASSEMBLY

Some General Assemblies are rather quiet, ho-hum affairs. The 28th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA), however, promises to be anything but boring. Potentially-explosive issues—even some which may ultimately result in ecclesiastical division—abound. By far, the most important discussion will revolve around women's issues. The subject is being raised in a variety of ways. Here is a sampling of some of the more significant matters up for discussion.

## Women Preaching

Two presbyteries—Potomac and Mississippi Valley—have overtured the General Assembly to amend the *Book of Church Order* in order explicitly to prohibit female preaching. The issue of women preaching has been a hot one in the PCA, ever since it was revealed that women have filled the pulpit at Cedar Springs Presbyterian Church, a prominent PCA church in Knoxville, Tennessee.

The Senior Pastor of that congregation, the Rev. John Wood, became the subject of judicial charges brought by several PCA presbyteries. Last July, after his own presbytery (Tennessee Valley) seemingly failed to act in the matter, Western Carolina, Calvary, and Ascension Presbyteries

allowed to address mixed groups so long as that is not during public worship. MNA was given the assignment to study the matter, after it was reported that in February 1999, a woman gave two addresses to a church planters conference in California. This activity appeared to some to violate the instruction of the 1997 General Assembly, which stated: "Seminars led by women on biblical and theological exposition will have women as the intended audience. . . ." One member of the MNA Committee, the Rev. Roland Barnes of Statesboro, Georgia, has been especially concerned with regard to the situation.

Last year's MNA Committee of Commissioners, which is to exercise oversight of the Permanent MNA Committee, declined to listen to a tape containing one of the lady's addresses. Instead, the Committee recommended, and the Assembly adopted, a vindication of the MNA staff, without having considered all of the evidence at hand.

## Women in Worship

In 1997, the General Assembly took exception to the minutes of Southern Florida Presbytery for having had a woman read Scripture in public worship, and another woman lead in prayer during public worship. Southern Florida Presbytery asked for clarification regarding the exception, and the

1998 Assembly referred the lower court to "1 Corinthians 14:34; 1 Timothy 2:11-15; [and] *Westminster Larger Catechism* Questions 155-159." Southern Florida still had not responded by last year's Assembly, which directed that a response should be given to this year's Assembly.



Historic Ybor City features fine cigars and good dining.

petitioned the General Assembly to assume original jurisdiction and try the case. Since that time, Eastern Carolina and James River Presbyteries also petitioned for original jurisdiction.

The Standing Judicial Commission (SJC) ruled the judicial matter "out of order." The SJC argued that since a Session has authority over the conduct of public worship, concern over the conduct of that worship must be directed to the Session itself. The SJC also argued that Tennessee Valley Presbytery had "acted" in the matter when it allegedly investigated the situation.

Louisiana Presbytery, however, is not satisfied with the outcome of that judicial case; and it is asking that the 28th General Assembly condemn the judgment in the John Wood matter. (One Assembly may condemn the opinion of a previous Assembly; and the judgment in re John Wood, presumably, is the action of the 27th General Assembly, which declared the SJC to be its commission.)

Louisiana Presbytery is also asking that Tennessee Valley Presbytery be disciplined for its toleration of women preaching within its bounds.

No fewer than eight presbyteries have weighed in on the issue of women preaching, all of them seeking the termination of the practice.

## Women Speaking

The denominational Mission to North America (MNA) Committee is proposing that non-ordained people, including women, be

The answer to the protest declined to condemn the participation in the mass. Westminster Presbytery has overtured the Assembly to reject that answer, and to instruct the college that such participation is inappropriate.

## Creation

For two years, the Creation Study Committee (CSC) has labored to try to find a denominational consensus, particularly with respect to the meaning of the word "day" in Genesis 1 and of the phrase "in the space of six days" in the confessional standards. The CSC is reporting its findings, and recommending that no particular action be considered by the Assembly for at least another two years, in order to give the church time to study the report. Whether or not that wish by the CSC will prevail, will be one of the key things to watch—particularly since there may be churches and ministers who are unwilling to remain in a denomination which does not maintain the six calendar day creational understanding.

## Unity of the Church

In 1999, the Rev. Dr. Mark Futato renounced the jurisdiction of the PCA. His action came just prior to the filing of judicial charges against him in South Coast Presbytery.

Later that year, he moved from Westminster Theological Seminary in California to Reformed Theological Seminary in Orlando. In April 2000, he was received by Central Florida Presbytery, without that court having informed South Coast of the situation or having allowed the California counterpart to pursue the judicial case.

In early May, South Coast adopted an overture, asking for the discipline of Central Florida Presbytery for its allegedly blatant disregard of due process.

## A Free Press

In January of this year, North Florida Presbytery overtured the Assembly to "decry" *Presbyterian & Reformed News*, and to ask that the Assembly join it in "decrying" the newspaper. In April, Southeast Alabama Presbytery sent up an overture which mentions *P&R News*, and which, if adopted, could be used to try to curtail the ability to report on significant events.

## A New Office Building

Since 1987, the PCA has mandated that most of its denominational offices be housed in one office building. Not long after that, the denomination purchased a two-story facility at 1852 Century Place, Atlanta.

Over the past couple of years, the building's inadequacy has become evident. That, coupled with an increasing awareness of its less-than-desireable location, has led the Administrative Committee to recommend that the denominational offices be moved to a new location, beyond the perimeter (I-285). The price tag for a new building is estimated to run several million dollars.

## A New Committee

Three years ago, at least three Deep South presbyteries overtured the Assembly to have Reformed University Ministries (RUM) become a new program committee. Currently, RUM is an agency under the auspices of the Mission to North America (MNA) Committee.

Although that proposal was put on the back burner, the move toward independent status has continued to bubble. This year, MNA was willing to support the separation.

## Presbytery Divisions

At present, there are fifty-eight presbyteries (including seven which are Korean language courts). If overtures from Northeast and Westminster Presbyteries pass, the total number of presbyteries will be sixty-one.

The proposal from Northeast would dissolve the present presbytery, and create three new ones: Southern New England, Northern New England, and New York State. The overture asks Ascension Presbytery to relinquish its territory in western New York, so that it may be incorporated into the new court which would cover all of the Empire State except for the New York City metropolitan area and Long Island.

The proposal marks another example of a recent move toward smaller presbyteries. The Southern New England Presbytery would have twelve churches and mission works, with 1445 communicant members; the Northern New England Presbytery would have nine churches, mission works, and core groups with 490 communicants; and the New York State Presbytery would have at least nine churches and missions with 1329 communicants. According to denominational guidelines, the ideal minimal size for a new presbytery is that of ten churches, 1000 members, and at least three churches with 125 members or more. Southern New England would meet these guidelines. New York State would meet the guidelines with the addition of the Presbyterian Church of Wellsville, New York (which would be added if Ascension goes along with the cession of territory). Northern New England, however, would fall short with regard to church membership.

Ironically, Northern New England may be the best-prepared to become a new presbytery from an organizational standpoint. For the last two years, Northeast Presbytery has divided its work among three sub-regional committees (corresponding to the proposed new presbyteries); and the group representing Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont has been the most efficient of the three in the conduct of business.

More significant for the future unity of the denomination is the proposed division of Westminster Presbytery. Long seen as the most conservative in the PCA, Westminster, which has straddled the states of Virginia and Tennessee, was one of the first four PCA presbyteries.

Over the past couple of years, the theological controversies which have caused heartache in the denomination as a whole, have erupted in Westminster Presbytery. The result has been a series of divisive issues within the ranks of the court.

A unique feature of the proposal would be that churches and ministers on either side of the state line could choose with which presbytery they wish to affiliate: a continuing Westminster Presbytery in the Old Dominion, or a new presbytery in the northeastern part of the Volunteer State. The overture itself candidly admits that it is theology, rather than geography, which is driving the proposed division. Moreover, it is likely that several churches in Tennessee will opt to go with the original presbytery, in southwest Virginia.

The result will be two presbyteries which will be defined doctrinally, rather than according to geographical borders. Historically, the acceptance of such "elective affinity" presbyteries in other Presbyterian denominations has presaged the eventual division of the denomination.

## CCB WON'T ANSWER LOUISIANA'S QUESTIONS COMMITTEE ALSO DEEMS PRESBYTERIES' CONCERNS INSUBSTANTIAL IN THE WOOD MATTER

The Committee on Constitutional Business (CCB) of the Presbyterian Church in America has declined to answer some pointed questions by Louisiana Presbytery—questions which touch upon the issue of the toleration of women preaching. And the CCB has also brushed aside the concerns raised by Ascension and Western Carolina Presbyteries with regard to the way in which the Standing Judicial Commission (SJC) handled their petition for original jurisdiction in the John Wood matter.

Louisiana had posed several tough questions—queries which sought to clarify how the current controversy regarding female preaching could be dealt with in a consistent fashion. In response, the Committee opined: “The charge of the CCB is to give advice regarding actual matters before the Church. The CCB is directly charged not to introduce new business, and therefore it cannot answer a series of hypothetical questions that force us to create procedures or suggest courses of action that are not directly addressed in our Constitution. Answers to such questions must be determined by overture or judicial processes that establish the policies of the Church (cf. BCO 40).”

Ascension and Western Carolina Presbyteries had raised concerns regarding the John Wood matter. Perhaps the most significant questions posed had to do with whether the SJC could rule a matter administratively or judicially out of order when there was no provision to do so in a case of original jurisdiction; whether the SJC may determine the “facts” of a matter without having taken testimony; and whether it was proper for members of the presbyteries which had petitioned the Assembly for original jurisdiction to be forcibly recused.

With regard to the orderliness of the matter, the CCB concedes that “There are no operating provisions in the Manual of the SJC for dealing with BCO 34-1. However, the BCO does assume that the SJC has the right to determine whether all matters coming before it are in order (RAO 15-2). Although the provisions of the BCO 41, 42 and 43 dealing with references, appeals and complaints do not directly apply, they are the only analogy the SJC currently has for making such determinations. More specific operational guidelines dealing with 34-1 are needed, but until they are provided the SJC can only operate with its ordinary procedures.”

With regard to whether the SJC may set forth “facts” and, on the basis of the alleged facts, throw a case out of court, the CCB stated that “the officers of the SJC or the impaneled SJC

may determine if a matter is administratively out of order without hearing evidence and arguments from both parties based on timeliness of filing, proper paperwork, etc. The impaneled SJC may determine if a matter is judicially out of order prior to hearing full evidence and arguments from both parties if the SJC believes it has sufficient initial evidence to make such a determination . . . . Otherwise the SJC could be forced to listen to matters at length, which were not properly before it.”

With regard to the forcible recusal of members of the SJC from the three presbyteries which had brought the charges, the CCB offered this opinion: “Because the only parties to a case that goes to the SJC are the Presbyterian Church in America and the accused (BCO 31-3), the mere membership of an SJC member in a presbytery that may have brought charges against the accused does not disqualify that SJC member from hearing and voting upon the case in which the SJC has assumed original jurisdiction. However, the rules for the conduct of SJC members who are qualified for adjudicating a case (Manual of the SJC 6 and 7), will ordinarily disqualify the SJC participation of members of presbyteries who have brought charges resulting in the SJC becoming the court of original jurisdiction. These rules, for example, indicate that it is not appropriate for any member of the commission to discuss the merits of the case with any party to the case or any person other than a member of the commission, or to express an opinion on the merits of the case prior to the record being completed, or to consult or advise regarding any matter that may come before the commission. While it is conceivable that members of presbyteries bringing charges may not be disqualified from SJC participation for these or similar reasons, it is unlikely and, therefore, members of presbyteries bringing charges should ordinarily recuse themselves or be disqualified.” [The relevant portion of SJC Manual 6 reads as follows: “A ‘qualified’ member under these Rules is any member of the Commission who is not disqualified by virtue of any of the following: . . . Having expressed an opinion on the merits of the particular case. However, a member is not disqualified merely because he had previously expressed opinions on theological issues or matters of church doctrine or government involved in the case. Nor is a member disqualified if he expresses an opinion on the Case to another member of the Commission or Judicial Panel after the Record of the Case has been completed. . . .”—Ed.]

## COMMITTEE DECLINES TO TAKE ‘EXCEPTION’ TO SJC MINUTES COMMITTEE DOES, HOWEVER, RAISE QUESTIONS BY MEANS OF ‘NOTATIONS’

One of the tasks each year of the Committee on Constitutional Business (CCB) of the Presbyterian Church in America is to review the minutes of the Standing Judicial Commission (SJC), in order to try to ascertain conformity to the Constitution with regard to the judicial process (but not the SJC decisions themselves). The PCA’s *Book of Church Order* provides that if exceptions are taken to the minutes of the SJC with regard to a case, the General Assembly may “direct the Standing Judicial Commission to retry [that] case.”

However, although the CCB declined this year to find any “exceptions” to the SJC minutes, the Committee did note several “notations” to the minutes. The two most significant are as follows: “1. There is no record in the minutes of the SJC having received and/or dealt with the materials submitted by Western Carolina

Presbytery and Ascension Presbytery in an effort to meet/respond to the officers’ original finding. (SJC Manual 10-2) 2. There is no record in the minutes as to how the SJC received information about the action of Tennessee Valley Presbytery upon which the SJC based their decision.”

Both of these “notations” go to the heart of the matter with regard to whether the SJC acted properly in the John Wood matter. The first helps to highlight that neither Western Carolina nor Ascension was given opportunity to respond to the switching of the basis for finding the matter out of order. The second raises the problem of how the SJC officers came to their initial ruling, when one of the keys to their determination was that Tennessee Valley Presbytery (TVP) had appointed a judicial investigative committee—an alleged “fact” which the full SJC has dropped from its report.

## RUM, Women, and Song

The work of the home missions committee of the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) over the past year has focused on three controversial matters. Mission to North America (MNA) has decided that its Reformed University Ministries (RUM) should be spun out into its own permanent program committee. MNA has wrestled with the proper role of women at MNA-sponsored events. And the Committee has decided to appoint an ad hoc committee to study the principles and practice of worship for church planters.

If the Assembly gives its blessing, RUM will operate for a year as a separate entity, with representatives from the area RUM committees providing governance. After the Constitution is amended, then RUM would assume its role as a full-fledged program committee, whose members would be elected by the Assembly.

MNA’s proposed new statement on the role of women would draw a sharp distinction between speaking in MNA-sponsored worship, and speaking in seminars. MNA states that the worship that it conducts requires that “the preaching of the Word in worship is to be protected, and that protection is assured as the preaching of the Word is conducted by elders. GA/MNA adheres to this standard in the worship services that it conducts.”


MNA also conducts seminars which are “designed to provide church planters and other leaders with greater insights and skills for their ministry. While GA/MNA is careful to assure that worthy material is presented in these seminars, the context is not that of a worship service, and therefore the subject matter does not require the same degree of protection as the content of worship.”

The statement continues, “The primary difference between the preaching of the Word in worship and the subject matter of seminars has at its heart the issue of authority. The content of seminars is not intended to carry the weight to which the description ‘teach or have authority over’ (1 Timothy 2:11-12) would apply. The context of this passage is the Apostle’s presentation of instructions for the proper conduct of public worship and not that of the more informal seminar which is generally more subjective, informal and based on personal experience than is the preaching of the Word in worship.

“In most cases, teaching and ruling elders present the content in the seminar context. However, from time to time, GA/MNA may ask that godly men and women give presentations even though they are not elders, but who in God’s providence may have insights and experience which may prove helpful and instructive to those who lead in ministry.”

The ad hoc worship committee is comprised of Roy Taylor; Bryan Chapell; Skip Ryan; Wade Williams; Jim Bland; and John Frame. Mr. Frame is the one member of this ad hoc group who has published books on the subject of worship, including an advocacy of contemporary worship music.

According to Dr. Bland, the work of this ad hoc committee will be presented to the October stated meeting of the MNA Committee. He has emphasized that the role of the ad hoc study committee is not to try to formulate a doctrine of worship, but rather to apply the doctrine of worship found in the Book of Church Order to MNA church planting. The focus of the paper which will be presented will be “Key Principles of Public Worship Practices for MNA Church Planters.”



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# CREATION STUDY COMMITTEE: IN SEARCH OF A CONSENSUS

For two years, the Creation Study Committee (CSC) of the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) has diligently been on a quest. The Committee has been searching for a way to keep the denomination together, rather than have it tear itself apart over the question of the doctrine of creation.

At the heart of the dispute is the meaning of the "days" of Genesis 1. But deeper issues abound. Among them are basic principles of interpretation, of both Scripture and the Confessional Standards; and theological subscription to the Standards.

The journey has been a difficult and oft-frustrating one for the members of the CSC, whose views have reflected the variety found in the denomination as a whole. Their work has produced a lengthy document—one of the longest reports of any denominational study committee. Towards the end of the report, the CSC concluded:

*As we have studied the history of this matter . . . it is clear that there has been a good deal of diversity of opinion over the issue of the length of the days throughout the history of the Church. It is this kind of diversity that is found in the PCA today. The fact is that the Church, while affirming with one voice the creation of all things visible and invisible by the triune God, has not come to a unity of position on the matter of the nature and length of the days, as she has with regard to such doctrines as the Trinity and the Person of Christ. This indicates that the Westminster divines were correct in their affirmation that "all things in Scripture are not alike plain in themselves, nor alike clear unto all . . ." (WCF I, 7). We believe that this is the reason that this Committee has not been able to reach unanimity. We have come to a better understanding of each other's views, resulting in a deeper respect for one another's integrity.*

*We are aware that this is a divisive issue. It is the hope and purpose of the Committee to give advice that could avoid any division of the church. While affirming the above statement of what is involved in an orthodox view of creation, we recognize that good men will differ on some other matters of interpretation of the creation account. We urge the church to recognize honest differences, and join in continued study of the issues, with energy and*

*patience, and with a respect for the views and integrity of each other.*

The report is divided into several sections. It begins with an introduction and continues with "Background to the Current Discussion of the Creation Days." Next will be found "Brief Definitions," followed by "Description of the Main Interpretations of Genesis 1-3 and the Creation Days." Those main interpretations are: The Calendar Day Interpretation; The Day-Age Interpretation; The Framework Interpretation; The Analogical Days Interpretation; and Other Interpretations of the Creation Days. "Original Intent of the Westminster Assembly" is another section, followed by "Advice and Counsel of the Committee," including Recommendations.

The Committee begins by testifying: *We have found a profound unity among ourselves on the issues of vital importance to our Reformed testimony. We believe that the Scriptures, and hence Genesis 1-3, are the inerrant word of God. We affirm that Genesis 1-3 is a coherent account from the hand of Moses. We believe that history, not myth, is the proper category for describing these chapters; and furthermore that their history is true. In these chapters we find the record of God's creation of the heavens and the earth ex nihilo; of the special creation of Adam and Eve as actual human beings, the parents of all humanity (hence they are not the products of evolution from lower forms of life). We further find the account of an historical fall, that brought all humanity into an estate of sin and misery, and of God's sure promise of a Redeemer. Because the Bible is the word of the Creator and Governor of all there is, it is right for us to find it speaking authoritatively on matters studied by historical and scientific research. We also believe that acceptance of, say, non-geocentric astronomy is consistent with full submission to Biblical authority. We recognize that a naturalistic worldview and true Christian faith are impossible to reconcile, and gladly take our stand with Biblical supernaturalism.*

*The Committee has been unable to come to unanimity over the nature and duration of the creation days. Nevertheless, our goal has been to enhance the unity, integrity, faithfulness and proclamation of the Church. Therefore we are presenting a unanimous report with the understanding*

*that the members hold to different exegetical viewpoints. As to the rest we are at one. It is our hope and prayer that the Church at large can join us in a principled, Biblical recognition of both the unity and diversity we have regarding this doctrine, and that all are seeking properly to understand biblical revelation. It is our earnest desire not to see our beloved church divide over this issue.*

The report states that there are three views represented on the Committee with regard to the crucial Constitutional question of the interpretation of the Confessional phrase, "in the space of six days":

*To some of us, the evidence leads to the conclusion that the Assembly meant "six calendar days." To others of us, the evidence is not strong enough to conclude that the Assembly wished to exclude any view other than the instantaneous view of Augustine. To yet others of us, the evidence suggests that the Assembly intended to express no more and no less than what Scripture expresses in the phrase "in six days" (Exodus 20:11).*

The CSC is recommending a special rule for consideration of its report, viz., "that the Assembly hear its report for up to one hour under the rules for 'informal consideration' . . . along with adoption of a rule (2/3rds vote required) that under this procedure no motions with respect to the report or recommendations be in order. During this period of informal consideration the committee will review its report, respond to questions and lead in discussion. Since instructed by the Assembly to bring 'non-binding advice and counsel' (M26GA, p

191), the committee further recommends that at the conclusion of the allotted time, the following recommendations be adopted as a unit without amendment."

Those three recommendations are as follows:

1. *That the Creation Study Committee's report, in its entirety, be distributed to all sessions and presbyteries of the PCA and made available for others who wish to study it.*

2. *That the Assembly declare its sense that in order to permit careful and prayerful contemplation of this matter, no further action of any kind with respect to this report be taken by the General Assembly for a period of at least two years.*

3. *That this study committee be dismissed with thanks.*

The procedure set forth by the CSC is designed to allow for a careful consideration of its report by the denomination. The Committee especially hopes to avoid potentially explosive action proposed by either those who wish to mandate the Calendar Day View, or those who wish the Assembly to go on record that the Confessional Standards do not specify the length of the days of creation.

Chairing the CSC has been Sam Duncan, Esq., a ruling elder from First Presbyterian Church, Hattiesburg, Mississippi. The Moderator of the 1997 PCA General Assembly, Mr. Duncan successfully argued for a minority report from the Bills & Overtures Committee at the 1998 General Assembly that the Creation Study Committee should be appointed.

## AC Proposes New Office Building



The Administrative Committee of the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) is proposing to obtain a new denominational office building. Pictured above is the current office building, located at 1852 Century Place, Atlanta.

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## Southeast Alabama Becomes Second Presbytery to Oppose Newspaper

At its April stated meeting, Southeast Alabama Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) became the second presbytery to overture the General Assembly with regard to *Presbyterian & Reformed News*. The court responded to a proposed overture brought by the Rev. Stephen Estock, Pastor of Covenant Presbyterian Church, Montgomery, at the January stated meeting.

The overture adopted by the presbytery is less-extensive than the original proposal. While paralleling an overture from North Florida Presbytery in terms of some of the Whereas clauses, what was sent to the Assembly focuses on the newspaper's reporting on on-going judicial matters.

The overture begins with a reference to the Apostle Paul's admonition in Ephesians for believers to live "with all humility and

gentleness, with patience, showing forbearance to one another in love, being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace", and with a reference to the Westminster Larger Catechism's explanation that the Ninth Commandment requires "the preserving and promoting of truth between man and man, and the good name of our neighbor, as well as our own;... a charitable esteem of our neighbors; loving, desiring, and rejoicing in their good name; sorrowing for, and covering of their infirmities;... a ready receiving of a good report, and unwillingness to admit of an evil report, concerning them." The overture next refers to two places in the *Book of Church Order* with regard to discipline. "Discipline is the exercise of authority given the Church by the Lord Jesus to instruct and guide its members

and to promote it's purity and welfare" (27-1). "Scripture law is the basis of all discipline because it is the revelation of God's Holy will. Proper disciplinary principles are set forth in the Scriptures and must be followed. They are: Instruction in the Word; Individual's responsibility to admonish one another; If the admonition is rejected, then the calling of one or more witnesses; If rejection persists, then the Church must act through her court unto admonition, suspension, excommunication and deposition. Steps (a) through (d) must be followed in proper order for the exercise of discipline."

The overture next states that "the *Presbyterian and Reformed News* which is published primarily by members of the PCA has printed articles about judicial cases which are in process and therefore it circumvents

the constitutionally ordained church courts, and may prejudice the court by the information it disseminates."

Southeast Alabama is asking the General Assembly "to instruct all members of the Presbyterian Church in America not to publish information about a judicial case which is in process"; and to "instruct all members of The Presbyterian Church in America to follow the procedures set down in the Book of Church Order when there is a grievance and to refrain from improperly disseminating information detrimental to the reputation of others." As does the North Florida overture, this overture also asks that the action sought be included by the Stated Clerk in his next pastoral letter to the denomination.

## Westminster Presbytery Overtures Assembly to Reject Proposed Answer to Protest Regarding Singing in a Mass

At its stated meeting on April 8, 2000, Westminster Presbytery, unanimously, voted to overture the 28th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) to reject a proposed answer to a protest. The protest, which was lodged towards the end of the meeting of the 27th General Assembly last year, focused on the failure of the Assembly to "receive a personal resolution which brought to the attention of the court the fact that a choir from Covenant College sang in a Roman Catholic mass." The protest expressed special concern "since the President of the college admitted during his presentation that this incident did occur"; and added: "The presenter has been vindicated through this admission that the incident did occur."

Besides asking for a rejection of the proposed answer to the protest, the overture

The Rev. Mr. David Coffin countered that contention, by saying that Mr. Belcher had not done anything amiss by having a concern for the public reputation of the denomination and its college. The court declined to receive the resolution, 316-488.

That evening, during the presentation of the Covenant College report, President Frank Brock acknowledged that the incidents did occur. Dr. Brock explained that some of Covenant's students come from former Communist countries—many of them non-Christians, who subsequently become interested in spiritual things after receiving instruction from Covenant professors. A Roman Catholic lady in Slovakia, who is appreciative of the college, requested that the choir perform two concerts in order to acquaint more people with Covenant College. The concerts were held in a Catholic Church (which functions as a concert hall in many communities). Dr. Brock believes this woman to be a genuine Christian. The lady indicated that if the choir performed at the mass held earlier that evening in the same building, more people would be likely to come afterwards. The desired result was that of more people coming to Covenant College, where they could be exposed to the gospel through its teaching.

The Assembly adjourned the next night. Just prior to adjournment, one formal "objection" and four protests were received, including one on the failure of the Assembly to take appropriate action with regard to Covenant College. Filing this protest was the Rev. Henry Johnson, Pastor of Trinity Presbyterian Church, Tazewell, Virginia. He was joined by five other commissioners, three of them, like Mr. Johnson, from Westminster Presbytery.

The Assembly authorized answers to two of the four protests, one of them being that offered by Mr. Johnson. Upon motion, the Board of Covenant College was to prepare an answer, for presentation to the 28th Assembly.

At its October 1999 meeting, the college board prepared a three-fold response. First, umbrage was taken at the "inflammatory manner in which the material was first made available to the assembly."

Secondly, the board presented various

facts regarding the incidents, including that during the second time the choir sang in the mass, "the priest dispensed with the sermon and instead invited someone from the congregation and one of our singers to testify to the work of God in their lives. The young adult Slovakian spoke at length (through a translator for our benefit) about her personal faith in Christ and it was an inspiring testimony. One of our students then spoke (again through a translator for the benefit of the congregation) of her commitment to Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit in her life. It was a 5:00 o'clock service on a Friday and the beautiful baroque church was filled to near capacity. Afterward the choir met with a large group of their young people. To the extent that the engagement was more in the nature of an opportunity to witness and a concert than of a worship service, the board of Covenant College endorses the decision of the Madrigals' director to accept the singing assignment, and would encourage judicious exploitation of all such opportunities in the future."

Third, the board addressed the notion of compromise of confessional standards of worship. "The fact that a Roman Catholic Eucharist was celebrated while the Madrigal group sang could complicate the whole issue if the choir participated in the Eucharist but under the direction of the choir director, the Chamber Choir intentionally did not partake of the Eucharist. The board and administration of the college believe it is wrong for any group

representing the college knowingly to participate in worship practices which our Confession of Faith precludes; we are further agreed that the Roman Catholic celebration of the Eucharist clearly falls into this category. The board and administration have counseled the college family to take care that such cautions are observed in the future."

Among the WHEREAS clauses, Westminster Presbytery declares that "in making response to this protest, the Board has tried to make a distinction between singing in a mass and participating in it"; that "this is a distinction without a difference"; that "no competent church historian or theologian would recognize such a distinction"; and that "the Roman Catholic Church itself does not regard this distinction as valid."

The Presbytery also wrote that "as a Presbyterian denomination, we have a solemn obligation to maintain our historic doctrine, which is also taught in Holy Scripture (Hebrews 7:27)"; that "the singing in a Roman Catholic mass by a choir which is under the auspices of our denomination has subjected the Presbyterian Church in America to ridicule and suspicion"; that "we have an obligation to protect our church's own good name as well as the good name of Covenant College (1 Corinthians 14:40; 1 Thessalonians 5:23)"; and that "the explanation given by the Covenant College Board does not excuse the participation in this false and superstitious worship (Romans 6:1-2)."



Dickenson First Presbyterian Church, Haysi, Virginia

also asks that the Assembly "direct the Board of Covenant College not to permit any musical group from the college to participate in any service where a Roman Catholic mass is held."

A ruling elder from Westminster Presbytery, Hugh Belcher, had initially brought the matter to the floor of the Assembly by means of a resolution presented on the morning of the second day of the Assembly. Mr. Belcher, who hails from Dickenson First Presbyterian Church of Haysi, Virginia, a congregation of Westminster Presbytery, noted in his resolution that a report was circulating on the internet that the Covenant College choir sang in a Roman Catholic mass. After he presented the resolution, several commissioners wanted to know in what forum this report came, and if he had brought the matter to the attention of Covenant College before presenting it on the floor. Concern was voiced by some that not first going to Covenant College personnel was a violation of Matthew 18 regarding church discipline.

### James River Asks For Original Jurisdiction

At its April 2000 stated meeting, James River Presbytery petitioned the Presbyterian Church in America General Assembly to exercise original jurisdiction with regard to the Rev. John Wood and the Session of Cedar Springs Presbyterian Church, Knoxville, Tennessee. The petition reads as follows:

Whereas, due to the public nature of the letter from Teaching Elder John Wood and the Session of Cedar Springs Presbyterian Church dated October 25, 1999 to the Tennessee Valley Presbytery, it is our concern that this overture be handled in a timely and God-honoring manner.

Whereas, the Scriptures clearly teach that a woman is not to teach or exercise authority over a man, but is to remain silent (1 Timothy 2:12); and

Whereas, the PCA *Book of Church Order* should be interpreted consistently rather than in a way that is contrary to the Scriptures; and

Whereas, to permit a woman to preach or teach in the context of worship would be a gross violation of 1 Timothy 2:12; and

Whereas, the Session of Cedar Springs Presbyterian Church has made it known that a woman has been invited to be the plenary speaker for the 2001 World Missions Conference,

Therefore Be it Resolved, that James River Presbytery overtures the General Assembly as Western Carolina, Calvary and Ascension Presbyteries have done in objecting to the Cedar Springs Presbyterian Church's use of female Preachers in their Worship service, and request the 28th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America to assume original jurisdiction in this matter in accordance with the provisions of BCO 14-6 and BCO 34-1.

This petition by James River passed by one vote. It joins the petition re-issued in December 1999 by Ascension Presbytery, which specifically names the Cedar Springs Session as the object of charges in the matter for consideration by the General Assembly.

## SOUTH COAST BRINGS CHARGES AGAINST CENTRAL FLORIDA

South Coast Presbytery, located in the very southernmost part of California, has overtured the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America to exercise discipline against Central Florida Presbytery. The extraordinary measure is being proposed because the Sunshine State court received the Rev. Dr. Mark Futato as a minister in good standing, even though he had renounced the jurisdiction of the PCA as he was facing the prospect of judicial charges which were being filed in South Coast Presbytery.

The charges, which had been brought by the Rev. Dr. Iain Duguid and the Rev. David Eby, revolved around Dr. Futato's involvement with a healing ministry which allegedly has New Age connections. At the time that the charges were filed in spring 1999, Dr. Futato was a colleague with Dr. Duguid at Westminster Theological Seminary in Escondido, California. He moved later that year to become a professor at Reformed Theological Seminary in Orlando.

The overture from South Coast Presbytery begins by noting that "the General Assembly has the responsibility to take cognizance of any neglect or irregularity that has taken place in a Presbytery of which it is well advised, and to examine, deliberate and judge the whole matter (BCO 40-4)." The document states that Central Florida Presbytery at its meeting on April 18, 2000, "did receive Dr. Mark Futato by transfer as a minister in good standing"; and that "there remain charges outstanding against Dr. Futato, which were found to be in order at a called meeting of South Coast Presbytery of the PCA on April 10, 1999." The overture says that "after the delivery of those charges and before that meeting Dr. Futato apparently broke his fourth ordination vow and did renounce the jurisdiction of the PCA in order to avoid facing the properly-constituted charges"; and that "the existence of these charges was communicated to the independent charismatic church which received Dr. Futato (and which now no longer exists), but the right to adjudicate the charges should Dr. Futato ever return to the PCA was not relinquished by South Coast Presbytery."

South Coast next alleges that "Central Florida Presbytery, although made aware of the existence of the charges by several individual members of South Coast Presbytery, made no effort to inquire of South Coast Presbytery whether the issues involved in the charges had ever been addressed and settled, and did not direct Dr. Futato to repent of his independent spirit and refusal to submit himself to his brethren, prior to consideration of his reception by their Presbytery."

One of the key pieces of evidence cited by South Coast is a letter from the PCA General Assembly Stated Clerk, who "expressed his opinion on this matter in a letter to Dr. Luder Whitlock [President of Reformed Theological Seminary] dated February 28, 2000, that Dr. Futato "...should provide the Presbytery in Florida, a copy of the charges from South Coast Presbytery, and request that the Presbytery in Florida deal with the case." The California court continues: "Nonetheless, even should South Coast Presbytery agree to remit the case to Central Florida Presbytery, such an adjudication in a case with process must necessarily involve a trial in accordance with the provisions of BCO 32."

The overture pleads that "we, the members of South Coast Presbytery of the PCA, hereby memorialize General Assembly and protest against the grossly unconstitutional proceedings of Central Florida Presbytery of the PCA in receiving Dr. Futato without adequate investigation of his status, thereby exhibiting a blatant disregard for the legitimate concerns of a fellow Presbytery. We further make the following overtures to the General Assembly:

"That the General Assembly act to reverse the April 18, 2000 decision of Central Florida Presbytery of the PCA in receiving Dr. Futato as a minister of the Presbyterian Church in America (BCO 40-5);

That the General Assembly take appropriate disciplinary measures against Central Florida Presbytery for its willful disregard of the properly-constituted charges against Dr. Futato, which remain to be answered, if Central Florida Presbytery does not act in a satisfactory fashion by the time of the 29th General Assembly.

That the General Assembly instruct the Central Florida Presbytery to inform Dr. Futato of the necessity for him to be cleared of charges against him before the South Coast Presbytery prior to his being received by Central Florida Presbytery.

That the General Assembly should enact these measures by any lawful means possible, including, if deemed necessary, the conduct of a trial on the floor of General Assembly (BCO 40-5 and 40-6)."

The overture concludes: "We bring these overtures to General Assembly with a deep sense of concern. Our desire is to promote the purity, peace, and unity of the church. Nevertheless, if in order to avoid legitimately constituted charges, a minister has simply to renounce the jurisdiction of one Presbytery in the PCA and after one year without regard to the pending charges be received by another Presbytery of the PCA, there is no possibility of effective church discipline.

"If this action by Central Florida Presbytery is allowed to stand, we will be a Presbyterian Church in name only, not in fact. The appearance will be that individual Presbyteries will have been granted the right to do whatever seems right in their own eyes, with no reference to the legitimate concerns of their fellow Presbyteries.

"Apart from any technicalities of the case, Central Florida Presbytery has treated the court system of the PCA with disdain by neglecting the interests of South Coast Presbytery.

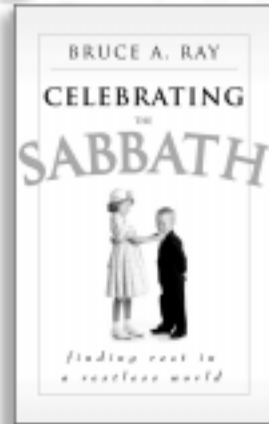
"In the light of the seriousness of these matters and the fact that continual vigilance is required to combat false doctrine (Acts 20:28-32), we request all members of General Assembly to devote themselves to persistent, humble prayer, seeking God's wisdom, love, and guidance regarding General Assembly's discussion and decisions concerning these issues."

The Rev. Dan Hendley, Pastor of Covenant Presbyterian Church, Palm Bay, Florida, responded to South Coast's overture by stating that Central Florida had been told that South Coast had been contacted, and that there was no problem from South Coast's perspective with receiving Dr. Futato. Mr. Hendley said that Dr. Futato's situation had been presented with great sympathy towards him, as one who, under great duress of a particular moment, pulled out of the PCA. The Palm Bay pastor wondered: "Why would the Presbytery [South Coast] let him go?", if the charges were so serious? He added that the South Coast overture "will come as an absolute shock to the members of Central Florida."

Concern over Reformed Seminary's acceptance of a man who had renounced ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the PCA in order to flee judicial charges led Calvary Presbytery in South Carolina to investigate whether ministerial candidates should continue to be recommended to the Orlando school. Officials of Reformed Seminary appeared before Calvary Presbytery in October and urged that court to postpone action until the summer of 2000, when, they assured the Presbytery, the matter would be rectified.

This is the second overture this year by which a PCA presbytery is bringing charges against another one. In April, Louisiana Presbytery petitioned the Assembly to discipline Tennessee Valley Presbytery because of its failure to prohibit women preaching within its bounds. The action by South Coast, which was adopted in early May, was approved with only one dissenting vote against it.

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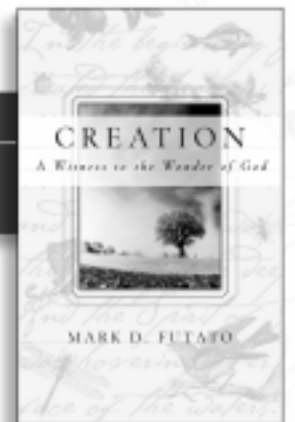


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## CE/P COMMITTEE APPROVES MARKETING PLAN

Atlanta, Georgia (February 24-25, 2000)—The Christian Education and Publications (CE/P) Committee of the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) met for a stated meeting on February 24-25. Among the items considered and approved was the implementation of a marketing plan for the Committee.

Don Clements, Chairman of the Subcommittee on Development, introduced Mr. Jerry Thacker, a professional consultant. Mr. Clements, who pastors a church in Virginia close to the West Virginia border, began by saying: "Let me give you the bad news up front—he's from West Virginia. I'm not done yet—he's from Bob Jones University!" Referring to a member of the CE/P Committee who shares both of those characteristics, Mr. Clements continued: "I think we've got Paul Settle's vote!"

For the next three quarters of an hour, Mr. Thacker gave a whirlwind interactive slide presentation, making the case as to why CE/P needs a marketing plan. He stated the necessity of customer satisfaction, and mentioned what he called the 5 "P's" of marketing: Product, Place, Price, Promotion, and Perception. He explained that "Perception is reality."

Mr. Thacker's firm, Marketing Partners, Inc., of Wyomissing, Pennsylvania, already has a contract with Great Commission Publications (GCP). GCP is a joint publishing venture between the PCA and the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. The CE/P Committee unanimously approved hiring Marketing Partners, Inc., for one year. [Editor's note: Both CE/P and GCP want our readers to know that the hiring of a marketing firm does NOT imply a move toward becoming market-driven ministries.]

### Women's Ministry

Mrs. Susan Hunt and Mrs. Jane Patete presented their vision for denominational women's ministry. Mrs. Hunt emphasized the fact that the Women in the Church wanted to foster "women's ministry that is truly covenantal in nature, not based on any personality or group of people." She expressed gratitude that some of her books have been translated into Korean, Spanish, and Russian; and that at least one book is on the recommended list of the Southern Baptist Convention. "I believe with all of my heart that PCA women are embracing Biblical womanhood," she averred.

Mrs. Patete noted that "bridges are being built to work in cooperative ventures denominationally." She cited the momentum from the 1999 National WIC Conference which has prompted local WIC chapters to be in touch with the Atlanta office. The Leadership 2000 Conference, scheduled for March 2000, is slated to have more than 300 women in attendance, including African-American and Hispanic women. The impact is being felt globally, too: MTW missionary Clay Quarterman has been asking that women from Ukraine be trained.

Announced at this meeting was a restructuring of several areas. The Gulf Coast presbyterial will now be associated with the Mid-South region; Westminster with Mid-Atlantic; and North Texas and South Texas with the West.

The Committee designated the 2001 WIC Love Gift to go to Ridge Haven, the denominational conference grounds near Rosman, North Carolina; and the 2002 Love Gift to go to CE/P for the expansion of its children's ministry program.

### Improved Financial Picture

The question of finances played a major role at the meeting. Mr. John Dunahoo, Business Manager, reported that the Committee experienced a surplus of \$241,000 in 1999, primarily because of the national Women in the Church (WIC) conference. For example, the staff had budgeted for attendance of 3200, whereas about

4000 women attended. Moreover, there was a different pattern of registration: more registrations than usual came in after the early-registration deadline, resulting in more revenue. And, the present CE/P staff was able to be used to do certain jobs that had been hired out for previous WIC conferences.

Also on the plus side was the fact that church and individual giving was up by \$27,000 over the previous year. And some expenses were not as great: the building rent went down, and the passage of a referendum in Georgia resulted in church organizations, such as CE/P, not having to pay property tax.

On the other hand, CE/P received less than 50% of its partnership share.

### Other Financial Matters

The CE/P Committee authorized the staff to do the groundwork on incorporating the Committee. In 1996, the PCA General Assembly authorized its program committees to be incorporated, if they so chose. Mission to the World (MTW) was the first committee to take advantage of that opportunity.

As a policy matter, the Committee directed that any stocks given to CE/P be consolidated into cash as soon as practical. The Committee also voted a ten percent raise for the Coordinator. According to a CE/P administrator, this enabled the Committee to stay within the range specified by the "CEO compensation Guidelines" as approved by the 27th General Assembly.

### Addressing the Culture

One of the primary foci came via the report of Dr. Charles Dunahoo, CE/P Coordinator. He set forth six characteristics of the present culture, gleaned from Gallup and Linday's latest book, *Religious Survey: Trends in the U. S.*: (1) a widespread popularity and appeal of religion; (2) a glaring lack of knowledge of the Bible, doctrines, and traditions; (3) inconsistencies of belief; (4) superficiality of faith; (5) a belief in God, but a lack of trust in God; and (6) the failure of churches to make a profound impact upon society.

### Seminars

The Rev. Bob Edmiston, Director of Training, reported on various ministries, including seminars sponsored by CE/P. Last year, he reported, there were 75 seminars conducted by CE/P trainers. This does not include the ministries brought by Dick Aeschliman and Bob Palmer.

Mr. Edmiston reported that, in recent years, there has been a Music and Worship Conference held every two years. One is scheduled for Park Cities Presbyterian Church, Dallas, Texas, in 2001. Keynote speaker will be Dr. Hughes Oliphant Old, a minister of the Presbyterian Church (USA). Another leader will be Mr. Ron Matthews, worship director at Calvary Presbyterian Church, Willow Grove, Pennsylvania.

Also on tap is a worship conference in Atlanta, scheduled for August 24-26, 2000. The keynote speaker will be Dr. Edmund Clowney. Others who have been influenced by him but have taken diverse paths will also make presentations.

### Psalms on CD

One of the CE/P Committee members is the Rev. Terry Johnson, Senior Pastor of Independent Presbyterian Church, Savannah, Georgia. At the instigation of his congregation, a CD has just been produced, consisting of numerous psalm settings from the *Trinity Psalter* and sung by the Scottish Festival Singers. Copies of *Psalms of the Trinity Psalter* were provided by the

Coordinator to those in attendance at the meeting.

Mr. Johnson came in for a bit of ribbing in conjunction with the new offering. One Committee member declared that "Terry is a lead singer" on the CD. Mr. Johnson quipped in reply, "There are certain prerogatives of leadership." Paul Settle followed: "If you're the lead singer, maybe I could turn this in for an Amy Grant."

### Fall in New England

Dr. Bob Palmer, Director of Church Ministry, enthusiastically spoke of a September 2000 Equip Conference, to be held in Exeter, New Hampshire. Sponsored by PCA and OPC churches, participation will include Assembly of God congregations, and Baptist and Methodist churches. Dr. Palmer is especially desirous of having seniors go to New Hampshire in September, not only to experience the fall foliage, but also to see what God is doing in New England. If possible, there will be an historic tour, with Dr. David Calhoun as tour lecturer, which will explore where George Whitfield and Jonathan Edwards had such great influence.

Dr. Palmer referred to his great passion—that of reaching the Millennial Generation. There is, he said, an interest that is awakening in the denomination as to how to reach this new group of young people. He suggested that a "new paradigm" is needed in order to minister in a post-modern world.

### Youth Ministry

The new Director for Youth Ministry is the Rev. Dean Conkel, who comes to his post after being an assistant and then an associate pastor at Lakemont Presbyterian Church, Augusta, Georgia. He stated that he tells young people, "Don't be afraid of this thing called Reformed theology—it's something . . . that tastes good to the soul."

### Boy Scouts of America

It was reported that the United Methodist Church has dissociated itself from the Boy Scouts of America because of Boy Scouts' anti-homosexual stance. The question was raised as to whether the PCA could step into that vacuum. The Committee authorized the staff to research the matter.

### BCO Blues?

The Rev. Dick Aeschliman, Assistant Coordinator, assists elders and congregations to shepherd God's people. He said that when he informs people that he is going to be instructing them in the *Book of Church Order*, he often initially meets with resistance. "You know, the *Book of*

*Church Order* is the best thing for insomnia. . . . But beyond that, there are some really spiritual things in there."

Alluding to the annual meeting of chairmen of presbytery Christian Education committees (April 11-12, 2000), he stated that one of his projects was revising the presbytery manual for these men. He also stated that there is a need to lift the level of Christian education in the denomination.

### Great Commission Publications

The Rev. Tom Patete, Executive Director of Great Commission Publications (GCP), presented a five-year projection of program expenses and sales income. He reported that this somewhat conservative estimate should result in an abundance of resources available to develop new publications and services. GCP has been fully funded by sales revenues since 1991.

As of January 1st, GCP had hired a new man as Systems Administrator.

GCP is recruiting focus groups to discover real and felt needs with regard to new adult Sunday School series. It is offering more in the way of music CDs. And it plans to develop more children's ministry literature outside of Sunday School.

Great Commission Publications is a venture originally formed by the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, and for the last 25 years has been jointly owned by the OPC and PCA. Half of its twelve-man board is chosen by each of the denominations.

### Officers

Retiring Chairman George Mitchell gave an opening devotional from Daniel 1:8ff. He asked rhetorically, "What can we be doing that we may stay close to Jesus Christ?" The pastor from Powder Springs, Georgia, suggested five things: (1) stay in the Word; (2) stay true to God; (3) stay close to a friend; (4) stay away from anything that might cause us to fall; and (5) stay alert to the enemy. Dr. Mitchell quoted famed Baptist preacher Charles Haddon Spurgeon, who warned: "Beware of no man more than yourself, for you carry your greatest enemy within yourself."

New officers for the next year are as follows: Chairman, Jack Sullivan; Vice Chairman, Terry Johnson; Secretary, Michael Woodham.

### The Future of CE/P

The Committee voted to schedule an extended meeting (Thursday through Saturday) for next September, in order to deal with the future of CE/P.

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## TO UKRAINE WITH CHRIST

by Fred Greco

The Lord works in mysterious ways. How else could I explain how a corporate lawyer and father of two small boys (Peter 2½, and Daniel 1½) ended up in a remote corner of the Ukraine, a country that was a former part of the Soviet Union? But I did end up in Donetsk, Ukraine, and the experience was a blessing to me and a testimony of the glory of God among his people. I was able to see first hand the promise of God in Christ in Psalm 2:7-8: "I will declare the decree: the Lord has said to Me, You are my Son; this day I have begotten You. Ask of Me, and I shall give You the nations for Your inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for Your possession." As good Reformed Presbyterians, we should all know that the promise of that Psalm is true; we know that our Great and Sovereign God is in control of the entire world and that His church goes far beyond our corner of the world in America, but it is a refreshing drink for the soul to actually see that church beyond our borders.

The story of my trip to the Ukraine, like so many ways in which the Lord works our His will, did not begin with a grandiose plan or wondrous expectations. It began slowly, as God determined to work His will in me, exceeding not only my expectations, but also my hopes and dreams as well. It began with a phone call one day in December from Zack Eswine, the Teaching Elder of my church, Grace Presbyterian Church (Hudson, Ohio). Zack said that he had received a phone call from David Ludwig, the director of International Theological Educational Ministries (ITEM), formerly known as Christ For Russia. David had asked Zack if he would consider traveling to Donetsk, Ukraine for a period of two weeks to teach at a Seminary/Bible College that ITEM had established some years earlier. ITEM is an organization headquartered in St. Louis, that is seeking to establish reformed seminaries and schools in former Eastern bloc countries. Presently, there are works established in Donetsk (Ukraine), Riga (Latvia), and Odessa (Belarus). Each month, ITEM arranges for two pastors to travel to Donetsk for two weeks to teach another portion of the curriculum. At this particular time, ITEM was lacking one such "professor" for the month of February, and David was contacting Zack to see if he was interested in going. Zack not only replied that he would be willing to go, but he also called me and asked



The professors and their classes

me to pray about going with him. He said that ITEM was willing for me to go and he thought it would be a great opportunity. I have to say that my first inclination was to think up some pious sounding way to decline the offer. I had just started a job at a new law firm a few weeks earlier and did not know if I could get the time off, and I did not know if it would be prudent to leave my wife, Deb, and the boys for a few weeks. But when I went home and talked to my wife, I was surprised at her enthusiasm for me to go. She had previously spent 18 months in Japan as a missionary and she wanted me to have a taste of that experience. Even more surprising to me, my firm was willing to give me a little more than a week off, although I hadn't even been working there a month. After prayerful consideration,

I decided that I would go.

After a couple of months of preparation to get a passport and VISA and to make all the necessary arrangements, I was boarding a plane in Cleveland, bound for Donetsk, via Detroit and Amsterdam. Zack was my traveling companion, and we were to meet the other pastor, Richard Terpstra, in Donetsk. I was scheduled to teach "The Person and Work of Christ," while Zack taught "The Synoptic Gospels" and Richard "The Holy Spirit." With eager anticipation, I began my more than 24-hour trek to Donetsk. The plane took us on the long flight overseas to Amsterdam, and Zack and I had a wonderful opportunity to discuss the current ministry of our church, pertinent theological issues, and our expectations and plans for the week ahead. It is not often that a Ruling Elder has a chance to sit and talk about spiritual matters for 10 uninterrupted hours with his pastor, and therefore even the travel to start my trip was a blessing.

Upon arriving in Kiev from Amsterdam on the following afternoon (including a six-hour time change), we obtained our first taste of what it was like to be in the Ukraine. We got off the plane and into a long line with all the other passengers to have our passports and Visas checked. Standing all around the airport were imposing looking soldiers. I truly was afraid that somehow I would be "found out," that some soldier would pull me aside and have me interrogated because my Visa identified me as a "religious worker." But the Lord was gracious, and I passed through the entry point without any trouble. Next Zack and I spent some time trying to decipher the customs regulations to determine which line we should get in, how we should declare our goods and what forms to fill out. After getting in the wrong line, another passenger who spoke English noticed our confusion and offered to help. He directed us to the correct line, and I went through without any difficulty. Zack, however, had his bags searched, and when the soldiers saw that he had several books about Christ, they began to say "Christ" to themselves and laugh derogatorily. It was a first hand reminder that it would not be popular to be a Christian in the Ukraine. After we cleared customs, we were met by our Kiev contact, Igor, who took us to his small Ukrainian built car. We had several hours until our flight to Donetsk, so Igor offered to take us into the city for lunch. He asked us if we would like pizza, and we, a little surprised, said yes. We went to a local pizza restaurant and spent the next hour eating pizza and talking with Igor about his church, his family and how each of us were converted to Christ. It was a surreal, and yet very gratifying to be thousands of miles from home with a complete stranger, and yet to have the most essential thing in life (the "one thing necessary") in common. We found out that our hopes and dreams were quite similar—Igor had two little girls that he prayed would come to Christ—and we met our first Ukrainian brother.

After a few more hours of waiting, we boarded a propeller airplane (circa 1960) and left Kiev for Donetsk. I must admit that the afternoon's lunch, combined with no sleep, had taken its toll on me and as we landed into the Donetsk night I was focused on not being sick. I learned to my surprise later from Zack that part of the reason I was so sick was that our landing was very steep, so steep that it provided an immediate impetus for prayer! We did land safely, and as we entered the Donetsk airport we were greeted by two men, one of college age and one in his forties. The older man looked at Zack and I and said "Brother Greco? Brother Eswine?" "Yes", I replied, how did you know?" "I am Sergei Karpenko," he said. "You look very much like Americans." And so began our acquaintance with Sergei Karpenko, the minister in charge of the work

in Donetsk and now a dear friend. The other man was Sergei's nephew, also named Sergei ("little Sergei" to us). They drove us to our apartment, where we met Rich Terpstra and where we made arrangements to preach the next morning, the Lord's Day at Gethsemene Church.

When we awoke the next morning, my Ukrainian adventure began in earnest. A driver came to pick us up and take us to Gethsemene Church, where we were ushered past throngs of bustling children and smiling faces into a room where the pastor and the deacons were. We were told that each of us would preach a sermon of about 15-20 minutes at that morning's service, which we thought



The church and school in Donetsk

was a special accommodation for the three of us. How pleasantly wrong we were! In order to give a better picture of the Ukrainian church, let me provide a brief description of the worship services we experienced. The service that morning began with singing. What singing it was! Looking back, I realize how foolish I was in failing to anticipate wonderful music from the land of Tchaikovsky. The congregation sang like a choir, and the choir sang like angels. Russian folk songs, Russian hymns and American gospel songs (Blessed Assurance, How Great Thou Art) were sung by the congregation and the large choir. Then a deacon read a passage from the Psalms and provided a short (five minute) exposition of the passage. Throughout the entire service, there was a fascinating practice going on. Men and women would quietly and unobtrusively come up to the table where the elders sat and bring folded notes. We found out later during the service that on these notes were prayer requests that the congregation wished the elders to pray for. It was wonderful to see God's people so highly desirous of the prayers of their leaders, but in a way that was not an attempt to draw attention to themselves or interrupt the worship service. Then it was time for the sermons. We soon found out that it is the practice in the Ukraine to have not one sermon per service, but rather three. It was evidence to us of the desire of the Ukrainian Christians to feed upon the Word of God that they were not only willing, but also desirous of hearing three sermons. The men and women of the Ukraine may be poor by American standards, but they are rich in their desire to hear the Word of God. During the week I was in Donetsk, there was a Lord's Day morning service, an Lord's Day evening service, a morning and evening service on Tuesday, a service on Thursday and a service on Saturday. It seemed as if the people could not have enough of the Word.

On the next day we began classes. The schedule for classes is normally a two-week period from 9 am until 4 pm. Some of the students spoke a little English, but teaching the classes required translators. We had two superb translators, Natasha and Max. It is difficult for me to convey my debt of gratitude to Max and Natasha for their hard work, and my thankfulness to God for them. Here I was, an America who knew no Russian, and I was able to express myself and teach a class using sometimes complicated theological language

(those of you who teach can now how difficult it is to express the Trinity, the difference between a nature and a person, and the sinlessness of Christ in English, much less Russian!) thanks to the skill of the translators. It was a practical instruction to me of the mercy of God in overcoming man's curse at Babel. But they became more than translators; they are now my friends and fellow-laborers in the Gospel. There were two classes: a "Bible certificate" class and a "Bachelor's" class. The age of the students was varied—from 17 year old girls to men in their late 60s. Some were pastors and elders, others were children's Bible teachers. The one thing that they had in common was a burning desire to learn and a tremendous respect for our abilities, both of which were very humbling. The students had an excellent grasp of the Bible and were able over and over again, I found, to recite from memory any particular verse I would offer as a proof text. What was lacking, however, was a systematic or complete understanding of the whole counsel of God; it was for this reason that the school was so important. My task was made much easier by the fact that these students really desired to learn, not just to "go to school." Imagine if you will a group of American students who ask a question about 1 John 5:18 in relation to perseverance, and after being given a 3 minutes answer as it relates to Greek tenses, are satisfied—and who do not argue with the teacher. Imagine being asked a question, answering it, and asking if there are any further comments and being told: "because you gave us the right answer, there is nothing left to say." There are students who I will never forget and who I pray I will see again before glory. By God's grace, I believe that we made a difference in their lives, and the school will continue to do so.

The harvest is rich in the Ukraine, and this is a wonderful opportunity to see the Reformed faith flourish in an area of the world that is starved for Christ. It has become my prayer that my grandchildren might assist Reformed missionaries from the Ukraine in their work in the United States. Before the recent news, I would have likened the work in the Ukraine as the equivalent of being offered an initial stake in Microsoft as a startup. As Reformed Presbyterians, we know that the Gospel will go forward in the Ukraine; but what a blessing to be in the vanguard of Christ's army, pressing forward under His banner instead of conducting a police action to repair the damage done by Arminianism, anabaptism and worse.

If you are reading this and wonder "what can I do to help?" I would say two things—first, consider as a church or individually supporting ITEM and its work. ITEM is very efficient, but it still requires finances to translate Calvin's Institutes into Russian, heat the professors' apartment and give the students a small stipend. Second, be willing to go and teach! All it requires is two weeks, a plane ticket, an aptness to teach and subscription to the Westminster Standards or Three Forms of Unity. ITEM sends two men per month, and is always looking to send new men. This is especially true of Ruling Elders. I was (and to date still am) the only PCA Ruling Elder to go to Donetsk. I hope I cannot say the same thing next year. If you are a Ruling Elder and love to teach but don't have much opportunity outside Sunday school, the Ukraine is for you! You will have an opportunity to preach (I did four times), teach eager students, and stay up all night talking about the Bible and theology with your fellow professors. It will change your life. If you have any questions about ITEM, the Ukraine or the ministry in Donetsk, please feel free to contact me at greco@surfree.com. God bless you.

Mr. Greco is a ruling elder at Grace Presbyterian Church, Hudson, Ohio.

## 'MIRACLES MUST BE CATCHING' People from New York's Redeemer Presbyterian Church Help to Rescue African Deportee

by Paul Liben

While Miami's Cuban exile community rallies behind Elian Gonzalez, a young black man in worse straits finds his support among a decidedly different group of people. The core of this group is from New York City's Redeemer Presbyterian Church, a young, well-educated congregation of Manhattan sophisticates. They are fighting a vigorous battle to save Dominic Nunu, a 26-year-old Liberian Christian, from imminent deportation and possible death.

His story, and theirs, fits well with Passover and Easter and their themes of freedom and resurrection.

Mr. Nunu's travails began in 1990 with the outbreak of a civil war in Liberia, when one morning he found his father, a prominent Christian lawyer-activist, his mother, and two sisters murdered in their beds. Apparently, his father had incurred the wrath of a rebel army by refusing its demand for support. Realizing he was a marked man, Nunu fled to Ivory Coast and eventually ended up in New York three years ago.

In recent testimony, Nunu describes what was then going through his mind: "I thought I would be finally safe, . . . that the misery would be over."

Instead, he was immediately taken into custody by Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) officials and thrown into its Wackenhut Detention Center in Jamaica, Queens, where he languished for two years. There, his health deteriorated and his

applications for asylum were lost and delayed. He was released in May 1999 after going on a hunger strike, which brought attention to his plight and to that of others like him. It also earned him the violent enmity of the Center's local INS employees and allegedly of the heads of the New York INS office.

Since his release, Dominic Nunu has been a model citizen, the kind that most Americans would enjoy having as a neighbor. As his housemate, Chris Gilbert, relates, he has taken classes at the local university in Staten Island, worked with youth at a Liberian church, and worked towards gaining a Microsoft Certification as a computer expert. At the same time, he has been working sixteen hours a day as a security guard in a Harlem hospital. Togba Porte, the president of the Liberian Community of Staten Island, calls Nunu an exceptional role model that the community cannot afford to lose. Nunu wants to become a human rights attorney some day, following in his father's footsteps.

An immigration judge granted Dominic "withholding" status, withholding his deportation for fear of his safety. By then, the rebels who had killed his family had taken over Liberia. However, the judge denied him political asylum, ruling that he had lived in the Ivory Coast and could return there. Knowing that Ivory Coast authorities routinely deport Liberians to Liberia, Nunu's *pro bono* lawyers appealed, but the Board of Immigration Appeal (BIA) denied the appeal, claiming it had been filed four months past the deadline.

Still, Mr. Nunu had a valid work permit. The INS rarely deports immigrants who have this permit plus a "withholding" status. Dominic had both, yet earlier this month, he was suddenly served with a notice giving him 10 days to appear at an all-too-familiar place—the Wackenhut Detention Center — with his bags for deportation.

On Monday, April 17, Dominic Nunu appeared at Wackenhut and was promptly taken into custody. Once again, his faithful friends at Redeemer Presbyterian Church swung into action on his behalf. Joined by the Liberian community, they organized demonstrations in front of 26 Federal Plaza, the location for the Manhattan INS office. They contacted the media and had articles printed in New York newspapers. They contacted a number of politicians, from US Senate immigration subcommittee head Spencer Abraham (R) to New York's freshman senator, Charles Schumer (D), and urged that action be taken.

Then, on Tuesday night came the grim news. Sometime after 10 PM, Dominic was taken from Wackenhut and hustled to a nearby airport for deportation. As he was being led away from Wackenhut in handcuffs, a crowd of INS workers staged a sadistic *bon voyage* celebration. As he filed past them, they continued to mock and ridicule him. One worker took his picture while the others roared with laughter.

Dominic Nunu was placed on an airplane for deportation. Then, the extraordinary

happened. Back in Washington, INS Commissioner Doris Meissner got wind of the despicable antics of her New York office. On her orders, Nunu was removed from the plane just as it was about to take off.

Back in New York, the INS crew at Wackenhut were stunned to see Dominic again. One official went up to Nunu and screamed in his face. For the New York INS, this was indeed a humiliation. Today, he remains at Wackenhut, still in danger of deportation from the vengeful souls that surround him.

And yet, he is at peace. That's because he and his friends know one thing: Last Tuesday night, a great miracle happened, just in time for Easter Sunday.

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## PASTOR AND CHURCH DEFEND HIS PARTICIPATION IN EQUINOX INTERFAITH CELEBRATION CENTRAL CAROLINA PRESBYTERY ACCEPTS EXPLANATION AS 'ADEQUATE'

The Rev. Tom Henry, Interim Senior Pastor of Christ Covenant Presbyterian Church, Matthews, North Carolina, has defended his participation in a spring equinox interfaith celebration held in downtown Charlotte on March 20th. Also speaking out publicly in defense of Mr. Henry's participation in the event was the Session (board of elders) of the prominent congregation, the largest in Central Carolina Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA). And Central Carolina Presbytery, at its April 22, 2000, stated meeting, voted to vindicate Mr. Henry by accepting his statement and a statement from the Session as an "adequate explanation" of the situation.

The controversy began with the publication of a front-page story on the event in *The Charlotte World*, a Christian-oriented weekly newspaper. Written by Miss Kim Cuneo, the March 31, 2000, article was headlined: "Celebrating Differences Or Mocking God? Christ Covenant's Tom Henry Defends Participation In Event That Maligns Biblical Christianity."

### The Article

Miss Cuneo wrote: "The Great Aunt Stella Center was dimly lit at the Spring Equinox Interfaith Celebration. On stage sat Tiani Tarr, part of the West African Drumming Circle. New Age music played softly in the background. The Rev. Frances Cook, of the National Conference for Community and Justice, stood up to read the 'Litany of New Creation.'

"We are called to move in new directions," Cook read, and the audience read the answer, "But too often we cling to the paths we know."

"A pagan holiday, the spring equinox celebrates the victory where the god of light starts to reign over his twin, the god of darkness."

"Not the type of gathering you would expect to see the Rev. Tom Henry, of Matthews' Christ Covenant Presbyterian Church."

"So, what was he doing at this event?"

"He stood up and began to criticize Christians for 'building up denominational cocoons.' He then told the eclectic audience that 'to love one another is to see the face of God.'

"Henry's main point was from Victor Hugo's 'Les Miserables,' when Jean Valjean is caught with the stolen candlesticks and the priest says to him, 'I have bought you with these candlesticks.'

"I always wanted to be that priest," Henry said.

"Henry defended his unconventional presentation of the gospel at this unconventional event, saying he seized an opportunity to 'speak not against the city, but to the city.'

"But even event moderator Jerry Klein had trouble picking anything uniquely Christian about Henry's presentation. Klein said, 'What he said didn't strike me different than what anyone else said.'

The article goes on to speak of the Rev. Cynthia Macon-Jones of University Park Baptist Church as being one who saw the occasion "as a unique opportunity to share the Gospel with a group that is not likely to hear the claims of Christ in a church. She said that it is a Christian's responsibility to 'represent Christianity fully and wholly.'

"The one thing you have to be able to do is stand up for what you believe," said Macon-Jones, who spoke immediately after Henry. "If you're looking not to offend, you're in the wrong religious faith. Jesus offended a lot of people."

Miss Cuneo wrote that "Macon-Jones was more direct [than Henry] in seizing the chance to share the gospel with this crowd. She gave a stern message, reading from Isaiah and declaring, 'It's our part to confess, to repent. To forgive us is God's part. God is the only one who forgives.'"

The article states that the speaker after Mrs. Jones "was the Rev. Rebecca Nagy, of the teaching ministry New Directions. She stood before the audience, and recalled her first encounter with the Great Aunt Stella Center. . . .



West African drumming circle

"Jokingly referring to Klein's regular bashing of Christians in Creative Loafing, she said she told Klein, 'Move over Jerry, there's another Antichrist to share the throne with you.' . . .

"Nagy shared with the audience a vision that seemed more in line with the spirit of the equinox event. At the root of all religions 'we're all saying the same thing!' she exclaimed. 'The great Is then sends another teacher . . . this is how the great religions were founded!'"

"Nagy added, 'No one can save me, I have to save myself,' and 'it doesn't matter as long as we have faith.'

"Following Nagy, the Rev. Dr. Gene Owens, formerly on staff of Myers Park Baptist Church, took the podium."

The article continued: "Owens' presentation was a crowd-pleaser, drawing appreciative applause and head nods with statements like 'religion is the only discipline I know in which ignorance is a virtue' and 'there are no white southerners who are not racists.'"

According to the article, Tom Henry was not bothered by the various anti-Christian remarks. "I think Christ can handle Himself," he said later. Henry was seen on stage clapping and smiling at the fellow presenters, even saying an occasional 'Amen.'

"Musical interludes by One Voice, the gay, lesbian and gay-affirmative chorus of Charlotte, peppered the speakers' presentations. A number of religions were represented by six people on stage, from Leslie Rawls of the Buddhist Society of Interbeing to Imam Abdul Munir Mohammed of the Ash-Shaheed Islamic Center.

"The event closed with Jerry Klein leading what he called his 'kum ba yah' moment, with the audience holding hands for a moment of

quiet contemplation.

"While we may have very different understandings of God," Klein said, "we shouldn't fight or argue. . . there's enough of that." This might sound ironic coming from Jerry Klein, who recently wrote in Creative Loafing that "Christian Fundamentalism is not just a quaint philosophy which honors the past; it's an absurd construct of superstitious notions wrapped up in a package built on fear," and ". . . this country's Christian Fundamentalists continue to drag our society down, lost in the rapture of mindless fantasies and fairy tales."

The article concludes by saying: "But Klein struck a more reconciliatory tone at the spring equinox celebration.

"If I've said things on the air or written things that were hurtful or divisive," Klein said, "I apologize and ask for forgiveness. That's what I've been called to say."

### The Heart of the Controversy

The heart of the controversy regarding Tom Henry's appearance at the equinox celebration centers on the issue of whether he clearly and adequately presented the gospel. Sub-themes being sounded include the level of the PCA minister's participation, and whether he could legitimately participate at all.

### Was the Gospel Presented?

Many readers of the *Charlotte World* article have concluded that, based on the article, Mr. Henry did not make a gospel presentation, during his relatively brief (five to seven minute) remarks.

That is a point, however, that is vehemently disputed by Mr. Henry and Christ Covenant Church. A press release from the congregation states that he made "extended remarks about what it means to trust in Jesus, to be like the apostle Peter and step out in faith and focus on Christ alone." The document also says that Mr. Henry declared "that his call was to love Christ more than anything and to fix his heart, mind and will on Him." Further, "The reference to the scene in *Les Miserables* where the priest models the grace of Jesus by showing the thief mercy instead of justice was used by Pastor Henry as an example of the kind of person he wants to be."

Mr. Henry's position appears to be backed up, at least to an extent, by two of his fellow-presenters. Cynthia Macon-Jones opined, "I thought that it [the *Charlotte World* article] was slanted. If they were going to say



Kum-ba-yah moment

what Tom was going to say, they should've said all that he said."

She continued: "I thought that Tom got up and represented Christianity, because he talked about the love of Jesus Christ." She did not get the feeling that Mr. Henry misrepresented who he was. "I just remember

### New Creations: What Is Your Calling?

Equinox occurs when the sun crosses the equator, making day and night equal. Equinox connotes equality and balance. Spring connotes new beginnings and new life. This Spring Equinox Interfaith Celebration explores faith expectations. What is the new creation that your faith expects from you this spring?

**We welcome your involvement toward the respect and dignity of all persons.**

### The Call To Community

#### The Call to Community

*Djole*, West African Drumming Circle

**The Call to Voice** *One Voice*, Ensemble

#### The Words of Welcome

**Mr. Jerry Klein**, Great Aunt Stella Center

### The Call To Creation

#### The Litany of New Creation

**The Rev. K. Frances Cook**, NCCJ

Tell the people of our community:  
**This is a day for new beginnings!**

We are called to move in new directions,  
**But too often we cling to the paths we know.**

We are called to reach outward in love;  
**But too often we draw inward for protection.**

This is the hour to wake from our sleep:  
**This is the moment of faithful response.**

Dare to pursue your calling. Dare to create something new.  
**We will act out our faith by living life to the fullest, stretching our boundaries, and loving our neighbor.**

So let it be. **Amen.**

[The preceding text was taken from the bulletin for the Interfaith Celebration.]

feeling I was glad to have someone on the stage with me who was also representing Christianity."

Gene Owens stated that he could "resonate some with what Tom said. I could tell that he was more evangelical." Dr. Owens stated that the reason why he believed that

was probably because of Mr. Henry's use of traditional language.

The liberal Baptist minister added: "I got a vague notion that this [what Tom Henry was presenting] was not my faith."

However, neither Mrs. Macon-Jones nor Dr. Owens could specify what it was about Tom Henry's message that was distinctly evangelical or Reformed. To date, neither Tom Henry nor the congregation has publicly released the specific remarks which he did make on the occasion. According to Stelle Snyder, the church's Communications Director, there is no record of his specific remarks because he spoke extemporaneously.

### Was It Worship?

Was this celebration a service of worship? Pastor Henry and Christ Covenant strongly maintain that it was not.

The program clearly shows that there was a "litany" which was read at the beginning of the proceedings. Moreover, the event closed

with a “kum ba yah” moment in which the participants meditated silently while they held hands. According to Mr. Henry’s statement, he participated in both the litany and the closing meditative moment.

The position of Christ Covenant Church is that the “litany” had no religious overtones, but was rather a calling to one another, to stretch the boundaries and to love our neighbors. As a matter of fact, Stelle Snyder stated that Pastor Henry was insistent that he would not participate in an interfaith worship service.

**The Rationale**

In an interview, Stelle Snyder noted that this is the third such event she has attended, and that there is always a “clear” and “dramatic” difference between what those from other religions are saying, and what those who are Christians are saying. This difference is most highlighted by the fact that whereas the other religions believe in man’s ability, the Christians proclaim man’s inability and God’s ability to save. She avers, “There can be no confusion as to what Tom was saying.” For anyone who studies *Les Miserables*, the priest is the Christ-figure who is extending grace rather than justice. The purpose of participating in the event, said the church spokeswoman, was to “open dialogue.” She stated that Christ Covenant Church wanted to say to the people gathered there, “We’re reaching out to you, so you can hear the gospel.”

Stelle Snyder points to comments written by Jerry Klein, the event coordinator, in the

some of you can now also hear that I’m sincere in apologizing to you for my attacks.

“I’m still a ‘work in progress,’ as are we all. While I hope we will continue to challenge each other, to tackle, with vigor, the issues that divide us, I’m going to try to do so from this point on with a stronger commitment to civil language, an open heart, and a respectful attitude.

“In the end, though, it all comes down to this, which you can take or leave as you may, in the simplest, most pure, maybe child-like sincerity I can find within myself: I’m sorry. Period.”

It is the love of Christ, says Stelle Snyder, which motivated the reaching out to the world via the interfaith event.

**Why the Discrepancy?**

Why is there a discrepancy between what Miss Cuneo reported and what is being claimed by Tom Henry and Christ Covenant Church? It has been suggested that the young lady had an agenda.

Dr. Owens said, “The reporter had decided what she wanted to write.” He stated that she picked “the most shocking points.” He added: “The perspective [of *The Charlotte World*] must be that of a very right-wing sort of paper.”

For him, Kim Cuneo was “like the archaeologist who goes looking for the remains of the Ark on Mt. Ararat, rather than simply going to find what’s there. I don’t believe the reporter came to be enlightened. I think she came to scoff. These people [right-wing people] do not have an open mind.”

But Paul English, Managing Editor of the newspaper, disputes that there was an agenda which drove the story. “She [Kim Cuneo] did not go there with an agenda.”

Mr. English says that the staff did wonder “why he [Tom Henry] was there, with all these . . . kooks! A Buddhist, a Muslim, New Age—and then there was Tom Henry. . . . We probably would’ve covered the story anyway because it [the event] was so off-the-wall.”

The Managing Editor, who is a PCA ruling elder, declared: “We did not go out to ‘get’ Tom Henry. We were always on very good terms with Christ Covenant. Harry Reeder [former pastor at the church] used to be a columnist for us twice a month.”

**Now What?**

According to the Communications Director at Christ Covenant, the church wants to put this matter behind them. Stelle Snyder also indicated the desire to re-ignite the previous good relationship the congregation has enjoyed with the Christian newspaper.

**The Effects of the Story**

The *Charlotte World* article has spread far and wide over the internet, and particularly on lists frequented by people from the Presbyterian Church in America and its sister denomination, the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. The widespread notoriety of the incident elicited from a member of Mr. Henry’s presbytery, an overture which called on Mr.

inaccuracy of its controversial article.

But Stelle Snyder would point, as an example of inaccuracy, to the fact that there was no reference in the literature to the event being a celebration of a pagan holiday. “The equinox was just the time of year they picked for the event!”, she says. And she maintains that the reason why there has not been a point-by-point refutation of the story is because of the desire by Christ Covenant Church to foster the peace and purity of the church, rather than continuing to stir the controversy.

**The Congregation’s Affirmation**

Meanwhile, Christ Covenant Church has called Tom Henry to be the new Senior Pastor. He received an eighty-nine percent affirmative vote from among the 1,110 ballots cast. [Since he has been an Associate Pastor at the church, and has not had an intervening time of service, he needed to

receive at least an eighty percent vote. Central Carolina Presbytery will have to approve with an at least seventy-five percent positive vote.—Ed.]

A recent article by Ken Garfield, religion editor in the *Charlotte Observer*, reports this news favorably. Mr. Garfield wrote that “what makes the vote even more inspiring is that it douses the firestorm that erupted after Henry participated in an interfaith event.” The article concluded: “A Christian preacher glorifying Christ is not news. What is news is that the interim pastor of a conservative Christian church shared a stage with people who don’t glorify Christ. What’s news is that he did that and still earned a job promotion from a thankful congregation.”

[Photos by Matthew Pickering, courtesy The Charlotte World.]



Pastor Tom Henry

Henry to give account of his actions of March 20th.

The Rev. Mike Ericson, pastor of Countryside Presbyterian Church, Cameron, North Carolina, sent in the overture to Central Carolina Presbytery since he believes that Mr. Henry not only should explain himself, but also because he believes that he should be given opportunity to be vindicated. Mr. Ericson indicated that he spoke with Pastor Henry about the overture prior to the stated meeting of Presbytery, and that Mr. Henry viewed the overture as a “friendly” gesture. The Presbytery responded to that overture by accepting the statements from Mr. Henry and the Session as an adequate explanation.

Meanwhile, *The Charlotte World* is staying with its original story. According to Paul English, no one has demonstrated the



A standing ovation for “What a Wonderful World”

April 1, 2000, edition of *Creative Loafing*, to illustrate the potential impact which Christians can have on an event such as the interfaith celebration. Mr. Klein wrote that, in contrast to his attitude in the past when Christians have told him that they are praying for him, he has now come to appreciate that at least some Christians “mean it in the best, highest sense. Maybe you’re getting through to me.”

He continued: “Am I about to convert? No. But do I believe some of you are sincere? Yes. Lately, I’ve received apologies from some of you for your attacks on me, and, on a one-to-one basis, I know you’re sincere. I hope

“New Creations: What Is Your Calling?” was “A Spring Equinox Interfaith Celebration”, presented by the Great Aunt Stella Center, Mecklenburg Ministries, and The National Conference for Community and Justice.

The Great Aunt Stella Center meets in the former facilities of Tabernacle Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church, and “is a unique, non-profit, community supported organization offering experiences in art and culture, education, human services, and religion and spirituality.” Its mission “is to bring together people who may look different, sound different, and believe differently in a community of respect.”

Mecklenburg Ministries “was conceived in the belief that the faith community could and should make an impact on issues of compassion and justice in Charlotte-Mecklenburg.” It bills itself as an “Interfaith Advocate for Compassion and Justice.”

The National Conference for Community and Justice (NCCJ) was founded in 1927 as the National Conference for Christians and Jews. It is “a human relations organization dedicated to fighting bias, bigotry, and racism in America. NCCJ promotes understanding and respect among all races, religions, and cultures through advocacy, conflict resolution, and education.”

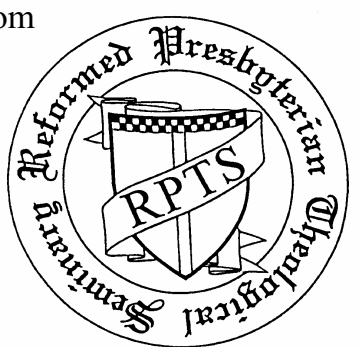
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# EDITORIALS AND LETTERS

## Voices from the Past

Church journalism has often been a controversial enterprise; and overtures from at least two PCA presbyteries to this year's General Assembly help to illustrate the point. Of course, this is not the first time that an ecclesiastical establishment has tried to prevent a free press from telling the whole story.

We thought that it would be good to consider words of wisdom from almost thirty years ago. The following excerpts were taken from an article written by Robert Hastings, Editor of the *Illinois Baptist*:

*Efforts to hush-hush an issue sometimes come from church and denominational leaders; the man in the pew may unwittingly encourage them by his insistence that he find nothing in his paper that is shocking or upsetting.*

*However, church and denominational leaders should fear publicity only if they are doing something they shouldn't. If they are above board, they should welcome inquiry and the full sharing of information.*

*Actually, an open press is the best friend that a conscientious church leader can have. In that open press, the issues will be aired and debated until truth eventually comes to the front. The honest and dedicated leader is at a disadvantage whenever rumor-mongers run rampant in personal conversations and telephone calls, yet never are forced out into the open in the public press.*

*If church leaders want a controlled press, they should at least be honest enough to admit that this is the identical tool used so effectively by totalitarian states.*

Although written by a Baptist, those words appeared in the September 6, 1972, edition of the *Presbyterian Journal*, a magazine formed in 1942 in order to agitate for reform within the Southern Presbyterian Church.

The *Journal's* parent organization was one of four which called for the formation of the Continuing Presbyterian Church (now the

Presbyterian Church in America). It is abundantly clear, then, that those who formed the PCA had no problem with the type of reporting which the *Presbyterian Journal* used to do.

Moreover, it is also clear that investigative journalism has been a legitimate endeavor within the church for a long time. Thus, the opposition to the historic role of the church press by North Florida and Southeast Alabama Presbyteries represents an interpretation of the Church's Constitution which was not held in 1973 by the founders of the PCA, and which apparently has not been held by any Presbyterian denomination.

The position taken by Southeast Alabama is particularly novel, in that it would seek to gag churchmen who have legitimate concerns over the direction of the ecclesiastical institution. In the matter of a complaint or appeal, parties to a case are banned from circularizing a higher court. And during a trial, the judges are not to express an opinion to outsiders. But there is no Constitutional prohibition on comment by others.

That this is a novel view can be seen in that the *Presbyterian Journal* itself did not hesitate to comment on judicial charges which were brought against a member of Charleston Presbytery in South Carolina. Indeed, the Editor, G. Aiken Taylor, had himself brought the charges of heresy, when he published a public challenge which attacked the views of a professor.

Other examples from the conservative wing of the Southern Presbyterian Church could be adduced. Suffice it to say that at least several of those who are helping to attack freedom of the press apparently have forgotten their heritage. In point of fact, many of the current PCA leaders not only supported the *Presbyterian Journal* and its style of journalism—at least some of them served on the magazine's board. Others engaged in other publishing ventures, such as the Concerned Presbyterian newsletter and *Presbyterian Churchmen United Contact*, which likewise were not bashful in commenting on the contemporary ecclesiastical scene.

Those who are seeking to overturn the historic understanding of the place of church journalism, it seems to us, have an obligation to try to amend the Standards of our denomination

in order to forbid investigative church journalism, including coverage of on-going judicial matters. Unless and until that is done, they don't have a Constitutional leg to stand on.

For ourselves, we will stand with our Confession of Faith and its advocacy of Christian liberty and freedom of conscience—doctrines which gave rise to two centuries of a free church press. And we would urge the commissioners to the PCA General Assembly to stand with us against those who would, perhaps even with good intentions, seek to impose extra-Constitutional restrictions upon us.

—Frank J. Smith

## Evaluation: Are There Discrepancies in the SJC Ruling?

A comparison of the recommendation of the SJC officers in the John Wood case with the judgment rendered by the SJC, shows that the full SJC changed at least one key alleged fact which the officers had set forth in their "Statement of Facts."

The key finding which has now been changed was that Tennessee Valley Presbytery (TVP) had appointed a judicial investigative committee when allegations of wrong-doing had been brought to the attention of the court. This was an important linchpin to the argument that TVP had indeed "acted" in the matter. If TVP had appointed such a committee, then there would be prima facie evidence that the court was taking the matter seriously. If it had not appointed such a committee, one might be led to conclude that TVP had not properly acted.

While the officers alleged, in their "Statement of Facts," that TVP had appointed said committee, the full SJC has tacitly admitted that that did not occur. It is reasonable to believe that the reason why that "fact" was removed from the report, is because that "fact" cannot be substantiated.

Also critical to the determination whether or not TVP had "acted" is whether it had considered the "matter" brought to its attention by Western Carolina Presbytery. The SJC agrees with its officers that the "matter" had been considered by TVP at both its April and its July, 1999, stated meetings. The Commission cites an overture adopted by TVP in October 1999 to that effect. However, at least two pieces of evidence counter that claim. The first is that the docket adopted at the July meeting lists a discussion of the theoretical matter of women speaking in public worship, but does not list any discussion of the specific matter with regard to Cedar Springs Presbyterian Church or its pastor, John Wood. The second is the protest lodged by the Rev. Dr. King Counts and others, which was spread on the record of TVP at its January 2000 meeting. Dr. Counts states that "no judicial proceedings or investigation ever occurred." Dr. Paul Gilchrist, former Stated Clerk of the General Assembly and a member of Tennessee Valley Presbytery, objected to that statement and insisted that an investigation had taken place. However, Ruling Elder Mark Wilson, who had been Moderator of Presbytery at the July 1999 meeting, immediately corrected him and stated that no investigation had occurred.

### POLICY REGARDING LETTERS

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The ruling by the full SJC is also problematic, in that it finds the John Wood matter "administratively out of order." However, the SJC officers had found the matter "judicially out of order."

This immediately raises a problem. According to the SJC Manual, the question of judicial orderliness is raised only after the matter is assigned, either to a panel or to the full SJC. And, in order for the matter to be so referred, the officers would first have had to find it administratively in order. But, once the officers find the matter administratively in order, there is no provision for a panel or the Commission itself to reverse that finding.

More than that, the change in the basis for the ruling has created a situation in which the two presbyteries (Ascension and Western Carolina), which worked to demonstrate the judicial orderliness of the matter, now have had the basis for the ruling changed; and that has been done with no possibility for recourse. Or, in other words, not only did the SJC, which is relying upon technicalities, not follow the technicalities properly—it also did not treat these two presbyteries fairly or equitably.

More injustice can be seen in the forcible recusal of men from the three presbyteries which had petitioned for original jurisdiction. The SJC made its ruling based on SJC Manual 6.2, which mandates recusal to parties to a case. However, the *Book of Church Order* is clear that in a case of original jurisdiction, the only parties to the case are "the Presbyterian Church in America" and the accused. Only when there is a complaint or appeal that goes to the Assembly, is a presbytery a party to the case. The Committee on Constitutional Business has recently determined that mere membership within a presbytery which has pursued a matter of original jurisdiction does not automatically disqualify that individual from serving on the case. And yet, it would appear that the SJC ruled that mere membership in these three presbyteries was sufficient to unseat these three men. This is another example of the injustice meted out by the SJC in this case.

A further issue that may be raised is why the minutes of the SJC do not reflect what transpired in the meeting. The original proposed judgment by the SJC officers declared that the matter was "judicially out of order." The judgment by the full SJC says that the matter is "administratively out of order." Even apart from the lawfulness of changing the basis for the ruling, there is the question of whether the minutes of the SJC accurately reflect the switch. The minutes, which were reviewed by the Committee on Constitutional Business, state that there were several amendments to the report offered by the officers. But there is no reference to an amendment of the judgment or the reasoning! This suggests that the SJC minutes are incomplete and inaccurate. But, why is that so? How can it be that the SJC, in such a high profile matter, would not be careful? It is a question concerning which, we trust, the church will demand answers.

—Frank J. Smith

## Letters

Dear Frank:

I was disappointed that you did not publish my edited email summary of our telephone conversation. Please see your February 4 email to me and my response. I understood from you that you would print only my written comments. What was printed failed to accurately represent my position on PCA courts. Please print this letter and my full statement in the next issue of *Presbyterian & Reformed News*. Thank you very much.

Sincerely,  
David B. Calhoun,  
Professor of Church History  
Covenant Theological Seminary,  
St. Louis, Missouri

### PRESBYTERIAN AND REFORMED NEWS

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Robert Shapiro, Editor-in-Chief  
Frank J. Smith, Ph. D., Editor  
Penelope Ann Abraham-Smith, Assistant Editor  
Adrian Abraham, Webmaster and Layout Manager  
Financial Office  
6470 Bentley Trail, Cumming, GA 30040

Editorial and Business Address:  
905 Dogwood Park Drive  
Lawrenceville, GA 30045  
678-442-9863  
E-mail: [PINS@JOURNALIST.COM](mailto:PINS@JOURNALIST.COM)  
Web Site: <http://pins.simplenet.com>

"I don't know about Roberts Rules of Order—I'm not a parliamentarian. However, in terms of church history, it strikes me as being unduly restricted. I can't remember either in Scottish or American Presbyterian church history where that much restriction was applied either to the meetings or the actions of church courts as a regular policy. Of course, for reasons of prudence or charity, certain sessions or actions of church courts may be limited to members only. That is understandable and right, but as a general practice, I think our courts and records should be open and available to all. After all, we are a 'connectional' church."

[Editor's note: A diligent search of our email log failed to discover a response to our February email—another indication that computers cannot always be trusted! We wish to thank Dr. Calhoun for his extended remarks.—Ed.]

Dear Mr. Shapiro:

I read your *mea culpa* on page 13 of the March-April issue and wish to mention several points:

1. I do not recall your calling me about *World* magazine's refusal to publish the Reformation Day Statement with its hundreds of signers, including dozens of PCA and OPC pastors. So if your failure to call Joel Belz was wrong, was your failure to call me wrong, too?

2. The question whether *World* reneged on an "agreement" or a "firm agreement" to publish the Reformation Day Statement is one that I will leave to the Jesuits.

3. You allege that neither D. James Kennedy nor R. C. Sproul has "featured or highlighted his Reformation Day support from his platform." First, how do you know this? Did you ask them? Second, even if this speculative statement happens to be true, it is irrelevant to the fact that Drs. Kennedy and Sproul signed the Statement, along with many other prominent Christians around the globe—including Robert L. Reymond, Timothy Kauffman, Carl Bogue, Robert K. Wright, John A. Battle, Jr., Gleason Archer, Mal Couch, John Witmer, John C. Whitcomb, Jeffrey Khoo, and Robert Morey, to name a few. That Statement was the "platform" for their views.

4. Since you do not tell your readers, what exactly are Messrs. Belz' and Olasky's views on the Covenant College choir singing in Mass? Why is mentioning the fact that the College choir sang in two Roman Masses an "inappropriate linkage" with the *World* magazine story? Mr. Belz is CEO of *World* and Chairman of the Board of Covenant, and Dr. Olasky is a member of the Board of Covenant and Editor of *World*. If there is indeed a pattern here, it ought to be reported.

And there does seem to be a pattern: There is at least one devotee of the Roman Church-State on the masthead of *World* (why don't you call Mr. Belz to ask him how many Romanists are on *World*'s masthead and staff?); *World* regularly retains Romanists to promote the magazine; and for years *World* has given away books written by Romanists. I think some investigative reporting is in order. Perhaps Messrs. Belz and Olasky are indeed "papal sympathizers," to use your phrase. Since they work constantly with Roman Catholics but reject a paid Statement critical of Rome and supportive of the Reformation, one might be led to that conclusion.

5. Your *mea culpa* reported that "according to Joel Belz, the Covenant [College] Board, while cautioning the chorale not to accept in the future

invitations to participate in the mass. . .," but the news columns of your paper reported the opposite: The Covenant College Board not only did not discipline those responsible for this idolatrous episode, but encouraged them to accept similar opportunities in the future. The headline above the story in the December issue of *Presbyterian and Reformed News* was "Covenant College Board Defends Choir Singing in the Roman Catholic Mass." The response of the Covenant College Board to the General Assembly included these words: "the board of Covenant College endorses the decision of the Madrigals' director to accept the singing assignment and would encourage judicious exploitation of all such opportunities in the future."

Cordially,  
John W. Robbins, Ph.D.  
President, Trinity Foundation

[Since the article reporting the Reformation Day Statement was not critical of The Trinity Foundation (Trinity) but was critical of World no injustice was seen to be done to the reputation of Trinity or Dr. Robbins. If, however, Dr. Robbins would like me to interview him, I am most obliging.

While the Society of Jesus may well have a position on this matter, I trust that Dr. Robbins can appreciate the difference between a "contingent agreement" and one that is settled. I was led to believe by Joel Belz that all advertisements received were subject to approval.

With regard to these Reformed leaders having signed the Reformation Day Statement, but not having taken a stance in their own ministries, no, I disagree that it is not irrelevant, in that what I support as an individual is not reflective of my corporate relations, i.e. my employees at EMC Corp. are not bound by my public personal confession. This was precisely Joel Belz's point. He could support the Reformation Day statement personally but could not bind *World* magazine to the statement. While I do not eschew the worthiness of discovering Messrs. Belz & Olasky's view on participation in the Mass, and as an ex-Catholic that is of great interest to me, my *mea culpa* only meant to highlight a lack of thoroughness on the part of *P&R News* in researching the story. The fact that there are devotees of Rome does not negate the common grace quotient that Reformed people acknowledge are to be found even in those deceived by false forms of Christianity.

I heartily acknowledge a seeming discrepancy in the two accounts and I also affirm that they both cannot be fully true. But I also know that I see in a glass darkly and I await clarification from the Covenant Board while I trust that Mr. Belz has accurately reflected his position to me in our conversation. "Love believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. . . ." —*Bob Shapiro*

[Micheal DiPeppino's article regarding the creation debate in Southern California Presbytery of the OPC was carried in the January/February issue. That article elicited a response from five participants in that debate, who took a contrary viewpoint: that letter appeared as an "open forum" piece in the March-April edition of the newspaper. Here, Mr. DePeppino issues his own response to the "open forum" article.—Ed.]

Are OPC ministers guilty of immoral vow breaking if they hold to some form of the

Framework Hypothesis (FH) of Genesis? This is implicit in the question which prompted the formation of a committee to study the FH in the Southern California Presbytery of the OPC. The Presbytery was right to investigate the question.

As to the letter's assertions about the animus imponentis: While I do not disagree with the proper use of the function of the animus imponentis, the majority's (i.e. the majority of the committee) letter to the editor unintentionally misleads the reader to believe the OPC somehow considers other non-24 hour interpretations of the days of Genesis one to be non-threatening to her system of doctrine. Two things in response to this: First, to my knowledge, the OPC has implicitly revealed its mind as a whole body regarding the nature of the creation days only at its inception. At its inception, twenty-four hour and day-age views were held by OPC's ministers and ruling elders, not the FH. The FH is not therefore included with the implicit allowance of the day-age interpretation that was apparently made by the whole body when it was formed. The FH differs essentially from the day-age interpretation concerning the nature of the creation days. The FH asserts "paper," metaphorical, or literary days, but not objective, space-time days. The day-age and twenty-four hour interpretations assert cosmic time periods (longer time periods and twenty-four hour days, respectively). While I do not believe the day-age theory agrees in sense (i.e. regarding the nature of days) with the Divines' intent for "in the space of six days," there does not seem to be any challenge to the system of doctrine by the conclusion or hermeneutic used to arrive at the day-age interpretation. This I do not conclude about the FH. The day-age interpretation is consistent with what Genesis one reveals to us of God's actions in time. This is quite different than the FH view that Genesis one reveals nothing about space-time days of creation even though The Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms make a time-space interpretation of the days and apply it to the Sabbath day. It seems that FH proponents in our presbytery assert that the days of creation are historical, "solar," but not cosmological. Second, the OPC has not spoken as a whole deliberative body as to whether of FH is in accord with the system of doctrine. Therefore, the majority errs in asserting the animus imponentis of the OPC can be used as grounds to defend OPC ministers and ruling elders who hold to the FH. I think the majority would admit that there is a difference between the representative actions of presbyteries verses those of the General Assembly.

The majority at most can say that only presbyteries of the OPC have ordained ministers who hold to the FH. And yes, some presbyteries are now debating whether it was an error to do so. The reader of the majority's response should carefully note their statement: "Furthermore, Mr. DiPeppino's concern that the framework interpretation 'undermines' the secondary standards obscures the real issue. . ." I think that if any view is being formally considered by a presbytery if it is in accord with or undermines our secondary standards it is a "real" (germane, pertinent) issue. I pose this question to the majority: What is more binding upon OPC ministers, the sense of the secondary standards or decisions by deliberative bodies that conclude a particular view is in accord with the second ordination vow? By asking the question the way they have, the majority has possibly implied that they think the latter is the more important issue. If the animus imponentis is more binding, then what guidance and protection is gained by having a written, objective secondary standard if deliberative bodies' decisions about the second ordination vow are more authoritative? Secondary standards in objective form provide a rule to know if ministers and deliberative bodies have erred in doctrine and practice.

Given my assertion that the FH is not in accord with the sense of our secondary standards and is therefore an exception to the secondary standards, deliberative, ordaining bodies in the OPC must determine if the FH can be held by those who take the second ordination vow. My contention is that what is more

authoritative are the secondary standards over that of a deliberative body's decision that a certain exception is acceptable. OPC ordaining bodies have the right to judge whether exceptions are in accord with the second ordination vow, but the church may always judge on the basis of the secondary standards if a deliberative body erred by allowing a particular exception.

Therefore, the function of the animus imponentis is not to change the wording or sense of the secondary standards, but to weigh the implications of exceptions to the secondary standards. If the church views the secondary standards to be in error, using the animus imponentis is not the most authoritative and binding means to alter the secondary standards.

As to the assertion that I misstated certain facts, I reply: The majority is composed of five members who advocate either the Framework Hypothesis or its Scriptural and/or confessional comportment. All five affirm the latter in different degrees. As to the former issue of affirming the view, the majority's report was submitted not merely as the FH in an orderly presentation, but also as a defense of its truthfulness to which all five members of the majority signed their names. It was not until the second adjourned meeting when Rev. Poundstone publicly announced that he "found the Framework Interpretation to be a bit of a stretch." Next, in attempting to state that the majority has made an important change in their definition of the FH (i.e. from non-solar days to solar days) between the time both sides met as a committee until the majority distributed their report to the Presbytery, I misstated that the majority distributed two versions of their report, one to the minority and one to the Presbytery. There was no intent to challenge the majority's moral integrity, only the stability of their position. In the case of Mr. Laurie: When I wrote that "he (Mr. Laurie) argued from the Presbytery floor that to adopt the minority's stand was in essence a rejection of scientific advances made in physics, biology and geology" Mr. Laurie did not use the word 'biology' but 'astronomy'. Mr. Laurie explicitly denies that he holds to macro-evolution. My apologies to members of the committee for these errors.

I do want to note that the majority does not resist my use of the terms 'harmonize' and 'harmonization' with respect to how Christians can or ought relate "scientific evidence" to Scripture's teaching. This could be oversight or indifference by the majority to respond on this point. The letter to the editor states that "he (Mr. Laurie) spoke of the necessity of maintaining his own personal integrity as a practicing scientist who in his daily work must deal with the evidence for an old earth."

The question I personally posed to Mr. Laurie, I pose to the reader: Is the evidence for an old earth more compelling than the straightforward propositions of Genesis which communicate a sequential, chronological week of 24 hour creation days? The letter implies that Mr. Laurie's advocacy of the FH has a relationship to the tensions he faces as a scientist. It is true that at times observing and thinking about the physical order does challenge whether or not our understanding of Scripture is proper. But, it is more often the case that Scripture challenges men about their assumptions of reality, truth, and morality. When scientists interpret general revelation in a way that contradicts Scripture, Scripture and its hermeneutic have the final authority. There are no brute, uninterpreted facts. One's worldview determines how the facts are understood. The majority's assertion seems naive that "macroevolution is logically a separate issue from the question of whether the picture of God's creating the world in six days is to be taken figuratively. Therefore, raising it as if it were a potential implication of the framework interpretation confuses the discussion, preventing a fair evaluation of the interpretation itself". While one can hold to a FH view of Genesis one and not hold to macro-evolution or be concerned to Scripturally accommodate it, it does seem that there would be significantly less Biblical grounds to quibble with evolutionary origins if you remove from the Christian Faith the doctrine that God created the heavens and

Continued on page 18

The *Presbyterian Journal* came under attack in the 1960s. It was alleged that the editorial staff "do continually strive to divide the Presbyterian Church in the United States" and that "by their unwholesome criticism and innuendo they undermine the confidence of the members of the [PCUS] in their constitutionally elected and appointed leadership"; and that the editors were guilty of "irregular churchmanship and disregard of the Presbyterian order of government" and of a "general failure to submit themselves to the government and discipline of the Church" along with "their evident design not to fulfill their ordination vows to further the Church's purity and peace." The Assembly was

asked to find that if "unconstitutional actions have taken place that injure the purity and peace of the Church, that it officially condemn them and order whatever is necessary for the spiritual welfare of the churches under its care." Furthermore, the Assembly was to "request that the teaching elders and ruling elders of the [PCUS] involved in the perpetuating of such disorder in the Church be officially disciplined by the censure of Admonition, and enjoined to cease and desist from further such actions which are detrimental and disruptive to the work of the Lord Jesus Christ."

Source: *The History of the Presbyterian Church in America: The Silver Anniversary Edition*

# NEWS FROM THE PRESBYTERIES

## Ascension

The spring stated meeting of the Presbytery of the Ascension met April 28-29, hosted by the Gospel Fellowship Presbyterian Church, Valencia, PA. Moderator RE Richard McBane called the meeting to order, and TE Leon Ben-Ezra preached the opening sermon.

The business of presbytery was unusually light with most business being routine matters. A couple of items of note came from the Candidates and Credentials Committee. Mr. Charles Brown, member of the Berean Presbyterian Church (Elwood City, PA) was examined and received under care. Also examined for transfer of candidacy was Mr. Earl Cornuet, who was also approved as a candidate under care.

The Mission to the World Committee chairman, TE Dale Szallai, presented a report done by the committee surveying the churches of presbytery as to which MTW missionaries were supported and by how much. What showed up in the report was the number of churches supporting each missionary on the list and the combined total dollar amount for that missionary. It was a very clear and helpful study. Also reporting under MTW business was TE Zachary W. Eswine of Great Lakes Presbytery, who, along with RE Fred Greco (also of Great Lakes) was involved in a mission trip to the Ukraine.

The Stated Clerk, RE Frederick Neikirk, reported on the SJC's refusal to hear our appeal on their handling of the overture regarding the matter of women preaching and the Cedar Springs Presbyterian Church session and pastor. The SJC has apparently been successful in blocking the overture from coming to the General Assembly.

The business being concluded a few hours early, presbytery adjourned, but not before enjoying the wonderful lunch prepared by the host church. There appeared to be no one requesting excuse for leaving before the meal. —*Carl W. Bogue, Correspondent*

## Calvary

### January Stated Meeting

The sixty fifth stated meeting of Calvary Presbytery was held on January 22, 2000, at Clemson (S. C.) Presbyterian Church. The Moderator, Ruling Elder Bill Stenhouse, called the meeting to order and led the worship service. The Rev. Decherd Stevens preached from I Peter 5:1-4.

Presbytery dissolved the pastoral relationship between the Liberty Springs (S. C.) Presbyterian Church and the Rev. Martin Marty; and approved the call of Friendship Presbyterian Church, Greer, South Carolina, to Mr. Marty. The terms of the call included a salary of \$50,000, plus four weeks vacation.

The Rev. Robert Slimp of Palmetto Presbytery was approved as Stated Supply of the Liberty Springs Church, effective after February 1, 2000; Mr. Slimp is to appear before the Presbytery in April 2000.

The Stated Supply relationship between the Rev. Dr. Fred Thompson and Zion Presbyterian Church, Chester, South Carolina, was dissolved per his request.

Mr. Mark Horne, a member of Lebanon Presbyterian Church, Abbeville, South Carolina, was received as a ministerial candidate.

The Rev. Tim Bowers was examined for transfer from the Southern Baptist Church. Presbytery instructed the Examinations Committee to examine the minister according to the *Book of Church Order* 13-6 and 21-4; and asked the Committee to make inquiry to the General Assembly Stated Clerk's office as to the proper meaning of the provisions

regarding the examinations of a minister from another denomination.

The Shepherding Committee was instructed, as a commission, to begin judicial process against a minister.

The Presbytery dissolved the pastoral relationship between Shannon Forest Presbyterian Church, Greenville, South Carolina, and the Rev. Lee Mashburn, effective June 1, 2000. Mr. Mashburn is hoping to plant a church in Salt Lake City, Utah, under the direction of Northern California Presbytery.

Presbytery heard reports from three mission churches: Honea Path, Crossgate, and Grace.

### March Called Meeting

A called meeting of Calvary Presbytery was held on March 4, 2000, at Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary, Taylors, South Carolina. The court approved the call to the Rev. Dr. Joseph Pipa to be Associate Pastor at Beech Street Presbyterian Church, Gaffney, South Carolina, until the congregation's student supply, Mr. Tim Miessler, can be ordained at the April 2000 meeting of Presbytery. The Beech Street Church has only two Session members, and one of them is unable to serve at this time. The call to Dr. Pipa states, "Being that your worldly concerns are satisfied with your position at [Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary], we offer you reimbursements for any expenses you incur from the discharge of your duties at said church, during the time of your being and continuing as the Associate Pastor of this church." The Presbytery decided to forego an installation service based on the nature and time needed for Dr. Pipa to remain in that position; this motion received a super-majority vote of three-fourths.

The meeting had also been called to discuss and take action in receiving the resignation of a ruling elder in a case without process, and to suspend him indefinitely from the Lord's table. It was ruled that those two items would be dealt with by the Beech Street Session.

The meeting, which had convened at 9:00 AM, adjourned at 9:15 AM.

## Central Carolina

The 80th stated meeting of Central Carolina Presbytery was held on January 21-22, 2000, at Friendly Hills Presbyterian Church, Greensboro, North Carolina. The Moderator, Ruling Elder George James, called the meeting. On Friday evening, host pastor Brian Deringer led the service of worship, including communion; and the Rev. Rod Culbertson of Reformed Theological Seminary, Charlotte, preached.

On Saturday, the Presbytery reconvened with prayer and the singing of the 100th Psalm. The Rev. Alex Coblentz was elected as the new Moderator. Ruling Elder Howie Burkhalter was elected Assistant Moderator; the Rev. David Frierson, Stated Clerk; and the Rev. Stephen Stout, Assistant Clerk.

The Chairman of the Commission for Back Creek Presbyterian Church presented a report. A congregational meeting had been held on January 19, 2000, to elect elders. The commission was dismissed with thanks. A letter from Ruling Elder Mark Doll was received as a protest and attached to the report.

Under the Mission to the World report, the Rev. Hunter Dockery preached from Philippians 2 on spiritual power, and Presbytery divided into small groups for a season of prayer. Missionary appointee Jill De Vere shared her vision to join the church planting team in Odessa, Ukraine.

Presbytery voted to set aside February 9th as a day of prayer and fasting for the unborn. The Administration Committee is studying a proposal to establish a committee to deal with pro-life issues, as urged by the General Assembly.

Memorials for the following ruling elders were spread on the record: Tommy Combs and Algie Stewart of Countryside Presbyterian Church, Cameron; D. C. Parsons of First Presbyterian Church, Ellerbe; and Hugh Roe "Dink" Still of Second Street Presbyterian Church, Albemarle. Dr. Morton H. Smith was requested to write a memorial regarding Dr. C. Gregg Singer.

Fifteen churches which have been delinquent regarding their statistical reports, were requested to send them in.

A teaching elder who professed his repentance, was absolved from the sentence of suspension from office. The Shepherding Committee, acting as a commission, had dissolved the pastoral relationships between the Rev. Ron Coleman and Meadowview Presbyterian Church, and between the Rev. Hunter Dockery and World Harvest Mission. Presbytery approved the call of Redeemer Presbyterian Church, Winston-Salem, to Mr. Dockery, with a salary package of \$60,000 plus benefits.

Presbytery voted to discontinue support for the church planting apprenticeship of the Rev. Phillip Nelson with three months severance pay in the amount of \$1,000 per month.

The Rev. Mike Hall reported on the denominational Insurance, Annuities, and Relief.

Presbytery approved the officers for the Pres-WIC organization.

Messrs. Jeffrey Mays and Martin King were transferred as candidates from South Texas and Gulf Coast Presbyteries, respectively. An internship was initiated for Mr. Mays at Meadowview Church, with the Rev. Gary Cox, Senior Pastor, as his mentor. Mr. Mays was examined for licensure. He stated several exceptions to the Standards, including with regard to the length of the days of creation, recreation and worldly employments on the Lord's Day, and paedocommunion. The motion to sustain the exam failed. The candidate was informed of this action and how the Candidates Committee would continue to work with him in the areas of the Bible, theology, and the *Book of Church Order*.

The Rev. Rod Culbertson, a member of Southwest Florida Presbytery, was licensed to preach; he is being called as Stated Supply for Christ the King Mission in East Charlotte. The Rev. John Williams, a member of Coastal Carolina Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church (USA), was examined and received "pending dismissal from the PCUSA (if possible)"; he has received a call as a part-time Pastor of Faith Presbyterian Church, Mt. Mourne.

Presbytery voted that the Rev. John Browne, who is organizing pastor for Grace Covenant Mission in Elon College, North Carolina, should continue in a tent-making capacity through June (or until he accepts another call or ministry opportunity). The Presbytery's Mission to North America Committee will present the Grace Covenant situation at the General Assembly Assessment Center and look for men through other means as well. Mr. Browne is to compile demographic information for review at the March MNA meeting, at which time the Committee will decide whether to discontinue the mission or move to call another church planter. Representatives of the oversight committee will meet with the congregation before the end of January to present the status of the mission. The oversight committee was

appointed as a commission with power to dissolve the mission if deemed prudent.

## Mid-America

The 38th Stated Meeting of Mid-America Presbytery (PCA) met on Friday, April 14, 2000, at Christ Presbyterian Church, Claremore, Oklahoma. There were eleven commissioners: five ministers and six ruling elders. The Moderator, the Rev. Craig Weaver, called the meeting to order. The time of worship was opened with a bagpipe rendition of "Holy, Holy, Holy" by Mr. Rick Ewing, a guest of the host congregation. Mr. Mike Philliber, a licentiate of Mississippi Valley Presbytery, and stated supply of Pickens (Miss.) Presbyterian Church, preached on Philippians 2:1-5 regarding the unity of the Church. The Rev. David Schwenk administered the sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

Mr. Neil Thielen was elected as Moderator; and the Rev. David O' Dowd was elected as Moderator-Nominee.

The Presbytery voted to drop Messrs. Chuck Simmons and Wayne Sparkman from the roll of candidates, per their request. Mr. Simon Torokwa, another candidate, was transferred to Pittsburgh Presbytery, as he was in the process of accepting a call to a church there. Candidate Mark Davis was transferred to Missouri Presbytery. The four-year license of Ruling Elder Bill Mitchell will expire at the Autumn Stated Meeting; Presbytery extended his candidacy until that meeting, and encouraged him to seek candidacy with Missouri Presbytery. Candidate Kyle Dixon reported on his progress in seeking the gospel ministry.

Mr. Philliber was examined and licensed to preach. He noted the following exception (which he had also indicated to Mississippi Valley Presbytery): "The clause in WCF XXI.v where it states '... singing of psalms with grace in the heart; ...' It is obvious that the writers were what we might describe as strict psalmodists. And though I think we need to sing and recite MORE of the Psalms, I don't agree we need to be strict psalmodists. This is the only [exception] I know of." Without objection, the Presbytery approved the request of Beal Heights Presbyterian Church for Mr. Philliber to move onto the field as student supply at its preaching station, Westminster Chapel, Tulsa.

Presbytery voted to communicate formally with Northeast Presbytery with regard to Mid-America Presbytery's support and encouragement of the Rev. Geoff Address's seeking of the Lord's will concerning his labors in the gospel, and enlisting Northeast Presbytery's aid in the same. The motion was amended to include a request that Northeast Presbytery receive Mr. Address as a minister without call, "and that Northeast Presbytery communicate to Mid-America Presbytery its reason(s) if they do not accede to this request." This amended motion carried, 8-2. Two other amendments failed: a request that Northeast Presbytery receive Mr. Address "as one willing and qualified to labor out-of-bounds"; and a request that Northeast Presbytery receive him as an evangelist. [In 1998, Mr. Address moved back to southern Vermont; he is currently employed as a public school teacher.—Ed.]

It was moved and seconded that "due to the destitute nature of the Church in Oklahoma, that Mid-America Presbytery clothe its Teaching Elders with all the powers of evangelist according to BCO 8-6, for the term of 1 year. After lengthy discussion, the mover and seconder of the motion were permitted to withdraw the motion."

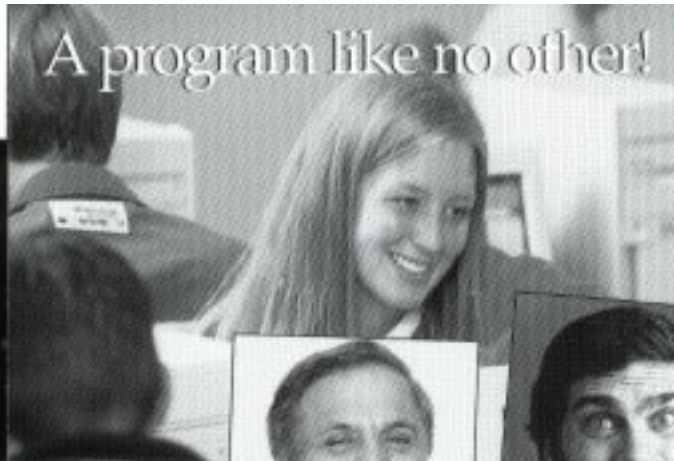
Presbytery voted to send Mr. Lyle Fogle as its representative to the PCA-MTW annual



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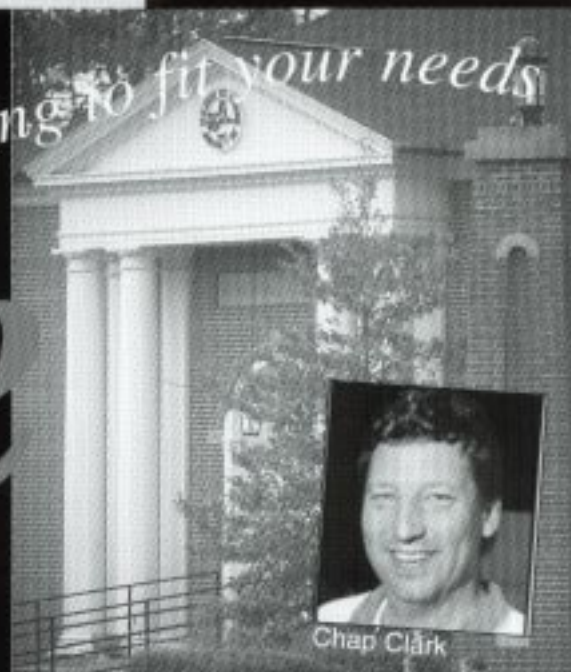
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Presbytery Chairmen's Meeting, and to underwrite his travel expenses.

The Rev. John Owen Butler, Stated Clerk, was re-elected Treasurer for another year. The Stated Clerk and Moderator were empowered to appoint men who volunteer to sit on the General Assembly's Committees of Commissioners.

## North Georgia

Atlanta, Georgia (April 18, 2000)—The spring stated meeting of North Georgia Presbytery was held at historic Westminster Presbyterian Church, Atlanta. The Moderator was the host pastor, the Rev. Chuck Frost.

At the beginning of the business session, the Moderator gave two pieces of advice: "Be careful that we don't confuse principle with preferences"; and "You're not compelled to say everything that you think."

The court approved two uncontested dissolutions of pastoral relationships, as approved by a committee acting as a commission: between First Presbyterian Church, Villa Rica, Georgia, and the Rev. Gilbert Moore; and between Cherokee Presbyterian Church, Woodstock, Georgia, and the Rev. John Maphet. Presbytery also accepted the resignation of the Rev. Denny Hieber from the pastorate at Cornerstone Presbyterian Church, Conyers, Georgia. The congregation had voted, 13-20, not to accept his resignation; however, the majority which sided with him has now mostly left the congregation, because of a difference in philosophy of ministry from that of the ruling elders.

Messrs. Jonathan Stuckard, David Gilbert, and Matt Cadora were taken under care as ministerial candidates.

Received by transfer were the Rev. Jeremy Jones, the Rev. David Gordon, and the Rev. Tom Wood. Mr. Jones expressed a reservation to the Standards regarding paedocommunion; and Mr. Gordon took an exception with regard to the Sabbath. Upon motion by the Rev. Bob Edmiston, the Presbytery recorded this exception as information, but not as an exception. At the close of the meeting, the Rev. Ted Lester presented a dissent to the failure of the court to record this exception; he stated, "Most of us would have difficulty with a loose construction of the U. S. Constitution," as he appealed to the fact that the Presbytery should not attempt to rewrite the meaning of the Confessional Standards.

Mr. Jones is being called to a campus ministry at Emory University; Mr. Gordon to being an Associate Pastor at Intown Community Church (salary package of \$95,728); and Mr. Wood to being Church Planting Coordinator for Perimeter Ministries International (salary package of \$92,153).

Examined and approved for ordination was Mr. Rob Edwards. He will be serving as a Reformed University Ministries campus minister at the University of Georgia.

Presbytery voted, 37-25, to erect a committee to investigate the way in which a pastor has carried out his pastoral duties. During extensive debate on the matter, a ruling elder from the pastor's church, who was not commissioned to the Presbytery, gave an emotional speech, urging the court to refrain from this action.

A complaint had been lodged by the Rev. Ted Lester regarding the manner in which the Presbytery had turned down the transfer of Dr. Frank J. Smith from Northeast Presbytery. Specifically, Mr. Lester complained that the use of executive session had prevented Dr. Smith from hearing the basis for being rejected, and had prevented him from being able to respond. Upon motion by Mr. John White,

Presbytery denied the complaint, on four grounds: (1) Presbytery has the right and duty to determine its membership; (2) Presbytery is under no obligation to state its reasons (and here the concurring opinion in the 1992 Gunther vs. Central Florida case was cited); (3) Presbytery has the right to go into executive session; (4) Roberts Rules of Order provide that a member can be punished if he violates the secrecy of executive session.

After the denial of the complaint, the court re-instructed its Credentials Committee to consult with Dr. Smith regarding Presbytery's January action, and to convey the general sense of the executive session.

Presbytery approved the Rev. Alan Foster to plant a church in Flowery Branch, Georgia. His call totals \$64,792.

## Northeast

Northeast Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church in America met for a stated meeting on January 15, 2000, at the Presbyterian Church of Coventry, Connecticut. The Moderator, Brad Evans, convened the meeting. Ruling Elder Clint Donnelly was elected Moderator for 2000.

Presbytery voted to distribute the funds from the on-going proceeds from the sale of the church property in Braintree, Massachusetts, to the three regional committees, which can make wise decisions regarding the godly use of these funds.

Presbytery voted to excuse all members from the other two regions, when one region has called a pro re nata meeting of Presbytery to deal with regional business.

A report was heard regarding the work of the Rev. Chris Robinson in seeking to gather a church in Portsmouth, New Hampshire. Presbytery established the Hope Presbyterian Portsmouth Project as a mission church, under the governance of the Session of the Exeter (N. H.) Presbyterian Church. Mr. Robinson indicated that he had been searching for a potential meeting site for public worship, and wrote: "I even stopped by the Red Hook Brewery, because I had heard they have some nice conference rooms, and there probably wouldn't be much competition for space on Sunday mornings." He also reported on core groups in Portland and Kennebunk, Maine.

The Northern New England Committee reported that it had called all churches in that area to a day of prayer and fasting on behalf of Christ Presbyterian Church, Nashua, New Hampshire, on Friday evening, November 19, 1999. A youth retreat for Northern New England was planned for February 4-5 in Concord, New Hampshire.

Mr. Mark R. Hastings, a member of Affirmation Presbyterian Church, Somers, New York, had requested that he be brought under care and examined for licensure. During examination, it became clear that Mr. Hastings is not pursuing ordination to the gospel ministry. Presbytery will examine him for licensure at the next stated meeting, so that he will be able to fill pulpits as the need arises.

Presbytery established the Berkshire Mission in Western Massachusetts as a mission church of the PCA under the governance of West Springfield (Mass.) Covenant Community Church.

Presbytery overtook to form three new presbyteries—Southern New England, Northern New England, and New York State—out of the existing Northeast Presbytery, thereby dissolving the existing Northeast Presbytery. Northeast Presbytery also requested Ascension Presbytery to cede its New York territory to the new New York State Presbytery.

The Southern New England Presbytery would have twelve churches and mission works, with 1445 communicant members; the Northern New England Presbytery would have nine churches, mission works, and core groups with 490 communicants; and the New York State Presbytery would have at least nine churches and missions with 1329 communicants.

Messrs. Tony Phelps and Nate Phinney were received under care as ministerial candidates.

Presbytery ruled out of order a complaint brought by the Rev. Philip J. Adams with regard to a case that is being appealed, on the basis that no complaint may be entertained in a judicial case that is appealed.

Mr. Adams was elected as Northeast Presbytery Parliamentarian.

## Western Carolina

Western Carolina Presbytery met on Saturday, March 18, 2000. Candidate Skip MacMillan preached from Matthew 28. The court later examined him and approved him to be Assistant Pastor at Arden (N. C.) Presbyterian Church. During his ordination exam, he stated that he has no exceptions to the Standards.

The Rev. James Conrad was received from Southwest Florida Presbytery, to become Pastor at Providence Presbyterian Church, Murphy, North Carolina. The Rev. Jeffrey Hutchinson was received from Philadelphia Presbytery to become Senior Pastor at Trinity Presbyterian Church, Asheville, North Carolina. The Rev. Donald Treick was received, without call, from Northern California Presbytery.

The Rev. Frederick C. Fowler, III, an honorably retired minister of Tennessee Valley Presbytery, was licensed to preach and approved as stated supply at the Frank Presbyterian Church, Newland, North Carolina.

The Treasurer, Ruling Elder Terry Elniff, reported a cash on deposit of \$25,081. The income for the 1999-2000 year was \$61,274, and expenses \$58,274. A budget for the 2000-2001 year of \$58,715 was adopted.

Elected for one year were the following: Stated Clerk, Don Munson; Treasurer, Mr. Elniff; Vice-Moderator in Nomination, Robert Drake.

The Presbytery heard and viewed a presentation on Kingdom Campaign Leader Training (KCLT) seminars which the General Assembly Mission to North America Committee has asked the Rev. Archie Parrish to lead in every presbytery. It was approved to hold the first of these seminars on June 2-3 at Trinity Presbyterian Church, Asheville.

Presbytery granted \$500 to the Rev. Owen Lovejoy for a mission to Cuba in May 2000. It was reported that contact had been made with Mission to the World's Impact overseer for the perennial visit by Impact teams to Cherokee, North Carolina. There is the possibility of a church plant in Cherokee, as a result of this ministry.

It was reported that the Rev. Bruce Lax has started preaching services at 8:30 Sundays in the Mars Hill Theater.

Presbytery approved seeking to sell the approximately 2 acres it owns in Rutherfordton, North Carolina, with the proceeds to be used for future development of the work there under the oversight of the Missions Committee.

The Rev. Brad Camper was continued without call for one year, provided that he report to each stated meeting, at least once per year in person, concerning his ministerial activities and steps taken toward receiving a call. The Shepherding Committee will seek a minister to mentor him in determining his call to the ministry and ways to proceed toward receiving a call.

The Rev. Kenneth Hutson was retained on the roll until the July meeting, and he was asked to transfer to Southern Florida Presbytery. If at the July stated meeting, he has not transferred or taken steps toward that, or has not received a call to an acceptable ministry, Presbytery will then act concerning his divestiture without censure.

The Rev. Greg Selmon was dismissed to Nashville Presbytery, pending receipt.

The Rev. John Jerguson was granted permission to labor outside the bounds of Western Carolina Presbytery with the Smyrna (Ga.) Presbyterian Church. The Clerk will notify the Clerk of North Georgia Presbytery of this action, and Mr. Jerguson will be asked to transfer his membership to North Georgia.

Messrs. Scott Kesler and Dan Rogers were examined and received as ministerial candidates. An internship for Mr. Rogers was approved at the Hazelwood (N. C.) Presbyterian Church.

## Westminster

The ninety-eighth stated meeting of Westminster Presbytery was held at Edgemont Presbyterian Church, Bristol, Tennessee, on January 8, 2000. The Moderator, the Rev. Steve Baker, preached on "the civil magistrate." Host pastor Larry Stallard administered the Lord's Supper. Mr. Baker was re-elected as Moderator.

Dr. Rod Mays, Director of Reformed University Ministries, reported on that agency's ministries. Mr. Mark Seely from Reformed Theological Seminary, Charlotte,



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reported on the school.

Presbytery voted to dissolve Asbury Presbyterian Church, Johnson City, Tennessee, and granted the Session the liberty to cease public worship earlier than 60 days from Presbytery's action. The Presbytery Shepherding Committee was appointed as a commission to carry on the oversight of the church members as they transfer to other churches.

The majority report of the Conflict Resolution Committee recommended that there not be a division proposed to the General Assembly until after January 2000. The five to three majority also recommended that Messrs. Henry Johnson, Jeff Fulford, and Jim Thornton be invited to a January 2000 meeting of the Committee to address differences; that the Committee "along with the above named teaching elders try to draw up mutually agreeable standards of application concerning the Westminster Standards on the following issues, but not necessarily limited to these issues: Mode of Baptism, Gifts of the Spirit, Role of women in the Church, Christian Education, and the Function of the civil magistrate with regard to the Law of God"; "That once agreed to, all the churches in Westminster Presbytery will comply by not taking a less restrictive stand; not speak ill of those who hold to a stronger or weaker position; and will judge all new licentiates, and ruling and teaching elders by the acceptable qualifications of this practice"; and that "There will be a called meeting of Presbytery to discuss, amend, and bring to a vote the results of the Committee's work." Presbytery voted instead to approve the minority report of the Conflict Resolution Committee, 28-15-1, and to adopt the minority report as the majority report, 27-16-1. The minority report overtured the General Assembly for a division of the Presbytery. Formally, the division would be along the border between Virginia and Tennessee; but the overture itself makes mention of irreconcilable theological differences, and would allow churches on either side of the border to choose to belong to either presbytery. Six ministers and five ruling elders asked that their negative votes be recorded; they are: Richard Hicks, Tom Sullivan, Ross Lindley, Brent Bradley, Larry Ball, Carel van der Merwe, Hugh Belcher, Terry Jones, Dan Witcher, Mark Hecht, and Jim McGowan. An overture, brought by 13 sessions of the Presbytery, which proposed the redrawing of Presbytery boundaries, was tabled.

Presbytery denied two complaints brought against Presbytery's failure to sustain two complaints against the Session of Pulaski (Va.) Presbyterian Church. The first complaint stated that "Presbytery has erred in her failure to protect the sheep at Pulaski Presbyterian Church from the impression that the Session was substituting a Saturday evening service for Sunday evening services, thereby giving the impression that the Sabbath Day is no different from any other day of the week." The second complaint centered on the "unqualified endorsement" of Teen Mania by the Session. The complaint noted that the Presbytery had requested Pulaski's pastor, the Rev. Rusty Whitener, not to teach or propagate his views concerning tongues. The complaint asked the Presbytery to instruct the Session "to announce to the congregation that it does not endorse an organization like Teen Mania that denies the sufficiency of Scripture." Messrs. Brent Bradley, James Reedy, Jim McGowan, and Carel van der Merwe asked that their negative votes be recorded on the action regarding this second complaint.

Presbytery voted to take no action regarding the candidacy of Mr. Michael Byers at this time, pending action by the Overtures and Judicial Business Committee on his complaint against the Session of the

Meadow Creek Church, Greeneville, Tennessee.

Presbytery voted to release Licentiate John Irwin from teaching restrictions in the areas of Christian education and the civil magistrate. This amended a previous action of the court.

Presbytery voted to sustain three complaints. Accordingly, a protest, which had previously not been admitted to record, was entered on the minutes. The protest had to do with the fact that Presbytery had "acknowledged" the "guilt" of the Session of Trinity Presbyterian Church, Tazewell, Virginia, and the members of the mission work in Wytheville, Virginia, but had not acknowledged the guilt of the Presbytery's Mission to North America Committee for its actions in the matter.

## Quotes from the Quorums

The following was heard on the floor of the North Georgia Presbytery meeting on April 18, 2000.

"Being in Westminster Presbyterian Church, I have to ask the question, Who was Peter Marshall?"—Kellett Thomas, beginning his questioning during a church history exam. [Prior to becoming Chaplain of the U. S. Senate, Peter Marshall pastored Westminster Presbyterian Church.—Ed.]

"Pardon me, Mr. Moderator."—John White. "Certainly. I pardon you quite often."—Chuck Frost. "You should see the booth around the corner."—John White.

"I was raised in a Christian home, baptized the eighth day. . . ."—Tom Wood, during his being examined for reception.

"Thopemy voice holds out—I'm allergic to air."—Stated Clerk Dwight Allen.

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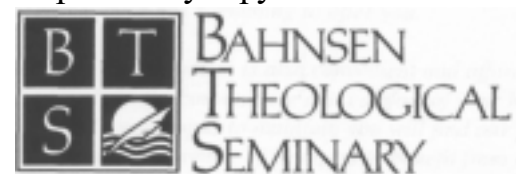
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Letters, continued from page 13

the earth in the chronological sequence of fiats (essentially disemboweling Genesis of its creation time and sequence details). This is not speaking to the majority's motivations, only to the related implication of their view. Certainly the discussions today on the teachings of Genesis one do not take place in a theoretical void, as if one could speak of what the Bible teaches about origins and it not effect how people will relate it to the prevalent world views. Neither is it absurd to think that the discussions about the meaning of Genesis one the last century and a half have provoked much reconsideration as to how Genesis is to be interpreted in light of what "the scientists" are saying about origins and the age of the universe and earth. I know that the majority wants their view to be considered on its exegetical merits alone. Yet, the historical context of their exegesis merits consideration.

On another note, it should not be understood that because the minority declined to sign the affirmations and denials contained in the majority's report that Rev. Gentry or the rest of the minority hold to macro-evolution or that the minority believes that the majority subscribes to macro-evolution. The majority's letter to the editor concludes with "We pray that the Lord of the Church would restore peace and unity both to our Presbytery and to the broader Reformed community as the ongoing discussion of the meaning of confessional subscription with respect to the days of creation continues." Peace amidst the Body comes from unity, and unity exists when we believe and practice similarly. Let us not weary to labor to sort out these concerns or become "thin-skinned" as our views are challenged. The majority is right to pray, for prayer expresses the reality of our absolute dependence upon our glorious Maker and Redeemer who gives wisdom generously to those who ask Him

for it. May He be gracious to give wisdom to us all in this issue.

Michael DiPeppino

Dear Sir:

In your January-February issue you published a report by Michael DiPeppino ("Southern California Debates Doctrine of Creation"). A portion of this report could lead, and indeed has led some to conclude that I am motivated by the belief that the Bible must be harmonized with secularist science and that I am a proponent of macroevolutionary thought.

I do not believe that my understanding of the Bible MUST be harmonized with my understanding gained from science (or any other source). I am unconditionally committed to the affirmation contained in the committee report that was being debated: "The only legitimate role of natural revelation or science in exegesis of Scripture is to alert us to the possibility that our

exegesis may need to be reexamined."

I did emphasize that this role of science is truly legitimate and important, and that it has been and must continue to be taken more seriously by the Reformed Church than is presently the case. The sciences I enumerated were astronomy, physics and geology. Astronomy was deleted and biology was added in the reporting. Since biology is the place where much of the development of macroevolutionary thought has occurred, its addition to the list of sciences for which I was claiming legitimacy fuels the suspicion that I believe that Adam evolved rather than being created, which I do not. The previously mentioned report, of which I am a signator, explicitly denies this theory.

Sincerely,

A. M. Laurie, Ruling Elder

El Camino Orthodox Presbyterian Church

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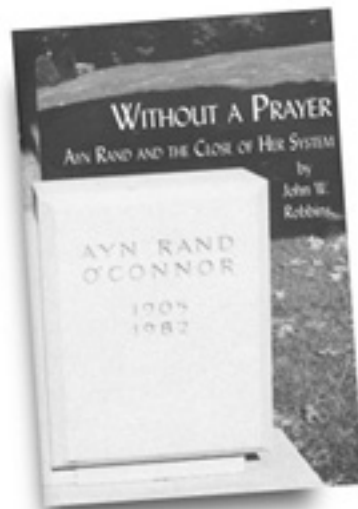
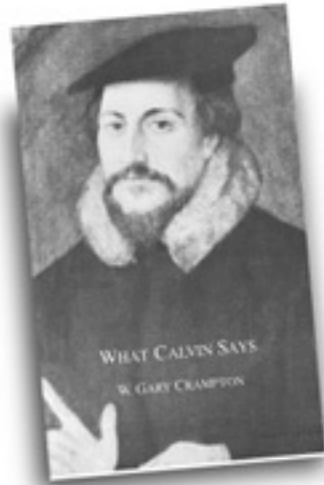
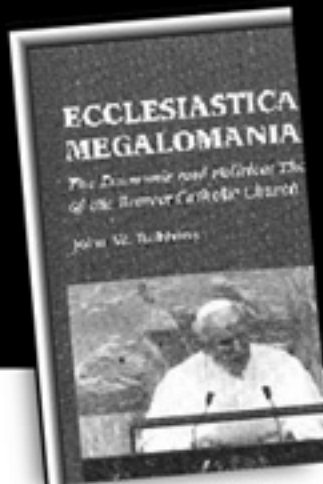
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