

# THE NEWS

## of San Fernando Presbytery

August 2010

### NEWS

#### YOUNG PRESBYTERIANS GATHER FOR 2010 TRIENNIUM

Over 5,000 young Christians from all over the world gathered at Purdue University for the Presbyterian Youth Triennium, held from July 20 through July 24. A group from San Fernando Presbytery joined the throng, accompanied by Chrissy Burnett of First, Encino, and Rev. Richard Poole of Faith, Valley Village.



“At triennium I had a blast,” said Shelby Jackson of the experience. “I had a great time and some laughs. I learned some new things and I think that it was a really good experience. Worship was my favorite part. I liked dancing to the energizers, singing the songs, and also watching the plays.” Anna Starck agreed that worship was a highlight. “Worship was one of the best experiences I’ve had. It was very hot, but the warm rain made up for that. It was great to listen to all the different types of speakers. Overall it was a great experience.”

The Presbyterian Youth Triennium is an event sponsored by the Presbyterian Church (USA) and the Cumberland Presbyterian Churches (CPC and CPCA) for the purpose of gathering Presbyterian and Reformed young people from all over the United States and the world for worship, prayer, play and community. Three years ago, 4,200 participants attended Triennium and with the current economy, leaders were expecting this year’s numbers to be even lower. Event staff were pleasantly surprised by the higher than expected registration numbers. Part of the reason for the increase may have been that this year individual congregations were able to send groups, in addition to the delegations from presbyteries.



## **BOLBACH ELECTED MODERATOR OF 219TH GA**

On the opening night of the 219<sup>th</sup> General Assembly, Elder Cynthia Bolbach was elected to serve as Moderator on the fourth ballot. Bolbach, from National Capitol Presbytery helped commissioners navigate a number of contentious issues during the eight days that the assembly was in session. A wide variety of issues were considered by the Assembly, but most of the attention was focused on a few topics that will by now be familiar to church members....

It was voted to recommend that presbyteries adopt a new *Form of Government*. In recent years there has been concern within the church that the *Book of Order* as it stands has become more of a regulatory than a missional document. The Form of Government Task Force was formed to develop a new framework for the Church's Constitution. Presbyteries will have until July, 2011 to vote on whether to adopt the revised Constitution.

The 219<sup>th</sup> GA proposed a change to the ordination standards contained in the *Book of Order*. This action does not change the Constitution. The proposed change will now be sent to the presbyteries for approval. A majority would have to vote in favor for it to be adopted.

Commissioners also voted to maintain the current definition of marriage as between "a man and a woman." Both the Final Report and the Minority Report prepared by the Special Committee to Study Issues of Civil Union and Christian Marriage will be sent out to the wider church for further study.

The Assembly approved *Breaking Down the Walls*, the report of the Middle East Study Committee, but only after several revisions. Though the initial version of the report caused controversy when it was made public earlier this year, the most controversial portions were either amended or deleted before Commissioners voted to accept it.

## **HERE AGAIN THIS YEAR**

*By Christine Chakoian, pastor of First Presbyterian Church, Lake Forest, Illinois*

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So now the General Assembly convenes. Commissioners and delegates trudge miles between conference center, meeting rooms, exhibit hall, hotels, and they vote several hundred times. Interest groups will have met, old acquaintances reconnected, opponents fought, new friendships forged. Some positions will have hardened; some hearts and minds changed.

The nature and work of the General Assembly has changed over time. In the late 1800s it was consumed with theological division. In 1910 the PCUSA's General Assembly sidestepped debates by dusting off the Adopting Act of 1729, allowing ambiguity over which tenets of the Westminster Confession were "essential and necessary." That same year, the United Presbyterian Church of North America endorsed the Social Gospel with a ringing statement: "The great ends of the church are the proclamation of the gospel for the salvation of humankind; the shelter, nurture, and spiritual fellowship of the children of God; the maintenance of divine worship; the preservation of truth; the promotion of social righteousness; and the exhibition of the Kingdom of Heaven to the world."

But theological battles continued anyway. Harry Emerson Fosdick's 1922 sermon "Shall the Fundamentalists Win?" pleaded for tolerance among liberals and conservatives across the church. But if unity was his goal, his sermon backfired badly. In a bitter contest, fundamentalist William Jennings Bryan narrowly lost his bid to be elected moderator of the General Assembly. To drum up support for theological orthodoxy, hard-line conservatives hosted angry rallies across the country. Princeton's J. Gresham Machen added his voice, arguing in his widely read *Christianity and Liberalism* that liberals were not true Christians. Other church leaders argued for inclusion, formulating the 1924 Auburn Affirmation, which aimed to create space for different theories about "the inspiration of the Bible, the Incarnation, the Atonement, the Resurrection, and the Continuing Life and Supernatural Power of our Lord Jesus Christ."

*(continued on page 3)*

*(continued from page 2)*

I attended my first G.A. 30 years ago in Detroit, Mich., working as a seminary assistant for the behind scenes operations. I was starry-eyed, utterly inspired by the gravitas of the decisions, the glorious crowds at worship, the sincere integrity of staff and delegates alike, and above all the selflessness of mission workers reporting from varied dangerous locations.

I've been to almost every GA since, and I'm far less starry-eyed now. Myriad position papers, so painstakingly written and debated, have not nudged the Kingdom any closer. What voice we Presbyterians once enjoyed at the civic table has faded, and many of our church members hardly care what the denomination declares (unless it embarrasses them in the news). I confess that it strikes me as anachronistic and wasteful to spend so much time, effort and, yes, money addressing a thousand items of business when only a few bear lasting impact. And yet I am far from cynical. This year, not for the first time, I come to the Assembly as a minister commissioner of the Presbytery of Chicago, committed to do my best to discern the will of God.

I love our church. I love how we value Biblical preaching, use music that shakes our hearts to the core, prayer that lifts us to the throne of grace. I love our commitment to mission that takes the world as it is and strives for God's righteousness anyway. I love our dedication to fellowship and nurture that enlightens, embraces, engages, at a time when Americans are being lured into angry political tribes. I love our hard work at thinking and discerning – that seeks the truth, no matter how uncomfortable, because the Truth will set us free. And most of all I love the way this church has drawn us to the saving love of Jesus Christ.

Which is why I am here yet again this year.

## **NORTH'S NOTES**

The last month of summer is here and I trust that time has been taken to relax and enjoy family and friends. With the culture and times changing so radically and quickly, it is so important to have a "home" base. It seems that one "home" base is our local church where we find opportunities to worship, reflect on God's goodness, share our joys and sorrows with God and friends, and to participate in "family" like activities.

The early church is an excellent example of believers gathering together as a unit in being and doing God's work amongst themselves and in their communities. This last month of summer may give us the opportunity to reevaluate our relationship with our "home" base, that being the local church, and to commit ourselves to being open to involvement there in new and different types of activities (outside our box endeavors). We might surprise ourselves and others by volunteering for assignments that God is presenting to us that we thought would never cross our horizon.

May our times of prayer and reflection this month produce eye opening possibilities for ministry in and among our local church and to the communities in which we reside and work.

Blessings,  
Jerry North

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

### **Presbyterian Women in the Synod**

**Cluster Meeting of Pacific, Santa Barbara, and San Fernando Presbyteries**  
**Saturday, October 9, 2010, 9:30 a.m.**

**Marjie Boyer Reports on PW USA Mission Trip to Rosebud Indian Reservation, North Dakota**  
**Lunch, and More!**  
**Location to be announced**

## 2010 PEACEMAKING OFFERING

Everybody thinks peace is a good idea. We all want peace. We pray for peace. But what does it take to live into peace, to make peace, to share peace? For certain, peace doesn't just happen.

### ***But help is available!***

The Presbyterian Peacemaking Program (PPP) exists to help Presbyterians get a handle on what it takes to bring our homes, our neighborhoods, the environment and the whole world into conformity with God's intent for justice and peace. For the last 30 years the PPP has provided congregations and individuals with worship materials, Bible studies, conferences, International Peacemakers, and suggestions for advocacy around issues important to Presbyterians.



The Peacemaking Program is funded by an annual Offering for Peacemaking which is usually received on World Communion Sunday, this year on October 3rd. The theme for the 2010 Offering is "Celebrate Christ, Our Peace" (Ephesians 2:14). All churches should have received a promotion packet (PDS# 12142-10-280) which can be ordered from Presbyterian Distribution Service (800-542-2612). One-eighth of the offering stays in our Presbytery. This past year we used our share to help fund the Hunger Action Enabler, Wendy Gist, hosted International Peacemakers from Colombia and Mexico, put a deposit down for a youth mission "plunge" early next year in Hollywood, provided scholarships to The Big Tent Conference and Ecumenical Advocacy Days, and contributed to Evangelicals for Middle East Peace.

**Synods also receive one-eighth of the offering.** Our Synod Justice Peace and Integrity of Creation Work Group (JPIC-SY) has funded projects in the Synod's presbyteries, including our own. One of these is the funding of our several mission trips (with San Gabriel Presbytery) to the Gulf Coast to rebuild homes destroyed by Katrina. Synod JPIC has also contributed to Sarah Henken's participation in the Colombia Accompaniment Program and provided scholarships to peacemaking conferences.

**A part of the genius of the offering is that congregations get to keep 25%.** This helps them to move beyond thinking peace is a good idea to actually doing something to make peace happen. The promotion packet has many suggestions for ways congregations can use their share of the offering. ***How have you used the offering in the past? How will you use it in 2011?*** Let Wendy Gist know at [MissionAdvocate@sfpresby.org](mailto:MissionAdvocate@sfpresby.org).

**"Presbyterian Women: The Best Kept Secret"**

**Saturday, November 6, 2010, 11:00 a.m.**

**Faith Presbyterian Church, Valley Village**

**Lunch, Presentation  
and  
Talk About Rebirthing  
Presbyterian Women of the  
San Fernando Presbytery**

**Synod PW Moderator Hagar Benitez  
and others from the Synod PW Coordinating Team will attend**

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