



Words

From

Wendy



**REV. GARY DART  
RECOMMENDED FOR  
STATED CLERK POST**

The Stated Clerk Nominating Committee recommended that commissioners elect Rev. Gary Dart as the new Stated Clerk at the May meeting of Presbytery. Gary has served as stated supply pastor of Panorama Presbyterian Church since 1991. He was ordained in 1971 after receiving his Master of Divinity from San Francisco Theological Seminary. In addition to chairing the Personnel Committee for three years, Gary has also served on Committee on Ministry, Property & Finance and Christian Formation. Although the deadline for this article fell before the meeting, it was expected that Presbytery would approve the committee's recommendation that Gary be selected for the job. In anticipation of Gary's election to the post, a reception was planned during the lunch break.

Valley United Presbyterian Church, located in Granada Hills, hosted the meeting which was scheduled to begin at 9:00 am and run to 1:00 pm. Presbytery commissioners were to be welcomed by Rev. Jae Hong Choi, pastor of VUPC, and Rev. Randy Lovejoy was slated to preach during worship. In addition to the reports given by other committees, Evangelism and Church Development planned to give a presentation on church transformation.



Rev. Gary Dart

**KATRINA  
RECOVERY  
UPDATE**

In an open letter to the PCUSA, the presbyteries affected by Hurricane Katrina offered an update on recovery efforts in the affected areas. After offering thanks for the outpouring of assistance from Presbyterians nationwide, both in prayer and in financial support, the letter outlines the current status of the rebuilding project.

Over \$26 million had been donated for recovery efforts as of November, 2007. Of those contributions, about \$13 million had been spent during that same period. It is estimated that the remaining money, when combined with expected interest income and fees, will total just under \$16 million.

In planning the future of recovery efforts with Presbyterian Disaster Assistance, the five presbyteries have arrived at a four-year plan, starting in 2008 and ending in 2011. It is expected that an additional \$1.5 million will be needed to fully meet the challenge of this ministry. The plan will first be taken to the General Assembly Council and then to the entire General Assembly when it meets in San Jose.

In the final paragraph of the letter, Alan Cutter, General Presbyter for the Presbytery of South Louisiana, gives thanks for the assistance received so far:

"Thank you again for the financial gifts that you so generously have given in the past to this ministry of compassion, and for your continuing prayers and participation. May Christ likewise be a blessing unto you as you have been Christ's blessing unto those who are in need."

I've been working as the Mission Advocate for Hunger, Poverty, and Peacemaking Issues for 2½ years now. In that time I've promoted programs, resources, and goods that help hungry, poor, and marginalized people locally and globally. You've heard about fair trade and had opportunities to buy fair trade products. I've led workshops on the world's water challenge and challenging the bottled water industry. And the list goes on. I find a lot of hope in what I hear from individuals and churches, so I want to hold up one group within the Presbytery for the positive steps they have taken.

To make this more interesting, let's see if you can guess who it is. The staff has taken to heart the reality that how we spend our money makes a difference for the poor and hungry and for the environment. They now serve only fair trade coffee and have a selection of fair trade tea available as well. At least half the staff attended a Sabbath Economics seminar and is working on ways to greater incorporate those concepts into their lives. They also recently switched from bottled water to a water filtration system. Have you figured it out?

This wonderful role model within our presbytery is the Presbytery of San Fernando office! The staff has shown incredible leadership by "changing their ways" at the office to new ways that make a positive impact in the world. I am very proud to be part of a staff that is making great efforts in the workplace to help the poor and hungry and the environment through the goods and services they buy. I hope we will all work to follow their lead!

*Little children, let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action. 1 John 3:18*

Blessings,  
Wendy Gist  
Hunger Action Enabler  
San Fernando Presbytery

## Iraqi Christians Persevere Despite Continuing Violence

*From the Presbyterian News Service*

It's been five years since the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime, and though Iraqi Christians, including Presbyterians, are surviving, the situation is as tense as ever, said one PCUSA leader close to the situation.

"The situation in Basra (Iraq's third-largest city) is really getting more tense and more violent," the Rev. Nuhad Tomeh, the PCUSA's regional liaison for Syria, Lebanon, Kuwait and Iraq, said in a recent interview. And in Baghdad curfews have been instituted, he said.

Christians are especially traumatized in Mosul, where last month the body of Paulos Faraj Rahho, the Chaldean Catholic archbishop of Mosul, was found in a shallow grave. He had been kidnapped in late February after leading prayers at a local church. Mosul is the "most sensitive situation," Tomeh said.

"Automatically Christians there are more fearful of their lives."

Many Christians have already left Iraq, even though they are not always welcome in neighboring countries and their lives as refugees can be very difficult.

Tomeh said Christians in Iraq are still able to worship "to a certain extent," though in some places it's off and on. "They are very careful, and any kind of public meetings they are doing it on a low-key kind of situation," he added.

Yet Tomeh also says that more and more Iraqis are looking to the church. "They are definitely seeking the church more for belonging, for being affiliated, for help," he said. "People are really suffering, so they come to the church. This gives the church a big responsibility to care for them."

The PCUSA has several ways to assist those in Iraq, including through Extra Commitment Opportunities (ECOs). Some of the ECOs related to aid for Iraq can be located on the denomination's web site at

<http://www.pcusa.org/worldwide/iraq/giving.htm>

Tomeh asks that Christians in the US keep the Iraqi people lifted up in prayer. "They are always asking for prayer for them, and for peace in general," he said.



## WHEN GOD COMES DOWN

*A meditation for Pentecost by Rev. Juan Sarmiento, Pastor of Quartz Hill Presbyterian Church.*

The narrative of the tower of Babel (Gen. 11) is often understood as the judgment of God over a proud human project: reaching the heavens through building up a tower. In order to stop that attempt God would scatter the people and confound their language. A closer look poses some deeper questions: In the Bible, more often than not, being scattered is a blessing rather than a curse. Such is the case of the children of Noah that after the flood and the subsequent covenant that God makes with them are scattered and re-populate the earth giving birth to different ethnicities and tongues (see Gen. 10:4, 20,31 and 32)

However, the inhabitants of the Babel are afraid of being scattered. They take refuge in their monolithic identity. Their efforts are directed toward only one city, one tower, one language. In such efforts the interaction with what is different disappears before the preponderance of what is familiar. What is foreign and different becomes undesirable.

Considering that the energy with which we can set ourselves to try to erect the towers of our group identity at the peril of all others, we can ask ourselves: Could it be that being scattered, more than being a curse would be God's blessed way of liberating us from becoming self enclosed to the extent of turning into a rigid "insider's club". God "went down" and intervened in favor of diversity. It was only after the inhabitants were prevented from building a colossal "city" that they were able to begin building different and distinct "cities" in places where they were once again scattered.

The same type of openness and sending occurred in the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:5-12). God "comes down" upon those that were gathered in the upper room and they go out to speak in a way that others could understand them. With that initial impulse the apostles were set in a trajectory toward "the ends of the earth". It would be only as they ventured into the foreign lands of the Mediterranean, Greece and Rome -as they heard their strange accents and observed their unfamiliar ways of living- that they became "good news".

The openness that Spirit carves into the heart of the community of faith prevents it from being stuck in a set conception of God, itself and those around it. The Spirit is the only impulse that can turn our often self serving institutions into communities that live in the risky reality of being sent to transform and being transformed as they go. As soon as a society, organization or church begins using all its energies to hang on to a crystallized identity, vocabulary or system of thought, it begins to die. Before God comes down our rootedness becomes confinement, our apotheosis degenerates into sclerosis. When God comes down the apparent weakness of being scattered becomes our true strength. My confidence is that the living presence of the Spirit promised by Jesus to his Church will continue to give us the courage to be the people of God scattered beyond our walls and among the often unfamiliar realities and territories of today's world.

***Please also see page 4 for information on the Pentecost Offering.***

**ATTENTION PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN!**

Are you coming to the...  
**Reunion  
of  
Presbyterian Women**

**of  
San Fernando Presbytery**

**May 17, 2008, 10:30 am  
Panorama Presbyterian Church  
Fireside Room  
Salad Pot Luck**

We will be collecting donations for Operation Gratitude which sends packages to men and women in the service. Suggested items include: DVDs, CDs, batteries (all sizes), computer flash drives, beanie babies, small novelty items, disposable cameras, prepaid phone cards

RSVP to Nelva Sayers by May 14, 818 886-3452

*Presbyterian Women in the Synod*

*Summer Conference*

*July 11-13*

*Chapman University, Orange, CA*

*plenary speakers, forums, workshops, mercado.*

*\$200 before June 10*

*contact Pam Hodges, (310) 645-0258*

*or ([PamHaji@ca.rr.com](mailto:PamHaji@ca.rr.com))*

**2008 Inside Out Conference**

**Thursday, August 14**

**Saturday, August 16**

**Long Beach Convention Center**

**Alan Hirsch to Keynote**

Hirsch is known for his innovative approach to mission as he works to develop and nurture leaders across the globe. As director of Forge Australia, he has served as the leader of a local church movement among the marginalized as well as the head of the Mission and Revitalization work of our denomination. His books, *The Shaping of Things to Come* and *The Forgotten Ways* have quickly become key references for missional thinking.

**CEMETARY LOT FOR SALE**

Panorama Presbyterian Church has one plot available for sale in Forest Lawn Memorial Park, Hollywood Hills. It is described as Interment Space 4, Lot 2247, Section Churchyard. Price \$3,000. This space was valued at \$2,850 in 1997. Call 818 342-9698 for more information.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS/OPPORTUNITIES**

LA CRESCENTA PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH SEEKS  
DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

Join our dynamic staff and take leadership of our children's ministry department. We are a growing evangelical congregation of 470 adult members in a suburb north of Los Angeles with a long history of innovative children's ministry. We seek a mature, devoted Christian who can provide visionary leadership for our largely volunteer-based ministry. Programs you handle will include: Kids Church, mid-week programs for all ages, two children's choirs, Vacation Bible School, summer camps and fellowship events for families. The position will also include working in conjunction with our on-site children's center that offers preschool and after school care for 230 children-infants through 6<sup>th</sup> grade. The Children's Director will provide spiritual direction for that ministry. The job is full time (40 hrs per week); work hours are somewhat flexible. Experience in some form of children's ministry and exceptional skills in teaching and administration are required. A bachelors degree (or higher) and music skills are desirable. Send resumes to: [nancy@lcpc.net](mailto:nancy@lcpc.net). Check out the church at our website: [www.lcpc.net](http://www.lcpc.net)

**SHEPHERDS' FIELD OLIVE WOOD HANDICRAFTS**

Shepherds' Field Olive Wood Handicrafts would like the opportunity to bring their handicrafts for sale at local churches. Creation and sale of olive wood carvings is a major source of income in the Christian communities of the Holy Land. These crafts come from Beit Sahour which has the largest percentage of Christians in Palestine, and sales of these crafts are their major source of income. Many of the carvings have religious themes, and nativity scenes are included in the selection. Shepherds' Field recently brought their crafts to Lancaster Presbyterian Church, and Rev. William Fry bought several items.

While it's possible to buy olive wood carvings from other sources, Shepherds' Field is directly linked to the Christian craftsmen in the Holy Land. If you are interested in having them bring their crafts to display at the church after worship, or in some other venue, please contact:

Violet Abdelmasih  
858-688-2793 (cell)  
[violetqum@hotmail.com](mailto:violetqum@hotmail.com)

**WHEN STREAMS DIVERGE**

**John Murdoch MacInnes and the Origins of Protestant  
Fundamentalism in Los Angeles**

**a new book by  
Daniel W. Draney**

Dan Draney (a long-time Glendale PC member) has written a book that focuses on the emergence of Protestant fundamentalism in Los Angeles beginning with 19th century trends toward religious radicalism and culminating in the split of radical and moderate groups at the Bible Institute of LA in the 1920s. To order, contact Jeremy Mudditt at Paternoster, an imprint of Authentic Media, [jmudditt@aol.com](mailto:jmudditt@aol.com), or visit the web site: [www.authenticmedia.co.uk/paternoster](http://www.authenticmedia.co.uk/paternoster)

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# Pentecost Offering

for Children at Risk, Youth, and Young Adults

The Pentecost Offering is traditionally received on the day of Pentecost (May 11, 2008). It provides a direct way to meet the needs of children at risk, youth and young adults. Congregations are encouraged to keep 40 percent of the Offering to support ministry with children at risk in their communities.

The General Assembly's portion (60 percent) provides leadership development opportunities from Presbyterian youth and young adults and supports children-at-risk programs at the national level. Since 1998, Presbyterians of all ages have raised over \$7 million for these ministries that benefit younger members of God's family.

All congregations should have received a mailing of Pentecost Offering materials. Additional materials to promote the 2008 Offering can be ordered from Presbyterian Distribution Service at 800 524-2612. You can also download resources from:

<http://www.pcusa.org/pentecost/order.htm>

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**Dr. Gerald O North**  
Executive Presbyter

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