

Stated Assembly

10:00 am EDT, May 24, 2011

Geneva Center, Rochester, IN

Moderator and Elder Palma Camren (First Presbyterian Church, Mishawaka) gathered the Assembly in God's Presence at 10 am by inviting all to sing "Morning Has Broken" and "Praise the Lord, God's Glories Show." Those gathered prayed their confession, were assured of God's forgiveness, and prayed for the wind of the Holy Spirit upon the deliberations and decisions of the day.

First-time elder commissioners, pastors and guests were introduced to the Assembly and welcomed by the Moderator. Quorum was established; the roll is found at Appendix A.4. Ballots were distributed upon official registration as a voting member of the Assembly. The following corresponding members were seated: Elder Eric Herzog, Whitewater Valley, and Financial Consultant to Presbytery of Wabash Valley; Rev. Ericka Kilbourne, Lake Michigan Presbytery and incoming pastor at First Presbyterian Church of Michigan City; Rev. Nan Adams, Florida Presbytery and Interim Associate Pastor at First Presbyterian Church, Elkhart; and Rev. Michael Wicks, visiting from Lake Michigan Presbytery.

Assembly approved the Docket and Consent Agenda, including Assembly Minutes for February 22, 2011, (Appendix A.7.a) Council Report (A.7.b), Committee on Ministry Report (A.7.c), and Transformation Ministry Team Report (A.7.d), Assembly dedicated its offering for the day to Presbyterian Disaster Assistance (\$706.00).

Committee on Preparation for Ministry vice moderator Rev. Chuck Compton (Flora Presbyterian Church) introduced Inquirer Mark Hulst for examination for Candidacy. Mark's membership is held by our Presbytery following the dismissal of Covenant Presbyterian Church, and he has been nurtured both by CPM and by the congregation in Atlanta, GA where he completed his internship and participates in congregational service with this wife, while he is completing his last year at Columbia Theological Seminary. Some Assembly members asked Mark about his Christian faith, his decision to remain with PC(U.S.A.) at the time his home congregation was dismissed, his forms of Christian service, and his sense of calling to ministry. His examination was arrested and sustained, and Mark was received as a Candidate under care of Wabash Valley.

Committee on Ministry moderator Rev. Bill McLean (First Presbyterian Church of Delphi) recognized those honorably retired recently from ministry: Susan Guyer Birch who had served in Missouri and Minnesota before coming the Wabash Valley with her husband, and Piliip G. Smith who served congregations in Logansport and Hammond. Moderator Pam Camren offered a prayer of gratitude for their ministry in the church.

Mission Co-worker Wes Tillett illustrated his ministry in Lebanon with slides that gave context to the country and his work. Wes and his wife Rita are from Rensselaer, lived in Lafayette for seven years while he served as Director of Family and Youth Ministries at Central Presbyterian Church, before he and his family were commissioned to teach and build relationships in Lebanon in a partnership with PC(U.S.A.) and the National Evangelical Synod of Syria and Lebanon. He showed the beautiful mountains and few remaining cedars of Lebanon, talked of his Islamic friends, the classmates and teachers of his children, and told stories of the school where he teaches religion, coaches sports for grades 4,5 and 6, and mentors the student council. Rita teaches Sunday school and they started a youth group in a local Christian church. He likened his ministry of faith and love to those who are planting to replace the deforested cedars: God calls us to plant seeds of hope and love; it may take years beyond their time in that place for the ministry among them to bear fruit. Wes invited participation at many levels: learning and prayer; congregational, presbytery, and/or synod

contributions in support of mission needs as part of Syria-Lebanon Network; personal visit to Lebanon; and full partnership in ministry. One idea was for vacation Bible school students to contribute money for his school to buy books for a library.

General Presbyter Rev. Frank Vardeman briefly touched on questions arising from the approval by presbyteries of the amendment concerning ordination. He has been distributing Rev. Paul Hooker's FAQ and meeting with congregations and sessions for conversations. He urged members and congregations who are troubled by the change to talk with presbytery leaders about the issues concerning them, to clear away some misinformation and misunderstandings, and to find a way forward in peace.

Rev. Paul Anderson (Dyer Presbyterian Church) addressed the historical context and theology of the Belhar Confession as part of the Assembly's discernment of God's Mission before the afternoon vote. He noted that the confession arises from the Dutch Reformed Church and the years of apartheid in South Africa, 1948-1994. The Black Codes of South Africa were similar to the laws surrounding and supporting slavery in North America. Paul argued in support of the Belhar Confession, noting that we are obliged for the sake of the Gospel to "say it, believe it, and act like it." Confessions are usually ecumenical, related to a time period, and address a specific situation. They are addressed to God, speak as the church, and witness to the world. Questions addressed to Paul concerned any nexus to the ordination questions, and what does Belhar add that was previously missing.

The Assembly responded to God's Word with prayers of the people, raising joys and concerns, including those suffering from the effects of tornadoes in Joplin, the flooding along the Mississippi, and erratic weather with late planting and more costly food. Assembly prayed in celebration of a 75th wedding anniversary, for healing for those with recent surgery, for Jason Hammersley, son of presbytery commissioner from First Presbyterian Church of Peru, who graduated from Columbia Theological Seminary and is a candidate for ministry; for the joys of summer camping at Geneva Center; and for congregations who are baptizing and confirming new members. Elder Bob Shoemaker (Dyer Presbyterian Church) led the offering prayer, and Rev. Paul Anderson preached on Matthew 6:1-4, not fasting, praying or giving bucks for attention, but quietly, going inside—where it matters—living out the Gospel.

Rev. Marcia Smith-Wood gave the call to the Lord's Table, and told once again the story of the Sacrament through prayer. Following the Lord's Supper, the Assembly agreed that the Stated Clerk could receive completed ballots from those who had to leave the building prior to the vote to approve or disapprove the addition of the Belhar Confession to the *Constitution of the PC(U.S.A.)*, then shared lunch together.

When Assembly reconvened at 1 pm, Rev. John Ritchie (First Presbyterian Church of Huntington) offered a motion to reconsider the Assembly's decision to allow votes to be taken early. Following debate of the theology, polity and precedence of PC(U.S.A.) voting and potential unfairness to those who seven who relied on the earlier decision, Assembly reconsidered and voted to reverse its previous decision.

Bible study and reflection around the tables focused on the Matthew 6 passage, then included the "just do it!" story of Café Agape at Hobart Presbyterian Church that provides not only much more than soup, but community for many of the 90 or so that usually attend twice a month. The other weekends of a month their partners in ministry serve in their own church buildings.

To prepare for the vote on the Belhar Confession, Assembly Commissioners used Mutual Invitation around the tables to discuss key questions: If we adopt this confession, what does it add? If we don't adopt this confession, what will be missing from our confessions and our life together? GA

Commissioner Rev. Bill Hudson (First Presbyterian Church of Merrillville) explained each amendment to be addressed by the Assembly, and each of the following was approved by voice vote with unanimous consent:

- 10-B. Removing Stated Clerk or Clerk of Session— On Amending G-9.0203b
- 10-C. Requiring Sexual Misconduct Policy—On Amending G-9.0404
- 10-D. Nominating Committees—On Amending G-9.0801a
- 10-E. Presbytery Rolls and Registers—On Amending G-11.0407
- 10-F. Certified Christian Educators—On Amending G-11.0407 and G-14.
- 10-G. Synod Function—On Amending G-12.0100
- 10-H. Nominations Process—On Amending G-13.0108, G-13.0111a, and G-13.0202b

Rev. Hudson moved the question:

- Shall *The Book of Confessions* be amended by adding the Confession of Belhar following A Brief Statement of Faith—Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and its accompanying documents?

Moderator Pam Camren called for paper ballots. Vice Moderator Rev. Laura Reason (First Presbyterian Church of Highland) and Assistant Stated Clerk Rev. McLean counted ballots, with the result of 63 yes, 27 no, present and voting. Announcement of the vote was followed by prayers led by Elder Leslie Casper (Westminster Presbyterian Church of Munster) and Commissioned Elder and Lay Pastor Mae Leech (Geetingsville Presbyterian Church), and the Assembly followed by singing “Amazing Grace.”

While the votes were being counted, General Presbyter Frank Vardeman commented on several points:

- Help get kids to camp at Geneva Center. 100 were registered to date.
- Reminder that the Ministry Excellence Fund includes a grant process funded by Lilly Foundation to assist ministers with burdensome debt.
- Presbyterian Disaster Assistance is setting up hospitality sites in the tornado-stricken areas south of us. What if Presbytery of Wabash Valley gathered a team from among our congregations to help clean up and provide spiritual care?
- Get those wellness exams available through the Board of Pensions medical plan. He particularly urged men, noting that three of our pastors are currently in treatment for prostate cancer.

Stated Clerk Elder Linda Long (First Presbyterian Church of Valparaiso) moved the “New Form of Government Transition Motion” in her written report, G.3. The following was approved by voice vote without dissent:

The Presbytery Council recommends that *in the event* the proposed *Foundations of Presbyterian Polity and Form of Government* (new FOG) are approved by a majority of the presbyteries that the Presbytery Assembly approve the following actions:

1. Pursuant to G-3.0109 of the new FOG, establish the following entities with the duties and authority specified:
 - a. a Commission on Ministry with the duties and authority laid out in G-11.0500 and G-14.0530 of the Form of Government of the 2009-2011 Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) (old FOG);
 - b. a Commission on the Preparation for Ministry with the duties and authority laid out in G-14.0400 of the old FOG;
 - c. a commission to be called the Presbytery Council, with the duties and authority laid out in G-11.0103v of the old FOG;
 - d. a Committee on Nominations with the duties and authority laid out in G-9.0800 and G-11.0103w of the old FOG: however, the nominating process will be governed by section G-3.0111 of the new FOG; and

- e. a Committee on Representation with the duties and authority laid out in G-9.0105b-f and G-11.0302 of the old FOG and G-3.0103 of the new FOG.

Background: Section G-9.0902a of the old FOG establishes the Committee on Ministry (COM), Committee on Preparation for Ministry (CPM), the Committee on Representation (COR), the Committee on Nominations (CON) and authorizes the establishment of a presbytery council (PC). The entities' duties and authority are laid out in the old FOG sections listed above in bullet points a-e. None of those entities are established under the new FOG, though a COR is required. In the absence of any action by the assembly, COM, CPM, CON, COR and the presbytery council will cease to exist as soon as the new FOG goes into effect. The purpose of the above motion is to continue these entities as the presbytery adapts to the new FOG.

Under the old FOG, COM, CPM and PC have the authority to exercise powers delegated to them by the presbytery assembly. Section G-3.0109 of the new FOG clearly distinguishes between "commissions" and "committees," with commissions only having authority to exercise delegated powers. Thus, the re-established COM, CPM and PC need to be established as "commissions." CON and COR can remain as "committees."

2. The committees and commissions established in paragraph 1 above shall prepare manuals of operation for review and approval by the Presbytery Assembly on or before December 31, 2011. Once those manuals are approved, the duties and authority of the various commissions/committees will be as prescribed in the manuals and the presbytery's Manual of Operations rather than in the old FOG.

Background: The new FOG envisions that much of what is currently required by the *Book of Order* be adapted and implemented in presbytery level operating manuals. COM and CPM already have such manuals and the basics of presbytery council operations are established in the presbytery Manual of Operations. While it will certainly be necessary to update these manuals to ensure they are compliant with the new FOG, it is not unreasonable to anticipate that the necessary manuals will be ready and adopted by the end of 2011. At that point it will no longer be necessary to operate under the old FOG.

3. Pursuant to G-3.0109 of the new FOG, continue the Permanent Judicial Commission (PJC) as presently constituted under D-5.000.

Background: Technically the adoption of the new FOG does not require reestablishment of the PJC as it is predominantly governed by the *Rules of Discipline*, which are unaffected by the new FOG.

If the required number of presbyteries to amend the Book of Order of the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) does not approve the proposed New Form of Government, then this resolution shall be null and void.

Additions to the Stated Clerk's Information Items presented were:

- CLP Mae Leech has resigned from the Administrative Commission for Ladoga after more than two years of service.
- In the list of those who are voting members of presbytery, *elders elected as GA Commissioners* were inadvertently omitted.
- Synod colleagues reviewed the Presbytery of Wabash Valley minutes for 2010 and they were approved without exception on April 27, 2011.
- Presbytery received a letter of thanks from the Theological Education Fund for contributions in 2010 in support of PC(U.S.A.) seminaries.
- At the February Assembly, there were 109 who voted. Today 90 votes were cast. Of those voting today, 44 were commissioned elders and 46 were minister members of presbytery.

Council moderator John Ritchie introduced Eric Herzog, Financial Consultant (Whitewater Valley), to review the financial reports presented to Council. Eric highlighted that receipt of per capita contributions was lagging behind budget estimates as is typical during the first quarter of the year, but showed an increase over the previous year. Basic mission gifts are below budget estimates, and to date, 42% are unpledged giving. Expenses for missions and operations are both under budget, with both showing the usual deficit at this time of year. Geneva Center ministry is also showing its usual first quarter deficit. Presbytery unrestricted net assets are \$500,694.

Nominating Committee chair Mary Lynn Boatright (First Presbyterian Church, Lebanon) presented nominations for election. There were no nominations from the floor, and the following were elected by unanimous consent:

- Elder Elizabeth Ferguson (Calvary, Logansport) Committee on Representation -- 2013
- Rev. Tom Albaum (First Presbyterian Church, Monticello) Geneva Center Ministry Team -- 2011
- Elder Dan LeMonnier (Westminster, Munster) Geneva Center Ministry Team -- 2013
- Rev. David Horner (Faith, Lafayette) as moderator of the New Ministry Development Team -- 2013
- Rev. John Gilbert as vice moderator of the Personnel Ministry Team -- 2012
- Elder Arlene Quinn (First, Lebanon) as a member of the Personnel Ministry Team -- 2013
- Elder Sandra Carlson (First, Michigan City) as a member of the Personnel Ministry Team -- 2013
- Rev. Alan Griffin (First, Goshen) as moderator of the Stewardship Ministry Team -- 2011
- Rev. Bill Hudson (First, Merrillville) as a member of the Stewardship Ministry Team -- 2013
- Elder John Bingaman (Cutler) as a member of the Visioning Ministry Team -- 2011
- Rev. Vanessa Syvertsen (Lima, Howe) as a member of the Vision Ministry Team --2011
- Elder Monica Conrad (Ogden Dunes Community Church) as a member of the Permanent Judicial Commission -- 2016
- Elder Ken Lukenbill (First, Plymouth) as a member of the Permanent Judicial Commission -- 2016

Ministerial Excellence Fund Co-Chair Ann Bingaman (United Presbyterian Church, Cutler) described the programs available through the Synod's four-year grant from Lilly, jointly administered for the benefit of the Presbyteries of Wabash Valley and Whitewater Valley. A brochure with more information and the Financial Rejuvenation Grant application may be downloaded from the Synod website at <http://www.lincolntrails.org/templates/System/details.asp?id=39293&PID=572283> The second prong of the grant is to offer educational opportunities for congregations in partnership with the I.U. School of Philanthropy's Lake Institute on Faith and Giving.

Geneva Center Ministry Team Moderator Rev. Stan Wilson (Ligonier Presbyterian Church) invited the Assembly to respond to the invitation to join in visioning for the Geneva Center Ministry by completing the survey of interest in potential programs. Rev. Paige Cantwell won the scholarship for one Geneva Center summer camper.

Administrative Commission Moderator Rev. Ruby Kleymann moved the Assembly to consider transitional support for one year for the Fuzzy Bear Preschool Ministry in Ladoga as a ministry to the community. Presbytery approved the following resolution:

That the Administrative Commission for the Ladoga Presbyterian Church [Rev. Ruby Kleymann, moderator; Elder Don Gentry (Faith, W. Lafayette); Elder Joe Hufford (Rossville); Rev. AJ Mildenberg;

CLP Mae Leech (Geetingsville); Rev. William Kleymann (Pulaski, Royal Center & Bethlehem, Logansport), clerk; and Rev. Chuck Compton (Flora Presbyterian Church)]:

- Continue its supervision of the Fuzzy Bear Preschool Ministry as it transitions during the next few months to close or to be independent of the Presbytery of Wabash Valley.
- Continue to review and authorize expenditures from the Davis Fund, not to exceed \$2125 per month, for not more than twelve additional months for the transition of the preschool and maintenance and utilities of the Ladoga property.
- Continue to transfer members as appropriate and officially close the congregation after pending litigation is settled and the preschool ministry is transferred or closed.
- Continue care and supervision of the property of the Ladoga Presbyterian Church and consult with the Stewardship Ministry Team concerning disposition of any property prior to making recommendation to Council.
- Continue to discern opportunity for New Ministry Development, partnerships with congregations or other presbyteries. The Administrative Commission is welcome to move forward with energy, intelligence, imagination, and love to further the ministry of Christ.
- Be recognized with deep and continuing gratitude for their years of work on behalf of our sister congregations to further Christ's church in this region of our presbytery. Pursuant to the Standing Rules, the officers of the presbytery will appoint others to serve in the event of intermittent resignations from this Administrative Commission and those newly appointed are charged to serve under this resolution.

Newly elected Moderator for the Stewardship Ministry Rev. Alan Griffin moved approved of a request from First Presbyterian Church of Valparaiso to grant an easement to the City of Valparaiso as required by City Ordinance:

That the request of the First Presbyterian Church of Valparaiso for an encumbrance of church property be approved in order for the Session of this congregation to grant formal easements as required by the City of Valparaiso for street right of way along Valparaiso Street on the east and Bullseye Lake/Ransom Road on the north as shown on the platted survey of the property (Exhibit A), upon condition that the Session of the First Presbyterian Church of Valparaiso formally approves these easements.

There being no other business before the Assembly, Moderator Pam Camren closed the assembly with a blessing and the sending at approximately 4 pm EDT.

Next Stated meeting is the overnight retreat at Geneva Center, September 16-17, 2011, beginning at 4 pm and ending on Saturday with an outdoor picnic lunch and time to enjoy the Geneva Center grounds. Last Stated Meeting for 2011 is November 29 at 10 am ET, Geneva Center.

Presbytery actions on amendments from 219th General Assembly were faxed to the Office of General Assembly immediately following adjournment.

Respectfully submitted,

Linda L. Long, Stated Clerk

With thanks to William McLean, Assistant Stated Clerk

As approved by Assembly readers Rev. William Hudson and Elder Richard Hammersley (First Presbyterian Church of Peru)