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30th General Assembly Approves 'Good Faith' Subscription and Condemns Chattel Slavery Annual Meeting Sets Attendance Record

Responding to overtures from about one-third of the presbyteries, the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) General Assembly emphatically adopted what is being called "good-faith" theological subscription, an approach which eschews "strict" subscription and also distances itself from "broad" subscription. It was an approach which perhaps four-fifths of the commissioners found to be appealing.

Also attracting overwhelming approval was an overture from Nashville Presbytery, which condemned chattel slavery, sought racial reconciliation, and professed repentance for past sins which "both we and our fathers" have committed.

The 30th Assembly also went on record as being opposed, on Biblical and moral grounds, to women in combat.

Among the measures not approved was an overture from Westminster Presbytery, which

wanted to restrict the ecclesiastical political activities of denominational administrators who have been promoting the newly-formed Presbyterian Pastoral Leadership Network (PPLN).

Elected Moderator was the Rev. Dr. Joseph "Skip" Ryan, Senior Pastor of the prestigious Park Cities Presbyterian Church of Dallas, Texas. In remarks to the press after the adjournment of the Assembly, Dr. Ryan said, "I'm very grateful for the spirit" of the meeting. It was, he said, a "very difficult Assembly," dealing with many tough issues, but that a "brotherly spirit" pervaded the meeting.

"It's clear that the Assembly wants to affirm that we want to put subscription debates behind us and move on together," said the Moderator, a member of the PPLN Steering Committee which helped to coordinate presbytery overtures regarding subscription.

Referring to the head of PPLN, Dr. Bryan

Chapell, Dr. Ryan said, "Dr. Chapell and others said that this may be a process." Nevertheless, he detected that the desire of the denomination is "not to have to continually discuss the nature of subscription to the Constitution."

A record number of commissioners attended the 30th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA). Final figures indicate that 783 churches were represented by 1602 registered commissioners. Of that number, 1121 (70 per cent) were ministers and 481 (30 per cent) were ruling elders. The previous record for attendance was set in 1998, the denomination's silver anniversary year, when 1423 commissioners registered.

This year's annual meeting marks the third time that it has been held in Birmingham and hosted by Briarwood Presbyterian Church. The previous times were in 1973, when the First PCA Assembly convened, and in 1991.



**30th General
Assembly**



**Briarwood
Presbyterian Church**

Assembly Approves 'Good Faith' Subscription

Birmingham, Alabama (June 20, 2002)— On a day that may well go down as historic in the annals of American Presbyterianism, the 30th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America today voted decisively in favor of what has been called 'good faith' subscription. The final vote in favor of an amendment to the *Book of Church Order* was estimated at a four- or five-to-one ratio.

Along the way, all efforts to stop or postpone the Constitutional proposal, and to amend it, failed.

The proposed change to BCO 21-4 now goes to the presbyteries for advice and consent.

The debate began after the Rev. Steve Smallman of Philadelphia Presbytery presented an eleven-man minority report, which called for a committee to be established in order to study the issue with a view toward gaining consensus. Mr. Smallman stated that he had been prepared to vote in favor of the proposal to amend the Constitution when he came to the Assembly, but that he had become convinced that studying the matter was the appropriate action to take at this time.

The Rev. Ray Cortese, a member of the Presbyterian Pastoral Leadership Network (PPLN) Steering Committee which has been advocating passage of the amendment, stated that he doubted that it is possible to attain greater consensus on the issue of subscription. "There just comes a time for a denomination to call the question," he said, adding, "I can't stand this stuff, parliamentary bickering, yadda, yadda, yadda."

Arguing in favor of the minority recommendation was the Rev. Skip Dusenbury, who said: "I heartily desire that there be peace in the church." However, "I think the ambiguity is going to surface when we debate this in the presbyteries."

The Rev. George Robertson, PPLN spokesman, argued that a study committee would not take the church any farther.

The Rev. Chris Hutchinson argued in favor of studying the matter. Identifying himself as "not a strict subscriptionist," he said, "I agree with where Overture 10 wants to go; I disagree with the means. We need

to go very patiently." He urged that the commissioners "slow the train down, so that more men can get on board."

Dr. Bryan Chapell counseled, "Let's be pastoral, let's be caring. . . . If it's better for the church to slow down, vote your conscience. . . . It is a prudential judgment call. . . . My sense is most of us came because it was time."

Ruling Elder Howard "Q" Davis expressed his great fear that the denomination was in danger of being ripped apart, especially because of the politics. He urged the erection of a committee, saying that in the past, "things I didn't think would get settled by committee, were settled."

Dr. Frank Barker averred, "We're not going to change much in our view of this," adding, "There's not going to be any easy solution to this."

Dr. Don Clements argued for the minority report, saying, "I think we are close to a consensus, but don't force it now." He also expressed the concern of many small churches at the politicization of the process by large churches.

The minority report was then voted on, and turned down by about a two-to-one margin.

Dr. Joseph Pipa then proposed adding a sentence to the proposal, viz., "All exceptions are to be reviewed by the Committee on Review and reported to the General Assembly." The President of Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary argued that without this review by General Assembly, subjectivism will result.

George Robertson countered that such a procedure "would make the Committee on Review of Presbytery Records almost a kind of supreme court." He stated that the Committee on Constitutional Business "has already ruled such a thing to be unconstitutional."

Bryan Chapell also argued the same point, stating that it would be improper and un-Constitutional to allow for that type of review "because we have other Constitutional methods" available, including the assumption of original jurisdiction (BCO 34-1) and complaint (BCO 43).

of *stare decisis*.

Stated Clerk Roy Taylor gave his opinion that an explicit statement in the Rules of Assembly Operations would be necessary in order for the Committee to



After Assembly's adjournment, CCB Chairman Craig Childs and David Coffin confer.

make major changes.

Arguing in favor of the ruling of the chair, that Mr. Coffin's request was not well taken, Dr. Wilson Benton said that the proposal from Mr. Coffin "is a very radical and bizarre proposal."

By an overwhelming margin, the court sustained the chair's ruling, and the B&O report was allowed to stand.

David Coffin noted that without a written record of what a person's exceptions are, "It'd be impossible to invoke [BCO] 34-1 since there'd be no record of it."

Dr. Pipa's amendment failed.

The Rev. Benjamin Inman presented an amendment which would require a two-thirds vote of a presbytery in order to approve an exception. That amendment, too, failed.

The Rev. Scot Sherman, at whose church the PPLN meeting was held in April, urged that the organization's proposal "represents . . . the best of Presbyterianism. . . . Since 1729, . . . people have worked hard to preserve that system of trust we hold for the catholic church." He argued that "those who want to be theologically monolithic" want to use the subscription issue to force conformity across the board, in contrast to adherence to a generic Calvinism.

The Rev. Lee Ferguson presented an amendment, which would have added that a candidate had to state his exceptions "in writing" and that "All such instances of differences shall be recorded in the minutes of the presbytery." Mr. Ferguson presented three reasons for his amendment: one, it helps to clarify that the exception(s) must be in writing; two, men in the Assembly are uncomfortable with the present wording; three, he had been told to wait until the Assembly to present such language, and had been assured that it would be readily acceptable.

Arguing against that amendment was Dr. Chapell, who stated that "once you're required to put this in the minutes, then it will get reviewed"; and that CCB had advised that this procedure was unconstitutional. President Chapell had earlier tried to get Mr. Ferguson's proposal ruled out of order under parliamentary procedure. After the vote on the amendment was taken, he apologized for having mischaracterized the role and functioning of the Committee on Review of Presbytery Records.

Mr. Ferguson's amendment failed, but by probably less than a two-to-one margin.

Skip Dusenbury moved another

amendment, picking up on language from Westminster Presbytery's overture on subscription. This amendment would have required the Presbytery to vote on whether a man would be allowed to teach or practice his exception. Dr. Will Barker argued against the proposal, asserting that it would work against liberty of conscience. By a large margin, the amendment was defeated.

The next speaker was the Rev. Jim Braden of Fayetteville, North Carolina, who was alarmed at the intrinsic danger evident to him in the proposed change to the Constitution. He expressed amazement that some of the founding fathers of the PCA "could be part of this overture. . . . A loose subscription to the standards has inevitably led to the decline of orthodoxy." He also was concerned that passage of the proposal "would establish a particular view"; and that "part of the overture which supposedly gives guidance, gives no guidance," in that the "terms are nowhere defined."

Will Barker argued for what he called good-faith subscription, as he made reference to a generic Calvinism. He stated that this protects against liberalism, and that there is a danger of a too-strict subscription.

Ruling Elder Bruce Ferg of Tucson, Arizona, urged defeat of the proposal. He said that the "unifying theme is that everyone wants to avoid wranglings." However, the proposal, which is badly worded, will invite confusion. The lawyer, who works in the Arizona Attorney General's office, warned concerning the proposal: "It deserves to be defeated because it's simply bad language."

The Rev. Ron Steel picked up on Will Barker's theme, as he said that strict subscription "tends to the watering down" of confessional commitment. He also argued that the PCA needs to stop being distracted by the debate over subscription. "There's got to be a way to put this issue to bed."

With a flutter of yellow cards, the Assembly expressed its will. Almost immediately, scores of commissioners lined up to record their negative votes.

Coffin Protests 'Political Maneuvering'

Birmingham, Alabama (June 21, 2002)— A strongly-worded protest from the Rev. David Coffin was spread on the record of the 30th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America. The Fairfax, Virginia, pastor's protest excoriated the court for having violated its long-standing procedure with regard to the conduct of business before the Bills & Overtures (B&O) Committee [see article to the left—Ed.].

Joining Mr. Coffin in the protest were other members of this year's B&O Committee. Other commissioners later added their names to the document.

Even recording the protest turned out to be a controversial matter. Several commissioners objected that the document did not fit the Constitutional criteria that it be couched in temperate language and respectful to the court. The Rev. Henry Lewis Smith, Assistant Pastor of First Presbyterian Church, Prattville, Alabama, asked for the court to allow Mr. Coffin to moderate the remarks.

Mr. Jim Mazzonette, a ruling elder from Christ Covenant Presbyterian Church, Matthews, North Carolina, raised a point of order, viz., that the protest was contrary to ordination vows which promises subjection to the brethren. The Moderator overruled the point of order, stating that subjection to the brethren does not bind the conscience. Mr. Mazzonette challenged the ruling of the

chair, and the court overwhelmingly sustained the chair.

The Moderator, Skip Ryan, then stated: "We need to listen to our brother", and added that the issue before the court as to whether the protest should be recorded or not was, "Do you find his remarks to be temperate and respectful to the court?" He later stated that if the court received the protest, he would entertain a motion to appoint a three-man committee to respond to the protest, and still later said, "There's a difference between intemperate language, disrespectful language, and arguing the case strongly."

Dr. Clair Davis, professor of church history at Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia, said that he was "99.9 per cent in favor of this protest," but that the words "'political maneuvering' impugn motives."

Dr. Stephen Clark, who presented the minority report of the Women in the Military the previous night, supported the recording of the protest. Referring to remarks made about his minority report, he called upon the commissioners to "remember some of the intemperate remarks made last night. If you didn't call a point of order last night, why do you call it now?"

On a highly-divided vote, the Assembly decided that the protest was proper and allowed it to be spread on the record.

(For text of protest see page 3)

GA Overturns Long-Standing Practice

Birmingham, Alabama (June 20, 2002)— An intense parliamentary debate broke out on the floor of the 30th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA), as the court decided whether overtures from presbyteries could be significantly amended by the Bills & Overtures (B&O) Committee.

The Rev. David Coffin, who has been a significant player on the floor of the PCA Assembly because of his parliamentary skill, asked the Moderator to rule the entire B&O report out of order in that the Committee had not followed its own rules in the preparation of the report. Specifically, the Committee had not allowed anything other than minor amendment to the various overtures before the Committee.

The Fairfax, Virginia, pastor argued that the practice of allowing the B&O Committee to modify overtures significantly was not simply a matter of custom that could be overturned on the basis of Roberts' Rules of Order, but that this practice was the settled opinion of the church as to its interpretation of the meaning of the relevant statutes which govern the conduct of the business. He pleaded for the upholding of the principle

PROPOSED SUBSTITUTE FOR OVERTURE 3 ET AL

The following was David Coffin's proposed substitute that he was prevented from presenting to the Bills & Overtures Committee:

At BCO 21-4, second paragraph, strike the last sentence: "In all cases, he should be asked to indicate whether he has changed his previous views concerning any points in the *Confession of Faith, Catechisms, and Book of Church Order* of the Presbyterian Church in America."

At BCO 21-4, after item "d," add a new item as follows:

e. He shall be examined as to his willingness to answer in the affirmative the questions for ordination (BCO 21-5).

1. With respect to the second question, Presbytery shall determine if the candidate is out of accord with any of the fundamentals of the *Confession of Faith* and *Catechisms* of this Church and, as a consequence, is not able in good faith sincerely to receive and adopt the same as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures.

2. In making this determination the Presbytery shall require the candidate to state the specific instances in which he is doubtful about, or in disagreement with, the biblical fidelity of any of the propositions or sentences of these doctrinal standards, which doubts or disagreements shall be called exceptions. The Presbytery must judge whether an exception so undermines the integrity of the system of doctrine, government, discipline and worship of the doctrinal standards as to (a) make implausible the candidate's profession of that system, or, (b) make impossible the candidate's conscientious practice under that system; in either of which cases, the exception cannot be permitted and the candidate must be disapproved.

3. If the exception is found permissible, the candidate shall be approved only under the following conditions: (a) he must be able and willing to explain the teaching of the doctrinal standards in the excepted part with sympathy and deference, and/or to submit himself to the requirements of the excepted part; (b) he shall be permitted to express his own conscience on the matter in the course of his teaching on the subject; and (c) he shall be permitted peacefully and respectfully to advocate his views before the courts of the church in order to persuade the church to modify its doctrinal standards.

4. The Presbytery shall not permit an exception except as set forth above, subject always to the review of the General Assembly. Whenever an exception is permitted, the Presbytery shall make a full record of the exception, including a citation of the portion of the Constitution excepted, and a brief statement, agreeable to the candidate, of the candidate's views.

The Coffin Protest

We the undersigned do solemnly protest the failure of the 30th General Assembly to sustain the appeal of the Moderator's ruling in the point of order raised against the report of the Bills and Overtures Committee. This failure has confirmed an egregious injustice and, in our judgement, has discredited the integrity of the Assembly's actions on critically important and controversial overtures. The Assembly's failure to correct this abuse of her rules, profoundly aggravated by the context within which it occurred, constitutes a tragic step backward for the Presbyterian Church in America, for recent Assemblies had provided some hope that the denomination had matured beyond the political maneuvering that had marred her past. In the midst of many otherwise laudable accomplishments, this failure legitimized the unwarranted and unnecessary limitation of straightforward brotherly debate and, at least for some of us, has fostered an atmosphere of suspicion and mistrust. It adds insult to injury that such a course should be pursued to advance the cause of "pastoral leadership," and amidst exhortations to, and prayers for, the unity and peace of the church. We register this protest in the hope that testimony to our conscience in this matter might awaken afresh due consideration of the real harm, to both brothers in Christ, as well as to the Assembly as a whole, that a repetition of this practice will produce.

Skip Ryan Elected Moderator of 30th General Assembly

Birmingham, Alabama (June 18, 2002)—The Rev. Dr. Joseph Ryan, Senior Pastor of Park Cities Presbyterian Church, Dallas, Texas, was elected Moderator of the 30th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America. Dr. Ryan, known as "Skip," was elected by about a two-to-one margin over the Rev. Dr. Anees Zaka of Philadelphia Presbytery.

A graduate of Harvard College and Westminster Theological Seminary, Dr. Ryan was ordained to plant Trinity Presbyterian Church in Charlottesville, Virginia. His present congregation in Dallas is the third largest in the denomination, with 5309 members reported in the 2001 denominational Yearbook.

Nominating Dr. Ryan was Dr. Ligon Duncan, Senior Pastor of First Presbyterian Church, Jackson, Mississippi. In his nominating speech, Dr. Duncan noted Skip's wide-ranging service, which includes an international radio ministry and being a consultant for the U. S. State Department regarding South Africa.

In remarks immediately after his election, Skip Ryan spoke of the meaning of "communion" as being "common union." He applied that truth with regard to the present Assembly: "We call ourselves fathers and brothers, because we're part of a common family." That should be reflected in "the way we talk to one another, the way we love one another."

Nominating Dr. Zaka was Dr. Peter Lillback, Senior Pastor of Proclamation Presbyterian Church, Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania, and an adjunct professor of historical theology at Westminster Theological Seminary. Dr. Lillback argued that there was no better person than Dr.

Zaka to demonstrate to a watching world that the PCA was committed to welcoming people of all races into the church. A native of Egypt, Dr. Zaka has been involved in ministry to Muslims.

of last September 11th, that the PCA was able to rise above extremism, racism, and hatred.

In an interview after the evening recess, Moderator Ryan said: "I do desire that the



The Honorable Joseph "Skip" Ryan

Dr. Lillback noted that this was the 30th anniversary of the founding of the PCA in Birmingham, as well as the 40th anniversary of "Letter from a Birmingham Jail," penned by Martin Luther King, Jr., which attacked black Muslim extremism. Dr. Lillback stated that Dr. Zaka's election would send a strong signal, especially after the terrorist attacks

way we speak to one another reflect the fact that we belong to one another." In his view, the General Assembly is "also the gathering of the family as well as the gathering of the court of the church." Therefore, the language of family ("fathers and brothers") "is not happenstance."

Meek Seeks Clarification

On Wednesday, June 19th, the second day of the General Assembly, the Rev. Jim Meek introduced a resolution, arising from a current controversy on this year's Bills & Overtures Committee, which asks the Constitutional Business Committee to propose amendments to governing documents if necessary, in order to make clear that overtures may be amended. During discussion of this matter, the Rev. David Coffin stated that he was "going to ask that the B&O report be ruled out of order," since the Committee this year has been violating Assembly rules by not allowing amendments to overtures. Mr. Meek is on faculty at Covenant Theological Seminary, St. Louis.

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Assembly Adopts Racial Reconciliation Overture

Birmingham, Alabama (June 20, 2002)—In a dramatic vote this afternoon, the 30th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) voted to confess its “heinous sins attendant with unbiblical forms of servitude—including oppression, racism, exploitation, manstealing, and chattel slavery,” all of which “stand in opposition to the Gospel.” The court voted to “confess our involvement in these sins. As a people, both we and our fathers, have failed to keep the commandments, the statutes, and the laws God has commanded. We therefore publicly repent of our pride, our complacency, and our complicity. Furthermore, we seek the forgiveness of our brothers and sisters for the reticence of our hearts that have constrained us from acting swiftly in this matter.”

“We will strive, in a manner consistent with the Gospel imperatives, for the encouragement of racial reconciliation, the establishment of urban and minority congregations, and the enhancement of existing ministries of mercy in our cities, among the poor, and across all social, racial, and economic boundaries, to the glory of God. Amen.”

Added to the overture from Nashville Presbytery was a 1977 statement from a North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council (NAPARC) conference on race.

The dramatic nature of the debate was highlighted by the unusual procedure adopted for consideration of the matter. The rules were suspended in order to allow representatives of the Bills & Overtures (B&O) Committee to speak for ten minutes, to be followed by thirty minutes of discussion on the main motion “without a motion for the previous question being in order.”

B&O Chairman Ligon Duncan began the ten-minutes allotted to his Committee, as he declared: “My heart was changed. My sins were challenged.” He also stated that as far as he could tell, no man on the Committee was driven by considerations of political correctness.

Mr. Sam Duncan, who was Moderator of the 1997 Assembly, said, “I come to this discussion with some baggage,” that baggage being that he is a “lifetime resident of the state of Mississippi.” He spoke of growing up on a farm, and of being sent to an academy when the public schools started to be integrated in the 1960s, often by court order. The Magnolia State attorney revealed that the Session of his church had decided to ban two children from a foster family which had taken them in. The one child is HIV-positive, and the second has full-blown AIDS. He added that “those children were black.”

Mr. Duncan said that “black ministers needed ministry tools in order to minister in

black communities. . . . We need to do more than wishing them well,” and that this overture would give them the needed assistance.

Dr. Charles McGowan, Moderator of the 1996 Assembly, declared: “I’ve never seen a [Bills & Overtures] Committee so deeply impacted by the power of the Holy Spirit. . . . We sensed strongly that God was impressing upon us that now is the time [to speak out against racism].” He recalled the segregated restrooms and segregated water fountains, and confessed, “I come as a pastor whose hands are not clean.” In the old denomination, it was “the liberal faction [that] was embracing the civil rights movement,” and as a result he tried to link that movement with liberalism.

Dr. McGowan noted that he has known of white families who stopped coming to church when blacks started to attend, and that he had not confronted the whites about the matter. “I publicly repent of that,” he said.

“There yet remains throughout our nation racism in various forms,” the Nashville pastor said. “Now is the time to take action, as we move [as a denomination] into our thirtieth year. . . . It’s time to own our sin to own our past. . . . The gospel will bring us to repentance.”

He concluded: “There will be those who will say, ‘Let’s not do this. It will be too divisive.’” Instead, he urged the commissioners: “Let us deal honestly with our sin.”

Ruling Elder Neil Payne moved that the matter be postponed indefinitely, as a way of neither adopting nor voting against the overture. He stated that we have been “tainted by unwholesome contemporary influences”; that adoption of the overture “would also create barriers”; and that there were unfounded assumptions in the overture.

The Rev. Mike Khandjian, who comes from an Armenian background and who experienced prejudice against him in the South because of his relatively-dark complexion, argued against the procedural motion. “This motion offends me,” he declared.

The Rev. Gene Case, Stated Clerk of Grace Presbytery, spoke in favor of the motion to postpone indefinitely. “We’ve heard some very eloquent expressions of personal experiences,” said the pastor from Woodville, Mississippi. However, he was opposed to the overture because of the implicit attack on the reputations of godly 19th century churchmen such as James Smylie, Charles Colcott Jones, and John L. Girardeau, who ministered effectively to blacks in antebellum days. Even after the War, the Southern Presbyterian Church had declared its desire that the races worship together. However, the intervention of the

federal government, which had engaged in a war of annihilation against the Confederacy, had by its policies after the War caused much bitterness in racial matters.

The Rev. Travis Hutchinson argued that the matter of racism is “something that touches us today.” He cited a book owned by the PCA, entitled *The Historical Birth of the PCA*, which in his estimation had racist sentiments. Mr. Hutchinson stated that he had spoken with Christian Education and Publications Coordinator Charles Dunahoo about the matter.

The Rev. Steve Wilkins, a scholar on the South, arose to say that “we should condemn sin and racism.” However, the overture “goes far beyond that.” The Monroe, Louisiana, pastor counseled that “it’s proper to repent of the sins of your fathers, if you hold to the same sins.” In his view, adopting the overture “starts us on the road of meaningless repentance.”

The Rev. David O’Dowd spoke against the motion to postpone.

Speaking in favor was the Rev. Bob Slimp, a former Army chaplain who told of a young black officer who died in his arms while professing that his hope was in Christ. Mr. Slimp pleaded that this matter of the overture “has come upon us very suddenly. It needs much refinement.”

An African-American minister from Philadelphia, the Rev. Lance Lewis, urged defeat of the motion to postpone indefinitely. He expressed his gratitude to

the men on the B&O Committee as they had wrestled with this issue. Mr. Lewis said that he stood before the Assembly “not as someone seeking political correctness, not as someone seeking to bow before the idol of CNN or academia,” but as one who, with his denomination, “stands on the Word of the living God.” He said: “It cannot be God’s Word only when we’re pointing it at the liberals and everyone else. It must also be God’s Word when it’s pointing against me and my sin. Brothers, I confess to you that I am guilty of the sin of racism. When I see a white man from the South stand up and begin to speak with a Southern drawl, y’all, I look at him and automatically assume that he must be against me, and not only doesn’t understand but does not wish to understand where I come from. And I say to you this afternoon that I confess and repent of that sin.”

The Rev. William H. Smith spoke for the procedural motion. Mr. Smith declared, “I have paid my dues,” as he noted that he had disappointed friends in past years because of his refusal to oppose inter-racial dating and marriage. However, he is fearful of worship and doctrine that are “race-specific.”

Time elapsed on debate, and the procedural motion was voted down.

The B&O Committee recommendation was then put to the court, and it passed overwhelmingly. Many commissioners thereupon applauded and rose for a standing ovation.



Neill Payne



Lance Lewis



William H. Smith

Assembly Approves Resolutions on Racial Relations

Birmingham, Alabama (June 20, 2002)—The 30th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) today approved two personal resolutions with regard to racial relations.

In response to a personal resolution from the Rev. Thomas Joseph, et al., the Assembly resolved that “every member, Teaching Elder, and Ruling Elder in the Presbyterian Church in America be urged to examine themselves in the light of Scripture and by the leading of God’s indwelling Holy Spirit to determine if there be any unrepented of and unconfessed sins of partiality, favoritism, or prejudice”; that “if any such sins be discovered, either present or past, that these sins be admitted to and forgiveness sought from God and from those brothers so sinned against”; that “the Presbyterian Church in America, at the denominational, local church, and personal levels, be encouraged to continue and/or begin to search out the lost wherever they are and lovingly and powerfully proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ in culturally relevant and meaningful ways as God leads by His Holy Spirit and gives the wisdom to understand”; and that “the Presbyterian Church in America seek to lead the way denominationally in racial reconciliation, regardless of color or ethnic background, for the sake of the Body of Christ and for

the glory of God.”

The Assembly also approved a personal resolution from the Rev. Henry Lewis Smith, et al., which called upon all those under the care of the General Assembly “to search their hearts before the Triune God, who is ‘no respecter of persons’ (Acts 10:34), and to repent and renounce any racism and/or class-consciousness.” The resolution also encouraged PCA churches “to make known that the doors to its worship and the arms of its fellowship are open to warmly welcome all persons without regard to race, class or national origin, and that it welcomes into its membership all who, according to Book of Church Order Chapter 57 (and any general provisions including those regarding discipline) come with a credible profession of their faith in the Great King and Head of the Church and Savior of the body, the Lord Jesus Christ.” The “whereas” section of this resolution made reference to the action of the Southern Presbyterian Church in 1865, in which the General Assembly stated that it saw no reason why the races should not continue to worship together.

The Bills & Overtures (B&O) Committee recommended passage of the Joseph resolution by a vote of 26-5-2, and of the Smith resolution by a vote of 34-1-1.

Assembly Approves Amendment Regarding Original Jurisdiction

Birmingham, Alabama (June 20, 2002)—The 30th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) today gave its blessing to amending the *Book of Church Order (BCO)* so as to increase the number of presbyteries necessary to petition for the assumption of original jurisdiction over a minister by the General Assembly. The action came in response to overtures from numerous presbyteries, which asked that the number be raised from two presbyteries, to a total of ten per cent of the presbyteries.

If the measure is approved by two-thirds of the presbyteries, next year's Assembly would have to approve also before it was enacted into church law.

The PCA presently has more than 60 presbyteries, meaning that a total of seven presbyteries would be required to petition for original jurisdiction if the amendment passes.

Arguing in favor of the amendment was the Rev. John Yenchko, Senior Pastor of New Life Presbyterian Church, Glenside, Pennsylvania. He conceded that adopting the amendment would create a double standard, in that the proviso that only two Sessions need petition a presbytery for original jurisdiction over a church member would remain intact. However, he argued that "we operate one step at a time."

Pastor Yenchko stated that while "the evils of liberal theology are a serious matter," it is also true that "activist presbyteries are a great danger." He added, "I believe that ten per cent is a very low threshold."

The Rev. Andrew Webb, church planter in Fayetteville, North Carolina, spoke against the proposal: "I would beg you not to pass this. I

need the continued oversight that [BCO] 34-1 provides. . . . It was put in there because of abuses in the PCUS [Presbyterian Church in the United States, from which the PCA was formed—Ed.]."

He continued: "34-1 has only been used once [the John Wood matter—Ed.]," but that subsequent events demonstrated why it was necessary to be invoked in that instance. Mr. Webb declared: "The proposal . . . eviscerates the standard. Deuteronomy 19:15 sets the Biblical standard for witnesses before us. . . . Ten per cent is never set in the Bible. That is a post-modern standard. . . . Please, do not pass this for the future history of the denomination."

The Rev. Dr. Frank Barker, Pastor Emeritus at host church Briarwood Presbyterian, argued for the amendment: "This just keeps it where it's been." In his view, the amendment provides adequate protection against liberalism, while also preventing an activist minority from pressing charges.

The Rev. Larry Ball, Pastor of Bridwell Heights Presbyterian Church, Kingsport, Tennessee, argued against the amendment: "We need to go back to the Word of God." There are, he said, many numbers that are important in Scripture: the number 12, the number 3, the number 666. "But the number 2 is important, too, with regard to judicial procedures," as in the necessity of two witnesses for a conviction in a trial.

In taking this action, the General Assembly declined to adopt an overture from Potomac Presbytery which would have set the minimal number of presbyteries, and the minimal number of Sessions, to petition for original jurisdiction at five per cent.

Assembly Refuses to Receive Personal Resolution in Opposition to League of the South

Birmingham, Alabama (June 19, 2002)—By an overwhelming margin, the 30th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) voted today not to receive a personal resolution condemning the League of the South (LOS). The resolution, introduced by the Rev. Merle Messer, would have counseled churches not to allow their buildings to be used for LOS activities.

Arguing against receiving the matter was the Rev. David Coffin, who contended that to entertain the resolution would violate "our doctrine not to consider anything political." Also arguing against the reception

of the resolution was Ruling Elder Neill Payne of Black Mountain, North Carolina.

In response to a general query, the Rev. Gene Case, Stated Clerk of Grace Presbytery, a member of the League of the South, noted that it was a purely political organization.

Others in the PCA are also members of the organization, including the Rev. Steve Wilkins, Pastor of Auburn Avenue Presbyterian Church, Monroe, Louisiana.

Among the stated objectives of the LOS is the peaceful secession of the South from the federal union.

In Other Action on Resolutions . . .

Ruling Elder John Mardirosian presented a resolution honoring Vincent Donato, who has been on the Session of Evangelical Presbyterian Church, Mount Laurel, New Jersey, since 1952. The Assembly exercised its prerogative of not sending the resolution to a committee, but adopting it immediately.

Ruling Elder Jim Mezzanotte's resolution, which asked that there not be links on the denominational web site to sites with material which may be regarded as slanderous, was referred to the Administrative Committee. The Assembly later answered the resolution in the negative. The Committee of Commissioners on Administration gave the following as grounds for its unanimous recommendation (23-0-0) that the resolution be turned down: "Material is currently screened prior to posting by accountable Committees/Agencies"; "Each Committee/Agency has its own policy for review and approval of material posted on their associated web sites"; "Those concerned about content on the official web site of the PCA may contact the responsible Committee/Agency to voice their concerns."



The old Southern Railway tracks, Birmingham

Commissioner Hit by Paper Missiles During Vote on Racial Reconciliation

A commissioner to the 30th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) was hit by paper missiles. The incident occurred immediately after he voted against Overture 20 from Nashville Presbytery on racial reconciliation.

After being hit, the man turned around to see if someone he knew was perhaps kidding him. However, when he turned around, he saw no faces that he recognized.

The commissioner later reported the incident to an official in the Stated Clerk's office, who reportedly was shocked at the occurrence.

Chesapeake's Concerns Referred to MNA

An overture from Chesapeake Presbytery asked for the establishment of a study committee on ministry amidst ethnic diversity. The 30th General Assembly answered the overture by referring the matter to the Mission to North America staff to "1) Explore the challenges presented to our ministry by the increasing ethnic diversity of our nation. 2) Suggest ways our General Assembly Committees, Presbyteries, and churches might meet these challenges. 3) Offer a statement of biblical values and commitments to God, to the world and to ourselves [regarding] our convictions in these matters, and to report to the 31st General Assembly."

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Assembly Goes on Record as Being Opposed to Women in Combat

Birmingham, Alabama (June 20, 2002)—The 30th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) this evening voted that sending women into combat is a violation of Scripture. On a highly-divided vote, the court voted down the minority report from the Ad Interim Committee on Women in the Military and then voted for the majority report. By adopting the Committee report, the General Assembly voted that it “declares it to be the biblical duty of man to defend woman and therefore condemns the use of women as military combatants, as well as any conscription of women in the Armed Services of the United States.”

The action tonight culminates a six year effort for the PCA to go on record in opposition to women warriors. In 1996, Philadelphia Presbytery overtured the Assembly to take a strong stance against women in combat. That Assembly simply expressed concern over the matter, but declined to adopt Philadelphia’s overture and asked the lower court for more exegetical support for its position. The 1997 Assembly voted down Philadelphia’s request for a study committee on the matter. The 1998 Assembly did appoint such an ad interim committee. The 1999 Assembly did not accept the committee’s report, and instead added to the committee several people who had problems with the approach being taken by the committee. The 2000

GA Declines to Send Women in Military Report to U.S. President

Birmingham, Alabama (June 21, 2002)—The 30th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA), having voted for a strong position in opposition to women in combat last evening, this morning declined to send a copy of the committee report to the President of the United States.

The motion to send the report to the Commander-in-Chief was immediately challenged by the Rev. David Coffin, who argued as a point of order that this was a new item of business. The chair, however, ruled that this was disposing of something previously adopted. Mr. Coffin challenged the ruling of the chair, and the Assembly sustained the chair on a close vote.

The Rev. Chris Hutchinson then moved that the Assembly also attach to the report the list of negative votes which had been recorded on the matter. Arguing against that amendment was the Rev. Don Stone of Allentown, Pennsylvania, one of the prime movers behind Philadelphia Presbytery’s overture on the matter. In his view, to send the list of negative votes would send a wrong message. The Rev. Wyatt George, pastor of Evangelical Presbyterian Church, Carbondale, Illinois, also opposed the amendment.

The Rev. David Coffin moved a substitute that the minority report be attached to what is sent. Speaking against the substitute was the Rev. Mark Horne of Minco, Oklahoma.

Mr. Jim Mazzonette then raised a point of order, viz., that the substitute is contrary to Book of Church Order 24-5(5), by going contrary to the notion of being in subjection to the brethren. But the chair ruled that the substitute was in order.

When time elapsed on debate, the court first voted down the substitute, then voted down the amendment, and finally voted down the main motion.

Assembly granted an extension to the committee to complete its work. The 2001 Assembly adopted several recommendations which were agreed to by all members of the committee, but could not agree as to whether to adopt the majority opinion (that the issue of women in combat is a moral issue) or the minority opinion (that the issue is one of prudence but not of Biblical compulsion).

Presenting the majority report were the Rev. Stephen Leonard and the Rev. Dr. Peter Lillback. Addressing the concern that the majority report might lead to the disciplining of military personnel who see nothing wrong with female combatants, Dr. Lillback argued that the exercise of discipline would be the last resort.

Presenting the minority report was the Rev. Dr. Stephen Clark. Senior pastor of Wallace Memorial Presbyterian Church, Hyattsville, Maryland, Dr. Clark stated that “no one thinks that it’s a good idea for women to be in combat, or denies that man has a duty to protect women.” However, for the minority, there are two critical issues: 1. Can the matter be raised to a moral standard?; 2. What is the nature of this church court?

Dr. Clark argued that “common ground on this matter was not going to be found in Old Testament law,” as the majority had attempted to do. He also stated that the “logic of the report eludes us,” as the majority tried to make its case by reference

to abortion.

Speaking in favor of the minority report was the Rev. Jeff Hutchinson, Senior Pastor of Trinity Presbyterian Church, Asheville, North Carolina. Mr. Hutchinson referred to the Rev. Joe Mullins, Pastor of New Covenant Presbyterian Church, Norfolk, Virginia, who ministers to many chaplains in his congregation, as one who also opposed the majority position.

Speaking against the minority was Hadley Mitchell, a ruling elder from Providence Presbyterian Church, Fort Wayne, Indiana, who passionately said: “I find the minority report to be naïve almost beyond description! Has the presenter of the report never heard of Tailhook? Does he not realize what would happen to a woman in combat who becomes a prisoner of war?”

Another ruling elder, Christopher Menges from Susquehanna Valley Presbytery, also argued against the minority report. In his view, “to have women in combat positions is sin.” Alluding to the position taken earlier today against racism, Mr. Menges stated that the women in combat issue “is the social issue of the twenty-first century.”

When the vote was taken with the customary show of yellow cards, the chair was in doubt as to the result. On a standing vote, the chair declared that the minority had been defeated. On a similarly close vote, the committee report was adopted.

General Assembly Votes to Oust CRCNA from NAPARC

Birmingham, Alabama (June 19, 2002)—With very little debate, the 30th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) overwhelmingly voted to terminate the membership of the Christian Reformed Church of North America (CRCNA) from the North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council (NAPARC). The proposed removal of the CRCNA from NAPARC, which action was initiated by the PCA, was approved by unanimous vote of the Council last November. The reason for the expulsion revolves around the CRCNA allowing women to occupy ruling and teaching office.

The only speech against the motion came from the Rev. David Gordon of North Georgia Presbytery. Mr. Gordon argued that having male teaching elders is not of the essence of the church. Noting that Protestantism is divided into hundreds of divisions, Mr. Gordon rhetorically asked:



IRC of C Chairman Lewis Ruff

“How is it that we feel no sense of shame for this situation?” He urged that since “our Lord never made this matter one of unity,” the PCA Assembly should not perpetuate the fracturing by breaking this tie with the CRCNA, a denomination founded in the 19th century by Dutch immigrants.

The court, however, with only a scattered number of yellow cards in opposition, voted to oust the CRCNA.

Seven years ago, the 23rd PCA General Assembly voted to rebuke the CRCNA for allowing women to be ministers and elders, and also instructed its delegation to NAPARC to use all due diligence to remove the CRCNA from the organization if the denomination did not repent of its action by its next Synod. It was not until the 1997 meeting of NAPARC that the Council voted to suspend the CRCNA as a preliminary step toward eventual expulsion. At the 1997 PCA Assembly, the denomination voted to terminate fraternal relations with the CRCNA.

The CRCNA and the PCA, presently two of the larger Calvinistic denominations in North America, had been among the five founding denominations of NAPARC in 1975. However, as early as 1983, concerns were being heard in PCA circles about the liberalizing trends in the CRCNA. In 1992, the General Assembly instructed its Interchurch Relations Committee (IRC) to investigate the CRCNA—an instruction which the IRC refused to carry out. The 1993 Assembly re-issued that mandate. The 1994 Assembly, not satisfied with the IRC report, took the unprecedented step of ordering that it not be printed in the General Assembly minutes.

In contrast to previous years when the IRC Committee of Commissioners often dealt extensively with controversial reports, the meeting of this year’s Committee took just over an hour.

The expulsion of the CRCNA will be effective as soon as two-thirds of the member churches of NAPARC vote in favor.

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Overture 7 Regarding PCA Foundation Defeated

Birmingham, Alabama (June 19, 2002)—Without extensive debate, the Presbyterian Church in America General Assembly overwhelmingly turned down Overture 7 from Westminster Presbytery with regard to the oversight of the PCA Foundation (PCAF) and other Assembly agencies. In recommending this action, the Committee of Commissioners for Administration stated: "The General Assembly as a whole, not individual members of the PCA, has oversight of General Assembly Committees and Agencies." Also stated in the grounds was the statement that there are "certain legal requirements to be met before a member of the General Assembly may secure copies of specified records of General Assembly within a reasonable time frame." This ground, which was recommended by the Permanent Administrative Committee (AC), was a replacement for another statement initially adopted by AC, which contended that "The PCA is incorporated under Delaware law as a non-stock corporation, which does not give individuals the right to inspect the records as the overture alleges."

A motion from the Rev. Larry Ball, that AC be instructed to define what records are available for inspection and the procedures that must be followed, was referred to AC for report next year. A pastor in Kingsport, Tennessee, Mr. Ball is a member of Westminster Presbytery.

The General Assembly also followed the unanimous (25-0-0) recommendation of the PCAF Committee of Commissioners, that all three items of Overture 7 be answered in the negative. With regard to the first item, which asked that members of the denominational corporation be allowed to inspect the records, the Committee gave several grounds, including the following: "The PCAF is fully under and submissive to the General Assembly in all the provisions of the BCO, RAO and its own by-laws and articles of incorporation"; "The Overture cites Delaware Civil law; however, the PCAF is incorporated under Georgia law"; and "The Overture appears to use civil law to circumvent the ecclesiastical government of the General Assembly over the PCAF and other Committees and Agencies." With regard to the second item, the request that the Assembly "instruct all of the committees and agencies, including

those that may be separately incorporated, of the rights of the members of the General Assembly in this regard," the Committee stated: "We deem it as unnecessary because the General Assembly already has a system of oversight. The committees and agencies of the PCA are already submissive to the General Assembly in all the provisions of the BCO and RAO and their own respective bylaws, articles of incorporation or manuals of operations." With regard to the third item, that if the Assembly "is unable to assert its rightful ownership of and oversight of these agencies, the Assembly begin the process of divesting itself of these agencies," the Committee asserted: "The General Assembly has and does continue to maintain proper oversight over its committees and agencies."

The Assembly also adopted the following statement: "The committee recommends that the General Assembly remind individuals and churches that they should show charity and honor to brothers in dealing with ecclesiastical issues. A letter that was disseminated this year has brought harm to the reputation of the PCAF and impeded its ability to do ministry. This should be avoided." This wording, which came with the unanimous recommendation of the Committee of Commissioners, was milder than other wording which had been proposed within the Committee and preliminarily adopted. The letter to which reference was made had been sent throughout the denomination by the Session of Midway Presbyterian Church, Jonesborough, Tennessee.

Yesterday, as the Committee met, PCAF President Randy Stair presented his agency's perspective on the matter. Distributed to members of the Committee were copies of a report from PCAF marked "confidential."

During his presentation, Mr. Stair quoted from *P&R News* as to its evaluation of the controversy regarding Overture 7. As he did so, he good-naturedly turned to the *P&R News* reporter and said that since this was the second time he was favorably quoting from the newspaper (the other being at the Presbyterian Pastoral Leadership Network meeting in Atlanta in April), he ought to get his own complimentary subscription. The reporter assured him that he would take care of it.

All Amendments Pass, Save One

Birmingham, Alabama (June 19, 2002)—All *Book of Church Order* amendments reported to the 30th General Assembly, save one, were passed today by the Assembly. One of the amendments finally enacted increased the number of men on the permanent program committees from 14 to 15 and increased their terms of office from four to five years. Another amendment specifies that each congregation may automatically be represented by two ruling elders at Presbytery. An amendment to *BCO* 12 added to the duties of a Session that it must "ensure that the Word of God is preached only by such men as are sufficiently qualified (*BCO* 4-4, 53-2, 1 Timothy 2:11-12)." Two other amendments dealing with judicial process were also approved.

One of those changes will now require that "[a]ll testimony shall be recorded (transcription, audiotape, videotape, or some other electronic means)," and that "in order to be referenced in written or oral briefs, such recording must be transcribed and the transcription authenticated by the trial court. The court of final appeal may assess the cost of transcription equitably among the parties."

Dr. Charles McGowan, who serves on the Standing Judicial Commission (SJC), spoke against the amendment, arguing that cost of transcription "might not be recovered." He stated that costs associated with a recent case reached \$100,000, and

that this amount "could double if this passes."

Another SJC member, Ruling Elder Howie Dunahoe of Central Carolina Presbytery, which court had initiated the amendment last year, supported the change. He said that under the present provision regarding the recording of testimony, a defendant who wants to appeal a case would have had to require said recording during the trial itself. He also stated that the "cost of professionally transcribing a tape is far from prohibitive."

Ruling Elder Dale Peacock, who has served on the SJC in the past, urged passage of the amendment. He stated that he is "one who greatly cherishes due process," and that this amendment is "required for the sake of justice . . . so that there not be simply excerpts of testimony." The Louisiana barrister argued that "someone who issues a frivolous appeal might be assessed the whole cost" of transcription.

Another attorney, Christopher Menges, also supported the amendment. "In order to do justly, we can do no less than the secular courts. I have represented pastors in other denominations in defrocking processes, where there was no recorded testimony. Gentlemen, you do not want [a trial] without recorded testimony."

The Rev. Jeff Hutchinson closed the debate by arguing against the proposal because in his view it was "another example of inculturation."

By a hefty margin, the amendment passed.

The amendment that now explicitly prohibits women preaching was enacted without debate or objection. Another version of this amendment had passed the 2000 General Assembly, but was voted down in the presbyteries. At the 2001 Assembly, a minority report from the Bills & Overtures Committee carried the day, as the amendment was adopted and sent to the presbyteries for advice and consent. Forty-two presbyteries—the exact number necessary—approved the proposal. There were nine votes against the amendment, with twelve presbyteries not reporting.

Not receiving the requisite two-thirds of the presbyteries was an amendment to *BCO* 32-19, which would have broadened the counsel who could represent a defendant in a trial to include any communicant member of the denomination. This amendment was held over from last year, because an insufficient number of presbyteries had reported their votes. Even with the additional year, only 56 of a total of 60 eligible presbyteries had reported in, and the proposal garnered only 38 votes, two short of the requisite 40.



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CCB Expresses Pastoral Concern and Brotherly Love With Regard To Westminster Presbytery's Overture

In evaluating an overture from Westminster Presbytery, the Committee on Constitutional Business (CCB) added an unprecedented cautionary note to its evaluation of the overture. The CCB stated: "Not as constitutional advice, but as pastoral concern and brotherly love, the CCB also asks the members of the B&O Committee of Commissioners to be very cautious regarding passing on intemperate language and personal accusations to the [General Assembly] through the reasoning, premises and recitals of overtures (WLC [Westminster Larger Catechism] 144 & 145)."

According to the Rules of Assembly Operations (RAO) 7-2, one of the functions of the CCB is to "Advise the General Assembly of the effect of any proposed amendment to the constitution." Denominational documents do not provide for the CCB to go beyond the offering of technical advice into the realm of pastoral counsel.

This loving pastoral advice came in CCB's evaluation of Overture 6, which asked for the replacement of the Standing Judicial Commission (SJC). Among the Whereases in the overture were the following: "among the abuses of the system which we have recently witnessed [was] the admittance to record of statements by members of the SJC which clearly crossed the bounds of propriety"; "a significant portion of the 29th General Assembly [2001] clearly was frustrated by the inability to rectify the situation"; "under our present rules, there are no Assembly-wide checks and balances on the SJC"; and "there is increasing frustration among many in the PCA arising from a perception that the decisions of the SJC do not reflect predictable justice."

The reference to the situation at the 2001 General Assembly concerned the Rev. John Wood, who had been charged with tolerating female preaching. In re the Wood matter, a concurring opinion by members of the SJC took to task the 2000 Assembly for having mandated that the SJC take up the matter again, and also took to task Dr. Morton H. Smith, Dr. Joseph Pipa, Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary, and *Presbyterian & Reformed News*.

Concern was raised with regard to this concurring opinion in several ways,

including an overture from Western Carolina Presbytery that asked that all of the concurring opinions be removed from the SJC report. Among the reasons given by Western Carolina were the following: "to allow the personal allegations against individual members of the Assembly to be placed in the Minutes of the General Assembly can only bring hurt to the individuals concerned, and cause resentments that are destructive of the purity, peace and unity of the Church" and "we do not believe that the provision for concurring opinions was ever intended to provide a forum for personal attack as appears in this report." Three Constitutional inquiries were received at the meeting of the Assembly, all addressing concerns regarding the concurring opinion which was in question.

Besides offering unprecedented pastoral counsel with regard to this year's Overture 6, the CCB, in its Constitutional evaluation of Overture 6, used unusual language. The Committee opined that "this overture is in conflict with other parts of the constitution, including but not limited to BCO 14-1(15)." The other parts of the Constitution where the overture was in conflict were not specified. The one place enumerated, BCO 14-1(15), consists of a list of the committees other than committees of commissioners through which business normally comes to the floor of the Assembly. The Committee stated that the overture "is also unconstitutionally vague as to what will be the basis of making the alternative decisions indicated in the proposed BCO 15-5, thus creating constitutional tensions without process for resolution." The CCB also stated that the proposal "will create numerous conflicts with our General Assembly RAO." In contrast, when the CCB evaluated a proposed amendment from Insurance, Annuities, and Relief, it did not employ the terminology of "conflict," but rather simply said that "other documents (i.e. RAO, By-Laws and manuals of operation) may need concurrent revision."

CCB's caution regarding intemperate language and personal accusations was noted within the Bills & Overtures Committee of Commissioners. Ruling Elder John White, a member of the Committee as well as Chairman of the SJC (and one of the

signers of the concurring opinion last year that was the object of concern), championed the view that at least one of Westminster Presbytery's several overtures should be labeled as "intemperate."

Speaking against the notion of reprimanding Westminster Presbytery was that court's representative, Dr. Roger Schultz. Recently appointed as Chairman of the History Department at Liberty University, Dr. Schultz has twice served terms on the General Assembly Theological Examining Committee. The professor argued that for the B&O Committee to make that sort of statement would manifest "an egregious double standard," given the fact that members of the SJC last year were not reprimanded for what many in the Assembly considered to be intemperate language.

One member of the Committee contended that there had been a "gracious apology" offered by one of the members of the SJC who had issued the concurring opinion; but another Committee member reacted by saying, "That was not gracious!"

The B&O Committee initially decided to attach a general statement at the end of its report, reminding all presbyteries to be cautious in their language in overtures. However, that action was later reconsidered, and the Committee finally decided to drop that cautionary statement.

The Committee on Constitutional Business also took umbrage with the other overture from Westminster Presbytery which was referred to it, Overture 29, which dealt with a candidate's exceptions to the Confessional Standards. CCB opined that the overture "is in conflict with the Constitution. Specifically: 1) It allows a presbytery to determine whether a man may or may not teach what he believes, even if it is not out of accord with any fundamental of the system of doctrine, thus going beyond our constitution to bind the man's conscience. (BCO Preface II.1 and II.7). 2) It is also unconstitutionally vague in not identifying what the prohibition to teach would restrict or allow. 3) The last paragraph

unconstitutionally provides a mechanism that puts the final approval for presbytery membership at the GA instead of the presbytery level. (BCO Preface II.2, BCO 21-1 through 7, BCO 13-1; BCO 13-9a,c,d; BCO 11-3&4)."

[Editor's Note: Overture 29 as adopted by Westminster Presbytery did not require General Assembly approval of the granting of exceptions, but it would have mandated that the presbyteries' actions on exceptions be reported directly to the General Assembly. Also, in 1999, CCB answered a Constitutional inquiry from Eastern Carolina Presbytery by saying "that a presbytery has the authority to require a man not to teach his exceptions as true in any public forum save that of the courts of the Presbyterian Church in America after that man has been received into the presbytery. Previous General Assemblies have addressed this question as follows: (1) '[w]hen a man is ordained with the allowance of exceptions to his full acceptance of the PCA standards, he thereby obtains (a) approval of his suitability to function within the ordained office, and (b) liberty to believe and live in some way not fully in accord with some portion of those standards. This allowance of exceptions, however, does not warrant his teaching or preaching of that matter so as to disturb the peace and purity of the church. The court of jurisdiction must determine in each situation whether such unwarranted actions have occurred.' (M14GA, pp. 125, 126). (2) 'Presbyteries do have jurisdiction over [teaching elders] and have the authority to restrict a minister from preaching views which the presbytery is convinced may be harmful to the spiritual welfare of the churches under its care (BCO 13-9 and 34-5). If a member of a church is convinced that the presbytery under whose jurisdiction he is has erred, judicial process is provided for in BCO (Complaints).' (M18GA, p. 205).'" How to reconcile the 1999 statement from CCB with its opinion that Overture 29 this year would bind a man's conscience, is not immediately apparent.]

General Assembly Votes to Allow Distribution of Independent News Outside the Meeting Hall

Birmingham, Alabama (June 18, 2002)—Upon motion by Dr. Morton H. Smith, Moderator of the 28th General Assembly, the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) this evening voted to allow the distribution of independent news outside the Assembly meeting hall. The measure passed on a close vote, 592-520.

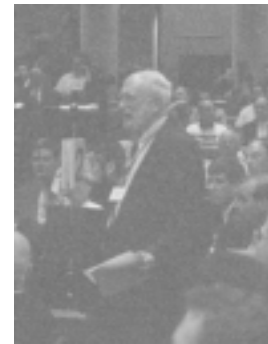
The matter had been raised when personnel from the Stated Clerk's office and the Administrative Committee (AC) forbade representatives of Presbyterian International News Service from distributing news bulletins anywhere on the property where the Assembly is meeting, other than in the exhibit hall. At a meeting of the AC earlier today, the Committee voted to allow the distribution of information in areas other than the exhibit hall prior to the setting up of the booths—a moot point, since the booths were in place by this morning.

Arguing for his motion, the denomination's original Stated Clerk noted

that the heritage of the Southern Presbyterian Church, from which the PCA came, was to allow for open distribution of a wide variety of publications at General Assembly—from the left-wing *Presbyterian Outlook* to the conservative *Presbyterian Journal*. Dr. Smith also stated that given the sensitive nature of many of the debates that would be occurring at this Assembly, it was important not to give any impression of any type of censorship.

Arguing against the motion was the Rev. Andy Silman of Grace Presbytery, who said that *Presbyterian & Reformed News* had a booth at this year's Assembly from which it could distribute its material, and no one was censoring the news.

No one else sought a microphone, so the Moderator put the question. After a show of yellow cards, he ruled that the motion had lost. But cries of "division!, division!" prompted a counted vote, which revealed that the motion had carried by a margin of 53.2% to 46.8%.



Dr. Morton H. Smith

General Assembly Calendar

The following is a calendar of upcoming events and special days, as approved by General Assembly.

October 13, 2002—Day of Prayer for Covenant College.

October, 2002—Month of Prayer for the "10/40 Window" and World Evangelization. The "10/40 Window" is that area of the globe between 10 degrees north and 40 degrees north latitude, containing people groups which historically have been the most resistant to the gospel.

Sometime in 2002-2003—A Special Offering for Suffering People (Compassion Ministry of Mission to the World).

November 10, 2002—Day of Prayer and fasting, according to the custom of local churches, for the persecuted church worldwide. Other evangelical churches will be observing this date as a Day of Prayer for the persecuted church, also.

November, 2002—Thanksgiving Offering for Urban and Mercy Ministries (Mission to North America).

December, 2002—Offering for Ministerial Relief.

February 9, 2003—Day of Prayer for Ridge Haven Conference Center.

May 4-10, 2003—Week of Prayer, coordinated by Christian Education & Publications.

The annual Women in the Church Offering will be for Reformed University Ministries.

SJC Manual Changes Approved

Birmingham, Alabama (June 19, 2002)—The 30th General Assembly enacted changes to the Standing Judicial Commission (SJC) Manual dealing with Memorials and with procedures for handling requests for the assumption of original jurisdiction. The amendments were proposed at last year's General Assembly and referred to the presbyteries for comment.

The provision regarding Memorials was originally adopted by the SJC in 1997, several months after the General Assembly itself had adopted the Manual (pending final approval of a package of SJC reforms). The SJC made numerous amendments to the Manual at its meeting in spring 1997, several of them substantive.

Objection was raised to SJC officers that it was improper to seek to amend a document that had already been approved by the Assembly. In order to avoid a floor fight, a behind-the-scenes deal was struck in which the new chapter on Memorials was vacated.

In 2001, the SJC reported its decision on *Erwin Morrison vs. Philadelphia Presbytery*. In that decision, the high court promulgated its view of the nature of Memorials, and decreed that a Memorial sent to a Presbytery need not be recorded on the minutes of the Presbytery, but only on the minutes of the lower court (the Session) about which concern was being raised. In making its ruling, the SJC referenced its position on Memorials which had been presented to the 1997 Assembly. The SJC subsequently used the opportunity to present once again the material from the vacated chapter. When objection was raised to some of the statements in the material, it was referred to the presbyteries for comment.

Two presbyteries—Mississippi Valley and Westminster—expressed disapproval of the changes. Westminster Presbytery's overture on the matter made reference to the findings of its Overtures & Judicial Business (O&JB) Committee [see separate box—Ed.].

Initially, the Committee on Constitutional Business (CCB) likewise raised similar concerns about the new provisions [see separate box—Ed.]. However, the CCB later withdrew its evaluation of the proposal from the SJC, due to the fact that evaluating an amendment to the *SJC Manual* was beyond the scope of CCB's duties.

Also adopted by the General Assembly, despite opposition, were new provisions regarding the assumption of original jurisdiction over a minister. Last year, the Assembly assigned the determination of whether or not to take a matter when presbyteries petitioned for original jurisdiction, to the Standing Judicial Commission.

In 2000, in the only such matter to have received a sufficient number of presbyteries to petition for original jurisdiction (the John Wood matter), the Assembly itself directed the SJC to consider the matter. The SJC had previously ruled that the petitions for jurisdiction were out of order, in that Tennessee Valley Presbytery purportedly had acted rather than refused to act. Subsequent to the 2000 Assembly, the SJC declined to proceed to trial, since, in its opinion, there was not a strong presumption of guilt.

The 2000 Assembly also directed the SJC to come up with procedures for how such petitions should be handled in the future. The SJC's proposal, which is that the SJC itself handle such matters, was approved by the 2001 Assembly.

SJC Won't Be Replaced

Birmingham, Alabama (June 20, 2002)—With no debate, the 30th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) today voted down an overture from Westminster Presbytery which called for the replacement of the Standing Judicial Commission (SJC) and the establishment of regionally-based judicial commissions. Overwhelmingly (33-2-3), the Bills & Overtures (B&O) Committee recommended that the overture be answered in the negative.

Among the grounds set forth by the Committee was the following: "The SJC remains the best means to handle judicial cases at the Assembly level. The proposed remedy suffers from the defects so evident in the former system, defects which the SJC was created to, and has in large measure, overcome."

In the 1990s, the SJC came under severe criticism. Reforms in how the SJC operates were approved by the 1996 Assembly.

Montana Brought in From the Cold

Birmingham, Alabama (June 19, 2002)—Responding to a request from Rocky Mountain Presbytery, the 30th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) extended the presbytery's boundaries to include the state of Montana. Previously, the fourth largest state in the Union had been "out of bounds" of any presbytery.

Under PCA rules, any of the presbyteries may plant churches in territory that is not circumscribed by the geographical bounds of a presbytery. In the United States, the states of Alaska, Hawaii, Oregon, Idaho, Utah, and Wisconsin are still "out of bounds", as are the eastern two-thirds of the state of Washington, most of Nevada, and the northern part of Michigan.

The only PCA churches in Montana were already members of Rocky Mountain Presbytery. They include an organized congregation in Bozeman, a mission work

in the state capital of Helena, and a church in Billings which was recently received from the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC).

Rocky Mountain Presbytery was formed in 1991 out of Southwest Presbytery to cover the states of Colorado and Wyoming. With the addition of Montana, the Presbytery now encompasses close to 350,000 square miles.

New Presbytery Established for Virginia's Blue Ridge

Birmingham, Alabama (June 19, 2002)—With little fanfare, the 30th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) established the denomination's newest presbytery. Blue Ridge Presbytery, which will stretch along the I-81 corridor and into the piedmont of central Virginia, was formed out of portions of James River and New River Presbyteries. The new judicatory becomes the denomination's 64th presbytery.

Assembly Votes Down Korean-American Presbytery

Birmingham, Alabama (June 19, 2002)—The establishment of a new Korean-American Presbytery was turned down by the 30th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA). The new presbytery would have raised to eight the number of ethnic Korean presbyteries in the PCA. Unlike the seven existing Korean presbyteries, this new presbytery would have been designed for the second generation of Koreans, and would have conducted its business in English rather than in Korean.

The proposal came from the Permanent Mission to North America (MNA) Committee of the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) rather than one or more of the Korean-language presbyteries. These ethnic-specific presbyteries are considered to be "non-geographical" courts. The Korean-American Presbytery would have also been non-geographical. Any Korean congregation in the PCA could have opted to belong to the new court.

New York State's Boundaries Extended

Birmingham, Alabama (June 19, 2002)—The 30th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) today voted to extend the boundaries of New York State Presbytery to include all of western New York. The action came with the blessing of Ascension Presbytery, which ceded its several counties in New York.

New York State Presbytery picks up one congregation from Ascension Presbytery in the transaction, the Wellsville (N.Y.) Presbyterian Church. The young presbytery, however, has its eyes set on developing congregations in the heavily populated areas of western New York, including Buffalo.

With the boundary change, Ascension Presbytery is now located only in northwest Pennsylvania and northeast Ohio, while two presbyteries cover the Empire State for the PCA: New York State and Metropolitan New York.

Evaluations of the changes to the SJC Manual

The General Assembly Committee on Constitutional Business (CCB) initially evaluated the Procedure for Hearing a Memorial proposed by the Standing Judicial Committee as follows:

It is the advice of CCB that the "Procedure for Hearing a Memorial" raises significant constitutional issues. These issues include:

- 1) Our concern that the procedures may reflect a definition of a memorial inconsistent with our historical Presbyterian usage since no clear definition is offered and the term has been variously used in other/former denominations in a manner that allows a higher court to act for a lower court.
- 2) The lack of clear *BCO* or *SJC Manual* definition of what constitutes a "memorial" being "administratively out of order."
- 3) Significant questions of due process such as the preclusion of appropriate briefing and argument.

Among the findings of Westminster Presbytery's O&JB Committee with regard to the SJC Manual on memorials were the following:

This procedure restricts the scope of the checks and balances prescribed in BCO 40-5. The only memorial that can be entertained by the SJC is one where the proceeding of the lower court cannot be addressed through appeal or complaint. No such restriction is present in BCO 40-5. The Officers of the SJC determine whether or not the Commission should address the concerns in the memorial. The party memorializing the SJC is not allowed to present a brief, or oral arguments, but only may answer questions posed by the panel or the SJC. The procedure would not allow for any evidence to be introduced except that of the court alleged to have offended itself provides. This would not allow for redress when the official records do not accurately reflect what actually took place in the lower court's proceedings, the very reason for the memorial in the first place.

The proceedings will not be conducted as a trial, but BCO 40-6 states that process against a lower court is to be conducted according to the rules provided for process against individuals, as far as they may be applicable. If the proceeding is conducted as a trial, the party memorializing would be allowed to present witnesses, and to be heard and to close. The respondent would likewise be given the opportunity to present witnesses and argue the case.

With regard to the changes of the SJC Manual on the assumption of original jurisdiction, the O&JB Committee observed:

It is interesting to note that written briefs are submitted after the panel's findings and recommendations are published but before the SJC renders judgment on a matter. That would seem to be in conflict with the philosophy proposed in Section 13.8, although, in this instance, the judgment is not a trial, but an investigation as to whether or not process will be brought against a minister.

The O&JB Committee concluded:

Because of the import of the changes proposed . . . for amending the SJC Manual, it is recommended that the Presbytery oppose the proposed amendments. The amendments restrict the provisions of the BCO in both Sections 16 and 18. In Section 16 by restricting the type of memorial that can even be entertained by the SJC and in Section 18 by institutionalizing assumption of original jurisdiction over a minister to the SJC. The proposal for Section 13.8 prohibits briefs to be filed until after a vote is taken and a verdict determined. It would be far more difficult to present final arguments against an already determined verdict rather than making those arguments before the final vote has taken place.

Review Committee's Work Survives Mostly Intact

Numerous Exceptions Regarding Ministerial Views Noted by General Assembly

Birmingham, Alabama (June 21, 2002)—The 30th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) turned away all challenges to the exceptions noted by its Committee on Review of Presbytery Records (CRPR) of Presbytery minutes. The challenges all revolved around the views of ministers and candidates which were approved by the lower courts.

However, the Assembly, on a close vote (149-138), did postpone one of CRPR's general recommendations, viz., that presbyteries should "Record exceptions taken by teaching elders and licentiates when examined."

The first challenge to the work of the review committee came with regard to Gulf Coast Presbytery, which had approved candidates who stated that the Westminster Confession of Faith "has gone too far in the section on marriage where in Chapter 24-3, it lumps Roman Catholics, infidels, and other idolaters together." The CRPR noted that this approval of the candidates with this exception was an exception of substance.

Rising in opposition to that action was the Rev. Jim Meek, a faculty member at Covenant Theological Seminary, who moved a substitute which would have deleted the exception. Mr. Meek said, "I am concerned about the Assembly going on record that Roman Catholics being lumped with infidels and other idolaters" would not be an acceptable ministerial exception to the church's Standards.

Mr. Paul English, a ruling elder from Bible Presbyterian Church, Concord, North Carolina, argued against the substitute. He expressed his concern about the Presbytery's action: "Does this mean they're allowing him to marry Presbyterians and Roman Catholics?"

The Rev. David Gilleran, a member of Gulf Coast Presbytery, also spoke against the substitute. He urged the Assembly to take exception to his presbytery's minutes, "so that we can respond to the General Assembly."

The Meek substitute lost by a large margin.

CRPR had also flagged Metropolitan New York Presbytery for approving for ordination a man "who takes the following exceptions (among several others) to certain language in the *Confession of Faith*: does not agree that 'vows of poverty, obedience, and singleness are necessarily sinful and superstitious *WCF XXII.7*; takes exception to the language that 'none who are not then present in the congregation' should partake of the Lord's Supper *WCF XXIX.3*; takes exception to the language of 'the making any representation of God, of all or any of the three persons, either inwardly or outwardly in any kind of image or likeness of any creature whatsoever *WLC #109*; takes exception to the language 'Although all are not permitted to read the word publicly to the congregation' *WLC #156*."

An amendment was moved to remove this exception from the CRPR report. Mr. English spoke against the substitute, arguing that "we don't know all of the reasoning" which goes behind the man's views.

Mr. Jim Mezzanotte, like Mr. English from Central Carolina Presbytery, urged the striking of the exception, noting that the Assembly had twice yesterday defeated attempts to amend the proposed change to

the *Book of Church Order* regarding subscription, that exceptions should be recorded.

CRPR Chairman George Felton pointed to the Rules of Assembly Operation, 14-6(c)(1), as the basis for his Committee's recommendation. That provision says that the Committee is obligated to note as an exception of substance "Apparent violations of Scripture or serious irregularities from the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church in America . . ."

The Rev. Dr. Roy Taylor, Stated Clerk of the Assembly, stated, "We do not presently have a Constitutional standard" that presbyteries must record ministerial exceptions in their minutes, but if they do,



CRPR Chairman George Felton

then the review committee has the authority to recommend action with regard to them.

Dr. Clair Davis, church history professor at Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia, followed up on Dr. Taylor's remarks by saying, "If any presbytery doesn't want its actions reviewed, it should make sure that its minutes are devoid of detail." He added, "I think taking exception to this is on the borderline between vigilance and suspicion."

The Rev. David Frierson, Stated Clerk of Central Carolina Presbytery, responded: "Yes, we need to be careful of suspicion. But we also need to be cognizant of total depravity." He noted that the Committee wanted the Presbytery to respond to this, and, further, that these are exceptions of substance.

The Rev. Mark Horne of Minco, Oklahoma, objected that "these exceptions are not substantial"; and wondered, "How can we possibly call somebody on this?"

The amendment lost overwhelmingly.

The next contest came with regard to the minutes of New River Presbytery. Several years ago, the Assembly had taken exception to the minutes of the lower court, because it had licensed a man who "holds exception in his view of the Sabbath (he does not believe that the Sabbath Day and the Lord's Day are the same), the law (he is not absolutely sure that the Decalogue is the New Testament Ethic), and on who may administer the Sacraments (he cannot see that the administration of the sacraments is the sole prerogative of teaching elders; he believes that ruling elders and others who have demonstrated knowledge, understanding, and maturity concerning the sacraments should be allowed to administer them.)" The General Assembly has refused to accept the Presbytery's responses over the past three years. The Presbytery's response to this year's Assembly was "word-for-word the same response" as submitted in 2001.

New River's Virgil Roberts, a ruling

elder, moved a substitute that would have stricken the CRPR's recommendation and replaced it with the following statement: "No further response is required to [this] exception . . ." In arguing for his substitute, Mr. Roberts noted that the licentiate in question was ministering at a very small congregation in West Virginia.

Also speaking in favor of the substitute was the Rev. David Currence, pastor in Charleston, West Virginia, who is another member of New River Presbytery.

Speaking against the substitute was Mr. Tom Bingham, a ruling elder from Iowa Presbytery, who noted that "New River's argument this year is identical" to what it had sent last year. Also speaking against was the Rev. Andrew Webb of Fayetteville, North Carolina, who claimed: "We're not talking about propositions or doctrines. We're talking about the whole of Reformed ethics."

Chairman Felton yielded to the Rev. Bob Peterson for the final word in debate. Mr. Peterson said: "What they sent to us was word-for-word what they sent us last year. . . . What else could we do [but note the exception]?"

The Roberts substitute failed overwhelmingly.

Questions were raised regarding the CRPR report on Southern Florida Presbytery. Last year, the Presbytery had approved a theological paper from a candidate who stated, "I believe that God gives extraordinary gifts (miracles, healing, and tongues)." In response, the Presbytery said, "The Teaching Elder in question is no longer a member of Presbytery and has left the PCA and joined another denomination." The Committee, however, moved that that response be found unsatisfactory, in that the RAO "requires that the Presbytery respond by stating whether they agree or



Dr. Clair Davis

respectfully disagree with the exception."

Flagged this year was a man's expressed belief, with regard to *Confession of Faith* II.3, in which he said, "I do not believe that the Holy Spirit eternally proceeds from the Father and the Son, but, in the integrity of the Holy Trinity, from the Father alone. I believe that the references such as John 14:16-17, 26, 15:26, 16:7-15, refer to the out-pouring of the Spirit at Pentecost and not to His eternal procession. While it is true, of course, that the Holy Spirit is the *Spirit of Christ*, He is also referred to as the *Spirit of God*, and as far as that goes, in the mystery of the Holy Trinity, Jesus is referred to as the *Everlasting Father*. Historically, the addition of the *filioque* was made unilaterally by the Roman Catholic Church centuries after the Council of Nicea and

subsequently inherited by Protestantism."

Speaking in favor of taking exception to Southern Florida's minutes was Clair Davis: "I think it's very dangerous to assert something the economic Trinity that doesn't happen in the ontological Trinity. I don't know what this guy is up to, but I think we need to find out."

Mr. Frierson seconded that idea, adding: "This is the very reason why exceptions [taken by a candidate] need to be recorded."

Overwhelmingly, the Assembly approved the CRPR motion with regard to Southern Florida.

The final points of debate under the CRPR report had to do with the general recommendations. The eleventh such recommendation would instruct presbyteries that the exceptions of teaching elders and licentiates to the confessional standards be recorded.

The Rev. Stephen Estock argued that this recommendation should be ruled out of order, as there is no Constitutional provision for this requirement. The chair, however, ruled that this recommendation doesn't have the force of law, but is a suggestion.

The Rev. David Coffin pointed the court to *Book of Church Order* 13-11 as giving adequate Constitutional warrant for the recommendation. That paragraph says that the Presbytery "shall keep a full and accurate record of its proceedings, and shall send it up to the General Assembly annually for review."

Dr. Davis moved that the matter be postponed to next year's Assembly. Noting the sparse number of commissioners left in the Assembly, the professor said that "only the elite of the church is still remaining."

Dr. Bryan Chapell spoke in favor of the motion to postpone. The President of the PCA's national seminary argued that it is very different to require that the Presbytery have a written record of a person's exceptions to the church's standards, and that the record be put in the minutes.

The Rev. Lee Capper, Stated Clerk of Pittsburgh Presbytery, argued against postponing. "I'm afraid if we wait 'til next year, we're going to have the same elite."

Paul English also argued against postponing, as he noted that "General Assembly has year after year after year" reviewed the actions of Presbyteries with regard to various exceptions taken by ministers and candidates.

By a slim margin (51.9 to 48.1 per cent), the Assembly decided to postpone the matter until next year.

At that point, Mr. Tom Leopard, a member of the host church (Briarwood Presbyterian), moved that the terminology being used with regard to the general recommendations be changed from "instructs" the presbyteries, to "counsels" the presbyteries. That amendment was defeated.

Just before adjournment of the Assembly, Chairman of the Committee on Constitutional Business, Dr. Craig Childs, moved that the court refer to his committee a Constitutional inquiry, viz., does the Constitution require a presbytery to record a minister's exceptions? The motion carried.

High Court Condemns Bible Translation

Birmingham, Alabama (June 20, 2002)—The 30th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) today voted to condemn Today's New International Version (TNIV), a new translation which self-consciously employs gender-neutral language. The action came in response to a personal resolution introduced by the Rev. Richard B. Phillips, Associate Pastor at Tenth Presbyterian Church, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and CEO of the Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals.

By a vote of 31-3-1, the Bills & Overtures (B&O) Committee had recommended an affirmative answer to the resolution, as amended. As finally adopted,



Dan MacDougall

the resolution reads: "BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED,

"1. That the PCA expresses disapproval of the practice of making gender-related or other alterations to the authorially-intended meaning of Scripture in Bible translations.

"2. That the PCA cautions its congregations and members, as well as the larger Christian community, against use of the TNIV;

"3. that the PCA implores the IBS [International Bible Society] to refrain from further gender-neutral or other 'corrective' efforts in Bible translations.

The resolution affirmed the PCA's commitment to "the full authority and plenary, verbal inspiration of the original autographs of the Holy Scriptures"; stated that "the proper task of Bible translators is to accurately reproduce the original text as given by the inspired authors into contemporary language"; noted that "the New International Version (NIV) exerts a strong influence on Evangelical Christians in the United States, being trusted and used by many pastors and lay people in the PCA"; contended that the TNIV "purports to achieve increased gender accuracy, in some cases by making prudent translation decisions, but in other cases deliberately altering gender-specific details which appear in the original languages"; and argued that "the accurate translation of the text of Scripture is a matter of such vital importance to the Church so that the PCA is obliged to join voices with other denominations in this matter, especially when a translation is likely to exert great influence on Christians and egregiously violates acceptable standards of Bible translation."

The proposal from the B&O Committee was not won without a fight on the floor. Dr. Dan MacDougall, a professor at Covenant College, moved to delete resolutions 2 and 3, as he argued that the matter of Bible translation was more complicated than what was represented by the Committee. However, Dr. Paul Fowler argued against the amendment, contending that the IBS has been working "surreptitiously" to foster its gender-neutral agenda. By an overwhelming margin, the amendment failed.

Also before the Assembly was an overture from Central Carolina Presbytery, which likewise expressed concern about the TNIV and which requested a study committee at the Assembly level. The General Assembly answered that overture by reference to its action on the personal resolution.

Assembly Votes for Unity

Birmingham, Alabama (June 20, 2002)—The 30th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) overturned the recommendation of its Bills & Overtures (B&O) Committee, and answered in the affirmative an overture calling for the addition of "unity" to ministerial ordination vows. By adopting the overture, the Assembly began the process of amending the *Book of Church Order*. If the change is finally approved, the sixth ordination vow for ministers will read, "Do you promise to be zealous and faithful in maintaining the truths of the Gospel and the purity and peace and unity of the Church, whatever persecution or opposition may arise unto you on that account?"

The B&O Committee, by a vote of 32-10-0, had argued that ordination vows "should be changed only under great necessity, as a change may implicitly require all officers to retake the vow, or the church be left with two classes of officers. Further, with respect to the vow as it stands, the church's unity is preserved, humanly speaking, in maintaining her purity and peace."

The Rev. Dr. Morton H. Smith, original Stated Clerk of the denomination, noted that the corresponding ordination vow for ruling elders and deacons includes the term "unity" (along with "purity", "peace", and "edification"), and stated that the omission of "unity" in the ministerial vow was probably an oversight.

The Rev. Dr. Will Barker also spoke in favor of the amendment, arguing that although "unity" and "peace" are related concepts, there is a nuanced difference, in that the unity of the church "goes beyond one's own orbit" by extending to the universal church.

The amendment now goes to the presbyteries for advice and consent. If passed by two-thirds of the presbyteries over the next year, it would have to be ratified by the 2003 Assembly before becoming a part of the Constitution.

In Other Action on Overtures

The 30th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA), with no debate, voted down the following overtures:

Overture 9 from Louisiana Presbytery, which asked that Freemasons be forbidden from serving as elders.

Overtures 14 and 15 from Rocky Mountain Presbytery, which sought language which would strengthen the Constitutional affirmation that only men can be ordained.

Overture 25 from Ascension Presbytery, which wanted to amend the *Book of Church Order* with regard to procedures if a Session cannot act or needs to be augmented.

Overture 27 from Eastern Canada Presbytery, which craved amending the *BCO* to allow for procedures when there was a perceived conflict between the Constitution and Scripture.

Overture 34 from Westminster Presbytery, which would have forbidden denominational personnel from participating in the Presbyterian Pastoral Leadership Network (PPLN) and still retaining their denominational posts.

Heard on the Floor . . .

"Mr. Ryan, 761 votes. Mr. Zaka, 449 votes. Mr. Gore, 1 vote. Mr. Bush, 3 votes. No hanging chads, no dimpled ballots."—Stated Clerk Roy Taylor. "I'm glad we have that behind us!"—Moderator Skip Ryan.

"You know, of course, we're a sentimental lot in the OPC."—Orthodox Presbyterian fraternal delegate Nathan Trice, speaking of the OPC General Assembly honoring nonagenarian John Galbraith who has attended all 69 OPC Assemblies.

"The ARP probably has the most toothless bureaucracy of any of the Reformed churches, and that's not necessarily a bad thing."—Dr. William Evans, Associate Reformed Presbyterian fraternal delegate.

"I am Jim Wert, ruling elder of North Georgia Presbytery, not to be confused with Jim Wert, ruling elder of Western Carolina Presbytery. Hi, Dad!"—Jim Wert (the younger).

"There are some campus ministers who refer to him as the Strom Thurmond of campus ministers."—Lee Ferguson, as the Assembly honored Billy Joseph for his 22 years of service as a campus minister.

"Like Rod [Mays] said, we're not like Harvard—we're just trying to be like UT."—Fritz Gaines, campus minister at Middle Tennessee State University.

"For the last 17 years, I've never stood at a microphone, which might not be a bad thing for some of us."—Don Ward.

"I am not a strict subscriptionist in any way. I'm a flaming frameworker. I love framework. I think it's the best thing since Elvis."—Chris Hutchinson.

After being referred to by the Moderator as "Dr. Coffin": "Mr. Moderator, I hope someday to have the honor of being addressed in this fashion, but I haven't yet completed the work. . . . You can just refer to me as 'Coffin' or some such thing."—David Coffin. "If you wait around long enough, you will get an honorary one. It's a good way to go."—Moderator Skip Ryan.

"I'm waiting patiently to speak passionately"—Craig Childs. Later: "I'd like to speak with a pretty high degree of a lack of passion."—David Coffin.

"This is my maiden voyage to a microphone in 19 years [at General Assembly], and I stand in the shadow of the master."—Ray Cortese, speaking from the same microphone as David Coffin. "Let's see what you've learned."—Moderator Skip Ryan.

"I hope my wife's not listening to the webcast, but I'll be happy to pledge the first \$1,000 [for a study committee on subscription]."—Don Clements.

"I don't know if I'm going to be appreciated enough, since I don't come to bring an amendment."—Jim Braden.

"I'm sorry, your time has elapsed."—Moderator. "I'm not surprised."—Benjamin Inman.

"Fathers and brothers, I stand to confess to you that I am a lawyer."—Bruce Ferg.

"Microphone 2 was the maker of the motion, and he spoke in favor of the motion, which was a wise thing to do."—Moderator pro tem Wilson Benton.

"But that's not a point of order, and you can't get my attention in that sneaky way."—Moderator pro tem Wilson Benton, addressing a commissioner who tried to call the question.

"And so we're now debating the motion?"—Fred Harrell. "Yes, and we'd invite you to join us."—Moderator pro tem Wilson Benton.

"Are you for or against the motion?"—Moderator pro tem Wilson Benton. "I'm going to call the question."—Mike Khandjian. "Well, do so!"—Wilson Benton.

"I was speaking in favor of the minority report, as the lesser of the two reports."—Rip Darden, speaking of the Women in Combat report.

"I've got a very good Presbyterian answer for you, sir—ordinarily, not necessarily."—Moderator Skip Ryan.

"With malice toward none, I'd like to call the question on all matters before the court."—Patrick Womack.

"Mr. Moderator, may I withdraw my amendment?"—Chris Hutchinson. "No, sir, it belongs to the house."—Moderator. "May we withdraw the amendment?"—Chris Hutchinson.

"I do appreciate the organ playing—I don't get to hear that in Nashville."—Jack Watkins of Nashville Presbytery.

"These are my thoughts, but also his thoughts, in some sort of mind-meld."—Jeff Hutchinson, speaking of his agreement with Joe Mullins.

"Whatever we decide, Dr. Davis, I assure you that my education has absolutely no value in this room."—Moderator Skip Ryan, responding to remarks by Clair Davis, church history professor at his alma mater.

General Assembly Gives Green Light to PCA Strategic Planning

Birmingham, Alabama (June 21, 2002)—The 30th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) gave the green light to the Strategic Planning Steering Committee and the Strategic Planning Committee. Both entities were extended for another year in order to report back to next year's Assembly.

Approved by the 2000 General Assembly, these committees were established in the hope of assisting the denomination to develop a vision for the future and uniting the denomination.

A paper, entitled "The Framework of Strategic Direction of the PCA," had been prepared by these committees. By vote of this year's Assembly, that document was "commended to the Presbyteries (and through them to their local churches) for their consideration, discussion and suggestions on how to perfect and implement the plan (especially indicating their measure of agreement with the four priorities under Section 5 'The PCA Strategic Priorities' and any additional examples of action steps . . .) and that the Presbyteries report their response by March 31, 2003 to the Strategic Planning Steering Committee."

Those four priorities are as follows: 1. Empower church health and growth for new and existing churches, local and worldwide; 2. Develop leadership for the future; 3. Increase denominational understanding and effectiveness; 4. Engage the culture—timeless truth for our times.

Under those four priorities were 48 sub-points. Among the sub-points are the following: "Enabling women to fulfill their Biblical ministry"; "God-centered and Gospel-driven worship"; "Preparing future denominational leaders"; "Articulation of a compelling church planting vision"; "Increasing active participation of ruling elders in presbytery and General Assembly"; "Make all church courts more edifying, encouraging, and effective by such means as conducting licensure examinations primarily in committee"; "Providing safe forums for discussion of theological issues"; "Structuring meeting time according to proper priorities, such as Prayer, Church planting, Missions, Leadership development"; "Developing specific strategies for multi-cultural churches—especially Hispanic, African-American, and Asian churches"; "Distinguishing the PCA approach to cultural engagement from current, evangelical parachurch expressions by being Gospel-centered and teaching the whole counsel of God, encouraging members to be involved in the community, local ministries, education, government, public forums, media, and the arts"; "Providing Biblical responses to women's issues, gender debates, and the cultural definitions of the family"; "Summoning members to public service and ministries of mercy."

The Administrative Committee of Commissioners overwhelmingly, but not unanimously, approved the presentation and continuation of these committees. The Committee of Commissioners voted 23-2-2 for the Assembly to hear the report, and 23-3-2 that the Assembly commend the committees' document ("The Framework of Strategic Direction of the PCA"). The vote to recommend continuance of these committees was 24-1-2.

Presenting the report of the Strategic Planning Committee on the floor of the Assembly was Dr. Frank Brock, retiring President of Covenant College. Presbyteries were encouraged to invite representatives of either of the two committees to attend a meeting in order to give further explanation of the strategic plan.

The 25-member Strategic Planning Steering Committee is comprised of twelve teaching elders, eleven ruling elders, and two women. According to the 1989 Assembly, non-elders serve in an

advisory capacity on Assembly committees and may not vote. The ten-man Strategic Planning Committee is comprised of the chief administrative officers of the denominational committees, boards, and agencies.

GA Fee Goes Up 25 Per Cent

Birmingham, Alabama (June 21, 2002)—The 30th General Assembly voted today to raise the fee for attending General Assembly from \$200 to \$250. The action came upon the recommendation of the Administrative Committee, and the Committee of Commissioners on Administration, which had voted 25-2-0 for the increase.

Starting with the 2003 Assembly, \$170 of the fee will be allocated for General Assembly expenses, \$55 for the Standing Judicial Commission (SJC), and \$25 for "Statistics and Publications."

The twenty-five per cent hike did not pass without opposition on the floor of the Assembly.

The Rev. Benjamin Shaw, a professor at Greenville (S. C.) Presbyterian Theological Seminary, stated: "I have heard throughout the week complaints in the lack of ruling elders [at this Assembly]. . . . Brethren, there are ways of reducing the costs." Referring to the Permanent Administrative Committee, Professor Shaw declared, "They have not sufficiently investigated the possibility of meeting on a college campus."

The Rev. Andrew Webb, a church planter in Fayetteville, North Carolina, moved as a substitute that the General Assembly not accept the Committee recommendation and directed the Committee to recalculate the commissioner registration fee at \$200. Mr. Webb pled: "I am from a very small church plant. . . . The people of my community are not wealthy." Instead of what amounts to an ecclesiastical tax, he said, "we should be more focused on reducing costs."

Speaking against the substitute was Ruling Elder Randy Smith of Tennessee Valley Presbytery. "You reduce costs, by reducing costs," he said, as he observed that keeping the registration at \$200 will not generate sufficient revenue for the Assembly to operate. However, he also reflected on how pricey some of the line items are in the denominational budgets: "When I saw salaries, I saw salaries in excess of my church's yearly budget. That hurts."

Mr. Paul English, a ruling elder from Bible Presbyterian Church, Concord, North Carolina, who was attending his eighth consecutive Assembly, declared: "I come [to General Assembly] because I am passionate about the work of the church. I usually vote against most of what happens here. . . . I will probably come no matter what." However, increasing the registration fee would be a hardship for his church of 45 members, many of them children, as it continues to send three commissioners (one minister and two ruling elders) to the Assembly. The registration fee "will probably come out of our building fund."

Speaking "strongly" against the substitute was Mr. Tom Leopard, a ruling elder at Briarwood Presbyterian Church, Birmingham, Alabama. The second-largest PCA congregation has often sent its full complement of ruling elders to Assembly, along with a number of its ministerial staff.

Mr. Jim Mezzanotte of the 2003 Assembly's host presbytery (Central Carolina) argued that "we have costs to meet." In his view, the way to cut overall costs is "by providing housing and meals. . . . There are things we can do to cut costs." In that regard, he offered to house as many commissioners next year as possible in private homes.

The substitute overwhelmingly lost, and the recommendation to increase the annual fee to \$250 carried.

The next item to be debated was a recommendation in response to an overture in 2001 from Heartland Presbytery, asking that ways be found to cut costs for attending the Assembly in order to foster increased participation by ruling elders. The Administrative Committee had

analyzed the situation and had concluded that holding Assembly meetings in hotel/conference center facilities is less-expensive than holding the meetings at a church or on a college campus.

Mr. Webb proposed a substitute that would direct the Committee to draw up plans for less-expensive General Assemblies and to consider the use of campuses. "It is possible to hold a meeting in less-expensive structures." However, the substitute overwhelmingly failed, and the original recommendation was adopted.

Local Arrangements Committees Will Conduct Worship at Assembly

Birmingham, Alabama (June 21, 2002)—The 30th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) voted today to end a two-decades old practice, viz., that of having the presbyteries, in rotating order, conduct the morning worship services at each General Assembly. Starting next year, the local General Assembly Arrangements Committee (GAAC) will be responsible for the worship services.

The Administrative Committee (AC) had recommended the change, arguing that it would take 21 years under the existing rotation system



Pipe organ at Briarwood Presbyterian

for all of the presbyteries to conduct a worship service at the Assembly. The Committee of Commissioners for Administration, however, voted (1-26-1) against the change, giving as rationale: "Because some presbyteries will likely never host a General Assembly they would consequently never lead worship at General Assembly. The previous practice of rotating worship leadership responsibilities among Presbyteries is therefore a more equitable method of addressing this issue."

Mr. Bingy Moore, Chairman of AC, moved the permanent committee's recommendation as a substitute to the Committee of Commissioners' motion. Speaking in favor of the substitute was Dr. Larry Roff, long-time organist at the Assembly, who said: "I make a lot of noise at the Assembly, not usually with my voice. With a vote of 1 to 26, I may be a voice crying in the wilderness." He argued, "This [proposal] isn't an attempt to have bureaucrats in an office somewhere develop worship services."

Other commissioners also argued in favor of the substitute, including Mr. Richard Lang of Pittsburgh Presbytery, who stated that planning for this year's worship started a year and a half ago. Pittsburgh Presbytery, he noted, was slated to host the Assembly in 2004.

Mr. Jack Watkins of Nashville Presbytery argued against the substitute, saying that it would "be against the grass-roots nature of the PCA."

Dr. Frank Barker, pastor emeritus of Briarwood Presbyterian Church, argued for the substitute, saying, "I think it's a whole lot better to have the host presbytery do this."

The Rev. Dan Jarsfter queried, "Who has the final say on what's done?," should the substitute prevail. The answer given was that AC would have the final say.

Immediately after having heard that AC would be able to exercise veto power over what

the worship services will be at General Assembly, the court voted in favor of the substitute, which then prevailed as the main motion.

PPLN Announces New Steering Committee

Four Women Named to Group of 29

The Presbyterian Pastoral Leadership Network (PPLN) has announced a new Steering Committee, to replace the original 17-man group. Among the new members of the Steering Committee are four women.

Miss Paige Benton, Sara Belz Drexler, Judy Honeycutt, and Mary Beth McGreevy join four ruling elders on the Committee. The original group was comprised only of men who are ministers.

Also joining the Committee are four ruling elders, and five ministers. One of the original ministers, the Rev. Dr. Harry Reeder, was named to a new Advisory Committee, which is comprised of fifteen ministers and seven ruling elders.

The announcement, which was posted in an email from the President's Office at Covenant Theological Seminary on June 3rd, stated that "these lay and ministerial leaders . . . represent a broad cross-section of PCA churches (e.g., Eastern, Southern, Western, Northern, rural, suburban, urban, Korean, African-American, Anglo, inter-racial, large, medium, small, traditional, contemporary, historic and new) and members (e.g., single, married, poor, middle-class, affluent, men, women, young, aged, teaching elders and ruling elders)."

Bryan Chapell and John Wood Preach at EPC Assembly

As reported on PCANEWS.COM, the denominational web-based magazine for the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA), the Rev. Dr. Bryan Chapell and the Rev. John Wood were the keynote speakers for the recent 21st General Assembly of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church (EPC).

Dr. Chapell is the President of Covenant Theological Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri. Mr. Wood is Senior Pastor of Cedar Springs Presbyterian Church, Knoxville, Tennessee. He was the subject of a judicial investigation in 2000 by the PCA General Assembly because of his advocacy of female preaching. The Standing Judicial Commission (SJC) which did the investigation declined to proceed to trial. In 2001, Mr. Wood, using Martin Luther King, Jr., rhetoric ("Free at last, free at last, thank God Almighty, I'm free at last"), led his congregation out of the PCA and into the EPC, a denomination which allows for the ordination of women to all ecclesiastical offices, including minister and elder.

Because of the EPC's stance on women's ordination, the PCA has declined to have close fraternal ties with the EPC, and has opposed its entrance into the North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council (NAPARC). However, EPC observers have on several occasions been invited to address the PCA General Assembly.

Hosting the EPC Assembly was Second Presbyterian Church, Memphis, Tennessee, pastored by the Rev. Sanders Willson. Formerly a PCA minister, Mr. Willson helped spearhead a gathering at Cedar Springs Presbyterian Church in September 1994, which had as its goal the building of a theological "consensus" within the PCA.

Retiring Moderator Says “It’s All About Jesus”

Birmingham, Alabama (June 18, 2002)—At the opening communion service of the 30th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) this evening, retiring Moderator Steve Fox exhorted the worshippers not to think of themselves, but to consider that “It’s all about Jesus.” He reminded those gathered of his remarks last

both a word of judgment and a word of hope. Josiah was a good king of Judea, but the people were not obeying the Lord. The ruling elder rhetorically asked, “If we’re to be honest, how many times have we not heeded God’s call?” The key is that our faith would not rest in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.

The Moderator applied the message by saying, first, that the PCA must be a church of the Word, living it and proclaiming it. Secondly, spiritual forces are at work in this world, even as people who were in bondage and captivity “needed to hear a word from the Lord.” Third, “we’re facing problems that can only be resolved by God Himself. We’re to proclaim it and teach it. Unless the world sees Jesus Christ in what we do, we’ll not see any progress in the kingdom.” That is true at this Assembly, the highest court of the denomination.

Towards the end of his message, Steve Fox stated that the events of September 11th had served as reminders of “our vulnerability.”

He gave application by asking, “Will we as a denomination make a difference in our world? Will we put aside our repetitive discussions and our egos?”

After the election of a new Moderator, Mr. Fox received a plaque from Administrative Committee Chairman Bingy Moore, in appreciation of his work the previous year.



Steve Fox (right) passes the gavel to new moderator Skip Ryan.

year when he became Moderator, viz., that “it’s not about me, it’s not about you, it’s all about Jesus.”

This year, the Alabama printer declared: “It’s not my way, or your way, or the highway. It’s about His way, or it’s no way.”

Basing his sermon upon Jeremiah 1:4-19, Mr. Fox stated that the ancient prophet utilized a double-edged sword, bringing



‘Postcard’ from Birmingham



Interior at Briarwood



Bingy Moore and retiring Moderator Steve Fox



Dr. Peter Lillback

Assembly Declines to Mandate Health Coverage

Birmingham, Alabama (June 19, 2002)—The Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) General Assembly turned down a recommendation from its Insurance, Annuities, and Relief (IAR) agency, and declined to require that ministers enroll in the denominational health insurance program. Instead, the Assembly voted to urge that churches enroll in the program.

The action came after the Rev. Daniel Jarfster issued a Constitutional challenge to the recommendation of the IAR Committee of Commissioners, that utilization of the PCA program be mandatory. The Committee had approved that recommendation on a highly divided vote (11-9). The Assembly asked the Committee on Constitutional Business (CCB) for advice. CCB Chair Craig Childs reported that in his Committee’s view, the motion was un-Constitutional.

After that finding by the CCB, the Assembly wrestled with how to care for ministers who are otherwise uninsurable

when the whole insurance plan may become insolvent.

The Rev. Charles Wilson, a medically-retired minister from Charlotte, North Carolina, whose expensive medical bills have been largely covered by IAR, moved an amendment by which the Assembly strongly encouraged the use of the denominational plan.

Other speakers urged that IAR determine what the cost of a denominational plan would be if everyone participated.

Revealed during the debate was the fact that several denominational agencies do not participate in the IAR health insurance program.

[Since the Assembly, IAR has sent out letters, asking churches to indicate what full-time employees they have who are not covered by a spouse’s health insurance. The purpose of the letter is to try to ascertain how much denominational insurance would cost if every church employee in the PCA participated.—Ed.]



The Rev. Mr. Tangai of the Istanbul (Turkey) Presbyterian Church presents Mr. John White with a copy of a Turkish language Book of Church Order. Mr. White had lent assistance to the Turkic World Presbyterian Church in developing its polity

**Giving Glory to the Sovereign God Who Reigns:
The Session of
Calvary Presbyterian Church (PCA)
Glendale, California**
wishes to offer a public testimony giving thanks to God for our
65th Anniversary
*(To be celebrated this fall with majestic theme
and excellent speakers, see website for particulars)*
(tentative date is November 16, 2002)

Founded in 1937 to be a confessing Reformed witness for the pure gospel in Southern California - we are experiencing our covenant God’s blessing by being faithful to the message of “Christ and Him crucified”. God continues to add to his church and encourage us, bidding us to “be strong and of good courage” for “the Lord your God is with you wherever you go” (Joshua 1:9).

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Agency’s Name Change Approved

Birmingham, Alabama (June 19, 2002)—The 30th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) gave its blessing to a change in name for one of its agencies. Effective upon adjournment, Insurance, Annuities, and Relief (IAR) will be known as PCA Retirement and Benefits, Inc.

The agency had already incorporated under the new name. The Assembly followed the agency’s lead by amending the Rules of Assembly Operations and the PCA Corporate Bylaws, and also began the process of amending the *Book of Church Order* in order to bring the Constitution into line with the agency’s action.

Interview with Morton H. Smith

[Dr. Morton H. Smith was the Moderator of the 2000 General Assembly. We appreciate his granting us this interview.]

What are your impressions of the General Assembly?

That's difficult to say. I think it was clear that the Assembly was controlled by a group that had full control of it in a way that I'd never seen before—in a sense, a political machine that just ran it. The decisions, I think, are some of the most serious decisions that have been made by any PCA Assembly. I told the Moderator that I thought the adoption of the subscription position was the darkest day that had happened in PCA history. It means that we have set ourselves now on a road that's going to bring the downfall of the PCA as a Presbyterian Church.

Did you tell Skip that?

Yes, sir.

What did he say?

He wasn't particularly responsive to it. It wasn't something he was interested in hearing. And of course, he himself had been involved in the organizing of this thing. He's listed as one of the PPLN group that was running the Assembly. We didn't have much conversation. It was in the lobby—it's difficult to carry on much conversation there at those times. But I told him that I felt that way about it.

As one of the founders of the PCA, you have usually been upbeat about the denomination, and have always tried to find positive things to say about the Assembly. Was there anything good that came out of this Assembly?

That's difficult to say. Perhaps the decision with regard to women in combat could be classified as good. I agree with the decision that was taken there, and I'm glad that we have finally spoken to that issue. I don't know why we delayed as long as we have about that issue.

How about the action on the review of presbytery records, towards the end of the Assembly?

It was clear that at that time the PPLN control of the Assembly wasn't as strong as it had been earlier. And so a number of the actions that were taken regarding particular cases and so forth were good actions, and were not as much controlled by the broader wing of the church as the rest of the Assembly was.

Do you think if a motion for reconsideration had been made that the earlier decisions would have been overturned?

I think that's conceivable if the Assembly on that last day could have done so, had anybody that had voted in favor of some of those earlier motions had been of such a mind to make such a motion. They feared it. Somebody said, 'Can we set a time for our closing so we won't have something like that.' They feared that kind of an action. Some of the leadership of the PPLN was there till the end—Dr. Chapell, for example, was there till the end. They would have fought it pretty hard if anything had been attempted.

I suppose you were also pleased with the motion that you made on the first night.

Yes, I was glad that the Assembly saw fit to open the door on the matter of the news. I was shocked that they would try to take the positions that were reported to me. As I understand it, they actually had said you couldn't pass things out in the yard, because

it was private property. Yes, I was pleased that the Assembly was willing and ready to allow independent news to be circulated outside of the Assembly floor. Did you have any problems afterwards in passing things out?

No, none whatsoever.
After that.

After that. Of course, there is the question, I suppose, of whether this is binding on the Administrative Committee in perpetuity, unless it is changed by the General Assembly.

It will always be argued that one Assembly cannot bind another.

Right, but one Assembly can bind a Committee.

Could bind a committee.

Which is essentially the case here.

Yes, it was a committee's decision that was overturned by the Assembly, and I would hope that they would listen in the future, and not try to pull that kind of a thing again. But I wouldn't be surprised if they do it again.

Do you think that the PPLN response to you, that there were no plans for parliamentary maneuverings and no attempts to stack committees (such as B&O), was honest?

No. I think it's quite clear that they stacked that Committee, and I think it's quite clear that, as someone has expressed it, they came ready to adopt their whole program. They were not going to compromise on a single thing. The way they beat down the debate that morning after they had put down David Coffin's objection, it was quite clear that they were not hearing any debate. I was sitting on the side, and the same vote that had set down Mr. Coffin's protest, continued. It was the same group of people, the same hands on every single question thereafter. They could have just as well said, 'No debate on these issues,' and it would not have changed a thing. I don't think anybody changed their vote, on the basis of debate.

Well, if their response was not honest, is there anything that you should or will do about that?

There were a number of things that I think were not honest. For example, how can men who were descendants of Northerners, vote the repentance for the South with regard to the race business. I don't think that's an honest kind of a vote. It should have been only the people that were descendants of Southerners that should have been asked to make that sort of a repentance. To outvote the Southerners, as it were, on that issue, was not really honest.

There's been talk in some circles in the PCA about sending up an overture, asking that the Assembly start paying reparations.

That would be the implication of where we are. One good brother in Calvary Presbytery has addressed a letter to the whole of the PCA, saying how can you consider me a brother in good standing in this church if you've condemned me for all these things?

Let's talk about this. During the debate on the "racial reconciliation" overture, one of the elder statesmen of the church stated that he had opposed the civil rights movement when he was in the PCUS because it was associated with the liberals, and that now he was expressing remorse

for having done so. As you know, and as documented in the Presbyterian Journal and in other publications, the ideology of the civil rights movement was itself a manifestation of liberalism. Certainly that would have been the position of the Moderator of the First PCA General Assembly, Jack Williamson. As a matter of fact, at the 1969 Memphis Assembly of the PCUS, a personal resolution from Jack Williamson and others, which opposed Martin Luther King, Jr., was ordered expunged from the record.
That's right.

Given that background, were you surprised at the action taken by the PCA Assembly? If I had thought of that background, I might very well have been surprised. I think, though, in the day in which we live, it was viewed that it would be politically incorrect not to have voted for it. I think that's where we were. We were almost in the hands of these people where you couldn't vote against it. I did vote against it, but nevertheless, it would be viewed as not being politically correct to do so.

Do you think that a number of the men have forgotten their conservative heritage, or is it perhaps that they never grasped the theological and philosophical problems inherent in the so-called civil rights movement?

I suspect it's some of both. Some may have forgotten their heritage. But I think it's very largely the pressure of the politically-correct kind of thinking that determined the vote of the Assembly. They didn't know any other way of how to answer it, than to approve it. I thought the motion of the lawyer from Western Carolina Presbytery, to postpone it indefinitely, was a very good motion—a very good move to set aside this thing without any statement one way or the other about the racial issue. And I'm sorry that the Assembly did not follow that guideline and do that.

There's a sense in which I'm not surprised that this Assembly did this. I think this is part of their program, their whole program to abandon the Southern roots from which the majority of the PCA has come, which goes counter to the founding of the denomination as a Continuing Southern Presbyterian Church. I think they're not going to accept compromise on this, either.

Does the failure of some to grasp the theological and philosophical problems inherent in the so-called civil rights movement, imply that their commitment to the Continuing Presbyterian Church movement was more on the basis of emotion rather than solid theological understanding? In other words, they never really understood what it was all about.

Oh, I think that probably is true. It is true that there was a mixing of social conservatism with theological conservatism in the forming of the PCA, and there were people who saw social conservatism defending the structures of the Old South as being part of the whole movement. Whereas we as a denomination, and we theologians, never spoke to that in that way. This was, I know, the case of individual ruling elders, who felt that that's what was implied. Then, perhaps, the allusion to John Richards' volume. John certainly was reflecting what was true of the South, in its general thinking, of the conservative thinking of the Southerners at that time. And I think most of the people in the PCA at that time felt that same way.

You witnessed many of the ethical lapses

in the Southern Presbyterian Church. In your estimation, are we seeing the same type of unethical behavior in the PCA? (If so, could you please specify what you perceive as unethical?)

Well, the PPLN people, in their response to my Open Letter, said that they had approached us, giving the impression that they had approached us to discuss the whole program before they set it in order. But the fact is, and as I responded to them in my response to them, their letter of approach came a week or two after we already had the word that one or two presbyteries had already adopted that position. So, we were not approached to talk with them seriously. That was, I think, a misrepresentation. It was just to say, 'Oh, we've been good. We've let all these people have an opportunity to consult with us.' This was not the case at all. They didn't approach us at all. That sort of thing shows a lack of integrity. Another example was one brother's last remarks on the floor during the debate on the subscription issue, in quoting Warfield by saying that strict subscription means an acceptance of every statement of the Confession. I am confident that he knows that's not what we have been saying when we talk about strict subscription. Warfield was talking about subscription in churches in other countries, not about the American scene at all. I have never advocated an every-word sort of a subscription in my public debates regarding subscription, or in the booklets that I have written on the subject, and I would have thought that that brother would know that fact perfectly well. I frankly was shocked that he made such a statement. To me it was a misrepresentation of the strict subscription position. What we desire is a subscription to every doctrine of the Confession and Catechisms, not necessarily to every word.

At the PPLN meeting in April in Atlanta, Bryan Chapell spoke of the "timbre" with which women are spoken of throughout the PCA. What is your impression of the "timbre" with which conservatives were spoken of throughout the General Assembly?

Well, I think they certainly held us in disdain. The way they treated David Coffin, for example, was in disdain. He is one of the most able men in the Assembly, and yet they just beat him down, as if he didn't have any point at all. His motion may have been more radical than they had expected, but nevertheless, the way they treated him was not respectful of a good brother who really knows his polity.

What other motion could he have made, that would have been less radical?

I guess he had to make something like that. But that was a fairly radical sort of a statement. You know, it's the first time anyone had ever proposed that before the Assembly, that they send the whole report back.

Right. Although we did do it once with the Permanent Interchurch Relations Committee report, slightly differently.

You have said that, in your opinion, we are very close to where the Northern Presbyterian Church was in the 1920s, just before the Auburn Affirmation, a liberal document which questioned many of the fundamentals of the faith, was signed by a large number of ministers. What leads you to that conclusion?

I have tried to study the history of the decisions and actions of the various Presbyterian denominations regarding

subscription. The first time that any denominational Assembly said that the presbyteries decide the doctrines required to be subscribed—that was done in 1927, actually after the Auburn Affirmation. We now have adopted almost the same language as they adopted in 1927. And I think that means the rapid demise of the church is ahead of us. Among other things, the thing that's most shocking to a number of people at the Assembly, was that they refused to allow the presbytery to keep a record of exceptions. What do they fear?! They fear that we conservatives would raise the issue and say, That's not a proper exception. And so they don't want us to have any voice about that. But I think that will open the door for every presbytery to have its own list of various exceptions, with no review of it at all. It's a breakdown of the Presbyterian system. Under the present proposal, a minister could be approved by a Presbytery, who did not believe in the virgin birth of Christ. It would not be recorded, and thus serious heresy would be accepted by that Presbytery. Our Presbyterian system is based upon the recognition of the depravity of man, and even of the remnants of sin that remain in believers. We need to have the checks and balance system that Presbyterianism provides with its review of lower court records by the higher courts, and the correction of the lower court by the higher court.

Do you have any evidence that there are liberals in the PCA today?

I don't have specific evidence that would hold up in any court case. I heard of a very interesting matter from one of the ladies who was in attendance at the Assembly that a lady who was sitting with her said in effect, "Well, we will be voting in a few years." The first lady, "Oh, no." She was in absolute shock that any of our Church believed that way. It appears that some, or at least one, of our women are pushing for and are hopeful of being officers in the church, members of the courts. And that, frankly, was shocking to me, too.

Of course, if the PCA were to adopt women officers, I dare say that that would precipitate a split.

I think it would.

On the PPLN website, one of its leaders has written that doctrine, piety, and cultural concerns form three strands of the rich Reformed tradition, and that these three strands are "inter-locking, mutually stimulating, and interdependent." How would you evaluate that sentiment?

One of the things that they're trying to promote is that the church is to speak to change the culture, and I do not think that that is the mission of the church. I hold to the old Southern Presbyterian view—Thornwell's view, that the church's mission is essentially the spiritual mission, viz., evangelism, and then the teaching of the people. Now, the fact that it's going to affect the culture—yes, I believe in a world-and-life view concept. But I think their view is that the church is actually to be activist in seeking to change culture. And I do not think that that's a proper understanding of the spiritual mission of the church. And I would cite Abraham Kuyper in the Netherlands. He held to what he called 'sphere sovereignty.' The church has one sphere it operates in, the family in another sphere, business in another, politicians and so forth in another—we as Christians are to operate in every sphere, but we don't do it as the church working in political areas and so forth. I think that the PPLN people do not understand the concept of the spiritual mission of the church, which is certainly the Southern Presbyterian heritage and the Continuing Church heritage, although we

haven't talked it about very much. And I think that's a weakness—we have not pressed this point as much as we should have.

What do you think about putting culture and piety on the same level as doctrine that they are "interlocking, mutually stimulating, and interdependent"?

I think that piety grows out of the doctrine. That the piety is expressed in the Christians' lives in these different spheres of life, that then influence the culture. But it's that sort of connection—not that they're all on an equal par. Doctrine is the foundation from which those others will come.

Is the sentiment, then, a liberal methodology? Is it dangerous doctrine? How would you characterize it?

I think it's very close to a social gospel concept. And I think that there are those in the PCA who want to press social gospel. We have seen some of that already in the PCA with regard to abortion—people marching at abortion clinics, and being told that this is their duty as congregations to go march at abortion clinics and that type of thing. I think it's the duty of individual Christians if they believe that, but for congregations to promote that as congregations I think is, again, getting away from the spiritual mission of the church.

You served as Stated Clerk of the PCA from its inception in 1973 until 1988. Would you have used your office to promote the agenda of a group, say, of Concerned Presbyterians?

No, sir!

Do you think it proper for denominational officials to use their office, and even denominational personnel, to promote the agenda of a political organization such as PPLN?

No, I do not think it proper. I know the Assembly turned down the request from Westminster Presbytery, in saying that everybody has the right of freedom of conscience, and that's true. But when you accept such an office, you're serving the whole church, and you must not allow yourself to let your own views then get in the way of the serving of the whole church. And I think you give up, as it were, your personal expressions at some points. In other words, when I was Clerk, I sought to avoid any clear tie with anybody. And when I gave advice, for example, about judicial cases and that type of thing—and the present Clerk may be doing this as well—I would talk to both sides, and I would say, Now, here's your best case—do it this way. And then somebody would call me from the other side and I would say, Now, this is what the Book [of Church Order] would allow you to do, and give the best advice to both sides. My idea of the personnel of our Assembly, especially the chief executive officers of the various committees and so forth, getting into this thing is wrong. I think they should have stayed out of it.

What do you think can be done about it?

I think we keep appealing to them, that this is the way it ought to be done. The only way we're going to get them to see it, though, is perhaps to air the ethics of it. If we had theological journals, like we had in the older days, like the *Southern Presbyterian Review* where this sort of thing was aired, it might be that you could, over a year or two, get real issues aired. But right now we seem to be hampered with regard to that. Maybe some of the web pages on the internet could do some of it, but I'm not sure how much effect that will have on the whole church.

You indicated two years ago, when you

traveled to Louisiana Presbytery, that you did not believe that people should leave a denomination unless it becomes apostate, or unless it begins to persecute those who are sound in the faith. If the amendment to BCO 21-4 is finally enacted, thus officially making the PCA a non-strict-subscriptionist denomination, will the PCA have become apostate? If not, then would you say that it is inappropriate to leave her?

I think that's a very good question. I'm not sure I would say that she's apostate. But you might follow John Gerstner. John Gerstner did not leave the USA church until he felt that she had abandoned Presbyterianism, with the change of the vows and so forth. And it could very well be at that point that some may want to say, We no longer feel we can walk in this church because we want to be a part of a Presbyterian church which we think is a Biblical kind of church. At that point, I think it could be argued that it's time for a separation. You remember, I reviewed Dr. Pipa's paper before men of your Presbytery on grounds for leaving and so forth: he had a number of things that he suggested there. John Owen has in some ways one of the best statements about it—he said that if to remain in a church causes you to sin, then you have to leave. And that becomes the question for individuals—to make that decision, whether it's going to cause one to sin to stay in this church.

Would it cause you to sin?

I think it'd be very, very difficult to live under the tyranny that will be coming down the road. Ligon Duncan, in his treatment of the Scottish situation, said that when they loosened the subscription, allegedly it was for freedom, but the result was more tyranny. And I think that's where we're headed in this denomination. I think the result will be more tyranny. That my view, for example, of strict subscription, will be laughed out of court, any time I stand up to speak—'Well, the Assembly has already said that you're wrong.' Despite the fact that they've not convinced me at all, I will not be allowed really to carry that kind of argument in the church. The Auburn Affirmation had pretty much become 'orthodoxy' by the time that Machen was forced out of the USA church. They didn't want to hear the orthodox gospel any more. They refused to let him say why he couldn't support the mission board. And I think that's where we are headed.

As you know, the Continuing Presbyterian Church movement was founded on rhetoric that maintained that experimental worship in the PCUS was a sign of apostasy and one just ground for ecclesiastical separation. Do you believe that the failure of the PCA to discipline those involved in experimental worship practices, such as liturgical dance, liturgical drama, and video clips, has led her to the position she is in today?

Oh, I think so. If you go back to my remarks at the Convocation of Sessions, I said if we are going to have a reformation, we've got to have a reformation in every point, including the matter of images, and I was standing before that stained glass picture of Jesus in the Westminster Church in Atlanta. That hasn't been removed. We haven't seen that sort of a spiritual awakening. It took place in England under the Puritans, but it has not taken place in the PCA since our founding. The fact is, I think since the founding we've just gotten more and more away from the orthodox view of worship.

Why is it that strict-subscriptionists have not brought charges against those who have fostered innovations in worship?

And, is it too late to do so now?

Probably the fear of men. And the hesitancy—we don't like confrontation, we don't like to confront people. But probably the fear of men. It would be unpopular, from the perspective even of many of our members who wouldn't see the point.

There are those in the denomination who would charge conservatives with being "racists." Besides the fact that the term has not been particularly defined, would you consider yourself a "racist" or a defender of such? I understand that you had close ties with blacks as you were growing up.

Yes, sir. I do not consider myself a racist, because I would define a racist as being one who hates another race. I personally have no problems with segregation of the races, if it had involved a full equality of practice with the races. In other words, I don't feel that there's anything wrong with that necessarily, if the inequalities hadn't been allowed to come into the system. I think we reaped the whirlwind by not doing so—not keeping equality, say, of schools and that type of thing. They were not the same level. We said, separate but equal. We did not provide equal schools for the black children. And the result is, I think, the whirlwind we have reaped since that time. But I do not consider myself a racist, though I have no objection to the segregation of the races, for example. And I see the Biblical ground for that, in part, is God's sending Israel into Egypt where they were segregated by the Egyptians because they were shepherds. It was part of God's plan to segregate Israel from the Egyptians. If they'd stayed in Canaan, they would have mixed with the Canaanites. But God graciously put them in a country where they were segregated, so that they would grow to become a great nation of Israelites, and not be a mixed bag, as it were. And so I think the idea of the segregation of races is actually found in the Bible.

Wouldn't some people, though, say that this is a redemptive-historical perspective—that this is more a picture of the separation of the church?

Well, I think that no doubt is true, but the fact that the idea of the separation of the races that way was used even by God—that's what I'm saying, that He Himself used it. This is why I was saying that segregation per se is not sinful, just as I believe slavery per se is not sinful. The condemnation, for example, that all slavery, and the description of the kind of slavery that we condemned at this Assembly, simply was not true about most of the Southern people—certainly Christian Southerners were not treating their slaves in that way. But that's just been ignored—it's a misrepresentation.

I believe that many in the PCA are genuinely desirous of being Reformed, and also desirous of putting the theological battles behind us so that we can all get on with ministry. Would that be your assessment also—that most folks want to be Reformed, and that the votes represented a desire to put theological battles behind us in order to get on with ministry?

Probably so, although I think it's a misunderstanding of the place of doctrine and the place of theological battles. Machen used to argue that conflict in the church has been useful throughout the history of the church in getting the church to hammer out her doctrines, in those early church councils and so forth. So, theological battles may well be necessary for the church to hammer her specific positions. And I don't think that theological battles are necessarily bad. We have to constantly be examining, Are we
(Continued on Page 19)

RPCUS Condemns Views of Four Reformed Churchmen

Steve Wilkins, Steve Schlissel, Doug Wilson and John Barach Called to Repentance

In an expected move, the sole presbytery of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in the United States (RPCUS) unanimously passed resolutions condemning the views of four Reformed churchmen. While much of the concern expressed revolves around the "New Perspective on Paul" and the doctrine of justification, other alleged deviations from orthodoxy being promulgated were also targeted.

This action by Covenant Presbytery came at its stated meeting on June 21-22, 2002, in Cumming, Georgia. In the meeting, attended primarily by teaching elders from the denomination's six congregations, concern was directed not only at addressing perceived doctrinal deviations within the Reformed community but also at addressing

issues arising from adherents of these views which had been vexing RPCUS mission efforts in Kentucky.

The churchmen condemned by the RPCUS are well-known. They include the Rev. Doug Wilson, a pastor and noted author associated with *Credenda Agenda* magazine; the Rev. Steve Schlissel, who writes *Messiah's Mandate*; the Rev. John Barach of the United Reformed Churches in North America (URCNA); and the Rev. Steve Wilkins, a scholar of the Old South who pastors Auburn Avenue Presbyterian Church, a Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) congregation in Monroe, Louisiana. The Auburn Avenue Church sponsors an annual pastors conference every January, and it was at the 2002 conference that the views in question came to prominence.

At least three judicatories associated with these men have responded to the RPCUS action: Christ Church Church, Moscow, Idaho, pastored by Mr. Wilson; Messiah's Congregation, New York City, pastored by Mr. Schlissel; and the Auburn Avenue Session. These responses, while taking issue with the substance of the charges, have primarily focused their response on the lack of communication with those accused, the absence of any citations or biblical support and perceived un-presbyterian procedure adopted by the RPCUS and in citing Messrs. Wilkins, Schlissel, et al., for their doctrinal deviations.

The RPCUS has responded by initiating the publication of the *New Southern Presbyterian Review (NSPR)* in which they have attempted to respond to

the criticisms concerning the lack of evidence for the Resolutions and Call to Repentance. In the introduction to the *NSPR* there are references to some of the points made in the Auburn Avenue Pastors Conference sessions (the *NSPR* can be downloaded at: <http://www.chalcedon.org/Review/ReviewFrameset.htm>) and the inaugural issue has specifically expanded on the charges made in the Resolutions.

Founded in 1983, the RPCUS is characterized by being theonomic, post-millennialist, and presuppositionalist with regard to apologetics. The denomination came into existence after Dr. Joseph Morecraft, III, and Chalcedon Presbyterian Church, an Atlanta congregation which he pastored, left North Georgia Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA).

With reference to the "New Perspective on Paul" Movement

Be it resolved that:

Any doctrine of justification that denies that faith alone, sola fide, as a resting upon Christ alone for salvation, is the only instrumental means of justification is contrary to the Bible and the Westminster Standards.

Any doctrine of justification by faith that defines faith as faithful obedience to God is contrary to the Bible and the Westminster Standards.

Any doctrine of justification that denies the forensic nature of justification is contrary to the Bible and the Westminster Standards. Therefore to define "to justify" as "to make righteous" and not "to declare and constitute as righteous" is contrary to the Bible and the Westminster Standards.

Any doctrine of justification that teaches that justification is a process beginning with baptism, which is contingent upon continual obedience to the Law of God, which can be lost by apostasy, and which is not completed until Judgment Day is contrary to the Bible and the Westminster Standards.

Any doctrine of justification that does not teach that immediately upon believing in

Jesus, God instantly imputes the perfect righteousness of Christ to that believing sinner, so that on that basis he stands forgiven and accepted by God forever is contrary to the Bible and the Westminster Standards.

Any doctrine of justification that blends justification and sanctification, or the imputing of righteousness and the imparting of righteousness, into one is contrary to the Bible and the Westminster Standards.

Any doctrine of the atoning death of Christ that does not teach that the death of Christ was a satisfaction of God's justice and a propitiation of His anger by the merits of Christ's life and death as the substitute of God's elect is contrary to the Bible and the Westminster Standards.

Any doctrine of baptism that teaches that all who are baptized with water are by that baptism incorporated into Christ and are recipients of all the benefits of Christ's accomplished work, e.g., regeneration and justification, is contrary to the Bible and the Westminster Standards.

Any doctrine of baptism that explains water baptism as the moment in which we are

regenerated or as the point of transfer from death to life is contrary to the Bible and the Westminster Standards.

Any doctrine of election that teaches that the elect can apostatize or that baptism is the proof of election is contrary to the Bible and the Westminster Standards.

Any doctrine that believers in Jesus can lose their justification and salvation is contrary to the Bible and the Westminster Standards.

Any doctrine that teaches that God accepts less than perfect obedience by Christ in behalf of the elect for fulfilling the conditions of salvation is contrary to the Bible and the Westminster Standards.

Any doctrine that denies the Covenant of Works is contrary to the Bible and the Westminster Standards.

Any doctrine that denies that the covenant of grace was made with Christ as the second Adam, and in Him with all the elect as His seed is contrary to the Bible and the Westminster Standards.

Any doctrine of the covenant that denies that the Lord's Supper is to be served only

to such as are of years and ability to examine themselves or that all ignorant and ungodly persons, as they are unfit to enjoy communion with him, so are they unworthy of the Lord's Table, and cannot, without great sin against Christ, while they remain such, partake of these holy mysteries, or be admitted thereunto is contrary to the Bible and the Westminster Standards.

Any doctrine of Biblical revelation that denies the propositional and systematic nature of the verbal and written revelation of God is contrary to the bible and the Westminster Standards.

Any ridiculing of the doctrines of sola gratia, sola fide, solo Christo, sola scriptura or Soli Deo Gloria is ridiculing the teaching of the Bible and the Westminster Standards.

Any ridiculing of the Westminster Standards as being a Greek and Hellenistic, and therefore inadequate, interpretation of the Bible is ridiculing of Biblical Christianity in its purest human expression.

-Adopted unanimously by Covenant Presbytery, Reformed Presbyterian Church in the United States, June 22, 2002.

A Call to Repentance

June 22, 2002

Covenant Presbytery of the RPCUS declares that teaching presented in the 2002 Auburn Avenue Presbyterian Pastors Conference, involves a fundamental denial of the essence of the Christian Gospel in the denial of justification by faith alone.

That the teaching of the various speakers: Douglas Wilson, Steve Schlissel, John Barach, and J. Steven Wilkins, has the effect of destroying the Reformed Faith through the introduction of false hermeneutic principles; the infusion of sacerdotalism; and the redefinition of the doctrines of: the church, the sacraments, election, effectual calling, perseverance, regeneration, justification, union with Christ, and the nature and instrumentality of faith.

That the rejection of the Bible as propositional and the introduction of an illegitimate post-exilic Jewish mindset as an interpretive scheme, denies the role of Scripture in interpreting itself. This view, while affirming the written work, yet gives

license to reformulate and reinterpret that word through the glasses of an unrevealed and antipropositional mindset that is closely akin to the old liberal higher criticism of the early 20th century.

The denial of the distinction of visible and invisible church and the introduction of an historical and eschatological church, opens the door to new and mystical meanings being applied to the sacrament of the Lord's Supper that are sacerdotal in orientation; makes justification an eschatological process instead of a definitive legal act; obscures the reality and necessity of the new birth; and corrupts Gospel preaching by eliminating the call to repentance and faith within the congregation.

That baptismal regeneration constructed upon the principle of linking the sign and the reality in effect differs little from Roman Catholicism.

That the doctrine that maintains union with Christ is an external position and place in the church confounds regeneration,

union with Christ, and the outward ordinances.

That the maintenance of the language of Calvinism in these speakers is superficial and misleading; their doctrine of perseverance is made to deny effectual calling; their doctrine of corporate election is made to deny particular redemption; and the native depravity of man is made to be removed in the outward administration of water baptism which thereby sufficiently qualifies the recipient for the Lord's Supper.

We therefore resolve that these teachings are heretical. We call these men to repentance. We call upon the church of

Trinity Review Condemns Neolegalism

The latest issue of *The Trinity Review* condemns the "Neolegalism" of the Rev. Steven M. Schlissel, as well as that of the Rev. Andrew Sandlin. Formerly associated with the Chalcedon Foundation in California, Mr. Sandlin has recently become

President of the Center for Cultural Leadership. *The Trinity Review* may be found online at <http://www.trinityfoundation.org/reviews/last.asp>.

May God have mercy upon their souls.

- Adopted unanimously by Covenant Presbytery, Reformed Presbyterian Church in the United States, June 22, 2002.

Response From Messiah's Congregation's Council

Dear Sir:

As Clerk of Consistory, I do hereby acknowledge the receipt of your somewhat puzzling communication of 23 June 2002. Does the RPCUS have no equivalent of the Reformed Rules of Church Order? If charges are being made against Reverend Schlissel, the appropriate first forum is the Consistory (Session) of Messiah's Congregation, not a secret tribunal meeting without the knowledge of any of those being tried. Your methodology appears not to meet the standards of even non-Christian courts of justice which recognize that no lawful trial can occur apart from the knowledge of the accused. Your entire procedure is out of order. Shame on you! Further shame is upon you for what appears to be a gross sort of hypocrisy. You write as if you are champions of the received Reformed and Presbyterian faith, yet you are remarkably selective in deciding which portions of this faith need to be treasured and observed.

You say you strictly subscribe to the Westminster Standards. Have you never, then, read the Larger Catechism at Q&A numbers 144-145? Note well the following excerpts of what you swore before God Almighty was your faith and practice: Q144: What are the duties required in the ninth commandment? A144: The duties required in the ninth commandment are, the preserving and promoting of truth between man and man, and the good name of our neighbor, as well as our own; appearing and standing for the truth; and from the heart, sincerely, freely, clearly, and fully, speaking the truth, and only the truth, in matters of judgment and justice. Q145: What are the sins forbidden in the ninth commandment? A145: The sins forbidden in the ninth commandment are, all prejudicing the truth, and the good name of our neighbors, as well as our own, especially in public judicature, giving false evidence, suborning false witnesses, out-facing and overbearing the truth; passing unjust sentence, rewarding the righteous according to the work of the wicked; concealing the truth; perverting [the truth] to a wrong meaning, or in doubtful and equivocal expressions, to the prejudice of truth or justice; speaking untruth, slandering, backbiting, detracting, tale bearing, whispering; rash, harsh, and

partial censuring; misconstruing intentions, words, and actions; thinking or speaking too meanly of others; aggravating smaller faults; raising false rumors, receiving and countenancing evil reports, and stopping our ears against just defense. We wonder how you can claim to be guardians of the faith you so blithely ignore. You put four men on trial for heresy without so much as notifying them or their overseers, you seek no explanations of any disputed points, no qualifications, no understanding. Yet you present yourselves to the world as defenders of the sacred faith! Our sacred faith includes the summary of it found in the Three Forms of Unity. The Heidelberg Catechism, perhaps the most treasured Symbol of Messiah's Congregation, demonstrates full agreement with the Westminster Standards in characterizing your collective behavior as sinful: Q112: What does the ninth Commandment require? A112: That I bear false witness against no one, twist no one's words, be no backbiter or slanderer, join in condemning no one unheard and rashly; but that on pain of God's heavy wrath I avoid all lying and deceit as the very works of the devil; and that in matters of judgment and justice and in all other affairs I love, speak honestly and confess the truth; also, insofar as I can, defend and promote my neighbor's good name. We trust you will understand how stunning your selectivity appears to us. For it appears to us that your action partakes of most of the sins explicitly warned against in the exposition of the Ninth Commandment found in the Reformed Confessions, which you claim to uphold. Brothers, this should not be! Yet your audacity does not stop there. In the first edition of your journal, *The New Southern Presbyterian Review*, issued concurrently with your "Call to Repentance" and devoted to common material, your editors claim to "seek to set forth nothing new in the field of theology, but simply to imitate the original editors in defending, expounding, and applying God's word to every sphere of thought, faith and life. Like the former editors, we subscribe strictly to the Westminster Standards as the purist human expression of the doctrine revealed in the Bible." Nothing new, you say, and strict

subscription. Yet you immediately go on to admit that "there have been, and continue to be, advances in understanding of God's word and refinements in the language and arguments used." You further confess that you "do not agree with the former editors in every particular of doctrine."

Yet you still wish to claim that, despite your many (though mysteriously unspecified) differences with your forebears, "(y)ours is a received orthodoxy recovered from the Bible by those great reformers of old and, guarded carefully through the generations since, passed down to us to be similarly guarded and handed down to our future generations." That means that you manifestly believe that you stand in the line of Reformed Orthodoxy even though you have improved upon your Fathers' language and arguments, and have grown beyond them in your understanding of God's Word. According to your explicit admission, then, "strict subscriptionists" can differ in their understanding of what they subscribe to! Brothers, if we are in error here, pray tell us, but surely you can understand why it seems to us that the very liberty you claim for yourselves (standing in the line of orthodoxy while growing in understanding, language and argument), your injudicious document seeks rudely to deny to others. We received your document with sadness and dismay. Your presbytery's charges are untrue, they are out of keeping with Reformed Church Order, their distribution is contrary to even pagan sensibilities of

propriety, and their content and character are violations of God's holy Law as explicated in our Reformed Confessions. We have always regarded you as brothers and friends in the Kingdom of our Lord. We regret that by your action you seem to be cutting yourselves off from the fellowship of the church outside your particular organizational circle. We see your action as a grievous disservice not only to our pastor, to others, and to the Kingdom, but to yourselves, as well.

We urge you to reconsider your hasty and error-laden "Call." By admitting your errors now, you will show yourselves to be humble under God's mighty hand, and you will recover your good name. Failure to do so may result in embarrassment on the day the Chief Shepherd appears. Be all this as it may, we acknowledge that you have been entrusted with covenantal oversight of the affairs within the confines of your own denomination, and that you can exclude other people and other people's views that you, rightly or wrongly, deem to warrant such exclusion. Regardless of your disposition toward us, however, you remain welcome to fellowship at our churches, anytime, including access to the Lord's Supper for all your professing members, and we look forward to the day when we will again meet you at that holy table where our communion with Christ and one another is signed and sealed.

Yours in Christ, on behalf of the
Consistory of Messiah's Congregation,
Jonathan Martin, Clerk of Council

Christ Church Public Response to the "Call to Repentance" of Covenant Presbytery, RPCUS of June 22, 2002

We, the elders of Christ Church in session, July 4, 2002, have determined that:

First, the resolution was garbled, indirect, and confused. The resolution was based on conference tapes and not personal interaction. There were four speakers at the conference with different emphases or views. No citations or quotations were employed in the resolution. The resolution did not distinguish clearly between views maintained by the speakers and speculations about what those views might lead to. As a result it was by no means clear what doctrines the different speakers were actually charged with holding. Anything that professes to be a call to repentance should be well-organized, well-documented, and clearly presented.

Second, the process that led to this resolution was unwise and uncharitable. We hold that in matters of public theological controversy, the processes of Matthew 18 do not have to be followed, but on an issue of this magnitude, with the very real

possibility of misunderstanding, wisdom and charity would have required contacting the speakers to determine if they in fact held the positions they were charged with holding. Not one of the speakers was contacted for purposes of clarification before this action was taken. The cover letter with the resolution said that we could contact them "for supporting evidence to the charges," but this was offered after the damage to the larger body of Christ was already done.

Third, the resolution was flat wrong on significant facts of the case. For example, Douglas Wilson, minister at Christ Church, holds to the historic Reformed faith as represented by the Westminster Standards on such questions as justification by a faith that is never alone (11:2), and the real presence of the body and blood of Christ in the Lord's Supper to worthy receivers (29:7). A host of other theological issues are tangled up in this resolution as well, but these two examples serve to show a pattern of misunderstanding.

Response to the RPCUS Charges by the Session of Auburn Avenue Presbyterian Church, Monroe, Louisiana

July 18, 2002

Dear Brothers,

We acknowledge receipt of your papers ("With reference to the 'New Perspective on Paul' Movement" and "A Call to Repentance") and confess ourselves to be dismayed beyond words.

We categorically deny that any of the speakers at our Pastors Conference have departed from historic, orthodox Christianity or even from historic Reformed orthodoxy. We categorically deny that anything taught at this year's Pastors Conference was "heretical" in the historic sense of the term (i.e. teachings which deny the central truths of the gospel). Your charges to the contrary appear to us to be groundless, untrue, and ill-considered. It is clear to us that the charges you have adopted reveal a deep misunderstanding of the teaching given at the conference and, thus, constitute a grave misjudgment.

Further, the procedure by which you adopted these charges was devoid of biblical order and common charity. You have not provided any basis for your charges, nor did you investigate your concerns in a biblical and charitable manner. You have not quoted anything any of the speakers actually said, nor did you make any official contact with any of the speakers to discuss what was said in the lectures in an effort to achieve better understanding. You gave none of the speakers prior notice of your intention to bring charges of heresy against them, nor did you give any opportunity to any of them to respond to the charges leveled.

Though we recognize your right to respond publicly to public lectures and would have had no objection to you voicing

your disagreements with the teaching given publicly, you do not have the right to declare men heretics without approaching the ecclesiastical bodies which have official oversight of these men and without having them examined in public about their views. This, at minimum, ought to have been done.

Aside from the requirements of Reformed Church order, however, it is plain to us that mutual respect and Christian charity demand that brothers be given the opportunity to answer charges against them before being judged. Responding publicly is one thing. It is quite another, however, to have a church court proceed to make judicial pronouncements and ask the wider Body of Christ to receive them as binding, without that court having made any official contact with the parties charged.

For these reasons, it is our judgment that your action is irresponsible, slanderous, divisive, and one which attacks the peace and unity of the Church of our Lord Jesus Christ. We therefore reject and deny your charges as frivolous and unfounded. We further denounce the procedure you have followed in making such charges as unbiblical and unjust.

In spite of our judgment of your actions, however, we declare that we have no animosity toward you and would welcome the opportunity to sit down and speak with you about the views expounded at our conference. We have always held you in high regard and have no greater desire than to be reconciled to you so that we may continue to serve with you in the cause of the gospel and the Kingdom of our Lord.

Sincerely in our Savior,
The Session of Auburn Avenue
Presbyterian Church

Editorials

Mixed Messages

In our estimation, the recent General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA), along with events prior to and after the meeting, displayed a variety of messages—often confusing, sometimes contradictory. Consider with us the following examples.

(1) One of the major themes that many in the Presbyterian Pastoral Leadership Network (PPLN) tried to sound was that of family. We are, we were told, all part of the same family, and it is important not to be dysfunctional, especially as we walk together before a watching world.

It is hard to disagree with the sentiment that we are all one family. However, there were indeed signs of dysfunction within this family. Among those indicators were the paper missiles and other manifestations of disrespect to which conservatives were subjected.

(2) On the one hand, we are regarded as one big family. On the other hand, the vote against the notion of recording a candidate's exceptions, pulls the church apart and betrays the ideal of being one happy family.

(3) Another example of a mixed signal was that of whether everyone in the denomination is welcome. On several occasions, conservatives have been assured that they are welcome to remain in the PCA and that their contributions are valued. However, as far as we could tell, no one seems to be listening. Perhaps conservatives were too busy dodging wads of paper, or filtering out the undercurrent of discontent that was evident on the floor of the Assembly, to appreciate just how much they are loved. But the question remains—if the contributions of conservatives are so appreciated, with regard to what issue, then, was their advice taken?

Given the friendly atmosphere being promoted, one is also hard-pressed to know what to make of the Committee on Constitutional Business' evaluation of Westminster Presbytery's overture to replace the Standing Judicial Commission (SJC) [see story on page 8]. Observations by CCB about the need to change subsidiary documents (such as the Rules of Assembly Operation) should be couched in similar language. But the fact that CCB's recommendation regarding Westminster Presbytery used strong terminology, while the recommendation regarding IAR's proposal was framed matter-of-factly, has sent out mixed messages.

(4) Mismatched signals also were evident in the interaction between Dr. Morton H. Smith and the PPLN. As reported in our last issue of the paper (April-June 2002), Dr. Smith challenged PPLN with whether or not there was going to be an attempt to stack key committees, and whether or not there would be an effort through parliamentary maneuvering to rule out of order attempts to amend overtures, despite the past custom. PPLN responded with a flat denial of these suggestions. However, the eleven-point email which PPLN sent out prior to the Assembly certainly seems to suggest a stacking of key committees. Furthermore, there is no question but that there was the (successful) effort to rule out of order attempts to amend presbytery overtures, through the use of parliamentary procedure.

Adding to the confusion is a recent open letter from one of the key players in PPLN, in which he stated: "Those who closely follow the activity and correspondence preliminaries of the

Assembly knew weeks in advance that this issue would be debated this year."

It appears we weren't on the same email lists or privy to the same internet chat rooms as this dear brother—certainly Morton Smith wasn't. But the response given to him by PPLN prior to the Assembly somehow doesn't seem to us to jive with reality, especially given the fact that at least one PPLN representative now professes to have known of such "activity and correspondence preliminaries" prior to the Assembly.

(5) Much of the PCA leadership has been promoting what it calls a "pastoral approach" in opposition to the use of parliamentary tactics. But, that same leadership apparently employed just those kinds of tactics which they had presumably eschewed.

Of course, perhaps what they meant was that the powers-that-be are always free to utilize obscure provisions of *Roberts' Rules of Order*, while those in the minority are forbidden from doing so. But that would manifest favoritism and a very un-pastoral attitude—so, obviously that must not be what is meant.

(6) PPLN has positioned itself as not being a "political" group. But the organization has lobbied for passage of Constitutional amendments, and has spoken openly of how to pass their overtures in the presbyteries. If they're not political, then why are they engaging in such political activity?

(7) Repentance is not usually accompanied with glee. But when the General Assembly passed Overture 20 and thereby confessed its sins of bigotry, racism, and oppression, virtually the whole body gave itself a standing ovation, congratulating itself on its repentance—something which seems to us very incongruous.

(8) We had always thought that repentance implied rectifying the wrong. But the repentance professed in Overture 20 has resulted in no action toward paying reparations. Repentance that is easy, repentance that doesn't cost us anything—what is this, but a very mixed message?

Apart from anything else that can be said about the 30th PCA General Assembly, it was a meeting that sent out mixed, confusing, and often contradictory signals. How these matters are finally resolved will go a long way toward determining what kind of a church we will be. —FJS

Turning Back the Clock

In our civil society, liberals use numerous metaphors to describe the ways of conservatives. Among the more-colorful concepts utilized in this fashion is that embodied in the phrase, "turning back the clock."

You know the image being conjured up of an old-fashioned hayseed, or worse yet, a Luddite refusing to adapt to his culture and surrounding realities and wanting others to be bound to his backward view of the world.

Let us say up front that we agree that it is very important not to turn back the clock, but rather always to leverage history toward the further reformation of the church.

But it is precisely because we do not want to turn back the clock that we are concerned about some of the actions taken and the attitudes manifest at the 30th PCA General Assembly.

The rejection of "full subscription", coupled with other votes which look suspiciously close to an abandonment of objective theology for a feel-good multi-

culturalism informed by political correctness, is, in our opinion, a way of turning back the clock and heading toward the rampant liberalism that so many of us in the PCA left behind in 1973.

Whether or not these recent actions will lead finally to full-blown liberalism, only time will tell. But in the meantime, let us do all that we can to prevent our beloved church from continuing to turn back the clock to the 1960s or even the 1920s. Let us work and pray to the end that Thy kingdom come, lest we must write in the coming days, Ichabod over our door. —RS

Letters

Dear Editor,

I would like to correct an error of "insufficient information" from the article "Presbytery of the Dakotas Takes on Doug Wilson and Christ Church, Moscow, Idaho," from your April-June 2002 issue. First of all, the CRE did not correspond with Illiana Presbytery, as your article alleges, concerning my deposition. The Session of Christ Church was the body that communicated with Illiana, as you properly state in your May-June, 2001 issue, page 18. Secondly, you failed to mention that I came to the CRE via the Federation of Reformed Churches (FORC) (properly noted in the May-June 2001 issue), which examined me before my deposition, and which encouraged me to finish my trial in the PCA (in accordance with *BCO* 38-3a, since Illiana Presbytery would not transfer me at FORC's request and send the trial on to them). This lack of information in your article makes it "appear" that the CRE has a history of taking in, or shielding men, from denominational discipline, which is not true. You may not have meant to infer this, but your mentioning of my case in close proximity to the CRE within this article lends itself to being interpreted this way. I came to the CRE a full year and a half after deposition, being a minister in good standing in the FORC that whole time.

On another note, I do want to thank you for mentioning that Cornerstone Reformed Church in Carbondale does practice paedocommunion. Having believed it while in the PCA (an exception approved by Illiana), but not being able to practice it, my convictions, and that of the church, have only been strengthened by its practice and practical outworking in the life of the children of the church. What a blessing for children of the covenant to experience the grace of Christ each week as Christ comes to them in the Lord's Supper, feeding and loving them as his children: "Let the little ones come to me."

Sincerely,

Burke Shade, Carbondale, Illinois

A Letter from a Bloodied Warrior for Christ
But if you bite and devour one another, watch out that you are not consumed by one another.

Galatians 5:15 (ESV)

Dear Fathers and Brothers,

Help me. Encourage me. Please do not kick me when I need your encouragement the most. My wounds for Christ were made more painful by statements being made by some at the General Assembly this year, many who are de facto leaders in our denomination. I want you to stop speaking, if only for a moment, and listen to those you do not normally listen to. I am not a pastor of a large congregation, I am in fact normal, shepherding a flock of about 100. Though statistics tell us that this is the normal situation I feel that I am ignored because I do not have a super church. Who would ever listen to a pastor of 100 on any

topic? He obviously is a failure. I am also probably considered one of those 80% of PCA churches that is not growing, at least over the last year. Though we have seen wonderful works of grace, as in a covenant child returning to membership and baptizing her three children, we are often holding our own.

But when it is said that most of us are not growing because somehow we are not gospel and mission oriented, the proof is in the pudding so to speak, you knock the wind out of my sails. I feel like Job, carrying on valiantly despite many difficulties and just when I need encouragement by my friends they come along and accuse me of having something wrong in my life. If only I was more spiritual, more prayerful, would get rid of my secret sins, would claim God's promises; things would be different. But in the words of Job, sorry counselors you all are. I wonder what you would all have said about Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel who could not turn the nation of Israel around? I wonder what you would have said about Jesus when the crowds followed him no more because he taught them the meaning of wonders he did.

We live, especially those of us in the Northeast, in a culture in which more and more people are turning away from God. We struggle daily with hearts that do not want to deal with God, who deny the Son, and are skeptical about Scripture, and enjoy their sin. Would a different method have turned the nation of Israel around for Isaiah? Would Jesus have done better not being so strong on his teaching? Should he have kept up the deaconal work of feeding the thousands to continue to draw a crowd?

You do not know me. You do not know my struggles. You do not know what God's providence's have brought to us. You do not know our victories or failures. You do not know our struggles or degree of effort. Yet because we are one of the 80% and one with only 100, we are not what we should be according to statements coming out of GA and ad hoc organizations. As Jobs friends told him that he must be in sin because of his situation, so you are telling me the same thing. Pardon me, but it is God who gives the increase. We who water and we who plant are nothing, only God gives the increase (1 Cor. 3:7). I have heard from many an experienced pastor that they have done nothing different at their various churches, but one church has grown while another one did not. I have heard from many that at one time their church suffered a decline and at other times it doubled in size and they did nothing different, it was the work of God. If we who water and plant make ourselves out to be something then we take glory away from the Lord whose Spirit blows where He will.

Does a church that goes from 50 members of mostly senior citizens to 100 with young couples and children, 80 percent of the congregation new over a dozen year period, get any attention? In my experience no, though I believe such has been a valiant effort by the local congregation in a difficult area where something like that has happened. One minister of thirty years experience came to our area and said he had never had so few come to Christ. Could we have done better, no doubt, we are not perfect. But should we be condemned and be told we are a part of the problem in the PCA? I do not think so. Please, no more discouraging words. Send us words of hope and refreshment.

Thanks for listening to me. Now please be slow to speak.

Sincerely in Christ,

TE Gary Englestad, Pastor
Evangelical Presbyterian Church
Mt. Laurel, New Jersey

FUNDS BEING RAISED FOR CHRISTY COOK



Funds are being raised for a 43 year old PCA woman, who is suffering from Lupus and kidney disease. Christy Cook has been diagnosed with End Stage Renal Disease, and needs a kidney transplant. Without the transplant, she will be permanently on dialysis. The projected cost of the transplant (without complications) and post-transplant medications, including anti-rejection drugs for the rest of her life, will likely exceed \$100,000.

Donations are being channeled through the National Foundation for Transplants (800-489-3863), and should be designated for the Christy Cook Fund.

Canisters at the PCA General Assembly were available in order for commissioners to give contributions for this cause; and a table in the Bookstore sold items to help raise funds, also.

Christy is the daughter of Ross and Pat Cook, Atlanta. Mr. Cook formerly served in the denominational Stated Clerk's office as Business Administrator.

Prestigious Journal Reviews PCA History

The February 2002 issue of *The Journal of Southern History* reviewed Frank J. Smith's *The History of the Presbyterian Church in America: The Silver Anniversary Edition*. The reviewer, David Stricklin, wrote that "this book is a record of the revolt against 'the liberalism of the Southern Presbyterian Church' . . . Unapologetically, . . . Smith clearly believes that the Continuing Church is the 'pure' church committed to right doctrine." According to Prof. Stricklin, "It would be wrong to suggest that the book's value is only as a polemical document, for it presents a factual account of the rise of the PCA. But its special value for southern historians is as a reminder of the many ways southerners define theological orthodoxy and of the fact that religious persons understand and accept others on the basis largely of where they are in relation to themselves along that system of belief."

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Morton H. Smith
(Continued from Page 15)

true to the Word?, and growing in these things. But I think in answer to your question, I think probably. And this, again, I think is one of the myths that's been passed around about us who are the conservatives, is that we are opposed to spreading the gospel! That's absolutely ridiculous! None of us is opposed to the spread of the gospel.

There are some in the PCA who wonder how effective the "TR's" are in doing evangelism and in engaging in ministry, let's say, to urban areas. If I may use a contemporary term, what is Greenville Seminary's 'philosophy of ministry', with respect to evangelistic outreach, including reaching the inner city?

I think there is the desire to do it. We'll go any place where there are lost people—we would desire to spread the gospel to them, urban or rural or whatever.

Are there any different strategies, or what strategy would you use in terms of ministering?

Well, as I look back in history, the Southern white, in dealing with the black, such as [John Lafayette] Girardeau with his preaching in Charleston, had one of the finest works going on with black ministry. And Charles Colcott Jones in south Georgia—and there are still remnants of that work, mainly in the USA church now, but remnants of the black churches and black presbyteries that had been established under that ministry. And I think that that's the kind of work that needs to be done wherever we go. I like Bill Shishko's [OPC minister on Long Island] definition of the program of the church—it's to minister the Word. That's the only program that the church has got! She doesn't have any other program at all. If she did this effectively, she'll be seeing the kind of spiritual results that we want to see. Just to add numbers to churches, mega-churches and that sort of thing, I don't think is necessarily at all a real measure of divine approval or success in the ministry.

As you've listened to people from around the denomination, what is the state of preaching in the PCA today?

I think it's not very high. In general, I

think preaching is rather poor, even from some of our most prominent pulpits. On the other hand, I can think of some of our men to whom I listen occasionally on the radio or television, who have very effective ministries—PCA ministers who are very effective preachers. And so, it's a mixed bag. I'm afraid that many men do not concentrate on preaching as they ought, and therefore it's not seen as that primary thing that Christ has given and that Paul talks about, that through the foolishness of preaching, God is going to gather in the lost.

In the PC(USA), surveys have indicated that a strong percentage of people believe that there will be a split in that denomination by the year 2050. What do you predict for the PCA?

I haven't thought of it. I think we have in the works what will bring, probably, the division in our church. We have lost down through the years a number of good men who have moved off, say, into the OPC and elsewhere, feeling that these churches are sounder than the PCA. And we've lost the good argumentation that these men would have kept in our Assembly had they stayed with us—good voices of good solid men. We've just lost them, because of that drift away from the PCA. It could be that the movement on the subscription issue will bring about that sort of a major movement, that would bring it out. In which case, probably five years.

Is there anything I should have asked you that I didn't?

I feel in a sense a real sadness about this past Assembly. I see us moving down the road that's going to bring the division. I think that it may not have been unintentional. I've heard down the years that they would like to get rid of us conservatives out of the church. I think of one man that I've been told about, that when he finally left the presbytery, that there were those who virtually applauded his leaving—his going through the trauma of leaving the PCA, and renouncing it as it were. And there were those who applauded the fact that he was gone. And I think that's the way they're going to see it, if a number of us leave. The fact is, though, they're going to reap the whirlwind if they continue to run the church the way they did this year.

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An Elder Statesman on the State of the Church

The Rev. Dr. Ben Wilkinson, one of the original ministers of the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA), has issued a statement regarding the current state of the church. It is a stinging indictment of all parties in the denomination, but especially focuses its fire on the Presbyterian Pastoral Leadership Network (PPLN).

The statement says that the PPLN material "could have been written by someone from the PC(USA), THE REFORMED CHURCH OF AMERICA, OR FROM THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION, or of a more fundamentalist position. It is many words that say little about truth, or to explain or give direction to our desperate culture and religious world that has no truth or direction. That, in my opinion is eternally dangerous. People can interpret the words in any way they desire. Like play dough, it's a lot of words, but no backbone or strengthening structure. . . . I am deeply disappointed to see that the denominational officialdom and many dear brothers through the years surrendering their minds and wills to this all inclusive mess of pottage." The document also charges that following the PPLN path will lead the church to liberalism and neo-orthodoxy.

Dr. Ben, as he is affectionately known, has long been identified with the Presbyterian Evangelistic Fellowship (PEF), one of the organizations that called for the formation of what is now the PCA. He succeeded Bill Hill as executive director of PEF in 1973, and served in that capacity for 22 years. He has long had a heart for the inner city, and he spearheaded the formation of the Synod of the City, a quasi-ecclesiastical, multi-ethnic, trans-denominational ministry in Greater Atlanta. He is organizing pastor for Rock of Ages Presbyterian Church, Atlanta. From fifteen ministry places associated with Rock of Ages, he and his co-workers distribute bread and the Word to an estimated 3000 to 4000 weekly.

Dr. Wilkinson's statement in its entirety follows.

I have been working through a copy of the PPLN material. My reaction is that it could have been written by someone from the PC(USA), THE REFORMED CHURCH OF AMERICA, OR FROM THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION, or of a more fundamentalist position. It is many words that say little about truth, or to explain or give direction to our desperate culture and religious world that has no truth or direction. That, in my humble opinion, is eternally dangerous. People can interpret the words in

any way they desire. Like play dough, it's a lot of words, but no backbone or strengthening structure. Let the readers make their own structure. I am deeply disappointed to see that the denominational officialdom and many dear brothers through the years surrendering their minds and wills to this all-inclusive mess of pottage.

The PCA fathers were clear and precise in their intentions in 1973. Strict subscription was not a major discussion in the formative meetings. It was probably clear in Morton Smith's mind and some of his students, but not in most of us. I did not understand the meaning of the words 'strict subscription' until the detailed discussions after the PCA was born. As a preaching evangelist, I grew after the formation of the PCA to a stricter subscription to the doctrines of Holy Scripture that are expressed in the Westminster Standards. Most of us came to the PCA because of an evangelistic concern, and to a bold affirmation of the inerrancy, infallibility and authority of Holy Scripture in all areas of faith and life. Today men are affirming those doctrines loudly and then ignoring their applications and implications in their decisions and ministry. Soon it will be a battle to reinterpret what they mean. Then careful doctrine became important. Many of us had not worked through the meaning and application of the Reformational doctrines as the writers of the Confession had given us. Because of the change (from the PCUS to PCA) and the discussions immediately afterward, many, myself included, got back to studying the doctrinal issues. It brought back strength and courage to some weak evangelical thinking and preaching. It is a bother to me that the PPLN brothers have not captured this and made it their own since they are positioning themselves as tomorrow's leaders. Many of us had hoped that we in the PCA would become a Church of Compassionate, Holy people; courageous Proclaimers of Truth on every area of life that The Word of God speaks. As a whole we have not. We have captured the 'User friendly approach' in our worship, teaching, discipline, writing, community outreach; and Church policies. The old neo-orthodox methodology of Biblical interpretation appeals to us. One result—Leaders offered a 'take your choice from the bag of views' of Biblical creation because we in our culture had already been infected to academic compromise by public education's prophets of evolution. We were unwilling to accept simply what God said in His Word though many scientists did and have found their scientific affirmations in its light.

Brothers, where I serve in Inner City Atlanta, this sort of watered down approach does not change lives. It doesn't even get ministers to think seriously about bringing the gospel into such Hell-holes. And the truth is, it is not impacting to godly change secular culture where most PCA people feel safe enough to serve. Abortion continues to grow, drunkardness and drugs are the relaxation of choice, pre-marital pregnancies are not only in the Hell-holes of the City, violence is not just Islamic Terrorist, 11:00 PM and 6:00 AM murder reports are not just from inner city police reports, but suburban daily accounts. Divorces have not gone down in our churches but up—some misapplied the user friendly philosophy, I fear. We cannot and will not see changed lives, vibrant Covenant families and Holy living, with such benign presentments in suburbia. Don't come down here and disappoint and confuse the struggling poor, the long downtrodden, the hurting, the addicted, the violent, the sensual searchers in inner city. We don't need that problem also. Don't cry Hope if you have an uncertain Sound of Truth to tell. Keep that—better yet, chuck that. We need some certain, strong truth declared and lived. Here in Inner City where I serve they won't buy that User Friendly Jive, and There in Suburbia they won't move to that unholy discordant tune. All over, our nation has been and is running wildly askew. I too believe God withdrew from us on 9/11 His holy protection and let the ungodly have his way for a time. Only a message of Hope, born in a Sovereign God's Irresistible arresting Grace with unwavering doctrinal underpinnings is adequate to challenge those under Satan's decided influence. For the Fathers of the PCA of the last 40 years and today, for this sinner saved by grace, Ben Wilkinson, Uncompromised Reformational Biblical Truth is the major issue. It pains me that it appears my beloved brothers with high responsibility have not picked up that Truth and surrendered everything to IT. Brothers, you will never be loved by everybody, but you will be loved by God and His chosen people! Come, Dear Brothers, and humbly make them your own. He and His Reformational Truth are worth living for, worth proclaiming, and if necessary worth dying for.

In reading these PPLN papers with other papers and the statements they are making, I can't see clearly where they are going. But I do know where the end of their path will go. Understand, I don't think most of them want to go liberal. But that is where this path will take them and us if we go with them. They are afraid of the Theonomists and their loss of the Prime Mission of evangelism. They are

afraid of the Strict Subscriptionists, with legitimate exceptions, and their non-compassionate exclusiveness. They see little life and conversions in these. They see debates and argumentation and little love in these. Certainly this emphasis is not the way of our Lord and His Word. But I am equally afraid of those who are all inclusive. Not all Church people are among the Elect of our loving compassionate Lord. We left such an all-inclusive group in 1973, but the trap is so subtle and so attractive and easy to embrace in Neo-orthodoxy's interpretive method and its soft appeal. Then Liberalism seems for a period on the surface so intellectually stimulating and caring. Romanism courts those moving in that direction to become a part of the mammoth World-Wide Church with a billion plus. With PPLN dreaming millions for the PCA, Rome will not be such a large leap and we can be in One Great Body claiming billions plus. Small is not sacred, but large at any cost is losing.

I want to see multitudes in His New Abundant Eternal Life of those whom He has chosen and irresistibly calls to Himself through faith in our Lord Jesus. I want to see as many as God will bring to Himself in the PCA—but not as ministers, officers and members who are so 'user friendly' conscious that they are afraid to boldly confront with compassion any persons at any time and any place with His caring truth and boldly challenge the damned who lead our culture down a broad and wide way to misery and Hell. For these reasons I fear the user friendly positions carefully constructed into the PPLN documents I have been reading.

We serve the Lord in a dangerous day. In my lifetime I have seen the true vibrant church world wide take on a new mark for this age. It is the mark of uncompromising truth and vitality—"Martyrs" (*martus*). We of the PCA must prepare to turn our backs on the mark of 'user friendly' and receive the mark of willing Martyrs, as God decrees. That should not sound strange or melodramatic. It was our Lord Jesus, in His last words on leaving His church for whom He had died to make new full mediatorial responsibilities in Heaven at the Father's right hand. He said to them, "you shall receive power after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you; and you shall be martyrs, witnesses unto blood, unto me both in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and unto the ends of the earth." Note, dear brothers of the PPLN and all across the PCA, He said "MARTYRS"! That must be a true mark of His church in our time . . . for the PCA . . . and the church to the ends of the earth . . . not 'User Friendly.'

Former RPCES Churchmen Express Concern About GA

On the eve of the 30th Presbyterian Church in America General Assembly, churchmen from across the denomination expressed concern about the General Assembly and certain trends in the denomination.

One of these churchmen was the Rev. Arnie Frank, a retired minister who served in three denominations, including the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod (RPCES). Mr. Frank, who left the United Presbyterian Church (UPCUSA) in 1981 in order to become organizing pastor of South Hills Reformed Presbyterian Church, Upper St. Clair, Pennsylvania, stated that the PPLN group "makes me nervous. It seems as though the leverage that this group will have is a leverage that will be determined more by statistics than necessarily solid theology. It seems to be strangely similar to what I saw at work in the UPCUSA, particularly the general

aura in terms of the politicization." He added "that we wouldn't know the full story if not for *P&R News*."

Another veteran minister from an RPCES background who is not happy about current trends in the PCA is the Rev. Dr. James A. Wiest. A native of Philadelphia, Pastor Wiest was a church planter as well as a pastor.

Commenting from his retirement home in Alamogordo, New Mexico, Dr. Wiest opined, "it appears that we are taking the same left turn the PCUS took when I was part of it (1961-69). I was in my first pastorate in Harmony Presbytery, South Carolina. Harmony was very conservative and concerned over the liberal agenda among the leadership. One of our ruling elders was doing some financial checking on the giving of the agencies. The official magazine stated that the church gave only a few thousands to the NCC [National

Council of Churches] (under 10k, as I remember), but as he dug deeper, he found that funds were shuffled across comparable agencies directly without going through normal accounting. He finally tallied \$406,000 a year was ferried unofficially across, amounting to several million in today's market."

Dr. Wiest also said, "It appears that the present overtures to our GA are designed to place the power in the heads of our agencies and stifle the grass roots influencing major decisions and direction of the PCA."

He went on to say, "All honest Christian organizations belong to ECFA to insure the monies are distributed ethically. No one is interested in who gives or what, but where it goes." He noted that standard #5 of ECFA states: *Every member organization shall provide a copy of its current audited financial*

statements upon written request.

"Another concern is subscription. I believe Morton Smith's letter covered it wonderfully well. Maybe I'm a little 'hard-pants', but if you don't want to subscribe to the true Reformed confession, as the PPLN wants not to do, then go sell cars or go on a Bill Clinton lecture circuit and make your living, i.e., find another denomination that suits your 'eisegesis' (what you want to believe and do)."

He added: "Our best counsel comes from Proverbs 22:28: 'Remove not the ancient landmark which thy fathers have set.'"

Another churchman who expressed concern about the state of the church is the Rev. Dr. Ben Wilkinson. In a statement issued to the press, Dr. Wilkinson decried the approach advocated by PPLN, as well as expressing concern about other groups in the church [see article this page—Ed.].

News From the Presbyteries

Northern California

Oak Hills Presbyterian Church, Concord, California, hosted a stated meeting of Northern California Presbytery on October 5-6, 2001. The Rev. David Brown was elected as Moderator.

The Rev. Mark E. Richline brought greetings as a fraternal delegate from Northern California Presbytery of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC). The Rev. Marty Scales reported on the September 2001 meeting of the OPC Northern California Presbytery.

The Rev. Mike Hall of the denominational Insurance, Annuities, and Relief reported on the employee benefit plans available from IAR.

The Rev. Andy Lee, Treasurer, presented the 2001 Treasurer's report. Income is below budget by \$1002.64, and expenses are below budget by \$2664.47.

Mr. Brown gave a report on the *Church Law & Tax Report*. There are more than 440 changes to the Internal Revenue Code, and the 18-page article in the publication reviews the changes most relevant to ministers and church treasurers.

The Pro-Life Committee, which had given a detailed report at the February 21, 2001, stated meeting of Presbytery, was dissolved with thanks.

Various commission reports were approved: Commission to Examine & Ordain Ruling Elders, Organize City Church of San Francisco & Install the Pastor & Associate Pastor; Commission to Examine & Ordain Ruling Elders, Organize Trinity Presbyterian Church of San Luis Obispo and Install the Pastor; Commission to Ordain & Install Dan Katches as Pastor of Covenant Community Presbyterian Church. With regard to the Trinity Commission, it was noted that scheduling difficulties had led the Commission to violate the *Book of Church Order* with regard to the 30-day minimum time limit between the nomination of elders and their election. (The nominations took place on September 9th, and their election took place on September 30th.) The minutes were approved in that this was a "minor infraction of the BCO and . . . all other requirements of the BCO were met"; and "with the understanding that this approval not be construed as a precedence to allow less than 30 days for Mission churches to nominate Elders as required by BCO 5-9(3)."

The Presbytery approved the revised call of Second City Fellowship, Kapolei, Hawaii, issued unanimously by the congregation, to the Rev. Mark Merritt to be Pastor. He was received into Northern California Presbytery pending release from Heartland Presbytery.

Various reports were given with regard to world missions, including a report by Chaplain David Dare on his missionary trip to Russia. He had been invited by a Presbyterian Evangelistic Fellowship (PEF) missionary to go to Moscow to give a conference for potential chaplains who were formerly Russian officers.

Pastor Brown reported on the work of the Christian Education Committee, especially the growth of the internship program the last several years. Presbytery approved the completed internships of Joel Linton and Andrew Park. Mr. Linton later preached before the Presbytery and was examined and approved for licensure.

It was reported that Mr. Horst Streu, who was licensed at the March 2000 stated meeting of the Presbytery "only for the purpose of working in the prison ministry and not for preaching the gospel in the church of Presbytery," had been placed on the roll of ministerial candidates by mistake. His name accordingly was removed from the roll of candidates.

The Rev. Jack Marshall, a 72 year old ruling elder at Sierra View Presbyterian Church, Fresno, California, for the past two years, was examined

and approved for licensure. Mr. Marshall, who had been ordained in 1951 at the Bethany Independent Fellowship Baptist Church in Brocton, New York, was approved as stated supply at the Sierra View Church with the approval to administer the sacraments, since he is an ordained minister.

The Rev. Redditt Andrews was examined and approved for transfer from Central Georgia Presbytery, in order to receive a call from the Soaring Oaks Church, Elk Grove, California, as Pastor. The Rev. Patrick McDaniel's resignation as Assistant Pastor of the Soaring Oaks Church was accepted, and his call to serve as a church planter in the Natomas/Sacramento, California, area was approved.

Presbytery accepted the resignation of the Rev. David Crenshaw as Pastor of Grace Church, Pleasanton, California. He was placed on the roll of Presbytery as being "without call."

Presbytery approved the resignations of the Rev. Bill Hawk and the Rev. Christopher Ribaud as Presbytery evangelists at Trinity Presbyterian Mission Church, San Luis Obispo, California. Mr. Hawk's call as a part-time Assistant Pastor of Covenant Community Church, Paso Robles, California, was approved, as was Mr. Ribaud's call as a part-time Assistant Pastor at the Trinity—San Luis Obispo church. Mr. Ribaud's work as campus chaplain and teacher at North County Christian School was also approved.

Presbytery approved the resignation of the Rev. Dennis Heida as Assistant Pastor at New Church, Berkeley, California, and approved his call as Pastor of Ridge Presbyterian Church, Paradise, California.

The resignation of the Rev. Tim Wohlers as Assistant Pastor of Oak Hills Presbyterian Church, Concord, California, was approved, and he was placed on the roll of Presbytery as "without call."

The Rev. Robert Scott, who has been without call for three years, reported that he is continuing to work on planting a church in Ashland, Oregon, and that he is filling the pulpit part-time at an OPC congregation.

Presbytery appointed a commission to organize Hidden Valley Presbyterian Church, Sandy, Utah, including the examination, ordination, and installation of ruling elders, and the installation of the pastor.

The PRESWIC program was discussed. The Christian Education Committee recommended that PRESWIC elect officers for two-year terms and that PRESWIC present annual plans for their work at the next meeting of the court.

Reports were given on the six mission churches of the Presbytery. Reports were also given on several chaplains who are members of the Presbytery.

Presbytery approved the application of Trinity Presbyterian Church—Central Oahu for an \$80,000 interest-free loan from the MNA Five Million Dollar Fund. Mentioned in the approval was "Teaching Elder Pete Anderson's excellent record of ministry in Hawaii and the progress of his church."

The Rev. Lewis Ruff presented the MNA Committee report, which included reports on the Inter-Presbytery Committee, the Asilomar Conference, and the September 11th Relief Fund.

Stated Clerk Art Schick reported that he had received an appeal from Randall Wright of Soaring Oaks Church from disciplinary action taken against him by the Session. A judicial commission was appointed to hear the appeal.

South Texas

On April 19, 2002, the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Beaumont, Texas, hosted the sixty-ninth stated meeting of South Texas Presbytery. The Rev. Paul Hahn, a substitute moderator, called the meeting to order. He was elected Moderator

of this meeting by consensus. Host pastor Mark Gibson led in worship and the Presbytery celebrated the Lord's Supper.

The Presbytery approved the minutes of the commission to ordain and install Matt Boulter as an assistant pastor at Redeemer PCA, Austin, Texas, and church planter for Emanuel Mission Church.

An additional \$1,200 was given to the San Antonio church plant, and \$1,200 to a new line item for MNA conference calls.

Overtures from Christ the King Presbyterian Church, Houston, to amend BCO 21-4 and 34-1, were approved.

The court sustained the finding of the judicial commission hearing the complaint from Mr. Al Henderson, which finding denied Mr. Henderson's complaint against the action of the Presbytery.

A proposed amendment to the Presbytery Bylaws, establishing a Committee on Campus Ministries, was read. The amendment will be voted on at the July stated meeting.

Ruling Elder Alex Villasana was examined in theology and sacraments as part of his trials for ordination. He sustained the exam.

Mr. Lincoln Ashby was examined and approved for ordination. He has been called as assistant pastor at Christ the King Presbyterian Church, Houston.

Mr. Kyle Livingston, a member of Christ the King Presbyterian Church, was taken under care as a ministerial candidate.

Ruling Elder Brad Bradley from North Texas Presbytery reported on the Southwest Church Planting Network. The Rev. Ronnie Rowe reported on Reformed University Ministries in the Southwest.

The Presbytery approved the petitions to organize Dios Con Nosotros Church, McAllen, Texas (Isaias Uc, organizing pastor); and Christ Presbyterian Church, Victoria, Texas (Mike Singenstreu, organizing pastor).

The Rev. Keith Good reported on his chaplaincy ministry.

The meeting, which began at 6:40 PM, adjourned at 11:45 PM with the singing of the Doxology.

Westminster

Johnson City, Tennessee (June 20, 2002)—Princeton Presbyterian Church hosted the summer stated meeting of Westminster Presbytery. Mr. John R. Whitner, a ruling elder from Bartlick Presbyterian Church, Haysi, Virginia, was elected Moderator.

The Presbytery commended the ministry of Dr. Bill Barton to the Westminster Presbyterian Church, Johnson City, Tennessee. Dr. Barton, a

member of Palmetto Presbytery, will be supplying the vacant pulpit for several weeks.

The Rev. Steve Warhurst was examined and received from New River Presbytery. His call (with terms of \$38,000 plus benefits) is that of an assistant pastor at Westminster Presbyterian Church, Kingsport, Tennessee, with one of the long-term goals of his ministry being that of developing a Bible study in Rogersville, Tennessee, into a church plant. Presbytery noted his exception regarding recreations on the Sabbath.



Princeton Presbyterian Church

The Rev. Theo Van Blerk was examined and received upon his release from Classis Pretoria of the Reformed Churches of South Africa. He is being called as Pastor of Meadow Creek Presbyterian Church, Greeneville, Tennessee.

Mr. Joel Kennedy, who preached a sermon for the communion service, was examined and licensed. He will be continuing his education in Scotland.

The Rev. Curtis Stapleton reported on his ministry with Reformed University Ministries at East Tennessee State University and King College.

Presbytery granted the Shepherding Committee the authority to develop a list of men who are available to supply the congregations' pulpits.

A judicial reference from a Session was referred to a commission.

The Rev. Dr. Steve Meyerhoff, the Presbytery's Stated Clerk, was transferred to Chesapeake Presbytery in order to accept a call as Pastor of Glen Burnie (Md.) Evangelical Presbyterian Church. His pastoral relationship with Memorial Presbyterian Church, Elizabethton, Tennessee, was dissolved effective August 1st. Presbytery spread a statement of appreciation upon the record, and ordered that it be transmitted to Chesapeake Presbytery.

The Rev. Dan Foreman was elected as the new Stated Clerk. Mr. Foreman is pastor of King Memorial Presbyterian Church, Bristol, Virginia.

Quotes from the Quorums

The following was heard on the floor of Westminster Presbytery at its last two stated meetings:

"We have no report—unless somebody wants to be examined."—Ross Lindley, Chairman of the Examinations Committee.

"Are there any instructions, or do we just follow our noses? . . . Forks—Ross [Lindley] would prefer to follow our forks."—Moderator John R. Whitner, just before the lunch recess.

"Is it all right for me to rule myself out of order?"—Moderator John R. Whitner.

"I want you to know that I was very happy when the congregation elected Johnny Powers and I to come and persecute the Presbytery with regard to this call."—David Cross, one of the representatives of Meadow Creek Presbyterian Church elected to prosecute a ministerial call.

Theo Van Blerk, who is from South Africa, was struggling to answer a particular theological question in English. While talking in Afrikaans with his translator, Carel Van Der Merwe, Mr. Van Blerk assured the Presbytery "I am not asking my translator for the answer", to which a commissioner called out: "He doesn't know it anyway!"



Service in the Park

On the evening of June 30, 2002, 200 people gathered in a downtown park in Bristol, Tennessee, to hear Dr. Roger Schultz speak on the area's Christian heritage. The history professor focused his comments on the influence of Presbyterian preachers during the colonial and Revolutionary periods, and on legendary 20th century preacher Dan Graham. The event was sponsored by five Presbyterian congregations in the Bristol area, including two OPC, one RPCGA, and two PCA churches.



Creation Conference Announced

Emmanuel Orthodox Presbyterian Church continues its Westminster Lecture Series this year with Dr. Joseph Pipa, President of Greenville Theological Seminary. Dr. Pipa is the latest in a long list of past speakers at Emmanuel OPC, including Prof. R. B. Kuiper, Dr. Cornelius Van Til, Dr. Robert Letham, Prof. John Murray and Dr. David Freeman. Dr. Pipa's subject will be Biblical Creation. There will be three lectures, the first starting at 7:30 p.m. on Friday September 13th. The series will then continue on Saturday at 9:00 a.m. with a break at 10:00 a.m. and finishing at about noon. After each lecture, there will be a question and answer period. Located at the crossroads of Park Avenue and Whippany Road in Whippany, New Jersey, Emmanuel OPC is easily accessible from New York or Philadelphia. For more information or directions contact elder Bob Freeman at 973-325-6130 or look on the church's website <http://www.opcnj.org>

Czech and Mate (and Family)

The Rev. Pavel Bartos, an evangelist with Presbyterian Evangelistic Fellowship, was received in April as a member of Calvary Presbytery (PCA). A native of Czechoslovakia, he is ministering in what is now known as the Czech Republic. He is pictured here with his wife Zdenka, and their four children:



In May, Pavel was invited to speak at a seminar in Prague at which he was able to proclaim the meaning of Christ's death and resurrection to present and former high government officials.



Covenant Presbyterian Church, Eufaula, Alabama

Noah's Ark, painted by pastor's wife Sara Thompson, is featured on the wall of a Sunday School classroom at Covenant Presbyterian Church.



Photos by Debbie and Laura Couch



NEW ST. ANDREWS COLLEGE

Classical Christian education with a Reformed backbone

NEW ST. ANDREWS has reset the standard for higher education in the Reformed tradition, and they are still alone in meeting it. Their faculty is outstanding, the curriculum demanding, and their graduates are equipped to lead, not follow, in the world God has re-given us in Christ. I know the teachers, I've met the students. This is the one college today that Reformed Christians can recommend without a string of admonitions."

Rev. Steve M. Schlissel

Pastor, Messiah's Congregation, New York City

In a day when even historically conservative Reformed and Presbyterian colleges are bowing before the idols of our age—feminism, multiculturalism, liberalism, statism, and postmodernism—finding a Christian college with an academic and spiritual backbone isn't easy.

But that task just got easier.

New St. Andrews College, established in 1994, is a community of confessionally Reformed scholars dedicated to preparing the next covenant generation to stand firm in the truth, beauty, and goodness of the faith once delivered to the saints. The College has revived the classical tradition of education that gave our Protestant forefathers the

intellectual strength and spiritual stamina to stand against the idols of their day. And we seek nothing less for our day.

That's a tall order, of course, but we've already taken important steps in that direction:

- We foster a personal community environment by keeping classes—and the college—small, admitting only 40 full-time freshmen each year. We hold weekly small group tutorial sessions and conduct examinations orally. And students live as responsible members of the local community (many with Christian families), instead of in dorms where collective immaturity often breeds immorality.

- We build our curriculum on biblical foundations and focus our studies on the great works of Western civilization. We also require seniors to write and defend 20,000-word theses.

- And we're making college affordable again for most Christian families. Tuition is under \$6,000 per year, and students pay the same, fixed tuition rate for all four years. We accept no government funds or the strings attached to them.

Many Christian colleges may be older, but none is more committed to the historic Reformed faith and to putting a backbone back into Christian higher education than New St. Andrews College.



Dr. Peter Leithart
(Ph.D., Cambridge University, England), Fellow of Theology and Literature and the author of *Brightest Heaven of Invention* and *A House for My Name* leads a tutorial for his theology class that includes *Shoreline Visitor* (right), a second-year student from Boise, Idaho.

I am not aware of any college that provides a more consistently reformed and academically excellent education than New St. Andrews."

Rev. Stephen M. Arrick

Senior Pastor, Evangelical Presbyterian Church, Newark, Delaware

If there is a better place for the next generation of Christian leaders to be trained and equipped, I am altogether unaware of it. The New St. Andrews experience beautifully combines academic rigor, Christian faithfulness, and the art of community."

Dr. George Grant

Author and Educator, Franklin, Tennessee

All you get at New St. Andrews is a highly qualified faculty, small classes, personal accountability, a demanding curriculum designed to develop stout, faithful servants of Christ, set in the context of a devout commitment to historic Christianity—in other words, precisely what is needed in this day."

Rev. Steve Wilkins

Pastor, Auburn Avenue Presbyterian Church, Monroe, Louisiana

New St. Andrews College is now accepting applications for the 2002-2003 academic year.

Early Application Deadline: March 1, 2002. The Spring New Student Weekend: April 12-15, 2002. Parents and Prospective Students Welcome.

For information and an application, or to make arrangements to visit the College, contact: Admissions Director, New St. Andrews College, P.O. Box 9025, Moscow, ID 83843

Phone: 208-882-1566, Fax: 208-882-4293, Email: nsaadmin@nsa.edu, Website: www.newstandrews.org

(Paid Advertisement)

Ministering in Mayberry

PCA Church Celebrates Sixty-five Years of Service to Small Town on the Great Plains

Out in the ranch country of northwest South Dakota, is the city of Lemmon, founded in 1907. Originally a station on The Milwaukee Road (Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul, & Pacific R.R.), it was on that railroad's mainline to the Pacific Northwest.



A versatile building, completed in 1986, serves the church's needs for worship, fellowship, education and outreach.

With a population of 1383, Lemmon is a community reminiscent of TV's Mayberry, RFD, but without the Southern accents. The nearest large city is nearly three hours by car.

Most of Lemmon's residents are either themselves involved in ranching, or are involved in services that support the ranchers and the community at large.

Over on First Avenue West stands the Reformed Presbyterian Church, a congregation of the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA). Founded in 1937 during the time of the Modernist-fundamentalist controversy in the mainline Protestant churches, the congregation identified with one of the separatist denominations, the Bible Presbyterian Church, due to its

commitment to Scripture. (The Bible Presbyterian Church eventually became known as the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod, which merged with the PCA in 1982.)

Numerically, this congregation does not match the world's standards of success. With under 50 members on her rolls, many would not even consider the Reformed Presbyterian Church in Lemmon a viable church. But the members and the Session disagree. Says one ruling elder, "the church is not about numbers; or at least it shouldn't be. The church is about presenting the grace of God through Jesus Christ faithfully to our members, and to the community. If we are faithful in doing that, we are successful."



Lemmon is located just below the North Dakota border.

A member of the far-flung Siouxlans Presbytery (which covers the states of Minnesota, North Dakota, and South

Dakota), the Reformed Presbyterian Church in Lemmon is located far from the better-known ministries and churches of the PCA. But its out-of-the-way location should not obscure the fact that the congregation has been graced throughout her history by teaching and ruling elders who have been Biblically rooted and carefully Reformed.

Lemmon itself has nine houses of worship, but the PCA congregation stands out in the community. According to local locksmith and mechanic Philip Paul, it is known as "the church that uses the Bible." A Scriptural emphasis, coupled with a commitment to classical Calvinism, enables the church to have an influence out of proportion to its size.

Presently, in addition to regular worship on Sunday mornings and evenings, the church offers Family Sunday School, Wednesday prayer meetings, Men's and Women's Bible studies, a weekly radio ministry, and is planning to begin a Pioneer Club this fall. The church has hosted community song-fests, community prayer meetings (such as following the September 11th events of last year) and provides worship services at Lemmon's Nursing Home.

Pastor Tom Penning tries to bring the gospel to light in the community as well. He contributes a weekly column in the local paper, in which he discusses applications of theology to events in Lemmon. He is involved in the Lemmon School District, and is available as a resource for home schooling families in the community. "The gospel can fix everything it touches," he says. "It is our

job to bring the gospel to as many parts of our community as we can."

Installed as minister just over a year ago, Mr. Penning hopes to remain in Lemmon for a long time. "Pastoring is meant



Featuring dinosaur displays, the Grand River Museum champions creation science and a young earth.

to be long term," he believes. "A pastor who jumps from place to place misses out on the richness of being part of a community, of a group of believers who love each other, warts and all. The intimacy found in a long-term pastoral relationship is like no other. My heroes have become those men who stay. I know a PCA pastor who has ministered in a small town similar to Lemmon for over 25 years. He knows the congregation. They know him. He is a part of them. That might not have the glamour of a program-filled big city church. But it is what a church should be."

*Reformed Presbyterian Church
500 First Avenue West/PO Box 388
Lemmon, South Dakota 57638
(605) 374-5580*

Photos courtesy *The Lemmon (S.D.) Leader*

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., 9:15 AM; Worship, 10:30 AM/6 PM
Wednesday Bible Study, 7 PM
(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., 11:30 AM; Worship, 9:30 AM
(714)526-3153

CALVARY PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
610 North Glendale Avenue/Glendale
S.S., 10:00 AM; Worship, 11:00 AM
(818)244-3747

CONNECTICUT

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

FLORIDA

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

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

TRINITY PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH†

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

GEORGIA

CRAWFORDVILLE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
Crawfordville
S.S., 10:00 AM;
Worship, 11:00 AM (2nd Sunday)
FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
One Harker Road/Ft. Oglethorpe
S.S 10:00 AM; Worship, 11:00 AM/6:00 PM
(706)866-2521

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

SOUTH LIBERTY PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
Sharon Barnett Road/Sharon
S.S., 10:00 AM;
Worship, 11:00 AM (1st/5th Sun.)
(706)456-2377

CHEROKEE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

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

LOUISIANA

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

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

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

MARYLAND

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

<p>CHRIST REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH Diplomat Building, 13992 Baltimore Avenue, Suite 300/Laurel S.S., 9:30AM; Worship 10:30AM/6:00PM (301) 498-3700 MINNESOTA</p>	<p>WHITE OAK PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH 699 Polly Watson Road/Fremont S.S., 10:00 AM; Worship, 11:00 AM (919)284-4196</p>	<p>FAITH PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH 1800 Third Loop Road/Florence S.S., 9:45 AM; Worship 11:00 AM/6:00 PM (843)665-9235</p>	<p>NEWHOPE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH Fairfax Fire Station #3 (Williams Memorial Hall), 4081 University Blvd./Fairfax S.S., 11:15 AM Worship, 9:30 AM/5:30 PM (703)385-9056</p>
<p>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</p>	<p>HAZELWOOD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH 117 E. Main Street/Hazelwood S.S., 9:30 AM; Worship, 11:00 AM/6:15 PM Wednesday, 7:00 PM (828)456-3912</p>	<p>BEECH STREET PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH 1403 Beech Street/Gaffney S.S., 10:00 AM; Worship, 11:00 AM/6:00 PM (864)489-2014</p>	<p>CALVARY REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH 403 Whealton Road/Hampton S.S. 10:00AM; Worship: 8:30 AM/11:00 AM Evening Gathering: 6:00 PM (757)826-5942</p>
<p>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</p>	<p>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</p>	<p>CALVARY PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH 9201 Old White Horse Road/Greenville S.S. 10:00 AM; Worship 11:00 AM/6:00 PM Wednesday Prayer Meeting 7:00 PM (864)294-0895</p>	<p>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</p>
<p>FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH East Beach Blvd. at 24th Ave./Gulfport S.S., 9:30 AM; Worship, 11:00 AM/6:00 PM Wed., Family Dinner (6:00)/Bible Study (6:30) (228)863-2664</p>	<p>TRINITY REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH 3701 South College Road/Wilmington Worship 10:30 AM (910)395-1252</p>	<p>SECOND PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH 105 River Street/Greenville S.S., 9:45 AM; Worship, 11:00 AM/6:00 PM Wednesday, 5:45 PM (864)232-7621</p>	<p>KNOX REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH 4883 Southard Lane/Mechanicsville S.S., 9:30 AM; Worship, 11:00 AM Sunday Evening, 6:00 PM (804)779-7608</p>
<p>ST. PAUL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH 5125 Robinson Road/Jackson S.S., 9:45 AM; Worship, 10:55 AM/6:00 PM (601)372-7497</p>	<p>NOVA SCOTIA BEDFORD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH 49 Nelson's Landing Blvd./Bedford S.S., 11:30 AM; Worship, 11:00 AM/7:00 PM (902)864-1587</p>	<p>FELLOWSHIP PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH 1105 Old Spartanburg Road/Greer S.S., 10:00 AM; Worship, 11:00 AM/6:00 PM Wednesday, 6:30 PM (864)877-3267</p>	<p>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</p>
<p>COVENANT PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH 625 N. Church Ave./Louisville Worship 11:00 AM and 6:00 PM 2nd Sunday, Fellowship Meal, 12:15 PM, Evening Studies at 1:00 PM. Wed Supper 6:00 PM; Prayer Mtg, 6:30 PM (601)773-5282</p>	<p>OHIO FAITH PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH 2540 S. Main Street/Akron S.S., 9:30 AM Worship, 10:45 AM/6:00 PM Wednesday, 7:00 PM (330)644-9654</p>	<p>TENNESSEE BRAINERD HILLS PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH 6388 East Brainerd Road/Chattanooga S.S., 9:45 AM; Worship, 10:45AM/6:30PM (423) 892-5308</p>	<p>TRINITY PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH† 108 Hill Street/Tazewell S.S., 9:45 AM; Worship, 11:00/7:00 PM (540)988-9541</p>
<p>PEARL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH 2933 Old Brandon Road/Pearl S.S., 9:45 AM; Worship, 11:00 AM/6:00 PM (601)939-1064</p>	<p>CHRIST COVENANT REFORMED (PCA) 14787 Palmer Road SW/Reynoldsburg Psalter Service, 9:30 AM/Worship, 10:45 AM Thurs. Bible Study, 7 PM (740)964-0889</p>	<p>MIDWAY PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH 4011 Old Jonesborough Road/ Jonesborough S.S., 10:00 AM; Worship 11:00 AM/7:00 PM (423) 753-941</p>	<p>WASHINGTON WESTMINSTER PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH 2700 Andresen Road/Vancouver Worship, 10:00 AM Sunday Bible Study, 6:30 PM (360)254-1726</p>
<p>TCHULA PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH 109 E. Main Street/Tchula S.S., 10:00 AM; Worship, 11:00 AM/5:00 PM Wednesday Prayer Meeting, 7:30 PM (601)924-7334</p>	<p>OKLAHOMA BEAL HEIGHTS PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH 614 SW Park/Lawton Worship, 10:45 AM and 6:00 PM (580)355-4702</p>	<p>BRIDWELL HEIGHTS PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH 108 Bridwell Heights Drive/Kingsport S.S., 9:45 AM; Worship, 11:00 AM/6:00 PM (423)288-3664</p>	<p>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</p>
<p>FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH 600 Main Street/Woodville S.S., 10:00 AM; Worship, 11:00 AM/6:00 PM Wed. Prayer Mtg. (Oct.-May), 6:00 PM (601) 888-4837</p>	<p>PENNSYLVANIA NEW LIFE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF HOPEWELL TOWNSHIP 2795 Patterson Drive/Aliquippa S.S., 9:30AM; Worship, 11:00AM (724) 378-4389</p>	<p>FELLOWSHIP PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH Highway 25/70/Newport S.S., 9:30 AM/Worship, 11:00 AM/7:00 PM Wednesday Prayer Meeting, 6:00 PM (423) 623-8652</p>	<p>WISCONSIN CALVARY ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH† 136 West Union Avenue/Cedar Grove S.S., 10:30 AM; Worship 9:00 AM/7:00 PM (920)668-6463</p>
<p>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</p>	<p>LEHIGH VALLEY PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH 31 S. 13th Street/Allentown S.S., 9:45 AM; Worship, 11:00 AM/6:00 PM (610)797-8320</p>	<p>WESTMINSTER PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH 900 Watauga Street/Kingsport S.S., 10:00 AM Worship, 11:00 AM/7:00 PM (423)247-7341</p>	<p>REFORMATION PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH† Aurora Medical Center, I-94 at Highway 164/Waukesha Bible Study, 10:00 AM; Worship, 11:00 AM Wednesday Prayer Service, 7:00 PM (262)246-2421</p>
<p>NEW JERSEY LOCKTOWN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH 197 Locktown-Flemington Road/Flemington S.S., 10:30 AM; Worship, 11:00 AM (908)996-7707</p>	<p>COVENANT PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH 515 West County Line Road/Hatboro S.S., 9:45 AM (Sum., 9:00); Worship, 11:00 AM (Sum., 10:00) (215)675-9688</p>	<p>COLLEYVILLE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH 715 Cheek Sparger Road/Colleyville S.S., 11:10 AM; Worship, 9:30 AM/6:00 PM (817)498-2626</p>	<p>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</p>
<p>MOUNT CARMEL CHURCH† 350 Franklin Blvd./Somerset S.S., 10:00 AM; Worship, 11:00 AM/6:00 PM (732)846-8777</p>	<p>ROCKY SPRINGS PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH 123 Rocky Springs Road/Harrisville S.S., 10:00 AM Worship, 11:00 AM/6:00 PM (724)735-2743</p>	<p>COVENANT PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH 2701 N. 7th Street/Harlingen S.S., 9:30 AM; Worship, 11:00 AM Midweek service, 7:00 PM Wednesday (956)425-3136</p>	<p>GRIEVING WITH HOPE The Rev. James Alexander PO Box 7100 Florence, SC 29502-7100 (843)664-9759 Website: www.griefwithhope.com Email: griefwithhope@abac.com</p>
<p>NEW YORK AFFIRMATION PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH Routes 100 and 139/Somers S.S., 10:00 AM; Worship, 11:00 AM (914)232-0546</p>	<p>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</p>	<p>CHRIST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH 1620 E. Common Street/New Braunfels S.S., 9:30 AM; Worship, 10:45 AM (830)629-0405</p>	<p>WE are pleased to have congregations and organizations join us as cosponsors of this venture. If you would like to become a sponsor, just let us know: PINS Financial Office, P. O. Box 60, Coeburn, VA 24230. Checks should be made payable to Presbyterian International News Service.</p>
<p>NORTH CAROLINA DILLINGHAM PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH 16 Stoney Fork Road/Barnardsville S.S., 9:45 AM; Worship, 11:00 AM (828)626-3668</p>	<p>SOUTH CAROLINA REEDY RIVER PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH 46 Main Street/Connestee S.S., 10:00 AM; Worship, 11:00AM/6:30PM (864)277-5455</p>	<p>PROVIDENCE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH 3510 Austin Parkway/Sugar Land S.S., 9:45 AM; Worship, 11:00 AM and 6:00 PM (except 1st Sun.) (281)980-2522</p>	<p>† Indicates a non-PCA church.</p>
<p>COUNTRYSIDE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH 127 Ponderosa Road/Cameron S.S., 9:30 AM; Worship, 11:00 AM (919)499-2362</p>	<p>GRACE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH 1955 Riverside Drive/Conway S.S., 9:30 AM/Worship, 10:45 AM (843)347-5550</p>	<p>VIRGINIA COEBURN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH 220 Second Street SW/Coeburn S.S., 9:45AM; Worship, 11:00AM/6:30PM Wednesday Prayer Meeting, 7:00PM (276)395-2866</p>	