

**REPORT TO WEBSTER PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH SESSION
PRESBYTERY OF NEW COVENANT STATE MEETING**

First Presbyterian Church, Lufkin, Texas
February 10, 2007 Meeting

Presbytery of New Covenant convened its Stated Meeting of February 10, 2007, at First Presbyterian Church of Lufkin, Texas. During the worship portion of the meeting, the sermon was delivered by Rev. Dr. Craig Barnes of Shadyside Presbyterian Church in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, who also serves as a professor at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary. His message was theologically grounded, challenging, and entertaining...very much like the sermons we enjoy at Webster Presbyterian Church (WPC) each week.

Several matters of importance and interest to the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), to the Presbytery of New Covenant, and to WPC were addressed. These items of business were:

- **Installation of the 2007 Moderator of Presbytery of New Covenant** - Reverend Deborah Cooper (former WPC interim Head of Staff)

- **Vote on Proposed Amendments to the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)** Approved by the 217th General Assembly (2006) and recommended to the presbyteries for their affirmative or negative votes. New Covenant is but one of more than 170 presbyteries in PCUSA; thus, passage or failure at New Covenant is not the final decision on these matters. Note that members of presbytery and commissioners to presbytery allow the Spirit to move them in these matters and that it is a vote of the individual person, not necessarily of the congregation represented or with the other representatives of the congregation voting.
 - **06-A. Revision of Form of Government, Chapter XIV Book of Order – Failed:** This revision to the Form of Government portion of the Book of Order has been in the works since 1996, but was voted down due, at least in part, to the view that a more recent, broader-based effort underway to reorganize the Form of Government is the proper vehicle for the changes proposed.
 - **06-B.1. Moving Ordination, Installation, and Commissioning Questions and Service Information to the Directory for Worship – Failed**
 - **06-B.2. Adding Licensure of Candidates – Failed:** If ultimately passed by PCUSA, this change would allow candidates for ministry to get hands-on experience while preparing to complete their examination process, a move that could help meet demand for pastors for small congregations, etc.
 - **06-B.3. Removing Synod Approval of Extraordinary Exam Process – Passed:** This amendment would eliminate a bureaucratic delay for candidates for ministry in unusual circumstances and restores the final approval alternate ordination exams to presbyteries.
 - **06-C. Enabling New General Assembly Council Structure – Failed:** A change was recently made to provide for presbytery representation on the General Assembly Council but, as written, the requirements result in an unwieldy number of members on the Council (there are almost 180 presbyteries). This amendment would restore the previous organizational structure to the Council.
 - **06-D. Opening COM to Access by Commissioned Lay Pastors – Passed:** This amendment corrects an oversight made with Commissioned Lay Pastor provisions were added to the Book of Order.

- **06-E. Members of the Synod – Passed:** This amendment would grant authority to synods to enroll officers, committee chairpersons, and council members as voting members of synod during their terms of office (as is the case with presbyteries).
 - **06-F. Naming Certified Christian Educators as Mandated Reporters – Passed:** This amendment would require called and employed persons in congregations and governing bodies to report suspected abuse of children.
- **Approval of Budget**
For more than a year, there has been an ongoing effort to switch Presbytery from a calendar year budget to a July 1- June 30 fiscal year budget. To effect this change, a “stub” has been developed and was proposed to bridge the period from the last calendar year budget (ending 2006) to the first of the new fiscal year budget periods (July 1, 2007 – June 30, 2008). This work was not initiated due to the financial challenges now faced by Presbytery (see next item), but the effort was certainly impacted by it. The January – June 2007 “stub” budget of \$653,100 (a 15.1% decrease from actual expenditures for the same period in 2006) was unanimously approved.

- **Approval of the Repayment Task Force Plan**
To address the catastrophic effects of the unauthorized withholding of special offerings, misapplication of funds, and general mismanagement by the Presbytery’s former Director of Business Affairs over the past few years, a Repayment Task Force was established to draw up a repayment plan. The net impact of these unauthorized actions are a cumulative obligation of \$1.5 million to General Assembly and ongoing but decreasing obligations to third parties of about \$500,000 per year for the next five years. The Task Force presented its well thought out and well received plan.

In summary, the five-year plan proposes drawing down a \$3.4 million undesignated bequest to Presbytery from estate of Cris Miller, a member of Memorial Drive Presbyterian Church, to meet the obligations. In the meantime, New Covenant will continue to sell three separate parcels of real estate it owns which, under optimum circumstances, could offset the principal reduction in the Cris Miller Fund.

The recommendations require two separate 2/3rds majority affirmative vote by the membership of Presbytery.

- The first of these two votes was conducted on February 10 and the recommendations were approved by the required 2/3rds vote
- The second vote will be conducted on Tuesday, February 27, at 1:00 p.m. at St. John’s Presbyterian Church in Houston, Texas

Other items of interest to WPC:

- From the Stated Clerk report...
 - Reverend **Tom Sharon** was installed as Pastor of First Presbyterian Church of Freeport, Texas, on December 10, 2006 (Tom is a former WPC member)
 - **WPC Elder Mary Lawrence** was elected to Presbytery’s Nominating Committee
- From the Committee on Ministry (COM) report...
 - Jim Brown has been assigned to serve as liaison to the **Webster Presbyterian Church Associate Pastor Nominating Committee**
 - **Mark Cooper** has been assigned to serve as liaison to the Pastor Nominating Committee of Westminster Presbyterian Church of Galveston

- Changes of Terms of Call were approved for **Mark Cooper** and **Helen Deleon** of WPC effective January 1, 2007
- Changes of Terms of Call were approved for **Steven Spidell** of Presbyterian Outreach to Patients (POP) effective January 1, 2007 (Steve is a WPC member)
- Transfer of membership of Ryan Sills (**former WPC Associate Pastor**) from New Covenant to Charlotte Presbytery, effective December 5, 2006
- From the POP 2006 Annual Report... **WPC Elder Mary Lawrence** will serve on the POP Board of Directors in 2007

A **Stated Meeting** of Presbytery was set for **Tuesday, February 27, 2007**, at 1:00 p.m. for a vote on the Recommendation of Repayment Plan. WPC will send commissioners to this meeting.

There will a **Stated Meeting** of Presbytery on **Saturday, May 15, 2007**, at Cho-Yeh Camp and Conference Center in Livingston, Texas. WPC will send commissioners to this meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Mark Cooper
Elder Jennifer Carr
Elder Gene Fisseler