

Synod Report

Highlights of Recent Events in the Synod of the Southwest, PCUSA

July 2010

Moving Into A Future Full Of Promising Possibilities

Commission will reflect on MGB

In response to several overtures from presbyteries and synods and a recommendation from the Office of the General Assembly, the 219th General Assembly, meeting in Minneapolis in July, voted to create a 21-member middle governing body (MGB) commission.

The Synod of the Southwest had submitted an overture calling for the appointment of a committee “to explore and examine the roles and relationships of synods and presbyteries in the Presbyterian Church (USA) – to each other, to the agencies of the General Assembly, and to congregations.”

The overture went on to spell out several tasks that needed to be accomplished.

The difference between a commission and a committee is that a commission can act with the authority of the General Assembly, while a committee would make reports and recommendations to the General Assembly.

The entire process and language of the Synod's overture was incorporated into the final recommendation to the Assembly – which the Assembly approved

One overture called for the elimination of synods, another called for dramatic changes in the roles of synods.

This review and possible action is needed because of financial considerations, the diverse ways in which MGB function within the denomination, and the fact that no review of the role and function of MGB has been made for over 40 years.

Goal would be to develop a MGB structure that is functional and which enables and furthers the mission of the church.

Jan DeVries heads to Grace Presbytery



In a somewhat surprising move, the Rev. Jan DeVries resigned her position as Synod Executive/Stated Clerk for the Synod of the Southwest to accept the call to become General Presbyter for Grace Presbytery in Texas as of June 1.

At a special meeting of the Synod held in Albuquerque on May 5, commissioners voted to accept her resignation with the thanks of the Synod for 10 years of faithful service.

A reception to express thanks to her was held in Albuquerque that afternoon and another was held in Phoenix later in the month.

In reflecting on her service in the Synod, she pointed to “a process over several years [that] refocused the synod's energies around six priorities, the two most obvious being leadership development and racial ethnic ministries. While structural changes were made, these were minimal and the focus was on ministry together among the four presbyteries and regionally.”

Synod makes plans for interim period

Meeting in Albuquerque on June 19, commissioners from the four presbyteries of the Synod of the Southwest made and confirmed plans for the months ahead as the Synod enters a time of transition.

Upon recommendation of the Executive Committee of the Synod, commissioners voted to empower the Committee to coordinate the Synod's mission and program during the transition period to an interim executive/stated clerk – essentially serving as Synod Executive. At the same time, added to the Executive Committee were Art Campbell, Personnel Committee; Conrad Rocha, immediate past moderator; Ray Kersting, Acting Stated Clerk, and Robin Thomas, staff.

As specified in the by-laws, the original committee was composed of Carrol Blevins, Moderator, and members John Dunham, Moderator Elect; Rochelle Mackey, Finance and Stewardship Development chair, and Mary Lynn Walters, Treasurer.

Elected to be Acting Stated Clerk until the interim executive/stated clerk is contracted, was Ray Kersting.

Elected by commissioners to be the Interim Executive/Stated Clerk Search Committee were John Dunham, Presbytery de Cristo, Chair; Carrol Blevins, Sierra Blanca Presbytery; Art Campbell, Grand Canyon Presbytery; Marty Bruner and Solema Newton, Santa Fe Presbytery. Jill Hudson of the Stated Clerk's office of the General Assembly will work with the Committee.

Synod also empowered the Executive Committee to contract with the person recom-

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In Brief

Larry Norris leaves Cook

The Rev. Larry Norris, president of Cook Native American Ministries, Tempe, is leaving the school to serve as pastor of Central United Methodist Church in Phoenix.

He has been at Cook since 1984. He began his new position July 1.

In a letter he said, "I am forever grateful to have had the opportunity to be a part of God's work at Cook. It has broadened and deepened my understanding of Native people, the Kingdom of God, and has opened the doors to meet and develop relationships with some of the most wonderful people on the planet!"

Today, Cook Native American Ministries continues to expand the vision and passion of Charles H. Cook, founder of the school, beyond the walls of a traditional school building - to bring newer and greater opportunities for education to Native Americans than ever before.

Celebrating the great ends

In celebration of the 100th anniversary of the establishment of the "Great Ends of the Church" that shape the life and mission of the Presbyterian Church (USA), Valley Church, Green Valley, AZ, had a series of sermons this spring that featured one "end" each week.

This was followed on Mondays with conversations exploring the implications of each for individual lives and the life of the congregation.

The great ends are spelled out in the opening chapter of the *Book of Order*:

- "The Proclamation of the Gospel for the Salvation of Humankind" (read Acts 1:8);
- "The Shelter, Nurture and Spiritual Fellowship of the Children of God" (read Ephesians 4: 11-16);
- "The Maintenance of Divine Worship" (read Colossians 3: 16-17);
- "The Preservation of the Truth" (see John 14: 11-8);
- "The Promotion of Social Righteousness" (read Amos 5:24);
- "The Exhibition of the Kingdom of Heaven to the World" (read Isaiah 11: 11-9).

Pastor of the church is Larry De-Long

The Rev. Dr. Sallie Watson installed as Regional Presbyter/ Stated Clerk for Santa Fe and Sierra Blanca Presbyteries



Installed as Regional Presbyter/Stated Clerk for the Presbyteries of Santa Fe and Sierra Blanca on June 11 was the Rev. Dr. Sallie Watson (left). She is shown at the reception with her husband, Paul, and daughter, Meredith. Son Alex was not able to be present. She comes to the presbyteries from the Presbytery of Arkansas where she was interim executive.

It happened at the Assembly

The 219th General Assembly that met early in July in Minneapolis is history, but many of its actions will live on in the life of the church. Among these actions were:

- Approving a boycott of doing business in Arizona because of SB1070 (related issues on next page)
- Approving an overture to be voted upon by the Presbyteries that would eliminate G-6.106b in the *Book of Order* (fidelity in marriage or chastity in singleness for officers).

Replacing this would be a new provision that would read, "Standards for ordained service reflect the church's desire to submit joyfully to the Lordship of Jesus Christ in all aspects of life. The governing body responsible for ordination and/or installation shall examine each candidate's calling, gifts, preparation, and suitability for the responsibilities of office.

"The examination shall include, but not be limited to, a determination of the candidate's ability and commitment to fulfill all requirements as expressed in the constitutional questions for ordination and installation. Governing bodies shall be guided by Scripture and the confessions in applying standards to individual candidates."

- Approving a comprehensive report on the Middle East that calls for:
 - > an immediate cessation of all violence, whether perpetrated by Israelis or Palestinians;
 - > the reaffirmation of Israel's right to exist as a sovereign nation within secure and internationally recognized borders;
 - > the end of Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories;
 - > an immediate freeze on the establishment and expansion of Israeli settlements in the West Bank, and on the Israeli acquisition of Palestinian land and buildings in East Jerusalem.
- Approving a massive revision of the Form of Government and sending it to the presbyteries for their affirmative or negative vote.

The present Form of Government was adopted in 1983 at Presbyterian union and has been amended more than 300 times.

The revisions are intended to make it less regulatory and more missional.

- Electing Elder Cynthia Bolbach of National Capital Presbytery Moderator on the fourth ballot during opening night of the Assembly.

She was the only elder in a field of six candidates.

Synod hosts bi-national event on border and immigration issues

Grand Canyon Presbytery initiates accompaniment

Phoenix-based Grand Canyon Presbytery has responded to passage of the recent immigration law in Arizona by launching an “accompaniment” program to support Hispanic residents of the state.

Non-Hispanic Presbyterians in the presbytery have covenanted to attend worship services in the presbytery’s five Hispanic congregations.

“Our intent is to show solidarity with our Hispanic brothers and sisters and to let them know they are not alone as they face the threats posed by the new law,” said the Rev. David Wasserman, Grand Canyon’s interim executive, adding, “We welcome others to come join us.”

It’s entirely possible, Wasserman said, “that we may need to extend our accompaniment program – depending on how things unfold – to doctors’ visits, grocery shopping trips and other aspects of the daily life of our Hispanic residents.”

Planning for the interim

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mended by the Interim Synod Executive/Stated Clerk Search Committee to serve in that capacity.

With the role of middle governing bodies (synods and presbyteries) being evaluated and possibly modified, it is expected that this interim position could be for as long as three years. Term of service, however, will be for one year, renewable for additional one-year terms.

In addition, the Synod directed the Personnel Committee to bring a slate of nominees (2 from each presbytery) to serve on the permanent Synod Executive/Stated Clerk Search Committee to the October stated meeting of the Synod and named Moderator-Elect, John Dunham, to serve as that search committee’s chair as well.

Because the work load is lighter during the summer, Synod voted to close the Synod office on Fridays.

Produced by the
Synod of the Southwest
for reproduction and distribution in
the Synod of the Southwest.
Ray Kersting, editor, design

For further details about the conference, transcripts of major presentations as they become available, and resources for follow-up, go to www.synodsw.org.

On April 15, over 150 people of faith gathered in Phoenix, AZ, for “Crossing Borders: Encountering God/Cruzando Fronteras: Encontrando a Dios,” an event sponsored by the Synod of the Southwest and other Presbyterian bodies in Mexico and the U.S.

Meanwhile, elsewhere in Phoenix, the Arizona State legislature was in the midst of passing the Support Our Law Enforcement and Safe Neighborhoods Act (“SB1070”), which has drawn attention, much of it critical, to Arizona in the weeks since its passage.

In this context, the Border Event, which had been planned over a two year period, was filled with a renewed sense of the urgency for comprehensive national immigration reform.

A statement, opposing SB1070 and calling for comprehensive reform was approved on the final morning and signed by participants.

The conference began and ended with worship and was called to prayer numerous other times throughout the three days by musicians from Frontera de Cristo in Douglas/Agua Prieta. In the opening worship, Frank Alton preached on the parallels between the story of Ruth and Naomi and that of millions of contemporary immigrants and called for “law” that nurtures life, community and love.

The balance of one afternoon was devoted to two presentations, “Bible and Migration: A Standard for Historic and Theological Comprehension” by Ramón Garcia Sanchez, and “Crossing the Border: Economics, Politics, and Migration” by Mark Adams.

Following dinner, Julia Thorne, Manager of the PC(USA) Office for Immigration Services, provided an overview of immigration policy and process, both historically and in the current day.

On the second day, three cycles of workshops were available to participants, focusing on everything from immigrant detention centers to the DREAM Act to how to develop a multicultural congregation. In the evening, a multicultural worship service was hosted by Memorial Presbyterian Church in Phoenix; Methodist Bishop Minerva Carcaño preached.

The final morning was spent in strategizing, in geographical and other groupings, on how to respond to the conference, the political developments in Arizona, and the likely repercussions throughout the country.

In closing worship, Carlos Cardoza-Orlandi preached on Acts 10. “[Peter discovers] something deeply radical and Christian: These Gentiles are us! ... These immigrants are us!”

—Bobbi Hargleroad

Participants approve open letter to leaders

Participants in the “Crossing Borders: Encountering God” event on border and immigration issues approved and signed an open letter to political leaders in Arizona and Washington opposing SB1070.

It reads in part (full letter is available on www.synodsw.org, news archives for April):

“We call for Comprehensive Immigration Reform that will provide a path for legalization for people who are contributing to our society, an adequate system for future legal economic immigration and family reunification, and policies that prevent deaths in the desert. We find it morally reprehensible that 5500 men, women and children have lost their lives in the last 16 years trying to provide a life of dignity for their families. Current immigration policy diminishes the ability of law enforcement to apprehend violent criminals and protect our communities. We believe that, by allowing for the orderly flow of law abiding persons through ports of entry, law enforcement agencies will be able to focus their efforts on apprehending those engaged in the trafficking of drugs, guns and human beings.”

Seen at the Border Event





Pictures by Parrish Jones