

# PRESBYTERY MEETING

March 16, 2013

# POSTLUDE

## Day filled with spirit, celebration, fellowship

With a brilliant choice for the Gathering Hymn, the meeting at Pines Presbyterian Church, Houston, began with commissioners enthusiastically singing "Revive Us Again," written in 1863 by William P. McKay, a Presbyterian minister from Scotland.

"Revive us again - fill each heart with Thy love;  
May each soul be rekindled with fire from above.  
Hallelujah, Thine the glory!  
Hallelujah, amen.  
Hallelujah, Thine the glory!  
Revive us again."

In keeping with the theme of "Revival," guest preacher, the Rev. Paul T. Roberts, President and Dean of Johnson C. Smith Theological Seminary in Atlanta, Georgia, began his sermon by saying what Revival is and what it is not.

Revival, Dr. Johnson said, is not jumping up and down in an emotional state nor returning to something in the past. Revival means revitalization, moving forward, being prepared for change, having an active role in what the Holy Spirit is doing through us. Revival is the power of God's spirit. "Let us remember," said Dr. Roberts, "the mystery and majesty of God."



Paul T. Roberts

## The State of the Presbytery Mike Cole delivers upbeat address

By TE Patricia Clark, HR—Former Moderator of the Presbytery

Weary of hearing complaints about the denomination, General Presbyter Mike Cole met the challenges head-on during his annual state of the Presbytery address. "In spite of those who want to believe the worst about the PC(USA), we believe in Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, the sovereignty of God, and the power of the Holy Spirit." Mike admitted that a lot of his work is in congregations that are unhappy. "In spite of those who believe the worst, we are not heretics; we are not apostate. We love Jesus Christ and want to make a difference."

Five congregations have been dismissed to other denominations and two more are in the process of discernment. Mike pointed out that "the financial impact of these dismissals is minimal because only one of the five we have dismissed and one of the two who are in discernment have financially supported the presbytery in recent years. In fact, the overage of pledges for 2013 exceeds the financial contributions of all the churches dismissed and in discernment." The general presbyter reported that the year 2012 ended with a positive balance for the first time in more than ten years, and the 2013 budget is fully subscribed, not including any funds from dismissed congregations. "Those have been set aside for a 'rainy day.'"

Mike admitted, however, that the emotional/psychological impact of losing part of the presbytery family is enormous. "The numbers don't matter. What matters is the people. We are saddened by losing friends and colleagues."

Answering the question "How are

we doing?," Cole was upbeat and pointed to dozens of congregations engaged in their communities, increased giving to synod and general assembly, and 5 new church developments. "Our 102 congregations gave 9 million dollars



Mike Cole's full address is posted on the website.

to local and global mission, out of 52 million dollars received."

Mike went on to list all the things he considers right with the PCUSA beginning with the statement, "We have a heritage and history that pre-

dates the founding of our nation. We have endured splits and reunions before and will weather this one as well." He pointed out the size of the PC(USA) dwarfs all other Presbyterian denominations significantly. As other strengths, he listed full, open, and theologically informed debate of issues that vex Christians and society, a nearly sixty year history of ordaining women, and multiple levels of long term relationships with other Christian denominations.

The last part of Mike's address featured his Top Ten reasons why it is a blessing to be part of the Presbytery of New Covenant. He concluded his remarks with an internationally popular video featuring South Korean rapper Psy dancing to "Gangnam Style." Mike Cole's face was superimposed on the rapper's, and the meeting exploded in laughter. Someone quipped, "We'd like to see Pope Francis top that!"

(For Mike's Top Ten, see page 2)

# TOP 10

## Reasons it's a blessing to be in the Presbytery of New Covenant:



10. We recognize that Presbytery is not “them;” it is “us.”
9. Collegiality means something here. We have strong relationships, and there is an increasing trust level that contributes to an atmosphere of grace, peace, and hope.
8. We are committed to local and global mission - CEDEPCA, Cuba, Haiti, Mexico, Peru, Taiwan, Romania, and Sudan- just to name a few areas where we are actively partnering with others in mission.
7. We have an outstanding Youth Ministry. The Presbyterian Youth Connection Council has been the premier youth ministry among presbyteries and it is getting even better under the leadership of Rev. Caressa Murray. For this summer, the PYCC has arranged for two mission trips for youth from small and mid-size congregations who might not have the critical mass on their own to arrange a mission trip.
6. We have a great Clergy Retreat. I believe it's the best in the denomination, with an appropriate blend of learning and relaxing after the Lent/Easter season.
5. Our response to crises. We were exceptionally blessed to be longest lasting recovery organization on the Texas Gulf Coast following Hurricane Ike. For those of you who weren't around at the time of Hurricane Katrina, our presbytery tithed its endowments - \$340,000 - to the presbyteries of South Louisiana and Mississippi. We are an amazingly generous presbytery family.
4. We are respectful of our diversity and recognize the wealth of knowledge within the presbytery. We know that many different heads are better than many of the same.
3. Every congregation matters; the smallest to the largest congregations receive the same level of guidance, care, and support.
2. We have a fabulous staff. Our mission is to serve the congregations, specializing in hospitality, professionalism, and integrity.
1. We have a sense of humor. We laugh a lot—a sign of a healthy

The offering received during morning worship

(\$2,937.00) will help subsidize the costs for our youth and adult delegates to Presbyterian Youth Triennium, July 16-20, at Purdue University. Every 3 years, thousands of Presbyterian youth gather for a week of worship, recreation, music, community building, mission projects, and Bible study.

Coordinator of Youth, TE Caressa Murray, said that this year the presbytery is sending 52 youth and adults to Triennium, representing 17 of our congregations!

## News to note

Associate GP Mary Marcotte will be on

sabbatical leave **Apr. 15-July 8, 2013.** During her absence, inquiries regarding her areas of ministry should be directed to Mike Cole or other members of the presbytery staff.

**The 2015 Seafarers Board**, which oversees the ministry of our port chaplains: Harry Bristol (St. Andrew's PC, Houston), Capt. Peter Cronk (Clear Lake PC, Houston), Dick Howard (St. Philip PC, Houston), and Dick Westfahl (Grand Lakes PC, Katy)

## Commissioners approve Constitutional Amendments

By RE Jane Larkin, Administrative Division Chair

The Presbytery voted on the constitutional amendments, most of which were considered non-controversial and were included in the omnibus motion. Two items were lifted to allow for thorough discussion.

One item lifted for discussion concerned the question: Shall the *Book of Confessions* be amended to include the proposed new translation of the Heidelberg Confession, with accompanying Scriptural references? An overview of the background on the revision was presented by Nell Schwartz who was a commissioner to 220<sup>th</sup> General Assembly and served on the standing committee dealing with this item. Nell pointed out that the appropriate scripture references were added to each question.

Following her remarks, the floor was open to debate. Two persons spoke: one in opposition and one in support of the document. The new wording was approved by a standing vote of 120-66.

An amendment to the *Book of Confessions* requires approval by 2/3 of the presbyteries.

Item 12-B on the Gifts and Qualifications for Ordered Ministry that would amend G-2.0104a of the *Book of Order* was reviewed by Laureen Suba, a TSAD (Theological Student Advisory Delegate) to the 220<sup>th</sup> General Assembly who served on the committee considering this change. Laureen reported on the discussion in the standing committee and recommended a negative vote. One other individual spoke in favor of approval. The Moderator could not discern the will of the body by a voice vote. A standing vote indicated that the presbytery approved the revised language.

An amendment to the *Book of Order* requires approval by a majority of the presbyteries.

# Welcome to New Covenant!

## New Faces and Old Friends



Helen Rose Moore

**TE Helen Rose Moore** has transferred from John Calvin Presbytery (South-east Kansas and Southwest MO ) to serve as Interim Pastor at Webster PC. She's technically transferring, but it's also a homecoming!

Helen Rose's MDiv is from McCormick Seminary; her MS in family therapy is from the University of Houston-Clear Lake. She is a licensed professional counselor, having completed 5 units of clinical pastoral education at The Methodist Hospital. She raised her children at St. Philip PC, Houston, where she was a youth parent and adult education teacher, and she served twice on the staff of St. John's PC, Houston. Welcome back, Helen Rose!

### TE Michael

**Homan** is serving as Associate Pastor to First PC. Michael transferred to New Covenant from Eastern Oklahoma Presbytery where he served as Associate Pastor for Next Generation Ministries



Michael Homan

at First PC, Tulsa. He received his MDiv from Oral Roberts University as well as a Bachelor's degree in Music Education. His DMin from Fuller Theological Seminary is in process, to be completed in 2013.

## Continuing Care Retirement Community adds Tower

Mike Wallace, Director of Marketing for Brazos Towers (Brazos Presbyterian Homes), spoke about the soon-to-be constructed Brazos Towers at Bayou Manor, 4141 S. Braeswood Blvd. The 84 new apartments in Brazos Towers will open in 2015. For more information about this Continuing Care Retirement Community, call the office, 713-660-5000.

**TE Robert "Bob" Ferguson, HR,** is transferring from Boston Presbytery. Bob received a BA in Theology from Oblate College SW (now Oblate School



Bob Ferguson

of Theology), Licentiate in Theology and Licentiate in Ecclesial from Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome, Italy, and an MA in Social Ethics and Doctoral Studies from Temple University. In 1995 his ordination was recognized in the PC (USA). He has served in both the Boston and Baltimore Presbyteries. "I keep failing retirement!" he said as he introduced himself to the presbytery. He and his wife, TE Peg Ferguson, HR, are attending New Hope PC, Katy.

## Candidate completes examination process

After preaching a sermon to the presbytery as part of the ordination exams, **Kathy Sebring** answered questions from the Committee on Examinations. A motion to sustain her exam in full was made and approved. Kathy was welcomed into the presbytery and enrolled as Minister of Word and Sacrament. She has been called to serve as Chaplain at Innovative Senior Care Hospice.



Kathy Sebring

Kathy was under care of Los Rancho Presbytery in California. She received her MDiv from Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena.

### Stated Presbytery Meetings

Sat. June 8, 2013 – First PC, Galveston

Sat. Nov. 9, 2013 – Atascocita PC, Atascocita

## New Commissioned Ruling Elders (CRE)



**RE Craig Wood** (left) was commissioned to serve as Commissioned Ruling Elder for a Particular Pastoral Service at First PC, Caldwell, for the period 4/1/13 to 4/1/14, and granted the following functions: Baptism, Lord's Supper, Marriage, Voice and Vote at presbytery meetings, and to moderate Session.

**RE Jim Mayer** (right) was commissioned to serve as Commissioned Ruling Elder for a Particular Pastoral Service as chaplain at Solari Hospice Care Center, for the period 4/1/13 to 4/1/14, and was granted the following functions: Lord's Supper and Baptism upon request as a part of the duties as Hospice Chaplain, supervised by Chaplain Matthew Stephens. Jim will also serve as Commissioned Ruling Elder, for the period 4/1/13 to 4/1/14, at St. Luke's Presbyterian, Houston. He was granted the following functions: Baptism and Lord's Supper, as supervised by TE Scott Harbison.

## A LOOK at the BUDGET

### A good news budget for 2013

Celia Morgan (Finance Committee) reported on the 2013 presbytery budget. The good news, she said, is that the presbytery now has \$56,000 to go to Unrestricted Reserves because of more contributions and lowered expenses.

The budget reflects a 50% increase in benevolent giving to the PC(USA) and the Synod of the Sun. For the first time in 10 years, this year's Operating Budget is over-subscribed, not including monies from those churches dismissed.

The 2013 budget was approved.

## Honorably Retired!

**Steven Thorney** retires just a short distance from where he was born and baptized—in Bellaire! His family moved to Louisiana where he graduated from Tulane University with a degree in mathematics. In 1971 Steve was commissioned in the USAF.



Steve Thorney

Stints in music and the corporate worlds preceded a life-changing event that led him to St. Andrew's PC, Houston, where he served as Deacon and Ruling Elder. Steve received his MDiv from the Houston Graduate School of

Theology in 1991. Steve completed ten units of Clinical Pastoral Education at M.D. Anderson Cancer Center, eventually serving as staff chaplain there. As Chair of the Clinical Ethics Committee at M.D. Anderson, he served as an educator on spiritual care and a collaborator on research into spiritual distress in advanced cancer patients. Steve served as Director of the POP Ministry for 4 years and later as Associate Pastor at Southminster PC in Missouri City.

He and his wife Chris plan to remain in Missouri City and hit the road with their travel trailer hooked onto their SUV!

**David Peterson** was born in Oregon to a Presbyterian pastor and attended schools there before going to San Francisco Seminary where he received his MDiv in 1972. Dave received a DMin from Western Theological Seminary in Holland, Michigan, and a Doctor of Humane Letters from Austin College in Sherman, TX.



David Peterson

Dave has served churches in California, Washington, Nevada, Michigan, and Houston (senior pastor at MDPC since 1995). He has been active both in the

denomination and in the local communities in which he has lived and served. He has served on university and seminary boards as well as those of many non-profits and renewal groups. He is the author of magazine articles and a book, *Receiving and Giving: Unleashing the Bless Challenge in Your Life*. Dave has been featured in radio devotionals and TV reflections on the Christian life.

Dave's interests include working out, yard work, and spending time with his four adult children, four grandchildren, and wife Terri.

*Postlude is published after each Stated Meeting.*  
*Editor: RE Helen Wolf*  
*Photographer: RE Lou Master, Pines Presbyterian Church, Houston*  
*Circulation: Patricia Brantley and Sandra Lopez*

# CODA

*Elder and minister commissioners received the following announcements and conducted the following additional business:*

- Granted permission for Heritage PC, Houston, to call Teaching Elder Mark Plunkett as their installed pastor. Mark was called to the temporary position of Transitional Pastor (temporary relationship to an installed call).
- Approved the transfer of the property of St. Giles PC, Houston, to Pathways Church of Houston, located in near northwest Houston.
- Elected 12 individuals to serve on presbytery committees. Christy Gurley's name was added to the list printed in the Packet.
- Approved the dismissal of 2 congregations which have completed the process outlined in the Presbytery's Reconciliation and Discernment Procedure—West Isle PC (Galveston) to the Covenant Order of Evangelical Presbyterian, pending completion of the transfer, and First PC (Freeport), to the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, pending completion of the transfer.
- Enrolled Joshua Young, under care of the session of Clear Lake PC, Houston, as an Inquirer.
- Enrolled William "Will" Briggs, First PC, Kingwood, and Shelley Homeyer, First PC, Houston, as Candidates.
- General Council approved motion from COM that the offering received from ordination and installation services shall be split 50/50 between the scholarship fund for those preparing for ministry and the Pastors Emergency Fund.
- General Council approved the leasing of the High Island Retreat Center in Galveston County for a monthly rental of Zero Dollars, to a non-profit corporation operating a social service agency with a renewable year-to-year term.
- General Council approved the recommendation that the net proceeds of the sale of any properties owned by the presbytery will be used to replenish the Visions Initiatives Fund (Glendora "Cris" Miller Fund).
- Anne Wilson has been elected President-Elect of the Association of Professional Christian Educators (APCE).
- Mary Sterner has been elected President of the South Central Region of the Association of Professional Christian Educators {SCRAPCE}.
- Cindy Houlihan, Office Administrator at Pines PC, Houston, has achieved Level One Certification by the Administrative Personnel Association of the PC(USA).