Outgoing Moderator Conrad Rocha (left), Santa Fe Presbytery, installs the Rev. Carrol Blevins, Sierra Blanca Presbytery, as Moderator and the Rev. John Dunham, Presbytery de Cristo, Moderator-elect at the closing worship service at the November meeting of Synod of the Southwest in Albuquerque. Their term of office begins in January and runs for two years.

Commissioners discuss a raft of topics at the November meeting in Albuquerque

Commissioners from the four presbyteries in the Synod of the Southwest had a plate full of topics to discuss at the November meeting of the Synod in First Presbyterian Church, Albuquerque.

Budget approved

Commissioners approved the 2010 operating budget for the Synod of $370,261. This is $31,000 less than the budget for the current year.

Because of the recession and because of fewer members, anticipated income is expected to be less in 2010.

Anticipated income includes $110,000 from congregations ($10,000 less than this year), $189,678 from per capita assessment ($7,884 less than this year), $45,000 from investments ($20,000 less than this year), and $25,000 from reserves.

The recommendation of Synod to local church sessions is to designate 10 per cent of their unified mission giving to the denomination for the Synod of the Southwest.

The budget includes no salary increases for Synod staff. The matter will be revisited at mid-year and if the financial picture has improved, the Synod will consider a one-time bonus for staff members.

Gift Acceptance Policy

A Gift Acceptance Policy that would guide the process and procedure for accepting gifts to the Synod was referred back to the Finance and Stewardship Development Committee for further work.

Concern focuses on having a section in the policy that can guide the Synod when a gift is given for a purpose or cause that in later years is no longer relevant.

Elections are on the minds of commissioners as Synod meets

Since it was the "Annual Meeting," Commissioners had a number of persons to elect to a wide variety of responsibilities in the life of the Synod of the Southwest when they met in November.

The Rev. Carrol Blevins was elected to a two-year term as Moderator of the Synod, and the Rev. John Dunham, Moderator-Elect for two years.

Blevins is honorably retired living in Las Cruces, Sierra Blanca Presbytery. Dunham is associate pastor, Valley Presbyterian Church, Green Valley, Arizona, Presbytery de Cristo.

After a thorough review of her work for the past five years, Synod’s Personnel Committee unanimously nominated the Rev. Jan DeVries to a third, five-year term as Synod Executive/Stated Clerk.

Commissioners immediately elected her unanimously. Following a review of her work by a committee, Mary Lynn Walters was nominated for another two-year term as Synod Treasurer. Commissioners unanimously elected her with thanks for her work.

Commissioners elected the following as moderators of committees and teams in the Synod:

- Elder Rocky Mackey, Finance and Stewardship Development Committee;
- The Rev. David Hicks, Synod Nominating Committee;
- Elder Glenn Bezuyen, Committee on Representation;
- The Rev. Art Campbell, Personnel Committee;
- The Rev. Randy Campbell, Border Ministries Team.
- The Rev. Ray Kersting, Communications Team.

Yet to be elected is a moderator for the Hispanic Ministries Coordinating Committee.

The Rev. Jan DeVries was elected to third five-year term as Synod Executive/Stated Clerk.
Approve Menaul Loan

At the recommendation of its Finance and Stewardship Development Committee, commissioners voted to release to Menaul School immediately the remaining $200,000 previously designated for scholarship for Hispanic and Native American students. Originally $50,000 was to be released in each of the four remaining years of the six-year grant. Because of cash flow difficulties at Menaul the funds will be released immediately, but they will be released as a loan to Menaul at 4.25% interest per year on the declining balance.

Each year $50,000 of the loan will be forgiven if all conditions of the loan are met. Primary condition is that the student population be composed of at least 50% Hispanic and/or Native American students in need of scholarship aid.

Meeting dates set

The Synod meeting that is ordinarily held in March will be held February 19-20, 2010, in Phoenix. The earlier date will enable the Synod to handle any business heading to the General Assembly before the March deadline.

The summer meeting will be June 12 in Albuquerque, and the fall meeting will be October 29-30 at a location to be determined.

Breakfast at GA

The Synod will sponsor a breakfast at the General Assembly in Minneapolis in July for all persons attending from the four presbyteries.

Date and time of the breakfast is 7 a.m., July 8. It will end by 8:15 so that attendees can be present for the first activity of the Assembly.

The breakfast is free and open to all from the Synod.

Distribution of MPF

As it has for a number of years, the Synod will again receive Mission Partnership Funds from the General Assembly Mission Council. These funds will cease, however, in 2013.

In 2010, the Synod is due to receive $629,972. This is $29,282 less than this year. All of the funds are distributed to the presbyteries with $100,000 for administrative staff support and $30,124 for Racial Ethnic ministries in each presbytery. An additional amount is distributed in accordance with a formula based on membership and mission giving.

Totals to be distributed to presbyteries in 2010 will be de Cristo, $150,590; Grand Canyon, $183,997; Santa Fe, $158,102, and Sierra Blanca, $137,284.

Event for pastors under 45

April 14-15, Synod will sponsor an event in Phoenix targeted to pastors in the Synod who are under the age of 45.

Synod will sponsor an event in Phoenix targeted to pastors in the Synod who are under the age of 45.

Synod holds November meeting in Albuquerque

(Continued from previous page)
The Finance Committee of Menaul School meets with the Finance and Stewardship Committee of Synod to discuss the proposed loan to Menaul (top left) prior to the meeting of the Synod.

As he presides, Moderator Conrad Rocha wears a traditional hat of single men in the Yi minority in China.

The Rev. Dave Wasserman, interim executive of Grand Canyon Presbytery, and the Rev. Sue Westfall, Presbytery Pastor/Stated Clerk of Presbytery de Cristo, preside at the Lord’s Table for the Sacrament.

Commissioners gather in First Church Albuquerque for the fall Synod meeting (above).

Friends and families of those who participated in the Global Mission Experience to China joined commissioners for a presentation on the trip (left).
The promise of God is that in life and in death we belong to God – this assertion provided the foundation for discussions led by the Rev. Dr. Cynthia Rigby at the most recent Kaleidoscope preaching seminar held at Ghost Ranch Santa Fe.

Thirty some pastors from around the Synod of the Southwest participated in this the 5th such seminar made possible through a special grant from the General Assembly Mission Council.

Much in demand as a speaker and lecturer, Rigby has been a professor at Austin Theological Seminary in Texas since 1995.

Theme of the seminar was “Preaching That Spans the Gap Between Church and Society.” For this gap to be bridged, Rigby believes that preaching needs to enable a person to know that God loves the person absolutely unconditionally and that nothing can separate a person from this love.

To know that we are loved this way makes all the difference in the world, she believes. To know this is not a tweaking of one’s life or being, but it is transformational.

It’s the difference between standing on the edge of a pool and considering its qualities, and jumping in and experiencing those qualities. It is grace that in essence pushes a person into the pool. The result is that a person’s life is redirected and changed, she asserted.

The gap between church and the world is bridged as the transformed person lives into the promise of God through the doing of justice in this world and being merciful.
Crossing Borders: Encountering God
An Event about Border and Immigration Issues
April 15-17, 2010, Phoenix Airport Hilton Hotel
Codst: $275 for Room and Board (plus your own transportation)
$140 for commuters

 Speakers
Rev. Bruce Reyes-Chow, Moderator of the 218th General Assembly
Rev. Minerva Carcaño, Bishop. Desert Southwest Conference, United Methodist Church
Rev. Saul Feria, Moderator, National Presbyterian Church in Mexico
Rev. Mark Adams, Mission Co-Worker, Frontera de Cristo
Ms. Julia Thorne, Attorney and Manager for Immigration Services (PCUSA)
Dr. Carlos Cardoza-Orlandi, Columbia Theological Seminary

In partnership with the Synod of the Southwest, Synod of the Sun, GAMC Office for Multicultural Ministries, Iglesia nacional Presbiteriana de Mexico, and Fronter de Cristo

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Ray Kersting, editor, design

In fulfillment of its mission goal of providing “the people of Sandia Presbyterian church [Albuquerque] an avenue to serve in humanitarian efforts ... in local and world communities,” the church has recently participated as a partner in the Lavender Project that was started in 2005 by St. Anthony’s Alliance in Rancho La Colorada, Mexico.

This was the situation. Where once rich farmland had dominated the landscape, now the land was parched by the sun and baked by seven years of drought. Subsistence farmers were selling off their precious livestock—chickens, goats, and cattle—because they lacked feed for them.

Most of the able-bodied men had already left to seek work in other parts of Mexico or the United States just to feed their families. Four of six irrigation pumps simply didn’t work anymore. Parts of their rusted casings were scattered about in pieces like castaways on the brown and desolate earth.

Entering the picture was St. Anthony’s Alliance, a New Mexico based non-profit organization focused on healing an ailing world. Recently Sandia has provided a gift of $2,000 in critical financing to assist people in this community of 900 about 40 miles from San Miguel de Allende in central Mexico. In addition, members of Sandia have poured our their love, generosity, and support to this community.

St. Anthony’s Alliance proposed the growing of lavender as a new cash crop to move the village towards survival and self-sustainability. The Alliance entered into a five-year collaborative agreement with a group of eight farmers whose irrigation pump had been broken for several years.

The Alliance bought them a new pump for $15,000, and, in exchange, they planted one hectare (about 2.2 acres) of lavender and also planted soybeans for the local soy kitchen school program.

Through the efforts of community member Aucencio Domenzain, a men’s cooperative was formed, a business plan developed, and a women’s cooperative that is now successfully producing soap and lavender products that are being sold in the markets in San Miguel.

In January Sandia Missions Committee agreed to support the Lavender Project with an eye on building a new soap production bodega. When pump, irrigation and water well problems suddenly arose and threatened all aspects of the project, Sandia volunteers quickly shifted their focus and provided needed support on the ground to help save this year’s harvest.

Pump and well experts worked hand-in-hand with the villagers to ensure that water made it to the right place at the right time.

The gifts from Sandia have been to help others help themselves . . . and sense the power of the Holy Spirit in making a difference in their lives.
Starting at the beginning

Newly ordained Guillermo Yela has already begun his work as new church development pastor in the southwest mesa of Albuquerque – also known as Westgate Heights.

Guillermo and his wife, Ceria, have been meeting with people in their homes in the target area for prayer and Bible study since he began his work this past summer.

Along with the Presbytery of Santa Fe, the Evangelical Lutheran Church, and the United Church of Christ are sponsoring this multicultural effort. An Advisory Committee has been formed with representatives from the three denominations.

Presbyterians serving on the committee are the Rev. Daniel Erdman (representing the UCC), the Rev. Trey Hammond, and elder Gloria Mirabal.

First major event being planned is a Christmas party for the community in December. To be included will be the traditional Hispanic Christmas play, La Pastorela.

First worship service is projected for February or March. Arrangements are being made to use a public school in the area for worship.

An experienced new church development pastor from California, the Rev. Daniel Beteta, has been hired to coach Guillermo in his efforts.

A soccer tournament next summer is also in the planning stages.

Through his initial efforts Yela has discovered that between 60 and 65 percent of the people were born in the US and have lived here for generations. Those born before 1950 are fully bilingual. The generation born between 1950 and 1970 speak English but understand little Spanish.

Between 35 and 40 percent of the population are new immigrants who came mostly from Mexico and a very small percentage from Central and South America.

About 55 percent of the homes are new, 30 percent are in an older area, and 20 percent are communities of trailers.

Yela has discovered that in many instances there may be three or more families sharing a single home with perhaps 10 or more children, so the school population far exceeds what might be expected in the housing area.

Yela was ordained to the Ministry of Word and Sacrament, September 27, at Albuquerque Second.

Young Adult Volunteer (YAV) Nicole Stansifer, a member of Albuquerque Covenant Church, is settling into her work with Church World Service in Kenya, East Africa.

She writes in part, “Everything here in Kenya is going well. I cannot stress enough how nice everyone here is. Kenyans, in general, are very nice people.

“I’m living in an apartment (pretty standard – two bedrooms, bathroom, kitchen, living room) in Westlands, which is a neighborhood in Nairobi. It is about an eight minute walk from where I work.

“I’m working as the communications person at the Church World Service East Africa office (website: www.cwsea.org). Everyone I work with is awesome. They are great people and so much fun to be around.

“Plus the organization does really good work. So, I am definitely enjoying my site placement.

“I have traveled a little bit for work so far. A couple of weeks ago I went with Mary, the program coordinator, for the “Water for Life (WFL) program to visit some of the WFL sites. We went to Nakuru, Eldoret, Kitale, West Pokot, and some other small towns in between.

“It was interesting for me to see some other areas and communities in Kenya. Since then, I’ve been back in the office, working on some articles and stories, newsletters, updating the website a bit, and a few other projects.

“This is supposed to be one of the rainy seasons here, but it has not rained much yet. It is nice to not have all of that rain to deal with here in the city, but people living in more rural areas really need it. It has been extremely difficult for them to grow any crops. People are losing a great number of livestock, not to mention the fact that they can hardly find water for themselves.

“So please keep these people who are struggling to find water in your prayers.”

Nicole was named to be a Young Adult Volunteer by the General Assembly Mission Council for the 2009-2010 term.
Frontera de Cristo celebrates its 25th

(Frontera de Cristo is one of the seven Presbyterian Border Ministries of the National Presbyterian Church of Mexico and the Presbyterian Church (USA). Frontera de Cristo is centered in Agua Prieta, Sonora, and Douglas, AZ. Following is a report from Mountain Shadows Church on the celebration as some of its members experienced it.)

Six members of Mountain Shadows Presbyterian Church attended the 25th Anniversary of Frontera de Cristo in Agua Prieta on October 17 and 18.

The moving, inspirational worship and dinner was a highlight for each of us. The entire gathering was bilingual with worship and talks given in two languages.

The energy at the worship cannot be adequately described. It took place in the unfinished sanctuary that foretold a wonderful future for the Lily of the Valley Church. At times the music lifted the rafters.

Everyone stood for communion—which was new to us Arizona Presbyterians. The two sermons given by our Presbytery Pastor Rev. Sue Westfall and her Mexican counterpart were thought provoking and hopeful.

As we gathered in the church social hall following worship we had a wonderful Mexican meal followed by talks from former Frontera de Cristo directors, the first board who described the vision 25 years ago, and tributes from many friends and supporters of the ministry.

The words of love, reconciliation, hope, friendships, vision, and God’s blessings on the future summarized the day. Two very different cultures have become one in Christ working together in His service.

Mission Challenge comes to Synod of the Southwest in person of Carol Fujii

Mission Challenge came to the four presbyteries in the Synod of the Southwest in the person of Carol Fujii, who with her husband, Leith, serve at the Bangkok Institute of Theology in Thailand.

She visited 13 churches during her itineration of the Synod, telling of her experiences in Thailand since 1998 with her family. She teaches English to incoming students in the Institute as well as working with The Well, an outreach ministry to women in prostitution.

Thailand is a country where the government tends not to notice that up to 300,000 women and girls are involved in prostitution, even though it is against the law. She tells of one graduate of the theological school, Supharang (Kay), who as she approached graduation felt a real sense of call to reach out to these women.

After marrying an American, Mike, the two began ministering through The Well, a facility that helps women find an alternative to prostitution by teaching skills such as card making and jewelry making. They came to know Thom who knew that what she was doing was not her.

She was offered an opportunity to go to The Well, but was leery at first. Later she called and came to The Well, accepting Christ’s love and forgiveness. She learned English and how to play the guitar. Now she has reached out to her family and the whole family has become Christians.

Carol works a couple days a week at the center, being alongside the girls to encourage them and to be with them. She seeks to introduce them to God’s love and introduce them to a job or vocation that is more healthy than prostitution. She says it is “very discouraging when a girl leaves and goes back to prostitution.”

Carol says that a challenge to the Institute, that is celebrating its 75th anniversary, is faculty development. The Institute does not offer graduate degrees beyond the MDiv, so aspiring faculty members must seek further education in the U.S. quite often but there is much competition to be accepted and their struggle with English is a handicap.

She says the challenge before the Church of Christ in Thailand is “for the church to be relevant to the Thai society, and to think outside the box to reach others for Christ.” In a country that is 95% Buddhist and only one percent Christian, she points to one graduate who developed a soccer ministry as a way of reaching some who would not otherwise darken the door of a Christian church.

The mother of four, her children are now out of the nest: Joy is a captain in the US Army and due to go to Iraq soon, Karin is with the Peace Corps in Cameroon, Mark is in college in Chicago, and Lani is a student at St. Mary’s in California.

In October, Mission Challenge brought some 45 mission co-workers from around the world to visit churches in over 150 of the presbyteries. Each shared experiences and the importance of their work where each was serving.

Get us your Information
See that your church newsletter is being sent to Ray Kersting, editor, 3 First Light, Santa Fe, 87506 or, if electronic, to srkerst@grappawireless.com
It's time for the annual Presbyterian Christmas Joy Offering.

Is this offering important enough to consider making a contribution through your church?

It is certainly important to the Board of Pensions as it seeks to meet the special needs of Presbyterian clergy. The Board receives half the offering.

It is certainly important to the racial/ethnic schools of the denomination and especially our own Menaual School that depends heavily on the gifts through this offering to continue its mission.

And it has been very important to countless people in the past whose lives were changed through their attendance at a racial/ethnic school. Consider the story of Will Chavez who attended Menaual.

“When my family moved to Denver, we lived in a poor neighborhood dominated by gangs,” he recalls. Caught between rival gangs, he and his brother lived under constant threat. When his brother was stabbed by gang members, his parents decided he needed to get away and sent him to Menaual.

There for the first time, he encountered teachers who helped him refocus. “Suddenly there were people telling me I had skills and talents and expecting me to use them. I learned a great deal of knowledge, but mostly they taught me how to gain knowledge and they helped solidify the moral foundations on which to make decisions. I can’t put a price tag on those gifts.”

The skills as a scientist and engineer that Will began to learn at Menaual opened many doors. But thanks to that moral foundation he has spent his career serving the larger community, working with the Environmental Protection Agency and the Department of Energy. Though much of his work has been in New Mexico, he has studied and worked in countries around the world from Mexico to China.

His daughter Emiko was the 18th member of the family to attend Menaual over the past 75 years. A 2009 graduate, she plans to study medicine, something she’s almost always wanted to do. “While traveling with my family, I noticed the lack of basic medical services in several foreign countries. For that reason, according to a time capsule letter I wrote myself in the second grade, I decided to study medicine.”

Her grandmother and several aunts were “herbalistas,” so her attraction to the healing arts comes naturally, but it was also nurtured by her time at Menaual.

“As a product of what these schools have done to change lives, I can’t stress strongly enough the difference they make,” Will says quietly. “I believe that had I not gone there, my life would very likely have ended tragically. Instead, because of the generosity of Presbyterians to the Christmas Joy Offering and because of the teachers and volunteers who gave of their lives to help others at those schools, I’ve been able to have a positive impact on my family and community.”

Now is the time to give generously.

**Butin resigns as head of San Francisco Seminary**

The Rev. Phil Butin, former pastor of Albuquerque’s Shepherd of the Valley Presbyterian Church, has resigned as President of San Francisco Seminary after seven years, effective the end of January.

When contacted he said, “During the first six years we accomplished a lot that was very important together.

“I have recently discerned that the gifts required for the seminary’s next stage of leadership will be different and that it is time to give thanks for what has been accomplished and give someone else the privilege of running the race for the next leg.

“My wife, Jan, and I are truly excited about both getting back into pastoral ministry.”

Mountain Shadows moving to self support in 2010

**Mountain Shadows Church, a new church development in Tucson, is moving to self-support in 2010. Following is part of what pastor Rachel Srubas wrote in a recent newsletter:**

“At this time in Mountain Shadows’ life, we celebrate the twelfth anniversary of our congregation’s founding, and I celebrate the third anniversary of my installation as your pastor.

“This is an important and challenging time for Mountain Shadows. At the October meeting of Presbytery de Cristo, the presbytery’s 2010 Mission Budget was approved. For the first year in our congregation’s history, Mountain Shadows will not receive any financial support from the presbytery.

“In years past, as a New Church Development, Mountain Shadows has received tens of thousands of dollars from the presbytery. But starting in 2010, we will be a financially self-sustaining church.

“I believe we are ready to meet this challenge. Three years ago, just as I began my ministry as your pastor, a very dedicated congregant told me, ‘A lot of people in this church are wondering if you can get us to grow enough to pay down our debt.’ I replied, ‘I can’t, but together with God, we can.’ Three years later, I stand by those words.

“Together with God, Mountain Shadows can grow from being a new, financially dependent and indebted church to a church that is mature, financially self-sustaining and debt-free. God planted this church in 1997 and has nourished its growth ever since, through the extraordinary devotion and generosity of congregants.”

With the termination in 2010 of funding from Presbytery de Cristo, the financial challenge facing Mountain-Shadows will increase.