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PCA Couple Wins Parents of the Year Award

Mr. and Mrs. William Devlin, members of New Life Presbyterian Church, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, are the 2001 winners of the Parents of the Year Award. The annual award was presented by the National Parents' Day Council. According to its literature, the Council is "a multi-racial, inter-faith coalition of religious, civic and business leaders and elected officials who believe that America's moral and spiritual health can be restored through a value-based revival."

As quoted in a press release from the Council, Gary Jarmin, its Project Coordinator, stated: "Parents' Day celebrates the unselfish partnership and unconditional love that parents bring to children, the complimentary roles that mother and father play in rearing healthy, happy, and successful children. The Devlins exemplify this partnership and truly embody responsible and virtuous parenting. They are inspirational, parental role models."

The award ceremony was conducted on July 25, 2001, at the Cannon House Office Building in one of the Congressional hearing rooms, turned for the evening into a banquet hall. The special speaker for the occasion was the Honorable Bob Dole, former Presidential candidate and former Senator from Kansas. Other luminaries present included former Senator Larry Pressler (R—S. D.) and Senator John Kerry (D—Mass.). A highlight of the event was the presentation of President George W. Bush's Parents' Day Proclamation, by Matthew Smith of the White House Office of Public Liaison.

The Devlins have become well-known for their ministry of compassion, particularly in conjunction with Urban Family Council (UFC), of which Mr. Devlin is Executive Director. According to Mr. Devlin, UFC is committed to an inter-racial, urban-oriented, incarnational ministry with an emphasis on loving people.

The Award That Almost Didn't Happen

The honor to the Devlins almost did not happen. Unbeknownst to them, the Rev. Terrence Griffith, pastor of the First African Baptist Church in Philadelphia and a former national senator from Grenada, had nominated them. When the forms came, the family thought that this was some come-on from some sort of organization probably looking for money—kind of like one of the Who's Who books. Despite his wife's better judgment, Bill went ahead and filled out the forms. Because of that act, "I certainly wouldn't win the Husband of the Year award," he confesses.

The Devlins were first selected as winners of the state award. "We were the nominee from Pennsylvania," says Mr. Devlin. "Within about a week's time [of winning that], all 50 names [from all the 50 states] were thrown in. It was kind of like the Miss America contest. I said, Well, I won't accept unless it comes with a crown."

Then late one night, he received a phone call from a friend who had been part of the selection process, informing him that he had won the national award. The significance of that still hadn't sunk in when he went to the office the next day, and received a call from someone in Washington, D. C. It was the week before the award ceremony, and the person on the other end of the line began explaining how he and his wife were invited to this special banquet in the nation's capital. When Bill started to thank the person but decline the invitation because he and his wife were going to be out of town, the person said, "Mr. Devlin, you don't understand—you've been selected as the national parents of the year." The National Parents Day Council made arrangements to fly the Devlins from wherever they were, so that they could attend the ceremony.

Bill relates that his wife, Nancy, still wondered if they wanted to participate. One of the sponsors of the banquet was the Washington Times Foundation, associated with Sun Myung Moon, and Bill Devlin had had his run-ins with the Unification Church. In the spring, he had been invited to participate with Mr. Moon at an event at an African-American church in Philadelphia, which would also feature Wilson Goode, Philadelphia's former mayor. When the *Philadelphia Inquirer* religion reporter got wind that Bill would also be on the platform, he called Bill, saying, "Devlin, what's going on?" Bill told the reporter that he was "going to share the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. I'm going to say that there's one Savior, and it's not the Rev. Moon." He also was quoted (accurately) in the *Inquirer* as saying that "Moon's Theology is Out to Lunch." When he saw his quotation in the newspaper, he thought, "Oh, dear, my goose is cooked." He was met at the event by a female assistant, who said, "We're sorry, your opportunity to speak has already passed."

The William Devlin Family

With that background, Nancy wasn't sure about participating where people from the Unification Church would be prominent. But they went, and they proclaimed the gospel of Jesus Christ.

A Packed Banquet Hall

Mr. Devlin states that "the place was packed" for the banquet. "We were allowed to speak about our work with the Urban Family Council, and what it means to live out the love of Jesus Christ. . . . I said that Jesus Christ is the only Messiah. . . . We again saw it as a wonderful opportunity to go outside the box and be there at the very seat of government. There were Unification Church people, secularists, elected officials, Mormons, Baptists, Presbyterians. The press was there. It was just a veritable cornucopia of religious beliefs. God gave us this opportunity to give the true message of Jesus Christ according to God's Word, in that Mars Hill of religious devotion."

"This was one more weird opportunity that God had given us, as a Bible-believing couple, to preach the gospel in a weird place. Instead of being at the dinner, we were the dinner, as they say here in Philly."

Other Opportunities Open Up

Winning the award has presented other opportunities for the Devlins to proclaim their message. Two radio stations—in San Antonio and Philadelphia—interviewed him. The story was on the front page of the *Washington Times*, and also ran in that paper's weekend edition.

According to Mr. Devlin, winning the award has "had a huge impact, because Nancy and I and Urban Family Council are always looking at ways to authenticate our belief in Jesus Christ, and to promote the families living in the city." He stated that their being the Parents of the Year has enabled people to see that "here's a couple living in the 'hood and they can remain successfully married and raise five kids who are not bitter. They all have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. They all went to public schools. Here are the Devlins, they've practiced open hospitality, they have a 24/7 practice of welcoming people. With everybody talking about cities dying, here's a sign of life, of all things. Here's a family not attending the First Church of Harry Houdini—you know, always trying to escape to the suburbs."

Again reflecting on the award ceremony, he said that being in such a place of prominence "was an opportunity, not to promote us, but to promote the Lord Jesus."

Traveling to Pakistan

Even before the award this past summer, Bill Devlin has continued to enjoy unusual opportunities to share the gospel. Bill was going to Pakistan as Chairman of the Philadelphia Interfaith Task Force, an organization opposed to religious persecution. In January 2001, he and Victor Gill, a native Pakistani, traveled to that Islamic nation. As they were preparing for the trip, Bill started to pray about whom he should see, and he got to thinking about Benazir Bhutto, the former Prime Minister of Pakistan. Victor had met the head of the Pakistani People's Party, with which Mrs. Bhutto is associated. That contact allowed Bill to forward to him his resume, which includes his numerous political contacts (such as Senators Rick Santorum [R—Pa.] and Arlen Specter [R—Pa.]) and his widespread political activity. (In 1999, he ran for Philadelphia City Council in the Democratic primary.) Word was received that Benazir Bhutto would like to meet with Bill and Victor.

They met with Mrs. Bhutto over a period of two days, at her apartment in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. Bill said that he was able to sit in her living room, sharing the

gospel with her.

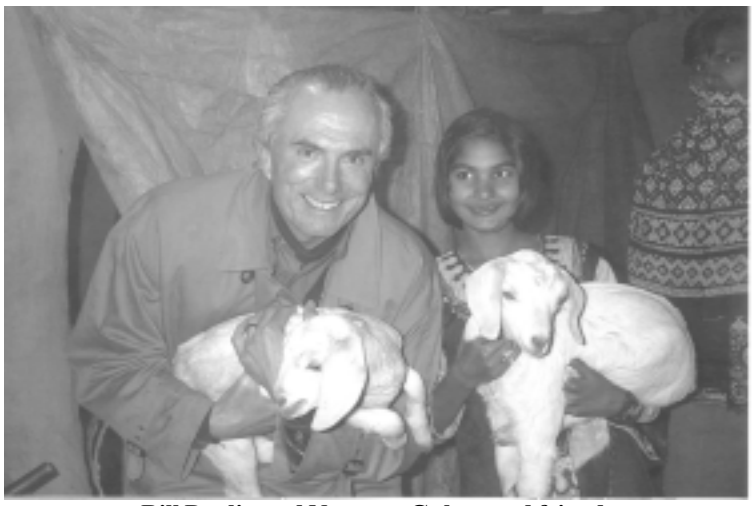
Her basic reaction to the gospel presentation, according to Mr. Devlin, was that she said, "I'm a Muslim." They also talked about her life in politics. "I asked her view on abortion. She said she's personally pro-life, but if someone wanted to get an abortion, she wouldn't stop them by law. I said, 'Benazir, you sound just like an American politician!' She wasn't very happy with me when I said that."

Rich and Poor

After arriving in Pakistan, they went to seven cities in seven days, meeting with Muslim generals, Muslim press, Muslim academics, as well as the American ambassador. "We met with the upper strata of society. We also met with the persecuted Christians. The goal of our trip was a trip of encouragement, to encourage the Pakistani Christians that you are not alone, that we in America are praying for you. We met with 180 people from 36 organizations. We lived at what we called the village level. We slept in buses, we slept in airports. . . . We went to the Christian villages, which are similar to the Jewish ghettoes in Poland prior to World War II. The people live in abject poverty."

Pakistani Persecution

The Christians, who constitute only three per cent of the Pakistani population, are also a very persecuted minority. Bill told of his visit with the Masih family, consisting of two parents and nine children. Several years ago, Mr. Masih went to the authorities, complaining of the rape and sexual assault of his then-seven year old daughter by Muslim villagers. Instead of being granted justice, he found himself in jail for two years.



Bill Devlin and Nageena Gulam and friends

For security reasons, this meeting with Mr. Masih had taken place at a pastor's home. However, Mr. Masih asked if Bill and Victor would travel with him to his house, about 45 minutes away, in order to meet his family. Even though it was dangerous for a Westerner to be traveling to that location, Bill decided to go.

As they started out at about 10 o' clock at night, the fog started to roll in. "It was like a movie," he recalls, of the torturous journey through narrow, winding streets. "The driver was stopping every ten feet to wipe the windshield. They told him not to do so, because of the bandits."

When Bill and Victor arrived at the Masih home, they discovered that it consisted of a one-room hut, about the size of a master bedroom. "Not only is it all the children who are sleeping on these rickety straw beds, but the son had just gotten married and he and his wife were spending their honeymoon there. At the end of our hour together, Gulam Masih reached under his bed and pulled out a bag of fruit and said to Victor, This is a gift I want to give to Brother Bill Devlin. I said I didn't want to accept it. Victor told me that it would be an affront not to accept it. Here I come from the richest country in the world, and this guy out of his poverty is giving me a gift. I just wept. I couldn't believe it."

Benazir Bhutto and Bill Devlin

Christianity and America

Bill says that while in Islamabad, the Pakistani capital, "we went out to lunch with a Muslim general. We were talking with him about the Lord. After lunch, he took us over to the world's largest mosque, in Islamabad. At the end of our time together, he said, I'd like you to meet with the chancellor of Pakistan's Harvard University."

For three hours, Bill and Victor spoke with this woman, as well as other academics and a journalist, about a variety of topics: civil rights for the Christian community, the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and the fact that America is not a Christian nation.

According to Bill, "They said, we believe in the Prophet Mohammed. I said, I know—but he's dead! But Jesus Christ is alive! I think they were somewhat taken aback by my frankness and boldness, and that I was able to say this with a smile."

"They said, America is a Christian nation. I said, No, it's not. That shocked them almost as much as the fact that Mohammed is dead."

Bill informed them of the social ills, including the 1.5 million abortions per year and the "sexually alternative lifestyles" that are openly accepted in America. "I was able to share my own testimony of how I came to faith in Jesus Christ, and how I was able to come to this country [Pakistan] without fear for my own personal safety. I talked about how if we put our faith in Christ, we will be in eternity with Him."

The Social Status of Christians

The lowly status of Christians in Pakistan is perhaps best reflected in the fact that they are able to hold only about four jobs: restroom attendant, street sweeper, brick kiln worker, and domestic servant. Even at that, sometimes holding these positions can be a back-handed compliment. "Benazir Bhutto said that she would never hire a Muslim as her servant, because she knows that the Christian servant would never steal from her," Mr. Devlin relates.

A Trip to St. Louis

Last spring, Bill traveled to Covenant Theological Seminary, in order to communicate UFC's message of loving people in an inter-racial model of ministry. He wanted to "breathe life into the prophetic voice of Francis Schaeffer. To engage the public square, to do so in love, and also to have a prophetic message. This flies in the face of even some PCA churches with their 'seeker-sensitivity', where they don't offend people with certain issues. The sanctity of life, or the sanctity of the family, is not something we tack onto our message, it is our message. Love people in the public square, do so boldly, don't forget the cities, the marketplace of ideas. Christianity is an urban faith, it always has been. My work is done inter-racially, with the thought, Many colors, one blood."

His message at Covenant Seminary, he notes, was well-received: "I just got invited back."

Debating on TV

Bill Devlin has also been privileged to debate on national television. On the PBS program, *Debates, Debates*, he took the 'just war' position. He also was on the same side of the debate as the female head of the ACLU on the issue of whether civil liberties will be curtailed in the wake of terrorist attacks. He recounts that he expressed his concern that the freedom to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ may suffer as a result of a desire to crack down on dissent in this country.

Another recent debate was with Jocelyn Elders, a former U. S. Surgeon General, which aired nationally, on Fox News. Dr. Elders was supporting the position of her successor, David Satcher, who "came out in July that we need to have a national debate on sex." Mr. Devlin's response was to laugh at those comments. When asked by the interviewer why he was laughing, he said, "When was the last time they [Drs. Elders and Satcher] watched television? We *are* having a national discussion on sex." Referring to Drs. Elders and Satcher as "condom commandos," Bill contended: "We need to talk about sacrifice. We can talk about this in a pluralistic society. These values are not confined to Christianity."

The Job Still Ahead

In response to a question, Bill Devlin said that his bid for Philadelphia City Council a couple of years ago did open things up for Urban Family Council in the secular marketplace. "People now see me as a player. To quote one of the gay leaders in town, 'Devlin's got juice.' We've gotten to a place where we deserve to be listened to."

However, "the evangelical attention span is about two years. My hope is to be able to remind people of the beautiful principle that all of life comes under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. You know, no sacred/secular dichotomy. We need to be the fragrance of Christ to a sick and dying culture.

"I got to tell you, Frank, it's a difficult message for most evangelicals—to love people who are not like us. To love our enemies, people who are opposed to us. We at Urban Family Council believe in counter-intuivity."

Bill and Nancy Devlin

Mr. Devlin is scheduled to return to Pakistan in January 2002. It is only one of many assignments he has accepted for the upcoming year, as he and his wife continue to display the qualities that led to their being honored as Parents of the Year.

To contact Bill and Nancy Devlin, you may call 877-URBAN-FAM. His email address is devlin@urbanfamily.org.

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Westminster Presbytery Will Reconsider Withdrawing from PCA

Picture is Complicated as Tazewell Congregation Votes to Leave Denomination

Westminster Presbytery has scheduled a vote at its January 2002 stated meeting as to whether to rescind a motion to withdraw from the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA). Adding new life to the move to rescind is the fact that Trinity Presbyterian Church, Tazewell, Virginia, voted on December 30, 2001, to sever ties with the Presbytery and the denomination.

The Trinity Church, along with its senior pastor, Henry Johnson, has been in the forefront of those wishing to leave the PCA. In the summer of 1999, the Tazewell Session had called a congregational meeting at which the church was slated to vote on whether to leave the PCA and join the Reformed Presbyterian Church in the United States (RPCUS), a denomination associated with Dr. Joseph Morecraft, III, and the Chalcedon Presbyterian Church. Mr. Johnson wrote an article in the *Counsel of Chalcedon*, a denominational publication, at approximately the same time, in which he stated the reasons why he wanted to leave the PCA. Several churchmen within and outside of Westminster Presbytery pleaded with Mr. Johnson to reconsider that proposed action, and the congregational meeting was never held.

At the congregational meeting which was held on December 30th, the church voted not only to leave the PCA, but also to affiliate with the RPCUS. The vote to leave was unanimous. The action to leave the denomination is pending reception by the RPCUS.

Mr. Johnson, who has previously been examined by Covenant Presbytery of the RPCUS, will not transfer his credentials until the two ruling elders and the deacon are examined and the congregation is received.

The Rev. Jeff Black, who has recently become associate pastor at the Tazewell church as well as organizing pastor for its mission work, Providence Presbyterian, in Wytheville, Virginia, is also to be examined in the near future by the RPCUS presbytery. Mr. Black, who until recently was pastor of White Oak Presbyterian Church, Fremont, North Carolina, is also supportive of the move to the RPCUS. He has been leery of the proposal for withdrawing Westminster Presbytery, which would have resulted in essentially another denomination. Pastor Black was especially concerned that the newly-autonomous Presbytery would have to seek its own way, and that there might be some instability associated with the fact that thorny theological issues were not being hammered out ahead of time.

Westminster Presbytery, which covers southwest Virginia and northeast Tennessee, has experienced unsettling controversy over the past couple or three years. In 1999, a special committee on conflict resolution was appointed in order to try to resolve some of the differences and make for a more peaceful existence. Some of the brethren who would not be identified as the more conservative members of the court pushed through a proposal to divide the Presbytery along theological lines. However, the 2000 PCA General Assembly rejected that attempt at establishing elective affinity presbyteries.

At the April 2001 stated meeting, a new proposal from many of the same brethren would have divided the court ostensibly along geographical lines (between Virginia and Tennessee), but allow churches in counties in adjacent presbyteries to join those presbyteries. A substitute motion was put forth by Ruling Elder Joe Reynolds and seconded by Henry Johnson, which proposed withdrawing the Presbytery as a whole from the denomination and allowing ministers and churches desiring to continue with the PCA to remain as a new presbytery in that denomination. By a significant margin (35-17), that substitute became the main motion. The court then delayed passage of the main motion until a called meeting on May 15-16, 2001. At that meeting, the motion to sever ties with the PCA prevailed overwhelmingly, 48-13.

Part of the package adopted included an overture to the PCA General Assembly to erect a new presbytery in the same geographical area of Westminster Presbytery. However, the 2001 General Assembly turned down that notion, and instead issued a pastoral letter, asking the Presbytery to reconsider its present course of action.

At the July 2001 stated meeting, the Presbytery denied a complaint from the Rev. Larry Ball, which would have had the Presbytery rescind its prior action. That vote, ordered by roll call, was 32-19. At that same meeting, previous notice was given, in accordance with parliamentary procedure, to rescind the motion to withdraw; and previous notice was also given to amend that action.

At the October 2001 stated meeting, the Presbytery did amend its action to withdraw, by changing the effective date from the January 2002 stated meeting, to the adjournment of the July 2002 stated meeting. However, the motion to rescind was postponed until the January 2002 meeting, in order to give time to consider the decision of the Standing Judicial Commission (SJC) with regard to Mr. Ball's complaint [see related story this page—Ed.]. The motion to postpone consideration of the motion to rescind carried, 28-12.

The court also postponed the adoption of an answer to the Coeburn (Va.) Presbyterian Church Session. The Session had inquired as to whether or not churches would have to vote if they desired to remain in the PCA. The special committee of Presbytery recommended an answer that states that no such vote need be taken, and that only churches which positively vote to leave the PCA with the Presbytery will no longer be in the denomination. Coeburn's pastor, however, moved a substitute, that maintains that any church wishing to remain in the PCA must vote to leave the Presbytery. The substitute motion made reference to two paragraphs in the *Book of Church Order*: 13-9(f), which says that Presbyteries have the authority "to dismiss churches with their consent"; and 25-11, which says, with respect to a congregation, that "specifically the right to affiliate with or become a member of this body or a Presbytery hereof and the right to withdraw from or to sever any affiliation or connection with this body or any Presbytery hereof" is exercised by "action" of the congregation. The Presbytery considered the motion and the substitute before the lunch break. After lunch, it was decided to postpone action on this matter, too.

The court, by a wide margin, declined to adopt a motion to have a straw vote on the question of rescinding the motion.

The withdrawal of the Tazewell church and its pastors from the Presbytery and the PCA may have a profound effect on the motion to rescind the Presbytery's action. Most observers believe that, if the Presbytery withdrew from the PCA, only two churches would have opted not to go back immediately into the PCA: Trinity Church, Tazewell; and Westminster Presbyterian Church, Kingsport, Tennessee. The resultant autonomous presbytery would have had only three ministers, two congregations and one mission work. However, with the Tazewell congregation now joining the RPCUS, presumably an autonomous Westminster Presbytery would be comprised of only one congregation, Westminster in Kingsport.

The next stated meeting of Westminster Presbytery is scheduled for January 12, 2002, at the Eastern Heights Presbyterian Church, Bristol, Tennessee.

SJC Denies Larry Ball's Complaint

High Court Rules that Westminster Presbytery May Depart

By a 17-1 vote, the Standing Judicial Commission (SJC) of the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) ruled on November 29, 2001, that one of the denomination's constituent presbyteries, Westminster Presbytery, may indeed leave the denomination. The ruling came as the General Assembly-level court denied a complaint brought by the Rev. Larry Ball which had contested the Presbytery action.

Pastor of Bridwell Heights Presbyterian Church, Kingsport, Tennessee, Mr. Ball has been a member of Westminster Presbytery from its first year of existence (1973). In his complaint, he alleged numerous irregularities in the act to sever denominational ties, including that the Presbytery had acted unilaterally without the formal consent of the churches themselves, and that the Presbytery had violated its own manual, which identifies the Presbytery as being part of the PCA. As he was preparing to take his complaint on to the General Assembly level, he discovered another irregularity, one which he would describe as a "bombshell": that the resolution which the Presbytery had allegedly adopted in July, 1974, which reserved to itself the right to withdraw from the PCA at any time, had in point of fact never been adopted.

The Second General Assembly minutes indicate that on July 20, 1974, Westminster Presbytery, meeting at Claypool Hill, Virginia, adopted a document which formally affiliated the presbytery with the denomination, and which also reserved to the lower court the right to sever those ties at any time in accordance with any rules which it might adopt. The purported document was listed as having been signed by the then-Stated Clerk of Westminster Presbytery, who is now deceased. The moderator, who is also said to have attested the document, is listed with a corrupted name (Lenny Higger instead of Larry Crigger). Mr. Ball, who was at that stated meeting in the summer of 1974, did not recall that any such resolution had been presented to or ratified by the Presbytery. Efforts by Mr. Ball to locate the original document proved to be futile. He was Stated Clerk of the Presbytery from 1976 to 1999, and he could not find any such document in the files of Presbytery, which are still in his possession. Further, inquiries to the PCA Historical Center in St. Louis also failed to retrieve the elusive document.

Prior to the Second General Assembly, all sixteen PCA presbyteries had been asked to adopt boiler-plate language in resolutions formally affiliating with the young denomination—resolutions which also specifically reserved the right to disaffiliate at any time.

In making its ruling, the SJC decreed that whether or not the Presbytery had adopted such a resolution was irrelevant. The mere presence of the purported document in the Second General Assembly minutes constituted evidence that, as far as the General Assembly was concerned, her presbyteries had joined based on a covenant agreement that allowed the presbyteries to leave at any time.

Key to the SJC's judgment was the reaffirmation of the viewpoint adopted by the 1986 General Assembly, that a higher court may "Act On" a matter before a lower court or may "Act Against" a lower court, but may not "Act For" a lower court. This position has been championed by many of the "founders" of the PCA, including Jack Williamson and Robert Cannada.

The SJC stated that maintaining "the separate identities of the three levels of governance in the PCA is the foundation that protects the local church's ownership of property. This is also one of the major bases for constitutionally establishing 'grass roots' Presbyterianism in the PCA. It is a historic form of Presbyterianism. In some ways this 'grass roots' Presbyterianism is to be significantly distinguished from some other historic forms of Presbyterianism, such as those forms that existed in Scotland and in Europe where there was a 'magisterial' form of Presbyterianism which was more 'top down' or 'hierarchical'.

"In the light of this understanding of our historic 'grass-roots' Presbyterianism, it is clear that the relationship between the General Assembly and the Presbyteries is similar in nature to the relationship between a Presbytery and the local church. The relationship is one that protects the individual identity of each level of our governance and ensures that only ecclesiastical authority is exercised over a lower court, and that at no time does a higher court 'Act For' a lower court."

The court opined that the Preliminary Principles of the *Book of Church Order* "make it very clear that the kind of relationship that exists between the local Church and the presbytery also exists between the presbytery and the General Assembly." Furthermore, "It is important to note that the provisions of *BCO* 25 that give a local church the right to withdraw from the PCA and to own exclusively its own property, set out an important distinctive of historic American 'grass-roots' Presbyterianism, namely the right to withdraw and retain ownership and control of property. In the light of the Preface to the *BCO* and the underlying foundations of our constitution, these rights must be extended to a Presbytery unless the *BCO* expressly excludes such rights from a Presbytery."

The SJC continued: "It is clear that the GA [General Assembly] had granted WP [Westminster Presbytery] and other Presbyteries the right to withdraw from the PCA, a right not only recorded in the minutes of the 2nd General Assembly but a right that is an essential element of historic American Presbyterianism as expressed in the Preliminary Principles of the *BCO*. Thus,

(Continued on Page 15)

NAPARC Votes to Expel Christian Reformed Church

By Michael Cannon

NAPARC, the North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council, met at the Philadelphia Airport on November 13-14, 2001. While several issues were on the docket, none was as weighty as the vote concerning the expulsion of the Christian Reformed Church of North America (CRCNA) from NAPARC because of that denomination's decision to ordain women into all offices of church leadership.

The issue was taken up formally at 10:35 AM on the 14th but this was not the first discussion of the matter. The CRCNA had already been suspended from NAPARC in the hope that she would consider her decision and reverse her course. At the 2000 meeting of the NAPARC, the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) brought the issue to NAPARC, which in turn requested the PCA to develop grounds for expulsion for presentation at the 2001 NAPARC meeting.

Dr. Roy Taylor, Stated Clerk of the PCA, presented the case against the CRCNA. Of the six proposed grounds, all voting members of NAPARC carried the following three resolutions unanimously.

That the NAPARC submit this resolution process terminating the membership of the CRCNA in NAPARC and that NAPARC submit the matter to the General Assemblies and Synods for action on the following grounds.

1) We believe the CRCNA has had opportunity over the last several years to reverse the controversial action of the CRCNA Synod 1995 in response to NAPARC's suspension of the CRCNA from voting member status in NAPARC. In 1996, the process was begun in NAPARC (initiated by the PCA) to suspend the CRCNA from NAPARC membership after the CRCNA Synod 1995 had approved the ordination of women to the offices of ruling elder and minister. The underlying hermeneutical issue cited by the PCA in correspondence between the two highest judicatories of the CRC and CRCNA (minutes of the 25th General Assembly, 1997 pp. 375-383) in 1998, the suspension of membership was effected, the CRCNA Synod 2000 did not reverse but reaffirmed and approved the ordination of women to the offices of ruling elder and minister.

2) We believe that the CRCNA has acted contrarily to the NAPARC constitution (Basis of the Council) against the teaching of the Word of God and the Belgic Confession article 30 by declaring the word 'male' in article 3-a of the Church Order is inoperative and authorizing the churches under its jurisdiction to ordain and install women in the offices of ruling elder and minister thus circumventing her own constitution.

The CRCNA delegation distributed and read a prepared response to the challenge of hermeneutical problems and constitutional violations. In the absence of any evidence presented demonstrating faulty hermeneutics in Scriptural interpretation, the CRCNA claimed to adhere to Berkhoffian hermeneutics (i.e., the hermeneutical approach of standard Reformed theologian Louis Berkhoff). The delegation made a counter allegation that; "…the decision of the Synod 1995 to allow the ordination of women is not the result of a new view of Scripture and its authority or a new hermeneutic." The CRCNA response further noted that two individuals using identical hermeneutical methods might arrive at different conclusions regarding any given text of scripture. The response pointed out the CRC contribution to the document, "A Reformed Testimony on Hermeneutics," which was a combined effort with other NAPARC member churches.

The CRCNA argument against the charge of constitutional infidelity centered on source documents for the Belgic Confession. The change in the English translation of Article 30 is the result of the emergence of the French version to a position of more authority in the CRCNA. The language of the French version uses a neuter noun translated as "persons" rather than the English version that renders the same word as "men." The French version has been relied upon since 1982 while many of the CRCNA churches still use the Psalter dating back to 1912 that would include "men" in the confessions. The CRCNA sees women serving in ordained positions as a matter of church polity rather than doctrine or confessional interpretation.

The PCA delegates pointed out that the position of the majority of the CRCNA membership was opposed to the ordination of women. The CRCNA response was that there are no polls or surveys taken that would demonstrate this to be fact however they did acknowledge that only 18 of 47 Classes have declared the word "male" to be inoperative in the CRCNA Church Order article 3-a and that not all churches within the 18 Classes are in agreement.

The delegations from the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America (RPCNA) and the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church (ARP) expressed reservations and concern that a decision by the NAPARC to expel the CRCNA would then shift to challenge churches that ordain women as deacons. That concern was addressed and the PCA delegates affirmed that the proposed course of action pertained only to the offices of ruling and teaching elder. Further, it was noted that the issue was the CRCNA's break with her own confessional standards (Belgic Confession) whereas the aforementioned denominations subscribe to the Westminster Confession of Faith.

After the vote to expel the CRCNA was taken, the delegates for the CRCNA graciously took their leave to travel to the airport. Before leaving, one of the CRCNA delegates read 2 Corinthians 13:11, "Finally brethren, farewell. Become complete. Be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace, and the God of love and peace will be with you."

The issue of the expulsion of the CRCNA now goes to the highest judicatory in each of the NAPARC denominations. Approval by two-thirds of those courts will be necessary in order to finalize the removal of the Christian Reformed Church. Those denominations are the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church (ARP), the Korean American Presbyterian Church (KAPC), the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC), the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA), the Reformed Church in the United States (RCUS), and the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America (RPCNA).

At the 1997 NAPARC meeting, the churches voted by delegation when deciding whether to suspend the CRCNA's membership in NAPARC. That vote carried, 6-1, with the CRCNA voting "no"; and was subsequently implemented when the highest judicatories confirmed the action, also by a 6-1 tally. Since its suspension, the CRC has been denied a vote in the conciliar body.

(Continued on Page 15)

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PCA Church in Germany Hosts Fourth Annual Retreat

The Swiss Alps provided a grand backdrop for Trinity Reformed Church's Fourth Annual Retreat, held in June 2001. This year the congregation from Kaiserslautern, Germany, considered God's covenant by examining Genesis 12-25, a teaching by Dr. Ralph Davis, Professor of Old Testament at Reformed Theological Seminary in Jackson, Mississippi. Over eighty people attended. In addition to a good number from the congregation, there were visitors from Belgium, the Philippines, Switzerland, Spain, other parts of Germany, and the United States of America. One family, introduced to the church during a stay at the Landstuhl Regional Medical Center, drove eleven hours from Madrid to join the gathering. Another family, now living in Switzerland, lamented the lack of a Reformed witness in their area of the country; they rejoiced in the teaching and fellowship of the saints at the retreat.

During Dr. Davis' times of teaching, the Trinity children studied the Beatitudes in a

Retreat participants

Vacation Bible School format that was developed and operated by the staff and students from the Reformed University Fellowship (RUF) at Belhaven College, Jackson, Mississippi. Three students, a campus intern, and their campus minister led a group of about thirty grade school students through their VBS program. They also provided a nursery for the numerous young additions to the Trinity family.

Trinity Reformed Church is the only church of the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) ministering to Americans outside of the Americas. It began meeting in February of 1988, when seven people representing four families met to consider how they might establish "a Reformed witness" in the largest American community outside of the United States. Through the usual ups and downs of church planting, God was faithful and kind to provide growth and establish this branch of His church.

The Swiss Alps provided a beautiful setting for the church retreat.

The group begin meeting for weekly Sunday evening Bible study. The Lord added to the number and in January of 1989 they began monthly worship in the home of one of the families, led by Mission to the World (MTW) missionary Will Traub. By that fall, they were ready for weekly services and a public meeting place. A number of Reformed military chaplains provided their services periodically, preaching and serving the Lord's Supper occasionally. The commitment of these men is noteworthy, considering some lived more than six hours' drive from the church! In February 1990, in the midst of the Persian Gulf War, the congregation began meeting in a beautiful fellowship hall near Ramstein Air Base.

In between chaplains, and occasional guest speakers, the pulpit was "supplied" from within the congregation. When several of the chaplains left Europe, more and more of the "preaching" load fell to the congregation. The congregation then issued a call to the Rev. Doug Hudson to become their pastor. Pastor Hudson and his family arrived to take up the work in November of 1993. The church has grown from seven to over eighty, with an average attendance of around sixty. It is a sweet fellowship, where the body feeds on the solid food of the Word and ministers to the community where God has placed her. From the beginning, the church has been self-supporting financially, but greatly indebted for the spiritual support it has received from the larger body of Christ. Men like Bill Leonard and Kennedy Smartt have given counsel and encouragement over the years. Southeast Alabama Presbytery has provided great support through the years. The Presbytery exercised great faith in doing something that had not been done before—planting a PCA church for English-speaking people on another continent. The denomination plants churches in America that are primarily English-speaking, and overseas it plants churches for the indigenous population. Trinity is strategically positioned to minister to U.S. military and Department of Defense personnel in this community and others who may cross her path. Many have stopped to worship while en-route on military orders from the United States to the Middle East or Balkans. Some have come because they are brought to Landstuhl to receive medical treatment.

Trinity has been able to minister to a wide variety of people. In 1998, when the American Embassy was bombed in Nairobi, Kenya, many of the injured were evacuated to the Landstuhl Regional Medical Center for treatment. The congregation was there to help.

The church leadership is exploring ways to encourage the planting of similar churches in other overseas military communities. The leadership believes that it is a shame that so many Americans, living overseas and serving their country, are without a consistent Biblical and Reformed witness. The church leaders believe the American military to be both a fine and a needy community, one which needs to hear the gospel of Jesus Christ and be challenged from God's Word to live consistent God-honoring lives. Trinity Reformed Church feels the burden of providing such teaching and preaching, particularly to ex-patriate English-speaking communities in places like Paris, Berlin, Munich, Prague, Frankfurt, and Tokyo.

Pastor Hudson refers to Jesus' statement that "the harvest is truly plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest." In his view, the military community overseas is a field that needs local churches as a part of the harvest. Trinity Reformed Church is attempting to do her part in this great gospel work.

An RUF team from Belhaven taught VBS.

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Presbytery Overturns a Session's Guidelines Regarding Marriage and Divorce

At a called meeting on October 16, 2001, Susquehanna Valley Presbytery overturned the Guidelines which a local Session had adopted regarding marriage and divorce. The higher court took the action by sustaining a complaint which had been brought against the position of the Carlisle (Pa.) Reformed Presbyterian Church by Tom Virkler and Steve McKinzie, members of the church.

The "Guidelines for the Session of Elders on Marriage and Divorce" which had been adopted by the Carlisle Session maintained that a spouse can be guilty of "willful desertion" even though still physically present in the home. The complaint asked that this document be rescinded, and also that the teaching and ruling elders at Carlisle "no longer teach or publicly advance [this] central tenet of the Guidelines."

The Presbytery sustained both of these points of the complaint. In doing so, the court stated that "the Guidelines are vaguely written so that they are readily interpreted in such a way as to be in conflict with Scripture and the GA [General Assembly] adopted recommendations of the Ad Interim Committee on Divorce and Remarriage." The court also said: "At the same time the Presbytery affirms the right and responsibility of the [Carlisle] Session to properly interpret and apply the Scripture, the Confession, and the GA adopted recommendations of the Ad Interim Committee on Divorce and Remarriage to individual circumstances and cases within the church, which views may be out of accord with the views of the Complainants."

In their presentation to Susquehanna Valley Presbytery, the complainants contended that "scripture [sic] in every place makes clear that what we commit to a marriage is more important than whatever temporal satisfaction we may derive from it, and that there are higher purposes than our own personal fulfillment.

"These are hard principles, but ones that the church must keep forth and center when advising members of the body when it is appropriate to end such a relationship either completely and covenantally with a divorce, or when to end it as a practical or functional matter as in the case of separation."

The complainants stated: "These Guidelines allow that it is appropriate for the Session to counsel that the dissolution of the bond of marriage may be justifiable under scripture and the Westminster Confession of Faith ('WCF') in cases where one spouse has emotionally, sexually or financially deserted the other."

The key issue of the complaint revolved around the question of what constitutes "desertion" as used in the Westminster Standards and what does the Bible mean by the word "depart" in I Corinthians 7. The presentation continued: "The Guidelines contend that scripture should be interpreted to imply that desertion does not just refer to whether or not a spouse is physically present in the home. Instead they expand the application to include the emotional and psychological condition of the relationship, the financial provision being made for the family, and the adequacy of the sexual lives of the spouses involved.

"In all cases the Guidelines grant that if the Session is convinced that one or more of these conditions reaches a subjective level of unacceptability, then a wrongful spouse's actions constitute a form of abandonment contemplated by Paul. It is then appropriate for the church to officially sanction the other's spouse's physical separation - a course of action, incidentally, that is specifically prohibited in v. 10."

The complainants argued that the Guidelines "make the case that, because the church traditionally accepts an inclusive definition for adultery that goes beyond heterosexual infidelity, we must likewise be flexible with the word 'desertion'. We disagree. Scripture is clear that various and sundry immoral and deviant sexual acts constitute a breaking of the flesh in a marital union. It does not require any stretch of interpretation to include such clearly sinful acts as grounds for divorce.

"But we have never expanded application of the 'adultery clause' into illusive and subjective mental and emotional contexts, despite strong scriptural support that would allow it. Our Lord makes very clear that the sin of adultery is committed fully and completely when one lusts after another in his or her heart. However, we know of no authority that has even suggested that mental adultery would allow that physical desertion should be expanded to include mental, emotional or psychological desertion."

The second line of argumentation in the Guidelines was to utilize alternative meanings to the words "dwell" and "depart" as used in I Corinthians 7. The complainants stated: "Relying on these alternative meanings makes it possible to interpret 1 Cor. 7 in a manner that refers to an emotional dwelling or departure or, through an extreme stretch, a financial or sexual dwelling or departure by a spouse.

". . . Utilizing non-physical meansing in these verses does not permit consistent, or even sensible, interpretation of the entire passage."

Two examples are given: "In v. 10 a wife is told not to depart from her husband. If Paul's concern is that she not depart emotionally, then his command that she not remarry in v. 11, is to a woman who is still living with what is now her ex-husband." Also, "In vv. 12-13 believers are told not to divorce an unbeliever who is willing to dwell with them. Is it possible that Paul's concern here is for an unbeliever who has physically moved out, but still comes back on a consistent basis to hold up his or her sexual end of the bargain?"

The complainants concluded that "by creating standards for non-physical desertion, the Guidelines introduce a whole new lexicon over which we can struggle when cases are tough." The Guidelines' list included: "consistent and prolonged violations, verbal battering, psychological manipulations, silence."

The complainants quoted from the report of the Ad Interim Committee on Marriage and Divorce, which reported to the 1992 General Assembly, as follows: "The Bible gives no justification for divorce based on merely inward, emotional and subjective reasons. Even if we find justification for interpreting *porneia* and desertion in a broader sense than some have, they must be broadened only within the boundaries of serious objective acts of sexual immorality or desertion. They must not be interpreted in any way that opens the floodgates to divorces based on subjective reasons, such as 'irreconcilable differences,' 'emotional separation,' 'loss of affection,' or the like. There is often great pain involved in marriage, and God intends for His people to work through the pain and learn to love even when we are not loved by the other. Emotional problems in and of themselves are not Biblical grounds for divorce."

Furthermore, the complainants noted "the irony that the Guidelines nowhere argue for dissolution of the marriage in the case of spiritual desertion, the most important and precious element of the marriage relationship. One of Paul's primary points in the 1 Cor. Passage is that believers *should stay even if the spiritual element is non-existent*. And now the Guidelines make the case for dissolution over lesser charges, and in fact, even instruct that the wronged spouse can now *physically leave*, an act unconditionally prohibited for believers in v. 10. The [General Assembly] Committee report says this cannot be: 'Paul does not make self-fulfillment the law of marriage, and is perfectly willing to require someone to remain in a marriage that will be painfully difficult. Here is a woman going to heaven, married to a man who is going to hell. Here is a woman who prizes above all things the Word and the ways of the kingdom of God, and here is a man who considers those things to be irrelevant, uninteresting, and unimportant. He cannot satisfy her or encourage her in any of those areas. In the dimensions of her life which are most precious to her, her husband is not only positively no help, but very often is an interference, a frustration. And yet, Paul says she must stay.'"

With regard to the problem of physical abuse, the complainants averred that "the PCA should consider a scriptural response to situations where physical harm is occurring within a marriage. Perhaps a case can be made on a Biblical principle as simple as self-defense. This would prove more manageable than attempts to fit the 'round peg of physical abuse' into the 'square hole of the desertion clause' in 1 Cor. 7.

"But even if, for the time being, we hesitate and even stumble over solutions to the physical abuse question, it doesn't require we kick the door wide open to all the various forms of desertion as promoted in the Guidelines."

The complainants' presentation concluded: "In a nutshell, what the Guidelines adopt is a framework wherein the worth of a marriage is determined by what we get out of it, not by what God expects to achieve through our involvement and continued participation in it. In less than three pages the Guidelines have captured a philosophy that redirects our focus from the sanctity of a marriage, as emphasized in scripture, to the quality of marriage, as determined by our own catalogue of needs and wants.

"Such a tendency is tempting and certainly understandable, especially when confronted with the unexplainable and seemingly unsolvable problems of life. But it is not right. If we, as a denomination, are to take the first step in this direction in the form of these Guidelines, then we could follow with the PCA 'Guidelines to the Session on Abortion.' In it we could justify and adopt principles that sanction terminating the unborn, but of course only in those cases where circumstances indicate an unacceptable quality of life described in some illusive scripture passage. Or we could promulgate 'Guidelines to the Session on Homosexuality' that scripturally condone such a practice in those tough situations where the ongoing psychological abuse and mistreatment suffered by a person, sometimes even at the hands of intolerant Christians, makes such a lifestyle decision understandable.

"Marriage is an institution that necessarily must struggle for existence in a fallen world. That notwithstanding, God expects marriage to succeed and to achieve those purposes that He has directed. And He expects the support of His church."

The original complaint was built upon a request, dated February 20, 2001, that the Session rescind the Guidelines and also that the elders cease from teaching that willful desertion can mean something other than a physical abandonment of the home. That letter, which began by proclaiming respect and high regard for the members of the Carlisle Session, nevertheless presented the claim "that the Guidelines exceed both Scripture and the Confessional standards regarding justifiable grounds for marital separation."

The letter noted that the Confession of Faith allows for divorce in two instances: adultery, and "such willful desertion as can no way be remedied by the church, or the civil magistrate . . .; wherein, a public and orderly course of proceeding is to be observed; and the persons concerned in it not left to their own wills, and discretion, in their own case." Messrs. Virkler and McKinzie made two points regarding the Confession's views. First, "Legitimate grounds for a claim of willful desertion must lie in its scriptural sanction, not in the approval of the councils of the church. The church council is a finder of fact. A case of willful desertion is legitimately sanctioned only because, first, the facts are found by the church to conform to the requirements of scripture and, second, because the church or civil magistrate could not remedy it. 'Willful desertion' does not exist simply because a remedy for a situation cannot be found." Secondly, "It would appear that the Confession takes a principle that Paul specifically applies to mixed marriages and indiscriminately extends it to all marital situations. We believe that this expansion of the application of scripture is justifiable. As a practical matter, it is impossible for a non-deserting party in a two-believer marriage to be obedient to the commands of vv. 10-11 [of I Corinthians 7] when the other physically leaves. In this case it is a defendable position that the departing spouse has denied the (working) faith, and should [be] treated as an unbeliever for the purposes of v. 15 (1 Tim. 5:8)."

The letter stated that the "real question addressed in the Guidelines can be paraphrased as follows: 'When do the actions or the behavior of one spouse in a marriage relieve the other of his or her responsibilities?'

"We believe that both parties to a marriage have the responsibility to minister to the other in all the elemental aspects of the marriage. A spouse is to continue to respond to the other and maintain the relationship despite the breakdowns and difficulties that may occur and irrespective of the behavior of the other. The obligation exists whether or not there is reciprocation by the other party. Fulfillment of elemental responsibilities and obligations should be attempted so long as the partner is present to be ministered to. Nowhere does scripture

abrogate these responsibilities—in fact, it is in the difficult situations that a redoubling of our efforts is most important and encouraged because of the greater potential for the personal sanctification of the person making the effort, and in its opportunity [for] positive effect on the other person."

The letter continues: "The Guidelines, however, take the position that a failure by one spouse to fulfill his or her role in any element of the marriage, so long as it is intentional and deemed sufficiently severe, constitutes 'willful desertion'. As a result, the wronged partner has legitimate grounds to physically separate and be relieved of any obligations under all elemental aspects of the marriage.

"We believe that such a position creates a construct that permits and encourages an attitude toward marriage that is totally contrary to that demanded in scripture. Rather than exhorting a petitioning spouse to continue to concentrate on what he or she should be contributing to a marriage in a difficult situation, the Guidelines allow someone to focus on what he or she is being denied and recourse in the form of physical separation if denied.

"We do not believe this is the intent in 1 Cor. 7. If it is, then it puts Paul at odds with general Biblical principles concerning the appropriate Christian response to difficult relationships. The context of the passage is that a marriage partner has a unilateral and ongoing duty to fulfill the responsibilities of the relationship, despite the behavior of the other spouse. What concerns Paul is the commission of an act by one spouse that makes it physically impossible for the other to meet his or her obligations. We believe Paul was addressing only the problem of physical desertion in a marriage."

The request for a rescinding of the Guidelines stated that "any reference to the administration of the 'adultery clause' when handling the issue of 'willful desertion' does not result in a true apples-to-apples comparison. In the instance of adultery, the scriptures are defining a 'triggering event' that allows them the absolute and right to separate simply because they do not want to continue to fulfill the obligations of the marriage. In a 'willful desertion' situation there must be a finding that the wronged spouse cannot fulfill the obligations before they elect to be free from the marriage."

The letter maintained that in I Corinthians 7, Paul was simply saying that physical abandonment made the fulfillment of marital obligations impossible. Therefore, in such a situation, the believer who is left is not under obligation.

The letter also looked at what it called "Tough situations that are addressed by Paul's principle." In a case of physical abuse (in contrast to emotional abuse), the spouse who is in danger "should resort to a situation of physical safety." In dealing with a lack of adequate financial support, a church which attempts to supply financial aid must be careful lest its charity lead to further diminishment of support by the offending spouse. With regard to physical expulsion, "Barring a spouse from the home is, in effect, just as much a departure by a other spouse as if they had left themselves. The 'willful desertion' principle applies."

The letter offered counsel regarding difficult situations: "Some situations demand time and concern rather than disciplinary measure, at least initially, and the church shouldn't feel the need to draw hard lines or make pronouncements before extending care and support. Discipline that is untimely or too extreme can delay or destroy opportunities for the correction of marital problems."

Susquehanna Valley Presbytery not only dealt with the substance of the complaint—it also had to handle the procedural question as to the orderliness of the complaint. The court determined that it is possible "to complain about a standing rule/guideline of a Session more than 30 days after it was adopted." The complaint was accordingly found in order, "although the Complainants made the technical error of citing the act of Session on May 14, 2001, when the Carlisle Reformed Presbyterian Church denied the petition to rescind the Guidelines rather than the later meeting of June, 2001, when the [Carlisle] Session denied the complaint."

At its November stated meeting, the Presbytery entertained a complaint from the Carlisle Session, against the Presbytery's decision that the Virkler and McKinzie complaint was in order. The Presbytery voted to reconsider that decision. The Presbytery then voted to "find that the complaint of Virkler and McKinzie be ruled in order because the guideline is considered an ongoing act even though their complaint was filed significantly after the adoption of the guideline." The court then denied the Carlisle complaint.

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Repent Or Perish: Rightly Discerning God's Judgment

A Sermon Preached on the Lord's Day, September 16, 2001

By Rev. Douglas W. Comin

The first Lord's Day following the infamous terrorist attacks upon the World Trade Center in New York City and the Pentagon in Washington, D.C., in which many thousands perished as hijacked passenger planes were used as missiles by Muslim fundamentalists on Tuesday, September 11, 2001.

There were present at that season some who told Him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And Jesus answered and said to them,"Do you suppose that these Galileans were worse sinners than all other Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish. Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them, do you think that they were worse sinners than all other men who dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish.—Luke 13:1-5

Last week as we met in this place to worship the Lord our God, none of us would have imagined the events upon which we would be looking back today. As the tragedies began to unfold on Tuesday morning, and we began to hear trickling reports about the catastrophes and disasters that were taking place in New York City and the Pentagon and in the rural parts of Pennsylvania, shock and horror overtook the people of our nation, and in the aftermath of those events there has been an incredible amount of confusion that has been generated. We have the light of God's Word to which we may look, so we turn there, to the pages of Scripture this morning, to try to understand the events of the world around us in the light of our Sovereign God and of His truth. There is no help to be found in the speculations of men. There is certainly no help to be found in the suggestions of those who are without Christ and God in the world. But there is hope, there is truth, there is perspective, there is conviction that comes to us in the pages of God's Word.

How are the people of God to respond in the face of events like the ones that we have seen and witnessed in the last five days? How are we to regard such events? What impact does God intend for such things to have upon our hearts and upon the hearts of those in our nation? What is the Biblical, and therefore, the true and right response? Certainly, one of the key words that has been floating around this past week in discussions about these things, and perhaps particularly among those who name the name of Jesus, is the word "judgment." We need to understand the events that have taken place in terms of the Scripture's teaching regarding the judgment of God. So, it is upon that particular theme that I want to focus your attention this morning, particularly in light of the words of Christ that we have read in the first five verses of Luke chapter 13. In what sense are we to understand the events that have taken place among us as we consider the judgment of God that is poured out upon the face of the earth?

I want to suggest to you two particular perspectives that it is essential for us to keep in mind if we would rightly understand and rightly improve these events for the glory of God and for the good of our souls.

The first main point that I want to speak to you about this morning is this:

I. The Bible teaches that we should not regard great disasters and calamities as specific judgments upon the particular victims as a direct punishment for their particular sins.

Why is this the case? Jesus had such an event in mind; two such events which were brought before Him by those who followed Him in His earthly ministry. One, an event in which Pilate, a wicked magistrate, had slaughtered worshippers in Galilee and mingled their own blood with their sacrifices. And another event in which the tower of Siloam, part of the wall structure of Jerusalem, collapsed, killing 18 people. Jesus, responding to those events that were brought up to Him by those who followed Him, said clearly, "Do you suppose that those who perished in these ways were greater sinners that all of the rest of the inhabitants of Galilee, or the inhabitants of Jersualem? I tell you, no." These events were not to be viewed in terms of individual judgment upon those who perished because of their particular sins being more odious in the sight of God than all of the rest who dwelt in those regions.

Why is it that we need to keep this in mind? There are several aspects of this that I want to highlight for you. Let us say first, as we think about this particular perspective, that this is not to deny that there are sometimes clear and obvious judgments of God upon particular persons for their sins. God has, at various times, brought about striking judgments that have corresponded directly to the sins of those upon whom they fell. There are extraordinary cases in Scripture of such direct judgments. As we think about the revelation of God in the Old Testament Scriptures, some of those examples immediately jump to our minds. We think of Nadab and Abihu who were struck down before the Lord, consumed for offering strange fire before the Lord. We think of Korah and his sons. The ground opened and swallowed them up, because they challenged the authority of Moses whom God had appointed to lead His people. We think of Uzzah, who in a direct response to his presumption in reaching out his hand contrary to God's Word and touching the ark of the Lord's covenant, was struck dead before the Lord.

The New Testament is not without such examples as well. We think of Ananias and Sapphira, who lied to and tested the Holy Spirit of God and immediately fell down at the feet of Peter, dead. Or we might think of Herod the Great, who spoke great swelling words of pride, and the gospel writer tells us that he was eaten up by worms and died. There are certainly extraordinary examples that we find in Scripture of God directly punishing individuals for their sins. Jesus does not deny that at all, but He speaks here in general terms of calamities that take numbers of people.

We see people not only perishing by the extraordinary acts of God from time to time, but also from the natural consequences of their sinful behavior. In the Scriptures, we can see a link between individual sin and the judgment and punishment of God, though it may not come in such a dramatic and sudden form. Paul speaks of this in Romans 1:27 when he writes about the debauchery of men into sodomy. He says, *"Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due."* There are consequences for sin. These come to light in the course of time, and these things are also affirmed by the Word of God, so we are not concerned to maintain the point that these things are not true and are not to be feared and noted by all men.

Second, I want to say that this is not a denial of the sovereignty of God over every event that occurs among His creatures. There are no random accidents. There are no chance events that are outside of the purview of the sovereign and living God. In Isaiah 45:6-7, the Lord declares: *"I am the LORD, and there is no other; I form the light and create darkness, I make peace and create calamity; I, the LORD, do all these things."* So, the Lord is sovereign over all of the events of the world. He not only creates peace, but He creates calamity. He uses instruments to accomplish His purposes, but His sovereignty is over all, and not only in a broad and general sense, but in a specific sense as it relates to individuals. The Psalmist tells us in Psalm 139:16, *"Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed. And in Your book they all were written, The days fashioned for me, When as yet there were none of them."* The days fashioned for each individual upon the earth are written in the book of God. None perished in great disasters, and none perished in New York City, or in the Pentagon, or in the hills of Somerset, Pennsylvania whose names and days ordained for them were not written in the book of God. These were not chance events. They were not random accidents, but all is in the hand of God, the Creator, Preserver, Sustainer, and Worker of His purposes among the sons of men.

Nor should we be fooled into thinking, as some would have us to think as they speculate in the aftermath of these events, that these were independent acts of Satan or evil men. When asked about what the church should be doing in response to the terrorist attacks, Dr. Michael Youssef, founding rector of Church of the Apostles in Atlanta, Georgia, said, "We need to educate people to understand that God did not do this. God did not do this. Satan did this. Satan and his followers." Are we to be comforted, brothers and sisters, by the notion that Satan has been victorious over God? That Satan has accomplished his purposes apart from the overseeing providence and mercy and power and strength of the Lord our God? Certainly, we understand from the Scriptures what the introduction from the Book of Job so powerfully unfolds before us: that Satan has power to do nothing unless God grants permission to him to accomplish His mysterious purposes according to His perfect wisdom!

Jesus made a statement to Pilate when He was being interrogated. Pilate said to Him, "Do you not know that I have power to release you and power to crucify you?" Pilate, this evil man, boasting of his power! And what did Jesus say in response? "You would have no power unless it were given to you from above." These are not random acts, nor are they independent acts of Satan or of evil men. The sovereignty of God is affirmed over all such events. But the concern of Jesus in the text we have read from Luke 13 is to warn us against regarding calamities that sweep away numbers of people in a single stroke as the direct judgment of God upon them for their particular sins. Why is that important for us to understand? Let me suggest several reasons to you.

First, because ultimate punishment for sin is not seen in this world, but in the world to come.

Another reason that it is important for us to understand this is because the providence of God is a great deep. Psalm 36:6 tells us, *"Your righteousness is like the great mountains; Your judgments are a great deep."* If there were such correspondence between those who perished in dramatic catastrophes and the punishment of God for their particular sins, the judgments of God would be very shallow indeed. Anyone would be able to connect the dots. But God's ways are mysterious. His providences are, indeed, beyond us.

The third reason we need to understand this is because the identifying of disasters with individual judgment promotes self-righteousness. It produces a Pharisaic heart.

The fourth reason we ought to be careful about this particular perspective is because the conclusion of this thinking is unjustly cruel and unkind. Charles Spurgeon, preaching in London in 1861 on this subject, addressing his congregation in the aftermath of a year of unusually devastating catastrophes, culminating in the collapse of a railroad tunnel that killed countless individuals, said this:

If this were the case, that all persons who thus meet with their death in an extraordinary and terrible manner were greater sinners than the rest, would it not be a crushing blow to bereaved survivors, and is it not ungenerous on our part to indulge the idea unless we are compelled by unanswerable reasons to accept it as an awful truth? Now, I defy you to whisper it in the widow's ear. Go home to her and say, 'Your husband was a worse sinner than the rest of men, therefore he died.' You have not brutality enough for that. A little unconscious infant, which had never sinned, though, doubtless, an inheritor of Adam's fall, is found crushed amidst the debris of the accident. Now think for a moment what would be the infamous consequence of the supposition, that those who perished were worse than others. You would have to make it out that this unconscious infant was a worse sinner than many in the dens of infamy whose lives are yet spared. Do you not perceive that this thing is radically false?

Surely, God's judgments are, indeed, a great deep.

The second main point that we need to understand, however, is this:

II. The Bible teaches that we should regard great disasters and calamities as corporate judgments, designed as a warning to the nation and people among whom they are sent.

It is the testimony of Scripture consistently throughout its pages that God does, indeed, send calamities and disasters and judgments upon nations and upon corporate entities in order to punish them for their sins and in order to awaken them to repentance. There are various types of disasters identified in Scripture as divine judgments upon a people.

"Natural" disasters, so-called, are not truly the random chance results of shifting climates and plates in the earth. Natural disasters are the hand of God. In I Kings 8:35-40, Solomon prays, *"When the heavens are shut up and there is no rain because they have sinned against You, when they pray toward this place and confess Your name, and turn from their sin because You afflict them, then hear in heaven, and forgive the sin of Your servants, Your people Israel, that You may teach them the good way in which they*

should walk; and send rain on Your land which You have given to Your people as an inheritance. When there is famine in the land, pestilence or blight or mildew, locusts or grasshoppers; when their enemy besieges them in the land of their cities; whatever plague or whatever sickness there is;whatever prayer, whatever supplication is made by anyone, or by all Your people Israel, when each one knows the plague of his own heart, and spreads out his hands toward this temple: then hear in heaven Your dwelling place, and forgive, and act, and give to everyone according to all his ways, whose heart You know (for You alone know the hearts of all the sons of men), that they may fear You all the days that they live in the land which You gave to our fathers." Pestilence, blight, mildew, famine, locusts, grasshoppers—all of these things are judgments of God which He sends upon the people to turn them from their wicked ways and awaken them to their sins.

This is also the case with regard to afflictions brought by cruel enemies. One of the great themes in the book of Judges, when there was no king in Israel and everyone did what was right in his own eyes, was that the Lord raised up bands of raiders, foreign powers, cruel oppressors, and sent them among His people. In Judges 2:14 we read, *"And the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel. So He delivered them into the hands of plunderers who despoiled them; and He sold them into the hands of their enemies all around, so that they could no longer stand before their enemies."* God often raises up wicked powers and wields them against His people as a sword. We find this the case among Israel as well. Assyria is called the rod of God's anger (Isaiah 10:5-7, 12). *"Woe to Assyria, the rod of My anger And the staff in whose hand is My indignation. I will send him against an ungodly nation, And against the people of My wrath I will give him charge, To seize the spoil, to take the prey, And to tread them down like the mire of the streets."* Assyria was the rod of God's anger. Assyria was a wicked nation, a nation engrossed in abominable idolatry—a nation which sacrificed its own children and knew not the living God. Can you not imagine some in Israel, when the scourge of Assyria began to be felt, saying "this is not the hand of God against us. This is the work of Satan. These are the wicked servants of the evil one." God says, *"Assyria is the rod of MY anger"*—but listen to what else He says about Assyria. *"Yet he does not mean so, Nor does his heart think so; But it is in his heart to destroy, And cut off not a few nations."* Assyria was not the conscious servant of God, was not seeking the glory of God, but seeking its own glory, as is often the case when God raises up wicked nations, wicked entities to bring judgment and chastisements upon His people. They do not willingly serve God, but serve Him with wicked motives. *"Therefore it shall come to pass,"* Isaiah continues, *"when the LORD has performed all His work on Mount Zion and on Jerusalem, that He will say, 'I will punish the fruit of the arrogant heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his haughty looks.'"* Assyria, too, would come to judgment and would be brought to the tribunal of God.

It is also true, not only of natural disasters and afflictions by cruel enemies, but internal disorder, injustice and oppression which God uses to chastise nations. Psalm 81:11-13 says, *"But My people would not heed My voice, And Israel would have none of Me. So I gave them over to their own stubborn heart, To walk in their own counsels. Oh, that My people would listen to Me, That Israel would walk in My ways!"* Israel collapsed from within long before the oppressors attacked it from without, because God gave them over to the counsels of their own hearts, and they pursued oppression and violence and the shedding of innocent blood and false worship and abominations of every kind, and God judged them by giving them over to these internal forces of wickedness, instability and violence. So, God does, indeed, use such events as corporate judgments wielded against nations.

What is the design of God in such disasters? Let me suggest several points.

First, God's design is to punish corporate sins. We find this clearly stated in Jeremiah 22:3-9. *"Thus says the LORD: 'Execute judgment and righteousness, and deliver the plundered out of the hand of the oppressor. Do no wrong and do no violence to the stranger, the fatherless, or the widow, nor shed innocent blood in this place. . . . But if you will not hear these words, I swear by Myself,' says the LORD, 'that this house shall become a desolation. . . . I will prepare destroyers against you, Everyone with his weapons; They shall cut down your choice cedars And cast them into the fire. And many nations will pass by this city; and everyone will say to his neighbor, "Why has the LORD done so to this great city?" Then they will answer, "Because they have forsaken the covenant of the LORD their God, and worshipped other gods and served them."'"*

This corporate nation is under that kind of judgment. Have we listened to the voice of God to do no wrong and no violence to the stranger, to shed no innocent blood in this place? Can we not be assured that the Lord has brought down our tall cedars, that he has brought violence against us to judge us for our corporate sins? God's design in such disasters is to humble us. In Isaiah chapter 9:8-12—the passage that immediately follows the description of Jesus as wonderful counselor, almighty God, everlasting Father, prince of peace of the increase of whose government and peace, there shall be no end, and the government will be upon His shoulders—the prophet says, *"The LORD sent a word against Jacob, And it has fallen on Israel. All the people will know—Ephraim and the inhabitant of Samaria—who say in pride and arrogance of heart: 'The bricks have fallen down, But we will rebuild with hewn stones; The sycamores are cut down, But we will replace them with cedars.' Therefore the LORD shall set up the adversaries of Rezin against him, And spur his enemies on, The Syrians before and the Philistines behind; And they shall devour Israel with an open mouth. For all this His anger is not turned away, But His hand is stretched out still."* God's purpose in sending those judgments was to humble the hearts of Israel. Instead of being humbled, they said, "We will rebuild. We will come back stronger and with more pride than before." They did not learn the lesson of humility. They did not fall on their faces before the living God and cry out to him for mercy and call upon Him for repentance. They hardened themselves in their pride, and God said, "I will spur your enemies on, for you have not been humbled before me." God's design is to turn us to himself.

Second, God's design in corporate judgments is to turn us to Himself. Isaiah continues: *"For the people do not turn to Him who strikes them, Nor do they seek the LORD of hosts. Therefore the LORD will cut off head and tail from Israel, Palm branch and bulrush in one day. The elder and honorable, he is the head; The prophet who teaches lies, he is the tail. For the leaders of this people cause them to err, And those who are led by them are destroyed. Therefore the LORD will have no joy in their young men, Nor have mercy on their fatherless and widows; For everyone is a hypocrite and an evildoer, And every mouth speaks folly. For all this His anger is not turned away, But His hand is stretched out still"* (Isaiah 9:13-17). What was God's purpose? It was to turn their hearts to Him, but He says, *"You did not turn to Him who strikes you. Your hearts were not humbled, and you did not regard the purposes of God. God's purpose was to turn you to Himself, that you might seek the Lord of hosts. Instead, you sought the corrupt counsel of your wicked leaders, of your foolish prophets, who spoke to you of your own worthiness, of your own goodness, and stirred the embers of your own pride, so that they grew into a mighty flame."* The Lord in his anger is not appeased.

Third, God's design in corporate judgments is to move us to repentance. This is seen in Jeremiah 18:1-12, where the prophet writes: *"… 'Look, as the clay is the potter's hand, so are you in My hand, O house of Israel! The instant I speak concerning a nation and conerning a lingdom, to build and to plant it, if it does evil in My sight so that it does not obey My voice, then I will relent concering the good with which I said I would benefit it.' Now therefore, speak to the men of Judah and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, saying, 'Thus says the LORD: "Behold, I am fashioning a disaster and devising a plan against you. Return now every one from his evil way, and make your ways and your doings good."' And they said, 'This is hopeless! So we will walk according to our own plans, and we will every one obey the dictates of his evil heart.'"* Heaven forbid that our nation should say that in the face of judgments designed to turn us to repentance!

Fourth, God's design is to call us to Christ through corporate judgments. In Hosea 6:1-3, after speaking about the judgments to come upon the land, Hosea says, *"Come, and let us return to the LORD; For He has torn, but He will heal us; He has stricken, but He will bind us up. After two days He will revive us; On the third day He will raise us up, That we may live in His sight. Let us know, Let us pursue the knowledge of the LORD."* God purposes to turn us to Christ. He who was "raised up on the third day" is the hope of all men and nations. He has torn, but He will rebuild. He has brought us low, but He will bind up our wounds by the one who said *"the Spirit of the Lord is upon me, for He has anointed me to bind up the broken hearted, to heal the lame and the blind, to proclaim freedom and liberty to the captives."* We are to turn to Christ. We are to look to Him alone. These are God's designs in corporate judgments. But let us consider,

III. The use we ought to make of these truths in our present disaster.

Let me suggest to you how we ought to be responding as individuals and as a nation. The first thing that we ought to do is to examine our hearts. Jesus said to those who brought before him these examples of great judgments—who were desiring to point to those who had perished and to say their sins were greater and therefore, they deserved that judgment—Jesus said, *"I tell you no, but unless you repent."* "Look to your heart," he said.

Consider how swiftly God may summon you to judgment. Are you beyond the reach of such sudden calamities? How swiftly God may call any one of us to stand before Him and say, *"You fool! Today, your soul is required of you."* Look at your heart. Sense the urgency of dealing with God, the living God.

Consider how justly you have deserved the same fate. Were they greater sinners than other men? *"I tell you,"* said Jesus, *"no, but unless you repent, you will likewise perish."* Look at your own heart. Consider how justly you deserve God's wrath and judgment. No doubt, there were some who perished in the recent disasters who did not deserve it in an outward sense—who had less rebellion in their hearts by God's grace than even I have. We must look at our own hearts. We must examine ourselves and consider the just desert of our own condition.

Consider what responsibility you bear for the kindling of God's wrath. God's judgments are poured out corporately upon a nation. They are poured out for the sins of individuals that mount up together before God. Judgment begins with the house of God. So we are told in II Chronicles 7:14, *"If My people who are called by my name will humble themselves and repent and turn from their wicked ways and call upon me, then I will hear from heaven and be merciful to them and heal their land."* Why did the land need healing? Because God's people had not called upon His name, because they had not turned from their wicked ways, because they had not examined their own hearts. Judgment begins at the house of God! What responsibility do you bear for the condition of the nation being what it is today, so that God's wrath is so provoked against us that He begins to send plunderers into our midst to plunder us. What have you done as a servant of the living God to warn others to flee from the wrath to come—to call them to faith in Christ? How have you contributed? What is your responsibility?

Consider carefully whether you have repented of your sin. This is the application Jesus made from the disasters of His day: *"Unless you repent!"* Spurgeon wrote:

Instead of thinking of their sins which would make me proud, I should think of my own which will make me humble. Instead of speculating upon their guilt, which is no business of mine, I should turn my eyes within and think upon my own transgression, for which I must personally answer before the Most High God? Have I repented of my sin? I need not be inquiring whether they have or not: Have I? Since I am liable to the same calamity, am I prepared to meet it? Have I felt, through the Holy Spirit's convincing power, the blackness and depravity of my heart? Have I been led to confess before God that I deserve his wrath, and that his displeasure, if it light on me, will be my just due? Do I hate sin? Have I learned to abhor it? Have I, through the Holy Spirit, turned away from it as from a deadly poison, and do I seek now to honor Christ my Master? Am I washed in His blood? Do I bear His likeness? Do I reflect His character? Do I seek to live in His praise? Am I prepared to die? If now the gates of hell should be opened, shall I enter there? If now beneath me the wide jaws of death should gape, am I prepared with confidence to walk through the midst of them, fearing no evil, because God is with me? This is the wisest way to apply the judgments of God to our own selves and to our condition. O sirs, God has spoken to every man in London during these last two weeks; he has spoken to me, he has spoken to you, men, women and children. God's voice has spoken from the glaring bonfire round which lay the corpses of men and women, and he has said to you, "Be ye also ready, for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of Man cometh."

Unless you repent, you will all likewise perish. We ought to examine ourselves.

And then, second, we ought to take warning. *"You shall all likewise perish."* What did Jesus mean? Did He mean that those to whom He was speaking would perish in exactly the same way and under exactly the same circumstances as those whose cases were brought before Him? In a sense, He did. In an immediate sense, that application was there. Remember, Jesus was speaking to Jews of the first century, and they brought before Him the case of some whose sacrifices were mingled with their own blood and some upon whom a portion of the walls of Jerusalem fell and crushed them, and Jesus said to them, unless you repent, you will all perish in the same way. Then, some 40 years later, His words came to pass as the sacrifices of unrepentant Jews in the city of Jerusalem were, indeed, mingled with their own blood, and not only the tower of Siloam, but all of the walls of Jerusalem came crushing down upon hundreds and thousands of them, and they did, indeed, likewise perish. But Jesus intended a broader

application as well that applies to each and every one of us. *"Unless you repent, you will all likewise perish."*

Death will come upon the unrepentant with suddenness, in the same way it came upon those about whom Jesus was speaking. We do not know the hour in which it will come. We can't even begin to imagine the feelings evoked by the suddenness of the attack in the World Trade Center by those who were there—who had begun their morning as they had every other morning before, who were in their offices, about their work and their business, on the phone with business contacts, or conversing with office mates, discussing the plans and the purposes of the remainder of the day. Jesus said, "unless you repent, you will all likewise perish"—with the same suddenness, with the same lack of preparation, with the same unexpected swiftness.

Death will come upon the unrepentant with overwhelming terror. The visions evoked by those events brought before Jesus bespeak great terror, the terror of wicked rulers sweeping in upon worshipers and cutting them down with the sword, mingling their blood with the sacrifices they offer upon the altar. The terror of bricks and mortar crumbling down upon un-expecting victims, crushing some of them to death, 18 in all. The terrors that we have seen ought also to remind us that death will come upon all unrepentant men and women with the same overwhelming terror.

Death will come upon the unrepentant with irresistible force. They will not be able to stop it. They will not be able to fight against it. They will not be able to resist it. It will be upon them, and there will be no more opportunity to turn.

Death will come upon the unrepentant with irreversible finality. There was no piecing back together of those who had been hacked apart by Pilate's soldiers. There is no piecing back together of those whose lives were lost in the tragedies of this week, and God intends this as a reminder to each and every one of us of the certainty of death that will come upon all who are unrepentant. Jesus' concern is not merely with physical death. His concern is with eternal death. Physical death is only the entrance into eternity which will be lived either in the presence of God and His holy angels, in the eternal praise of the Lord Jesus Christ, or in eternal separation from God bearing the lashes unto eternity that our sins have deserved. Unless you repent—according to the authority of Jesus Himself—you will all likewise perish! Take warning!

A third application that we ought to make from this, is that we ought to exercise active compassion toward those who are suffering the effects of this disaster. We should do this for three reasons. First, because they are not greater sinners than we are—because we recognize the mysteries of God's providence bound up in these events—because we recognize that God has amidst the rubble preserved us and granted to us an opportunity to call fellow sinners to cry out to God and to receive His grace, to cry out to Him for mercy and to look to the Son, Jesus Christ, who is the only redeemer of men. Second, we ought to show active compassion because our own transgressions have brought God's wrath upon the land. Our unfaithfulness has contributed in no small part to these judgments coming upon us. Are we not, then, to respond, not only on our faces before God, but in compassion toward those that are suffering for our own transgressions? Third, because we are God's instruments to proclaim His message in the face of these judgments. Who will tell them that they are to see the applications of these things that God intends? Who will tell them? Certainly, they're not going to hear it on CNN. They're not going to hear it on MSNBC. They're not going to hear it on public radio. God has called His church to be His messengers—to make the spiritual applications that His word makes to those who are suffering in the midst of such disasters—to call upon them with a prophetic voice to hear the message of God intended through these things. So, we ought to exercise compassion. We ought to demonstrate, as a church and as believers, the gospel of Jesus Christ in the midst of these things in word and in deed.

A fourth application is this: we ought to call upon our fellow citizens, our local and our national leaders to seek the Lord. What is the message that we must bring before them? We should call upon them, first, to acknowledge God's righteous indignation against our national sin. This is a message that we are not hearing. This is a conclusion that is not being drawn by the national media, to our great peril. It is our responsibility to sound forth this message. We need to remember the prayer of Nehemiah which we focused on in greater length when we gathered for prayer. We need to lead our nation in praying this prayer before the Lord: "You are just in all that has befallen us, for you have dealt faithfully, but we have done wickedly. Neither our kings, nor our princes, nor our priests, nor our fathers have kept your law, nor heeded your commandments and your testimonies with you testified against them." We need to remind and proclaim to our fellow citizens and to our leaders that God has righteously and justly judged us for our national sins. If we don't tell them, no one is going to. It is our responsibility to proclaim these things!

We need to call upon them, second, to forsake nationalistic pride, lest they be found to be like those in Judah and in Jerusalem saying, "We will rebuild. We will make it better before," in the pride and arrogance of their hearts. The Lord sends adversaries against those who lift themselves up in pride. Not that the Lord will not rebuild. He may be pleased to do so, but He will not rebuild in the face of pride. He rebuilds in the aftermath of repentance and humbleness and brokenness of heart. The temptation that currently confronts our land to be even more entrenched in an attitude of arrogance and pride cannot be underestimated. Our president, in the midst of his remarks at the National Cathedral during the day of prayer on Friday, said our responsibility in history in response to these events is "to rid the world of evil." That's our responsibility, he said. What about our own nation? Have we no responsibility to rid ourselves from evil before we rid the world of it? We have this prideful tendency to see ourselves as the invincible America, to see ourselves as holy and righteous and virtuous in the face of a world filled with darkness and evil. God is seeking to show us our true selves, that we might forsake our nationalistic pride and fall down before the Lord our God.

And then, third, we must call upon our fellow citizens and our local and national leaders to turn away from our humanistic, idolatrous syncretism. I know there are a lot of touchy-feely sentiments floating around out there among the citizens of our country. It would probably be an offense, if they were to hear me say that which I am compelled by the truth of God's word to say. The national day of prayer held on Friday was an abomination! It was despicable! It was an affront and an insult in the eyes of a holy God! The central memorial service in the National Cathedral amounted to an open and public declaration that we are a nation who worships ourselves, and we have forsaken the true and holy God for pluralism and syncretism. The service was opened by Bishop Jane Holmes Dixon, who said, "Those of us who are gathered here—Muslim, Jew, Christian, Sikh, Buddhist, Hindu—all people of faith want to say to this nation and to the world that love is stronger than hate." She was followed by a Muslim cleric, representing the Islamic Society of America who led in prayer. To whom? This was followed by the reading of a portion of Lamentations by a rabbi emeritus from the city of New York, followed by Billy Graham, who assured those present—remember who they were? Muslims, Jews, Sihks, Buddists, Hindus, and Christians—that they should feel "the loving arms of God wrapped around us." Then he added that "you may be angry with God, but I want to assure you that God understands these feelings that you have." Angry with God!? We have it backwards! We have it backwards. God is justly angry with us! And we respond in a national day of prayer by completely blurring the lines of truth and righteousness and calling upon the names of every imaginable god that the citizens of this nation have contrived. Meanwhile, news coverage scanned the nation highlighting everything from the Mormon Tabernacle choir to a Buddhist ceremony in Cambridge, Massachusetts, that featured "the lovingkindness , compassion, meditation prayer and the six-syllable jewel in the lotus mantra." And lest we be accused of political incorrectness, and thus offend the real god of our land—our own local news here in Durham featured coverage of prayer vigils in San Francisco where the gay men's chorus led the congregation of sodomites in hymns of devotion and songs of inspiration. We're told that "we need to educate the people of this nation that God did not bring this calamity upon us," that this is the work of Satan and his followers, persecuting poor, defenseless, righteous America.

May God have mercy! May God have mercy upon our land and show us the truth! But I want to tell you, brothers and sisters, that no one is going to know these things unless you tell them. It is our duty and our responsibility to educate those around us, not that Satan has overpowered God, but that God has overpowered us—and why He has done so, and how we have provoked Him, and how we ought to turn from our wickedness.

We need then, fifthly, to humbly confess our corporate transgressions against God's law. Why is it that God is provoked against us? Has He given us no standard? How do we fare if we examine our nation against the unchanging standard of His moral law, as summarized in the Ten Commandments? Have we put other gods before Him? Certainly, the events of the prayer services on Friday show us how blatantly we have forsaken the first commandment, you shall have no other gods before Me. Have we worshipped Him as He requires, or have we worshipped the work of our own hands? Are we a nation that honors the name of God and does not take that name in vain? Have we remembered the Sabbath Day? One of the great ironies in all of this, if you would simply look around today, you will notice a great prevailing silence upon our land. There are no professional football games. Quietness prevails now, because God's judgment has forced us to keep His Sabbath. Are we a nation that honors God's Sabbath? Are we a people who respect and honor authority? Do we see that evidenced in households across our land where it is preferable to drug our children into a stupor rather than to discipline them according to God's word—where authority is despised and independent spirits reign throughout the land? Are our hands tainted with innocent blood? Eyes filled with tears at the sudden calamity that fell upon the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on Tuesday. How many tears were shed for the four thousand innocent babies that died that same day at the hands of abortionists, or the day before that, or the day before that, or the day before that, ad infinitum, ad nauseum. Our hands are full of innocent blood! Do we defraud the poor and take what does not belong to us? Are we known for our sexual purity? Are we a people who honor truth and despise false witness? Are we covetous and materialistic? To ask these questions is to answer them, and it is no wonder that God's wrath is provoked against us. We need to repent corporately as a nation of our offenses against God, and nothing short of that repentance is going to stay His hand from bringing greater and more ominous judgments against us.

Then, finally, we need to recognize Christ, alone, as God's anointed prophet, priest, and king. I've heard in the past four days more quotations from the Psalms publicly than perhaps any time in my memory, but there is one Psalm that has not been popularly quoted—Psalm 2—which applies with more specificity to what we are facing as a nation than perhaps any other.

"Why do the nations rage and the people plot a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against His anointed, saying let us break their bonds in pieces and cast away their cords from among us. He who sits in the heavens shall laugh. The Lord shall hold them in derision, then He shall speak to them in His wrath and distress to them in His deep displeasure, yet I have set my king on my holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree the Lord has said to me, you are my son. Today, I have begotten you. Ask of me, and I will give you the nations for your inheritance and the ends of the earth for your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron. You shall dash them to pieces like a potter's vessel. Now, therefore, be wise, oh kings. Be instructed, you judges of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the son, lest he be angry, and you perish in the way when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all those who put their trust in him."

That's the message that our nation needs to hear. We have rebelled against God. We have sought to throw off the bands and constraints of His own righteous law. We have rejected Him in favor of every imagination of man's heart that could possibly be contrived, and we have multiplied wickedness and offense and transgression against every single command of God! Yet God has not been dethroned. Christ continues to reign from heaven. God has set His king to reign on Zion's holy hill, and His wrath is kindled.
What ought our nation's leaders to do? No plainer instructions can be given than that of the Psalmist: *"Kiss the Son, His wrath to turn, lest ye perish when His anger is kindled but a little. Blessed are those who put their trust in Him."* Blessed is that nation whose God is the Lord. May we take this message to the streets. May we take it to work with us. May we take it to our neighbors, to our family members, lest we be deceived by the false teaching of our leaders in the church and in the nation who would only lead us into error, and—according to Isaiah—those who follow it into destruction. We have a message from God for the nation. It begins with our own hearts. It begins with personal repentance and humbling before the throne of grace, and it continues with public proclamation. This was the pattern of David in Psalm 51 when he prayed for God's forgiveness and humbled himself in repentance, and then he said, *"I will teach transgressors your way, and sinners shall be converted unto You."*

May God so do among His church today.

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The preceding sermon, which appears here in a slightly-abbreviated version, was preached at Triangle Reformed Presbyterian Church, a congregation of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America (RPCNA), by the Rev. Dougas Comin. You may visit the church's web site at www.reformed.com/triangle. The congregation gathers for worship in the main conference room of the Comfort Suites Hotel, Exit 282 from Interstate 40, in Durham, North Carolina. Morning worship is at 10 o' clock, followed by a fellowship lunch at 12:30. Evening worship is at 5 o' clock. The church's phone number is (919)544-5459. You may reach Pastor Comin at rprev@peoplepc.com.
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News From The Presbyteries

Calvary

The Seventy First Stated Meeting of Calvary Presbytery was hosted by Trinity Presbyterian Church, Spartanburg, South Carolina, on July 28, 2001. The Moderator, the Rev. Ray Hellings, called the meeting to order at 9:06 AM and presided.

Dr. Jimmy Agan preached from Phillipians, the Lord's Supper was celebrated, and the Rev. Carl Sorensen pronounced the benediction.

Two ruling elders, John Richie and Glen Ellis, both from Second Presbyterian Church, Greenville, South Carolina, were memorialized.

The report of the Commission to install the Rev. Archie Moore as Pastor of Greenwood (S.C.) Presbyterian Church was approved and admitted to record.

The Associate Pastor relationship between Woodruff Road Presbyterian Church, Simpsonville, South Carolina, and the Rev. Richard Thomas, was dissolved so that he could accept the call to be Senior Pastor at Mount Calvary Presbyterian Church, Roebuck, South Carolina. The terms of call totaled $74,999.50.

Presbytery approved a change in its manual, so that the quorum of Presbytery shall be at least 25 members (at least 10 ruling elders) representing at least one-third of the churches of the Presbytery.

The Rev. Decherd Stevens' call was increased by $3,100.

Presbytery referred the matter of the Book of Church Order amendments to a Bills and Overtures Committee, for report at the October stated meeting.

It was decided that an overture to divide the Presbytery would be referred to a special meeting of the Presbytery to be held on September 10, 2001, "in order to have an informal discussion without parliamentary procedure, and without motions. The format would consist of presentations of pros and cons for the prospective discussion of Calvary Presbytery followed by discussion." The proposal, set forth by several churches outside of Greenville and Spartanburg Counties, would create a new Saluda River Presbytery.

As a point of information, the Session of the Woodruff Road Church was "given oversight over a group of people seeking to start a church in the Simpsonville area."

Messrs. Matt Barbier and Charles Kuykendall were taken under care as ministerial candidates.

Messrs. Steve Lammers, Shawn Slate, and Steve Perkins were approved to receive moneys from the Covenant Seminary Presbytery Scholarship Fund. Messrs. Lammers and Slate were also approved to receive the Lamb Fund Loan.

The following were removed from the roll of candidates: Mr. Earl Steadman (per his request); Mr. Greg Thompson (pending confirmation of his ordination by James River Presbytery); Mr. Matt Lucas (pending his reception into the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church); and Mr. Josh Martin (as he was ordained by Covenant Presbytery in conjunction with his work with Reformed University Ministries in Mississippi).

Presbytery approved an internship for Mr. Todd Smith under the supervision of the Rev. Lee Moseley.

The Rev. Toby Woodard was examined and approved for transfer from Central Georgia Presbytery. His call from the Presbytery Mission to North America Committee, to be a church planter in North Greenville County, was approved, with a total package of $62,108.

Dr. Jimmy Agan was examined and approved for ordination. He continues at Erskine College and Seminary, Due West, South Carolina, having been called as Assistant Professor of New Testament.

Messrs. Bill Fikes and Hugh Acton were examined and licensed to preach. Mr. Fikes was approved as stated supply at Reidville (S.C.) Presbyterian Church for one year, and Mr. Acton was approved as stated supply at Center Point Presbyterian Church, Moore, South Carolina, for one year.

The court adopted a revised Form for Reviewing Sessional Records, which incorporates the distinction between exceptions of form and exceptions of substance. No Session minutes will be approved that have more than three exceptions of substance taken to them, nor more than three exceptions of form.

Presbytery approved the Rev. E. Crowell Cooley to organizing pastor of Grace PCA mission, Dacusville, South Carolina. The call, which specifies $12,360 per year and health insurance, also states: "You will have one month's vacation per year, and other leave as needed for your calling as a Grandparent during your being and continuing as the Organizing Pastor of this Mission Church."

Covenant

The 92nd stated meeting of Covenant Presbytery was held on May 22, 2001, at Riveroaks Reformed Presbyterian Church, Germantown, Tennessee. The Rev. Brian Habig preached from Psalm 13. The Moderator, the Rev. Brad Stewart, called the meeting to order and prayed the constituting prayer.

The Presbytery approved and admitted to record the reports of the North Jackson Mission Commission; the Nominating Committee Commission; the Commission to ordain and install Mr. David Skinner as an assistant pastor at Riveroaks Reformed Presbyterian Church; the Commission to install TE Jark Long and TE Jean Larroux as assistant pastors at Independent Presbyterian Church, Memphis, Tennessee; and the Commission to install Rev. Timothy Hammons as pastor of the First Presbyterian Church, Osceola, Arkansas.

The Treasurer's report was approved. The balance on January 1, 2001, was $35,396.83, and the balance on April 30, 2001, was $60,476.31, of which $37,572.91 is designated for other causes.

The Rev. Randy Thompson presented the report of the George Soltau Commission in executive session. Coming out of executive session, the court reported that it "has acted to empower the George Soltau commission to receive the profession of repentance from TE Soltau on behalf of Covenant Presbytery and to act on behalf of Covenant Presbytery to restore TE Soltau to his office upon the satisfaction of the commission to the reality of his repentance (*BCO* 37-3)."

The court admitted to record a dissent from Pastor Grover Gunn and David Smith to the action of Presbytery in February 2001 which adopted the non-binding resolution on creation which had been adopted by the 28th General Assembly. [See box on next page.—Ed.]

The court adopted the recommendation of its Stated Clerk, that "Whenever the presbytery appoints a commission to act as a session, the stated clerk should assign them a stated meeting once each year for the Church Care Committee to review their unreviewed sessional records, as is done with other sessional records."

The Rev. Wayne Herring reported that the church which he pastors, St. Andrews Presbyterian, has just purchased a new building. The Presbytery accepted the invitation of that congregation to host the February, 2002, stated meeting.

Mr. Herring also reported that Josh Martin is slated to be the next campus minister for Reformed University Ministries at Delta State University, Cleveland, Mississippi. Nathan Turcuit is to be the next campus minister at the University of Tennessee, Martin. The Presbytery dissolved the call of the Rev. Brian Habig as RUF campus minister at Mississippi State University, Starkville, Mississippi, and to dismiss him to Nashville Presbytery, pending reception, so that he can take up a similar work at Vanderbilt University. Mr. Herring "warmly commended TE Habig as having been unusually blessed by God in the work at Mississippi State. TE Herring stated that Presbytery releases him with sadness but realizes that Covenant Presbytery's loss will be the great gain of Nashville Presbytery and Vanderbilt University." The call of the Rev. Ricky Jones at Delta State University was dissolved, and a call to him to become the RUF campus minister at Mississippi State was approved.

The Rev. Robbie Hinton was given the powers of an evangelist retroactive to the February 2001 stated meeting of Covenant Presbytery.

The Presbytery appointed a commission to organize the North Jackson [Tenn.] Mission as Covenant Presbyterian Church.

The Presbytery approved a committee recommendation to take $1,200 from the Presbytery's Church Planting Fund to pay for Chris Miller to attend the PCA MNA Assessment Center in Atlanta, Georgia. "If Mr. Miller is approved at the Assessment Center, monies from the Lamb Fund will be available to help with the church planting efforts in the Bentonville/Rogers area in Arkansas."

The Presbytery also approved a committee recommendation, to establish "an Arkansas Church Planting Network to do the following: pray for church planting works; strategize for and plan potential cities and towns with a view toward eventually establishing a separate presbytery for the state of Arkansas."

The Rev. Richard Rieves gave an update on the New Beginnings Community Church in inner-city Memphis. A building has been located for the church's permanent location; the cost is $150,000, of which half has been raised.

The Rev. Don Erwin was called as presbytery evangelist to the Russellville, Arkansas, mission, and given the powers of evangelist. He was later examined and received, his ministerial credentials being transferred from the Fort Worth Bible Church.

The Rev. John Wingard invited Presbytery to the New Life Reformed Presbyterian Church, Munford, Tennessee, on May 27, 2001, for a celebration of his fifty years of service in the gospel ministry. Mr. Wingard has pastored the New Life Church for the last five years. The Moderator offered a prayer of thanksgiving for his long and continued service.

Mr. Charlie Baxter of the PCA Foundation reviewed the history and purpose of that denominational agency.

The Rev. Jim Codling was given permission to labor out of bounds as stated supply of New Bethel PCA, Sumterville, Alabama, with the permission of Warrior Presbytery.

The Church Care Committee informed the court of the formation of a subcommittee in response to a request of the Session of First Presbyterian Church, Indianola, Mississippi.

The Presbytery encouraged churches having youth retreats to invite youth from other PCA churches within one and a half hours to attend. Churches were encouraged to take advantage of the Christian World View Student Conference in Virginia and the Junior and Senior High Reformed Youth Ministry (RYM) Conferences in Panama City, Florida. Christian Education Committee funds are available for students who need assistance in attending.

The Pres-WIC budget for April 1, 2001 to March 31, 2002, was approved.

The Rev. Clete Hux of Evangel Presbytery reported on the ministry of the Apologetics Resource Center, Birmingham, Alabama (www.apologeticsresctr.org). "This Center is a resource for congregations to be trained to defend the faith and evangelize members of cults." [For an article on Mr. Hux's ministry, see "PCA Minister Does Battle Against Word-Faith Movement," *P&R News*, Winter 1996, p. 5.—Ed.]

Covenant Presbytery voted to divide equally among its candidates the Covenant Presbytery Scholarship Fund at Covenant Theological Seminary.

Mr. Dana Emborsky was approved as a recipient of the Lamb Fund for the 2001-2002 academic year at Covenant Theological Seminary.

Mr. Hunter Bailey, a member of Covenant Presbyterian Church, Little Rock, Arkansas, was taken under care as a candidate. His internship under the supervision of Dr. Ligon Duncan, Senior Pastor of First Presbyterian Church, Jackson, Mississippi, was approved.

Mr. Bill Evans, a member of Independent Presbyterian Church, Memphis, was also taken under care as a candidate. His mentor for an internship will be Dr. Phil Douglass, St. Louis, Missouri.

Presbytery voted to use half of its Mission to the World budgeted vision trip money to help send the Rev. Brad Steward to visit two missionaries from his church (Grace Presbyterian Church, Starkville) who work with MTW in France: Dr. Lily Doty and Mr. Michael Matthews.

Eastern Canada

The Presbytery of Eastern Canada had a very encouraging meeting October 12-13, 2001. The highlight of the meeting was the reception of Sovereign Grace Presbyterian Church in Antigonish and in River Denys as a mission congregation. Antigonish and River Denys are about half way between our existing congregations in Nova Scotia, in Halifax

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(Bedford) and Sydney. A core group of about 15 adults in River Denys formed when they could not get a suitable minister in their former affiliation in the Presbyterian Church in Canada. The similarly sized group in Antigonish comes out of a Baptist church from which they withdrew rather than disrupt it with quarrels over the sovereignty of God. Ligonier Ministries was one of the influences moving these people to trust in God's sovereign grace, and to a greater openness to covenant baptism. Though they are about an hour apart, the two groups have chosen with Eastern Canada Presbytery to be established as a single charge, to give a better base for growth to self-support. The Presbytery Maritimes MNA committee has been charged with finding an organizing pastor. We covet your prayers.

We also had the pleasure of receiving two retired pastors into our fellowship. Donald E. MacLeod is the former pastor in River Denys, and is now residing near Antigonish and worshipping with that group. Quincy Caldwell was most recently a pastor in the Associated Presbyterian Church, and has been supplying the pulpit for the two groups for the last two years. He will continue as Stated Supply while we look for a full time organizing pastor.

Presbytery also heard of the progress of two daughters of Grace Toronto Church. Grace Mississauga is progressing in the west end of Toronto, and now Grace Korean has begun to meet with English language services for second generation Koreans. Thus far the two are still formally part of Grace Toronto. Presbytery's Ontario MNA committee was also given a mandate to work with a man who is engaged in starting a congregation in Dundas (outside Hamilton), to work towards his ordination in our church and the establishment of this as a mission of our Presbytery.

Sovereign Miramichi (New Brunswick) reports excellent growth and good community response, and Covenant Miramichi is seeing numerous visitors, and a positive response to its radio broadcast. Thames Valley in London (Ontario) is growing and seeing some integration of the Chinese and "English" cores of the congregation. We rejoiced before God in our time of prayer as all of our congregations reported the positive evidence of the work of his Spirit.

The only other action of general interest was our approval of all the proposed amendments to the *Book of Church Order*.

Don Codling, Stated Clerk/Correspondent

[Editor's note: The Associated Presbyterian Church is the name of the group which left the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland because of disagreement over a discipline case. The case resulted in the excommunication of Lord Mackay for attending a Roman Catholic mass at the funeral of a fellow government official.]

South Texas

Christ Presbyterian Church, New Braunfels, Texas, hosted the sixty-sixth stated meeting of South Texas Presbytery on July 27-28, 2001. The Moderator, Jon Green, opened the meeting with prayer and presided. Host pastor Dick Jones led in worship, and the sacrament of communion was celebrated.

A complaint by Al Henderson was referred to the Administration Committee.

The following commission minutes were approved: to install Joseph Myung as assistant pastor of Korean PCA, Houston, Texas; to particularize Christ Church, Katy, Texas, and install its Session; and to install Mark Gibson as pastor of Reformed Presbyterian Church, Beaumont, Texas.

Matt Monds, youth pastor at Spring Cypress Presbyterian Church, was given the privilege of the floor in order to report on youth ministry in South Texas.

The Rev. Steve Cairns reported on the activities of Westminster Seminary—Dallas.

It was reported that the Williams case is closed, and that Attorney Sharpe reported that the U. S. Supreme Court had declined to hear the Williams' appeal.

A panel was appointed to hear the O' Roarke complaint against the Session of Covenant Presbyterian Church, Harlingen, Texas.

Presbytery approved the report of the Ad Interim Commission on Matters at Bay Area PCA regarding the complaint filed by the Rev. Bill Fitzhenry. The court sustained three of the specifications: "Allowing the respondents to bring hearsay accusations, unsubstantiated accusations and slander against a teaching elder on the floor of Presbytery without restraint or rebuke"; "Failing to correct matters complained against which were confessed to the court and were breaches of our church constitution"; and "The delinquency of the South Texas Presbytery in failing to act on the unconstitutionality of the Bay Area Presbyterian Church Session." Two specifications were denined: "Sustaining a section of the complaint but doing nothing to correct the offense"; and "Editing the complaint and thereby removing the cause of one section of the complaint." The court stated that it "acknowledges its error in handling the complaint by Jan Sattem, TE, against the Bay Area Presbyterian Church Session by allowing emotions to prevail over established rules during its deliberations." The court also said that it "acknowledges its error and asks for the forgiveness of TE Jan Sattem, and the Session and Congregation of Bay Area Presbyterian Church. Furthermore, Presbytery asks for TE Sattem's forgiveness for allowing his name to be slandered on the floor of presbytery." Finally, "Presbytery instructs those members of presbytery who slandered TE Sattem to apologize to TE Sattem."

The Rev. Aureliano Tan, who has been without call since 1997, had been cited to appear before the court. He stated that he had been

A DISSENT FROM COVENANT PRESBYTERY'S ACTION IN ADOPTING A RESOLUTION ON THE DOCTRINE OF CREATION

We the undersigned wish to record our dissent from the action of Covenant Presbytery in its February 2001 stated meeting found in paragraph 91-21.4 of the minutes. In this action, Covenant Presbytery adopted the non-binding resolution on creation adopted by the 28th General Assembly, as Covenant Presbytery's position on creation, which reads as follows: "Since historically in Reformed theology there has been a diversity of views of the creation days among highly respected theologians, and, since the PCA has from its inception allowed a diversity, that the Assembly affirm that such diversity as covered in this report [the final report of the General Assembly's Advisory Committee on Creation] is acceptable as long as the full historicity of the creation account is accepted."

We disagree with this action for the following reasons:

1. This position is confusingly imprecise. What is included in "such diversity as covered in this report"? In the report, the Creation Study Committee "determined to provide a brief description of the main views represented in the PCA, as well as a few other lesser known views" (*M28GA*, p. 140). The "main views" described in the report are the calendar day interpretation, the day-age interpretation, the framework interpretation and the analogical days interpretation. The "lesser known views" described in the report are "other interpretive schemes that are probably represented in the PCA, but not represented on the Study Committee" (*M28GA*, p. 174). These are the intermittent day interpretation, the gap interpretation, the days of revelation interpretation, the days of divine fiat interpretation, the focus on Palestine interpretation, and the expanding time interpretation. The report also gives a brief definition of Warfield's "theistic evolution" interpretation (*M28GA*, p. 138; cf. p. 194), and Warfield is listed as holding to a variation of the day-age interpretation (*M28GA*, pp. 130, 152, 157). Warfield's interpretation is a part of that "diversity of views of the creation days among highly respected [Reformed theology] theologians" mentioned in the Presbytery position. Which of these diverse views discussed in the report are part of "such diversity as covered in this report"? Or, perhaps more to the point, is there any reasonable basis for saying that some of the views discussed in the report are "covered" in the report, and others are not? The Presbytery did not define as acceptable only the four views "expounded" in the report (*M28GA*, p. 183) and referred to as "the four most prominent views of the creation days in the PCA" (*M28GA*, p. 132). The Presbytery did not define as acceptable only the diversity allowed in the PCA from its inception, though this diversity is also mentioned in the position statement. According to the report, "... the only widely held alternative to the Calendar Day view held at the beginnings of the PCA was the Day-Age view. The Framework view was not widely embraced or understood by the PCA ministry in 1973, and the Analogical view of the Genesis days, as it is now promulgated, was unknown." (*M28GA*, p. 134)

The Presbytery affirmed that such diversity as "covered" in the report is acceptable as long as the full historicity of the creation account is accepted. The word cover in this context can mean merely to include (*OED*, vol. 2, p. 1103, III.b.). (We are not saying that those who voted for the action recorded in paragraph 91-21.4 consciously intended to support as acceptable every diverse view discussed or even mentioned in the report subject only to the "full historicity" qualification, even though they voted to adopt language which can be so interpreted.)

What does it mean for a view to be acceptable? Does that mean it is in full accord with the statement of our standards that God created the world "in the space of six days"? Or does it mean only that the view is not a denial of a fundamental of our system of doctrine? Can the word acceptable refer to an exception that can be taught, or to an exception that can be taught only when acknowledged as an exception? Even if a man's views are determined to be an exception which cannot be taught, is there not a sense in which his views are acceptable if the presbytery has voted to accept him?

2. This position is inadequate as a standard of acceptability. It defines as acceptable such diversity as covered in the report as long as the full historicity of the creation account is accepted. Of the four main views discussed in the report, the framework view is uniquely subject to criticism regarding historicity. As the report says, "Affirming historicity while denying sequence is difficult" (*M28GA*, p. 167), and "... the Framework view sees sequentiality as optional at best" *(M28GA*, p. 172; cf. p. 165). If the framework view is "acceptable" and thus passes the "full historicity" test, then what views fail the "full historicity" test and how do they fail it? Also, the report discusses the minimal need to "assent to" several "affirmations" in addition to the historicity of the accounts of both creation and the fall (*M28GA*, pp. 183-184). The report speaks of "the full historicity of Genesis 1-3" as only one element of "the orthodox view" of creation (*M28GA*, p. 182). The report states that even the more latitudinarian presbyteries on the days of creation have required both an affirmation of the historicity of Genesis 1-3 and a rejection of evolution (*M28GA*, p. 134). Is an affirmation of historicity alone an adequate standard, especially if the framework interpretation is judged to meet this standard? In terms of accepting historical sequence, Warfield's interpretation meets the "full historicity" standard better than does the framework interpretation. One can accept the events of the creation account as historical events as opposed to myth, but then interpret the events unacceptably, as is the case with Warfield's day-age interpretation.

3. If "acceptable" means that the views "covered" in the report are not exceptions to our standards, then this sets a bad precedent for the interpretation of our constitution. With this precedent, our standards can over time come to mean anything. Leaving the language of our constitution the same but changing its interpretation by majority vote is risky. We should instead either follow the example of Mississippi Valley Presbytery and affirm the interpretation of original intent (see paragraph 91-21.2) or else initiate an effort to amend the language.

4. According to the testimony of the 28th General Assembly, its action was only a non-binding opinion and not a standard to which our presbytery had to conform (*M28GA*, pp. 245-246). The report says,

"It should be observed that the ordinary courts of jurisdiction for officers in the church are the presbytery for the teaching elders and the session for the ruling elders and deacons. These are the courts that deal with the theological position of officers, and it is not the prerogative of the Assembly to interfere with the judgments of these courts, except by way of review of the presbytery minutes, or by judicial process." (*M28GA*, p. 183)

5. Presbytery's action can be interpreted so as to contradict the advice Covenant Presbytery gave to Mississippi Valley Presbytery in February 1999. The letter Covenant Presbytery voted to send included the following:

Through some stalwart individuals, the Lord raised up the Presbyterian Church in America one generation ago. Now, it seems to us that we are already beginning to drift from our moorings. Pragmatism, emotion, and a reluctance to hurt feelings are becoming the order of the day in many of our church courts, rather than a desire to stand unashamedly on the revealed will of God, the Holy Scriptures.

Upon the basis of what we have heard reported to be in the minutes of the Mississippi Valley Presbytery, we are grieved and disturbed that in recent years Mississippi Valley Presbytery has approved examinations in which the following positions were acknowledged, and at times without the presbytery's even recording these positions as exceptions to the Standards which should not be preached or taught: 1. Various interpretations of "the space of six days" which deny creation over a period of approximately 144 hours, especially those interpretations which deny that the Biblical account of creation in six days is an historical narrative of events which occurred in time as we know it.

We concluded our letter with the following testimony and exhortation:

With the exception of the issue of ordination of women, an issue that has not arisen before us yet, we have dealt carefully and to the best of our ability, Biblically, with each of these questions, refusing men entrance or counseling them not to teach or preach the exception.

We, therefore, exhort you in the name of God, before Whom we will all someday stand, to be more circumspect in your examinations and theological deliberations in the days ahead, in order that the peace and purity of the Church be preserved.

We would suggest that presbytery acted with undue haste in adopting the action recorded in paragraph 91-21.4 of the minutes. The General Assembly creation study committee advised "that in order to permit careful and prayerful contemplation of this matter, no further action of any kind with respect to this report be taken by the General Assembly for a period of at least two years" (*M28GA*, p. 184). The 28th General Assembly did not heed this advice. We would suggest that Covenant Presbytery should heed this advice by rescinding the action recorded in paragraph 91-21.4 and by postponing consideration of the question of a general position on creation until the October 2002 stated meeting.

TE Grover Gunn and TE David Smith March 6, 2001

preaching and teaching at Southwest PCA, Houston; and that he had administered baptism to his grandchild. He indicated that he did not want to be divested of his credentials as a teaching elder. The Presbytery voted to retain Mr. Tan on the rolls for a period not to exceed one year, and admonished him to work with the Ministerial Relations Committee in finding a call.

Ruling Elder Brad Bradley was given the privilege of the floor to report on Reformed University Fellowship regional activity and the Southwest Church Planting Network. Reports were heard from the following RUF campus ministers: Pat Roach (Rice University); William Luther Boyd (University of Texas); John Ferguson (Texas A & M); Derick McDonald (University of Texas—international students). Reports were also heard from the following church planters: John Ratliff (Christ the King Presbyterian Church, Austin); Carlos Ireta (The Divine Providence Mission, Laredo); Mike Singenstreu (Christ Presbyterian Mission, Victoria). Representatives from Emanual Mission in Austin reported on their church planting activities. The Presbytery voted to recognize Christ the Holy Redeemer Mission in Laredo as a mission of the South Texas Presbytery.

The Rev. David B. Mullens, Jr., reported on his work in Tampico, Mexico; and the Rev. Lawrence S. Ruddell reported on his trip to Istanbul, Turkey.

The Rev. Jerry Maguire was examined and received from New River Presbytery, in order to become pastor of Covenant Presbyterian Church, Harlingen. The Rev. John Carroll was examined and received from Palmetto Presbytery in order to become assistant pastor at Christ Presbyterian Church, Katy. Messrs. Troy Greene and David Stotts were taken under care as ministerial candidates. Messrs. Matt Boulter and Steven Cooper were examined and licensed to preach. The Presbytery voted that the Candidates Committee "reconsider its method of reporting the results of future written exams." Messrs. Bradley Wright and David Hall were approved to receive the Covenant Seminary scholarship funds.

Southwest

Presbytery of the Southwest met for a stated meeting on April 19, 2001, at Westminster Presbyterian Church, Alamogordo, New Mexico. The Moderator, Tom Troxell, opened the meeting with prayer at 1:10 PM and presided.

Among the visitors recognized were Messrs. Rick Walter and Ron Ward of the Valley View Church, Animas, Arizona. The independent congregation, which is looking for a pastor, is also considering affiliating with the Presbyterian Church in America.

Licentiate Dennis Hermerding, serving with Reformed University Fellowship at the University of Arizona in Tucson, was examined for ordination. His theological paper, "A Biblical Theological Analysis on Joshua 1:1-9," was approved, as was his exegetical paper on Philippians 1:9-11. Presbytery approved the ordination exam, and appointed the ordination service to occur on June 3, 2001, at Catalina Hills Presbyterian Church, Tucson.

The Christian Education and Credentials Committee was constituted as a commission to bring Messrs. Ryan Hughes and Josh Moon of the University Presbyterian Church, Las Cruces, New Mexico, and Mr. Alan Cooney of the Catalina Hills Church, under care as candidates, and then to award scholarships to them made available to the Presbytery's candidates by Covenant Theological Seminary.

The Rev. Vince Wood spoke about a pending mother-daughter relationship between Immanuel Presbyterian Church, Mesa, Arizona, and a group of about 28 reformed people living in Yuma, Arizona. The Presbytery later voted to approve the requested mother-daughter relationship. The Rev. Bill Phillips spoke about a mission relationship which Fellowship of Grace Presbyterian Church, Peoria, Arizona, has with a reformed church in Uganda.

Ruling Elder Brad Bradley from North Texas Presbytery reported on the work of the Southwest Church Planting Network. Included in the report was information about new outreach efforts to Lubbock, Texas (Providence Presbyterian Church, Pastor Rob Bailey); Texas Tech in Lubbock (RUF, Pastor Marc Corbett); North Fort Worth, Texas (Lone Star Presbyterian Church, Pastor Russ McAnulty); Norman, Oklahoma (Pastor Mike Biggs); University of Oklahoma (RUF, Doug Serven); and Edmond, Oklahoma (Edmond Community Church, Pastor Jeff Birch). The Rev. Ronnie Rowe of South Texas Presbytery reported on the work of Reformed University Ministries in the Southwest. The Rev. Mike Biggs reported on RUM's work at New Mexico State University, Las Cruces; and Mr. Herderding reported on the work at the University of Arizona.

Several church planters reported: the Rev. Gary McMillan (Providence Presbyterian Church, Farmington, New Mexico); the Rev. Phil Kruis (Rincon Mountain Presbyterian Church, Tucson, Arizona); the Rev. Aaron Zapata (Iglesia Presbiteriana Oasis mission, El Paso, Texas); and the Rev. Tom Johnson (Christ the King mission, El Paso, Texas). Mr. Troxell reported on the work of military chaplains from the Presbytery.

A memorial concerning the Rev. Gerrit DeYoung, who was recently called home to the Lord, was attached to the minutes. [See *P&R News*, March-April 2001, p. 15, for the memorial, which was written by the Rev. Wayne A. Buchtel, pastor of Calvin Orthodox Presbyterian Church, Phoenix, Arizona.—Ed.]

Presbytery's business paused for an hour and a half supper break, and for an hour and forty minutes given to the worship service. The Presbytery meeting adjourned at 9:20 PM.

Susquehanna Valley

Wheatland Presbyterian Church, Lancaster, Pennsylvania, hosted the November 17, 2001, stated meeting of Susquehanna Valley Presbytery. The Moderator, Teaching Elder Tom Myers, called the meeting to order and presided.

Teaching Elder David Tate preached from I Corinthians 3:14-18. Host pastor Christopher Labs presided at the administration of the Lord's Supper. An offering was taken in the amount of $242.

The Stated Clerk reported on the status of transfer of several ministers. At the direction of the court, he sent letters to Mrs. Beverly Trainum and Robert Trainum regarding Mr. Trainum being deposed from the ministry on September 17, 2001.

The Presbytery received the reports of several commissions: the Commission to organize Church of the Servant, Palmyra, Pennsylvania, which included the ordination and installation of ruling elders and the installation of Teaching Elder Ronald Ziegler as Pastor; the Commission to install Teaching Elder James Bates as Pastor of Kirkwood (Pa.) Presbyterian Church; and the Commission to organize The City's Gate Presbyterian Church, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, which included the ordination and installation of ruling elders, and the installation of Teaching Elder Steve Heinbaugh as Pastor.

Presbytery approved the 2002 budget totaling $71,940.

Presbytery voted in favor of all the proposed *Book of Church Order* amendments.

Teaching Elder Fred Marsh of the denominational Mission to North America Committee reported on the activities of MNA. Ruling Elder Howard Perry told the Presbytery of his upcoming move to Delaware; he thanked Presbytery for the opportunity to serve the Presbytery in the past. Also giving reports were the church in Williamsport, Pennsylvania; Westminster Presbyterian Church, Lancaster, Pennsylvania; and Dr. Robert Rapp.

Teaching Elder David Wegener discussed his desire to become the first missionary from MTW to Zambia.

Licentiate James D. Tyson was examined for ordination, and approved in the parts of the trial in which he was examined. The remaining portion of the exam will be conducted at a future meeting.

Teaching Elder David Tate was examined and transferred from Philadelphia Presbytery, to become Senior Pastor of Faggs Manor Presbyterian Church, Cochransville, Pennsylvania.

Dr. R. Laird Harris was examined and transferred, as an honorably retired minister, from Heritage Presbytery. Dr. Harris had served as a Professor at Covenant Theological Seminary, and was the Moderator of the 10th PCA General Assembly.

The Standing Rules were amended so that the Church & Ministerial Oversight Committee will now have the authority to disburse funds to ministers as well as to churches experiencing financial difficulty.

It was reported that there has been considerable activity on the Presbytery website (www.svp.pca.org).

Westminster

August 2001

Abingdon, Virginia (August 21, 2001)—Westminster Presbytery met for an adjourned meeting of its summer stated meeting this evening at the Abingdon (Va.) Presbyterian Church.

The court had anticipated a trial this evening of the Rev. Jim Thornton, that he had displayed an attitude of "lording over his flock." However, the court heard from the Rev. Bill Leuzinger, who had preferred the charges, that he was satisfied with Mr. Thornton's repentance and explanation regarding the matter. It was a deal that was brokered by the Rev. Dr. Ed Crook, earlier today. Accordingly, the Presbytery voted to rescind its action in proceeding to trial, and accepted Mr. Thornton's statement which was spread on the minutes. [See *P&R News*, May-June 2001, p. 16; and July-August 2001, p. 20.]

October 2001

Coeburn, Virginia (October 27, 2001)—The Coeburn (Va.) Presbyterian Church hosted Westminster Presbytery for its fall stated meeting today. The Rev. Carel van der Merwe, pastor of Grace Reformed Presbyterian Church, Greeneville, Tennessee, preached on the topic of infant baptism, and the host pastor administered the Lord's Supper. The service of worship was Puritan-style, and featured the *a capella* singing of four psalms as well as Old and New Testament readings.

Presiding over the meeting was the Rev. Bill Leuzinger, Pastor of the Abingdon (Va.) Presbyterian Church. He has been the Moderator for the entire calendar year, having been elected at each of the four stated meetings.

Among the items of business handled was the honorable retirement of Rev. Preston Sartelle. The pastor of Draper's Valley Presbyterian Church, Draper, Virginia, for fifteen years (1983-1999), he continues as a foreign missionary with the Caribbean Christian Center for the Deaf.

Transferred to New River Presbytery were the Draper's Valley and Pulaski (Va.) Presbyterian Churches, along with their pastors. This action came in accordance with the re-drawing of presbytery boundaries, approved by the 2001 General Assembly.

Transferred to the Federation of Reformed Churches (FORC) was the Rev. Pete Crews, a former Mission to the World missionary to France who has for the last several years been in Switzerland under the auspices of parachurch organizations, first Reformed Ministries International and then Kingdom of Covenantal Ministries. The Federation practices paedo-communion, a position which Mr. Crews has adopted.

The reports of the Greene County Commission and the Meadow Creek Commission were received and spread upon the record. Based on the findings of those commissions, the court voted to proceed with judicial process against the Rev. Jim Thornton, and appointed the Rev. Richard Hicks, Chairman of the Greene County Commission, to serve as prosecutor and prepare the indictment. The charges revolve around Mr. Thornton's behavior in his former pastorate, Meadow Creek Presbyterian Church, Greeneville, Tennessee.

The Greene County Commission was appointed as a result of a complaint filed by the Rev. Pat Parham over a year ago. The Presbytery had previously exonerated a member of the Meadow Creek Church who had been excommunicated by the Session, on the basis that the Session should not have held up his transfer to Grace Reformed Presbyterian Church, another PCA church in Greeneville. By upholding the point that the man should have been transferred before judicial proceedings began against him, the Presbytery vacated the judgment against him and rendered moot all of the other proceedings. The burden of Mr. Parham's complaint was that simply to sustain the matter on a technicality did not promote justice, since that method did not deal with the underlying issues, including the very real possibility of sin on the part of one or more parties.

Because there is no Session at the Meadow Creek Church, the Meadow Creek Commission is acting as the Session. The Presbytery also instructed the Session to look into the behavior of members of the Meadow Creek Church, since the Greene County Commission had also expressed concern about the behavior of unnamed members of the congregation.

Well, It Was a Saturday, After All . . .

Heard during consideration of the motion to adopt the docket at the October stated meeting: "At 5 o' clock, could we get a football report?"—Ross Lindley.

Coeburn (Va.) Presbyterian Church has a new sanctuary (right). Built in 2000, the new building is attached to the existing structure. The original Presbyterian building is the oldest church building in the coal-mining town. The congregation has occupied the present site since 1958, when it constructed the brick building seen at left.

Graham Bible College Celebrates Its Jubilee

Graham Bible College was founded by Rev. Dan. H. Graham to train men and women to serve Christ more effectively.

During the years of his ministry in the Appalachian region, Dan H. Graham was impressed with the need for a college in the Southeast that would stand firmly for the truth of the Scriptures.

In 1950 Mr. Graham contacted Rev. Preson Phillips of Greenville, South Carolina. In 1951 the Dan Graham Bible Institute was founded in Bristol, Tennessee, with Mr. Phillips as its first president. Originally the school met in a building at 15 Fifth Street where Mr. Graham had been having radio services. For the first few years only evening classes were held; later, day classes were added.

In 1956 the school was granted the right to confer the Bachelor of Arts degree and was incorporated as Graham Bible Institute and Bible College, Inc. That same year the college obtained a dormitory and faculty residence building in Bristol. In 1958 a building which formerly housed the First Methodist Church was purchased for use as a classroom and administration facility. Today Graham Bible College is located on Volunteer Parkway at Exide Drive in Bristol, Tennessee.

Graham's doctrinal position, to which all its faculty and board adhere, is that of historical biblical Christianity in its Reformed expressions. The curriculum offers a four-year Bachelor in Biblical Education degree, the two-year Associate in Biblical Education degree, or the one-year Certificate in Biblical Education. In order to facilitate learning, Graham students have available to them one of the finest biblical and theological libraries in the southeast. They also are able to take advantage of one of the lowest tuition rates in the nation.

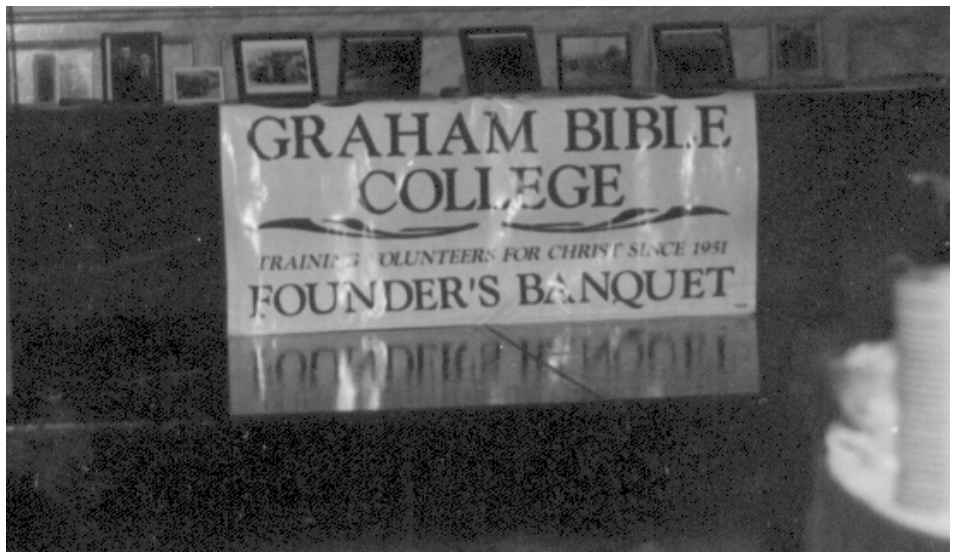
Eaton Hall is the main classroom building.

Many graduates of Graham have entered the ministry, including a number who are in the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA). Most of the faculty today are ministers in the PCA or the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC). The current president, Dr. Phil Blevins, is a member of the PCA's Westminster Presbytery.

When Pastor Graham died in 1975, he had founded twenty-seven churches in the Appalachian Mountain region, as well as the Bible college which continues to hear his name. His Christian legacy remains evident in the college through the faithful teaching, and personal application, of the whole council of God, to the glory of Jesus Christ (Acts 20:27)

You are invited to visit Graham Bible College, or call at (423) 968-4201.

Two of Graham Bible College's fine graduates



A banquet in the spring of 2001 celebrated the college's 50th anniversary.

Pastor Dan Graham

The library at Graham Bible College

Administrative offices

Covenant College Names New President

At a meeting in Nashville, Tennessee, on December 4, 2001, the Board of Trustees of Covenant College named Dr. Niel Nielson as the fifth President of the liberal arts institution. His appointment is slated to become effective on July 1, 2002.

Dr. Nielson is a graduate of Wheaton College (Ill.). He holds a master's degree and a doctorate in philosophy from Vanderbilt University.

A philosophy professor at Bethel College in Minnesota for four years, he later spent thirteen years in the financial world. During this time, he lived in Chicago and London, and traveled to numerous European and Asian nations. He continues to serve on the boards of several organizations, both non-profit and for-profit.

Ordained as a ruling elder in the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA), he served in that capacity at the Naperville (Ill.) Presbyterian Church. Since 1997, he has been pastor of outreach at the non-denominational College Church in Wheaton, Illinois.

Dr. Nielson's wife, Kathleen, also earned a master's degree and a doctorate at Vanderbilt, in the field of literature. Like her husband, she is also a graduate of Wheaton College.

Mrs. Nielson has taught and written material for a women's Bible study at College Church. Approximately 250 women participate in that weekly study. According to a press release from Covenant College, "She also speaks at women's conferences and retreats around the country."

Kathleen is the daughter of Dr. John Buswell and granddaughter of Dr. J. Oliver Buswell, both of whom were professors at Covenant Theological Seminary in St. Louis. Her sister, Elizabeth (Buswell) Stortz, is married to the Rev. Rodney Stortz, a member of the Covenant College Board of Trustees.

Joel Belz, a long-time member of the Board, and a member of the presidential search committee, was enthusiastic in his endorsement of Dr. Nielson for the position. As quoted in a college press release, Mr. Belz said, "The Nielsons specifically and explicitly understand and applaud that which makes Covenant unique, and have said so repeatedly. They clearly believe that Covenant's specific commitments—doctrinally, philosophically, and educationally—will help it avoid some of the tensions which have been so troublesome in much of evangelical higher education." The Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Board, Mr. Bob Avis and the Rev. George Robertson, were also quoted in the press release as giving their support, as was retiring President Frank Brock.

The first president of Covenant College was the late Dr. Robert G. Rayburn. After the college moved from St. Louis to Lookout Mountain, Dr. Rayburn continued for a brief time as president of both the college and the seminary. His successor at the college was Dr. Marion Barnes, a professional chemist who helped to clean up air pollution in Chattanooga.

The third president was Dr. Martin Essenburg. He was succeeded by Dr. Frank Brock, a businessman from Lookout Mountain, Tennessee, who became president in 1988. Under his tenure, the school's enrollment has doubled, and several new buildings have been added to the scenic campus.

Covenant College is owned by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA). Unlike coordinators of other denominational agencies, Dr. Nielson will not be confirmed by a General Assembly vote. However, he will have to be examined and approved by the General Assembly Theological Examinations Committee.

NAPARC

(Continued from Page 4)

The PCA and the OPC, which had had long-standing fraternal relations with the CRCNA, had already broken those ties with the CRCNA over the women's ordination issue.

NAPARC was founded in 1975 by several denominations—the CRCNA, the OPC, the PCA, the RPCNA, and the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod (RPCES), which merged with the PCA in 1982. Besides providing fellowship, contact, and occasional inter-communion and pulpit exchange among the constituent denominations, NAPARC has also formulated a "comity" agreement and an agreement to respect the discipline of the churches in NAPARC. The "comity" agreement, also known as the Golden Rule agreement, pledges the denominations to consult with a NAPARC church or mission before planting a new church in the community where it is located. The agreement regarding "fugitives from discipline" pledges the NAPARC churches not to accept a minister or member who has been disciplined by another NAPARC church. Expulsion of the CRCNA will remove the barrier of the comity agreement, and would also clear the way for ministers and people disciplined by the CRCNA to be received by the other churches in NAPARC.

Michael Cannon is Pastor of Knowlton Presbyterian Church, Columbia, New Jersey, and a member of New York Metropolitan Presbytery (PCA). He previously served as a Minister of Adults at St. Andrews Presbyterian Church, Irmo, South Carolina, and as a chaplain in the U. S. Army.

Westminster

(Continued from Page 3)

unless this right to withdraw was expressly excluded in the *BCO*, the terms set out in the minutes of the 2nd General Assembly stand, not on the basis of WP's approval of them but on the basis that the 2nd General Assembly was acting constitutionally when it approved them.

"It is important to again note that the provisions of *BCO* 25, that give a local church the right to withdraw from the PCA and to own exclusively its own property, set out an important distinctive of historic American 'grass-roots' Presbyterianism, namely the right to withdraw. It is important to note that this right must be extended to a Presbytery under the Preliminary Principles, unless the *BCO* expressly prohibits such a right. The *BCO* does not prohibit a presbytery from taking such action. This right does not prevent the GA from making ministerial declarations about a particular decision to withdraw, or from making such declarations about the manner or terms of such a particular decision to withdraw. However, the GA is not free to make a declaration that a Presbytery does not have a right to withdraw. Indeed, as has already been noted, the 29th General Assembly has properly made ministerial declarations about the details of the plan for WP to withdraw from the PCA but has not asserted that WP has no right to withdraw."

The SJC judged that Mr. Ball's contention that the action violated liberty of conscience was not valid, in that no church or minister was being forced to make one decision or the other: "WP's plan for withdrawal ensured that all ministers and churches had the freedom to remain in the PCA or to continue with the separating WP."

The SJC declared that the ministerial declaration of the 29th (2001) General Assembly to WP did not "declare that what WP is doing is dishonest or deceptive to the membership of WP so as to call into question the veracity of the actual decisions taken by the Presbytery. . . . Indeed, the ministerial declaration of the 29th General Assembly made it very clear that all parties to these decisions in WP are being fully and rightly informed."

The SJC concluded: "WP, within the framework of the *BCO*, has the authority to decide the composition of its own membership and its ecclesiastical affiliation. Such a decision is not acting for a local church. While such an action clearly affects a local church within its bounds, it does not affect that local church's internal operation, nor does it affect the church's ownership of property, nor does it abrogate any of the local church's rights under the *BCO* to complain or appeal. Thus the plan of withdrawal is not an action that 'Acts For' the local church. This action by the Presbytery is an action by an ecclesiastical body and at the same time it is an action by civil or legal entity acting for itself and only for itself. This action, of course, involves all of the members of the presbytery, that is all the local churches and all the teaching elders that are members of the presbytery."

The opinion was "prepared by TE Robert M. Ferguson after discussions with and with the concurrence of TE Dominic Aquila and RE Robert C. Cannada."

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Letters to the Editor

Dear Editor

I would like to respond to the article on page 13 of the *Presbyterian and Reformed News*, July-August 2001, entitled "Overtures Regarding Pastoral Relationship Turned Down."

Let me respectively disagree with some of the writer's rationale.

The third paragraph includes the following statement: "The majority of a congregation may have faulty, erroneous or unbiblical grounds for wishing the removal of its pastor and in such cases the presbytery may deny their request in favor of a minority in the congregation who wish to continue under the ministry of a faithful pastor."

If the majority of any congregation falls into the category mentioned above, in all likelihood the pastor has not done his job. He is the shepherd of the flock. I believe a church goes as it is led by the pastor and the elders. Pastors can't do it alone. I firmly believe if a pastor does the job that God calls him to do, he will not have a church where the majority acts as you have described.

I belong to West End Church in Hopewell, Va., and our congregation is not like the one that you described. By a majority vote, our congregation voted to dissolve the relationship with the pastor. Without going into all of the details here, I will say that our pastor did not commit any gross sin. Our church was not growing. We have been losing members. We thought it was time for a change. The Presbytery did not agree. Their decision has really hurt our church.

There is a statement in the fifth paragraph that states, "This is not to suggest that the Presbytery should never dissolve the pastoral bond between a faithful pastor and a congregation in cases of contested requests for dissolution. There may be circumstances in which a pastor, not accused of any personal fault in life, doctrine or ministry, should step aside." This is the circumstance in our church. It would have been very helpful if the writer would have given an example here as he did above.

I was told by a member of another PCA church, who had also voted to dissolve their relationship with their pastor, "the Commission and Presbytery are just like unions. They take sides with the pastor and are not really interested in the local church." I have recently seen a situation that strongly indicates that the gentleman was right.

The *BCO* 13-9-k states that part of the Presbytery's responsibilities is to "visit churches for the purpose of inquiring into and redressing the evils that may have arisen, etc." I don't see this happening in our area. The commission tends to listen to the pastor and are not really interested in what happens to the local church. If a commission would investigate the situation, it wouldn't take long to get the truth. It just appears that they do not take the time to do a decent investigation.

I would also like to respond to the letter to the editor written by Pastor David B. Wallover. I respect him for his feelings and compliment him on letting you know of them rather than to talk to others. I respectfully ask him to consider the whole paper and not just an article or two that he disagrees with. I look forward to receiving the paper. However, there are articles and comments that I don't agree with in each issue, but that doesn't mean that the paper is wrong. Maybe I am. If the *P&R News* starts writing articles on what they have heard, starts printing untruth, etc., then it's time for many of us to stop taking it. Until then I encourage the *P&R News* staff to continue the good work.

In closing let me thank you for printing the truth. It is evident to me that there are problems in the PCA. We came out of a liberal denomination. Now we are having similar problems and are being criticized for commenting on them.

TE John A Van Devender expressed very well what needs to be done in the PCA in his OPEN LETTER TO THE PCA.

Keep up the good work.

In Christ,

Billy Mitchell

[Editor's note: As reported in PCANEWS.COM, the official denomination web magazine, West End Presbyterian Church voted to withdraw from the Presbyterian Church in America unless James River Presbytery dissolved the pastoral relationship between the congregation and the Rev. Dr. Robert Wilson, or unless the Standing Judicial Commission upheld a complaint against the Presbytery's declining to dissolve the relationship. At its October 2001 stated meeting, James River Presbytery, by a vote of 39-9, did dissolve the pastoral relationship, thus rendering moot the move to withdraw from the denomination.]

[The following letter came in response to a favorable book review in *Equip for Ministry*, the official magazine published by the Presbyterian Church in America Christian Education & Publications Committee. The book which was reviewed was *Introducing the Reformed Faith: Biblical Revelation, Christian Tradition, Contemporary Significance*, by Donald K. McKim, and published by Westminster John Knox Press, the official arm of the Presbyterian Church (USA). In the review, CE/P Coordinator Charles Dunahoo writes, "I would recommend it to pastors and teachers for personal study. It would also make a good text and format for a group study of Christian doctrine in the Reformed tradition."—Ed.]

Dear Sirs:

Excuse me, but isn't this a PCUSA-type author and publisher? If so, why is the PCA magazine promoting it? Are not there "Intro to Reformed Faith" by conservative/PCA/OPC writers? Can you comment?

Sincerely,

Mike Rodgers

Sierra Madre, California

[Editor's comment: To be quite frank, we, too, were somewhat taken aback when we saw the favorable review. Donald K. McKim is well-known for his questioning the traditional understanding of the inerrancy of Scripture. In our opinion, even if a particular book contains much solid truth, it is wise to note in a review that the author's theology is suspect (if that is the case), lest someone be led to think that all that the author writes is fine.]

Tribute to The Folks of Meadow Creek

Twenty three years ago I was a new, green PCA minister, fresh out of seminary, and called to pastor the Meadow Creek Presbyterian Church. I'm sure I made as many mistakes as new ministers normally make. But the folks at Meadow Creek adopted me as one of their own. The elders led me by the hand and explained to me how I should visit the folks, carry my Bible with me, read the Scriptures and pray with them about their needs; and how to conduct a session meeting. The U. S. Air Force called me to active duty as a chaplain one year after my arrival at Meadow Creek, and with very mixed feelings I accepted their call. I had completed the military application process before ever going to Meadow Creek, but did not know whether a slot would open for me.

The road of time takes us through places we never imagined we would go—through many valleys, up many rocky roads, through a few bogs and thickets, in and out of some pretty dark woods, and occasionally into a shady meadow. Fortunately for me, before that road carried me into some of the rockiest terrain of my journey it led me through a secure and shady meadow where I was fortified for the next leg of my trip. The name Meadow Creek, as far as I am concerned, is worthy of all that it implies—a happy place of refreshment on a journey that was soon to get harder, and a pleasure memory.

I've never seen any happier days than the days I spent at Meadow Creek. And I've never worked with people who showed more interest in my needs, or showed me more common courtesies and friendliness. I never had the first cause to worry about my security or whether they would meet my needs. I consider that they were meeting my needs better than I was meeting theirs. And in those days the fellowship at the church was good. If we had our differences, I don't remember them. No doubt, many of the folks I knew at Meadow Creek are no longer there, but some of them are.

Time's road also brings us across some bridges and to some road forks that force upon us the decision of going to the right or to the left. I have returned to the Baptist faith ways of my your, and I'll never again put myself under care of a presbytery. I have no other motive for writing this [except] to pay tribute where tribute is due. But if I were a Presbyterian minister and Meadow Creek called me I'd try to go back, even if I had to ride a bicycle to get there.

Sincerely,

Richard H. Rosser

591A Key Senter Road, Jackson, TN 38305

[Ordained by Tennessee Valley Presbytery in 1977, Chaplain Rosser has also served in the Tennessee Air National Guard. He was dismissed by Tennessee Valley to the Southern Baptist Convention in 2000.—Ed.]

Dear Editor,

Public sin requires a public confession, and since I used the venue of the Presbyterian International News Service to commit my sin, I seek the venue of PINS to publicly confess and repent. In a previous letter to the editor I cited factual information regarding the average tenure of pastors in such a way as to imply in the present situation regarding TE Jim Thornton, that Meadow Creek Presbyterian Church was at fault. Hopefully thoughtful people realized that average pastoral tenure has nothing to do with the present case.

In essence I slandered the congregation of Meadow Creek Presbyterian Church and implied that the Westminster Presbytery was in error in its actions. I do not know the details of the case and am not personally involved, therefore I have no right to comment on the case. I believe that I have allowed a root of bitterness to grow in my heart over my own failure to minister well to the folks at Meadow Creek and other problems that I experienced there. I also believe that my personal anger against PINS for publishing what I consider to be gossip enflamed my words wrongly against the church.

I publicly apologize to the people of Meadow Creek for my words and for any pain they may have caused. I publicly confess my own sin of bitterness and anger and my use of the written word to imply a slanderous conclusion. I seek the prayers of my brethren in the PCA that the Lord might enable me to live at peace with my fellow believers, and to war only against the Adversary.

In Him, David E. Longacre

[We very much appreciate Mr. Longacre's letter. May the sentiments he has expressed be our own. As for the Meadow Creek situation, the reader's attention is drawn to the coverage of Westminster Presbytery, found on p. 13.—Ed.]

Correction

In the July-August 2001 issue of P&R News, in the article entitled "Assembly Declines to Revisit John Wood Matter," we reported that the Committee on Constitutional Business (CCB) responded to a Constitutional inquiry from the Rev. Arch Van Devender. This is incorrect. The Constitutional inquiry came from Ruling Elder Daniel Jarstfer. We appreciate the member of the CCB who called this to our attention, and we apologize to all concerned for the error.

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Editorial

Providing Answers

The horrific events of September 11, 2001, tremendously shook up our world. In the space of about an hour or so, our world was turned upside down.

That infamous day elicited a variety of responses and reactions, from politicians, pundits, and preachers. But other than a few harshly-criticized comments from evangelicals such as Jerry Falwell and Franklin Graham, there has been virtually no voice heard on the national scene which attempts to give the divine perspective on the terrorist attacks.

To the contrary, there have been many false prophets proclaiming a pluralistic message. Their siren song seeks to soothe by pretending that all of the world's religions are essentially the same, and that whatever "god" may exist certainly had nothing to do with airplanes crashing into skyscrapers.

As Christians, we should be the first to admit that we do not fully understand why God did what He did on September 11th. But we should also be the first to announce that "our God is in the heavens, and He has done whatsoever He has pleased" (Psalm 115:3).

Our impression is that many of the sermons preached on September 16th from evangelical pulpits sounded a note of comfort in the midst of tragedy; and we would certainly not disagree with that theme. Our impression also, however, is that the doctrine of divine sovereignty was sounded from very few pulpits. We also believe that even fewer preachers dared to suggest that at least one of the reasons why God may have done what He did is because He is angry with this nation, and was displaying His judgment.

But at least some of the ministers of our land have had the courage to set forth the idea of God's just wrath against our national sins. And one of the best sermons which we have read on the subject is the one you will find in this issue of the newspaper.

The Bible says that blessing follows obedience and curse follows disobedience. The Scriptures also say that whatsoever a man sows, that shall he also reap—a principle which God's Word illustrates in the lives of nations as well as individuals.

It seems to us that unless we can draw moral lessons from such singular events as we witnessed on September 11th, there is no meaning at all to history. History then would become a tale by an idiot told.

But as people of the Book, that is an untenable position. God does speak to us through His providential dealings with mankind, as He works all things together for His glory and the good of His church. Without that understanding, not only would there would be no sense to history, but there would also be no grounds for calling for days of thanksgiving (for heaven's evident blessing) or days of fasting and prayer (for heaven's evident displeasure).

Let us not shy away from the opportunity presented to us, the church, to proclaim boldly the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and to demonstrate compassion to those directly affected by the events of that terrible Tuesday. Let us also be sure to couch our words and deeds in an understanding of history and providence that will provide answers to a world which desperately is looking for them.

—FJS

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Sports News

Covenant College Soccer Teams Post Winning Seasons

Both the men's and the women's soccer teams at Covenant College posted winning seasons in 2001. The men's team finished with a 13-5-1 record, while the women's had an 11-8 season.

The Lady Scots won the regular season conference championship. Highlighting their season was a 2-0 shutout of the University of Alabama at Huntsville, an NCAA Division II school.

Covenant College is a member of the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA) and the Appalachian Athletic Conference (AAC). Several members of both soccer teams won individual NAIA and AAC honors.

For the Scots, Sheldon Grizzle, Roddy Chisholm, Tim Cobb, and Philip Bleecker were NAIA All-American Honorable Mention. Nathan Brinkerhoff and Ben Kellogg were NAIA Academic All-Americans. Nathan (Interdisciplinary major) had a 3.73 GPA, while Ben (majoring in Biology and Chemistry) had a 3.72. On the women's team, Suzanne Jenkins and Sara Hoxter won NAIA All-American Honorable Mention.

For the Lady Scots, Sara Hoxter, Suzanne Jenkins, Ashley Sherbondy, and Cameron Hastie were All-AAC first team, while Rachel Sasscer and Colleen McQuirk were All-AAC second team. From the men's team, Roddy Chisholm, Ben Kellogg, and Tim Cobb were on the All-AAC first team, and Mike Krom and Allen Duble were on the All-AAC second team.

Covenant College is the denominational school of the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA). The Lookout Mountain, Georgia, institution's soccer teams are often highly-ranked. In 2000, the men's team won the Appalachian Athletic Conference championship.

Brian Crossman coaches the men's soccer team; Mark Duble coaches the women's team.

Photo by Martha Dearry

With a perfect 13-0 record, the champion 4th-5th grade basketball team in the Coeburn (Va.) Youth League was coached by Presbyterian pastor Frank J. Smith. Three of the six players have been named to the Coeburn (Va.) All-Stars Team. Pictured above (left to right) are Ryan Markham, Andrew Pate, Holden Burke, Molly Jenkins, Andrew Dearry, Emily Palmer, and Coach Smith.

Carrying the flag of St. Andrew, Covenant College coeds display their school spirit at Alumni Weekend, October 6, 2001. The men's soccer team defeated North Greenville College, 8-0, while the women's team completed the shutout by winning 9-0.

New Scotland Yard at Covenant College boasts one of the prettiest settings of any soccer field in the country.

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

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

ARIZONA

CALVIN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (OPC)†
4150 Acoma Road/Phoenix
S.S., 9:15AM;Worship, 10:30AM/6PM
Wednesday Bible Study, 7PM
(602) 992-4454

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., 11:30AM; Worship, 9:30AM
(714) 526-3153

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., 9:30AM;
Worship, 11:00AM/6:00PM
(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/6:00PM
(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., 9:30AM; Worship, 8:15AM/10:45PM
(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

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

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

COVENANT PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
625 N. Church Ave./Louisville
Worship 11:00 AM and 6:00 PM
2nd Sunday, Fellowship Meal, 12:15 PM,
Evening Studies at 1:00 PM.
Wed Supper 6:00 PM; Prayer Mtg, 6:30 PM
(601)773-5282

PEARL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
2933 Old Brandon Road/Pearl
S.S., 9:45 AM; Worship, 11:00 AM/6:00 PM
(601)939-1064

TCHULA PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
109 E. Main Street/Tchula
S.S., 10:00 AM; Worship, 11:00 AM/5:00 PM
Wednesday Prayer Meeting, 7:30 PM
(601)924-7334

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
600 Main Street/Woodville
S.S., 10:00 AM; Worship, 11:00 AM/6:00
Wed. Prayer Mtg. (Oct.-May), 6:00 PM
(601) 888-4837

SECOND PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
1926 Grand Avenue at 20th/Yazoo City
S.S., 9:45 AM; Worship, 11:00 AM/ 5:00PM
Wednesday, 7:30 PM
(601)746-8852

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

AFFIRMATION PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
Routes 100 and 139/Somers
S.S., 10:00 AM; Worship, 11:00 AM
(914)232-0546

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

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

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

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/Aliquippa
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

ROCKY SPRINGS PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
123 Rocky Springs Road/Harrisville
S.S., 10:00 AM
Worship, 11:00 AM/6:00 PM
(724)735-2743

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/Connestee
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

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

TENNESSEE

BRAINERD HILLS PRESSBYTERIAN 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

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

VIRGINIA

COEBURN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
220 Second Street SW/Coeburn
S.S., 9:45AM; Worship, 11:00AM/6:30PM
Wednesday Prayer Meeting, 7:00PM
(276)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

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

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†
Aurora Medical Center, I-94 at Highway 164/Waukesha
Bible Study, 10:00 AM; Worship, 11:00 AM
Wednesday Prayer Service, 7:00 PM
(262)246-2421

LAKESIDE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
Seventh Day Adventist Church, 21380 W. Cleveland Ave./New Berlin
S.S., 10:45 AM: Worship, 9:30 AM
(262)968-6769

GRIEVING WITH HOPE
The Rev. James Alexander
PO Box 7100
Florence, SC 29502-7100
(843)664-9759
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† Indicates a non-PCA church.

Summer of 2002 Mission Opportunities

Are you a college student or recent college graduate that is wrestling with how you might use your God given gifts to serve Christ? Would you like to sharpen your abilities to defend the faith and proclaim the gospel? Are you be interested in working shoulder to shoulder with established congregations around the world so that you might better understand the way your gifts might be incorporated into the life of Christ's Church? If so, please prayerfully consider whether a summer with RP Missions might help you in your growth and stir within you the desire to actively serve Christ wherever He may lead. This organization operates under the oversight and authority of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America. RP Missions seeks to provide college students with an introduction to missions from a Biblical and Reformed perspective. We seek to work with established congregations so that participants will better understand the ins and outs of the life of the Church and learn to appreciate and utilize the form of Church government that God has prescribed in His Word.

Participants should expect to spend three hours each week during the spring in training/preparation for the upcoming missions. Below you will find brief descriptions of each of the upcoming trips.

Australia (Four weeks in June/July)

The summer of 2001 will be our second opportunity to travel to Melborne, Australia to work with a congregation on the outskirts of the city in Geelong. This team will be helping a small congregation to carry out several tasks. First, they will be doing some door-to-door work to establish contacts in the community. They will also plan to hold a Holiday Bible Club (VBS) for children in the community. Young people will also be interviewed on local Christian radio stations, where they will give their testimonies and present the gospel and describe their work in Australia. This team will also carry out some ministry in the ports around Melborne. This team will also have opportunity to work in two Christian Schools. While at the schools they will teach in some classrooms as well as lead in the daily assemblies. We will be seeking to encourage our host congregation by participating in the activities and outreach of their congregation. This team is open to college age young people and there is a limit of 12 participants on this mission.

Cyprus (Four weeks in June/July)

For the second year, RP Missions is sending a team to Larnaca, Cyprus. This team of four or five young people will carry out some needed improvements on the Church building and will help organize and implement an English Vacation Bible School. Team members will also be responsible for developing Sunday School lessons for the children of the host congregation. This congregation is heavily involved with ministry to refugees and this team will do what it can to aid in that ministry. Much time will be spent in the establishment of relationships with the members of the congregation and with local children who participate in the Vacation Bible School. A joint outreach effort, distributing pamphlets, will be carried out with another local congregation.

Japan (Four weeks in July/August)

For the fourth year, RP Missions will be sending a team to Kobe, Japan. This team will work with six congregations in the Kobe area. They can expect to lead English language lessons by using Bible lessons, and they will help each congregation carry out their Vacation Bible Schools. Some manual labor can be expected on some of the Churches. Again, much time will be spent establishing relationships with the members of the congregations for the purpose of encouraging them and better understanding the worldwide nature of Christ's Church. Participants will carry out door-to-door ministry, pamphlet distribution, organizing Bible Studies, giving their testimonies, and will participate in a youth conference. This team is limited to 4-6 participants.

Northern Ireland (Two weeks in December/January)

This team will work with two Presbyterian congregations in the towns of Moneydig and Belfast, Northern Ireland. This team will lead some Soccer camps and lead in devotions. They will also help to organize and lead some Vacation Bible Schools. This team is limited to 21 young people.

Scotland (Six weeks in June/July)

Ministry opportunities abound and the need for the gospel is great. Team members can expect to present the gospel in several public schools, distribute several thousand tracts, survey communities and make invitations to these congregations, organize Vacation Bible Schools, and participate in a two week course on Reformation history in England and Scotland. Participants will travel to London and throughout the south central parts of Scotland during that course. This course can be taken for graduate credit from the Reformed Presbyterian Theological Seminary and several other colleges have given credit to students who have successfully completed the course.

Suriname (Two weeks at end of May/June)

This small team of four or five young people will travel to this tropical nation to work with five mission churches that are interested in learning how to sing the Psalms *a cappella*. Applicants for this team should be able to read music and should be familiar with and love the Psalms. Participants will hopefully represent all four parts (soprano, alto, tenor, and bass) to better instruct these congregations in the beauty of *a cappella* singing. Team members will also examine the psalms and prepare some short psalm meditations before teaching the psalms.

If you would like more information, please visit our website, write or call using the information below. Applications are available by mail or by visiting our website. *The application deadline is January 1, 2002.*

RP Missions

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