

PRESBYTERY MEETING

March 15, 2014

POSTLUDE

Praise and Glory to God!

On a bone-chilling day in November (unusually early for Southeast Texas) Presbyterians journeyed to the Alabama-Coushatta Indian Reservation in Livingston for the year's final stated presbytery meeting.

They were genially welcomed by members of Indian PC and warmed by a delicious breakfast spread. In contrast to the warm outer clothing worn by the travelers were the bright colorful dresses of the Indian women and the traditional ceremonial regalia of the First and Second Chiefs of the Alabama Coushatta Tribe, Clem Sylestine and Herbert Johnson, Sr.



The chiefs are also Ruling Elders in the PC (USA).

All gathered in the roomy lodge adjacent to the church for morning worship and communion.

"We come from east and west, north and south.

We come from different homes, different families, different lives.

We come to gather, we come to worship.

We are the people of God, unified within our diversity, unified in the love of God.

Come! Let us worship God!"

With these words, commissioners were called to morning worship. Hymns were sung in both English and Indian, accompanied by piano and an Indian drum. The message, "God's

Continued on page 2

Envisioning the future of the presbytery

By TE Keatan King, Postlude Reporter

In serving as a consultant for the Visioning Team established by General Council, the Rev. Dr. David Sawyer joined us once again to lead all attendees of the presbytery meeting in a process of Appreciative Inquiry by which the assembly shared in table discussion. Appreciative Inquiry evokes storytelling that celebrates and illuminates the best of what is and has been for the purpose of envisioning what can be possible. Appreciative Inquiry assumes that the components of a hopeful future have already been revealed in our collective experiences in the past. Rev. Sawyer facilitated this conversation by asking the following questions:

1. Remember a time when you were most engaged, alive and motivated. When we are at our best, what is the single most important value that makes our presbytery unique? Who was involved? What did you do? How did it feel? What happened?
2. What is the single most important value that makes our presbytery unique?

3. Make three wishes for the future of the church. Describe what the church would look like as these wishes come true.
4. In what ways can the presbytery assist in making these wishes come true?

Each table discussed each question and recorded their responses. These will be gathered along with those already collected from previous Appreciative Inquiry sessions with New Covenant congregations and presbytery committees that have been moderated by Visioning Team members. This sizeable and growing collection of stories will eventually be read by the Visioning Team who will listen for common themes.

Visioning Team members are eager to visit with as many congregations and



David Sawyer

Continued on page 4

Action postponed on Teaching Elders Ethics document

John Hirling, Chair of the Committee on Ministry (COM), led a discussion on the proposed document, Teaching Elders Ethics in Cases of Disagreement with Denominational Policies, Statements, and/or Decision in the Presbytery of New Covenant. This proposal, adopted by the Committee on Ministry Oct. 7, 2014, was presented for a vote by the presbytery.

Discussion ensued about whether or not to postpone the vote on this document. After floor discussion on both sides of the issue, the vote was taken – to postpone 58; to not postpone 55. Voting on the Teaching Elder Ethics document is now postponed until March 2015.

Worship...continued from page 1

Denouement” (untying the knots in your life), was delivered by TE Jeff Smith, St. Andrew’s, Houston. Jeff spoke about the changes he has seen in himself, in the session, and in the life of the congregation of St. Andrew’s.

Contributing to this change, Jeff said, was the church’s participation in the Faithwalking program. He emphasized that changes come very slowly – over years. “We must be patient.” said Jeff, “Don’t try to get ahead of the Holy Spirit.”

The morning offering, \$2,809.50, will be given to Kids Free Clothing Exchange (KFCE), which is sponsored by PW of First Presbyterian, Livingston. Located in Onalaska, TX, this organization provides children’s clothing at no charge to families in Polk, Trinity, Angelina, Tyler, Liberty, Hardin, and San Jacinto counties.

Women of the church, using Native American Sign Language, gracefully interpreted the Lord’s Prayer using this traditional means of communication. Every movement of the arm and positioning of the hand has special meaning. During lunchtime, other cultural presentations were also demonstrated by members of the church – explanations and illustrations of Indian stick ball and Indian dancing.



Powerful Tools for Pastoral Caregivers

Dick Humphrey, member of Grace Presbytery, spoke about the 6-week program for PC(USA) pastors, “Powerful Tools for Pastoral Caregivers.” In these sessions, pastors will learn effective self-care tools through lessons, discussion, and brainstorming. The class will meet every Thursday, Jan 22-Feb. 26, 9:30 -11:30 a.m. at Interface Samaritan Counseling Center behind St. Philip PC, Houston. Call 713-626-7990 to register.

Inclusion of the Belhar Confession in *Book of Confessions* approved by New Covenant Presbytery

By TE Mary Currie, Director of Senior Adult Ministries, Clear Lake PC, Houston

In introducing background information for voting on including the Belhar Confession, TE Greg Han spoke about how our constitution defines a creed or confession: In its creeds and confessions, the church declares to its members and to the world who and what it is, what it believes, and what it resolves to do. This statement identify the church as a community of people known by its convictions as well as by its actions. They guide the church in its study and interpretation of the Scriptures; they summarize the essence of Reformed Christian tradition; they direct the church in maintaining sound doctrines; they equip the church for its work of proclamation. They serve to strengthen personal commitment and the life and witness of the community of believers. (BO F-2.01)



TE Greg Han

This is the second time the Belhar Confession has been sent to the presbyteries for a vote on including it in the *Book of Confessions* of our church. Following the 219th General Assembly in 2010, the confession fell 8 votes short of being included. The 220th General Assembly began the process anew with the 221th (2014) General Assembly again sending it to the presbyteries for their vote.

In debate concerning the Belhar Confession, the Rev. Casey Jones (First, Pearland) speaking against inclusion, voiced concern that adding the Belhar Confession could dilute our confessional heritage and a concern that the confession can be read to imply that disunity implies heresy. Rev Brent Hampton (First, Brenham) spoke in favor of the motion to include, saying the issue underscored by Belhar are issues that need to be kept before the church.

In a first vote by written ballot, the motion to approve including the Belhar Confession in *The Book of Confessions* was 85 for and 73 against. Because of the closeness of the vote and the possible misunderstanding of who was eligible to vote, a re-vote was requested and granted. Moderator John Jo again read the list of ministers/elders eligible to vote on the matter. In a standing vote, the motion was again approved by a count of 81 votes for inclusion and 75 against.

According to the GA’s Voting Tally webpage on the 2014 GA amendments, at least 114 affirmative votes by presbyteries are needed for the confession to be added. (2/3 majority of 172 presbyteries to pass). As of Nov. 16 only 3 presbyteries had reported voting on the Belhar Confession, with the totals being 1 for inclusion and 2 against. (<http://www.pcusa.org/browse/resources-resource/tag/belhar/>)

Mental Health Symposium planned

Many in the U.S. suffer from some form of mental health problem but are able to function in society. Because of the stigma attached to people with mental health problems, more education is needed. The Congregational Resourcing Team is organizing a Mental Health Symposium to take place in early 2016. Speakers who are experts in the area of mental health problems will present information to help us learn how to minister to and include people with mental health problems in the circle of God’s love. Contact TE Charlotte Kibler (HR) if interested in helping to plan this symposium. charwk@juno.com

Four Pastors granted Honorably Retired Status

TE Linda Sharon was granted HR status, effective Oct. 15, 2014. Linda received her MDiv from Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary in 2005 and was ordained in 2007 after two Clinical Pastoral Education residencies at the Methodist Hospital, Texas Medical Center, with a concentration in Oncology. Linda also earned certification as an ACPE Board Certified Chaplain and served as staff chaplain in the DeBakey Heart ICU. Linda has relocated to Mabank, TX, to be with her husband, TE Tom Sharon, who had accepted a call as Pastor of First PC, Mabank, TX. Linda now serves at First PC, Mabank, as Parish Associate.



TE Linda Sharon



TE Samuel Hsu

Also granted HR status was **TE Samuel Shen Hung Hsu** (Member-at-Large), effective Oct. 1, 2014. Sam began his ministry as an industry ministry director in Taiwan. After 16 years of ministry in Taiwan, he came to the U.S to study at Austin Presbyterian Seminary. Through the years, Sam has

established a church, served as an interim pastor, a Christian Education pastor, and board director at Houston Taiwan Institute for Senior Citizens. He and his wife have 2 children and 1 grandchild.

Also granted HR status but not present at the meeting are: **Mark Stoub** (First Presbyterian, Baytown), effective May 3, 2015; and **Debbie Leo** (Member-at-Large), effective Dec. 31, 2014.

Mark received his MDiv from Louisville Seminary and a DMin from McCormick Seminary in Chicago. Mark has served churches in Missouri, Illinois, Tennessee, and Texas. He is the author of *Blood Under the Altar* and a soon-to-be released sequel. He and his wife plan to move to Kyle, TX, to write and fix up the family home that was built in 1912.

Debbie received her MDiv from Austin Seminary. She has served as a hospice chaplain, a caregiver, and as interim pastor at St. John's PC, Houston, and associate pastor for Christian Education at Central Presbyterian, Houston. She is the co-creator of Worship Weavers, Brigid's Place.

She and her husband plan to continue enjoying the meditation that comes through art, silence, nature, gardening, and riding mountain bikes on Sugar Land levees.

Candidate complete examination process

Candidate Lauren Suba (St. Philip PC, Houston) completed her ordination exams by preaching a sermon before the presbytery and answering questions from the Committee on Examinations. After voting to approve the sermon portion of her examination, the assembly then approved a motion to sustain her examinations in full. Congratulations, Lauren!



Lauren Suba

Lauren received a BA degree from Hood College in Maryland, an MBA in International Management from Thunderbird Graduate School in Arizona, and her MDiv from Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary. She has been called to serve as Executive Director for United Campus Ministry of Greater Houston. She will be ordained Feb. 1, 2015, at St. Philip PC, Houston.

Worship, friendship, and fellowship

Rusty Edmondson and his wife Sara Armstrong, PC(USA) Mission Co-Workers, who are itinerating in the U.S., spoke about their work among the people of Peru, building bridges among the many cultures in Peru and developing partnerships among mission teams who come to help with many projects throughout the country. Slides and videos from New Covenant mission teams who worked on a variety of projects in Peru last summer were shared. Sara and Rusty said that such work is building "kingdom bridges" between the diverse cultures in Peru.

Welcome to New Covenant!



TE Jimmie Chaffin

TE Jimmie Chaffin, HR, has transferred to New Covenant Presbytery from Arkansas Presbytery. He received his MDiv from Louisville Presbyterian Seminary, a DMin from McCormick Theological Seminary, and a Diploma in the Art of Spiritual Direction from San Francisco Theological Seminary. Jim pastored 3 churches in Kentucky before coming to Texas. He is serving at Woodlands Community PC as Spiritual Director, an area of special interest to him.

Jim had a military career with the U.S. Army prior to his ministry in the Presbyterian Church. He served in Korea and in the Vietnam War. He was inducted into the U.S. Army Quartermaster Hall of Fame. Jim and his wife Cynthia have a daughter and a son.

Also transferring to New Covenant is **TE Chun Jae Jang**. He transfers from the LA Presbytery of Korean PC Abroad and has been called to serve at Love PC, Houston. He received a BTh degree from the Presbyterian Theological College in Seoul, Korea, and received his MDiv from Presbyterian Theological Seminary in Seoul. He was ordained in 2002.

Future...continued from page 1

clusters as possible, and members of the team will continue reaching out to communities so they may contribute their rich experience and insight to this process.

In a time of rapid, paradigmatic change in the mainline church in the United States, ecclesial leaders are faithfully attending to what new expressions of ministry are possible. Our Presbytery senses that we are entering a fruitful season for the church to share the gospel in Southeast Texas.

The Visioning Team's role is to guide the Presbytery through a process of figuring out "who we are and what God is calling us to be.

Installation of Moderator for 2015



Presiding for the last time as moderator, RE John Jo thanked the presbytery for the opportunity to serve as Moderator for 2014. TE Laurey Murphy (Spring Branch PC, Houston) was installed as Moderator of the Presbytery of New Covenant for 2015 and presented with items that are the symbols of that office - stole, gavel, and cross.

Save the date for these events!

- * New Covenant Christmas Open House—Thurs., Dec. 4, 2014
- * Church Officer Enrichment—Fri., Jan. 30—ChristChurch Bellaire
- * Youth Conclaves—Feb. 20-22 and Feb. 27-Mar. 1—Cho Yeh
- * Board of Pensions Workshops – March 4, Post Retirement; March 5, Render Under Caesar
- * Clergy Retreat—April 14-16
- * Synod Youth Workshop - July 21-26—University of Tulsa

CODA

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

- Elected TE Lynn Hargrove as Stated and Recording Clerk of the Presbytery of New Covenant to a 3-year term ending Dec. 31, 2017.
- Elected Peter Koester (Webster Presbyterian) as Treasurer of the Presbytery of New Covenant to a 3-year term, ending Dec. 31, 2017.
- Approved the proposed Minimum Terms of Compensation for 2015.
- Approved names of 75 people who have agreed to serve on the committees of the presbytery. The name of RE John Bobbitt (First PC, Houston) was added to serve on the Outreach Committee, Class of 2017, to the list printed in the Packet.
- Approved the Equalization (Parity) Plan from the Ecclesiastical Affairs Committee which states how many Ruling Elders each congregation may elect to attend a presbytery meeting, effective Jan. 1, 2015.
- Approved the motion from General Council to set aside the proposed revision to the Reconciliation and Dismissal Procedure that were presented at the July 2014 meeting of the presbytery.
- Approved the motion from General Council that the proposed revisions to the Gracious Reconciliation and Dismissal Procedure (The Packet, p. 54-65) be offered as a first reading, with the intention of approving these revisions at the March 2015 presbytery meeting.
- TE Steve Rehrig has transferred to Mission Presbytery, effective 6/1/14.
- TE Sam Knight was granted permission to labor inside the bounds of ECO as he served and completed his service as interim pastor at Grace PC, Houston.
- Received report that dissolved these relationships: TE Lynne Buckridge and Heights Houston – Lynne is now a Member-at-Large; TE Charlie Hornes and Crockett PC— Charlie is now serving at Woodlands Community; TE Paul Hoang and Young Nak Houston – Paul is now a Member-at-Large; TE Christa Brewer and Woodlands Community - Christa is now serving as an associate pastor in Myrtle Beach, SC.; and TE Katie Cummings and Grace PC, Houston—Katie is now a Member-at-Large.
- Morgan Gilliland (Memorial Drive PC, Houston) has been enrolled as an Inquirer.
- Travis Ziegenbein (Memorial Drive, Houston) has been enrolled as an Inquirer.
- The next Stated Presbytery Meeting will take place Sat., Mar. 21, 2015, at St. Philip PC, Houston.

Postlude is published after each Stated Meeting.

Editor: RE Helen Wolf

Photographers: RE Krista Langley and friends, Indian PC, Livingston

Reporters: TE Mary Currie and TE Keatan King

Circulation: Patricia Brantley and Sandra Lopez