



April 2012

Dear Commissioner or Advisory Delegate:

As outlined in the *Manual of the General Assembly*, one of the responsibilities of the Stated Clerk is to provide to commissioners and advisory delegates an electronic packet of information about each candidate who is standing for Moderator.

This booklet contains the following information for all five candidates standing for Moderator of the 220th General Assembly (2012): a photograph, biographical sketch, personal statement regarding the candidate's sense of call to the office, a written presentation by the presbytery having jurisdiction over the candidate (if that presbytery has endorsed him or her), the candidate's selection for and information about Vice Moderator, and the candidate's responses to a questionnaire developed by the Stated Clerk.

Each candidate has chosen the layout for his or her material within the space limitations provided.

The election of the Moderator will take place during the plenary session of the General Assembly on Saturday evening, June 30, 2012. The process that will be used can be found in Standing Rule H.1.b (4).

Earlier on that Saturday, all five of the candidates will gather together during one of the Riverside Conversations being held in the convention center for time to be with commissioners and advisory delegates interested in having conversation with them. The candidates have chosen to make themselves available in this way instead of having individual booths.

God's blessings to you as you continue the important work of preparation for the General Assembly.

In Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gradye Parsons".

Gradye Parsons
Stated Clerk of the General Assembly

QUESTIONS FOR CANDIDATES FOR MODERATOR OF THE 220TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY (2012) PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (U.S.A.)

Using no more than 500 words for each response, please answer questions 1 through 3 (mandatory) and two additional questions.

1. What are some of the exciting possibilities facing the 21st Century church? What are the challenges that face the church in this century?
2. In the Mid-Council Commission report a great deal of the narrative spoke to the emerging shapes and forms for mid-councils. In your view, what do you find especially promising in the narrative and why?
3. How might the initiative to create 1001 new worshipping communities help the PC(U.S.A.) reach its goal of increasing its racial ethnic membership and come closer to becoming a multicultural community of faith, hope, love, and witness?
4. The first part of our Constitution is the *Book of Confessions*. Two changes to the confessions are proposed to this assembly. How might the church better highlight our confessional theology, and how would you interpret to the church what it means for church officers to be "instructed and led" by the confessions in their ministry?
5. In F-1.03 of The Foundations of Presbyterian Polity in the *Book of Order*, we are reminded that, "Unity is God's gift to the Church in Jesus Christ. Just as God is one God and Jesus Christ is our one Savior, so the Church is one because it belongs to its one Lord, Jesus Christ." How would you work for unity within the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and how would this contribute to the visible unity we seek within our church and with other churches and Christian communities?
6. What do you understand to be the greatest ecumenical challenge and ecumenical resource before the church in the next decade?
7. What suggestions do you have for identifying new directions for the development of faithful leadership for the mission of Christ?
8. We are living in a war-torn world. What might the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and its congregations do to strengthen the ministry of peacemaking at this time?
9. The theme of the 220th assembly is "Walking, running, soaring in hope" from Isaiah 40:31. For many in our nation and world, economic pressures make it hard to hope. What is the role of the church in addressing economic injustice?
10. Brian McLaren will be addressing the Office of the General Assembly breakfast on Monday morning. He has written: "Those who dedicate themselves to be agents of change in our churches will require superhuman doses of courage, kindness, creativity, collaboration, and perseverance. Thanks be to God, faithful change agents will find, like the little boy with his fish and bread, that they already have more resources for the journey than they realized." What are some of the resources God has already provided the Presbyterian Church for the journey ahead?



Presbytery of Charlotte

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 13, 2011

Contact: Rev. Timm High, Acting General Presbyter
timm.high@presbyofcharlotte.org
980-207-5213

THE PRESBYTERY OF CHARLOTTE ENDORSES THE REVEREND DR. ROBERT AUSTELL AS CANDIDATE FOR MODERATOR OF THE 220TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY

At its 112th Stated Meeting on Tuesday, October 11, 2011, the Presbytery of Charlotte unanimously and enthusiastically endorsed the Reverend Dr. Robert Austell as a candidate to stand for Moderator of the 220th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the largest Presbyterian body in the U.S. with approximately 1.9 million members. The General Assembly will be held June 30 - July 7, 2012 in Pittsburgh, PA.

The Rev. Austell is the Pastor and Head of Staff of Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church in Charlotte, NC, where he has served since February 2002. Austell was a commissioner to the 218th General Assembly (2008) in San Jose. He is the Moderator-elect of the Presbytery Council after having served as Vice-Moderator of Council in 2011 and Moderator of Presbytery in 2009. The Presbytery of Charlotte is the third largest presbytery in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), with 130 churches and almost 40,000 members.

Austell spoke to his sense of call: "I have challenged my congregation to stretch beyond their walls and answer the question, 'What is God doing in and around you, and how can you be a part?' With the discernment and blessing of my family, elders, and local congregation, standing for Moderator seems to be the clear answer of how God would have me answer that question. I see it as an extension of the calling and work which I have already been doing - loving ordinary and imperfect people and pointing them to the extraordinary grace of God in Jesus Christ. I believe I am being called at this time to remind the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) of the extraordinary God that has called us *together* into being and leads us *out* into the world with hope and Good News as a distinct, truth-and-grace-bearing people."

Quay Youngblood, an elder from Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church spoke to the endorsement of Austell's local congregation: "Through the years as our pastor, Robert has

exhibited a quiet and consistent attitude which can be best described as ‘speaking the truth in love.’ While he is strong in his convictions, he extends grace to those who see things differently. As the pastor, he has led us to look beyond our walls to the neighborhoods and communities around us. He has led us to know that church only begins in the confines of our walls. It really takes place where God is already at work in our homes, work places, where we eat, where we shop and where our families go to school. Our congregation... would have to share Robert with the larger church. This is Robert leading by example: get out of our comfort zones and get involved.”

The Rev. Lee Koontz, Chair of the presbytery’s nominating committee also spoke to Austell’s endorsement: “If I may be allowed some personal privilege here... I personally am excited to support Robert’s candidacy, and I recognize that he has substantial gifts that would serve the denomination well as Moderator. Among those gifts is the ability to speak authentically and faithfully to a wide spectrum of Presbyterians. During a time in which we’re discussing congregations potentially leaving the denomination, Robert is able to relate to those who want to leave, those who want to stay, and everyone in between, and he does so with compassion and understanding. That’s one of many reasons that I’m excited to support his candidacy for Moderator of the 220th General Assembly.”

The Rev. Timm High, Acting General Presbyter of the Presbytery of Charlotte adds: “The Presbytery of Charlotte, in endorsing Robert Austell’s candidacy for Moderator of the General Assembly, believes that Robert’s sharing of his gifts with the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) in this way would prove to be a blessing in an ever-widening circle of persons and places, and would be a faithful affirmation of his baptismal vows. Robert is deeply committed to nurturing relationships and identifying resources amongst all persons, faithfully rooted in his relationship with Jesus Christ and his commitment to servant leadership.”

Austell studied at Davidson College (A.B.), Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary (M. Div. classwork), Princeton Theological Seminary (M.Div.), and Reformed Theological Seminary, Charlotte (D. Min.). He is married to Heather Brackbill Austell and they have three daughters and live in Matthews, N.C. He is also a life-long musician, frequent conference worship leader, author, and computer enthusiast. Additional information and updates will be available at www.robertaustell.com.

* * *

For more information or to contact Robert Austell, please also see below:

E-mail: robert@gspc.net

Church: www.gspc.net

Websites: <http://robertaustell.com> (moderatorial candidate website)

<http://robertaustell.blogspot.com> (articles on local church mission and ministry)

<http://GAhelp.net> (resource site for denominational issues)

Twitter: @gspcrobert

Facebook: /robertaustell

Robert Austell

Charlotte, NC

I AM A CHILD OF GOD who belongs to God, through the gracious gift of Jesus Christ, in whom I believe and put my trust as Lord and Savior. Known as one who speaks often of grace, I do so out of deep experience and gratitude for that grace. I also treasure God's Word and Spirit of truth as that which is inexplicably bound up with grace.

I AM A HUSBAND and FATHER who has been married to Heather twenty years, as of May 2012. We met through InterVarsity in college and have three daughters—Walker, 8th grade; Abby, 6th grade; and Elizabeth, 3rd grade—and one very fluffy dog named Buddy. They were my first "ask" about this moderator journey and they prayerfully stand ready to make the journey with me, should I be elected.

I AM A LOCAL PASTOR seeking to respond faithfully to a calling to stand for moderator. Yet I remain a pastor, and I believe that may be one of the most significant things I can offer the denomination, with the Lord's help. I believe we need a pastor-moderator for the whole church, one who draws people together around the Gospel and sends them forth in hope. I love the church and the Word and the way God draws people to the hope of the Gospel.

I AM AN ORDINARY MAN who has been loved by an extraordinary God. I am humbled by the grace of God in my life and want to share that grace with those inside and outside the church. At the end of the day, all talents, experience, qualifications, and personality aside, I am standing for moderator to show people the love, truth, and grace of God in Jesus Christ.

a bit more about Robert

I am a "bi-lingual" GenX-postmodern, meaning I am equally as comfortable with modern and post-modern culture, having grown up on the front-end of a significant cultural shift. This perspective has informed our worship and mission as a multi-generational congregation. I am a classically trained pianist, but also have been improvising since I was five, and literally and figuratively "read the notes" and "play by ear." I worked as a session musician in Nashville and continue to be a frequent worship leader at conferences in and out of the denomination. I write and record music, but enjoy even more working with younger or amateur musicians to record and flesh out their ideas. Much of my journey of call has been to find how musical and pastoral gifts fit together. This found expression in my D.Min. project, in which I explored a biblical and historical theology of worship, particularly with respect to music. I am deeply a people-person, but also cherish solitude to recharge and renew. I love technology, but as a tool rather than an end in itself. I am a laid-back, type A person. What in the world does that mean, you ask? That means I am very administrative and organized, but don't stress over disorganization or disorganized people.



Pastoral Ministry

- Pastor, Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church, Charlotte, NC, 2002-ongoing
- Associate Pastor for Youth and Missions, First Presbyterian Church, Lenoir, NC, 1996-2002

Presbytery of Charlotte

- Moderator of Council, 2012
- Vice-Moderator, 2011
- Moderator of Presbytery, 2009
- Member and Writer, Ad Hoc Committee on Reconciliation/Dismissal Policy, 2008-2009
- Commissioner to the 218th General Assembly, 2008
- Chair, Ecclesiastical Affairs/Bills and Overtures, 2003-2008

Equipping Ministries, Wider Church

- Montreat Wee Kirk Conference - worship leader, seminar leader, 2003-2011
- GAhelp.net - creator, webmaster, 2010-ongoing

Education

- D.Min., 2008, Reformed Theological Seminary
- M.Div., 1996, Princeton Theological Seminary
- M.Div. work, '92-'94, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary
- A.B., 1990, Davidson College

SENSE OF CALL

I have a heartfelt faith in Jesus Christ, a love of God's Word and people, and a commitment to live out the GOOD NEWS of Jesus Christ with truth and grace to those inside and outside the Church.

FAMILY My most basic calling is to my family—to love them unconditionally, if imperfectly, and with them to seek truth in the bounty of God's grace. We are bound together in covenant: we disappoint, we forgive and love, and we try to remind each other of the goodness of the Good News of Jesus Christ in our daily (and fairly ordinary) lives together. That's all a bit more flowery and theological than I normally talk about my family, but as I was pondering how to answer the question of "why stand for moderator?" I realized that, truth be told, my calling starts with my heart for my family.

LOCAL CHURCH My second core calling is to my congregation. I framed my description of my calling to my family as I did because my calling as pastor flows out of that. In my congregation, we are also bound together in covenant: we disappoint, we forgive and love, and we try to remind each other of the goodness of the Good News of Jesus Christ in our daily (and fairly ordinary) lives together. That group of *ordinary people* has realized we serve an *extraordinary God*, who has sent and led us out into and among our neighbors and world. That has been and continues to be our adventure together.

DENOMINATION The Lord has seen fit to use this calling and these gifts in the life of our presbytery, and I have seen how covenantal and grace-filled seeking of truth as a community has blessed and bound together our presbytery. In a time when our denomination seems to struggle with all of those qualities—covenant, grace, truth, and community—and with the prayerful support of my family, local congregation, and presbytery, I have been convicted to stand and remind the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) of who and whose we are, in Jesus Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit.

MINISTRY PASSIONS

TRUTHFUL AND HOPEFUL COLLEGIALITY: I find authentic friendships and community the best place to seek and speak truth in love.

WORSHIP, MUSIC, AND CREATIVE ARTS: Our church sees creative arts not only as an integral part of our worship, but of our mission as well, and we are seeking more and more ways to connect with our neighborhood, community, and world through the arts. My D.Min. project was on the theology of worship and music; I've written much on worship, including music for worship.

TECHNOLOGY AND MINISTRY: I am a computer enthusiast! And as with music, one of the things I most enjoy is exploring how this interest can be used in ministry for the Kingdom of God. I am a blogger, Twitterer, Facebooker, and more... and am eager to help teach and resource others to use these TOOLS for ministry.

GRACIOUS WITNESS: I believe we can be a Gospel witness to our own congregations and the watching world by developing a pastoral response to congregations seeking dismissal from the denomination. My original commissioner's resolution was approved by the General Assembly of 2008 and has since morphed into "gracious dismissal policies." That original action ties together much of what I'm about—a pastoral love of the church, a desire to listen well to one another, a passionate concern for our mission and witness to the world around us, and a calling to be a resource to the denomination.

QUESTIONS

FOR CANDIDATES FOR MODERATOR OF THE 220TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY

What are some of the exciting possibilities facing the 21st Century church? What are the challenges that face the church in this century?

My middle daughter was born in the year 2000. She will spend her life in the 21st century. One of my strongest hopes is that the church will nurture her faith, equip and send her out as Christ's disciple in and for the world. She gives me some clues to the possibilities and challenges we face. Since she was a toddler, technology has been the air she breathes. She doesn't have to work to understand it or use it; it's simply an extension of everything she does. And that extension is remarkable indeed. She connects with friends almost instantaneously for conversation, information, and recreation, with geography or even language no longer a barrier or hindrance. These connections can be physically isolating, but also emotionally deep. The church has much to offer that is anchored in the past: physical community, tangible sacraments, Sabbath rest – time and space carved out of life and the world, and more. More importantly, many of those qualities are rooted in God's physical, tangible, embodied, real presence in Jesus. Yet the church must also learn how to speak the "language" of the day, to see technology not as a threat or even simply as a tool, but as part of the air my daughter and the coming generations take in and breathe out.

Cities are growing as more people move to them and individual neighborhoods (like ours) are becoming increasingly multi-racial and multi-cultural. The church faces the choice of being people who gather behind church walls or people who go out beyond them. More than being a challenge or possibility, this is the very reason God gathered a people in the first place – to bless the world around them. At the same time, the world is shrinking in the sense that there is greater and greater potential to be connected with what God is doing around the world. The smaller membership congregation I serve has six "homegrown" young adult mission workers in Central America, Southeast and Central Asia, and one

fighting sex trafficking in the U.S. Jesus prayed in John 17 that God not take the disciples out of the world but go with them as they are sent INTO the world that God loves. Each of these young adults has embraced this challenge and opportunity as we all are invited to do.

Technology is not the only "language" the church must learn to speak with fluency; the very nature of our culture has shifted significantly in the last generation. While 21st century culture is still developing, some values seem to have emerged. Among these are authenticity, transparency, community (despite the isolating tendencies of technology), and an ability to live in tension, among others. Many of these overlap with biblical and Christian values as well, yet we must also be willing to let go of baggage of the past that was more cultural than Christ-like. So the church has an opportunity to speak into culture in new and creative ways.

In the Mid-Council Commission report a great deal of the narrative spoke to the emerging shapes and forms for mid-councils. In your view, what do you find especially promising in the narrative and why?

PASTOR TO YOUTH DIRECTOR 1: *I want you and the kids to have an incredible lock-in. I can't wait to hear about all the amazing, creative, and fun things you do with them. Just remember not to break anything, to clean up afterwards and make sure that on Sunday morning we can't tell that you were here.*

PASTOR TO YOUTH DIRECTOR 2: *I hope you and the kids have an incredible lock-in. I'll be praying for everything you do and can't wait to tell the congregation about it. Don't worry if things get a little messed up. I'll remind them that it's a sign that we're doing something right!*

There is an interesting parallel between the narratives of the report and our attitudes towards youth and young adults. In both cases, established leadership wants things to flourish, but we often

"The church must learn how to speak the language of the day."

QUESTIONS

FOR CANDIDATES FOR MODERATOR OF THE 220TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY

hover, ready to swoop in if things get out of our control. There is a necessary tension between risking “failure” and risking “success”; perhaps we need to redefine both and change the conversation altogether.

I find great promise in the MCC report because of a willingness to allow presbyteries to adapt from organizations that regulate everything within their bounds to Christ-connected partners that encourage, equip, and connect local congregations in their mission and ministry. This is the same move we have been trying to make in the Presbytery of Charlotte for some time, as well as in the church I serve (where we seek to equip and partner with each member for ministry and mission). For us, a key question has become,

“What is God doing in and around us and how can we be a part of that?”

Similarly, I am drawn to the creative language in the MCC report about a large canvas and a palette of colors for experimentation; but I’ve had the experience of giving one of my children a sheet of paper and a box of crayons. It invites creativity but can also limit it. What if the Spirit moves beyond the canvas or paints with a color we have not defined? Will we shut it down or call it “out of order?” What if a new ministry or worshiping community forms that is “beyond the frame” we have drawn? If it ends up not bearing the name PC(USA), what is that to us if it honors and serves Christ in the world? Let’s bless it and give thanks that God has moved among us and out from us!

Finally, the report names a crisis of trust as “the single greatest threat to the vitality and future existence of the church.” Indeed, I have found in my presbytery that challenges of money and ministry are only symptoms of underlying issues of trust and relationship. I welcome the encouragement to create, envision and experiment; but we must also take seriously the invitation to build relationships and develop “theological friendships.” The significant value of these relationships is, perhaps, a hidden jewel in this report that we dare not miss.

How might the initiative to create 1001 new worshipping communities help the PC(USA) reach its goal of increasing its racial ethnic membership and come closer to becoming a multicultural community of faith, hope, love, and witness?

This is an interesting blend of questions and worthy goals. I believe the key is in the *sending*, not the *gathering*.

Gathering has become the default mechanism for “doing church” for as long as I can remember. And, in most cases, gathering tends to gather along racial and cultural lines. (This is not the only drawback to gathering as a church strategy, but is pertinent to this question.) Theologians and visionaries have been telling us for a generation or more that a better, more faithful, model is in understanding that we are sent as (to be) the church in and to the world.

If we continue our default approach of only gathering out of the world, we will either continue as segregated and isolated congregations or we will awkwardly force or count our way into some sort of mechanical diversity. Learning to be the church sent into the world isn’t just a new program, but requires a change of intent and perspective that also sees the surrounding communities as “the world God loves.” As we learn to be sent we also learn to see and love with God’s heart and the resulting diversity is more authentic and connected.

Easy to say; hard to do, right? Absolutely. The growth of my own small congregation into an outward-focused, sent church has involved seven years of intentional process, and we are probably only in an adolescent, awkward stage of that growth. Yet, we have experienced an “enlarging” of our heart and vision that has resulted in new worshipping communities and increased racial and cultural diversity. This intentional process has involved teaching, preaching, communication, trial and error, and space for change. For us, these first steps have not come about from a line on the statistical report, but from a change of heart and calling, to understand that we worship and serve a God who has called us together in order to send us out.

“What if the Spirit moves beyond the canvas?”

QUESTIONS

FOR CANDIDATES FOR MODERATOR OF THE 220TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Practically and specifically, this means congregations must not be retreats out of their communities, but should increasingly reflect the community and cultures around them, and more than that, be marked by a Christ-like LOVE FOR the communities around them. Love for the community should lead both congregations and presbyteries to become aware of immigrant populations in their midst and seek ways to connect with and minister alongside them. The same key question (I raised earlier) applies: what God is doing is what God has always done – redeeming the world in love. If we claim to love God, we will be a part of what God is doing, and we will follow Christ out from behind our walls into the world around us.

So, I would suggest that the new worshipping communities will more effectively address the richness of God's love for the world as a fruit of a "sent perspective" than as one more program or initiative. Fortunately, these are conversations that are happening throughout the church; let's listen and follow!

In F-1.03 of The Foundations of Presbyterian Polity in the Book of Order, we are reminded that, "Unity is God's gift to the Church in Jesus Christ. Just as God is one God and Jesus Christ is our one Savior, so the Church is one because it belongs to its one Lord, Jesus Christ." How would you work for unity within the Presbyterian Church (USA) and how would this contribute to the visible unity we seek within our church and with other churches and Christian communities?

"LOCAL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH DITCHES THE PC(USA)"

"PRESBYTERY FILES LAWSUIT
IN CHURCH PROPERTY DISPUTE"

Those are two headlines I've seen in secular newspapers in the past few months. Who are the Presbyterians? Increasingly, they are known as the folks who sue each other over their stuff. Do I know why? Yes, truth is at stake; justice is at stake; faithful stewardship is at stake. Is visible unity as important

as those things? No, maybe not for its own sake. But Christian unity doesn't exist for its own sake; it exists as a witness to the Lord Jesus Christ. It is our witness to the world and so it is our mission and our responsibility.

We are deeply divided on certain issues in the church. I don't see how anyone can dispute that. Yet if we cannot summon some basis of unity, some degree of communication and community for the sake of Christ, then our truth, our justice, our stewardship – they become a clanging gong and an offense to the Gospel.

How can we do better? One way is to pursue theological friendships. "But, I couldn't possibly be friends with THAT person!" Really, is that what Jesus taught when he taught about neighbors and enemies? Even in disagreement, we can demonstrate the principles of the 2008 "Gracious Witness Overture": consistency, pastoral responsibility, accountability, gracious witness, openness and transparency.

Those qualities, supported by scripture and our *Book of Order*, do not force people to agree when they differ, but they help us present a visible unity to the watching world. How we treat one another in disagreement IS a demonstration of unity (or not). Seeking community with those who remain in fellowship and blessing those who seek fellowship elsewhere are both forms of visible unity, and visible unity for the sake of Christ honors and witnesses to Christ to the world.

In addition to the quality of witness we provide, we might also find that treating one another with grace also leaves room for reconciliation, restoration and deeper community. In the Presbytery of Charlotte we responded to the 2008 "Gracious Witness Overture" not with a dismissal policy, but with a "Reconciliation Policy" – recognizing that intentional discernment together might result in blessing those who seek dismissal or celebrating a restoration of community. Either one, we deemed, would be a God-honoring form of reconciliation, which would be a gracious witness to the watching world.

"If we claim to love God, we will be a part of what God is doing..."

QUESTIONS

FOR CANDIDATES FOR MODERATOR OF THE 220TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Personally, I work for unity within the Presbyterian Church (USA) by pursuing relationships with colleagues, by being a collaborator and team-player, and by drawing people to our shared mission in the world. As to issues, I have found that far from having to sweep differences under the rug, this intentional unity in Christ has invited and made space for far deeper and more meaningful conversations around important issues than would otherwise have happened. I look forward to sharing those stories and that example as broadly as God grants me opportunity to do so.

What suggestions do you have for identifying new directions for the development of faithful leadership for the mission of Christ?

I'll describe two ideas from my own ministry context in a smaller membership congregation: cultivating lay preachers from the congregation and "intentional residence communities." Though I recognize the development of these ideas are contextual to my situation, I believe they will serve as examples of new directions we could go to develop leadership.

Since I began as pastor of Good Shepherd in 2002, I have looked for opportunities to develop leaders in the church. Seeing teaching gifts among a number in our church, I have tried to cultivate and develop those, including inviting elders, staff, and several different high school and college-aged students to preach. With coaching from me and the approval of Session, we have developed a number of individuals within our congregation of 220 who have preached at least once. In fact, during a sabbatical after the seventh year, different members preached each of the twelve weeks, with an ordained teaching elder brought in to do the sacraments. As we have grown in our understanding of being *sent* beyond the church walls into the world, these folks have been faithful leaders in proclaiming the Good News.

The idea of an "intentional residence community" developed from a desire to incorporate the following to expand on a traditional seminary internship in our congregation:

- a desire for an extended relationship between student and church community
- a more lengthy mentored ministry
- our own identified mission to our neighbors.

Specifically, we are seeking a group of three or four seminary students (or families) living in a nearby apartment or housing complex, meeting regularly for accountability, fellowship, and support and work with our congregation to develop and implement ministry and mission in that location. It is close to an apprenticeship model but adds the *on location* factor of living among the community served.

More broadly, rather than trying to think up great ministry ideas for the congregation to do, I have consistently asked the question, "*What is God doing in and around you and how can you be a part?*" And I've pledged to help anyone in the congregation who is willing to try to answer and follow up on that question. That has led to some interesting and unique ministries: watercolor class, songwriting and recording projects, screenplays and scripts (including by elementary students), after-school tutoring, knitting in Nicaragua, "Scrubbing Sisters" and many more. I've tried to replicate that mindset at the presbytery level, urging our council and presbytery to ask what God is doing through the churches and then using the resources of presbytery to encourage, equip, and support that work.

Identifying new directions for developing faithful leadership will look different depending on context, but I believe it will come about through listening, relationship-building, and through discerning with congregations and individuals what God is already doing and how we can be a part of that.



"This intentional unity in Christ has made space for far deeper conversations..."

Robert Austell has chosen as candidate for vice-moderator

Hope Italiano Lee

Bradenton, FL

I AM A FOURTH GENERATION PRESBYTERIAN married to a fifth generation Presbyterian immigrant.

I AM A MOM to two sixth generation Presbyterians! I grew up in a small rural congregation in the Presbytery of Baltimore, went to Eckerd College in St. Petersburg, FL, Princeton and Columbia seminaries, and hold a D.Min. in homiletics from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary.

I AM THE LEAD PASTOR of Kirkwood Presbyterian Church in Bradenton, FL (the retirement capital of the country) and a member of Peace River Presbytery. Previously I served congregations on Amelia Island, FL and in King of Prussia, PA. Before ordination I worked in youth ministry and camp and conference ministry in several different settings.

MY HUSBAND Sung Ho is also an ordained PC(USA) pastor. He serves as a chaplain in Bradenton as well as on staff at Kirkwood. Our children are 7 and 3 and although we don't have any pets, we do have a croatan plant in our front yard that we have kept alive for almost a year now! Our family is very big on the outdoors and loves camping, canoeing, kayaking, whitewater rafting, and hiking. This summer we celebrate our 15th straight summer of leading youth mission trips and conferences!



On Being the Church

"There are wonderful moments that every congregation, regardless of size or location, can discover when they look at their neighborhood, their immediate community, and the world right outside their window and realize that they weren't meant to be just a building, but the church.....and the church has nothing to do with even having a building. God has given us everything we need to be successful in ministry."



On Preaching – "There really has never been a better time to be the church! In a world where just about everything is fleeting and temporary, it is exciting to me to be able to share and give people the Word of Life which is eternal."

On Redevelopment –

"What an opportunity to bring a fresh breath of the Spirit to congregations who have felt forgotten and abandoned. What a joy to love people who have spent their lives in a congregation and who have a story to share, and seek together a renewed sense of purpose, value, and call!"

On Migrant Farmworker Ministry –

"In my early college years God led me to Mision Beth-El, a farmworker ministry in Wimauma, FL, where I truly encountered and developed a lifelong relationship with Jesus Christ. There God transformed my understanding of grace, mercy, and compassion and brought into significant clarity what a hands-on approach to active engagement in social justice looks like as a person of faith. I am thrilled to have accepted a call in Peace River Presbytery, where I now serve on the Board of Directors for Mision Beth-El."

Palo Duro Presbytery

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February 27, 2012

Gradye Parsons, Stated Clerk
Office of General Assembly, PCUSA
100 Witherspoon St
Louisville, KY 40202-1396

Dear Gradye:

At its Stated Meeting in October 2011, the Palo Duro Presbytery voted unanimously and enthusiastically to endorse Reverend Randolph “Randy” Branson to stand for Moderator of the 220th General Assembly.

Reverend Branson served two one-year terms as Moderator of the Palo Duro Presbytery (PDP) in 2010 and 2011. During his tenure as Moderator of PDP, Randy ran the meetings with honesty, integrity, and fairness. He brought humor and compassion to our meetings as well as a deep sense of wisdom. As the presbytery began its meetings, Randy would ask a commissioner to serve as “pray-er” throughout the course of the meeting; during a particularly difficult piece of business, he would stop the meeting and ask that individual to pray with and for the body gathered.

In his current call in Graham, Texas, he has worked diligently to equip that congregation for leadership and to deepen their discipleship. He has accomplished this with diligence and perseverance in his call to be in ministry in the community of Graham and with First Presbyterian Church, Graham. He has sought out leaders in the church to be partners in leadership, listening to their points of view and including them in strategy sessions and long-term program planning. One recent highlight was their successful Vacation Bible School during which several members worked together to plan and execute a meaningful Bible School program which was well attended by folks from the church as well as the community.

Reverend Branson has also served in leadership at the presbytery level as a member and moderator of the Committee on Ministry. Currently, he moderates the Formation Ministry of the presbytery, which is planning our next presbytery meeting to do an exposition of best practices, complete with brief presentations and information booths to highlight different kinds of resources and practices that are available and used in our congregations. Reverend Branson served as a Teaching Elder Commissioner to the 219th General Assembly in 2010 in Minneapolis, Minnesota. A member of the Association of Presbyterian Christian Educators (APCE), Randy attends the annual APCE meetings and supports the work of those committed to Christian education and

spiritual formation. He is an advocate for our youth and attends the youth weeks at Mo Ranch Camp and Conference Center with high school and middle school youth each year.

As Moderator of the 220th General Assembly, Reverend Branson will lead with fairness and integrity, honoring viewpoints from all sides of an issue. He will seek to gather all of us around the table for a time of listening to each other as we seek to discern God's call as individuals, as congregations, as presbyteries, as a denomination, and as the Church in the world.

Through his ordination, Reverend Branson vowed to serve the people with energy, intelligence, imagination, and love. This is the behavior we have witnessed in his time in Palo Duro Presbytery. We expect Randy will continue to live into that vow as Moderator of the 220th General Assembly and brings unique skills and passions that are needed throughout the Presbyterian Church (USA). We are pleased to endorse him for Moderator of the General Assembly.

Respectfully submitted,



Rev. Ruth E. Clendenin
Stated Clerk, Palo Duro Presbytery



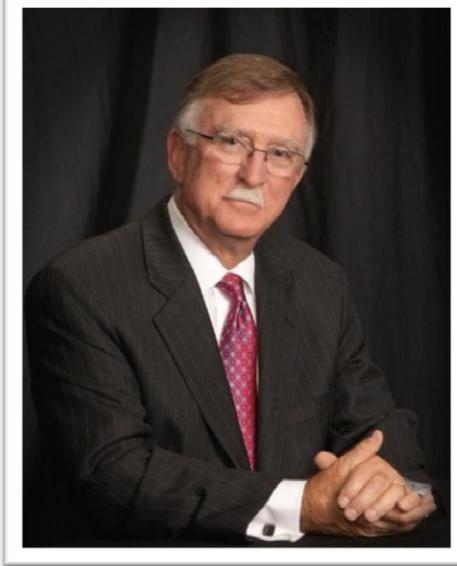
Rev. Richard A. Schempp
Executive Presbyter, Palo Duro Presbytery



Randy Branson

I wasn't born a Presbyterian, but I got here as soon as I could, specifically when my parents introduced me to the nursery in First Presbyterian Church of Miami, Oklahoma, when I was about three years old. I received my call to ministry in the fall of 1966, which led to graduation from San Francisco Theological Seminary in 1971 and ordination in January of 1972. I serve currently as the pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Graham, Texas. Prior to this I was the pastor of churches in Arlington and Baytown, Texas, after beginning ministry in San Pedro, California, as an associate pastor and interim head of staff.

I have served the larger church in a variety of capacities. I was moderator of Palo Duro Presbytery in 2010 and 2011. I was moderator of the Committee on Ministry for three years, and I currently moderate the Formation



Ministry in Palo Duro Presbytery. In New Covenant Presbytery I moderated the Candidates and Examinations Committee for many years. I have been a member of the Educator Certification Committee of the General Assembly for seven years, serving a year as moderator and currently as secretary. I have been a member of a variety of presbytery committees, such as education, theological reflections, general councils, personnel and administration. I have been quite active in youth and educational ministries locally and through synod-wide conferences. I organized and led the first delegation from New Covenant Presbytery to Youth Triennium in 1983. I was a General Assembly commissioner in 1983 and 2010. My professional affiliations include the Association of Presbyterian Church Educators and the Presbyterian Association of Musicians.

Born and raised in Oklahoma, I graduated from the University of Oklahoma with a B.S. in Engineering Physics in 1968. While at OU I lettered two years as a baseball player. I

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married my wife Karen in 1968. We have one son, Michael, who lives in Chicago, Illinois, with his wife of one year, the wonderful Elizabeth. Michael works as a manager for the downtown Chicago Hilton Hotel, and Elizabeth is an artist and an art and technology teacher for the Chicago Public Schools. My personal interests include family and friends, golf, music, dance, the fine arts, movies, TV, fine dining, Texas Rangers baseball and OU athletics. I am richly blessed to live in a beautiful setting with two horses, two dogs, and the ultimate survivor, a 16 year old barn cat. God is good!

My Sense of Call

The call to stand for Moderator of

the 220th General

Assembly comes from a deeply held conviction that I can make a significant contribution to creating a new climate of appreciation, respect and trust within the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). I offer my experience and skills developed during a 40 year pastoral career to this task. I believe the renewal I have known at a local level can be the reality of the whole Church.

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is experiencing dramatic and contrasting feelings about itself at the moment. On the one hand, there is the exhilarating joy of those who believe the



recent changes in the Form of Government regarding ordination standards has led us a step closer to the full inclusion of GLBT people in the life of the denomination. On the other, there is the pain and anguish associated with betrayal, as opponents of this change believe the PCUSA has abandoned the Gospel and the evangelical zeal that made us a significant part of the larger Christian community and a power player within our American culture. These forces present the PCUSA with a challenge about its common life and a decision about its future. The 220th General Assembly will be a watershed moment for us. It will signal to our members and our culture who we are and where we are going.

I believe the PCUSA needs a Moderator who is a visionary pastor. First, we need a pastor, one who is skilled in dealing with grief, despair, hostility, and inertia. I am a pastor with 40 years of successful experience leading congregations to set aside old grievances and discover futures filled with dynamic ministry. I have helped accomplish this by developing deeply committed, loving and lasting relationships with people who hold widely divergent views from mine on everything from theology to politics. I approach each person with appreciation, respect, and trust. This has paid dividends in changed attitudes

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toward the denomination and one another. These pastoral skills are vitally important for our denomination in our time. We need to grieve well and heal from the wounds suffered during our time of fighting. We need to embrace the new thing God is doing in our midst. I believe I have the skills, experience, and wisdom of a pastor to address these needs creatively and faithfully.

While I am a pastor, I am also a visionary. Here is an example of what I envision for our denomination. Imagine a church where people recognize and appreciate the unique contribution that each part of the Body of Christ makes to the whole. Imagine congregations coming alive again after languishing for years. Imagine pastors and lay leaders energized for evangelism and mission. Imagine networks of Presbyterians working together for social justice. Imagine Presbytery meetings where people genuinely enjoy each other. I have been a part of such dramatic transformative experiences. I wish to offer these stories to the whole Church for our encouragement and hope. As a careful listener, I will work with denominational structures to develop additional visions for our Church.

While parts of the PCUSA are full of anxiety, fear, and distrust, other parts are excited and flourishing. They have

been unaffected by recent decisions, and their primary interest is to carry out their charge to be a congregation of the PCUSA that is doing faithful ministry. As Moderator, I want to share these stories and their best practices, as well as be a force for healing, reconciliation, and renewal.

Question 1: What are some of the exciting possibilities facing the 21st Century church? What are the challenges that face the church in this century?



Creating New
Relationships
in Christ
Branson - Moderator

This may be the most exciting time to be a Christian since the Reformation. Trends that have been emerging since the Jesus Movement of the 1960s and '70s are beginning to coalesce into remarkable changes in the Church. This has been a time of great experimentation in worship, faith formation, mission, evangelism, and theology. We are beginning to see these new things that God is doing intersect with the historical expressions of the faith. That which will last is being separated from the trendy. The Spirit is leading the Church into an unknown future full of promise, hope, and God's new thing. Patience, perseverance, and trust with God and one another will take us where God wants the Church to go.

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The emergence of new technologies in communication, and the eruption of dynamic social media present phenomenal possibilities for human interaction and relationship. They promise broader and faster communication with people about what is happening. They connect more people quicker than we ever thought possible. Events can be more spontaneous and require less advance planning. These new means of communication and relationship are less expensive and more democratic, providing for easier and more involved feedback. All of this will affect how the Church and the PCUSA does our mission and ministry.

One of the very exciting possibilities facing the 21st Century Church is the way people will engage in mission. Instead of a mission program managed by a large national bureaucracy, mission will depend on local units and networks of people with similar interests. The technology makes this possible. Modern Christians want personal experiences in the mission field. People want to see how their efforts help people. They want hands on experiences. I am impressed with the way many national and mid-council staff are working to make this possible in the PCUSA.

The greatest challenge in all of this will be quality control and



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accountability. In this we are like the early church. The Spirit is moving among the believers, but the possibilities for errors in belief, teaching, and practice which corrupt the Gospel message are equally alive. Exercising proper authority over congregations and emergent faith communities will require a balance between flexibility and the need for integrity. Maintaining our historical connectionalism and covenant relationships will be essential for listening to what the Spirit is saying to the churches. Finally, we must address how we can include all our brothers and sisters in the conversations. Parts of the Church, which have been ignoring each

other for a generation or two, will need to reengage so that we can use all our resources to follow God into the future. As

Moderator, I see my role as one who encourages new relationships, works to make those happen, and ensures that all voices are heard and appreciated.

Question 2. In the Mid-Council Commission report a great deal of the narrative spoke to the emerging shapes and forms for mid-councils. In your view, what do you find especially promising in the narrative and why?

When I agreed to stand for General Assembly Moderator, I decided to stand on two planks: (1) creating new relationships in Christ within the

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PCUSA; (2) strengthening congregations for the mission and ministry of Jesus Christ. After reading carefully the report of the Mid-Council Commission, I find to my delight that they have highlighted the same things. This report and the report on the Future of the Church are so important they must be read, studied, considered, and evaluated by every part of the PCUSA. The information is vital to our future as a denomination.

In my view the PCUSA and other mainline denominations have been largely defined for more than a generation by what I call "The Fight." The report highlights this dynamic and the factors that perpetuate it. The MCC points to the current model of deciding all controversies through legislation and parliamentary procedure. This polarizing process results in tribes, advocacy groups, competition, and a win/lose mentality. There is no sense of cooperation, mutual benefit, or appreciation for the contributions of "the other." The result is division.

By highlighting this dynamic the MCC calls the church to find new ways of being together in Christ. I call this "creating new relationships in Christ." Paul wrote to the Corinthians in the midst of their quarrels, "*I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and him crucified.*" Christ alone is our

foundation for relationships that move us past "The Fight" to embrace our high calling as God's elect. Until we have such relationships, we will have no basis for making decisions apart from the polarizing fight. My experience and gifts have helped to strengthen relationships within presbyteries and congregations. I believe this can happen nationally as well.

The second focus of the report that I find most exciting is its emphasis on strengthening congregations for the mission and ministry of Jesus Christ. As discontent with national policies has grown, more congregations and

presbyteries have adopted their own mission programs. I am encouraged that the MCC highlighted some of these fresh approaches in their report. We can learn from those.

Learning from the success of others is the third promising part of the report. For far too long we have focused on pathology, what is wrong with the Church, congregations, councils and leaders. The report offers a more productive approach of sharing best practices.

Lastly, I love the emphasis on context for ministry. There is no longer "one size fits all" approach to ministry. Each missional unit is responsible for applying its gifts and graces to the



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necessary ministry in its context. Appreciating and supporting one another rather than opposing a ministry's mission will build up the church.

With all this said, I do not support the recommendations. The organization of the church is not the problem. We have a relationship problem that cannot be solved by non-geographic presbyteries, the elimination of synods, or the creation of regional bodies to handle judicial cases. It's about relationships.

Question 3. How might the initiative to create 1001 new worshipping communities help the PC(U.S.A.) reach its goal of increasing its racial ethnic membership and come closer to becoming a multicultural community of faith, hope, love, and witness?

The goal to create 1001 new worshipping communities is a noble, good, and challenging one, especially in a world that seems to understand less and less the need for faith communities. Growth in the Christian faith, as well as other non-Christian religious traditions, seems to be most dynamic in the non-Western world. This indicates that the most fertile ground for new worshipping communities will be among immigrant groups. This presents a tremendous challenge to leadership within the PCUSA and its congregations.



Creating New Relationships in Christ
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When I was the pastor of the Grace Presbyterian Church in Arlington, Texas, we were approached by a group of Korean Christians, who wanted to use our facility for worship and fellowship on Sundays and prayer time during the week. We gladly hosted them. I preached in a couple of their worship services with translation offered by their pastor. It was a wonderful experience. Eventually that group petitioned to become a part of Grace Presbytery.

I believe this offers an effective model for creating new congregations in transitional neighborhoods. Until

transportation becomes as affordable as communication, the neighborhood church will continue to be attractive to

local folk. The biggest challenge is to find appropriate ethnic leadership with an entrepreneurial spirit to develop the new church. Equipping and supporting them is the next most vital ingredient to success. Allowing them into presbytery structures and leadership is another.

While identifying ethnic and immigrant groups to organize into worshipping communities is important, the traditional model of planting a church in a growing area must still be a significant part of our strategy. As more neighborhoods reflect the ethnic mix of their city, the neighborhood church can attract local ethnic people to their

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ministry. In my experience racial ethnic people are more interested in a congregation that has a vital and dynamic ministry, rather than associating with their group. As with any new church development, the gathering congregation will establish its own culture and traditions. Multiculturalism should be the result.

I am primarily interested in creating strong, vibrant, energetic, and committed new churches. As pastor of Grace Presbyterian in Arlington, Texas, a 6 year old church when I was installed, I was privileged to be part of a church that understood its ministry as the responsibility of the laity. While dynamic pastoral and staff leadership is important, an energized laity is the key to a growing church. I hope the PCUSA can develop a network of people who have had great success in planting churches and helping them grow. These people need to share best practices with the rest of us, not only in written form, but through workshops and consultations with both clergy and laity in new church developments.

Question 5. In F-1.03 of The Foundations of Presbyterian Polity in the Book of Order, we are reminded that, "Unity is God's gift to the Church in Jesus Christ. Just as God is one God and Jesus Christ is our one Savior, so the Church is one because it belongs to its one Lord, Jesus Christ." How would you

work for unity within the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and how would this contribute to the visible unity we seek within our church and with other churches and Christian communities?

Part of the PCUSA wants a divorce from the rest of us. Some have already moved out and are residing somewhere else. Others have moved into another part of the house and are living separate lives while under the same roof. Still others maintain contact, but on a minimal basis. Can this marriage be saved? What does it say to those outside faith communities that our unity in Christ is an illusion or at best an unattainable ideal?



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Branson - Moderator

A good marriage counselor knows not to take on the hardest issues at the beginning of a counseling relationship. One builds trust by asking for cooperation, communication, and collaboration on smaller things before tackling the elephant in the room. That's the approach I have used in dealing with highly conflicted or stressed congregations and presbyteries. I have encouraged situations where people interacted in safer and more satisfying ways. The emphasis was on getting to know the other as a person instead of an adversary.

There are many places where we can approach one another on safer

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ground than the great issues that divide us. We can gather around scripture, share mission opportunities, eat together, pray with one another, and find some times to laugh together. We can share best practices. We can share each other's stories and begin listening to one another for understanding, rather than listening to argue. We can learn each other's language. When I was a member of Grace Presbytery, I organized a group of 16 teaching elders, half liberal and half conservative. We met for 3 years learning about each other before we began to tackle the really difficult issues. I made dear friendships that I maintain today. I learned to appreciate the vibrant ministries represented, and I grieved with those whose ministries were troubled. Doing this requires understanding that unity does not mean uniformity, but appreciating the unique and powerful contributions of every part of the body.

Too often the PCUSA has adopted the methods of the secular culture in dealing with conflicting views and perceived truths. In 1 Corinthians 12, however, Paul shows a better way, one where the parts of the body appreciate and respect one another. Each contributes something unique that the other cannot. In the end he points to the way of love in a covenant relationship. This is what the culture wants to see from Christian believers.

People want to see us live out the model of Christ, breaking down the dividing walls of hostility.

What we do with one another within the PCUSA can easily be done with those from other faith traditions. Even within our differences that produce serious disagreement, we can find places to meet agreeably.

Question 8. We are living in a war-torn world. What might the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and its congregations do to strengthen the ministry of peacemaking at this time?

I am glad that the PCUSA has dedicated itself to peacemaking. "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God." Jesus has pointed out that peacemakers will be persecuted and rejected. This is difficult work. It takes courage, wisdom, diplomacy, and luck. It is more an art form than a science.

The number one thing that the PCUSA must do to become more effective peacemakers is to quit taking sides. Peacemaking is accomplished when various sides come together to learn about each other, share some common experiences, talk openly about what divides them, and have some fun together. This establishes the groundwork for true problem solving and conflict resolution. When we lose

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our neutrality, we discount contrasting viewpoints. If we are to be true peacemakers, we must be able to bring all sides together in a process that helps them move beyond hostility.

During my time in Arlington, Texas, I participated actively in the Ulster Project, a ministry of Catholic and Protestant churches in the U.S. We brought an equal number of Catholic and Protestant (Presbyterian) teens from Northern Ireland to the U.S. to live with teens and families here. The teens spent a month together enjoying summer activities in Texas, while spending time creating new relationships. The effect of this experience was dramatic. As far as I have heard, not one teen who had been through the program participated in the religiously fueled violence that plagued Northern Ireland for more than a generation. These teens became peacemakers. With the resources in the PCUSA, surely we can develop programs like this for other areas of hostility.

The second thing we can do to be effective peacemakers is start with ourselves. Our history reveals that two or more parallel denominations have developed over the years within the PCUSA and its preceding denominations. Conservatives and Liberals attend different seminaries, colleges, and conferences. They support



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different conference centers and use different networks for placing pastors in churches. This division has been described as our becoming a tribal church. We don't share curricula, hymnbooks, and worship styles with one another. We don't read the same books. We may not even speak the same theological language. We have difficulty praying together and sharing sacraments and liturgy. Until we address this division within our own denomination, we will not be able to speak with authority to other groups in conflict. To become better peacemakers we must show that we can work effectively toward peace with one another.

In the second half of my ministry I have been involved in several efforts to create friendships among people who have opposing views. It has made a difference in churches and presbyteries. I know what is involved in being a peacemaker, and I wish to bring this experience and skill to the broader church. I am not naïve, nor do I have idealistic illusions about what it takes to develop an atmosphere of appreciation, respect and trust, but I have been a part of it happening.

Randy Branson

Randy Branson has chosen Shamaine Chambers King to stand with him as candidate for Vice-Moderator. Shamaine is a part-time pastor and full-time wife (Stephen) and mom (three daughters - six, nine and seventeen).



She loves ministry and is excited to be part of what God is doing in the church and in the world. Although uncertain what the future will hold, she is confident that God has a plan for the church and expectantly watches for the Spirit's leading. Her congregation's story, along with many other experiences of grace, give her great hope that the church can faithfully follow Christ's call to love God, care for our neighbors, share the good news, make disciples and be witnesses.

Thoroughly enjoying her first ordained call (Windsor Presbyterian Church, Windsor Heights, IA, Presbytery of Des Moines), Shamaine is an experienced church leader. Prior to ordination, she served St. Philip Presbyterian Church, Houston, TX (youth director), Shepherd of the Hills Presbyterian Church, Austin, TX (seminary intern), First Presbyterian Church, Fort Worth, TX (urban mission), Greenwich Presbyterian Church, Nokesville, VA (pastoral assistant) and John Knox Ranch, Wimberley, TX (leadership development). A graduate of Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary (2002), she has been nurtured by her home congregation, encouraged through camp and conference ministries and mentored by diverse pastors and congregations. She has served as leadership for Montreat, Mo-Ranch and other conferences as a design team member, small group leader, worship leader, recreation leader, director, preacher, keynote facilitator and speaker.

Spending time with family is a joy and a priority. Whether they are noshing on good food, listening to live music, experiencing the arts, playing outside, swimming, riding bikes, working together, being with friends, playing games or heading off on an adventure, she delights in her family. She loves a family road trip, especially if it involves bikes, paddles, hammocks, mountains, water, relatives or reunions of any kind.

love
serve
share

grace
faith
hope
peace
joy

passion
enthusiasm
gratitude

Shamaine Chambers King

Rev. Dr. Janet Edwards

Forward Together with Courage



Vision for the Church and the Way Forward Together

I have a vision for the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) where we proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ with joy and live together as the Body of Christ with life-giving power.

This vision arises from my experience sitting beside my grandfather, every Sunday, in the fifth row on the lectern-side of the Eastminster Presbyterian Church. It was there that I first learned that God loves me, that I am to love God back and that I am to love my neighbor (*Mark 12:30-31*). This vision is fueled by the same convictions that gripped me when I was first called to ordained service: I must do justice, love kindness and walk humbly with God (*Micah 6:8*) and help others do the same.

This vision may be simple to say and shared by many, yet in our time it may also feel painfully beyond our reach. I look at my presbytery and see that it has gone from 144,000 members in 1977 to 38,000 in 2011. We have spent our savings. We are facing the urgent

need to reconfigure how we do church, both in our congregations and in the presbytery. This has become a common story for many across the PC(USA) and yet there is a continued focus on what divides us, and upon the dangers in our present moment rather than the opportunities.

So how do we get from the present state of the PC(USA) to what we feel called to be?

We can take solace in the fact that we are not the first to come to such a juncture. Our ancestors gave us a cornerstone of Presbyterian faith for just such a moment as this: **Unity in essentials, liberty in non-essentials, charity in all.**

For generations, failure to agree on what the essentials are has crippled us. The charity among us has been so tested and so frayed that our church lives in a broken state.

The good news is that the way forward has been in front of us all along. Jesus spoke of the heavenly banquet (*Luke 14:15-24*) and gave us the example in

His life of the simple meal with those He loved in the upper room (*Mark 14:22-25*). Our essential is that we are one in Christ where everyone is invited to the banquet table. Jesus does not promise that this will be easy. And yet, it is our Good News.

So let us hold our differences lightly. Let us focus on what unites us: our love for Jesus Christ and our service to Him through helping our neighbors in need.

When we do this, Jesus will transform our present moment. Instead of feeling like a crisis this moment will be a moment of opportunity. When we do this, we will no longer have emptying churches sitting in full neighborhoods. We will have lively centers of worship from which unimaginable witness will arise. When we do this, we will honor our ordination vows to be friends in ministry.

As my friend Jeff Eddings, pastor of Hot Metal Bridge Faith Community in Pittsburgh, has said, “We value the communion of the saints over the agreement of the saints.”

When we all do this, we will move forward together with courage into the future God has prepared for us.

A Little About Me

My family has a long tradition of ministry in the Presbyterian faith, dating back to the 1600s. We also have a history of helping move people beyond their differences. For example, the present Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, a merger between Western Seminary, the Presbyterian seminary in Pittsburgh and Pittsburgh-Xenia, the United Presbyterian seminary, sits on what was once my family’s land. My grandfather was a long-time trustee of Pitt-Xenia and offered the property as a solution to uniting two very different communities in a new place.

I was baptized and confirmed in the Sixth United Presbyterian Church in Pittsburgh, now Eastminster Presbyterian Church. I vividly remember preaching my first sermon at Eastminster, as a summer intern while attending Yale Divinity School, and being utterly struck in that moment by a call to serve God and my community for the rest of my life.

Ordained in 1977, and married a few years later to my husband of over 30 years, I have been blessed to raise two sons and serve Presbyterian and ecumenical communities in Pennsylvania and beyond. I began my



Pictured left to right:
My son Sebastian, me, my husband
Alvise, and my son Charles

ministry here at Pittsburgh Seminary as an Instructor in Homiletics and Liturgics and then served three separate small churches that faced a variety of circumstances similar to those experienced by so many of our congregations across the PC(USA) today.

The first was a small, elderly congregation in a mostly Catholic city neighborhood. The second was a similar church in a small industrial city down the river whose steel mills had all closed. The third was the small remnant that was trying to establish itself after a split in the congregation. My pastoral work then will be familiar to many of you today: helping the people to evaluate their situation honestly and choose courageously how to be faithful to Christ in some new way.

During that time, I also served on the Candidates' Committee (now the CPM), becoming chair and then interim staff for a year. In 1987, I was elected moderator of Pittsburgh Presbytery. Being a progressive voice in a conservative presbytery, there was, no doubt, a sense of hesitancy in some of my colleagues about how I would moderate. I assured them by explaining how I understood my role as moderator: to bring people together, move us through our disagreements, and find ways to be One in Christ with joy and spirit-filled power.

When my year as moderator ended, the Executive Presbyter, the Rev. Dr. Harold Scott, wrote that, "more than any other moderator in the memory of those of us who have been in the presbytery for a long time, you encouraged us to move to the throne of grace in your prayers of intercession before reports and in those moments of thanksgiving at their conclusion." I am still humbled by these words.

When my children were old enough to attend school for the full day, I felt called to return to the study of spirituality. It is a passion sparked by the late Henri Nouwen, one of my first teachers in seminary. I eventually completed my Ph.D. in spirituality from Duquesne University in 1997. It was then that a call to pray without ceasing took hold and has remained with me to this day.

During this time, I have been a member-at-large of my presbytery. My church home has been The Community of Reconciliation, an intentionally interracial, multi-denominational and inclusive congregation in Pittsburgh Presbytery. I have been involved there in almost every way possible, with the exceptions of serving on the session (membership in presbytery prevents this) and doing much in the kitchen (I have zero confidence as cook).

I also currently serve the Synod of the Trinity as a member of the Nominating Committee and am on the Board of Directors of the Pittsburgh Presbytery Foundation, which supports the life and mission of the presbytery. And of course, throughout all this time, I have been blessed to be a mother and a wife.

Through all these years I have felt a strong call in my pastoral work to extend the welcoming hand of faith to people who have felt marginalized, including people of color as well as lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people. I have been honored to serve at both Imani Christian Academy and Johnson C. Smith Theological Seminary as a Trustee, at The Neighborhood Academy as a teacher and advisor, and at More Light Presbyterians as a board member with a term as co-moderator, which ended in 2011.

Shortly after taking my ordination vows, the place of LGBT faithful in the church became an issue of conflict within our Presbyterian community. I watched it become one of the defining debates in our church life. In my efforts to be a servant of Christ, and as part of my ministry, I have joined with many faithful Presbyterians in the discussion and discernment over this matter.

My heartfelt belief is, and has always been, that God fully welcomes LGBT people into the Body of Christ. At the same time I recognize there are those who disagree with me on this. I've been a witness to the hurt on all sides of our debate and have felt called to build bridges and reconciliation among us all.

I rejoice that Amendment 10A is now G-2.0104 in our *Book of Order* because every session and presbytery has an opportunity to have conversations in the ordination process that build reconciliation. And some will have the blessing to experience the leadership and witness of the ordained LGBT faithful in our midst.

I look forward to the day we can be a church family that proclaims the Gospel with joy and lives together as the Body of Christ with life-giving power. On that day, our unity in essentials, liberty in non-essentials and charity in all will courageously lead our country and the world into being together in a way that eludes us all right now.

The Call to Stand for Moderator of the 220th General Assembly

A year and a half ago, I experienced with shock a call from God to stand for moderator of the 220th General Assembly that will convene here in my home, Pittsburgh, this June. Through months of prayer and discernment with many different Presbyterians, this call only grew stronger. It has been as strong as any of the most important calls in my life: the call to ordained ministry, the call to marry my husband, Alvise, the call to become a mother, and the call to pray without ceasing.

After I was elected a commissioner to the assembly, three sessions in Pittsburgh Presbytery presented overtures to endorse my standing for moderator. My presbytery failed to endorse me. Again, I entered into a period of discernment. The call remained as strong and as deep as before. It was heartening for me to learn that, while it is common to receive presbytery endorsement, it is not required. I now know that the gatekeepers for the office of moderator are the commissioners. God has called several of us to stand and, in due time, God will inspire you, as commissioners, to choose who is called to serve.

Beyond the important function of presiding at the assembly with a steady and kind hand, the Standing

Rules of the General Assembly give the moderator three important duties.

The first is to embody unity, community and mission in the Spirit of God. As we are baptized into one body in Christ (*1 Corinthians 12:13*), we know unity is an essential of our Presbyterian faith and polity. It makes sense that unity is central to the office of moderator. Community comes from welcoming all to the table. Mission flows from the nourishment we receive there. Nurturing such unity would be my priority.

The second duty is to tell the story of our church's life. We all know Presbyterians, congregations and presbyteries who show immense courage every day to share the Gospel in word and deed. I have been inspired by such stories of faith and have been posting some to my website: RevJanetEdwards.com. As moderator I would be thrilled to continue to uncover and share with us all the courage of those already preaching with joy and living with transforming power!

The third duty is to uphold the people of God in prayer. Engaging in prayer with Presbyterians far and wide, as well as with faithful Christians in the wider Body of Christ, would be a blessed opportunity for us all to explore what Paul means when he challenges us to pray without ceasing (*1 Thessalonians 5:17*).

Our church is doing good work every day. Though at times it may feel like we are immobilized by fear of an uncertain future, in truth we continue to move forward. If we all courageously embrace being together at Christ's table as one, our church will become stronger than ever.

Thank you for your thoughtful and prayerful consideration of my experience, journey, and call to serve Christ through this office of moderator of the 220th General Assembly.

Questions Answered: Giving Detail to the Way to Get There

Forward – Our Sense of Where We Are Heading

What are some of the exciting possibilities facing the 21st Century church? What are the challenges that face the church in this century?

The most exciting possibility facing the 21st Century church is the combination of reformation and revival that is beginning to take clear, tangible form within the PC(USA).

Many in the church are realizing that the spiritual terrain has shifted underneath us. Our intelligence and imagination are shaping new forms at every level of the church that will allow us to proclaim the Gospel with lively power and be joyfully together as the Body of Christ in this new world.

With God's blessing, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the fading structures that served mightily in the 20th Century will yield to new ways of how to be the church and do church in the 21st. These possibilities range from retooling congregational activity to fit the demands of 21st Century families, to the exploration of monastic-like covenantal groups, to cyberspace communities. There is no limit to the exciting possibilities for knowing and serving the Triune God in this new landscape and for allowing creative ideas and new leadership to find their voice.

Technology drives and supports most of this in the church just as it does in the world. Connections are possible now that were unimaginable only a short while ago. One challenge is to distinguish wisely between those elements of technology that facilitate our witness and build up our life together, and those that do not.

The greatest challenge before us as a church is to overcome our fear of this already underway transformation. For some time, I have understood our feelings to be prayers. For me, the feeling of fear is a prayer to God that goes like this: "I am in way over my head here, please help me, God." The weakening of the familiar structures of our church and the not yet fully formed 21st Century alternatives make fear a completely reasonable response even as we know that God "has not given us the spirit of fear but of power and of love and of a sound mind." (*2 Timothy 1:7*) No matter what, power, love and sound minds are in God's answers to our fears.

Our present time, between what has been and what will be, tests our faith in ways our parents and grandparents did not have to face. Still, our Presbyterian heritage of confidence in God's utter providence was first articulated in at least as volatile a time as ours. I am confident the reports of the 21st Century and Mid-Council committees will guide us well on these matters of such deep importance. We can trust that God will meet us and our children in the future lovingly prepared for us, opening our hearts and minds to all the 21st Century holds.

Our Way to the Future at the Mid-Council Level

In the Mid-Councils Commission report a great deal of the narrative spoke to the emerging shapes and forms for mid-councils. In your view, what do you find especially promising in the narrative and why?

What an astounding and courageous job was done by the Mid-Councils Commission! Their wisdom can serve to carry us into the future by giving us thoughtful suggestions on how we can be powerfully and joyfully the church together in this new century.

For me, the most promising aspect of the report's narrative is the honest assessment of the underlying dynamics that trouble our church family. I believe that any recommended solutions, especially the elimina-

tion of synods and the creation of non-geographic presbyteries, would only flourish if they are built upon a solid acceptance of the reality we face in the PC(USA).

The Commission gets to the heart of our difficulties by concluding that there is a “crisis of trust” among us (Report, p. 41). I appreciate the Commission’s insight that in order to build the quality of trusting relationships we all desire, we need what they call “Cultural Proficiency” (Report, p. 39). When we commit ourselves to developing this cultural proficiency (not only in a racial or ethnic sense, but also in theological, generational and even technological senses, to name a few), a crucial necessity will blessedly be in place for bridging all our differences within the church and nurturing our relationships. The world we are in now absolutely requires this wide-ranging cultural proficiency.

I was especially struck by this insight in the narrative:

For true lasting change to occur (even within an institution) those in the “center” and those “outside of the center” must be engaged in the conversation. It is the *interaction* of the margins and the center that creates the new possibilities. **And it is exactly that interaction and the lively experiments that would come from it—that we recommend become the primary work of the church for the next season.** (p.36)

For myself, and it may be true for many others, I feel more on the margin than in the center of the church for a variety of reasons. I have also come to understand that those I see as in the center also often feel as if they are on the margins. Indeed, we must trust everyone—margins and center—to be important participants in the experiments that are imperative for us to thrive as the Body of Christ in this world.

Following the lead of the Mid-Councils Commission in building trust, we will experience the privileged blessing of giving birth to a 21st Century reformed Presbyterianism that will maintain our witness to Christ and our way of being the church far into the future.

Our Way to the Future on the Congregational Level

How might the initiative to create 1001 new worshipping communities help the PC (U.S.A.) reach its goal of increasing its racial ethnic membership and come closer to becoming a multicultural community of faith, hope, love, and witness?

Meeting Roger Dermody’s challenge to create 1001 new worshipping communities in the coming decade would help us reach our goals for increasing racial ethnic membership.

If we fully embrace the social and demographic changes happening around us and within us, we will guarantee a multicultural mix of greater diversity in the church. This will only increase over the next several years given the ethnic trends among us. And as we courageously seek out our neighbors, through both existing congregations and new communities, we must always be open to being changed ourselves by the experience.

A great challenge for us in the PC(USA) is to keep the focus on the right goal. We should not be starting new worshipping communities *in order to* increase our racial ethnic membership. That goal is self-serving at best, using people to fulfill our purposes. People are not fooled when our goal is to meet our need. The right focus is on proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ with joy and life-giving power.

Another serious challenge is the fact that sharing and living the Gospel can differ mightily among ethnic groups as well as among the wide variety of diversity present in human beings (age, sexual orientation, economics, education, for example). For 1001 new communities to arise, we must expand beyond our comfort zone to empower new leaders, nurture new worship forms, talk about our faith in new ways, and, most of all, welcome what might be strange to us as a gift from God.

Thankfully, the new Form of Government gives us the flexibility to experiment with community structures necessary to support all this potential newness.

The challenge here is to take advantage of the opportunity given by our new constitution.

Community of Reconciliation (COR), the congregation I have been part of for over 20 years, was a “new kind of community” when it was founded in 1968. It was created to be intentionally interracial; wanting to counter the fact, still true today, that 11 AM on Sunday morning is the most segregated hour in the whole week. The key to success at COR as a multiracial community of faith is primarily our covenant to stick together so that we can truly come to know one another, and be changed by one another, because this is what Jesus would have us do.

If we stay clear and simple in our proclamation to all we meet, and welcome all, not just on our terms, to Christ’s table, we have a very good chance of fulfilling many of our goals at once. We can strengthen our historic congregations, begin 1001 new PC(USA) fellowships, and continue to increase our racial ethnic membership in both. We can then achieve our greater goal of being the multicultural community we feel called by Christ to be. From experience, we know that while this is not easy, it is courageously embracing the land God has placed us in.

Forward Together

In F-1.03 of The Foundations of Presbyterian Polity in the Book of Order, we are reminded that, “Unity is God’s gift to the Church of Jesus Christ. Just as God is one God and Jesus Christ is our one Savior, so the Church is one because it belongs to its one Lord, Jesus Christ.” How would you work for unity within the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and how would this contribute to the visible unity we seek within our church and with other churches and Christian communities?

A colleague in my presbytery recently said to me, “Our unity must come from the grassroots up.”

She was right. God’s gift of unity to the church comes through the Spirit’s inspiration in each of us to choose to be together in this particular embodiment

of Christ in the world. But our long, intractable difficulty agreeing on the essentials of our faith has made choosing unity a huge challenge for us. The moderator is called to be the ambassador of the unity of the Spirit; that is, to mirror and nurture the unity that we, each of us, have already chosen.

How would I accomplish this as moderator? What I envision is this: When visiting your presbytery, I would invite all to the table and begin by listening. The only way to the joyful, transforming power we all desire is through being honest about what troubles and delights us. If we can come to know one another in love we will be better able to surrender to the unity God wills among us.

I strive to do this every day because like you, I promised upon ordination to be a friend to my colleagues in ministry. Since I was ordained, I have chosen to regularly invite colleagues to have coffee or go to lunch. More often than not, this has been with those who disagree with me.

Because the defining debate of our era has been the place of LGBT people in the church, I have reached out in conversation in two directions. I have reached out to LGBT Presbyterians whose voices have been silenced in our church for so long and I have reached out to those who disagree with me on the full inclusion and participation of LGBT people in our church. Over the years I’ve had countless conversations with these colleagues. When my passionately held view has lost in a vote, I have continued the conversation. I have listened to the hurt on all sides. In honoring my ordination vows, I’ve made friends.

The verse in Scripture that has guided me is Galatians 3:28, “There is no longer Jew nor Greek, there is no longer slave nor free, there is no longer male and female, for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.”

I know many presbyteries have worked hard to transform their communal life from confrontation to conversation. Our unity cannot rest on our agreement because even those who are of like minds will

eventually disagree on some things. Our unity is in Christ—our relationships, our conversation. Our unity rests upon our love for all and that means, in part, seeing our differences—including our very disagreements—as opportunities to discover together what none of us separately could know of God.

What this looks like every day is each of us courageously choosing to be together in faith. As moderator, I would join, arm in arm, with you to nurture our unity both within the PC(USA) and with other churches and Christian communities.

With Courage

Brian McLaren will be addressing the Office of the General Assembly breakfast on Monday morning. He has written, “Those who dedicate themselves to be agents of change in our churches will require superhuman doses of courage, kindness, creativity, collaboration, and perseverance. Thanks be to God, faithful change agents will find, like the little boy with his fish and bread, that they already have more resources for the journey than they realized.” What are some of the resources God has already provided the Presbyterian Church for the journey ahead?

“Change agents” is a good way to describe what the PC(USA) most needs if we are to experience the joy and life-giving power required by our mission as the church into the future. We must all be change agents. To the extent that I have been a change agent in our church, I have drawn on three grand resources God has always provided to the church on our journey together into the unknown.

The first is Scripture. Scripture is a flowing litany of change and the courageous agents of that change. Moses leads the Israelites from slavery to freedom and then through the difficult transformation into a people during their years in the wilderness. Rahab is remembered because she helped the spies in Jericho, serving as a change agent as the Israelites entered the Promised Land. There is the change from Israel and Judah into exile in Babylon and then the change

experienced in the return from exile to Jerusalem. The Prophets show us clearly that “prophet” can be another word for “change agent.”

Perhaps the most dramatic change of all is seen in the small band of Jesus’ followers who witness His life, death and resurrection and must tell the world about it. Others join them to tell the story of Jesus. The disciples and the apostles were change agents who offer wisdom and inspiration so that we may be the same thing in our time.

Another great resource God has already provided for us is the heritage of our ancestors. In response to the crumbling church of their time, our ancestors dug deep into Scripture and created a new way of being the church. They risked much when they sought to be faithful to God in Christ, just as we do. Our *Book of Confessions* holds for us the wisdom gained by our forbearers, as the agents of change in their time.

And the bottomless well for us all—the faithful in Scripture, our faithful mothers and fathers, and finally our selves—is the Holy Spirit who is the source of all the qualities we must have for moving into the change before us. Jesus promised us the Advocate, the Helper, the Comforter, the Holy Spirit (*John 14:26. 16:7*). Whatever quality of spirit we need for the challenges ahead, we can call upon that Helper and trust our prayer will be answered. We can trust that God is with us.

I don’t know what from these resources you draw upon most. I draw from Gideon’s skepticism, Esther’s courage, Mary’s willingness and Peter’s humanness among so many others in Scripture. John Witherspoon, Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Sarah Edwards, Jonathan’s wife and heart to his head—I stand on their shoulders. I begin the morning with prayer, doing the best I can to remember all day that the Holy Spirit is with me. Perhaps you do, too. With all of this, may our hearts swell with the courage required for the faithful living of these days.

Rev. Janet Edwards has selected
Rev. Jeff Krehbiel
to stand with her as Vice Moderator

The roots of my call to the ministry were planted when I was 15 years old, during a confirmation class retreat from my middle-class church in Ann Arbor, Michigan, to an inner-city church on the south side of Chicago. The church was a hub of their urban community, engaging their neighbors seven days a week, incarnating the gospel in their common life, finding their lives by giving themselves away. I had never experienced church like this before, and I have worked to rediscover that same vital dynamic ever since.

I have now been involved in urban ministry for more than twenty-five years, serving a small, multi-racial congregation on the West Side of Manhattan in New York City, and then in an inner-city church in Wilmington, Delaware, before coming to Church of the Pilgrims in the summer of 2000. Located in the Dupont Circle neighborhood of Washington, D.C., Church of the Pilgrims is the former “national church” of the Southern Presbyterians. Led by Randy Taylor, who served as pastor from 1956–1967, at great risk (and even greater consternation) they embraced the civil rights movement, shifting the focus of their ministry away from the South and toward their urban setting.

Today Church of the Pilgrims reflects the diversity of its thriving urban neighborhood, with Embassies, hotels, and high-rises on one side, town houses, apartments, bars and restaurants on the other. During my tenure the congregation has experienced revival in its worship life, renewed engagement with the city through participation in a city-wide church-based community organizing effort (which I serve as co-chair), and invigorated outreach to young adults through programs such as “Theology on Tap,” a weekly Bible study held in the tavern across the street from the church. Practicing radical hospitality, Church of the Pilgrims became a More Light Church in 2002.



I grew up at First Presbyterian in Ann Arbor, and attended McCormick Theological Seminary in Chicago (where I interned in that same inner-city church). In 2004, I completed a Doctor of Ministry degree in “Gospel and Culture” at Columbia Theological Seminary in Decatur, Georgia. The focus of my doctoral work was the “missional” calling of the church in contemporary North American culture: in our pluralistic, post-modern, and post-Christian era, the church is called to be a community of alternative values and practices grounded in the ministry of Jesus of Nazareth that bears witness to the gospel in its common life. Among the practices that have been central to my ministry are hospitality, community, care for the poor, support for the sick and the dying, peacemaking and the struggle for justice.

I have been married for 30 years. My wife, Cheryl, is an educational consultant who works with school districts around the country in the area of professional development. We have two children, Andrea, 24, and Kelsey, 21. I am currently serving as the Moderator of National Capital Presbytery, having served for three years as chair of the Presbytery Council.



Presbytery of Great Rivers

Bringing Hope: Every Hour, Every Day

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April 12, 2012

Rev. Grayde Parsons
Stated Clerk of the General Assembly, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

Dear Rev. Parsons,

Raised in the Presbyterian Church and intimately familiar with all our traditions, Susan Krummel nevertheless understands change. She reminds us that the Body of Christ is alive and continually reforming. She alerts our sessions to the perils of our unspoken folkways, customs that create stumbling blocks for newcomers. Sue warns us of the negative effects of carefully concealed church entrances - usually a side or back door - and our churches' hidden restrooms. Avoid if you can, she says, the esoteric bulletin filled with items and phrases that mean everything to a native Presbyterian and absolutely nothing to a newbie.

Sue Krummel believes that today's mission field is as much "here" as "there." Every community in our Presbytery of Great Rivers has been harmed by the Great Recession. As a result, Sue has encouraged us to respond to the many needs that are all around us. By giving each congregation a check for \$100 and challenging its sessions to use the gift to start a local ministry, the Great Rivers Presbytery under Sue's leadership has fed the hungry, clothed the destitute, and opened school doors to students in need of extra help. A natural innovator, Sue shows deep faith in sessions' creativity. The hundred dollar challenge has lifted spirits in many ways. In one town the church decided to offer guitars and guitar lessons to youngsters who would otherwise not be able to afford them.

Through her weekly emails to pastors and commissioners, Sue Krummel touches us. By referring to the antics of her grandchildren and her work in the garden, Sue connects with us on a human level. Arguments and debates may fascinate some, but Sue is moved by an unfailing intuition and a recognition that we are what we feel. Instead of leaning on her academic degrees and many honors, Sue relies on the gift of spiritual insight and a keen awareness of the movement of the Holy Spirit. She has a pastor's heart and those who know her might well call upon Sue were they to need someone to sit with a dying parent.

Aided by her grasp of the future, Sue senses where the world and the church are headed. She knows what battles are worth fighting and what issues are of lesser importance. The world is changing fast and the Holy Spirit is on the move. A church led by the Rev. Susan Krummel will be able to follow the Spirit's lead and as a result it will be in the right place at the right time. With her gift of vision, Sue Krummel is the kind of moderator the Presbyterian Church (USA) needs so much today.

Those of us hoping for a week of constructive 2012 General Assembly discussions will benefit from Sue Krummel's leadership. Experienced in leading large and challenging meetings, Sue is good at thinking on her feet. Unfailingly fair, she consistently honors each person's contribution. In seeking our next moderator, we could do no better than Susan Krummel.

Gary Davis
Moderator-elect of the Presbytery of Great Rivers

Krummel Family

Sue Krummel

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The weathered old hymnal I held in my hands had belonged to my great-grandmother, Annie Parr Harris. She had sung the songs of her faith from this hymnal in the little rural Presbyterian church in Glasford, Illinois, a truth testified by the mimeographed worship bulletin which slipped from the hymnal's pages dating to the 1920s. As I held that book, I wondered if she could ever have guessed that she would have someone to whom she was "related" on the other side of the world through her Presbyterian connections.

A million miles from Glasford, Illinois, is the Kenyan city Mombasa. A dusty metropolis of nearly a million souls, Mombasa is the home of Shadrach Krummel, a young teenager residing at Wana Wa Mola, or "House of Jesus." Shadrach Krummel lived on the sordid and dangerous streets of Mombasa his entire life until last year, when he found his way into Wana Wa Mola but, until last year, he had never had a last name. In order to register for school he needed a last name. He took the name Krummel.

You see Wana Wa Mola is a mission of First Federated Church in Peoria, Illinois, a joint congregation of the PC(USA) and the UCC. Their senior pastor is my husband, Forrest Krummel and in 2008 that congregation decided, after hearing from a Young Adult



Volunteer in Mission about the street boys of Mombasa, that they needed to do something and Wana Wa Mola was born. That Young Adult Volunteer who inspired the mission committee of First Federated also had the last name Krummel, and her first name is Anni. She is my daughter and also the great-great granddaughter of that first Annie.

My great grandmother Annie Parr Harris may never have heard of the city of Mombasa, and she certainly never imagined the lives of the children who would live there in the future, but her faithful commitment to Jesus Christ through that country church in Glasford became part of a line of Presbyterians which would provide for the shelter, nurture, and spiritual fellowship of a child of God on the other side of the world.

Is the PC(USA) changing? Absolutely. But what has not changed is the nature of our denomination which links us to a continuum of souls who have shaped this world for the better in the name of Christ. The church in Glasford, Illinois,

has not been around for decades but does that mean its mission has now ended? Ask Shadrach. Change needs to happen in our denomination but that change does not mean that we will cease to carry out our call to bring hope in the name of Jesus to those who have not heard. I believe that change, when drawn from the essence of who we are, can make our mission that much stronger.

I do not know what the PC(USA) will look like over the coming decades, but I am beginning to see glimpses of its future and I believe the Spirit is present in what I see. Churches are beginning to think in new ways about their neighbors and their need to be in ministry with them. For some it means opening their building to provide a neighborhood library or free laundry facilities. For others it means welcoming elders from a church of West Africa into leadership in their congregation. In ways large and small Presbyterians are beginning to find new ways to give glory to God. I believe this is not a time for us to be afraid, it is a time to be brave, creative and open to the guidance of God.

All of this begins to explain why I, the great granddaughter of a rural Presbyterian and the mother of a global Presbyterian missionary, am standing for moderator of the 220th General Assembly. When I was a girl I learned an important truth from my family, “What we are is God’s gift to us; what we make of ourselves is our gift to God.” This has always helped me to look at my life and see what gifts God

has given me. So, when members of my presbytery came to me and told me I should consider this, I did. I was born an organizer and have spoken publicly since I was very young. I was taught that nobody was better than me; and, conversely, that I am no better than anyone else. This has given me the courage required to walk into conflicted situations and help people address their issues as a leader in a presbytery.

I have also served churches of almost every size and as an executive presbyter, I represent a theologically diverse presbytery. Since I was ordained in 1980 I have served churches ranging from 35 to 1300 members, served as stated clerk and executive presbyter and partnered in ministry with my husband of 35 years, Forrest (Frosty) Krummel. I have served the denomination on the Synod Nominating Committee, various Committees on Ministry, Moderator of the Presbytery and as moderator of the General Assembly Nominating Committee. At General Assembly, I have been a seminary page, a commissioner, the moderator of a commissioner committee and committee assistant. At the same time I have helped to raise two great daughters, Dr. Katherine Degner and Anni Krummel.

I am part of a long line of mothers and fathers of the faith. I have been inspired, shaped and formed by these people who have gone before me and they have taught me that sitting around is not an option. If I am called to serve

as Moderator of the General Assembly,
I will bring all those people with me;
their values, their ethics, their faith.
And no matter what, I will continue to
write my family's story of following
Jesus through the Presbyterian Church.

Sue Krummel

Sue Krummel

Questions for Candidates

1.What are some of the exciting possibilities facing the 21st Century church? What are the challenges that face the church in this century?

The days are gone when most Presbyterians in North America had shared experiences - our news came from the same places, our schools taught the same things, we watched the same shows on tv. Our culture is breaking itself down into smaller and smaller segments. We choose our own news sources, music sources, etc. In fact, in some cases, we are creating all of that and making it available to the world at large. There was a time when the same answers worked for almost every congregation. Not so today. Perhaps what we share now are the questions. Our answers to these questions from our own context will open up the possibilities. For instance, "How do we share the gospel with a world that wants to both personalize the way it consumes information and to create the content of that information?"

Ask most Presbyterians to talk about their church life and they will say "I go to Church A." That is good. As Reformed people we certainly believe that being in worship is the heart of responding to our salvation, that giving glory to God and enjoying God forever is what we were created to do. But "going to" church is not enough. We also need to be "Sent out by Church A" to be followers of Christ in a world that does not know him. It is a challenge to convince members who see themselves as consumers of religious services, who believe they pay their pledge so that the church will be there when they need it,

to see that something else is required of them. Remember the prophet Micah? Followers of God then thought that showing up in worship with their offerings was enough. Not so, they were told. Your full response to God includes doing justice and loving kindness and walking humbly with your God. This may be the biggest challenge and biggest opportunity: turning from being clients of the church to being co-conspirators with God in this revolution to say that the old life is gone and a new life has begun.

We need to think about how we measure what we do. In part because of the annual reports each congregation prepares, we are often stuck thinking about the impact of our ministry simply in terms of members, worshipers and money. What if we "counted" in a different way? How many families use the food pantry we support each month? What kind of relationship are we forming with the children in the Scout troops that use our building every week? How many people are reading the Bible Study on our website and beginning to think differently about who and whose they are? What opportunities are we giving people who are not our church members to make recommendations to our mission committees about community needs? Finding a new way to gauge our response to our call is a challenge and an opportunity.

2.In the Mid-Council Commission report a great deal of the narrative spoke to the emerging shapes and forms for mid-councils. In your view, what do you find especially

Leaders Ensuring Community

promising in the narrative and why?

What do Presbyterians value most in having a structure that has as its purpose providing assistance to congregations as they carry out their call?

In my experience over 20 years of presbytery leadership in one form or another it is this: Congregations mostly like to be left to do their ministry. There are two times when they really want their Mid-Councils involved: when there is money available for a project or when there is trouble. That trouble could be something as simple and predictable as the fact that their pastor has retired or taken a new call. It could also be something as drastic as a tornado or severe misconduct or a precipitous pastoral change. When money or trouble is involved, many congregations want the mid-Council there, right by their sides.

The way that congregations and sessions think about Mid-Councils often reminds me of the way teen-agers think about their parents. Mostly our congregations want the presbytery and synod to stay out of their rooms, off of their Facebook pages, and out of their conversations with their friends. And, like teen-agers, when the trouble has passed or the check has been written, they mostly want you to get out of their room again. If this analogy applies, then how does the Mid-Council report help us to develop the relationships that are necessary to move the church forward?

The report's emphasis on the idea of mutual cooperation for the purpose of mission reminds us of what our purpose is as a church. Focusing on forming covenant communities of missional congregations; being learning communities; developing cultural proficiency; seeking parity between ruling and teaching elders; developing new worshiping communities drives us

to look for ways to reinvent Mid-Councils. Leaving behind the idea that regulation is our only function may help us to encourage our congregations not to see Mid-Councils only as snoopy parents, but to see us more as partners in ministry.

The presbytery I serve is one of those mentioned in the Mid-Council report. We have certainly changed our emphasis in the last few years to one of creating a learning community and empowering our congregations to become more missional. There are congregations and sessions within our presbytery that have moved to a new understanding of the relationship between the presbytery and their local church. There are others that have not made that shift. The elected and employed leadership of the presbytery continues to look for ways to help congregations see us as their partners, working to support their ministries and mission.

3.How might the initiative to create 1001 new worshipping communities help the PC(U.S.A.) reach its goal of increasing its racial ethnic membership and come closer to becoming a multicultural community of faith, hope, love, and witness?

The issue of race in the United States is certainly one which creates divisions. The history of the Presbyterian churches in Illinois, for instance, is one of congregations formed by abolitionists who came here specifically to keep it a free state while others are congregations formed by former slave owners who saw nothing wrong with that. Some of those divisions still exist. As the Mid-Council report reminds us, even thirty years ago when we talked about race in the PCUSA, we were mostly talking about Blacks and Caucasians of European descent. We defined ourselves by our skin color and our backgrounds. I have heard people in

Issues

Unity

churches make comments that horrified me about those with African heritage. Can we ever solve the problem of how Black and Caucasian citizens and church members relate to one another? That remains to be seen.

As we think, then, about the 1001 new worshiping communities and reaching more racial ethnic church members, we are, in some ways, leaving behind that dilemma and moving to new populations among us. Even the Africans to whom many of our congregations are reaching out do not carry the baggage of people who have been in this country for generations and whose families lived in slavery. Perhaps the relationship between our mostly white church and these newcomers to our shores is made easier without the sin of slavery.

In encouraging new worshiping communities, then, how can we share the strengths of the faith that sustains us and the way we celebrate it without imposing our cultural expectations? I heard of a church where an immigrant population is taking their turn leading one of the worship services. This congregation sometimes has meals after worship. Some are complaining because they are now serving both mashed potatoes and rice at these dinners. We need to get past the fear of the new and find what we share in common in our faith in God who loves even us.

How will we define a worshiping community? What will be the marks of the Reformed church that they will exhibit so that we can claim them as a part of the PCUSA? How will we interact with them as Mid-Councils in ways that encourage them and sustain them without turning them into mission projects that will always be seen as something less than full partners? How will we develop our cultural proficiency to such a degree that we will not be afraid of letting someone else decide what constitutes worship? These are the hard questions that we will answer as

we go. The way we answer them will depend on our context and our ability to be open to the leading of the Holy Spirit. People who bring us new traditions or who are completely new to the Christian faith will be part of what sustains and enlivens this denomination in the 21st century and beyond.

5. In F-1.03 of The Foundations of Presbyterian Polity in the Book of Order, we are reminded that, "Unity is God's gift to the Church in Jesus Christ. Just as God is one God and Jesus Christ is our one Savior, so the Church is one because it belongs to its one Lord, Jesus Christ." How would you work for unity within the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and how would this contribute to the visible unity we seek within our church and with other churches and Christian communities?

Unity is an issue before presbyteries in the last few years in a way that it is has not been for several decades, even centuries. As our culture continues to find ways of accommodating people's preferences by creating more homogeneous communities, our church is often being pulled in the same direction. The Presbyterian Church in all of its varieties in the early twenty-first century is dividing itself into smaller and smaller segments. One of the questions before us may be, "When do we become such a small segment of the body of Christ that we have lost any real effectiveness?"

There is merit in presenting a unified witness to the world as a part of the Body of Christ. The great institutions around the world that carry the name "Presbyterian" did not, for the most part, come about because of only one congregation or one pioneering missionary. Those institutions of healing and learning came about because

Superhuman

Presbyterians were working together to bring hope in the name of Jesus Christ.

Our ancestors in the 19th and 20th centuries knew they had a “story to tell to the nations” and overcame, at times, the divisions within the church that might prevent them from telling that story. In the 21st century we seem confused about what our call is and how we might live it out.

What is it that we need to be doing together and can those things create a centered set rather than a bounded set, to use the language of the Mid-Council report? To whom does your congregation reach out in order to share the good news of salvation? How is it helpful to your church members to be part of a denomination with a rich history, a creedal heritage, and a heart for mission in reaching out to people? How is it helpful to you to be part of a denomination that can help in pastoral searches and provide resources for the administrative life of your congregation so that you can concentrate on your ministry? Working together to find answers to questions like this may help to address the need for unity in the PCUSA.

The decisions about ordination standards and discussions about marriage and the like create fissures among us that may not be able to be healed any time soon. As we watch our friends depart, how do our interactions with them give evidence to the world of who and whose we are? Even in the midst of this current discord, can our neighbors watch us and say “those truly are Jesus’ disciples for they have love for one another.”

10. Brian McLaren will be addressing the Office of the General Assembly breakfast on Monday morning. He has written: “Those who dedicate themselves to be agents of change in our churches will require superhuman

doses of courage, kindness, creativity, collaboration, and perseverance. Thanks be to God, faithful change agents will find, like the little boy with his fish and bread, that they already have more resources for the journey than they realized.” What are some of the resources God has already provided the Presbyterian Church for the journey ahead.

We have so many resources at our fingertips for moving into the 21st century. As Brian McLaren has said, it will take courage to use them in a way that brings glory to God.

One of our best resources is money. Some of that money is under the direction of sessions and presbyteries, synods, and the General Assembly. In our operating budgets, we make decisions every year that show the world who we are. With our investments/endowments we provide for the future of our institutions and make great strides in charting new paths for carrying out our call. We are in the position of this preacher: “I have good news and bad news about our finances. The good news is that we have plenty of money to do everything that God is calling us to do. The bad news is that it is still in your pockets.” Presbyterians are not, in general, the givers we could be. If every Presbyterian gave 10%, sessions, mid-Councils and the GA would have more than enough money for carrying out God’s call. The money is there. We have to be doing such excellent mission and ministry that our members cannot help but support it.

We love our children. We want them to do well and succeed. We provide amazing experiences for them while they are growing up. They sing in choirs, they go on life-changing mission trips, they engage in Bible study in a way that we wish we could get adults to do. These educated, enthusiastic young people who have a tender place in their

hearts for the church are one of our greatest assets. We need to find ways to capitalize on all of this experience and good will when they become young adults.

Our emphasis on rationality and education is a resource. There is a segment of the world that is educated and logical and also has faith in the Triune God. When you look across the spectrum of options for such people in the Christian family, there are not many places for them to express faith in a way that makes sense with the life they live. Such people need a place to be faithful

and to bring the gifts they have been given and developed. The PCUSA represents one of the places where this can be done.

The best asset we have is that we want to help other people in Jesus' name. This does not make us unique in the Christian family in any way. But it does remind us that we respond to our salvation by the way we live. Our salvation is not for us alone. We have been forgiven and freed; it does not stop there. We respond by bringing hope in the name of Jesus Christ so that others may live these new lives as well.

Sue Krummel

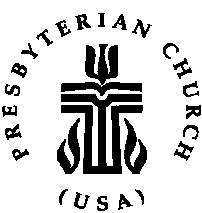
has chosen the Rev. Sanghyun James Lee
as Candidate for Vice Moderator - 220th General Assembly

James Lee has been the pastor of the Korean Community Presbyterian Church (KCPC) since January, 2005. Under his leadership, KCPC has expanded not only its membership and programs, but also its local and overseas missions. Today, the church partners with over 15 missionaries and has completed three construction projects in Mexico and India. Rev. Lee also has involved actively with the spiritual formation of the second generation Korean Americans. Through his coordination, the regional Korean American summer youth camp has grown to a consortium of over 25 youth ministries within the Synod of South Atlantic and Living Waters.



A graduate of Yale Divinity School (M.Div.) and Union-PCSE, Richmond (D.Min.), James currently serves Trinity Presbytery on its Committee on Preparation for Ministry and the Communications Committee. He is also the Adjunct Executive of National Council of Korean Presbyterian Church. He served as Moderator of Korean Presbyterian Churches of the Synod of the South Atlantic, Stated Clerk of National Council of Korean Presbyterian Church, the Church Development Committee of Midwest Hanmi Presbytery, and the Church Support and Development Committee of the Synod of the Covenant.

James is married to Jina Shin Lee for 18 years, and they have two daughters, Karen and Crystal.



THE PRESBYTERY OF ELIZABETH

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REV. PAUL F. RACK

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October 7, 2011

The Reverend Gradye Parsons, Stated Clerk
Office of the General Assembly
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
100 Witherspoon Street
Louisville, KY 40202

Dear Gradye,

May the blessings and peace of Christ our God be with you!

In its 648th Stated Meeting, on Tuesday, September 27, 2011, the Presbytery of Elizabeth enthusiastically and overwhelmingly endorsed its own Moderator, teaching elder Neal D. Presa, of 27 Princeton Drive, Middlesex, NJ 08842, as a candidate for Moderator of the 220th General Assembly.

The presbytery perceives that our world and Christ's Church are in a time of great change. In our own denomination, the tension between people of different perspectives threatens to undermine our mission and unity. The Church needs to navigate such times faithfully, pastorally, and creatively, always oriented by our Reformed theological tradition. The presbytery recognizes in Neal the gifts and skills necessary to bring together many divergent interests in the common cause of Christ's mission and the gospel witness.

Neal has been pastor of the Middlesex Presbyterian Church in Middlesex, NJ, a multicultural congregation, since 2003. He has also served the Church regionally, nationally, and globally. Currently, Neal is the Moderator of our presbytery, and has chaired our Bills and Overtures Committee. Neal is the chair of the General Assembly Special Committee on the Heidelberg Catechism, and has worked as vice chair of the General Assembly Council. In addition, Neal has held positions on the executive committees of both the World Alliance and World Communion of Reformed Churches, and has represented Reformed churches worldwide in such settings as the Vatican and the World Council of Churches Faith and Order Plenary Commission.

As an educator with an M.Div. from the San Francisco Theological Seminary, a Th.M. from Princeton Theological Seminary, and a Ph.D. from Drew University, Neal values theological education and our theological institutions. Assisting present-future leaders of all ages in discerning and living out their calling is a high priority for him. He served as a Trustee of Princeton Theological Seminary, and has taught at New Brunswick Theological Seminary and Somerset Christian College.

Beneath his vast ecclesiastical experience and advanced theological degrees, Neal also cherishes the Church as an inclusive community. He was nurtured in a large Filipino American family. With his Korean American wife, Grace, and their two sons, Neal embodies and treasures the diversity of family and faith.

The Presbytery of Elizabeth is pleased to offer Neal to the 220th General Assembly and to the wider family of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

In Christ,

Paul F. Rack
Stated Clerk



Rev. Dr. Neal D. Presa

pastor
husband & dad
theological educator
ecumenist & liturgist
follower of Christ



Seeking the Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace

The Lord Be With You

For 220 years, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has offered a critical prophetic witness to communities across the country and around the world.

Throughout this time, the Church has encountered great challenges, some of which have strained the fragile threads that sew us together, and, in a large part of that rich history, we were a divided people. In the midst of membership declines, an ethos of anxiety and high mistrust, there, at the center and at the circumference of our life together is the triune God who calls us still: the God who met us at the baptismal waters, and who stands with us at the water's edge.

Lift Up Your Hearts

The 14th century mystic, Julian of Norwich observed: "...but all will be well, and all will be well, and every kind of thing will be well." I believe that. I do so not out of a naïveté of the real problems we are confronting, nor out of the blind faith that if we simply walk hand-in-hand, things will get

better, and certainly not in confidence in our own willpower, strategies, and votes. Instead, my hope, our hope, remains in the triune God who knits us together, who continually invites us to the Table. This is the God who deploys us from the Table in the power and presence of the Holy Spirit to testify in word and in deed what we pray, praise and proclaim whenever and wherever two or three gather in Christ's name. It is a testimony that says: In life and in death, we belong to God. This is Christ's mission, this is Christ's Church.

Let Us Give Thanks

From this deep and abiding sense of the amazing love of God and out of my love for Christ and the Church, I sense a call to serve as moderator of the 220th General Assembly. Rooted in our Reformed heritage while embracing the potentials of emerging ways of how to be Presbyterian in the 21st century, I want to partner with you, to discover how we may more faithfully and fully serve in this exciting time. **Amen.**

www.nealpresa.com

ndpresa@gmail.com



text PRESA to 56512

Neal D. Presa

Seeking the Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace

ABOUT NEAL

Born into a large Filipino American family on the beautiful Pacific island of Guam, I am a man who loves the water, feasts, and faith. I was baptized in the Roman Catholic Church and raised in the Congregational tradition in the San Francisco Bay Area.

Attending the University of California, Davis majoring in political science and history, I planned to attend law school; the Lord had other plans. I spent the next 12 years earning an MDiv, ThM, MPhil, PhD. I was nurtured by the New Covenant Presbyterian Church in San Leandro, CA, ordained as a deacon and elder, served two Korean American and two Filipino American congregations and was finally ordained as a minister of Word and Sacrament. I am privileged to currently serve as pastor of the Middlesex Presbyterian Church in NJ since 2003.

During this period, I met an amazing Korean American woman, Grace Rhie, at the 2001 Convocation for Asian American Presbyterians. Nine months after we met, I proposed to Grace on the floor of the General Assembly Council. How Presby-geeky is that! We have two handsome sons, Daniel (8) and Andrew (7). We love to travel, play sports & board games together, watch movies and discover new places to eat. I'm a Cub Scout Den Leader and soccer coach.

VOCATIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

- Pastor, Middlesex Presbyterian Church (NJ)
- Adjunct Faculty in Preaching & Worship, New Brunswick Theological Seminary (NJ)
- Adjunct Faculty in Theology & Bible, Somerset Christian College
- Theological & Liturgical Consultant
- Henry Luce Foundation Graduate Fellow, Center for Christianities in Global Contexts, Drew University (NJ)
- Graduate Teaching Assistant in Preaching & Worship, Drew University
- Author/Editor of 3 books, several articles, and book reviews

HIGHLIGHTS OF CHURCH SERVICE

- Executive Committees, World Communion/Alliance of Reformed Churches (WCRC/WARC)
- Convener, Caribbean & NA Area Council, WCRC/WARC
- Chair, GA Special Cmte on the Heidelberg Catechism
- Vice Chair & Parliamentarian, General Assembly Council
- Committee on the Office of the General Assembly
- GA Sacraments Task Force
- Presbytery Moderator & Vice Moderator
- Trustee, Princeton Seminary

Neal D. Presa

Seeking the Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace

What are some of the exciting possibilities facing the 21st century church? What are the challenges that face the church in this century?

The prevalent image of the Church that occupies our minds and aches our hearts is one of membership decline, fewer adult baptisms, struggling presbyteries, more than half of our congregations without full-time installed pastors, and parts of the Church planning to or who have already departed to another denomination. Church expert Peter Steinke speaks of how mainline churches, like the PC(U.S.A.), are facing the loss of status and image akin to a football team losing “home-field” advantage: gone are the days of the fancy uniforms, packed stadiums, and fans cheering for us at the bleachers.

Yet, we know, believe, and confess the pattern of Christ’s own ministry: new life follows dying to self. Our *Book of Order* says as much, in the opening lines: “The Church is to be a community of faith, entrusting itself to God alone, even at the risk of losing its life.”(F-1.0301)

Entrusting our future to God’s mysterious ways carries with it a sense of fear, wonder, and expectation because we don’t know what God will do. The world is so complex and ever-changing, can we keep up? Or will the Church be relegated to irrelevancy in a culture that, often appears to care less

what the Church thinks or does.

Yet, our Reformed faith affirms that the ministry of Word and Sacrament does matter; teaching a child the ways of Christ does matter; calling and training women and men for ordained ministry does matter; praying for hospital shut-ins and walking alongside the depressed and downtrodden counts; spending a Saturday afternoon building a house together and gathering for fellowship afterwards has lifelong consequences.

You see, the challenges which we face in this century are not new to God’s people. The Church has always confronted challenges. It’s in times of tension that God forms and shapes faith, renews our calling, and shows us new and fresh ways. God has seen us through. Presbyteries are re-thinking new and fresh ways of being collaborative, missional communities. Social networking platforms are connecting new and old friends and colleagues, even PNCs with potential candidates. Our seminaries are still admitting the next generation of leaders. Individuals and families are still responding to Christ’s call to serve as mission co-workers. Our 10,100 congregations continue to worship every Sunday for worship, and serve Monday through Saturday. Christ’s mission in the world is not finished. Christ is not done with us yet.

Neal D. Presa

Seeking the Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace

In the Mid-Council Commission report a great deal of the narrative spoke to the emerging shapes and forms for mid-councils. In your view, what do you find especially promising in the narrative and why?

We have grown accustomed to the motto: *Reformata, semper reformanda secundum verbum Dei et Spiritus* (trans. “Reformed, always being Reformed according to God’s Word and Spirit). This is a fancy-shmancy way of simply saying, we are not only a Church *of the* Reformation; we are a Church *in* Reformation.

We must change how and why we have been doing what we have been doing. Whenever the Church is in a period of reformation, the Church asks:

- Whose are we?
- What is God calling us to be?
- What are we to do to more faithfully serve God?

The Mid-Council Commission report helpfully provides a humble, skeletal blueprint that is theologically robust, grounded in mission, and creatively risk-taking.

What the Report calls the Church to do is diagnose those places and spaces in our thinking, structures and actions that stifle the creative, fresh work of the Holy Spirit. What is preventing mid-councils from being missional communities that support the ministries of congregations,

encouraging and equipping teaching and ruling elders for mutual service? The Report calls mid-councils to make seismic shifts from the traditional function of presbyteries being bureaucracies that monitors, oversees, controls, and votes; and instead become vibrant partners where innovation, creativity, imagination, and an entrepreneurial spirit are encouraged and promoted.

I am excited how presbyteries across the country have already taken great strides to reform their practices and thinking. Some have changed the format and content of presbytery meetings to be more community-and mission -oriented, while others are sharing presbytery staff and resources in creative ways. They didn’t wait for a General Assembly action, or funding to flow their way; they responded to the call of the Spirit and, like a surfer in the ocean, they rode the wave.

Being and becoming the Presbyterian Church in the 21st century will require a nimble flexibility that maximizes gifts, passion, relationships, and imagination for the sake of mission, while minimizing an over-reliance on structures, rules, and regulations.

Our sisters and brothers in Los Ranchos Presbytery wisely remind us: “Where two or more churches are doing mission together, the presbytery is in their midst.” Let’s ride the wave and follow the Spirit.

Seeking the Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace

How might the initiative to create 1001 new worshipping communities help the PC(U.S.A.) reach its goal of increasing its racial ethnic membership and come closer to becoming a multicultural community of faith, hope, love, and witness?

Becoming a more multicultural community of faith, hope, love, and witness is not the PC(U.S.A.)'s vision and goal; it has been and always will be the vision and plan of God for all of humanity to be reconciled to God and with one another. The all-encompassing covenant of God in Christ through the Holy Spirit calls every person, of every race, of every nation, of every language, of every background. What we do as the PC(U.S.A.) is merely play catch-up with what God has been calling us to do from the beginning.

The initiative for 1001 new worshipping communities is an effort to faithfully respond to Christ's call to recognize, embrace, and welcome diversity. It makes us all aware that strangers in our midst are, in fact, our neighbors. It challenges mid-councils to seek new and creative ways to harness resources and leverage gifts among and between congregations to develop new worshipping communities. The initiative rightly recognizes that the U.S. demographic population has changed so that by the year 2050 there will be no majority population in the country. Yet, as racial ethnic and immigrant populations have increased, the

PC(U.S.A.) remains less culturally diverse when compared to the national average. And though we are more culturally diverse than in prior years, there remains a big gap between being *culturally diverse* and *culturally proficient*.

The goal for 1001 new worshipping communities is not about a numbers game of reaching the number 1001 or increasing our racial ethnic membership so we can applaud our efforts and a job well-done. At the heart of the goal must be the recognition that without my neighbor, without the diverse experiences and cultural backgrounds, without the different perspectives that may go against my own preconceptions of the world and myself – without that broad array of diversity that my neighbor brings, I am impoverished; we are impoverished. We are incomplete without the fullness of God's good creation.

The "1001 new worshipping communities" initiative is a call upon the whole Church to receive the living Christ in our neighbors. Note, it's not the old term of "new church developments" but rather "new worshipping communities." And rightly so. Because it is when we encounter our neighbors at the Word – in Scripture, song, bread, cup, font, community – "then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him."

Seeking the Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace

In F-1.03 of The Foundations of Presbyterian Polity in the Book of Order, we are reminded that, "Unity is God's gift to the Church in Jesus Christ. Just as God is one God and Jesus Christ is our one Savior, so the Church is one because it belongs to its one Lord, Jesus Christ." How would you work for unity within the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and how would this contribute to the visible unity we seek within our church and with other churches and Christian communities?

As unity is already ours in Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit, unity is both a gift and a task. It's already accomplished, but living out that unity to make it visible in our life and work together is where the difficulty lies.

Our Lord prayed, ". . .that they may be one as we are one" (John 17:21). The apostle Paul urged the Ephesian Christians, "Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4:3). What follows the apostle's exhortation are key phrases: **one body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all.**

I want to call the whole Church to a season of prayer. Let us confess the ways we have not promoted unity, or how our actions may divide us from each other. Prayer expresses our collective reliance that we cannot, on our own, make unity. We place our trust and confidence in the Holy Spirit.

I would invite us to a time of baptismal renewal and re-covenanting. At the baptismal waters, we receive the

declaration that we are God's beloved children, that we are sisters and brothers to one another, and we are welcomed into the body of Christ. Let us regularly renew our one baptism in our one Lord in the one hope we have been given.

We journey from the Font to the Table. Gathered around bread and drink, I would like to convene a series of churchwide conversations on what it means to be the Church of Jesus Christ in our time, how do we engage in mission in the U.S. and around the world, and how do we dignify difference within the body. These are questions of identity. Our discovery of who we are, why we are the Church, and what we are to do and be occurs where community, Table, Scripture, and conversations converge.

But it doesn't stop there. After Table fellowship and conversations, Jesus called his disciples to serve. Let's serve alongside one another, in tangible, hands-on mission opportunities to touch lives, and to be touched by others whom we encounter.

This "Gather-Send-Gather-Send" pattern is what we offer to other Christian communities, for this is Christ's pattern of being among us. We don't gather just for the sake of being visibly united. We gather to be sent. We are sent to re-gather again. We re-enact what we have seen and heard. Gather. Send. Gather. Send. Gather. Send. . . .

Seeking the Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace

Brian McLaren will be addressing the Office of the General Assembly breakfast on Monday morning. He has written: "Those who dedicate themselves to be agents of change in our churches will require superhuman doses of courage, kindness, creativity, collaboration, and perseverance. Thanks be to God, faithful change agents will find, like the little boy with his fish and bread, that they already have more resources for the journey than they realized." What are some of the resources God has already provided the Presbyterian Church for the journey ahead?

Where God gives vision, God provides the provision. For 220 years, God has richly blessed the Presbyterian Church. I cannot do justice in enumerating the many ways God has provided and continues to provide for our common journey together. I'll go against the advice of a former preaching professor who said to not preach 3-point sermons. Because we're Trinitarian, here's the three points:

- Message
- Messengers
- Mission

God has entrusted to us a *message* of great news: news that liberates us from bondage to fear, sin, oppression, news that proclaims that in Jesus Christ we are forgiven, news that declares that God so loved the world. This message is taught in our living rooms and prayed around the dining table. It is a message that has resounded in the community of Middlesex Presbyterian Church for the last 50

years, and with 10,100 other congregations like yours. It's a message that is Tweeted by thousands daily, learned and tested by seminarians, finding expression in Sunday School classes and mission service opportunities.

God has called women, men, and children, in the past, in the present, and in the future to be *messengers* of that message. God has gifted the Presbyterian Church with creative thinkers, with passionate servants who invest their lives; there are messengers who serve in large, medium and small-sized churches, in urban, suburban, and rural communities. In each generation, God calls messengers.

God has blessed the Presbyterian Church for more than two centuries with an invitation to *mission*: to join God in our neighborhoods, to transform the world, to stand in solidarity with people, to feed the naked, clothe the hungry, shelter the homeless, advocate for the weak.

Yet, far too often, we either look with despairing nostalgia at what the Church was and try to retrieve it, or we content ourselves with the knowledge that because God is sovereign, God will take care of everything. The challenge and opportunity before us is to move onward with what we have, trusting God on the journey, and knowing that when we stumble along the path, God accompanies us on the way.



Neal D. Presa has invited

Rev. Tara Spuhler McCabe

to stand as a candidate for
Vice Moderator

Tara's Call

My sense of call as vice moderator: is one of a privilege and opportunity to serve the church, whom I love, in this particular position. It is a service out of a larger call in faithfulness. The opportunity to meet, listen, and truly collaborate with one another on who we are as children of God, as Presbyterians, and as particular members in particular Presbyterian communities. It is broken and beautiful. It is complicated and it is all precious. Out of a thriving ministry of 12 years, I always find myself thrilled and still nervous about how we continue to be shaped out of God's claim on our lives. And that is okay!

Tara's Hopes

The best part of this call is that I am part of a team! As we all are, we are part of a body. It will be our task as a team to lead, listen, and collaborate with integrity on how you the body, out of the General Assembly, discerns us to move in the next two years. We are part of your team to grow in the integrity and strength of a church in the Body of Christ. And I do not want to be shy about this. We work hard and with deep faith in being a church, a body, a vibrant and faithful body. All of this is what I love in being a part of this particular body. We are currently in a time not unlike any other time, when we are all tasked to be faithful witnesses. May we be encouraged to get a sense of how our traditions give us the foundations for being creative collective folk. Again, all of this is precious!

About Tara

Vocational: Current Call: 2000 – 2012
Intern (2000 to 2002), Director of Christian Education (2002 to 2006), Associate Pastor (2006 to 2012) at The New York Avenue Presbyterian Church, Washington, DC

Education:

Master of Divinity, McCormick Theological Seminary, 2000
BA in Religious Studies and Elementary Education, Agnes Scott College, 1996

Personal:

Born in Jacksonville, Florida
Grew up and raised out of First Presbyterian and Riverside Presbyterian, St. Augustine Presbytery
Married to Kendrick McCabe
Our children are Elliot (5) and Evelyn (3)
Active in our neighborhood community as well as our local school and daycare

National Capitol Presbytery:

Mission Coordinating Committee
Co-chair of sub committee for College and Campus Ministry
Christian Educators Working Group
Youth Workers Group
Washington Interfaith Network

Denominational:

Planning Teams: Montreat Youth Conference, Peacemaking, 7% Young Clergy Delegate for PCUSA to World Council of Churches, Harare 1998