

Presbyterian & Reformed News

Recording the
Story of the
Presbyterian
Church in America

\$2.75 per issue/\$15.00 per year

Volume 7 Number 1

Published by Presbyterian International News Service, Inc., Coeburn, Virginia

January - February 2001

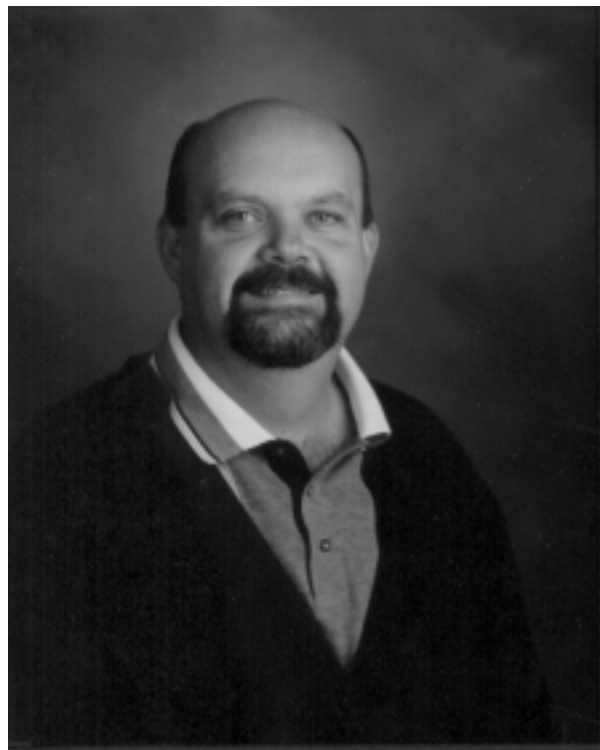
Troubled Court Experiences Healing Reconciliation in Westminster Presbytery

Johnson City, Tennessee (January 13, 2001)—For at least two years, Westminster Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) has been in turmoil. Numerous complaints, dissents, and protests have engaged the judicatory located in northeast Tennessee and southwest Virginia. And last spring, the highly-divided Presbytery voted 27-16-1 to ask the General Assembly to divide the Presbytery along theological lines—something which the Assembly declined to do.

In declining to divide the Presbytery, the Assembly essentially was indicating that the presbyters needed to learn to get along with one another. And in a dramatic moment today on the floor of Westminster Presbytery, a long-time pastor in the Presbytery may very well have helped that desire to become reality, as he confessed his sin of bitterness toward other presbyters. The confession palpably moved the Presbytery, resulting in tears and emotion on the part of not a few of those gathered for the meeting.

The confession came in a context of a debate on the meaning of theological subscription to the Westminster Standards. After presentations by three members of the court, the floor was opened for comments and questions. Towards the end of the allotted time, the Rev. Rick Light, pastor of Eastern Heights Presbyterian Church, Bristol,

Tennessee, came up the center aisle of the Westminster Presbyterian Church, which was hosting the meeting, in order to make his statement.



Rev. Rick Light

Mr. Light stated that the basic problem in Westminster Presbytery was not theological, but that of personality clashes. Saying that he was speaking only for himself, he admitted that he had been bitter toward two fellow presbyters in particular, viz., the Rev. Henry Johnson and the Rev. Brent Bradley.

Rick Light stated: "I'm going to confess that sin, because I think that you've not cared about my ministry. . . . [However,] I'm not going to sacrifice this Presbytery because of my anger."

The Bristol pastor's remarks came just prior to a scheduled time of prayer. After that corporate prayer, Mr. Johnson asked to speak. With tremulous voice, he affirmed that his only desire had been to serve the Lord Jesus Christ and to see that the Presbytery be faithful to Scripture. "I grieve before the Lord," the Tazewell, Virginia, pastor declared, "that divisions continue to exist in the Presbytery. . . . I beg anyone who has aught against me to meet with me so that we can seek to be reconciled. . . . I desire to be reconciled to anyone who has anything against me."

The open discussion, and particularly the open confession of sin, seemed to have a calming effect upon what has been a troubled court. There was no rancor in any of the votes during the business of Presbytery, and, indeed, a sweet spirit seemed to pervade the proceedings throughout the day.

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The First Coast Ballet uses interpretive dance to portray the incarnation at PonteVedra Presbyterian Church in Florida. The troupe's performance is part of an annual event, 'A Bethlehem Visit', which has been attracting thousands of spectators. Local newspapers report that many of the visitors to the recreation of ancient Bethlehem, which includes a live nativity scene, kneel before the Holy Family with tears streaming down their faces. Full story on pages 10 and 11.

Westminster Presbytery Debates the Meaning of Theological Subscription

Johnson City, Tennessee (January 13, 2001)—The meaning of theological subscription was the special topic on the agenda during the morning session of the stated meeting of Westminster Presbytery. In accordance with a format recommended by the court's Committee on Conflict Resolution, the commissioners and guests heard presentations and reactions, along with a time for questions and comments.

Leading off the discussion was the Rev. Larry Ball, who served as Stated Clerk of the Presbytery from 1976 to 1999. Mr. Ball, who has often been identified with the more "Reformed" camp of the court, noted that the Presbytery had been founded as a "strict subscription" presbytery in 1973. But, using words from David Hall's *The Practice of Confessional Subscriptionism*, he also warned that there have historically been two dangers: casual latitudinarianism on the one hand, and overstrict intolerance on the other.

With regard to the strict subscriptionist position taken by the Presbytery from its earliest days, Mr. Ball stated that "since the days of our origin we have not asked men as to their understanding of the meaning of subscription when they entered this Presbytery. Maybe this was a major mistake on our part. Even though this has not been done, the general understanding seems to be that those coming into this Presbytery have agreed with our position in regard to subscription."

The Kingsport, Tennessee, pastor also noted that the court never "adopted a rule as to whether one can teach or promote his exceptions to the Confession"; and he urged that the court continue its practice of determining that question on a case-by-case basis.

Proclaiming that the Confession of Faith "binds us together as a denomination," he averred: "We cannot bind the conscience of our brethren to more than the statements in the Confession. To do so is to require of them more than they vowed in their conscience when they became members of this Presbytery. Our personal practical applications of Scriptural principles must not be elevated to the status of our Confessional Standards. I think this has caused unnecessary tension within our Presbytery. I personally have strong theonomic views, but beyond the Confessional statement that the general equity of the Old Testament Law is binding today, I cannot hold my brethren to my views. Some may consider it idolatry to have voted for Al Gore or George Bush in the last election, and may even preach it from his pulpit, but to require such an application of Scripture from our brothers is to go beyond the Confession." Mr. Ball added that he would consider deleting Mr. Gore's name from the list of legitimate candidates for whom to vote.

He cited the insistence on home schooling as another example of extraconfessionalism.

The heart of his argument against extraconfessionalism was this: "If we are only allowed to bind our brother to the statements in the Confession, then we cannot bind them to deductions from Scripture which we believe wholeheartedly, but are not explicitly stated in the Confession, or implicitly stated in the Confession where the Confession chooses not to list all of the elements that may be included in a specific category."

Mr. Ball illustrated this last point by

saying that the area of idolatry would be an example "where the Confession does not list all the items classified under a specific category." Accordingly, even though Buddhism, Hinduism, etc., are not listed as idolatrous, "we would all understand that such items would be included under the definition. Demanding that the brethren understand Buddhism as idolatry would not be extraconfessionalism."

Mr. Ball noted that the continuation "of tongue speaking is an example where we disagree (although historically as a Presbytery we have held to the cessation of all tongue speaking). The Confession



Westminster Presbyterian Church, Johnson City, Tennessee

speaks of 'those ways of God's revealing His will unto His people being now ceased.' . . . I personally believe that all tongue speaking is subsumed under this definition because I believe that all tongue speaking is revelational and therefore an exception to the Confession. Some in the Presbytery do not believe that all tongue speaking is revelational. I disagree with them. I will continue to vote my conscience on this issue, although I realize that others will disagree with me."

The pastor also took to task those who would allow "personal subjectivism" to govern whether or not to admit a man to the Presbytery. "To vote against a man because in your opinion he does not meet some subjective requirement is to go beyond the responsibility of a presbyter. This would include such reasons as a man being too passionate, too divisive, too doctrinally oriented, too controversial, and such things as these. If a man has been declared fit by his Presbytery for the ministry (he has been ordained and there are no charges pending), and if he passes the examination in regard to his commitment to the Westminster Standards (and he has a legitimate call), we are obligated to vote for him, based on objective standards accepted by this Presbytery. To add subjective requirements to the acceptance of a man beyond his commitments to the standards and his being in good standing in a transferring Presbytery is to go beyond the limits of the Book of Church Order. We then have no objective standards on which we agree, only subjective feelings. This only adds unpredictability and a lack of trust of the brethren. It only adds chaos to Presbytery. Here again the danger is to add to the requirements stated in our standards, to

which we have all vowed to practice."

A Dissenting Opinion

After Mr. Ball's presentation, the next speaker was the Rev. Brent Bradley, who voiced his opposition to Mr. Ball's perspective. "I fear that what he's proposing will open up Pandora's box," he declared.

Speaking specifically to his assigned topic of subscription to the confessional standards, Mr. Bradley said that the issue "is not necessarily tied to the issues that divide us in the Presbytery. . . . It's a narrow

Presbyterian standards).

In handling matters not explicitly dealt with in the Standards, Mr. Ball had allowed for two possibilities: amending the Confession of Faith; and, the use of church discipline in order to define the application of the Westminster Standards. Brent Bradley also argued that on the basis of Mr. Ball's viewpoint, "there is only one option, not two. The reason is that discipline must be based on an objective basis."

Mr. Bradley stated that "We have not made [the issue of Christian vs. public education] a litmus test for admission to this Presbytery." He also urged: "We must debate the Word of God with vigor and charity. . . . We must return to the only infallible rule of faith and practice."

A Concurring Opinion

The Rev. Steve Meyerhoff, current Stated Clerk of the Presbytery, next made a presentation. He stated that he was in "substantial agreement with Larry's paper," adding: "I would join in his appeal." He urged that "cautious," "circumspect," "careful," and "restrained," should characterize the presbyters. He argued that when "the General Assembly allows latitude in an area, a presbytery ought to listen, instead of being a presbytery substantially different from the rest of the Assembly."

Mr. Meyerhoff opined that the current controversy in the Presbytery was not a classic Old School/New School debate, nor essentially a problem of theonomy versus non-theonomy. Rather, the basic problem has been a "Reformed fundamentalism," which is "closer in some ways to dispensationalism." He stated that this "Reformed fundamentalism" is characterized by an aggressiveness, and a spirit which does not limit itself, but uses controversy to press its views.

The Elizabethton, Tennessee, pastor used the example of beverage alcohol. "Many in the PCA hold that this should not be done." However, since the General Assembly has already addressed the matter, it would be unseemly for those who are total abstainers to continue to press the matter denominationally.

"I plead for restraint," Steve Meyerhoff said. "We cannot stand such treatment. What we have experienced in recent years is a flood of issues," which have become distracting. "Issues which are important, but which I feel are not that important."

He also stated that the pattern of fundamentalism is to erect walls. "The Old School didn't take that approach—they stuck to the Confession."

The Stated Clerk suggested at least three responses. The first is that of debate. The second option is that of discipline: "I am reaching the end of my patience and am considering bringing charges against those who continue to press extra-confessional matters." The third option is that of division—an option which the General Assembly voted against.

Mr. Meyerhoff stated: "Yes, we must be restrained on both sides. This is the second or third time the Committee [on Conflict Resolution] has asked [us] to restrain ourselves on overtures. The last time, it unleashed a flood of overtures."

Caution and restraint—those were his watchwords, as he concluded his speech.

[Continued on next page]

issue," relating to the second ordination vow—that of receiving and adopting the standards. "We adopt the Confession . . . and the Catechisms as our confession. We don't adopt the system of doctrine."

In his view, "The issues that have caused controversy in our Presbytery . . . would include things that are explicit in our Confession of Faith"—matters such as the charismatic movement and the Sabbath. "Mr. Ball's proposal does not get us any closer to agreement—it simply points out the different hermeneutics not only to the Confession but also to Scripture. . . . We're living in a post-modern world," where we use words in a different way—such as the word "is."

Further, "Mr. Ball's proposal simply is not workable." It would "limit the church to sixteenth century problems." It would be difficult if not impossible to write down every possible deviation in doctrine. Mr. Ball's approach does not recognize that statements which flow by "good and necessary consequence" from both Scripture and the Confessional Standards are also binding.

"Larry's proposal would make the church essentially agnostic. The Confession doesn't address the role of women in family, church, and society. Abortion is not listed as a violation of the sixth commandment."

Mr. Bradley argued that Larry Ball's position "undermines the sufficiency and perspicuity of Scripture, since it takes the Westminster Standards as the final authority." Even the example used with regard to Buddhism does not work, since Mr. Ball, according to Mr. Bradley, was being inconsistent (in that that false religion in point of fact is not mentioned in the

Time for Questions and Discussion

Leading off the discussion was the Rev. Dr. Cortez Cooper, former Coordinator for the denominational Mission to North America Committee, and presently pastor of Draper Valley Presbyterian Church, Draper, Virginia. Dr. Cooper expressed gratitude to the three men who had made presentations, adding: "What we need is more of this." He urged also that we "need more encouragement and partnership in the gospel. Ministry flows out of theology." He, too, pled for caution and restraint, in order to bring glory to God in the ministry.

Another commissioner offered the following: "I hope Steve [Meyerhoff] was not saying that because General Assembly has voted a certain way, that we should leave it alone, unless it's extra-confessional. We're the General Assembly's 'salt', just like the Sessions are our 'salt'."

Mr. Meyerhoff responded: "Our list in this Presbytery has been too long and too passionately pressed by others."

Brent Bradley asked Mr. Meyerhoff: "What extra-confessional issues have generated overtures?" He responded: "I hope you'll grant me a little hyperbole as a speaker." He stated that the issues of home schooling and women voting in congregational meetings would be two such issues. He also said that overtures have come from sessions "that anticipated what General Assembly might do."

Mr. Bradley responded by noting that many of the "divisive" issues in the Presbytery revolve around things such as the days of creation, the continuation of charismatic gifts, and worship and the Lord's Day—all confessional matters. "Up until recently, this Presbytery had a consistent view," and that what has caused the controversy has been the attempt that has been made to modify the previous positions.

The Rev. Carl Howell asked Mr. Ball about the example of abortion. He responded that the General Assembly did a study and settled the matter; however, he did think that it was a mistake not to add "abortion" to the list of violations of the sixth commandment specified in the confessional standards.

Dr. Roger Schultz, history professor at Virginia Intermont College, noted that the early statement by Westminster Presbytery was a "very strong statement of subscription"; and he wondered "what continuing authority does that resolution have?" Mr. Ball responded that the Presbytery "was organized on what we thought was a strict subscriptionist basis." Alluding to Westminster Presbytery's strong stance on the days of creation, he stated that the Presbytery believes "the lower courts have the authority to define confessional standards."

The Rev. Pat Parham offered his observations. "There have been some differences and they mostly revolve around examinations. The real issue is, How are we going to handle exceptions? . . . Presbytery votes on exceptions every time." He suggested that the Presbytery Manual should be amended, under the general rules, to re-affirm what was said in the original resolution from 1973. Included in this amendment to the Manual could be a statement about a minister not being allowed to teach his exceptions.

At the close of the discussion period, the Rev. Rick Light came forward to confess his sin of bitterness (see lead story, page 1). The court then engaged in a time of prayer.

By Brian Abshire

On Thursday, February 8th, 2001, R. J. Rushdoony, potent Christian scholar and prolific author, president and founder of the Chalcedon Foundation, passed from this life to the next. Unknown by most evangelical Christians outside of the academic elite, "Rush's" influence on shaping the nature of theological discussion regarding social issues may well be seen in later generations as a pivotal point in laying the foundation for a future reformation.

"Rush" was from an ancient Armenian family who fled from the Turkish genocide in the early decades of this century (though born in America, Rushdoony's mother was actually pregnant with him during their escape). As a result of growing up in the Armenian sub-culture, rich in Christian history and tradition, and living in the last days of American Christian culture, Rush had a remarkable perspective from which to see our social problems. One the one hand, Rush never got over his family's love affair with the United States. America, in the early part of this century, was less consistently humanistic than today, and more vestiges of our own Christian past were evident. Christian America had given the persecuted Armenians freedom, and security and prosperity.

Yet at the same time, by end of the 1920's the theological rot of American evangelicalism and the sociological implications that had on the nation could be clearly seen. Liberalism had conquered the mainline churches, Princeton had fallen, Machen was excommunicated, Tennessee was humiliated before the world by enforcing the Genesis account of creation; all while broad evangelicalism was sliding into revivalistic irrelevancy by retreating from American life into a pietistic infatuation with the "rapture." Rushdoony KNEW that America had been great, because she had been godly, and it was perhaps his most enduring contribution that his life was spent understanding where we went wrong as a culture, and what we had to do to get back on track. Rushdoony believed deeply that the Bible was God's infallible Word, and that it had answers for every area of life. A strict Van Tillian, Rush approached every issue from the perspective of "What does GOD say about this issue?"

After serving as a missionary to Native Americans, and working in suburban churches, he began his serious scholarly work in the 1950's as he analyzed American culture from a Reformed and presuppositional perspective. Rush authored a number of small books that revolutionized the Christian concepts of education and public policy. "The Messianic Character of American Education" was a devastating critique of the bankruptcy of the philosophical foundations of the public school system. He accurately saw back in the days when the biggest social problem facing teachers was chewing gum and talking in class, where those presuppositions would ultimately lead, forty years later. Rush thus is known in some circles as the "father"

of the Christian school movement and much of his time in the seventies and eighties was spent as an expert witness securing the right of Christians to educate their own children, in their own way.

In books such as *The Nature of the American System* and *This Independent Republic* Rush demonstrated the

options, "autonomy or theonomy" and if God had said it, he took it seriously.

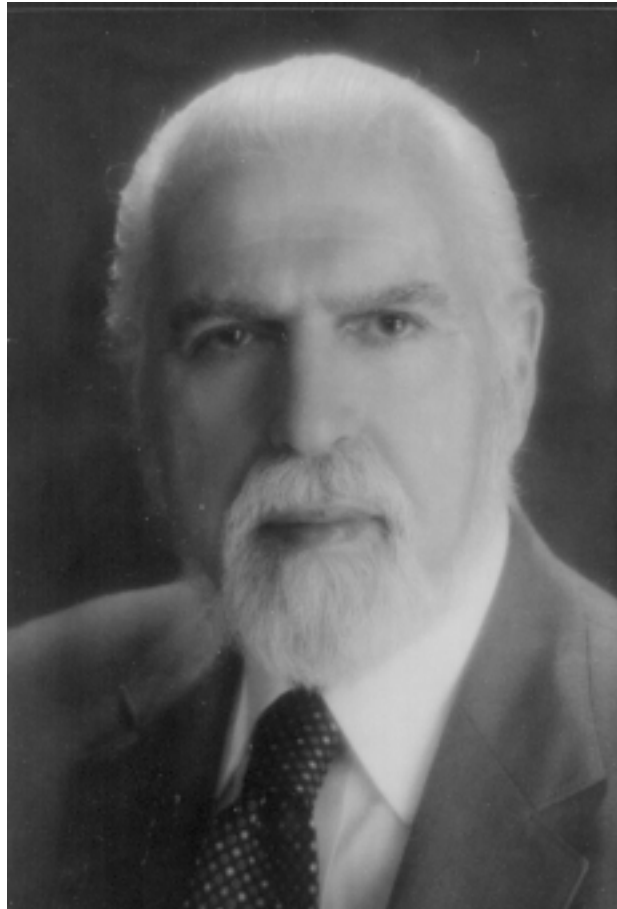
Sadly, in this author's opinion, Rushdoony's legacy will likely not be appreciated in this generation, partially due to theological inertia, partially due to the personal quirks of some of his disciples. Rush was a tremendously gracious man, kind and charitable. But some, who attached themselves to his theology, have not been able to model this aspect of his character. Rushdoony used to be a popular speaker at Reformed Seminaries in the 70's, until certain followers poisoned the well with their acerbic attacks, and caustic comments, thus giving the entire movement he founded a bad name.

I knew Rush personally, only for the last decade of his life. He served as one of the readers for my Ph.D. in sociology of religion, a job he did not have to do, but graciously did anyway, reading and critiquing my dissertation. I had the privilege of working with him and for him for several years at his think-tank in California and I treasure every memory of the time I spent with him. I would not call him a "friend" for that would imply an unwarranted personal intimacy. Instead, in many ways, he was a father in the faith. Rush's books, bought in bulk in 1983 on my way back to England to begin my doctoral studies, changed my entire concept of Christianity. The days spent with him in his living room, surrounded by immense stacks of other books (Rush read and DIGESTED, one book a day throughout his life), was a more

profound education than any course I had taken in college or seminary (and I quickly got into the habit of bringing a notebook and pen when visiting Rush, because EVERYTHING he said was worth remembering). And though I did not always agree with his conclusions, I deeply appreciated his brilliance, profoundly respected him as a Christian man, and yes, I loved him as Timothy might have loved Paul.

It is a great injustice that the millions of Covenant children who are being blessed by a Christian education, may never know that he was the man who secured that right for them. It is a great injustice that though Rush provided the theological and intellectual foundation for the resurgence of the Christian Right in the 1980's, he is seldom given credit for initiating Christian activism. It is a great injustice that millions of Americans read Francis Schaeffer and never know that his most profound ideas were directly taken from Rushdoony. But Rush doesn't care; his work is done, he is at rest with his fathers now, and everything he did was for the glory of God. But he ought to be remembered, and honored. We will not see his like for a long time to come. God never gives us many Calvins, or Knoxs or Gillespies. Rush was a mighty man of valor, and the world is a poorer place without him.

—Dr. Brian Abshire writes from Spokane, Washington, where he recently became pastor of Faith Presbyterian Church.



Rousas J. Rushdoony

Christian principles behind the formation of our country, and again, he predicted accurately, the growing tyranny of the civil magistrate as it escaped the bonds of Christian presuppositions. In all these books, Rush was able to succinctly and powerfully delineate the essence of the problems facing us, from a thoroughly Christian world and life-view.

But Rushdoony was not just an expert in critiquing the problem. He was an avid postmillennialist, firmly believing that God had called his people to victory, and in 1973, provided the means, through his *magnum opus*, *The Institutes of Biblical Law* (self-consciously named after Calvin's *Institutes of Christian Religion*). In the *Institutes*, Rushdoony provided the first major work of Reformed casuistry in more than three hundred years. The book was so important, that at one point, even Dallas Theological Seminary carried it in their bookstore. Basically, and essentially, the *Institutes* was a Van Tillian demonstration of the antithesis between the Bible and modern humanistic assumptions; assumptions which far too many Christian scholars had unwittingly accepted. It also demanded that Christians work to rebuild EVERY area of life according to God's Word.

Rushdoony's analysis was not of course without controversy. He dealt seriously with the penal sanctions of the Law, and it is probably that aspect that earned him the undying enmity of so many. Yet he never backed down from Van Til's assessment that there were only two

Presbytery of the Ascension Overtures Assembly to Review Whether SJC Violated Its Mandate in John Wood Matter

One of the presbyteries which petitioned General Assembly to take original jurisdiction in the John Wood matter was the Presbytery of the Ascension, a judicatory which covers northeast Ohio, northwest Pennsylvania, and western New York. Below is found the report of that presbytery's ad hoc committee, which was presented by the Rev. Dr. Carl Bogue, Pastor of Akron's Faith Presbyterian Church.

The Presbytery followed the recommendation in adopting an overture to the 2001 Assembly. The overture suggests that the Standing Judicial Commission (SJC) failed to follow the mandate of the 2000 General Assembly in the John Wood matter, and asks for a review of the minutes of the SJC in order to ascertain if the Commission violated proper procedure. The overture also asks that if it is found that the SJC did violate proper procedure, then the Assembly should take appropriate action. The two references cited are *Rules for Assembly Operation (RAO)* 15-1, paragraph 4; and *Book of Church Order (BCO)* 40-4, last sentence. The *RAO* reference specifies that "[i]f exceptions are taken with respect to a case, the Assembly may find this a ground to direct the Standing Judicial Commission to retry the case." The *BCO* reference says: "If, therefore, the next higher court be well advised that any such neglect or irregularity has occurred on the part of the lower court, it is incumbent on it to take cognizance of the same, and to examine, deliberate and judge in the whole matter as completely as if it had been recorded, and thus brought up by review of its records."

According to a member of the Presbytery, there was no audible dissent on the motion to adopt the overture.

Report of the Ad Hoc Committee on the TE Wood Matter January 27, 2001

When your Committee reported in October as a Commission of Presbytery to act as need be in this matter between Presbytery meetings, there had been activity but no conclusion to the matter. At that time we reported that a Panel of the SJC had been appointed to investigate the allegations re: TE John Wood. The Panel met in September but was willing to hear only from those who had "direct knowledge of the facts of the case." Thus, they heard only from those who were present at the worship service or who had spoken directly to TE Wood. Your Commission had written to the Panel expressing concerns about these arrangements and the apparent violation of the General Assembly's directive that "representatives of the petitioning presbyteries be permitted to represent their allegations before the SJC" (*M28GA* 28-72.24). In that communication we also expressed concern that the key theological issues would not be dealt with adequately if representatives of the petitioning presbyteries were not allowed to present their allegations. We never received a formal response from the Panel. The secretary of the Panel did confirm this understanding in a telephone call initiated by the Stated Clerk of our Presbytery.

The Panel of the SJC concluded that there had been error in allowing the woman to deliver the main message during a worship

service, but it did not find enough evidence to determine that charges should be brought against TE Wood.

We received no further communications from the SJC until we received notification that the SJC had considered the matter and reached a decision.

The "Findings" of the SJC had two main points.

1. A Woman Speaking At The Evening Services In August, 1998.—The investigation has not resulted in a strong presumption of guilt (*BCO* 31-2) on the part of TE John Wood in connection with a woman speaking on August 16 and 23, 1998, at CSPC, and therefore judicial process should not be instituted against him.

2. TE Wood's Views Regarding Women And Preaching.—SJC concludes that judicial process should not be instituted against TE John Wood for his expressed views regarding women and preaching because: (1) the investigation did not produce evidence that raises a strong presumption of guilt on the part of TE John Wood in connection with any public

scandal caused by agitation regarding or the promotion of the view that women should be ordained or that women should preach in PCA churches; (2) the investigation has not resulted in a strong presumption that TE Wood promoted his views on women and preaching in PCA churches; and (3) there is no clear evidence that TE Wood's views are outside the bounds of our Standards.

There were also three concurring opinions which are of interest. I will only give one or two sentences from each.

1. Six members of the SJC signed a concurring opinion that criticizes the General Assembly: "We believe the 28th General Assembly did err in assuming original jurisdiction of this case.

2. A second concurring opinion from one member reacts to the statement, "because there is no clear evidence that his views are outside the bounds of our Standards." ". . . If the statement means that the views are in accord with our Standards, then that conclusion is too generous a characterization. Furthermore, if the views are not outside the bounds of our

Standards, then he should not be restricted from 'promoting' those views."

3. The third concurring opinion is also signed by one member. ". . . The majority opinion states that 'what she [Dr. Linda Eure] said "crossed the line"'. . . . What is not clear from the evidence is that this offense should be charged to TE Wood." "The majority states that TE Wood holds to a view that 'excludes women from preaching (authoritative teaching). . . . However, this statement leaves much unsaid with respect to TE Wood's view. . . ."

Your committee was and is concerned about the procedures used by the SJC in their assignment from the 28th G.A., which we believe to be an arrogation of power which is improper and which resulted in a bad decision. It is little wonder that an "investigation has not resulted in a strong presumption of guilt" since there was never any opportunity for the presbyteries involved to "represent their allegations." In an effort to rectify this error, your committee recommends the following overture to be sent to the 29th G.A. [See box for the overture as it was amended and adopted by the Presbytery.—Ed.]

Overture to the 29th General Assembly from Presbytery of the Ascension

Whereas, the 28th General Assembly voted to take jurisdiction of Dr. John Wood with respect to allegations set forth in overtures from three presbyteries; and
Whereas, the matter was referred to the SJC to be considered "after the manner of *BCO* 31-2"; and
Whereas, the 28th General Assembly directed that, as part of this process, "representatives from the petitioning presbyteries be permitted to represent their allegations before the SJC" (*M28GA*, p. 310); and
Whereas, Presbytery received, from the Investigative Panel appointed by the SJC, a letter stating that the Panel would be meeting ". . . for the sole purpose of gathering information . . ." and asking that we identify witnesses ". . . who have direct knowledge of relevant facts . . ."; and
Whereas, Presbytery understood "represent their allegations" to entail, not just a right to identify witnesses, but also a right to explain our reasoning and concerns; and
Whereas, the contents of the Panel's letter indicated to us that there would not be an opportunity for us to "represent our allegations" before the Panel in the way in which the 28th General Assembly meant that phrase; and
Whereas, we sent a letter to the Panel detailing this and other concerns, and asking for a further explanation of the Panel's planned process, particularly as it related to "permitting us to represent our allegations"; and
Whereas, Presbytery never received a formal response to its letter; and
Whereas, in a telephone call, initiated by the Stated Clerk of Presbytery, the Secretary of the Panel stated that it was his understanding that representatives from the Presbytery of the Ascension would not be allowed to speak before the Investigative Panel on the grounds that they had no ability to testify from direct knowledge regarding the facts of the case; and
Whereas, on the basis of the above letter and conversation, Presbytery's Commission determined that it would not be good stewardship to send a representative to the Panel's meeting if he would not be able to speak to Presbytery's position (and having no information as to whether we would be permitted to address the full SJC); and
Whereas, it is our understanding that the two men from the other petitioning presbyteries (one of whom was an elected representative of his presbytery) were allowed to speak to the Panel only with regard to their knowledge of facts, and not with regard to a presentation of the allegations; and
Whereas, no one from this Presbytery received any notification of permission to attend the meeting of the full SJC, much less to "represent any allegations"; and
Whereas, to the best of our knowledge, neither of the other two petitioning presbyteries received such an invitation; and
Whereas, the above facts seem to indicate that the Standing Judicial Commission acted in direct violation of the instructions of the 28th General Assembly; and
Whereas, the current Standing Judicial Commission is clearly a commission of the 28th GA (see *M28GA*, p. 245); and
Whereas, commissions, by their very nature, must operate within the procedures and guidelines mandated by the body appointing them lest their power be unchecked; and
Whereas, this is particularly true in this matter which was assigned to the SJC by the General Assembly, and which does not fall into any of the categories mentioned in the *RAO* and *SJC Manual* as being under the ordinary purview of the SJC (i.e., appeals, complaints, and judicial references (see *RAO* 15-1 and *SJC Manual* sec. 13-15)); and
Whereas, *RAO* 15-1 and *SJC Manual* 20.5 charge the Committee on Constitutional Business with reviewing the minutes of the SJC to determine if the SJC has conformed to the requirements of the *RAO* and *Manual*; and
Whereas, if the SJC failed to carry out the instructions of the 28th General Assembly it has failed to act properly as a commission, thus violating the *BCO* and *RAO*; and
Whereas, this overture raises questions only about the procedures followed by the SJC, not its reasoning; Therefore be it Resolved, that the Presbytery of the Ascension hereby overtures the 29th General Assembly, through its Committee on Constitutional Business, asking that the CCB examine the minutes of the Standing Judicial Commission to determine if the instructions of the 28th General Assembly were followed with regard to the matter of permitting representatives of the petitioning presbyteries to "represent their allegations before the SJC"; and, if not, to take or recommend appropriate action as per *RAO* 15-1, para. 4 (cf. *BCO* 40-4, last sentence).

Calvary Presbytery Overtures General Assembly to 'Condemn' SJC Findings in John Wood Case Overture Alleges Improprieties in Both Procedure and Findings

by Mark Rooze

At its regular stated meeting on January 27, 2001, Calvary Presbytery overtured the 29th General Assembly (GA) of the PCA to condemn the Standing Judicial Committee (SJC) report on the John Wood / Cedar Springs Presbyterian Church case.

The presbytery, meeting at Woodruff Road Presbyterian Church in Greenville, South Carolina, rejected the negative recommendation of its own Bills and Overtures Committee, and instead amended and adopted the personal resolution of Dr. Joseph Pipa III, President of Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary, as an overture to the GA by a vote of 42-27.

Dr. Pipa had originally submitted the resolution at the October 26, 2000, meeting of Calvary Presbytery. Dr. Pipa himself offered the majority of the amendments. "Both I and the presbytery felt the need to keep the overture confined to those facts which are publicly available," Dr. Pipa later said.

Rising in support of the resolution was Rod Mays, denominational coordinator of Reformed University Ministries. "This is a watershed issue in our denomination," Dr. Mays said. If this ruling [of the SJC] goes unchallenged, future generations will look back at this and say we blinked."

"If we are on a slippery slope, and many believe that we are, then there must also be toe-holds," he continued. "We cannot cave in to this culture."

The Rev. John Wood, senior pastor of Cedar Springs Presbyterian Church in Knoxville, Tennessee, was investigated for allowing a woman to preach to his congregation during two evening worship services in August 1998 and for holding views that allow a woman to publicly preach the Word of God. The SJC failed to issue an indictment.

The overture states that the SJC failed to follow the 28th General Assembly's instructions to allow the presbyteries which originally brought charges to testify regarding Mr. Wood's theology, that the SJC

failed to focus its investigation on Mr. Wood's theological views and instead merely found that he had not agitated for them, that the SJC's procedural ruling against any cross examination failed to allow conflicting testimony regarding Mr. Wood's position to be properly investigated, and that the SJC improperly dismissed members from its own panel.

The overture hearkens to the order of the 28th Assembly instructing the SJC to hear from the presbyteries in the case against Wood, and specifically to Bills and Overtures Committee (B&O) Recommendation 24. That recommendation, adopted by the Assembly, said "that representatives of the petitioning presbyteries be permitted to represent their allegations before the SJC."

Alluding to that provision, the Calvary Presbytery overture states that "the 28th General Assembly instructed the SJC to hear from the Presbyteries concerned in the charges against John Wood," but that neither "the SJC nor its panel of three men gave the Presbyteries an opportunity to speak to the theological and constitutional issues involved in the John Wood case" and that "the SJC made theological interpretations without hearing from the Presbyteries."

Prior to the 28th General Assembly, the SJC had ruled the case against Mr. Wood out of order, and had secured a concurring opinion from the Committee on Constitutional Business. But the Assembly rejected those recommendations, instead siding with the B&O finding that four presbyteries had properly petitioned the General Assembly to take original jurisdiction under *Book of Church Order* (BCO) 34-1.

The Assembly, by an overwhelming margin, voted to hear the case, and then assigned it to the SJC, ordering the SJC proceed with a hearing under BCO 31-2. (BCO 31-2 provides for a hearing to determine whether there is a strong enough presumption of guilt to institute process.)

However, the SJC sent letters to the

petitioning presbyteries indicating that "doctrinal issues will not be debated during this phase of the proceeding." At least one presbytery, Ascension, responded by letter to the SJC prior to the 31-2 hearing, stating that according to its original resolution "doctrine is the crux of this matter and thus we do not see how discussion of doctrinal issues can be avoided in the proceedings." The presbytery also said that "if the letter is a full statement of the process, then we have serious misgivings as to whether the concerns of the presbyteries can be adequately addressed and whether the directives of the 28th GA are being followed."

The SJC did not allow presbyteries to present testimony regarding the orthodoxy of Mr. Wood's theological views at the 31-2 hearing. The Calvary Presbytery overture states that by failing to remedy the concerns raised by Ascension and not allowing the presbyteries to testify, the SJC violated the orders of the 28th General Assembly.

Another issue raised by Calvary's overture is the nature of the SJC's theological findings. It states that although "the SJC was instructed to determine Mr. Wood's views, in their report they do not focus on his views but that he has not agitated for the view that women may preach in the church."

The SJC report concludes that "the investigation did not produce evidence that raised a strong presumption of guilt that TE [Teaching Elder] Wood is agitating for or promoting a view that women be ordained nor that he is promoting women preaching the authoritative word of God in worship services. Neither TE Wood nor CSPC has trumpeted this event; others within the PCA have spread the report both in private communications and in the secular press. The SJC, therefore, concludes that judicial process should not be instituted."

In effect, the Calvary Presbytery overture questions whether the SJC substituted a lower standard for a chargeable offense. It maintains that rather than primarily focusing on whether Mr. Wood's views are in error or in conflict with the Standards of the church, the SJC emphasized that he had not agitated or promoted that view. Two of the three grounds in the section related to theological findings say that the investigation found no evidence of "any public scandal caused by agitation regarding or the promotion of [Wood's] view..." or "a strong presumption that TE Wood promoted his views."

The SJC majority opinion did not mention a public sermon preached by Mr. Wood on the subject at Cedar Springs on July 2, 2000. However, that sermon was entered into evidence before the SJC and cited in two concurring opinions.

Yet another concern raised by the Calvary Presbytery overture is the conflict between what Mr. Wood originally told investigating pastors and what he told the SJC. The overture states that "in the report of the panel there is a conflict between the testimony of Drs. Smith and Pipa and that of Mr. Wood with respect to Mr. Wood's definition of preaching, and there was no opportunity for cross examination," and that "there is a conflict between the report of Mr. Wood's position in the SJC ruling and his expressed position in his letter of October 2, 1999," but that "such conflict can only be resolved through a trial with cross examination."

The "private" nature of the SJC

hearings, without cross-examination, had also been established by the SJC in its letter to the presbyteries regarding procedure. Ascension Presbytery had also complained about that provision prior to the hearing, saying "it also seems that all interested parties and courts in this matter will be hampered if they are not allowed to hear the evidence which various persons may be prepared to give."

The SJC report admitted that "legitimate questions were raised about TE Wood's views on the subject through subsequent statements he made to others inquiring about the . . . event."

BCO 32-13 makes cross-examination available to all parties in a trial.

The overture's final clause states that "in its spring meeting in 2000 the SJC would not allow its members who were from the Presbyteries that brought the original overtures to the SIC to vote on the issue, even though it was pointed out that in cases of original jurisdiction no member of the court was required to recuse himself."

Excluding SJC members from presbyteries which had objected to a woman preaching has become particularly sensitive because of the 17-0 SJC vote on the final report. The absence of a minority report precludes judicial review by the 29th General Assembly.

Calvary Presbytery's overture calls for "the 29th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America to condemn the report of the 28th Assembly through the SJC." The language of "condemning" a report was drawn from a Louisiana Presbytery overture regarding an SJC ruling also related to the Wood matter early last year. That overture, combined with similar overtures from other presbyteries, effectively set aside the SJC's original ruling that the case was out of order.

"This report is so flawed, it needs to be condemned," Dr. Pipa said, when interviewed later. He cited not only the findings of the majority opinion, but also a concurring opinion which suggested that the Assembly itself had erred.

The overture will now go to the 29th General Assembly to be held in Dallas on June 19-22, 2001, for action by the entire assembly.—Mr. Rooze is a student at Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary.

Calvary Presbytery's Overture on SJC Decision in John Wood Case

The following is the text of Dr. Joseph A. Pipa's resolution regarding the action of the SJC on the John Wood case, as amended and adopted by Calvary Presbytery. The presbytery has now forwarded the resolution as an overture to the 29th PCA General Assembly.

Whereas, the 28th General Assembly instructed the SJC to hear from the Presbyteries concerned in the charges against John Wood; and

Whereas, the SJC nor its panel of three men gave the Presbyteries an opportunity to speak to the theological and constitutional issues involved in the John Wood case; and

Whereas, the SJC made theological interpretations without hearing from the Presbyteries; and

Whereas, the SJC was instructed to determine Mr. Wood's views, in their report they do not focus on his views but that he has not agitated for the view that women may preach in the church; and

Whereas, in the report of the panel there is a conflict between the testimony of Drs. Smith and Pipa and that of Mr. Wood with respect to Mr. Wood's definition of preaching, and there was no opportunity for cross examination; and

Whereas, there is a conflict between the report of Mr. Wood's position in the SJC ruling and his expressed position in his letter of October 2, 1999, and

Whereas, such conflict can only be resolved through a trial with cross examination; and

Whereas, in its spring meeting in 2000 the SJC would not allow its members who were from the Presbyteries that brought the original overtures to the SIC to vote on the issue, even though it was pointed out that in cases of original jurisdiction no member of the court was required to recuse himself;

Therefore be it Resolved Calvary Presbytery overture the 29th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America to condemn the report of the 28th Assembly through the SJC (not to draw up charges against Mr. Wood and proceed to a trial).

CLASSIFIED ADS

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Cedar Springs Delays Vote on Whether to Leave the PCA

Cedar Springs Presbyterian Church, Knoxville, Tennessee, has delayed the vote on whether to withdraw from the denomination and seek another affiliation. The vote had been anticipated to be held in early February, after opportunity for the congregation's members to solicit information and have any questions answered.

However, the Session decided to postpone the vote until after the Missions Conference in early March. The elders have also called for a month of prayer and fasting, so that the people can seek the Lord's face in the matter.

With a total membership of approximately 5,000, Cedar Springs is the fourth largest congregation in the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA). It and its Senior Pastor, the Rev. John Wood, have been embroiled in controversy with respect to a woman bringing the main message in two Sunday evening services in August 1998. The denominational Standing Judicial Commission (SJC) recently declined to indict Mr. Wood either for the incidents or for his views. However, the SJC also found that the woman in question did cross the line in her speaking in public worship.

Printed below is a denominational issue summary distributed by the Session.

Denominational Issue Summary

Introduction

In the last two years, certain leaders of our denomination have directed complaints and actions toward Cedar Springs Presbyterian Church's leadership which have caused us to re-examine who we are as a church and where we can best serve the Lord Jesus in the furtherance of His Kingdom. This brief summary will seek to bring a focus to the issues we face and their possible resolution.

Cedar Springs Presbyterian Church

Cedar Springs Presbyterian Church (CSPC) is and always has been an evangelical Bible-teaching church that seeks to help fulfill the great commission in our community and world. As Bible-focused believers, we have found ourselves in agreement with basic creeds of the faith, which express essential doctrines centered in Scripture. Where Bible-focused believers have differences in their interpretation of doctrine, such as infant baptism or limited atonement, our posture, as a local congregation, has historically been one of seeking unity in the Gospel while granting liberty to each other.

CSPC left the PCUS in 1981 to join the PCA. At the time we thought the more conservative denomination better reflected our Biblical focus and we saw many areas of common interest in world missions and evangelization. Our elders were received without examination, even though a number of them held different interpretations of the Scriptures relative to some doctrines taught by the Westminster Confession of Faith (WCF) than the majority of the leadership of the PCA. Prior to joining the PCA, CSPC did not have a formal training program for prospective officers. After we joined the PCA we instituted a formal training program and taught the WCF and church government. If anything, officers of CSPC have become more reformed as a result of this officer-training program. Over the last year or two we have been informed by leaders in the PCA, with whom we have

always identified, that those differences in interpretation are considered essential items by leaders in the majority of the PCA. In addition, there is a minority of elders in the PCA who would say many more of our opinions fall short of strict subscription to the Westminster confession, as they understand it. This minority has sought to assert their views on the rest of the denomination through control of ministerial selection, litigation in church courts, and other means. The recent conflict we have experienced, over what we consider to be a minor event, is an example of their approach.

The Presbyterian Church in America

The Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) was formed by evangelical and conservative members of the Southern Presbyterian Church in response to liberal interpretations of Scripture, receiving ministers who disclaimed the deity of Christ, and a proactive social agenda by the General Assembly that included funding abortions and giving strong support to the National and World Councils of Churches. The Westminster Confession of Faith, which had historically been the principal confessional base of the PCUS, was adopted as an accurate expression of the reformed faith and became part of the constitution of the PCA.

Many in the leadership in the PCA have, in the past, been in agreement with us in the "non-essential" nature of some of the differences in interpretation and application of the Scriptures as they relate to the doctrines taught in the WCF. But there are significant areas in which we now understand, because of recent comments from these PCA leaders, that we are out of agreement with the majority of the leadership of the PCA. Some important examples are infant baptism, limited or particular atonement, and the non-ordained role of women in the church. Others that would be a problem to the minority group of strict subscriptionists are ministry relationships with non-reformed or less-reformed groups and missions, eschatology, length of the days of creation, cessations of the gifts of the Spirit, worship style, etc. Many of our congregation and some of our elders do not take the PCA view of these issues and therefore we are out of accord with their view. While we have tried to teach faithfully the position of our denomination, we have always accepted variant convictions on these issues, believing they are neither essential to the gospel nor to the qualifications of Christian maturity and leadership.

We thought we were accepted and given liberty to choose in these areas, but we have discovered that the active minority, which believes in a strict subscription to the Westminster Confession, has the ability and freedom in the PCA to bring complaints and charges against us in their effort to "protect the purity of the church". Like a consuming fire, these complaints and charges destroy the unity of the Spirit, which Christ intends for his body. This is not beneficial to the PCA or CSPC nor is it useful in accomplishing the purposes of the Church as the body of Christ.

A significant number of leaders from the majority of the PCA have advised us to ask that our present elders be "grand-fathered" and require stricter subscription from new officers. Others have suggested those out of accord in infant baptism should resign. If we stay in the PCA, we can expect continued involvement in conflict and litigation on issues not essential to the gospel. Since we are out of accord in significant issues with the majority of the leadership of the PCA, and since we do not believe God would have one member of the body bind the conscience of another in non-essential issues, it seems the honorable and loving thing for us to do is to transfer our denominational affiliation.

The Evangelical Presbyterian Church

The Evangelical Presbyterian Church (EPC) was formed in 1981 as a result of a perceived drift from conservative Bible-focused Christianity in the United Presbyterian Church USA (UPCUSA). The EPC also saw a need to provide boundaries against litigious excesses and denominational power struggles it witnessed in other churches. Therefore it received the same documents of the constitution as the PCA, but with a different perspective. It clearly defined a set of essentials of the gospel and then adopted the following motto: "In essentials unity, in non essentials liberty, in all things charity."

CSPC's Options

The Session Leadership Team was commissioned by the Session to study these issues. After months of prayer and study, the report was given to the Session and it determined in its November meeting that we should begin the process of transferring our affiliation with the PCA to the EPC. Our options, as the congregation considers all sides of the issues, are:

Leave the PCA to maintain the integrity of what we believe are the convictions of the majority of our congregation and leaders and to pursue spiritual unity rather than a strict subscription uniformity with our brothers and sisters in Christ in that denomination.

AND

Join the EPC as a denomination that reflects our commitment to the Gospel and to unity with the essentials and liberty in the non-essentials. In this denomination, individual congregations have liberty to adopt positions and practices for non-essentials. Our initial position will be our traditional position that has been shaped by the focus on the truth of Scripture and the Great Commission.

OR

Choose to be an independent Presbyterian church adopting the constitutions of the Scripture and the Westminster Confession with liberty for interpretation on non-essentials. Again, our initial position will be our traditional position that has been shaped by the focus on the truth of Scripture and the Great Commission.

OR

Choose to be an independent Presbyterian church as described above while studying carefully whether or not we should request affiliation with the EPC.

Call for Study and Prayer
Information regarding these matters will be presented to the Congregational Units on January 14, 21 and 28th and in two "Town Hall" meetings on Sunday evenings of January 21st and 28th. We will do everything we can to respond to all your questions and provide you with the information you will need in this most important decision. Please listen, study and above all pray, for God's will to be carried out in CSPC's decision. We ask you to be patient with us, your servant leaders, as this process proceeds to a vote probably in February.

John Wood's Sermon on the Matter

On January 14, 2001, the Rev. John Wood spoke to his congregation with regard to the present decision of whether or not to remain in the Presbyterian Church in

America (PCA). He based the message on Titus 2:11-3:11.

At the beginning of the message, he apologized to his hearers for reading about a page and a half at the start. However, he felt compelled to do so, because of the importance of the message—indeed, he stated that this may be one of the most important messages he would ever present to Cedar Springs Presbyterian Church.

In his introductory remarks, Mr. Wood said: "I believe that it is a message is from the Lord, because I see it arising directly from His written Word, and applying directly to our situation.

"We are certainly at a crossroads in the more than 200 year history of this congregation. . . . We have an important decision to make. The elders have recommended that we leave the denomination we've been part of for the past twenty years, and affiliate with another, younger denomination. It is a recommendation with which I wholeheartedly agree. But some of you may be opposed to the decision. In fact, I know that some of you are. You certainly have the right to oppose it. But things are being said that I believe are not entirely accurate. And it's time for me to address this issue publicly. I haven't wanted to do that, preferring rather to wait for the two 'town meetings' that will be held the next two Sunday afternoons. But there's been too much talk, too much background noise, to ignore it any further.

"The peace of this congregation is threatened. And I would be an unfaithful shepherd if I did not tell you all that is on my heart.

"But that raises the question, Why you should listen to me. Why take what I say any more seriously than what anyone else has to say? On this particular matter, by virtue of God's call to me through your voice as a congregation, I believe that you are obliged to give special weight to my words. If I'm wrong in such a weighty matter as this, then you probably need to find another pastor. I don't say that as a threat, but only to state the obvious. If your pastors and elders are misleading you in a matter as important as this, you probably have the wrong pastors and elders. Don't lose sight of this, as we move through this process. Either God is leading this congregation through its elected leaders, or he's not.

"There is another reason that I claim a special right to speak in this way, and I must confess I feel at this point a little bit like Paul, writing in his second letter to the Corinthians, saying, 'Forgive me if I make a bit of a fool of myself.' But I would encourage you to give special weight to the words of one who has ministered to you now for over a decade—who has carried you on his heart, baptized your children, welcomed them to the Lord's table, married them, counseled many of you in times of trouble, buried your dead, and sought to preach the Word to you in season and out of season. This decision, frankly, *will not affect the lives of those who oppose it!* You will not even know the difference between the PCA and the EPC on a daily basis. If a person was to leave here and come back in a year, and didn't know whether we'd voted or not, they would not even have a clue from the sermons that you'll hear, or the worship, or the life of this church. Those of us who are recommending the change are the ones who will have to live with your decision on a daily basis. Therefore, I think that special weight should be given to our words.

"I want to be very careful. The PCA contains many dear brothers and sisters—most of my closest friends in ministry are brothers in the PCA, with whom I continue to be very, very close. And I don't want to say anything that would hurt them. *Nevertheless, some things simply must be said!* And I pray that God will give me grace and wisdom, and will use these words to speak His word, which does not bring confusion, but understanding."

Mr. Wood then stated that Paul gave instruction to Titus as to what he should be about positively, as well as what he was to "avoid like the plague." What are we to stress is "nothing less than the gospel in all of its glory." The God of this gospel is a God of mercy and love and

grace. The minister spoke of the atonement of Christ, and the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit.

"And then he tells us that because we now have the Spirit and have been made new, we are now called to live lives that are so winsome and attractive, that the world will look at us and not hear foolish controversies and debates and read in the newspaper about one—I'll be nice—one thing after another, but will say, Look at how they love one another, and so will be attracted. And then he ends by speaking of our blessed hope . . . of the glorious appearing of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ. . . ."

"And he says, This is what your ministry is about. This is it. It's about this—only this. Nothing else. This. Let me try to make this as clear as possible—this is what it's about. Nothing else. This! Teach this—teach it with authority. . . ."

Mr. Wood made an appeal to any unbelievers in the audience to understand that the Church of Jesus Christ is about the gospel, not the denominational controversies about which he would be speaking.

Then, he spoke of avoiding "foolish controversies," described by Paul as "unprofitable and useless." "He couldn't say it more strongly. 'Unprofitable,' 'useless,' 'avoid it,' 'get away from it,' 'don't get involved in it,' 'it will detract and distract from Biblical first things.'"

"... He's not talking about un-Biblical issues. He's talking about things that arise from our study of the Scriptures. The long genealogies of the Old Testament—what tribe came from what tribe, who came from what, who has the supremacy, who has the priesthood, who has the kingly line, who may serve in what way, who may lead in worship, how are we to worship. Arguments about the law—what can we do on the Sabbath, what can't we do, who can lead in worship, who can't lead in worship: law arguments again. Creation days—'days', 'ages', 'a poetic framework against polytheism'? What is it? Are these things wrong to discuss. No, they're not wrong to discuss! Is it wrong to have hearty theological discussion? Of course it's not! But the moment that these become controversies, the moment that people are seeking to impose their view of secondary issues onto the conscience of another person, Paul doesn't say, 'Oh, now, this is something you should really get involved in. This is important stuff.' He says, 'Get out of it! Get away from it! Don't waste another moment, because these are foolish, foolish, controversies.'

"And the bottom line is that I have for some years now had to be involved as your representative in one foolish controversy after another of the *exact* sort that Paul is talking about. We have fought over the meaning of the creation days—something which Christians in the fourth century decided was not worth fighting over. We have fought over the Sabbath, whether we're going to have Calvin's view and admit that, the view of the Continental Reformers, or whether we're going to hold to the high Scottish view of the Sabbath. We've fought over contemporary worship, whether people may sing contemporary songs and use overhead projectors or not. And on it goes—those are just representative.

"And brothers and sisters, it is not right, and it is not godly, and it is not Biblical."

Pastor Wood then addressed five arguments which had been raised against the church leaving the PCA. He conceded that most of the congregation "would never come to a town meeting, and so I just wanted to answer them this morning. And if this is not what you wanted to hear, forgive those of us who simply need to hear and say it—bear with us. Because these objections are being raised in whispers throughout the church, and they need to be answered together as a family."

The first concern is that of the unity of the church. Mr. Wood stated that this was an excellent question. "How can we show the unity of the church of Jesus Christ by leaving a denomination? How can that not be splitting from Christ's church? The answer is this: . . . denominations are not the church. They aren't.

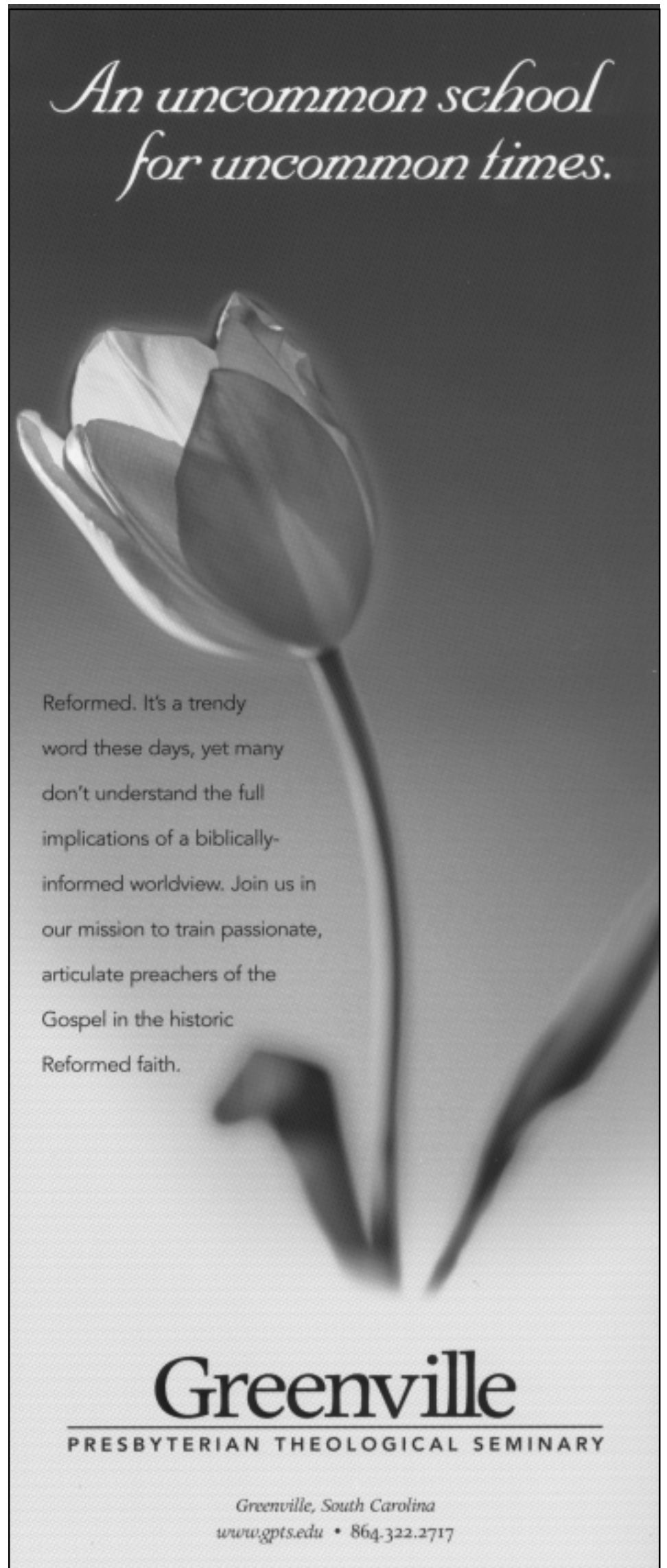
They are manmade structures. They may have the word 'church' in them, but they are not the church. And I can prove it from the Bible. When God looks at us, what does He see? Does He see the kinds of divisions based on theology and ideology? No—in fact, He sends Paul to Corinth to attack the origin of denominational division. He attacks it. He says the problem here is that some of you are saying, I am of Paul, I am of Apollos, I am of Cephas. Now was it wrong for those who had studied under Paul to tell people, Hey, I studied under Paul, and I really love his teaching. No, that was right—that was honoring Paul. Was it wrong to say, I studied under Peter, and I just love the sermons that he brings and the stories that he tells? No, that was right—that was good. But they had now formed their identity when they talked about who they were—they said, I am of Paul, I am of Apollos, I am of Cephas. I'm a Baptist, I'm a Presbyterian, I'm a Methodist, I'm an Episcopalian. Well, what kind of Presbyterian? I belong to the EPC. I belong to the PCA. I belong to the OPC. I belong to the PCUS. I belong to the ARP. I can't keep up with all the acronyms for all the kinds of Presbyterians that there are. Do you think that God sees that when He looks on us? . . . God sees geographical divisions, period. . . . The church of Christ in Rome, meeting in the following different places—the different congregations. The church of Jesus Christ in Corinth, meeting in all these different congregations. Or, the churches of a particular region of the world—the churches of Galatia, the churches of Asia Minor. . . . God sees His church in Knoxville, Tennessee, meeting here, and meeting on another corner. And He sees us as we really are, whether we like it or not. He sees us as one. And He's much more concerned that we say to the City of Knoxville that we are one, than He is about the kinds of divisions that Paul says we are not to give any credence to.

"Now, am I then saying that denominations are bad? No. I'm saying denominations rightly understood—not seen as the church, but seen for what they are—can be helpful. Denominations are wineskins—they're like mission boards. They're places to credential pastors, to meet to try to see if you can advance certain kinds of ministries. And as long as they're helpful toward the end of the real church—the local congregation, and the congregations in a particular community—as long as they're helpful toward that end, they're great! When they aren't any longer, then you say, 'We love you—but this isn't helping, it's hindering. Go in peace!'"

"But a person who says, I won't stay with the church that I'm a part of, that has married me and baptized me and ministered to me, because they're changing the letters on the name, has failed to understand what the church of Jesus Christ is, and has fallen for the Corinthian heresy, however well intentioned. They've fallen for the idea that the church of Christ is these false divisions—it is not.

"So, it's not schismatic to leave a particular group if you do it saying, Release us now, and we'll go in peace."

The second objection is "the perceived absence of Biblical reasons for leaving." Pastor Wood said that he has received numerous letters from people in the congregation which have stated that the reasons for leaving the PCUS revolved around big theological issues, while the current issues are small ones: "It's constant, but it's small." Mr. Wood argued that these people are "making my case. Paul doesn't say, Avoid substantive controversies. He doesn't say, Walk away from real theological battles. He says, Avoid foolish controversies. And if your argument is correct, then you're calling into question the existence of the PCA. Because the founders of the PCA did not accuse the PCUS of being apostate. In fact, that vote came up at an Assembly. Someone tried to declare it to be apostate, and it was defeated, overwhelmingly. Nor were they thrown out. Why did they leave? They left because they finally said, Enough of these foolish controversies. It's keeping us from doing the work of the gospel. So, Biblically, I would say that understanding this text—and if you knew our situation the way that those of us



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who have to live in it day-by-day knew it, you would realize that this text, applied to our situation, constitutes a call to move on."

The third objection is "the desire to stay and fight for our denomination." This objection is answered by the answer given to the previous objection: "Why would you want to fight for something that's perishing? The church of Christ is forever—not denominations. I wouldn't want to stay and fight for the EPC. The point is, they're just voluntary organizations, that may help or may hinder. If they help, go on with them. The PCA's helping some churches wonderfully—they should remain in it. It's hindering others—they need to get out, and some of them are looking at doing that now."

The fourth objection is "the desire to remain in a more conservative denomination. I've had somebody say to me, Why would we want to stop being one of the most liberal churches in a conservative denomination, and turn around and be one of the most conservative churches in a liberal denomination? It's a clever way to put it; it is completely and utterly inaccurate. It is a misuse and a misunderstanding of the words 'conservative' and 'liberal' in a theological, ecclesiastical setting. . . . Theologically-speaking, 'liberal' means that a person does not believe the Bible is God's Word, does not believe that Jesus is the unique Son of God and divine—just that He was a good teacher, does not believe in the supernatural. That's what it is to be a liberal. And the EPC is no more theologically liberal than the PCA. They're both evangelical groups. The EPC is simply broader evangelically than the PCA. . . . I'll give you an illustration. When people have said to me, In one sentence, explain to me why you think we ought to leave, I have said, Imagine this. Billy Graham gets a new clean bill of health and moves to Knoxville, Tennessee, out of his beautiful place in Montreat, and he does what he did there—even though he's an old Southern Baptist, he decides to go to Cedar Springs Presbyterian Church, and he and his family come in, the way they did to Montreat Presbyterian. I would like for him to be able to be an elder here. You know, call me a fool. But I'd like for Billy Graham to qualify as an elder at Cedar Springs. Billy Graham does not qualify as an elder in the PCA, but he does in the EPC, and that's what I mean by broader—broader in that sense. And that's what this church is and has been for . . . over 200 years. It has never been the Old Princeton scholastic Presbyterianism—it has always been a revival, large-hearted, evangelical Presbyterianism. And I want us to remain that.

" . . . My friend Sandy Willson really made a great point. He said, You know, the quickest way to theological liberalism is not ever by being too broad, but by being too narrow. And you can prove it, historically. And the reason is, we make the same mistake as the Pharisees. A lot of us became very legalistic with our children because we wanted to protect them. That's what the Pharisees did for Israel. But what happens to most of the children of legalistic people is that they remember that they wanted us to be Christians, but they can't remember why. Now, why is that? It's because we elevated secondary issues to primary place. And do you know what happens when we elevate secondary issues into first place? We think that we'll just get a bigger group of primary issues, but we don't. Everything becomes secondary. You abolish your primaries. When you put secondary things in first place, all that you have are secondary issues.

"The Bible speaks to much more than the gospel. The Bible does address worship issues, and all sorts of other things, that are secondary. And as we read and study and theologically debate with friends, we do come to conclusions. And if I'm convinced that the Bible teaches a certain thing about worship, or about ordination, or whatever, my conscience is bound by that before the Lord. Not a primary issue, it's secondary, maybe even tertiary—third. But because I believe with all my heart that that's what God says in His Word, my conscience is bound. Now, here's the point where most Christians make an enormous mistake that troubles the church. Just because my conscience

is bound on a secondary issue, doesn't mean that God is calling me to bind your conscience on a secondary issue. My conscience does not rule this church, nor does it rule the world. And we've got a world full of fundamentalists of all different religions, including Christian, who are trying to legislate everything that they believe, because they think that their conscience rules the world. And sadly, we have some here who think that their conscience with regard to secondary issues should rule this church—and it doesn't! Your conscience rules you. And the church of Christ is about primary, not secondary, issues."

The final objection is "the need to proceed more slowly—what's the rush?" Mr. Wood explained: "Some of us have been living this a long time." Further, the Session is trying to give as much information as possible to the congregation. However, "there is only so much information for you. And in all charity, I think that most of those who are crying for a longer stretch of time have absolutely no expectation of studying this issue, they've made up their minds, they simply want to stop it. And here's the problem with it. Whatever the decision, neither they nor you will have to live with it. Those of us who have proposed it will have to live with it.

"Well, you say, How does that affect us on a daily basis? Right now, this, which is one of the biggest churches in the PCA, has three ordained pastors ministering to adults. We've got other people working with us, thank God. . . . Now, contrast that to a normal situation. . . . Briarwood . . . has fewer people in church on Sunday than we do, and has fourteen ordained pastors ministering to their adults. We're dying over here! And we have been unable, until we know whether we're going to the right hand or the left, to go on. We can't call people to come and serve until we tell them what they're coming to. The reality is, if I may whisper this in your ear—many of you who are strongly opposed to this, are the same people who twenty years ago were strongly opposed to going into the PCA and leaving the PCUS. The bottom line is, the way that God has wired you, you don't like change. And whatever it is, you will vote against it. And there's really no information that can be given that will move you to the next point. We could take a year, we can take ten. You don't want to change. We can't do anything about it. I pray God will move your heart.

"But as for me and my house, may I just say to you, dear brothers and sisters, on this weekend of celebrating Dr. King's life, Set me free! Set us free from *foolish controversies*, that have eaten our time and our energies and have made us be trumpeted around in the newspapers around this country in a way that does not glorify God! And it's not going to stop—it will continue, because the DNA of the thing is given to foolish controversies, and it's celebrated, because they aren't big issues. 'Well, this is OK, because these aren't big issues.' And that is the contrary of what Paul teaches. Big issues are worth fighting over; little issues, not. Warn a divisive man; warn him again; Paul says, after that, have nothing more to do with him. That's God's Word. And if you will set us free, we will staff this church. We will move on ahead. We don't have some nefarious hidden plan of change. We are wanting to keep this church on the trajectory that it's been on. And the day that you vote to release us, you will see Buddy and Roy and Verne and me and others skipping down the halls, singing, 'Free at last! Free at last! Thank God Almighty, I'm free at last!' [*laughter and applause from the congregation*].

"Please don't take that as being facetious. It really is about the gospel. It really is. That's what we want to be free to do. Jesus gave Himself for us—gave His body, His blood poured out, so that you and I might be free at last. Free in Christ—identified not with this group or that, but identified with Christ. And I invite you to stand together, and respond as the church down through the ages has responded to the question, Christian, what do you believe?" [*What followed was a congregational recitation of the Apostles' Creed.*]

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Creation Discussion Continues in Church Courts

Calvary Presbytery Overtures General Assembly on Creation Days

by Mark Rooze

Calvary Presbytery has voted to overture the 29th General Assembly (GA) of the PCA Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) to retain fidelity with the Westminster divines and declare that the proper interpretation of the Confessional phrase "in the space of six days" is six normal calendar days. According to the overture, future candidates who differ from that position would be required to declare their exception to the Standards.

Meeting on January 27, 2001, at Woodruff Road Presbyterian Church in Greenville, South Carolina, the presbytery adopted the overture by a large majority on a voice vote. The overture was brought by the Rev. William "Rod" Clay and the session of Second Presbyterian Church of Greenville, South Carolina, one of the founding churches of the PCA.

The overture signals that the debate over the Confessional interpretation of the creation days, voted on by last year's assembly, is far from over.

Citing overwhelming documentary evidence from the original Westminster Divines and Calvary Presbytery's historic stance that the phrasing of the Standards is unassailably grounded in Scripture, the overture takes issue with the 28th General Assembly's finding that a diversity of views on creation is acceptable. The overture states that such diversity, in essence, invalidates any definitive creedal statement, and seeks to remedy that situation.

"One of the questions we have been asked is, 'Are we imposing our views on the Assembly?'" said Rod Clay in a later interview. "The answer to that question is, no. We are simply clarifying the position of the Westminster divines. Just as later councils in the early church clarified the meanings of earlier councils, so we believe we are doing here. This is not a new step, but only a clarification of what the Westminster divines meant — nothing more."

Mr. Clay adds, "We believe it is also the position of the original PCA churches." Second Presbyterian key role in the founding of the PCA is seen in that it was one of only 29 that issued invitations to other churches to join the original convocation. "Several elders on the session today, who helped frame this overture, issued that original invitation, and it was clearly their position then."

The overture makes no statement regarding those ministers already ordained in

the PCA. Nor does it contemplate any action against future candidates. An exception to the Standards is not normally viewed as a theological sanction.

At its 1998 convocation, the 26th General Assembly formed a Creation Study Committee (CSC) in hopes of putting to rest denominational unrest on the issue. In 1999, the 27th General Assembly adopted a 10-point personal resolution offered by Dr. Joseph Pipa, President of Greenville Theological Seminary, which affirmed a Biblically conservative position on a number of creation issues, but did not offer an interpretation of the Confessional language "in the space of six days." That resolution was also supported in the Bills and Overture Committee meeting by the CSC. The CSC requested and was granted additional time to study the issue.

The CSC presented its report at the 28th General Assembly. That report documented the history of the interpretation of the creation account in the early church, by the Westminster divines, and by subsequent Presbyterian scholars. It also cited overwhelming documentary evidence that all Westminster divines who addressed the issue of the length of the creation days advocated a calendar-day view. The historical portion of the research was led by the Rev. David Hall, who had encouraged other ministers to study the issue by offering two free hard-to-get sports tickets to anyone who could produce evidence to the contrary. The reward was never collected, and to date, no such information has surfaced.

The report also documented at least four views regarding the length of the creation days currently held by ministers in the PCA: the Calendar-Day view, the Day-Age view, the Framework view, and the Analogical view.

The CSC offered its report to the 2000 General Assembly, asking that the report be disseminated and studied for two years before the Assembly took any additional action, while the committee itself be discharged from further duties. That recommendation was rejected, resulting in a flurry of parliamentary maneuvers. David Hall proposed a substitute motion affirming a calendar-day view and stating that future candidates differing from that interpretation declare an exception. The Assembly rejected that substitute motion, and instead voted in favor of an amendment to the report offered by the Rev. Dr. Frank Barker, stating that diverse views would be accepted so long as they affirmed the historicity of the Genesis account. *[continued next column]*

Magnolia State Presbyteries Take Differing Stances

The debate in the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) regarding the nature and length of the days of creation continues. Over the past several months, two key presbyteries in Mississippi have taken diverse stances.

In October, Mississippi Valley Presbytery adopted a position designed to lower the decibel level of the discussion. That court adopted a resolution which declared that court's strong affirmation of a traditional view of the "days" of creation. The resolution also establishes a policy that anyone with a different view must declare that he has an exception to the Westminster Standards, with the presbytery deciding on a case-by-case basis whether or not to accept the man.

At its February 6, 2001, stated meeting, Mississippi Valley forwarded an overture to General Assembly. The overture technically does not ask for action by the higher court. Rather, the communication simply declares: "with charity toward all members and with fidelity to the original authors of our confessional standards, our understanding is that, unless evidence to the contrary is found, the Westminster standards' phrase 'in the space of six days' means that the six days of creation were days of normal duration with evening and morning. Accordingly, for the peace of the church, any future candidates who differ with this original meaning should request an exception to the Confession, unless documentation that the Westminster Assembly meant otherwise is firmly established. We also pledge to make these

future determinations with care, charity, honesty and impartiality."

The same day that Mississippi Valley was meeting, its neighbor to the north, Covenant Presbytery, was meeting in Cleveland, Mississippi. A jurisdiction that covers north Mississippi, west Tennessee, and most of Arkansas, Covenant Presbytery had in 1999 gently rebuked Mississippi Valley Presbytery for perceived laxness, including with regard to the doctrine of creation.

The previous year, Covenant Presbytery received an overture from the Carrollton (Miss.) Presbyterian Church, asking the higher court to adopt a position of affirming creation in six normal days. The Presbytery postponed consideration of that overture until after the General Assembly heard the report of its Creation Study Committee (CSC).

It was the Carrollton overture which was before Covenant Presbytery at its February stated meeting, the court having postponed consideration from October 2000. The church's former pastor, the Rev. Grover Gunn, moved that the Presbytery respond to the overture by adopting the same position as that taken by Mississippi Valley Presbytery in October 2000. He also moved that his motion, which entailed more than three pages of material, be postponed until May 2001, so that the court could have opportunity to consider it carefully. However, the motion to postpone failed. Mr. Gunn then withdrew his original motion. At that point, it was moved and seconded that Covenant Presbytery adopt as its own the position of the 28th General Assembly. That position is that any of the diversity covered in the CSC report would be acceptable, so long as the historicity of the creation account was upheld.

During debate on the matter, at least one commissioner argued that if Covenant Presbytery voted for the motion, then the Presbytery would be able to attract young ministers to its ranks. The main flow of argument in favor of the motion was the notion of submitting to General Assembly.

The adoption of the General Assembly position by Covenant Presbytery does not technically commit the court to the notion that any of these views is not an exception to the Confessional Standards. In 1997, Covenant Presbytery seemingly took the position that anything other than commitment to creation in six regular days is an exception, in that an ordinance's contrary views were spread on the record.

The vote eliminated any possibility for sessions and presbyteries to study the CSC report before the matter was voted on.

In actions which presaged the continuing acrimony, the winning side applauded and cheered loudly for several minutes, while long lines of elders who found their position defeated formed to record their negative vote. The next day, similar lines formed to register their affirmative vote for Mr. Hall's substitute motion.

The Calvary Presbytery overture conscientiously borrowed much of the language offered in Mr. Hall's substitute motion, and did so with his approval, according to Rod Clay.

The overture now proceeds to the 29th PCA General Assembly in Dallas in June, 2001, for consideration by the commissioners.

Mr. Rooze is a student at Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary.

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Thousands Take Tour at PCA Nativity Scene

Florida Church Puts on Multi-Media Production

The cold of the night is punctuated by the warmth from bonfires and torches. Merchants, peddling their goods, blend their voices with the dolorous music of the Middle East. Young lasses run through the streets, while Roman centurions prod the town's denizens to pay their tribute. It is the Bethlehem of 2000 years ago, and you are there.

For the past decade, Ponte Vedra Presbyterian Church on Florida's First Coast

effort, and money. Monetarily, it cost at least \$60,000 for this year's production—\$10,000 just for the animals. A whole menagerie of sheep, goats, chickens, and even camels is rented each year.

But there are other manifestations of grandeur, also. Warren Halstrom says that 35 buses were used to shuttle guests from a parking lot, two miles away, which is used at other times for a golf tournament. When the visitors arrive at the church, the people

After that pre-show, "the doors to the sanctuary pop open," says Warren Halstrom, and the visitors are allowed to proceed through those doors out toward the re-creation of Bethlehem. Along the way, however, they may stop to see the First Coast Ballet, a troupe associated with the church, doing a Christmas celebration through dance. "I'm one of those artists who believes that dance is one of the God-given ways in which we can bless the Lord," Mr. Halstrom explains. The dancers have given their bodies and hearts to the Lord. It is through dance—i.e., interpretive ballet—that they are able to tell the story of the coming of Christ.

The spectators next arrive at the Bethlehem site. Actors and actresses camp outside the walls, conveying the sense of the crowded nature of Bethlehem, as well as a "very agrarian feel." Fourteen Roman guards, in full dress uniform, several of them on horseback, patrol the city gate.

Artificial lights are used; but, says Warren Halstrom, they are cleverly hidden. The sense is that the light is coming from the bonfires and torches.

The city, he says, is "abuzz with activity." A sound track plays Middle Eastern music, as "merchants" hawk their wares help to create a marketplace kind of atmosphere. There is a synagogue where a rabbi is teaching boys; there are giggling girls running through the streets. "Most of the guests say they forget where they are," he reveals.

Then, "you kind of stumble upon the manger. . . . People seeing a live baby say, 'Look, Jesus is real, He's alive!' We see our guests kneeling and with tears down their face."

He adds that these people "are able to encounter the true meaning of Christmas before their eyes."

When asked the purpose of the annual event, Mr. Halstrom stated: "The event obviously has many benefits. One of the chief is for Ponte Vedra Presbyterian Church to provide a free gift to the community, whereby they can be reminded of the true meaning of Christmas."

Warren Halstrom said that about 400 people can be accommodated every ten to fifteen minutes to go through the pre-show and then on to the tour of Bethlehem.

Ponte Vedra Presbyterian Church, which was organized in 1991, is one of the larger ones in North Florida Presbytery. The latest available denominational statistics show that there were 599 communicants and



A Roman soldier on guard outside of the village of Bethlehem

307 non-communicant members at the end of 1999, for a total of 906. Among North Florida's churches, only Pinewood Presbyterian Church in Middleburg, Florida, was larger, with a total of 1004 members.

Interview with the Worship Director

A native of Vancouver, British Columbia, Warren Halstrom has been worship director at Ponte Vedra Presbyterian Church for just over a year. During our interview with him, we posed several questions, including these:

1. How do you go about selecting the 'Holy Family'?

"It starts with the Baby Jesus, actually. A family [that's had] a baby six months or less. About the time we start working on the event, we begin to look at who's pregnant. Our children's coordinator helps us in this—we call her the 'queen-mother.'"

2. How does playing the 'Holy Family' affect the people involved?

"It's really life-changing for them. They have memories that last for years. I've played Christ before. When you are serious in portraying a character, you have to get inside his mind. The nativity scene we have is at that magic moment of the angelic announcement. Those who are playing Mary have to think what it means to be Mary, who all men will call blessed."

Photos courtesy of Ponte Vedra Presbyterian Church



The angel Gabriel announces the incarnation, while bright lights and theatrical smoke add to the drama.

(the beaches between Jacksonville and St. Augustine) has been hosting 'A Bethlehem Visit' as an annual Christmas celebration. The highlight of the tour of the town, in the eyes of many of the thousands who attend, is the manger scene, where parents play Joseph and Mary, while their own child plays the baby Jesus.

So moving is the experience that many of the visitors kneel before the Holy Family, with tears streaming down their faces. It is an emotional climax to a multi-media spectacle which features high-tech touches, the fine arts, and a theme park atmosphere.

According to Warren Halstrom, worship director for the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) congregation, about 15,000 people toured the site in 1999. The huge turnout led the church to put on the event for two consecutive weekends

(Friday through Sunday, 6:30 to 8:30 PM) this past year, rather than the one weekend (three days) as in years past. Mr. Halstrom stated that about 20,000 people attended in 2000. Buses and vans from churches as far away as Georgia and Alabama traveled to Ponte Vedra Beach in order to take the tour. Diana Patterson, communications director at Ponte Vedra Presbyterian, stated: "We have synagogues that come. We invite all of the PCA churches in Florida, and in our Presbytery. Other Presbyterian churches, Baptist churches, Catholic churches, also come."

The event involves a huge expenditure of time,

empty into the main foyer, where a choir is singing carols.

The guests are then treated to what Mr. Halstrom referred to as a "Disney pre-show." The pastor or associate pastor will read Scripture and give a brief talk about what the people are going to see. Then, there is a multi-media show. This year, the production featured eight "angels"—young girls dressed in white flowing gowns, along with "Gabriel," played by Mr. Halstrom. The angels were like dancers, except they didn't move their feet: they engaged only in arm movements. Gabriel, who was about fifteen feet off the floor, came out and sang a song from an existing musical. The production is marked by the use of black light and theatrical smoke, with a sudden blaze of 40,000 watts of white light in one dramatic moment.



Thousands flock to the PCA nativity scene. Thirty-five buses were used to transport the spectators from a parking lot two miles away.



Secular Press Covers 'A Bethlehem Visit'

Local Newspapers Report that Spectators Kneel Before 'Holy Family' Five-Month-Old Girl Among Those Portraying the Baby Jesus

The annual event sponsored by Ponte Vedra Presbyterian Church did not escape the notice of at least three local newspapers. According to a front-page story ("B" section) of the *Jacksonville (Fla.) Times-Union*, visitors to a nativity scene sponsored by a congregation of the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) knelt in front of

moment to spy a real baby sitting in for the newborn Jesus, flanked by real-life parents posing as Mary and Joseph."

Again quoting from "Mary," Karen Rivedal writes: "'This is probably more Christmas than Santa Claus or anything else," she [Maria Early] said. 'This shows the true meaning of Christmas. The children

with the caption: "The birth of Jesus Christ is portrayed for A Bethlehem Visit by Steve Thomas and family at Ponte Vedra Presbyterian Church." Another color picture, on the front of the Community Section, was headed with the words, "A Saviour is Born." The caption began: "The sight of Mary and Joseph with newborn Jesus, portrayed by Steve Thomas and family, brought tears to the eyes of many who attended the annual Visit to Bethlehem at Ponte Vedra Presbyterian Church."

The *Ponte Vedra Recorder* also ran a story on the event. In an article entitled, "Church production depicts Bethlehem of Bible times," Mark Faulkner wrote: "Short of a bright, shining star floating in the heavens above, Ponte Vedra Presbyterian Church's *A Bethlehem Visit* re-creates the birthplace of Jesus Christ down to the smallest detail for area residents to get a better understanding of that time." He quoted DeeDee Tamburrino, who had

"[Mrs.] Tamburrino said they were able to stay in character as much as possible. Her son's bottle was wrapped in swaddling clothes not to look out of place, and a convenient mound of hay became a diaper changing station."

In interviews with *P&R News*, both Diana Patterson and Warren Halstrom expressed gratitude for the way the media portrayed the event. "Yes, we feel very happy with the press coverage," said the communications director. The worship leader stated: "Our press coverage has been outstanding: . . . not only positive, but expansive." He attributed the good coverage to the "magnitude of the event."

Ponte Vedra Presbyterian Church worked diligently to attract the thousands of visitors to its production. Twenty-one large billboards were rented throughout the Jacksonville area in order to advertise the event. As in past years, the billboards featured pictures of the Holy Family.



Parishioners from Ponte Vedra Presbyterian portray the Holy Family.

church members portraying the 'Holy Family.' Entitled "Church's Nativity scene brings Christmas to life," the article quoted Maria Early, one of the women portraying Mary, as saying: "Seeing people kneel before us with tears in their eyes—it's one of the most touching things I've ever experienced." She added: "People come from all over the area to see it."

The story, which appeared in the December 19, 2000, edition of the major newspaper, noted that Mrs. Early's five-month-old daughter, Faith, was one of the babies portraying Jesus this year. Tim Early, Mrs. Early's husband, was cast as Joseph.

The article, written by Karen Rivedal, stated: "Located about halfway through the church's bustling outdoor re-creation of Bethlehem, the quiet manger scene is the chief crowd-pleaser when visitors take the walking tour.

"For many, it's a throat-tightening

know it's Jesus' birthday, and that's what we're celebrating."

The article pointed out that the village measured about 9000 square feet, and "is painstakingly built and staffed to mimic biblical times. Merchants and craftsmen practice their trades. Beggars seek alms and Roman guards maintain order. The stony-faced guards patrol the straw-strewn grounds, mildly harassing cast members and spectators to pay their taxes or go to jail.

"For added realism, a few dozen animals grace the production, including camels, sheep, goats and chickens. The church pays a movie production company to rent the animals, which are behind pens that double as an impromptu petting zoo."

Press coverage of the event was not limited to the major newspaper in Jacksonville. On December 22, 2000, a front page color picture in *The Beaches Leader*, a suburban paper, featured the 'Holy Family,'



"... all generations shall call me blessed."

played "Mary" in 1998. "A little girl had brought a gift to give to the baby Jesus," she said. "We're not supposed to let anybody in there with us, but her mother asked please can she come in. So I nodded my head. The little girl must have been 5. The package was wrapped and she set it right in front of the little manger. That was the highlight of the whole night. She knelt down, said a little prayer right in front of the manger. It was extremely touching."

The church has also produced a video, approximately 25 minutes in length, designed mostly for in-house distribution. Entitled *A Bethlehem Visit*, the video gives an overview of some of the preparations made for the event, as well as enables the viewer to experience a "tour" of the village. At the end of the video, several people are asked what the tour meant to them. One woman stated: "I saw Bethlehem how it was years and years ago—and I saw the baby Jesus."

Perspective from the Media Committee

A radio personality during the morning drive time on a local contemporary Christian radio station, Mrs. Paulette Waterman serves as Co-Chair of the Media Committee for 'A Bethlehem Visit.' As such, she helps to interface with the local media regarding the event, including taking press people on guided tours of the site.

In an interview with *P&R News*, Mrs. Waterman stated that the event has become a family tradition, with many families planning to have their out-of-town guests arrive during the time that they can take them to the production. However, she was also surprised that this past year, an estimated sixty to seventy percent of those taking the tour were first-time visitors.

Commenting on the event, she said, "It's like a virtual reality, . . . bringing to life the Biblical city." She added: "It's a way to try to manipulate all of your senses," as she mentioned the smell of live animals, the chickens cooking on a rotisserie, the fish being offered for "sale," and the donkeys braying. "It's like a time travel."

She explained the purpose of the event as being a way of bringing to life words on a page. As such, "It becomes an emotional experience. . . . Then, you get to fill in the blanks from what you've learned as a child" about the Christmas story.

Regarding the manger scene, Paulette said: "When you see them [the Holy Family] sitting in the manger, . . . it just creates this feel where you are in awe of them. . . . 'This is the Christ-child'—that's what it makes you realize." Moreover, children who attend the event "are in awe. They bring gifts. . . . People from the community offering gifts to the baby." She hastened to explain that the church did not specifically encourage that; however, "that's just a natural response, just to jump into the roles."

She described the event by saying: "In a theme-park way, it's very interactive."



One-sixth of the \$60,000 spent on the event was for the rental of animals.

Book Review: The Genesis Debate

The GENESIS Debate: Three Views on the Days of Creation

Edited by David G. Hagopian. Crux Press, Inc., California; © 2001; 319 pages; index; Paperback.
Reviewed by Ray Williams, January 2001.

In a written debate format, three two-man author teams present and defend their view concerning the days of creation. J. Ligon Duncan III and David W. Hall address the *24-hour View*, Hugh Ross and Gleason L. Archer, the *Day-Age View* and Lee Irons with Meredith G. Kline, the *Framework View*.

The debate spanned a period of 18 months and it started with each team preparing an opening essay. Those essays were circulated to the other two teams, and each team prepared response essays that interacted with the opposing views. After the responses were circulated, each team concluded by preparing a reply essay that addressed the points raised in the response essays.

A hallmark of the debate, as pointed out in the book's Introduction, is the scholarly manner in which each of the views is presented and the opportunity it gave evangelicals, who are committed to the infallibility, inerrancy and authority of Scripture, to defend their respective views in a lively, yet friendly, forum.

The reader should come away from this book convinced of the hermeneutical and exegetical expertise of the authors. They are men of high intellect with outstanding writing and argumentative skills. Their knowledge of Scripture and church history is readily apparent and their views are expressed with clarity and conviction.

Although the differing views are presented with sincerity, it must be kept in mind that only one creation day interpretation can be correct. Therefore, the church must calmly continue to search for the truth, being charitable at all times, but unrelenting in its goal of achieving a consensus through respectful dialog.

For an individual to fully appreciate and personally assess the merits of the arguments, it is necessary that the complete debate text be read including the responses and replies. Nevertheless, a brief commentary on each view is offered in the following paragraphs:

The Framework View, as expressed by Irons and Kline, "is that interpretation of Genesis 1:1-2:3 which regards the seven-day scheme as a figurative framework." God "completing His creative work in a week of

days is not to be taken literally. Instead it functions as a literary structure in which the creative works of God have been narrated in a topical order." This view paints a complex and interesting pattern of parallelism and symmetry to the creation narrative, but it lacks credibility because of its denial of the clear chronological import of Genesis 1. Ross and Archer comment about this and say that it ignores, "the quantity and quality of sequence markers and of other textural clues [that] powerfully suggest a time-ordered series of events." It is faulty also, because it is inconsistent with the Westminster Confession of Faith's creation statement that explicitly conveys the idea that creation occurred over a time period of six days. Duncan and Hall express their disagreement with the framework view when they state, "we contend that the view is incorrect, eccentric, and thinly supported."

The 24-Hour View – Duncan and Hall present a detailed case of what they consider to be the classical view of creation in which God miraculously created the universe in six ordinary days. In addition to a comprehensive exegesis of Scripture, they review church history in depth and cite the views of early patriarchs. Notwithstanding the fact that Ross and Archer dispute some of this information and point out that a number of early scholars wrestled with the issue of creation and struggled with creation day ambiguities, Duncan and Hall insist that Bible-believing theologians prior to 1800 were near-unanimous in their belief in an ordinary day creation.

Duncan and Hall's case should be well received by those who are skeptical of the discoveries of modern science. But, a glaring weakness in their presentation is the failure to use any evidence from general revelation to support their exegesis. This omission is intentional as evidenced from their statement; "We purposefully limit our discussion to the meaning of day in Scripture and the history of interpretation." Apparently, they feel God's general revelation does not shed light on the Genesis 1 narrative because they further state, "In short, we take no position on the age of the universe precisely because that question is not directly addressed by the canon." In their response to Ross and Archer's criticism of young-earth creationism they make another startling statement, "We do not understand young-earth creationism to be a central part of this debate, nor have we sought to be dogmatic about the age of the universe." In response to this, Ross and Archer replied, "Whereas the four of us

[Ross, Archer, Irons and Kline] identify the 24-hour interpretation with a young-universe, young-earth creation model, Duncan and Hall claim that the age of the universe and earth are separate issues from the length of the creation days. Duncan and Hall never explain, however, how such a separation is possible."

No doubt Duncan and Hall concur in the importance of using all available sources, including extra-biblical information, to determine the context of a bible passage to fully understand its meaning. In view of this, what better context could there be than to use the physical evidence of God's creation to provide clarification and depth of understanding to the Genesis 1 narrative? Duncan and Hall decided to ignore this aspect of God's revelation, but what results is a defective hermeneutic. Along this same line, they are critical of Ross and Archer's use of scientific evidence and erroneously charge them with elevating science to the level of Scripture.

The Day-Age View – In their presentation, Ross and Archer demonstrate expert knowledge of astrophysics and the hard sciences. They build their interpretation upon the conviction that God's revelation can be trusted as truth in both the words of Scripture and the works of creation.

Based on language analysis, they point out that unlike English, biblical Hebrew has no word other than *yom* to denote a long time span. Therefore, there are three possible literal interpretations of the creation days; six daylight periods, six 24-hour periods or six long time spans. Consequently, the day-age view is also a literal interpretation of the text.

In developing a creation model, Ross and Archer explain that the frame of reference in Genesis 1:1 is the cosmos, the beginning of space, time, matter and energy. Genesis 1:2 explicitly shifts the frame of reference, the narrator's vantage point, to

the surface of the earth. From the initial conditions of the primordial earth, a place unfit for life, a straightforward chronology of creation events follows whereby God transformed the earth into a place suitable for life and to accommodate His crowning achievement, the creation of man!

Ross and Archer also present biblical evidence that supports the long creation day view and they confidently assert that the abundance of scientific evidence that establishes the extreme age of the earth/universe is continuing to accumulate and becoming more compelling as time goes on. They point out that the day-age interpretation provides a straightforward reconciliation of the established scientific record and a literal reading of Genesis 1.

Summary – From this debate, two key questions emerge. First, how should the evidence of general revelation be used to help in the interpretation of special revelation? And second, what does the evidence of general revelation say about the age of the earth/universe? Until there is substantial agreement on these two questions, the controversy over the length of the creation day will continue to rage.

This book is a must read for those interested in learning more about the doctrine of creation and is recommended for Teaching and Ruling Elders of the Presbyterian Church in America.

Ray Williams was a Ruling Elder in Christ Presbyterian Church, Marietta, Georgia and currently is a member of Grace Community Presbyterian Church (PCA), Blairsville, Georgia. <raywill@alltel.net> The views expressed are not necessarily those of the editorial staff. However, we appreciate his sending us his piece, and we always welcome such contributions.

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Editorial

A Wholly Unholy Worship

I was raised in a mainly Roman Catholic (with a smattering of Jewish) household. After coming to Christ, my wife and I spent some years in broadly evangelical congregations before being introduced to the Reformed faith in our early twenties. So, we are well acquainted with diverse practices in worship. One of the most appealing aspects of the Reformed faith to Patty and me was its unabashed and constant focus on the centrality of the Word of God and the rejection of novelty and man-centered practices.

Recently, some of the Shapiros excused down to Orlando for a long weekend and ventured upon the PCA church nearest our hotel. Having gotten lost on the way we arrived a little late during a song and there was standing room only. Praise God! That was surely a good sign.

Unfortunately, that was nearly the last occasion I had to praise Him. After the worship song performance, complete with singing, bongo drums, and synthesized keyboard (completed to rousing applause by the audience-congregation), the children were dismissed from worship to attend Sunday School. What came to my mind when I saw the children dismissed was an incident an OPC pastor once related, when he saw the children dismissed just before he delivered his guest sermon: he turned to the elders on the podium with him and asked, "Would you send your lambs away before they've been fed?" He quickly summoned the children back and proceeded to preach God's Word to the entire covenant family.

Next came a testimonial from the pastor's aunt, who related a trial that challenged her mother, when she was imprisoned by the Japanese during their occupation of Korea and Manchuria during WWII. While the message was inspirational and focused as it was on the importance of God's Word and His faithfulness to provide all our needs, my children and I were amazed at an unordained person (and a woman) taking such a key role in the worship service. The congregation's response, though, was more troubling as they, again, enthusiastically applauded when she finished.

Then came the sermon from Acts 21:1-14.

My family and I were little prepared for what was to follow. The pastor raised the issue of Paul's friends, through the Spirit, counseling him not to go to Jerusalem and how Paul knew God's bigger picture for his life. But he not only failed to explain but confessed he didn't understand how both were from the same Spirit - how both the warnings and Paul's mission could both be inspired of God. The net effect it seemed to me was to call into question the consistency of God's Word. He reiterated the "big picture" theme at least ten times throughout the sermon, challenging the congregation to apply it to various circumstances we might find ourselves in. One of those applications was for teenagers to perhaps ignore the counsel of their parents if the Spirit was leading them in another direction.

The service ended with a series of praise and worship songs, complete with clapping, swaying, uplifted hands, etc. Let me say, first of all, that as the father of six children, all in teen years or above, I am well aware of the need to be relevant to the next generation (as, I might add, Scripture commands) and I profess an affection of many contemporary Christian musicians and their works (including Rich Mullins who wrote one of the songs), yet those songs were written to be performed and that in informal gatherings. They were not written for congregations that adhere to the regulative principle of worship—congregations which eschew the excesses of charismatic and Pentecostal services.

I eventually came to be saddened by the number of people who attended that church. Saddened to think that so many are deceived into thinking that that is what the PCA stands for. Saddened to see so little covenant truth demonstrated or preached from that pulpit. Saddened to see that the guidelines set down in Scripture for God's holy worship were so little heeded.

My children, interestingly, were as much saddened by this PCA church service as I was. But most sadly to us all, God received very little faithfulness dividend on His grace, which He has lavished upon us in Christ.

- Bob Shapiro

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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

P. O. Box 60, Coeburn, Virginia 24230

Editorial and Business Address:

P.O. Box 60

Coeburn, Virginia 24230

540-395-PINS (7467)

E-mail: PINS@JOURNALIST.COM

Web Site: www.presbyteriannews.org

Quotes from the Quorums

The following quotes were heard on the floor of Westminster Presbytery at its January 2001 stated meeting.

"I would like to move that we appoint Dan Foreman as Treasurer."—Bill Leuzinger. "Can he count?"—Ross Lindley.

"And you know that the writer to the Hebrews was a Presbyterian when he referred to the 'general assembly of the firstborn.'"—Dr. Phil Blevins, during his examination to be received from Mississippi Valley Presbytery.

During his examination to be received from the Presbyterian Church (USA), the Rev. Trevor Downie offered the following:

"My liberal pastor mentioned John Calvin [in a derogatory way—Ed.]. And I wondered if John Calvin had ever written anything. . . . I went to the library and found the *Institutes*. After reading the first three sections of Chapter 1, I became immediately convinced of the truth of what he was saying. I thus became a Christian and a Reformed Christian."

"I was introduced to the Banner of Truth Trust through a theology book at Union Seminary [in Virginia]."

"Taken as a denomination, as a whole, she [the PC(USA)] is an apostate church. . . . There is rampant heresy in the denomination. . . . There is almost no discipline. You can almost believe anything. . . . I've often said that the Church in the Middle Ages was better off than the PC(USA)."

When he stumbled on one question, Mr. Downie said: "I'm drawing a blank. Can I use a life-line?"

Heard during a discussion regarding the meaning of the Constitution: "What version of the *Book of Church Order* are you reading from?" "1611."

Do you have some Quotes from the Quorums? Send them in to us! *P&R News*, PO Box 60, Coeburn, VA 24230; email: pins@journalist.com.



Rev. Trevor Downie

Some Service-Stoppers

In a January 26, 2001, letter, the Rev. Stephen M. LaValley, organizing pastor of The Berkshire Mission in Massachusetts, presented the following anecdote:

On one Sunday morning, we were worshipping the Lord together and I was in the middle of a sermon, when all of a sudden, smoke began billowing up the stairs of the building we rent. A terrible electric smell accompanied it and one of the girls who was watching the children came upstairs and said that there was a possible fire downstairs. We all calmed down and waited while a couple of men went to check it out. They came back up, reporting that it was a light switch and they cut off the circuit going to it. I went on preaching, but then the lights went out. I tried to get going again a couple of times

only to have the lights fade again and again. I stopped and waited while the guys went down again and they came back up soon with the lights finally working. I, being a stubborn Yankee, continued preaching when all of a sudden a very large picture behind me fell producing quite a stir, and startled the living daylight out of me. I said, "Well, let me finish with a quick thought and I think it's time to go home now. . . ." One visitor immediately quipped, "We gotta get outta here!" We did.

Pastor LaValley also writes that a Christian foundation will grant the budding church \$7000.00, if the group can raise that much in matching funds by the end of March. Contributions can be sent to The Berkshire Mission, 491 Williams Street, Pittsfield, MA 01201; 413-445-2595.

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News From The Presbyteries

Ascension

The winter stated meeting of the Presbytery of the Ascension met January 27, hosted by the Fairview Reformed Presbyterian Church, Industry, Pennsylvania. Outgoing Moderator, RE Richard L. McBane convened Presbytery and exhorted the Presbytery to faithfulness and perseverance, opening the text from Jeremiah 29:1-9.

The new moderator, TE Jeffrey Noyes, was introduced. The Stated Clerk's report and Treasurer's report was followed by the Nominations Committee report, presenting nominees for the presbytery committees, G.A. permanent committees, and G.A. committees of commissioners. As elected, the new presbytery committees convened before lunch to elect their officers for the current year.

TE James Funyak presented the MNA report, which centered largely on the church planting effort in Clarion County, Pennsylvania, and new boundary proposals regarding New York.

TE Robert Peterson, chairman of the Administration Committee, brought several items of business, including the approval of the year 2001 budget.

Two of the three BCO amendments sent down to the presbyteries were defeated. The voting on Item 1 re: "to encourage women in the church. . . ." was defeated by a vote of 4-34-5. Item 2 re: "counsel" for "accused" passed 42-1-1. Item 3 re: RUM being made an "Assembly permanent committee" was defeated 6-34-4.

After lunch Ministerial Relations chairman, RE George Caler, presented several changes in "terms of call," as well as the annual report of TE Byron Curtis, professor at Geneva College and member of Eastern Carolina Presbytery.

The Ad Hoc Commission on the TE Wood Matter made its report. Chairman, TE Carl W. Bogue, gave a summary of what had occurred since the October meeting of presbytery, including a summary of the "Findings" of the SJC. An overture was then presented to presbytery which concluded: *Therefore be it Resolved, that the Presbytery of the Ascension hereby overtures the 29th General Assembly, through its Committee on Constitutional Business, asking that the CCB examine the minutes of the Standing Judicial Commission to determine if the instructions of the 28th General Assembly were followed with regard to the matter of permitting representatives of the petitioning presbyteries to present their allegations; and, if not, to take or recommend appropriate action as per RAO 15-1, para. 4 (cf. BCO 40-4, last sentence).* The overture was approved without dissenting vote.

—Carl W. Bogue, Correspondent

Covenant

Covenant Presbytery met in its 90th Stated Meeting on Tuesday, October 3, 2000, at the Independent Presbyterian Church, Memphis, Tennessee. The Rev. Jim Danner, Pastor of Main Street Presbyterian Church, Columbus, Mississippi, preached a sermon from II Timothy 4:1-4, entitled, "Are We in a Tree?" The sacrament of communion was observed. Ruling Elder Jim Alinder, Moderator, presided over the meeting.

The court adopted a memorial from the Hickory Withe (Tenn.) Presbyterian Church for June Grace Holt Hall, late wife of Dr. Frank Hall, who has been a ruling elder for over

fifty years.

The Rev. Tim Horn told the commissioners of his plans to go as a missionary for MTW to England and Wales. He asked for prayer and financial support so that he might leave on his target date.

TE Jimmy Young was given the privilege of the floor to tell the commissioners and visitors about an orchestra from Kiev, Ukraine, which will be at Grace Evangelical Church on October 14 & 16. This orchestra is the product of the PCA MTW missionary work in the Ukraine. It is in demand throughout the United States.

The Rev. Durant Fleming, Independent Presbyterian Church, Memphis, Tennessee, welcomed the commissioners and visitors attending the meeting. He asked the presbytery to offer prayers during the season of prayer after lunch thanking God for His providence in bringing the congregation of Independent Presbyterian Church into the fellowship of Covenant Presbytery and the Presbyterian Church in America. He also requested that thanksgiving be offered for the unity displayed during the process of the vote of the members.

Presbytery approved the report of the Hot Springs (Ark.) Mission Commission. The court also approved the report of the Commission to install Grover Gunn as Pastor of Grace Presbyterian Church, Jackson, Tennessee; and the report of the Commission to answer the inquiry from PresWIC read at the May 2000 stated meeting.

The Treasurer, Ruling Elder Lee Mattox, reported that there was \$42,280.90 in the bank at the beginning of 2000; and that there was \$19,921.06 in the bank as of September 30th. Of that amount, only \$2,806.47 is available for Presbytery salaries and operating expenses, with the remaining \$17,114.59 being designated for other causes. The minutes state: "Those present were urged to be sure that their churches are current with amounts budgeted for Presbytery. OF THE \$84,120.00 BUDGET APPROVED FOR PRESBYTERY FOR 2000, ONLY \$38,216.94 IN UNDESIGNATED RECEIPTS HAVE BEEN RECEIVED."

Mr. David Nelson was introduced to the Presbytery. He is working on his internship through Second Presbyterian Church (EPC), Memphis, Tennessee, and is seeking licensure in Covenant Presbytery. He is an intern of Potomac Presbytery, and would like to be available to fill pulpits in Covenant Presbytery as a partial fulfillment of his internship requirements. After examination, and hearing his sermon from Romans 3:19-28 ("Justification by Jury versus Justification by Faith"), the Presbytery licensed him to preach.

Mr. Jon Anderson, as part of his ordination trials, preached a sermon entitled "What Comes First?", based on Haggai 1. After further examination, he was approved for ordination as Assistant Pastor at Grace Presbyterian Church, Starkville, Mississippi. His completed internship was accepted as satisfying the internship requirements of Covenant Presbytery pending its approval by Mississippi Valley Presbytery.

The Presbytery examined and transferred William Gleason, Jean Larroux, Mark Long, and Doug Barcroft. Mr. Gleason came from Central Georgia Presbytery to accept a call to the First Presbyterian Church, Clarksdale, Mississippi. Mr. Larroux transferred from Evangel to accept a call to the Independent Presbyterian Church, Memphis, Tennessee. Mr. Long transferred from Palmetto Presbytery, also to accept a call to the Independent Presbyterian Church. Mr. Barcroft transferred from the

Southern Baptist Convention to accept a call to Saint Andrews Presbyterian Church, Bartlett, Tennessee.

The court gave permission to the General Assembly MTW Committee to send a team on a short term missions project to help the ministry of Dr. Dick Thomas, a Ruling Elder at the Covenant Presbyterian Church, Greenville, Mississippi.

The Rev. Wayne Herring reported that the mission work in Russellville, Arkansas, was encouraging. He introduced Mr. Don Erwin who told the presbytery of the encouraging work there. Covenant Presbytery appointed a commission to replace the MNA Committee as a borrowed session for this mission.

Mr. Herring introduced the Rev. Robbie Hinton who gave an encouraging report on the North Jackson, Tennessee, mission work; and Dr. Sal Pellicano who gave a report on the ministry of Beginning Again in Christ prison ministry.

Presbytery adopted a total 2001 budget of \$85,620. The Covenant Presbytery asking for 2001 is \$18.88 per communing member.

The Presbytery set the salaries for 2001 for our employees at \$4800 for the Stated Clerk, \$2500 for the Recording Clerk, and \$1200 for the Treasurer, with a commendation for a job well done.

It was moved, seconded, and approved to postpone the consideration of the Carrollton (Miss.) Creation overture, previously postponed to the first stated meeting of Presbytery after the presentation of the creation report to General Assembly, until the February 2001 stated meeting of Presbytery.

The Presbytery awarded the Covenant Pastor's Scholarship to Ellis Dean Chaplin.

It was moved, seconded, and passed to approve the call from Memphis Funeral Home and Cemeteries to the Rev. Danny Ketchum. The call includes the assurance that he is free to teach the distinctives of the Presbyterian Church in America with no restraint in accordance with BCO 8-7.

The pastoral relationship between the Rev. Gary Clowers and the First Presbyterian Church of Osceola, Arkansas, was dissolved, and he was dismissed to the Mississippi Valley Presbytery of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church pending his reception by that presbytery. Mr. Clowers is accepting a call as pastor of the Richland Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church in Millington, Tennessee. The stated supply relationship between First Presbyterian Church, Clarksdale, Mississippi, and the Rev. Tim Horn was dissolved and Mr. Horn continued on the role of Covenant Presbytery without call.

The assistant pastoral relationship between the Rev. Clay Harrington and the Independent Presbyterian Church was dissolved and Mr. Harrington was continued on the role of Covenant Presbytery without call.

The Rev. Steve Willicombe was dismissed to Northern Illinois Presbytery pending his reception by that presbytery. Mr. Willicombe has been laboring outside the jurisdiction of Covenant Presbytery with Young Life, and has been transferred to Wisconsin. It was noted that he requested to remain a member of Covenant Presbytery and to receive permission to labor outside its geographic bounds. The committee advised against this because of the great distance involved and the location of his new call within the geographic bounds of

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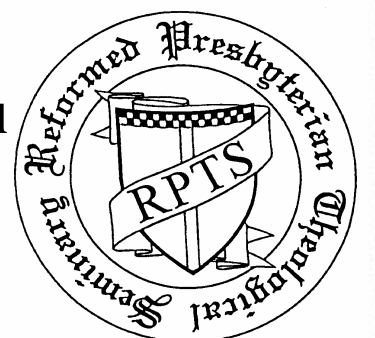
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another PCA presbytery. [Editor's note: Wisconsin is outside the bounds of any PCA presbytery.]

The status of the Rev. Jim Misner was changed from "ministering outside the jurisdiction" of Covenant Presbytery to continuing on the role without call. TE Misner had informed Presbytery that he is currently without call.

The pastoral relationship between the Rev. John Rhodes and the Oak Ridge Presbyterian Church, Water Valley, Mississippi, was dissolved and that Mr. Rhodes will remain on the role of Covenant Presbytery without call.

The Rev. Dr. Mark Kreitzer be dismissed to Mississippi Valley Presbytery pending reception by that presbytery in order to accept a call from Bailey Presbyterian Church, Bailey, Mississippi.

The Presbytery approved the Covenant Seminary Lamb Fund and Theological Seminary Fund Aid Loan Application for Dana Emborsky.

The Rev. Alan Cochet, Chairman, presented the report of the MTW Committee. He stated that Dr. Lily Doty is now in Lyon, France, teaching in the school started by the MTW church planting team. She still is in need of financial support.

Mr. Cochet encouraged pastors to take advantage of the vision trips to the mission field which are offered by Mission to the World. He told presbyters and visitors of brochures and videos which are available to help churches be more involved in missions through prayer, giving, and other means. He encouraged everyone to commit to pray that the Presbyterian Church in America would seriously get involved in world missions.

Grace

The ninety-eighth stated meeting of Grace Presbytery was held at Bay Street Presbyterian Church, Hattiesburg, Mississippi, on September 12, 2000. The worship was led by the Rev. Wilson Smith of the host church. He preached on I Corinthians 11:21-28, "Christ at the Door of Our Hearts," prior to the administration of communion.

The Rev. Alton Phillips served as Moderator pro tem, substituting for Ruling Elder John Carter, who was sick.

The Stated Clerk, the Rev. E.C. Case read the list of deceased ruling elders since last year. The honour roll was as follows: Carvel W. "Bill" Bozeman, First, Hazlehurst; Fleming Poole, Thomson Memorial; James Odell Cooley, Heidelberg; Avery Dean Hazelwood, Thomson Memorial; P.W. Van, First, Gulfport; Jack Parker Halliday, First, Gulfport; Victor James Daniel, First, Gulfport; J.O. Davis, Covenant, Laurel; Alfred Moore, First, Hattiesburg. There were no deceased teaching elders.

The Presbytery approved the Rev. Dale Linton, a retired minister of Grace Presbytery, to be Pastor of the Magee (Miss.) Presbyterian Church. He will serve the church while continuing to live in Brookhaven, Mississippi, with a salary of \$400 per week, and granted two weeks of vacation a year.

Presbyter acceded to a request from the Session of the McDonald Presbyterian Church, Collins, Mississippi, for advice and counsel. Moderator Phillips appointed a committee to meet with the Session, and that committee was dismissed in order to do so. Later in the meeting, Presbytery heard the report of that committee, and voted to "augment the McDonald Presbyterian Church Session by adding 3 Ruling Elders and no less than one Teaching Elder," and added the Rev. Bobby Penny, the Rev. Dale Linton, and Ruling Elders Sam Duncan, Larry

Hancock, and Allen Hawkins "pending consent of the congregation."

A resolution from the Session of the Northwood Hills Presbyterian Church, Gulfport, Mississippi, regarding Dr. R. L. Summers upon his recent retirement after fifty years of ordained ministerial service, was ordered spread upon the minutes. The resolution noted his thirty-one years as Pastor of First Presbyterian Church, Gulfport, during which time the church grew tremendously, and his fourteen years of labor, without compensation, as Pastor of the Northwood Hills Church. The document also stated: "Dr. Richard L. Summers did not only heed the call of Christ to be a soldier of the cross, but also that of his country to bear arms in World War II serving in the Army Air Corps as captain and pilot of a bomber crew that took part in the liberation of Europe and when during a mission his plane was crippled by anti-aircraft fire and ditched in the North Sea, Dr. Summers with exemplary courage and leadership brought his crew through that harrowing experience and their subsequent imprisonment by the enemy, ministering the gospel of God's grace to them." The Rev. M. D. Connor, current pastor of First Church, Gulfport, prayed a prayer of thanksgiving regarding Dr. Summers.

Per the request of the Session of Moss Point (Miss.) Presbyterian Church, the court established a Stated Supply relationship with PCA Chaplain Randy Williams. The Session was granted permission to secure his labors as Stated Supply until the next meeting of Presbytery, when he can be received into Grace Presbytery. He is presently a member in good standing of Northern California Presbytery.

Presbytery approved the requests of the Rev. Dr. Bobby Penny and the Rev. Andy Berg to labor outside the bounds of Grace Presbytery at Presbyterian Christian School in Hattiesburg. Mr. Berg remains without call.

At 11:23 AM, Mr. Arrington Rhett, representative from Palmer home, addressed Presbytery for four minutes. At 11:27 AM, Mr. Bob Bishop of IAR/PCA addressed Presbytery for six minutes.

The Presbytery adopted, in amended form, an overture from the Session of First Church, Gulfport, with regard to the role of women. As adopted, the overture calls upon the General Assembly to "affirm that a woman may not preach or teach in the corporate worship of any church or in the corporate worship conducted by any church court or by any committee, board, and/or agency of a church court" and to "reaffirm that the Presbyterian Church in America believes that the Scripture teaches that the offices of Elder and Deacon are open to men only." Removed from the overture was language that would have asked the Assembly to "declare that the Session may allow only qualified men to preach or teach the Word of God in settings where men are present, and any such disregard of this declaration will constitute grounds for disciplinary action."

The Rev. Norman Bagby requested resignation as Recording Clerk. This was approved, and the Stated Clerk Case was instructed to write a letter of thanks to him, expressing gratitude to God for his faithful service as Recording Clerk.

The committee appointed by Moderator Carter to encourage participation of Ruling Elders in Presbytery sent out 29 letters to Ruling Elders, but received no responses. The Rev. Tommy Shields, Chairman, requests that any ruling elders who are interested, please let him know and volunteer to serve on the committee in an effort to find out why ruling elders don't participate on a greater level.

A letter from Liberty (Miss.) Presbyterian Church Congregational Meeting was read by the Stated Clerk. It was moved and seconded to grant the request of the Liberty Church to be removed from the Roll of Grace Presbytery. A substitute was moved, seconded, and carried that Grace Presbytery acknowledge that the

Liberty Presbyterian Church has withdrawn from the Presbyterian Church in America. The substitute passed as the main motion.

James River

James River Presbytery's fall stated meeting was held at Trinity Presbyterian Church, Charlottesville, Virginia, on October 14, 2000. Ruling Elder Dale White gave a sermon on the unity of believers from Ephesians 4. Host pastor John Hall administered the Lord's Supper.

The Rev. Brad Taylor was transferred to Evangel Presbytery. The report of the commission to ordain and install Mr. John Lindsay as Pastor of West Hopewell Presbyterian Church was approved.

The Presbytery offered a prayer of thanksgiving for the successful bypass surgery performed on Ruling Elder Gene Friedline, Stated Clerk of Presbytery.

The Treasurer reported that there was \$44,753.98 in the bank at the beginning of the year, and \$36,146.12 at the end of September. The Presbytery voted to approve a 2001 budget of \$51,650 (including \$15,000 for Vision 2000). The 2000 budget was \$33,700. It was noted that the 2000 expenses were in excess of projected income by \$12,000. The Presbytery voted to authorize the Stated Clerk to send a letter to the churches in Presbytery to commend contributing churches for their support and to encourage non-giving churches to consider increasing their giving to the Presbytery so it can meet the 2001 budget which is twice the projected income for 2000.

Messrs. Tony Nix and David Baggett were

taken under care as candidates.

Mr. Ewan Kennedy was examined and approved for ordination as Assistant Pastor of Calvary Presbyterian Church, Norfolk.

Gail Fleischfresser, a member of Westminster Reformed Presbyterian Church, Suffolk, reported on her plans to go to Mexico City as part of a Mission to the World team. She will be involved in an administrative support function.

Mr. James Watson was examined and approved for ordination as Pastor of Centralia Presbyterian Church, Chester, Virginia.

Mr. Jim Thorpe, who was ordained in the PCA, and Mr. George Boomer, who transferred to the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, were removed from the roll of candidates. The licensure of Mr. Ralph Carrell, who is now attending a Baptist church in Richmond, was removed.

Mr. Thomas H. Taylor was re-elected as Recording Clerk.

The Presbytery requested the Reformed University Fellowship subcommittee to investigate the establishment of a work at Washington and Lee University, possibly to begin in 2001, because of the volunteer financial support and interest regarding this work. Presbytery encouraged the subcommittee to make inquiry of other presbyteries in Virginia about the possibility of cooperative support for a work at Virginia Tech.

The Presbytery extended for an additional year the call of the Rev. Jack Howell as an evangelist at Trinity Church Mission, Norfolk, and the call of the Rev. Don Ward as an evangelist at Grace Community Church Mission, Charlottesville. A commission was established to examine elder nominees at the Grace Community Church Mission.

Mid-America

Mid-America Presbytery met for a called meeting on January 5, 2001, at First Reformed Presbyterian Church, Minco, Oklahoma. The Moderator, the Rev. David O'Dowd, presided. There were four teaching elders and seven ruling elders present.

The Rev. Mark Horne from Pacific Northwest Presbytery was present, also, in order to transfer into the Presbytery. He had received a call from the Minco church as Pastor. Upon examination, he was approved and received. During the examination, the court noted that his acceptance of paedocommunion was indeed an exception to the Confessional Standards, and prohibited him from teaching or preaching that view in the context of his ministry at the church in Minco. Mr. Horne noted that when he was ordained by Pacific Northwest Presbytery, he had taken an exception to the Confession of Faith, XXI.8, in that he believes that the confessional view is too stringent. The court found that his view on the Sabbath was an exception, but allowed him to teach and/or preach it in the context of his ministry in Minco.

When asked if his views had changed since he was ordained, Mr. Horne offered the following: "It has occurred to me since I was ordained that I have and plan to continue using Bible story books and artwork which involve pictures of Jesus. Yet the Westminster Larger Catechism (Q109) states that the second commandment forbids 'the making any representation of God, of all or any of the three persons, either inwardly in our mind, or outwardly in any kind of image or likeness of any creature whatsoever.' I don't agree with this. I am puzzled however that I have never heard anyone take an exception to this clause. I don't know if I should or shouldn't regard this as an exception or scruple but this seemed like a good place to bring this up." The court voted to note Mr. Horne's commitment to the second commandment, and *not* to regard his view as an exception to the Presbyterian standards.

Mississippi Valley

The Presbytery of Mississippi Valley met at Trinity Presbyterian Church, Jackson, Mississippi, on February 6, 2001. The Rev. Dr. Ligon Duncan opened the meeting with prayer at 9 AM. The Stated Clerk established that there was a quorum present. Ruling Elder Sommy Peaster was elected Moderator and he again opened in prayer. The adoption of the docket was approved, visitors were introduced, and the welcome from the host church was given.

During the Stated Clerk's report it was recommended that the Standing Rules be revised to schedule nominations for presbytery committees at November's meeting instead of February's meeting. Commission reports were given on the installation of Rev. Jud Davis and Rev. Mark Kreitzer and on the licensure of Dr. Neil Stewart. Following the Treasurer's report and several short reports from a few committees, Dr. Ligon Duncan led us in worship preaching from Ephesians 3:14-21.

Dr. Ligon Duncan was elected as chairman of the Credentials Committee, and the Rev. Scott Reiber was elected as vice-chairman.

The completion of the internships of two men were approved: Messrs. Dale Hollenbeck and Dennis Hermerding.

Mr. Andy Coburn, a student at RTS Jackson, was taken under care as a candidate.

Mr. Bill Inman was examined and approved for licensure. Mr. Mike Philliber (Pickens PCA church) and Mr. Dale Hollenbeck (MTW, Africa Inland Mission, Uganda) were examined and approved for ordination. Revs. Joe Easterling (First Pres, Yazoo City), Robert Lane (First Pres, Madison), and Jimmy Turner (laboring out of bounds with Christian Medical and Dental

Society at University Medical Center, Jackson) were examined and approved as transferring ministers. The call of the Rev. Bob Schwanebeck to labor out of bounds with Palmer Home was approved. Also, the Rev. Guy Richardson was approved as Stated Supply to the Edwards church for one year.

An overture to the 29th PCA General Assembly was passed dealing with the Presbytery's position on creation days. This overture requires all candidates who hold a position other than six-calendar-day creation to take an exception to the Westminster Confession (see story on page 12).

After setting the arrangements for the next Presbytery meeting to be held in Vicksburg on May 1, 2001, the meeting was closed with prayer.—*Guy Richard, Correspondent*

New Jersey

The Presbytery of New Jersey met for its 95th stated meeting at the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, Star Cross, New Jersey, on November 18, 2000. The Moderator, the Rev. Eugene Potoka, conducted the opening worship, and Mr. Ron Elkin, Director of AMMI ministries, brought a message from Colossians 3:1-17. Thirteen teaching elder and six ruling elder commissioners were present.

A budget of \$15,375 was adopted for 2001. This represents an increase of \$2000 over the 2000 budget. The per capita askings for 2001 will be \$17.08 (based on 900 communicant members), a 17.5 per cent increase over the \$14.53 the previous year.

Reports were heard from the Rev. Dan Barr (regarding the Shore Points Mission in Mamora, New Jersey), and from Mr. Elkin (regarding AMMI ministries, a ministry to Jews).

The Rev. Ted Trefsgar was examined and received from Eastern Carolina Presbytery, to become Pastor of Village Presbyterian Church, Mount Laurel, New Jersey. His total compensation package is \$46,551.64, plus administrative expenses, automobile allowance, and moving expenses.

The Rev. Gary Engelstad led in a discussion on "Full Preterism." No action was taken on this matter.

The court received a dissent from the Rev. David Longacre regarding the action of the Village Church with respect to Mr. Rockhill. The dissent was ordered spread on the minutes of the September stated meeting of Presbytery.

North Georgia

The Presbytery of North Georgia met for a called meeting on December 19, 2000, at Christ Church Presbyterian, Atlanta. The Rev. Peter Jackson was examined and transferred from Central Florida Presbytery, in order to accept a pastoral position at Christ Church Presbyterian.

The Presbytery approved the dissolution of the pastoral relationship between the Rev. Howard Brown and Redemption Fellowship, and Mr. Brown was transferred to Potomac Presbytery.

Philadelphia

Biblical Theological Seminary, Hatfield, Pennsylvania, hosted a stated meeting of Philadelphia Presbytery on November 11, 2000. Dr. Fred Putnam, a professor at Biblical Seminary and the Moderator, called the meeting to order and presided.

The Rev. David Wallover was transferred to Great Lakes Presbytery.

Reports were heard regarding various world mission efforts.

The Presbytery, by a vote of 29-13, approved the budget of the Reformed University

Ministries at Lehigh University, totaling \$79,941. The Rev. Frank Moser asked that his negative vote be recorded on the motion.

The following officers were elected for 2001: Moderator, Ruling Elder Grant McCabe; Vice-Moderator, the Rev. Philip Ryken; Recording Clerk, the Rev. Don Stone; Parliamentarian, Dr. D. Clair Davis.

The court thanked the teaching elders who paid their dues and helped bring down the deficit in the Administrative Budget; and asked all of its member ministers to help in the coming year by paying their dues. The various Sessions were also requested to consider meeting the Presbytery's "askings" for next year.

The Rev. Thomas Cox was examined and received from Nashville Presbytery. He has been called as Pastor of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, Levittown, Pennsylvania.

Presbytery approved the call of the Rev. John Muhlfeld as Associate Pastor of Covenant Presbyterian Church, Harleysville, Pennsylvania.

The court granted permission for Mr. David Henry, a licentiate of Susquehanna Valley Presbytery, to labor at the Johnsville Reformed Church, under Susquehanna Valley's jurisdiction, either as a licentiate and/or as an ordained teaching elder.

Presbytery acknowledged the merger of Promise Presbyterian Church with Emmanuel Orthodox Presbyterian Church, and the transfer of Promise Presbyterian to the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

Presbytery approved Dr. Will Barker's response to a protest, which had been entered at the September stated meeting. The protest revolved around the fact that the court had voted to ordain a man to serve as an assistant pastor at a Baptist church. Dr. Barker's answer stated that the man, the Rev. Kyuboem Lee, had "already served at Calvary Baptist Church for many months, during which his freedom to teach his Reformed interpretation of Scriptural teaching was demonstrated." Accordingly, "Presbytery deemed the call to be 'for the good of the Church' (BCO) 21-1) in approving it and proceeded to the ordination of Mr. Lee in this unusual opportunity for outreach in a needy urban setting and for a special expression of the unity of the true church (cf. Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter XXV).

"Mr. Lee's ability to administer the sacraments is not unlike that of many PCA Teaching Elders serving in mission agencies with which MTW has cooperative agreements, or who are in associate or assistant pastoral positions, or who are otherwise laboring out of bounds of Presbytery. As his call indicates, he is in fact free to teach infant baptism in a way that will not disturb the peace of the church, and he is of course free to practice infant baptism or baptism by pouring or sprinkling in other churches where this would be the accepted practice."

The call from Calvary Baptist Church stated: "Since the only major difference between the Baptist and the Reformed positions is that concerning believer's baptism versus infant baptism, you will be free, under proper pastoral supervision to present various views on baptism, including that of the Reformed position."

The Rev. George Clark was honorably retired, per his request.

A letter from Crossroads Community Church was entered into the record, announcing their election of the Rev. Leo Karlberg as pastor emeritus in recognition of nineteen fruitful years of service as their pastor.

Mr. Daniel Bradley was allowed to withdraw his candidacy for the ministry. Received under care were Messrs. Joseph Bisulca, Jr., Steven Kline, and Bryan Verbrugge. An internship of Candidate Robert McKelvey at Christ Covenant Presbyterian Church, Hatboro, Pennsylvania, was approved.

Reports were heard on various mission churches and budding efforts: the Overbrook sections of Philadelphia (under Mr. Lance Lewis); Cornerstone Presbyterian Mission (under the Rev. John Kinyon); and a work among Russian Jews, called "Rock of Israel" (under the Rev. Fred

Klett). Presbytery approved the report of the commission to organize Christ the King Presbyterian Church and to install the Rev. Adam Brice as Pastor. Sixty-two members constituted the new congregation, which has three ruling elders and three deacons.

Mr. Robert L. Dalberth was licensed to preach. He took exception to the Westminster Standards, in that he does not believe "that it is sinful to enjoy some recreation on the Lord's Day."

The Presbytery elected the Rev. Erwin Morrison and Ruling Elder David C. Lachman to another term on the Judicial Business Committee, Class of 2003. The matter was later reconsidered. Mr. Morrison was elected, but Dr. Lachman was not. The Rev. Mark Herzer asked that his abstention be recorded on the second vote.

South Texas

Called Meeting in August

The Presbytery of South Texas met for a called meeting on August 18, 2000, at Trinity Presbyterian Church, Houston. Moderator Jason Yoo called the meeting to order and presided.

Mr. Brad Bradley reported on the activities of the Mission to North America Committee, and the Southwest Church Planting Network. The proposed amendment to the Joint Committee (Network) Standing Rules, with regard to a participating church giving at least 2.00% of its annual budget to the Network, was approved.

A Reformed Universities Ministries minister has been placed at the University of Arizona—Tucson.

The Presbytery dissolved the call between the Rev. Jason Welch and Grace Presbyterian Church, The Woodlands, Texas. The credentials of the Rev. Doug Warren were transferred to Northeast Presbytery. The court voted to call a congregational meeting for Covenant Presbyterian Church, Harlingen, Texas.

The Presbytery voted to encourage each teaching elder member to give \$50 to offset the anticipated budget shortfall.

It was reported that there would be a presbytery-wide youth function at Spring Cypress Presbyterian Church on October 21st. This would be a pig-jig' (square dancing and barbeque).

Mr. Ken Thurmon was received under care as a candidate.

The installation of the Rev. Bob Schwartzbeck has not happened. The commission to perform the installation has been suspended until a committee meets with the Session of Oaklawn Presbyterian Church, Houston.

Called Meeting in October

A called meeting of South Texas Presbytery was held at Korean Presbyterian Church, Houston, on October 11, 2000. The purpose of the meeting was to deal with a complaint from the Rev. Jan Sattem and three ruling elders from Bay Area Presbyterian Church, Webster, Texas (Houston area), against actions taken by the Session.

Mr. Sattem, as Moderator of the Session, had called a meeting of that court for September 28, 2000, in order to deal with the complaint. The Session ruled, however, that his complaint was out of order and did not receive it, based on an interpretation of the *Book of Church Order* that his complaint should go to Presbytery rather than to the Session.

The Presbytery did not sustain the portion of the complaint which stated that "... complaints [were] heard against the pastor in the wrong court." The court did sustain the portion of the complaint which dealt with "actions taken requesting TE Sattem's resignation." The court did not sustain the portion of the complaint which alleged that "actions [were] taken regarding the

dismissal of the findings of the Ministerial Relations Committee.” The court ruled the portion of the complaint with regard to “lingering questions regarding the Board of Trustees and Church By-laws, and subsequent Session meetings” out of order, “because the motion does not refer to a specific action or decision.”

The Presbytery encouraged the Session and Pastor to reconsider the recommendations of the Ministerial Relations Committee. The Presbytery also voted to call on the Institute of Christian Conciliation to assist that Committee in bringing about reconciliation at the church.

The Rev. Bill Combs was appointed as Presbytery’s representative at the congregational meeting to be held on October 15, 2000.

Stated Meeting in October

The sixty-third stated meeting of the Presbytery of South Texas was held at Trinity Presbyterian Church, Houston, on October 27-28, 2000. The Rev. Bill Fitzhenry led the opening worship, and the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper was observed.

The court dismissed Mr. and Mrs. Leon Halden and daughter Deanna, and Mr. Tony Elia, to the Providence Orthodox Presbyterian Church, Kingwood, Texas.

The Clerk reported that he had received at least ten letters from concerned members of the Bay Area Presbyterian Church. A complaint from Mark Klemm, Michael Plunkett, and David Currie against the Session of that church was also received, which was referred to the Administrative Committee.

Also referred to the Administrative Committee were complaints from T. J. O’Rourke against the Session of Covenant Presbyterian Church, Harlingen; and from the Rev. Bill Fitzhenry against the Presbytery.

The court heard reports about various mission efforts.

The Presbytery approved the call to the Rev. Dr. Jon Green from Oakwood Community Church. Upon motion, the congregation was encouraged to extend a fourth week of vacation.

The committee which visited with the Oaklawn Session and the Rev. Bob Schwartzbeck reported that he has decided not to pursue the call to the church. The Session concurs with that decision. Mr. Alex Villisana, who is pursuing ordination as a minister of the gospel, was approved as ruling elder supply at the Oaklawn Church.

Messrs. David Hall, Matt Monds, Robert Cook, Steve Cooper, Tucker York, and David Avilia were approved as ministerial candidates.

The Presbytery approved the Resolution and Thanks Committee report (see at right).

The court examined and approved for ordination Messrs. Clay Holland and Jason Little.

The Rev. Steven Paul Stahl was granted honorable retirement status.

The Rev. Chris Mucci, who had been an assistant pastor at Bay Area Presbyterian Church since 1996, was transferred to Heritage Presbytery, pending receipt.

It was moved to establish a commission to visit the Bay Area Presbyterian Church (BAPC), per BCO 13-9f. A substitute motion was made, as follows: “that the South Texas Presbytery commission its MNA committee to act on its behalf in seeking reconciliation within the Bay Area PCA, to the end that the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ be honored and that grievances be relieved. Further, that in view of the authority granted to the Presbytery to visit churches for the purpose of inquiring into and redressing evils that may have arisen in them (BCO 13:9f), the commission be requested to proceed with dispatch to this task. The commission is therefore authorized to meet with TE Jan Sattem, the ruling elders of the Bay Area PCA, and members of the congregation in seeking the unity of the Spirit and the bond of peace (Eph. 4:1-6; 2:15-22).” The substitute motion was amended to insert Administrative Committee in place of the MNA Committee, with the Rev. Lawrence Ruddell, an assistant pastor at Bay Area Church, being recused. The amendment carried, as did the substitute motion, which then passed as the main motion. The Presbytery dissolved the pastoral

relationship between the Rev. Jan Sattem and the Bay Area Presbyterian Church. The Presbytery also voted to approve six months recommended severance pay for Mr. Sattem [who had been Senior Pastor of the church since 1999—Ed].

Expressing Thanks, South Texas Style

The following was adopted as the report of the Resolution and Thanks Committee at the Presbytery of South Texas, October 27-28, 2000:

We came by plane and by car
‘Cause these Texas miles are so far
But you showed you cared
When you had prepared
A banquet fit for a czar.

BBQ beef, the course of the day
‘Taters, cole slaw and beans they say
and desserts galore
were the stuff of lore
but our group from Pearland was
still on the way

The hymns and choir refreshed
The Word, read and preached
In the cup and the bread
Our souls were fed
In worship our lives were blessed

It doesn’t take long to spend the night
When you meet Friday night till very late
But in Christ we can rest
And we know that is best
Because McDaniel said to be here by eight

[Editor’s note: E. R. McDaniel, III, is Stated Clerk of the Presbytery. The Rev. Andy Adams and Ruling Elder Lee Joseph were the poets laureate who penned the report.]

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Southwest

The Presbytery of the Southwest met for a stated meeting at Covenant Presbyterian Church, Sun City West, Arizona, on April 13, 2000. The Moderator, the Rev. Bill Phillips, called the meeting to order and presided.

The Rev. Tom Troxell reported on his attendance at the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America's presbytery meeting in Phoenix on February 25, 2000, as a fraternal delegate.

The court approved the minutes of the commission to ordain Mr. Wayne Nieman as a teaching elder and install him as the Director of the Biblical Counseling and Training Center.

Reports were heard on the Providence PCA Mission in Farmington, New Mexico; the church plant work in Scottsdale, Arizona; and the Iglesia Presbiteriana PCA Oasis Mission and Christ the King PCA mission in El Paso, Texas. Reports were also heard regarding the Southwest Church Planting Network; Will Tilley's and Lt. Bruce Hougeson's work as Navy chaplains; the BEAMM work in Juarez, Mexico; the establishment of Reformed University Fellowships in Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas; Fred McFarland's work as an Air Force chaplain; and Tom Troxell's work as an Army National Guard chaplain.

The Presbytery recommended to the Missions Committee that they explore the possibility of starting a PCA church in Roswell, New Mexico.

The Presbytery noted the change of view presented by the Rev. Vince Wood, including his willingness to submit to the practice of the denomination. His exception is that he "can not find any Biblical grounds to limit the administration [of the sacraments]" to ministers. His change of view is based on ruling elders and teaching elders having "the same office and no duties limited to one."

The court approved changes to the Joint Committee Standing Rules for the Southwest Church Planting Network. The provisions specify that each participating church must give at least 2.00% of its general fund receipts to the Network, and at least .75% to the respective presbytery.

The meeting, which began at 1:03 PM, was adjourned at 4:35 PM

Tennessee Valley

Tennessee Valley Presbytery (TVP) held a stated meeting on October 10, 2000, at First Presbyterian Church, Fort Oglethorpe, Georgia. The Moderator, the

Rev. Carter Johnson, presided.

The court approved the minutes for the commission to install Eric Mullinax as Associate Pastor of Covenant Presbyterian Church, Chattanooga.

The Rev. Dr. J. Render Caines indicated his decision to step down as Stated Clerk. A ruling elder from his congregation (Covenant Presbyterian of Chattanooga), Mr. Mark Wilson, was elected, effective January 1, 2001.

Mr. Dwight Wilkinson reported on the work of Presbyterian Evangelistic Fellowship's Bridgemont Camp in Wear's Valley, Tennessee. The Rev. Russ Sukhia reported on a youth retreat, a woman's retreat, and a men's rally.

The court voted to lift the censure of suspension from the sacraments imposed against Mr. Ray Miles, in light of his having given evidence of repentance. His name was removed from the roll of the Presbytery, and he was commended to the care and pastoral oversight of the church of which he became a member.

A budget of \$129,700 was adopted for 2001. Of that amount, \$6,000 was designated for the General Assembly in Chattanooga Committee. The Presbytery voted to invite the General Assembly to meet in Chattanooga in 2005.

The court voted to restore the ministerial credentials of Dr. Stuart Merriam "because his conviction by the criminal court of Papua New Guinea has been 'quashed.' Dr. Merriam's credentials were removed by the TVP in 1995 on the basis of that conviction and loss of subsequent appeal out of concern for the 'honor of Christ and peace of His church.'" The court then voted that his credentials be suspended without censure "because the findings of the Ad Hoc Commission (appointed by the TVP at the Special Called Meeting of August 10, 2000) has raised a strong presumption of guilt concerning Dr. Stuart Merriam's Christian character." The Moderator is to appoint a prosecutor to prepare the indictment and conduct the case. The Rev. Harold Borchert and the Rev. Sam Cappel asked that their negative votes be recorded.

The Presbytery recognized as a mission church the group presently worshipping in West Brow, Georgia. Reports were heard on the mission church in Morristown, Tennessee, and the Reformed University Fellowships at University of Tennessee at Chattanooga and at University of Tennessee at Knoxville. The Rev. Daniel Waterman reported on his work as a chaplain in the U. S. Army. The Rev. Dana Stoddard reported that Harvest USA, a ministry to homosexuals and those addicted to pornography, will be opening an office in Chattanooga in summer 2001.

The court voted that teaching elders on the roll who wish to be divested without censure, licensed to preach, and assigned communicant membership in a local PCA church, be asked to:

"1) reaffirm their ordination vows and state that their views have not changed, and 2) provide a views statement to be reviewed for approval by [the Minister and His Works Committee]." The Presbytery will be asked to note in its minutes that the previous ordination exam of such men will be accepted in lieu of a licensure exam; such men will be licensed for a period of one year.

Licentiate Jerry Harwood was examined and approved for ordination as Assistant Pastor of the Hixson (Tenn.) Presbyterian Church.

It was noted that the credentials of the Rev. Richard Rosser have been transferred to the Southern Baptist Convention.

Westminster

The one hundred and second stated meeting of Westminster Presbytery was held at Westminster Presbyterian Church, Johnson City, Tennessee, on January 13, 2001. The Moderator, Ruling Elder Nat Kelley, called the meeting to order; and the Rev. Richard Searles, Associate Pastor of the host church, led in prayer. Candidate David Atkisson preached at the opening worship, in fulfillment of requirements for licensure and ordination. Mr. Searle administered the sacrament of communion.

The Rev. Bill Leuzinger, Pastor of Abingdon (Va.) Presbyterian Church, was elected Moderator.

The Presbytery approved the commission reports regarding the installation of the Rev. Dion Marshall as Pastor of Sandlick Presbyterian Church, Birchleaf, Virginia; and the installation of the Rev. Frank J. Smith as Pastor of Coeburn (Va.) Presbyterian Church.

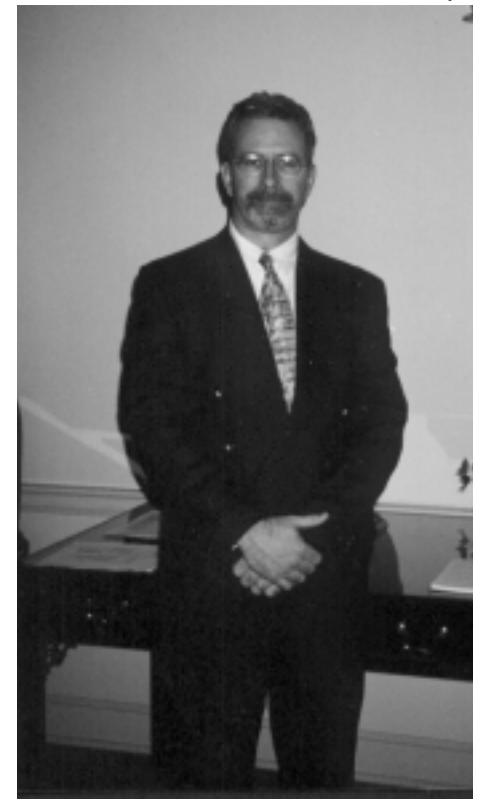
The Rev. Larry Ball presented a brief report of the Greene County Commission. He also presented the recommendations of the Conflict Resolution Committee, which were adopted. The first was that the morning session of the meeting today be set aside for a debate on the issue of "Subscription to the Standards" [see story on page 2—Ed.]. The second was that "a similar format be used to debate various issues for the remainder of the stated meetings in the year 2001. The Committee will choose a different topic for each meeting." The third was that "presbyters be encouraged to seek forbearance in limiting overtures and complaints while we are engaged in debate so that the other business of Presbytery may be completed."

The Presbytery examined and approved for ordination Mr. David Atkisson. He has been called by Mission to the World as a missionary to Brazil.

Examined and received were the Rev. Trevor Downie (from Holston Presbytery of the PC(USA)), and the Rev. Dr. Phil Blevins (from Mississippi Valley Presbytery). Mr. Downie is

serving out of bounds at Bellemont Presbyterian Church, an independent church south of Bristol, Tennessee, which was founded by a famed evangelist, the late Dan Graham. Dr. Blevins has been serving as President of Graham Bible College, Bristol, Tennessee.

Presbytery received the report of the Haysi Commission through its Chairman, the Rev. Henry Johnson. The Haysi Commission was dealing with a judicial matter which had arisen at the Dickenson First Presbyterian Church, Haysi, Virginia. Also received was the report of the Asbury Commission, which was overseeing the details regarding the dissolution of the Asbury Presbyterian Church, Johnson City, Tennessee. Both commissions were dissolved as of today.



David Atkisson

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SUPPORTERS

ALABAMA

EBENEZER PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
2478 Hobbs Island Road/Huntsville
S.S., 9:45 AM; Worship, 11:00 AM/6:00 PM
Bible Study, Wednesday, 7:00 PM
Fellowship Supper, 2nd Wednesday, 6:30 PM
(205)883-7298

WESTMINSTER PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
1400 Evangel Drive/Huntsville
S.S., 11:10 AM; Worship, 9:30 AM/6:00 PM
(205)830-5754

TALUCAH PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
2374 Talucah Road/Valhermoso Springs
S.S., 10:00 AM; Worship, 10:45 AM
(205)778-8288

ARIZONA
DESERT SPRINGS PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
1555 W. Overton Road/Tucson
S.S., 9:20 AM; Worship, 10:30 AM
(520)742-8990

CALIFORNIA

GRACE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH†
Meeting at Costa Mesa 7th Day Adventist Church, 271 Avocado St./Costa Mesa
S.S., 11:30 AM; Worship, 9:30 AM
(714)526-3153

TRINITY PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
940 East Valley Parkway, Suite G/Escondido
S.S., 11:00 AM; Worship, 9:00 AM/5:00 PM
(760)480-4373

NEW LIFE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
500 Manhattan Beach Blvd./
Manhattan Beach
S.S., 9:30 AM/Worship, 10:30 AM
(310)372-8455

CONNECTICUT

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF COVENTRY
55 Trowbridge Road/Coventry
S.S., 10:45 AM; Worship, 9:30 AM/6:30 PM
(860)742-7222

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF MANCHESTER
43 Spruce Street/Manchester
S.S., 9:15 AM; Worship, 10:30 AM
(860)643-0906

FLORIDA

GRACE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
1875 N. W. Britt Road/Stuart
S.S., 9:30 AM;
Worship, 11:00 AM/6:00 PM
(561) 692-1995

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

TRINITY PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH†
44 Southview Avenue/Valparaiso
S.S., 9:15 AM/Worship, 10:30 AM
Third Sunday Service and Supper, 6:00 PM
(850)678-0060

GEORGIA

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
One Harker Road/Ft. Oglethorpe
S.S 10:00 AM; Worship, 11:00 AM/6:00 PM
(706)866-2521
SOUTH LIBERTY PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
Sharon Barnett Road/Sharon
S.S., 10:00 AM;
Worship, 11:00 AM (1st/5th Sun.)
(706)456-2377

CHEROKEE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
5549 Hwy. 92E/Woodstock
S.S., 9:35 AM; Worship, 8:00/10:45 AM
(770)928-2051

LOUISIANA
AUBURN AVENUE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
224 Auburn Avenue/Monroe
S.S., 9:15 AM
Worship, 10:30 AM/6:00 PM
(318)323-3061

BETHEL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
2040 East McNeese Street/Lake Charles
S.S., 9:30 AM; Worship, 8:15 AM/10:45 PM
(318)478-5672

WESTMINSTER PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
146 E. Cherry Street/Opelousas
S.S., 9:30 AM; Worship, 10:45 AM
(318)948-9339

MARYLAND
CHRIST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
Elkton High School/Elkton
S.S., 11:15 AM; Worship, 9:15 AM
(410)398-3192

<p>CHRIST REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH Diplomat Building, 13992 Baltimore Avenue, Suite 300/Laurel S.S., 9:30AM; Worship 10:30AM/6:00PM (301) 498-3700 MINNESOTA GOOD SHEPHERD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH 15321 Wayzata Blvd./Minnetonka S.S., 11:15 AM; Worship, 9:30 AM Sunday Evening Bible Study, 6:00 PM (952)835-6358</p>	<p>HAZELWOOD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH 117 E. Main Street/Hazelwood S.S., 9:30 AM; Worship, 11:00 AM/6:15 PM Wednesday, 7:00 PM (828)456-3912 SHEARER PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH 684 Presbyterian Road/Mooresville S.S., 9:45 AM; Worship, 11:00 AM/5:00 PM Wednesday, 7:00 PM (704)892-8866 NEW COVENANT PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH 10301 Old Creedmoor Road/Raleigh S.S., 11:00AM; Worship, 9:30AM/6:00PM (919)844-0551 TRINITY REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH 3701 South College Road/Wilmington Worship 10:30 AM (910)395-1252</p>	<p>FAITH PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH 1800 Third Loop Road/Florence S.S., 9:45 AM; Worship 11:00 AM/6:00 PM (843)665-9235 BEECH STREET PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH 1403 Beech Street/Gaffney S.S., 10:00 AM; Worship, 11:00 AM/6:00 PM (864)489-2014 CALVARY PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH 9201 Old White Horse Road/Greenville S.S. 10:00 AM; Worship 11:00 AM/6:00 PM Wednesday Prayer Meeting 7:00 PM (864)294-0895 SECOND PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH 105 River Street/Greenville S.S., 9:45 AM; Worship, 11:00 AM/6:00 PM Wednesday, 5:45 PM (864)232-7621 FELLOWSHIP PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH 1105 Old Spartanburg Road/Greer S.S., 10:00 AM; Worship, 11:00 AM/6:00 PM Wednesday, 6:30 PM (864)877-3267</p>	<p>CALVARY REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH 403 Whealton Road/Hampton S.S. 10:00AM; Worship: 8:30 AM/11:00 AM Evening Gathering: 6:00 PM (757)826-5942 WEST END PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH 1600 Atlantic Street/Hopewell S.S., 9:45 AM; Worship, 10:50 AM/6:00 PM Wednesday Prayer Meeting, 7:00 PM (804)458-6765 KNOX REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH 4883 Southard Lane/Mechanicsville S.S., 9:30 AM; Worship, 11:00 AM Sunday Evening, 6:00 PM (804)779-7608 IMMANUEL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH 4700 Colley Avenue/Norfolk Worship, 10:30AM/6:30PM Wed. Christian Education Classes, 7:00PM Sat. Prayer Meeting, 7:00PM (757)440-1100 TRINITY PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH 108 Hill Street/Tazewell S.S., 9:45 AM; Worship, 11:00/7:00 PM (540)988-9541</p>
<p>MISSISSIPPI MCDONALD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH 295 E. Williamsburg Road/Collins S.S., 10:00AM; Worship, 11:00AM/6:00PM Wednesday prayer meeting, 7:00PM (601)765-6437 FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH East Beach Blvd. at 24th Ave./Gulfport S.S., 9:30 AM; Worship, 11:00 AM/6:00 PM Wed., Family Dinner (6:00)/Bible Study (6:30) (228)863-2664 ST. PAUL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH 5125 Robinson Road/Jackson S.S., 9:45 AM; Worship, 10:55 AM/6:00 PM (601)372-7497</p>	<p>NOVA SCOTIA BEDFORD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH 49 Nelson's Landing Blvd./Bedford S.S., 11:30 AM; Worship, 11:00 AM/7:00 PM (902)864-1587 OHIO FAITH PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH 2540 S. Main Street/Akron S.S., 9:30 AM Worship, 10:45 AM/6:00 PM Wednesday, 7:00 PM (330)644-9654 CHRIST COVENANT REFORMED (PCA) 14787 Palmer Road SW/Reynoldsburg Psalter Service, 9:30 AM/Worship, 10:45 AM Thurs. Bible Study, 7 PM (740)964-0889</p>	<p>TENNESSEE BRAINERD HILLS PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH 6388 East Brainerd Road/Chattanooga S.S., 9:45 AM; Worship, 10:45AM/6:30PM (423) 892-5308 MIDWAY PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH 4011 Old Jonesborough Road/Jonesborough S.S., 10:00 AM; Worship 11:00 AM/7:00 PM (423) 753-941 BRIDWELL HEIGHTS PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH 108 Bridwell Heights Drive/Kingsport S.S., 9:45 AM; Worship, 11:00 AM/6:00 PM (423)288-3664 FELLOWSHIP PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH Highway 25/70/Newport S.S., 9:30 AM/Worship, 11:00 AM/7:00 PM Wednesday Prayer Meeting, 6:00 PM (423) 623-8652 WESTMINSTER PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH 900 Watauga Street/Kingsport S.S., 10:00 AM Worship, 11:00 AM/7:00 PM (423)247-7341</p>	<p>WASHINGTON WESTMINSTER PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH 2700 Andresen Road/Vancouver Worship, 10:00 AM Sunday Bible Study, 6:30 PM (360)254-1726 WEST VIRGINIA PROVIDENCE REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH 5865 Davis Creek Road/Barboursville S.S. 11:30; Worship 10:00 AM/6:00 PM (304)736-0487 WISCONSIN Calvary Orthodox Presbyterian Church† 136 West Union Avenue/Cedar Grove S.S., 10:30 AM; Worship 9:00 AM/7:00 PM (920)668-6463 REFORMATION PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH† Lake Country SDA Church, 142 Lake St./Pewaukee Bible Study, 10:00 AM; Worship, 11:00 AM Wednesday Prayer Service, 7:00 PM (414)781-2171</p>
<p>NEW JERSEY LOCKTOWN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH 197 Locktown-Flemington Road/Flemington S.S., 10:30 AM; Worship, 11:00 AM (908)996-7707 MOUNT CARMEL CHURCH† 350 Franklin Blvd./Somerset S.S., 10:00 AM; Worship, 11:00 AM/6:00 PM (732)846-8777 NEW YORK REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH Route 7/Duanesburg S.S., 9:30 AM; Worship, 10:30 AM/7:30 PM (518)895-2448 FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH 209 Union Street/Schenectady SS, 9:30AM; Worship, 8:15/11:00AM/6:00PM (518)374-4546 AFFIRMATION PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH Routes 100 and 139/Somers S.S., 10:00 AM; Worship, 11:00 AM (914)232-0546</p>	<p>OKLAHOMA BEAL HEIGHTS PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH 614 SW Park/Lawton Worship, 10:45 AM and 6:00 PM (580)355-4702 PENNSYLVANIA NEW LIFE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF HOPEWELL TOWNSHIP 2795 Patterson Drive/Alquippa S.S., 9:30AM; Worship, 11:00AM (724)378-4389 LEHIGH VALLEY PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH 31 S. 13th Street/Allentown S.S., 9:45 AM; Worship, 11:00 AM/6:00 PM (610)797-8320 FAITH REFORMED CHURCH 2953 Saltsman Road/Erie S.S., 9:45 AM/Worship, 11:00 AM (814)899-3037 COVENANT PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH 515 West County Line Road/Hatboro S.S., 9:45 AM (Sum., 9:00); Worship, 11:00 AM (Sum., 10:00) (215)675-9688</p>	<p>TEXAS COLLEYVILLE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH 715 Cheek Sparger Road/Colleyville S.S., 9:45 AM; Worship, 11:00 AM/6:00 PM (817)498-2626 COVENANT PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH 2701 N. 7th Street/Harlingen S.S., 9:30 AM; Worship, 11:00 AM Midweek service, 7:00 PM Wednesday (956)425-3136 COVENANT PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH SDA Church, 1209 S. John Redditt Rd./Lufkin S.S., 9:30 AM; Worship, 10:45 AM/5:30 PM (409)637-6043 CHRIST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH 1620 E. Common Street/New Braunfels S.S., 9:30 AM; Worship, 10:45 AM (830)629-0405 PROVIDENCE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH 3510 Austin Parkway/Sugar Land S.S., 9:45 AM; Worship, 11:00 AM and 6:00 PM (except 1st Sun.) (281)980-2522</p>	<p>RON HAYNES Disaster Response and Mercy Ministries Presbyterian Evangelistic Fellowship 1003 Hollyleaf Court Ballwin, Missouri 63021 (314)227-2612 GRIEVING WITH HOPE The Rev. James Alexander PO Box 7100 Florence, SC 29502-7100 (843)664-9759 Web: pages.prodigy.net/grievingwithhope Email: grievingwithhope@prodigy.net</p>
<p>NORTH CAROLINA DILLINGHAM PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH 16 Stoney Fork Road/Barnardsville S.S., 9:45 AM; Worship, 11:00 AM (828)626-3668 COUNTRYSIDE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH 127 Ponderosa Road/Cameron S.S., 9:30 AM; Worship, 11:00 AM (919)499-2362 WHITESIDE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH Highway 74/Cashiers S.S., 10:00 AM; Worship, 11:00 AM Wednesday, 7:00 PM Prayer Meeting (828)743-2122 WHITE OAK PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH 699 Polly Watson Road/Fremont S.S., 10:00 AM; Worship, 11:00 AM (919)284-4196</p>	<p>ROCKY SPRINGS PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH 123 Rocky Springs Road/Harrisville S.S., 10:00 AM Worship, 11:00 AM/6:00 PM (724)735-2743 SOUTH HILLS REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH 110 Hays Road/Upper St. Clair/Pittsburgh S.S., 9:15 AM; Worship, 10:30 AM; Wednesday, 7:30 PM (412)941-3480 HILLCREST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH Route 19, three miles south of Leesburg/Volant S.S., 9:45 AM; Worship 10:55 AM/6:30 PM (724)533-4315 SOUTH CAROLINA REEDY RIVER PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH 46 Main Street/Conestee S.S., 10:00 AM; Worship, 11:00AM/6:30PM (864)277-5455 GRACE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH 1955 Riverside Drive/Conway S.S., 9:30 AM/Worship, 10:45 AM (843)347-5550</p>	<p>VIRGINIA COEBURN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH 220 Second Street SW/Coeburn S.S., 9:45AM; Worship, 11:00AM/6:30PM Wednesday Prayer Meeting, 7:00PM (540)395-2866 NEW HOPE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH Fairfax Fire Station #3 (Williams Memorial Hall), 4081 University Blvd./Fairfax S.S., 11:15 AM Worship, 9:30 AM/5:30 PM (703)385-9056</p>	<p>WE ARE PLEASED TO HAVE CONGREGATIONS AND ORGANIZATIONS JOIN US AS COSPONSORS OF THIS VENTURE. IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO BECOME A SPONSOR, JUST LET US KNOW: PINS FINANCIAL OFFICE, P. O. BOX 60, COEBURN, VA 24230. CHECKS SHOULD BE MADE PAYABLE TO PRESBYTERIAN INTERNATIONAL NEWS SERVICE.</p>

† Indicates a non-PCA church.

