

# CONNECTIONS

A Newsletter of the Presbytery of New Covenant

Growing congregations that passionately engage their communities to make disciples.

## Emergency Preparedness

By Ruling Elder Mike Marcotte,  
Pines PC in Houston

Those of us living in southeast Texas are no strangers to the annual calls for personal preparation that accompany the onset of the hurricane season (which seems to start earlier and last longer each year!). Planning and preparation are equally appropriate for the congregations in our presbytery, and the range of potential disasters goes well beyond hurricanes and flooding. Fires, chemical releases, large-scale utility interruptions, and acts of violence will undoubtedly affect at least some of our churches and the communities they serve, requiring prompt and effective responses.

Church leaders should wrestle with several challenging questions: Do we

have a plan for communicating with staff and members in the event of an emergency? Do we have appropriate insurance in place, and are we prepared to take measures to protect the property when damage is imminent? Have we considered how our facilities might serve as a temporary place of shelter or refuge if we are spared damage in a community-wide disaster? Are our records and files (paper and electronic) effectively “backed up” and safeguarded? Are we able to mobilize, organize, and care for volunteers to meet the needs?

A Disaster Preparedness Committee has recently begun work on cataloging resources and examining ways to support the presbytery and its



congregations in effective planning. Visit the “Disaster Preparedness and Assistance” folder in the Resources/ Our Filing Cabinet section of the presbytery’s website ([www.pbyofnewcovenant.org](http://www.pbyofnewcovenant.org)) for help in getting started on this important work. If your congregation didn’t submit someone as your Disaster Assistance Contact on the annual supplemental report form, please provide one to Patricia Brantley, Database Coordinator, at [pbrantley@pbyofnewcovenant.org](mailto:pbrantley@pbyofnewcovenant.org).

## From Your Transitional General Presbyter Search Team

By Ruling Elder Shelley Hernandez,  
Pathways PC in Houston

Searching and calling a Transitional General Presbyter is much like searching and calling a Pastor. We trust in the process, and part of the process is discerning God’s will, both for those searching for a candidate and the candidate them self. At our March presbytery meeting, I reported that the Transitional General Presbyter Search Team was in serious conversation with a candidate and “hoped to have this wrapped up soon.” However, the

discernment process took a bit of a curve. The candidate we were in serious conversation with, after much prayer and discernment, concluded God was not calling them to serve in New Covenant. It was a bit painful for the candidate to share, and a bit painful for the Search Team to hear. Again, we trust in the process, and the Search Team has

already begun meeting and discerning. We have full faith in the knowledge that God is in control of this process and ask you to continue praying for the Search Team, for the candidate God already has chosen, for our presbytery leaders and staff, and for our presbytery as a whole.

**tran·si·tion**

**tran'ziSH'n, tran'siSH(ə)n/**

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## NEW COVENANT CONNECTIONS

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# Generational Theory with Karl Travis

Did you miss out on our “Being and Becoming an Intergenerational Church” seminar? Do you wish you knew more about how generational differences play out in the life of congregations? Are you wondering why tried-and-true organizational structures and stewardship campaigns aren’t working anymore? Do you truly desire to bring the gifts of the whole family of God into vibrant flower in your congregation?

Enjoy and use these video recordings of the seminar. Use them as a resource for planning teams. Watch them alone or in groups. Let them inform and inspire you as you seek to engage in excellent ministry.

These video recordings were made possible by a generous Vision Initiative grant.

- Generations Part I: What is Generations Theory and why should we care about it?
- Generations Part II: What does Generations Theory look like in the church?
- Implications of Worship: How does Generations Theory inform worship?



Participants at the Generational Theory event

- Mission Engagement: How does Generations Theory inform mission engagement?
- Organization: How does Generations Theory impact the way we work together?
- Money: How does Generations Theory impact the ways we encourage generosity and stewardship?

You may find the videos on the presbytery’s website ([www.pbyofnewcovenant.org](http://www.pbyofnewcovenant.org)) under Resources/Filing Cabinet/Generational Theory in the Church.

## Commissioned Ruling Elder Online Courses

This summer the University of Dubuque Theological Seminary (UDTS) will be offering three online courses for Commissioned Ruling Elders (CRE): Reformed Theology with Dr. Gary Eller, Introduction to New Testament with Rev. Grant VanderVelden, and Presbyterian Polity with Dr. Scott Nesbitt. The summer term runs from June 5 to August 25. Each fall and spring, UDTS regularly offers all eight core courses. Learn more at [udtslearning.net](http://udtslearning.net) or by contacting Carla Gibbons at [CGibbons@dbq.edu](mailto:CGibbons@dbq.edu), 563-589-3630,

or 1-888-207-8218. UDTS reviews applications on a rolling basis each semester, and new applicants are required to take



the Online Learning Course as an introduction to distance education. Check their continuing education website at <http://udts.dbq.edu/academics/continuingeducation/> for upcoming events.



## Clerk's Corner

Rev. Lynn Hargrove, Stated Clerk  
Presbytery of New Covenant

In the early months of each year, Clerks of Session are asked to complete the Annual Statistical Report (ASR) for their congregation. This tracks membership trends, worship and education attendance, racial ethnic diversity, and financial information. Sometimes this can be used to gauge the relative health of a congregation.

On paper, 2016 was not a good year for the presbytery. We went from 23,828 members to 16,006. If someone didn't know any more than that, there might be some wrong interpretation of these figures. Last year we dismissed our largest congregations, Houston First and Memorial Drive, to ECO. We also dismissed some that were not that large (Southminster and Love Korean). That accounted for the vast majority of the decline. There were a few congregations that "cleaned the membership rolls" by taking people off that had not attended in a couple of years or had any other sign of continuing church membership. And there were 283 people who joined the Church Triumphant across our presbytery.

On the other hand, of our 89

congregations, 29 added members. It might have been just one person, but 33% of our congregations showed growth. Overall, we gained 692 members and baptized 138 children and 21 adults. We chartered a new congregation last year, too. This is Iglesia Latina, which meets in the Heights. We also have several "New Worshipping Communities" spread across the Houston area, many worshipping in languages other than English. Unfortunately, the ASR does not take those into account.

We have become more ethnically diverse. While we are mostly Caucasian (84%), we reported 5% Asian, just over 4% Hispanic, almost 2% African, 1.7% African American, 1.3% Black, with a sprinkling of Native Americans and folks from the Middle East. We worship in many languages – Taiwanese, Korean, Spanish, Portuguese, Vietnamese, and others.

This might be the most surprising area to many of us! There is a perception that the church is graying. Across the Presbytery of New Covenant, 36% of members are over 65

(a 30+ year spread), and there are many congregations who might have most of their members in that age range. On the other hand, 20% of our members are between the ages of 26 and 45 (only a 20 year spread), and 32% are between the ages of 46-65. Young people are going to church here in our presbytery.

Numbers don't tell the whole story, but it is something that is easy to measure. For me, the heart of the congregation is mission involvement. Our congregations are reaching out to the people in their communities in amazing ways. Our congregation in Vidor, with ten members, feeds people through their soup kitchen. This is an outreach that has grown to other congregations in Vidor. Our friends down in Clear Lake (membership 1,060) have begun two new community outreaches – one to the Bacliff area and the other to the South Shore neighborhood. We have lots of congregations of all sizes making a difference in their communities across southeast Texas!

At the last presbytery meeting, Moderator David Green asked people to share the stories of what is going on in their congregations. Those are available on our [website](#). We will continue collecting these over the course of this year. There is GOOD NEWS here in the Presbytery of New Covenant. Let's celebrate together!

## Mental Health 101

### Equipping Faith Communities to Better Serve Those Broken by Mental Health Difficulties and Disorders

Individuals struggling with mental health problems are more likely to go to a member of the clergy before a physician or mental health provider. Do you feel equipped to serve those struggling with a mental illness? This seminar will help you to:

- RECOGNIZE the signs of mental illness,
- REFER those struggling to professional care, and

- RESTORE lives through the supportive community.

Join us on Thursday, June 8 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Presbytery Center at 1110 Lovett Blvd. in Houston. This seminar will be led by Matthew S. Stanford, Ph.D. Dr. Stanford is CEO of the Hope and Healing Center and Institute in Houston and adjunct professor in the Menninger Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Studies



Matthew Stanford

at Baylor College of Medicine and the Department of Psychology at the University of Houston. This is a FREE EVENT. Lunch will be provided at no cost.

Learn more and register online at [bit.ly/2017MentalHealth101](http://bit.ly/2017MentalHealth101).



## Mary's Musings

Mary Marcotte, Associate General Presbyter  
Presbytery of New Covenant

# Recalculating... Recalculating...

I've found myself thinking about guidance systems lately. Your vehicle may feature On-Star directional guidance, or you may crowdsource your journey using the app Waze on your cell phone, or perhaps you go old school and print out driving instructions. Those more recent guidance systems usually have a digital display as well as a customizable voice. Sometimes we're frustrated when we think we know the way better than the guidance and the voice keeps admonishing us to *turn right, turn right, turn around, recalculating, recalculating!* It's surprising how much further down



the road people will go before admitting they are lost and turning around.

And sometimes, the GPS doesn't know best. It might be acting on old traffic patterns or not acknowledge road closures.

As both individual Christians and as the church I think it's time to talk about our directional systems. What is

our compass and who is our guide as we set out on our life's journeys? "Trust the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding" the writer of Proverbs reminds us (Proverbs 3:5). Those GPS systems are great as long as we know where we are going. But if we put in the wrong address, we will wind up at the wrong destination. We can fall into the trap of responding to reminders we are heading in the wrong direction with "don't bother me – I'm making good time."

As we live faithfully in this day and age I'd suggest that we work more intentionally on listening to our God Positioning System. How are we practicing listening for God? Do we dismiss the voice of God when it is spoken in a tone or accent we don't want to hear? Do we belittle and discard the voice of God shared by others? Do we spend prayer time listening as much as giving God marching orders?

What do we do when we hear clear guidance? Do we test what we have heard in conversation with our community? Do we see how the directive might be addressed in scripture? How do we sort what is

eternal wisdom from what is limited by our own experience of the way we've always done things?

Even in the midst of fears generated by a narrative of scarcity, I put my trust in God's good abundance. How will we do good and faithful ministry with the blessings we have rather than those we can no longer count on? Who and what is God putting in our mission field as an opportunity for partnership? What is the new thing God is calling us to do?

I know of several congregations trying to more clearly define their mission and vision statements. Each of them is going about that process in different ways, which is fine because they are different bodies of believers with differing gifts. I've come to believe that our vision has to be rooted in an honest assessment of who we are and the many resources of time, talent, and treasure in our midst. We have to know what inspires and incites us to ministry in the name of Jesus, the Christ. Finally we have to know – truly know, not just guess at – our neighbors and the mission field that surrounds us. I believe when we pay attention to our answers to these three questions and find the intersection of who we are, where we are, and what we have to offer, we begin to hone in on our God-driven mission. And then we open our eyes and holy imagination to ask what new reality might spring forth if we lived out those action words. Resting in the assurance of our hope in Christ, in what new partnerships with the Spirit might we make those dreams a reality? That's our vision. May it be so.

## Resources: Did You Know...?

Did you know... that you can find all the holdings in the presbytery's resource center online? Go to Resources/Resource Center at [www.pbyofnewcovenant.org](http://www.pbyofnewcovenant.org) to search our extensive holdings. You may check them out online, or if you know the title of a resource that you are interested in, you can contact Patricia Brantley at [pbrantley@pbyofnewcovenant.org](mailto:pbrantley@pbyofnewcovenant.org). She

will get resources ready for pick up or make arrangements to have them mailed to you. If you're looking for a study on a topic, you may contact Mary Marcotte at [mmarcotte@pbyofnewcovenant.org](mailto:mmarcotte@pbyofnewcovenant.org) for suggestions.

Additionally, free give-away resources are available to take-and-keep at the presbytery center at 1110 Lovett Blvd. in Houston. Feel free to



stop by and look. You may also borrow equipment, such as projectors, screens, parachutes, button-makers, etc. Give-away resources and rental equipment are not searchable online. Call the presbytery center for more information at 713-526-2585.

## Preaching and Public Life

By Ruling Elder Janet Rainey, New Hope PC in Katy

The Presbytery of New Covenant held its first stated meeting of the year on Saturday, March 18, at Clear Lake Presbyterian Church. The keynote speaker was the Rev. Dr. Carolyn Helsel (Assistant Professor of Homiletics at Austin Presbyterian

Theological Seminary), who began by asking us to guess what she was going to tell us that we already knew! That is, “God loves everyone, and everyone in the



Carolyn Helsel

world needs to hear it.” She reminded us that telling people we encounter that they are loved by God is an act of preaching in the public realm, and that this work of the church is reflected in how we live in the world, the leaders we elect, the laws we pass, and how we speak truth to power.

Carolyn discussed how, over the centuries and recent decades, people have suffered because of terrible theology preached from the pulpit. We have only to think of the Crusades, the genocide of indigenous peoples,

human chattel enslavement (“slaves must obey their masters”), and the pulpit messages that declare natural disasters and epidemics such as AIDS to be God’s punishment. We must share the good news of God’s love with those who doubt that God really loves everyone. Like Esther, we must have the courage to stand up to political power, ask for policy change, and use whatever influence we have to make a difference for others. Political engagement through preaching has produced abolitionists, the marches against the Jim Crow laws and ‘Separate but Equal’ policies, civil rights actions, the Declaration of Barmen, the Confession of Belhar....

Carolyn reminded us that, as Christians, we have a moral responsibility to respond to the current political climate. We must choose not to be silent. God invites us into the public realm to speak on behalf of LGBT children and youth and on behalf of immigrants. God calls us to actively protest, be responsible for educating ourselves and finding opportunities to educate others, listen compassionately to fears and concerns, empathize with other’s struggles, and assist. Now is not the time for silence. As followers of

Jesus, we must pray for courage to be in dialog with each other even when the conversations are hard, and we must pray that our work joins with the work of God already in our midst. Preaching prophetically is more about being able to declare that God has spoken and is speaking in our midst, in such a time as this. We must claim the personal nature of the political, and the political nature of the personal. As followers of Jesus, we are sharers of God’s love. Our faith affects how we measure the impact of political policy and its effect on justice.

Dr. Helsel read a portion of the introduction to a book she is writing to help congregations confront and discuss race, be responsible for their own learning, and stay in the conversation. “*Healing White Anxiety: Helping White Christians Talk About Race*” (from Chalice Press) is written out of her own anxieties, experiences, and sense of gratitude, and will be available in February 2018; it is suited for use in small groups or as a Lenten study. It is her hope that in reading it people will feel honored and cared, will have their emotions cared for, will listen and honor each others experiences, and will be encouraged to stay on the journey of education about the deeply problematic issue of race and the greater unity of humanity. “God loves us and the whole world.”

## March 18 Presbytery Meeting

The presbytery had its first stated meeting of the year on March 18 at Clear Lake Presbyterian Church in Houston. Rev. Dr. Rose Niles, Houston Development Officer for Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary, preached the sermon, and \$2,260 was collected in offerings to support need-based scholarships at Austin Seminary. The keynote presentation was given by Rev. Dr. Carolyn Helsel, Assistant Professor of Homiletics at Austin

Seminary, who spoke about preaching and public life (see separate article). 2017 Moderator, Rev. David Green, rolled out the theme for the year: The Work of the Church: Preaching, Teaching, Pastoral Care. David asked attendees to write down stories about something good happening in the life of their congregations, and the stories were available to pick up after the meeting. A compilation of them as well as Postlude, a publication summarizing



Lunch time at the March 18 meeting

highlights of the meeting, may be found on the presbytery’s website: [www.pbyofnewcovenant.org](http://www.pbyofnewcovenant.org).

## Westminster Members Deliver HOPE

By Ruling Elder Michele Peck,  
Westminster PC in Nacogdoches

When members of Westminster Presbyterian Church in Nacogdoches arrived at Project HOPE with donations of food, baby formula, and diapers, the volunteers appeared overwhelmed. Denise Lee smiled as she helped carry in the donations. She said diapers are always needed and shared a story about a baby who arrived at the pantry wearing a Kroger bag as a diaper.

“Helping Other People Eat” is the primary objective of Project HOPE ([www.nacogdocheshope.com](http://www.nacogdocheshope.com)), and everything the small Nacogdoches food

pantry receives gets used. Each month, they provide supplemental food to more than 1,900 people in Nacogdoches County. HOPE supplements local outreach efforts by purchasing food at reduced prices from the East Texas Food Bank in Tyler. Baby items are not available through the food bank, and HOPE must purchase often-requested items at full retail prices.

More than a decade ago, a “Sunday School Skip Day” food drive was organized at Westminster by the late Mike Stump. Each year Pastor Steve Newton challenges the church to “give a ton of food” to HOPE in the glory of

God and in loving memory of Stump. Westminster youth are involved in organizing and delivering the food. In doing so, the children learn that friends and neighbors can be counted among so many battling hunger worldwide.

Hunger relief is a mission supported by Presbyterian churches around the world and supporting local charities is an important part of Westminster’s ministry. Westminster members are encouraged to be involved in a wide variety of mission projects in our community, and 10% of the church’s budget is given to local charities.

## Supporting Recovery from Human Trafficking

By Ruling Elder Sally DeStefano,  
First PC in Conroe

Human trafficking destroys lives. It unfortunately is alive and thriving in the Houston area, including in Montgomery County. First Presbyterian Church in Conroe supports various efforts to help the victims of this horrific crime to recover...and it has plans to expand its efforts in 2017.

A significant portion of the annual Thank Offering, collected during the Presbyterian Women’s Fall Gathering in November 2016, was donated to Freedom Place in Houston to assist with its programs to help victims of trafficking. Freedom Place is a division of Arrow Ministries.

In December 2016, one of our Presbyterian Women’s Circles donated various art supplies to Freedom Place. Every year at its Christmas meeting, Lydia Circle members gift something to help less fortunate women and girls. This year an extensive array of items was requested by Freedom Place for its art therapy program. There were so many items that the hostess’s living

room could not accommodate all of it. What a wonderful problem to have!

At the Presbyterian Women’s Retreat at Camp Allen this April, sponsored by the Women of First Presbyterian in partnership with The Woodlands Community Presbyterian Church, personal journals for Freedom Place’s writing therapy program were decorated by participants who wanted to do something to help these young women recover from their abuse. The decorated journals will be appealing to these young women, inviting them to reflect on their challenging journey.

First Presbyterian also is working with The Phoenix Charity in The Woodlands to construct “Sisterly Love Bags” from pre-owned t-shirts sewn into decorative tote bags and to

pack these bags with as many items as possible to help a recently rescued woman during her first days outside sexual slavery. Many times, these women have no clothes, no shoes, and no personal items that are essentials of everyday living. Tied to the side of each bag are “sister hearts” that have been sewn from scraps of cheerful materials donated by our Mission Sewing Group. These hearts convey the much-needed message that these women are loved and valued as children of God.

Happily, the initial supply of 94 t-shirt shopping bags are being sourced from t-shirts that did not sell at First Presbyterian’s 2016 rummage and bake sale. One of our members “rescued” the t-shirts with this project in mind, and now they are being recycled into a very important purpose.

So much still needs to be done to help these girls (and sometimes boys) rescued from the sexual slavery business that occurs daily in our own back yard. This is an important start, to be followed by other efforts in the future.



T-shirt bag pattern

# NEW COVENANT TRANSITIONS

## New Minister Members

Rev. Barbara Johnson is Honorably Retired and has transferred from Shenandoah Presbytery. She received her M.Div. in 2004 from Columbia Seminary in Georgia and was ordained in 2005. She has moved to the Houston area to be near her grandchildren.



Barbara Johnson

Rev. David Puig-Jordan has accepted a call as Associate Pastor of



David Puig-Jordan

Northwoods Presbyterian Church in Houston. He has a Doctorate of Theology from the University of Hamburg, Germany and

was ordained in 2002 at the Baptist Church "William Carey" in Havana, Cuba.

Rev. John Purcell is Honorably Retired and has transferred from Grace Presbytery. He received his M.Div. at Austin Seminary and was ordained in 1965. This is his third time to be a member of New Covenant.



John Purcell

Welcome!

## Candidates for Ordination

At the last two presbytery meetings, three candidates preached as part of their examination for ministry. At the November 19, 2016, stated meeting, Candice Richey Womack preached a sermon on the parable of the dishonest manager. She spoke of the "economics of mammon" versus grace. Candice has a M.Div. from Fuller Theological Seminary and is serving as a hospital chaplain at Houston Methodist Hospital. Her son, Charlie, was born March 20.



Candice Womack



Chad Lawson

At the March 18, 2017, stated presbytery meeting, Chad Lawson and Omar Rouchon preached. Chad gave a sermon on

Jesus as our Bread of Life and reminded us that we miss the opportunity to be the body of Christ if we give from a distance. Chad has a M.Div. from Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary and is being called to serve as the Designated Pastor at First Presbyterian Church in Crockett.

Omar Rouchon preached on Genesis 18 and how Abraham rushed to welcome the three strangers



Omar Rouchon

at his tent. Like Abraham, we are called to the habit of hospitality. Omar has a M.Div. from Harvard Divinity School and is being called to serve as a Designated Associate Pastor at St. Philip Presbyterian Church in Houston.

The assembly approved motions to sustain all three examinations in full. Congratulations and welcome, Candice, Chad, and Omar!

## New Resource

### The Rule - DVD

This 86-minute documentary shares the story of the Benedictine monks of Newark Abbey in the heart of Newark, New Jersey and the transformative power of their commitment to serve God by engaging with their changing community, where grinding poverty and broken families have taken a toll on community health. Segments of the video could be used

to address becoming disconnected with community and the decision to either re-engage or relocate (some monks chose each of these options). Additionally the video has material that could be a powerful discussion starter for those seeking to partner with school systems and to become involved in mentoring programs.



### 2017 Presbytery Meetings

July 15 at First PC in Sugar Land  
November 18 at Northwoods PC in Houston

### Next Connections Deadline

The next *Connections* copy deadline is Tuesday, June 13 for the July/August 2017 issue. Please send articles and photos to Theodora Pounds at [tpounds@pbyofnewcovenant.org](mailto:tpounds@pbyofnewcovenant.org).

# NEW COVENANT TRANSITIONS

## Mary Marcotte Goes Part Time

As a presbytery, we are in the midst of a season of transition and redefinition. The makeup and nature of our constituent membership and our financial resources have diminished during the years since I was called to serve you in November of 2004. Yet creativity, hospitality, and supportive presence still abound. Our vision continues for growing congregations that passionately engage their communities to make disciples. In anticipation of my retirement at the end of this year, I have voluntarily requested that the Personnel Committee reduce my position to half time as of April 1. I believe this will allow them space and time to make future staffing recommendations that will best support the mission and ministry of New Covenant.

What does that mean for each of you that it is my great pleasure to serve?

It means that much of my remaining months will be spent more aggressively teaching and empowering volunteers to perform many of the functions that I currently carry out. Because of the flow of my work with its regular weekend duties, I will take my time away in clumps and clusters, working around my ongoing responsibilities. It also means that my availability for extra projects will be more limited. I'd ask that you continue to invite me to consult, facilitate retreats or trainings, identify potential resources, etc. The further out on the calendar that you make these requests, the more likely I am to be able to accept. Please know this is the kind of work that feeds my soul. That said, I trust that you would understand if I find I do not have available time and have to decline your invitations.

Ordinarily, I plan to be in the

office Tuesdays through Thursdays from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. and on Fridays from 9 a.m. to 12 noon. Additionally, I will continue to be available for some weekend assignments as pre-arranged. I will continue to monitor my emails remotely during time away from the office and reply as I am able to do so.

My last day of active service to the presbytery will be at the presbytery meeting on Nov. 18. The balance of 2017 will be used in my calculations of my reduced hours.



Mary Marcotte

It is my hope and prayer that our shared ministry continues to thrive in the weeks and months ahead. It has been (and will be) a significant pleasure to work beside you.

Faithfully, Mary Marcotte

## Thank you and Farewell!

Dear Presbytery of New Covenant,

I have been blessed to serve as your Coordinator for Youth Ministry for the past six years. During that time I have seen God at work in the young leaders and adults on our Presbytery's Youth Connection Council (PYCC), in the connections made between churches, and in the relationships built among youth workers. Through worship, leadership development, creating and leading events, and sharing the gospel through song and testimony, the young people of this presbytery and their adult mentors have witnessed to me the power and beauty of God's salvific work in and through the connectional church. I have truly been blessed by this ministry!

God is now calling me to embark on a new ministry – the ministry of serving as Co-Pastor alongside my

husband, Jonathan Murray, for the congregation of Covenant Presbyterian Church in College Station. Therefore, I have submitted my resignation to the Personnel Committee, effective June 30. I will deeply miss serving this presbytery in this way, but I know God is calling me to turn my full attention, time, and energy towards this new call and towards my family.

The presbytery is seeking to fill the position of Coordinator for Youth Ministry, and I ask that you encourage anyone you know who is qualified to apply (details on the [presbytery's website](#)). With the presbytery's support and the leadership of our youth and adults on PYCC, our youth ministry will continue as a strong, vibrant force within our presbytery!

I am extremely grateful for these six years of ministry on the presbytery level



The Murray Family

and for the relationships I have been able to form. I have grown spiritually and discovered new gifts and abilities. I have been supported and encouraged to follow God's leading in ministry with youth and their adult mentors. This presbytery has nurtured my calling as a pastor, a youth leader, and as a disciple of Christ. I thank you and thank God for this presbytery.

Yours in Christ, Rev. Caressa Murray

## PYCC Is The Place To Be!



2016-2017 PYCC

Do you know a young person who exhibits a mature faith and has gifts for leadership? Do you know an adult with a mentoring spirit and a strong relationship with Christ? Then encourage them to apply for the 2017-2018 Presbytery's Youth Connection Council (PYCC).

Our presbytery's Youth Council is a wonderful opportunity for young people to share their gifts and explore their leadership abilities. Youth on the council work alongside adult members to design and lead fellowship, mission, and worship experiences for the young people of our presbytery. Through these

events, this council seeks to deepen one's faith and relationship with God as well as build relationships between youth and adults in our presbytery.

We need you to identify young people and adults in your congregation who have gifts for ministry and leadership potential and who will be willing to make the commitment to be a member of the 2017-2018 PYCC. Information and applications can be found online at [www.pbyofnewcovenant.org](http://www.pbyofnewcovenant.org). Potential youth and adults should complete applications and submit them to their home church for review and endorsement. Churches will then select and submit up to four youth (in 10<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> grades) and three adults (over the age of 23) to serve on the council and represent your congregation.

Don't wait! The **deadline is July 1, 2017**. Thank you for empowering the youth of our presbytery to serve as leaders of Christ's Church!

## Youth Mission Trip

From June 11 through 17, 83 junior and high school youth and adults from seven churches in our presbytery will join forces for a week-long mission experience at Heifer Ranch in Perryville, Arkansas. Heifer Ranch is one of three learning centers operated by Heifer International. Our youth and adult chaperones will engage in a variety of experiential activities such as team-building development; educational sessions on global poverty and hunger, who Heifer is, and what this organization does around the world; hands-on service projects like milking a goat or harvesting vegetables; and an overnight third-world village experience. Participating churches include Atascocita, Covenant in College Station, First in Bryan, First in Sugar Land, and Community of the Servant Savior, John Knox, and St. Thomas in Houston.



## Youth Spiritual Pilgrimage

By Rev. Keatan King, Associate Pastor at St. Philip PC in Houston

This summer, senior high students from St. Philip and St. Thomas Presbyterian Churches in Houston are going to Montreat for the Senior High Youth Conference from July 21 through 31. The Conference is July 23 through 29, and the extra days are for driving to and from Montreat, during which time we will complete a Spiritual Pilgrimage through the South.

Many among us are deeply concerned by a climate of intolerance, racism, and violence that is threatening to undo so much of the progress accomplished by the Civil Rights movement. Thus, we are embarking on a Spiritual Pilgrimage through the

South to teach youth about the painful history of racial oppression in the South; to study the brave individuals and congregations who furthered the Civil Rights movement as an expression of their Christian faith; and to pursue the work of reconciliation and repentance that God is still calling forth.

To accomplish this, we will embark on a pilgrimage from Houston to Baton Rouge to Birmingham to Montreat and attend the Senior High Conference at Montreat. Along the way, we will combine prayer, education, and conversation around "holy sites" of the South that have played a role in the Civil Rights movement. On our trip, we plan to visit the following places:

- Baton Rouge: visit with Together Baton Rouge (a community organization fighting racial inequality) and the Whitney Plantation;
- Birmingham: the Civil Rights Institute, 16<sup>th</sup> Street Baptist Church (the church bombed in 1963), and Birmingham Jail; and
- Selma: walking the bridge together.

Our goal is to empower youth to be active participants in racial reconciliation efforts in America, especially as catalysts for this conversation and work in the Church.



Figures at the Civil Rights Institute

# events and happenings



**May 2**

Youth Worker Gathering  
St. Thomas PC  
Houston, Texas

**May 29**

Memorial Day Holiday  
Presbytery Center Closed

**June 8**

Mental Health 101  
Presbytery Center  
Houston, Texas

**June 11-17**

Youth Mission Trip  
Heifer Ranch  
Perryville, Arkansas

**July 1**

PYCC Application Deadline

**July 4**

Fourth of July Holiday  
Presbytery Center Closed

**July 6-8**

Big Tent  
Washington University  
St. Louis, Missouri

**July 10-15**

Synod Youth Workshop  
University of Tulsa  
Tulsa, Oklahoma

**July 15**

Presbytery Meeting  
First PC  
Sugar Land, Texas

**July 21-31**

Youth Spiritual Pilgrimage  
Montreat Conference Center  
Montreat, North Carolina



## Coffee House LIVE

Join St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church on **Thursday, May 11**, for Coffee House Live. The featured artist will be Brave Combo ([www.bravecombo.com](http://www.bravecombo.com)). For the past three decades the Denton, Texas-based quintet has perfected a world music mix that includes salsa, meringue, rock, cumbia, conjunto, polka, zydeco, classical, cha cha, the blues, and more. They are America's premier dance band and a rollicking, rocking, rhythmic global journey. The band has won two Grammy Awards and been nominated for their work seven times. Doors to the family center open at 7:00 p.m. and the music starts at 7:30 p.m. All are welcome; no cover charge. St. Andrew's is located at 5308 Buffalo Speedway in Houston.



## 4th Annual Vintage Car Festival

You're invited to the family-friendly Vintage Car Festival on **Saturday, May 13**, at First Presbyterian Church in Tomball (30410 Tomball Parkway, right across from Lone Star College). Admission is free to the public. From 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., view vintage cars, trucks, and motorcycles. Up to 75 vehicles can register for public judging. Enjoy live music featuring the headliner band Braid and other entertainment. Visit the petting zoo, the face painting booth, the bake sale, and the food and drink court. For shopping this Saturday of Mother's Day weekend, visit the silent auction, the art sale, and the vendor booths. For additional information, go to [www.fpctomball.org](http://www.fpctomball.org) or email [vintagecarfestival@mail.com](mailto:vintagecarfestival@mail.com).



# events and happenings



MaryAnn McKibben Dana

## 2017 Women's Conference

Take a break from the busyness of life during the Mo-Ranch Women's Conference in Hunt, Texas. Gather together with hundreds of other women from across the region for either of the identical sessions of Women's Conference: **May 30 to June 1** or **June 2 to 4**. This year's theme is "A Durable Fabric; Frayed but not Afraid" as presented by Keynote Speaker, MaryAnn McKibben Dana. Conference activities include keynote presentations, worship, fellowship, recreation, free time, and workshops. Mothers, daughters, and granddaughters come together for a time of reunion and growth. Friendships that last a lifetime are made by women who would not have otherwise met. Registration is now open at [www.moranch.org/attend](http://www.moranch.org/attend).

## Synod Youth Workshop: OPENING DOORS

Synod Youth Workshop is designed to provide youth and adults in the Synod of the Sun with an opportunity to receive and share the Gospel of Christ, create communities of faith, reach out to the world around the event, and honor our calling to be Christ-like. The keynote speaker is Rev. Clay Brantley. The workshop is open to youth who are entering 9th grade through those who have just graduated from high school and is **July 10 through 15** at the University of Tulsa. Registration is \$375 per person through June 1. June 2 through June 30, registration is \$425 per person. Learn more at <http://www.synodyouthworkshop.com/>.



## Bible Study Conference

Bible Study Conference is for Presbyterian Women leaders utilizing the Horizons Bible Study who are preparing for the next year's study, "Hebrews." The author of the 2017-2018 study, Melissa Bane Sevier, will give participants an in-depth look at the study and share in conversation about topics within that study. Register online at [www.moranch.org/attend](http://www.moranch.org/attend). **June 1 and 2** at Mo-Ranch in Hunt, Texas.



Melissa Bane Sevier



MO-RANCH

## SUMMER CAMPS

Mo-Ranch offers co-ed residential Christian summer camps on the Guadalupe River in the beautiful Texas Hill Country! Mo-Ranch summer camps are a place where your child will grow in character, faith, and confidence through meaningful relationships in a Christ-centered natural setting in Hunt, Texas. One and two-week sessions are available for 8 to 15-year olds from **June 4 through July 22**. Early bird and sibling discounts are available. Registration is now open at [www.summertime.moranch.org](http://www.summertime.moranch.org).



Join Presbyterians from around the country at Big Tent 2017, **July 6 through 8** at Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri. The theme will emphasize the hope of the Gospel and its power to transform society in our current cultural context, marked by anxiety, racial division, political animosity, and economic inequality. Through dialogue, workshops, exhibits, and engagement with one another, participants will engage the Church in its mission of justice-making and peace. Learn more and register at <http://oga.pcusa.org/section/churchwide-ministries/big-tent-2017/>.

# In our Prayers

## *Praises*

Rev. Warren Johnson, HR - turned 100 on Mar. 14; the oldest ordained minister in our presbytery

Charles "Charlie" Hamilton Womack -

son of Rev. Candice Richey Womack, Staff Chaplain at Methodist Hospital - born on Mar. 20

Revs. Jonathan and Caressa Murray - Covenant PC in College Station - installed as Designated Co-Pastors on Mar. 26

## *Health Concerns*

RE Forbes Baker - First PC in Sugar Land and Presbytery's Director of Finance

Karla Collins - Administrative Assistant at Brenham PC

Rev. Shelley Craig, HR - Vice Chair of Presbytery's Nominating Committee

Evelyn Darden - Mother of RE Sharon Darden, Presbytery's Coordinator for Committees on Ministry and Preparation for Ministry

Kathy Ledbetter - Administrative Assistant at Alden Bridge PC in The Woodlands

Minnie Martinez - Administrative Assistant at First PC in Brazoria

Rev. Mark Plunkett - Pastor at Heritage PC in Houston

Phenita "Kiki" Rodgers - Daughter of Patricia Brantley, Presbytery's Database Coordinator and Receptionist

RE Gayle Smith - Member of Congregational Life Committee and Clear Lake PC in Houston

Rev. Carol Tompkins - Member at Large

## *Deaths*

RE Luis Guerra - Pines PC in Houston - Mar. 10

Gloria Marcotte - Mother of RE Mike Marcotte, Clerk of Session at Pines PC in Houston - Apr. 4

RE = Ruling Elder | HR = Honorably Retired

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## Classifieds

### Nursery Items Needed

First Presbyterian Church in Dickinson is turning an unused secretary office into a nursery and needs new or gently used nursery furniture (crib, changing table, pack and play, rocker, etc.).

Contact Rev. Kathy Sebring at [kksebring@gmail.com](mailto:kksebring@gmail.com) if you can help.

### Job Openings

**First Presbyterian Church in Brazoria:**

Worship Leader – Part-Time

**Grand Lakes Presbyterian Church in Katy:**

Youth Director – Full-Time

Director of Early Childhood Ministry – Part-Time

**Presbytery of New Covenant:**

Coordinator for Youth Ministries – Part-Time

Details on these positions as well as other openings may be found on the presbytery's website ([www.pbyofnewcovenant.org](http://www.pbyofnewcovenant.org)) under Congregations/Church Jobs.