

# PRESBYTERY MEETING

MAY 15, 2007

# POSTLUDE

## Proposed Fiscal Year 2007/2008 Budget presented to presbytery

By Elder Dick Baker, Postlude Reporter and member of Grace PC

The Business Affairs and Budget Committee presented a proposed budget for the fiscal year running from July 1, 2007 to June 30, 2008. The final budget for that fiscal year will be presented to Presbytery for approval at its



Sid Holderness

expenses between July 1 and the August 25 meeting.

Details of the proposed budget are available at the Presbytery's website: click on "Budget & Giving Information Book." The Revenues in this budget are based on estimates of benevolences to be received from the New Covenant churches, either estimates provided by the churches or



Kiah Townsend

at its August 25 meeting. In the interim, approval was granted for the presbytery to meet necessary

estimates based on historical giving. The expenses shown are operating expenses only; they do not include any of the Presbytery's debt repayment. All NCD expenses are included in this budget; none of the NCD expenses are hidden in designated accounts.

In its report, the committee emphasized that the proposed budget is not balanced; it shows a negative \$152,083 net income. The final budget to be presented in August will be balanced, hopefully from increased church benevolences. Expenses in all categories are already "cut to the bone," and any further required reduction to the budgeted expenses will have a detrimental impact on the ability of the presbytery to achieve its vision for the year.

The presbytery currently has only a minimal operating reserve, so no reserve funds are available to offset a negative operating income.

New Covenant is a strong presbytery with a clear vision and dedicated, capable leadership. We have begun to show good progress toward achieving our vision for the future. Our ability to continue that progress depends on the level of financial support that is received from our churches. Sessions and congregations are urged to prayerfully increase their financial support of the presbytery so that the final budget may be balanced without further program reductions.

**"This is our last clear chance to fund our way out of deficit rather than cut our way out," said Elder Rupert Turner.**

## Commissioners find welcome and respite in the Piney Woods



Meeting view: The famed water slide and Lake Evelyn at Camp Cho-Yeh

Cars filled with commissioners and visitors moved along the many arteries of southeast Texas, pressing toward the peaceful Piney Woods for the Tuesday meeting of the Presbytery of New Covenant. Camp Cho-Yeh had its warm and friendly welcoming mat out (Especially welcoming to many were the "people-movers"! ). While these meetings are held to conduct the business of the presbytery, they open the opportunity for sharing in the connectionalism of our denomination. Tuesday was such a day. New friends, old colleagues, new stories, old stories – all were accompanied by outstanding food, lots of laughter, and good conversation in a relaxed setting.

In the Dining Hall overlooking Lake Evelyn, Moderator Deborah Cooper called the meeting to order and suggested that everyone should visualize a ride down the waterslide into the cooling waters below. And what better song to open the meeting in such a setting than "Morning Has Broken."

*Mine is the sunlight! Mine is the morning  
Born of the one light Eden saw play!  
Praise with elation, praise every morning,  
God's recreation of the new day!*

## New Covenant's Worship at Cho-Yeh

By Elder Bettie Varner, Postlude Reporter and member of Pinecrest PC

The almost cool morning temperatures in the sun-drenched woods of Cho-Yeh helped create an ideal setting for worship. Music was led by the Rev. Steve Thorney and Laurie Hauschel (both of Southminster PC, Missouri City) on guitar and keyboard. The assembly of participants tapped feet and sang joyfully musical selections led by the duo that included "Come, Now is the Time for Worship" and "The Heart of Worship."

Using 1 Peter 4:7-11, former associate general presbyter of New Covenant, Connie Nyquist, spoke eloquently about the importance of community, in a sermon entitled, "Re-



Connie Nyquist was recognized for the Life Achievement Award she received from the Association of Presbyterian Educators.

Creating Community." The message was simple and straightforward. Her suggestions to us:

- Find authentic community in the Church.
- Love self and others fervently. "Christ was never short on love."
- Be more patient and forgiving.
- Practice hospitality with strangers, not just with those we know.
- Serve fearlessly with whatever gifts we have to God's glory and then hold each other accountable, "since a community

will perish if its members are not employed, but it will thrive when gifts are used." (Bonhoeffer)

The morning's offering of \$1,828.95 will fund scholarships to Camp Cho-Yeh.

The Celebration of the Lord's Supper was a creative expression that made all to feel God's presence and grace. The Rev. Sam Steele, First, PC, Livingston, encouraged us to hear the message with our eyes as he pantomimed the familiar words of institution and invitation. The final song, "The Celebration Song," had us tapping our feet again and smiling as this total participation in Worship closed.



Music was provided by Rev. Steve Thorney and Laurie Hauschel, both of Southminster PC, Missouri City.

## Proposal for presbytery meetings to be held on Saturdays only

Elder Susan McPhail Wittjen, Chair of Ecclesiastical Affairs, reported that discussions have been held concerning which day of the week presbytery meetings should be held, as well as the number of meetings considered essential. The committee proposed that after 2007, all presbytery meetings will be held on Saturdays unless an invitation for a Tuesday meeting is received. Also, since 85% of our members live in the Houston area, the committee is trying to centralize meetings to minimize travel time and costs.

Please return the Evaluation and Feedback Form to Janice Schessler at the Presbytery Center. Sessions are asked to review questions and provide input. The form is part of the Addendum that was made available at Registration. Or ask Janice to email a form to you. The committee wants to make these meetings as meaningful, efficient, and convenient as possible.

The next Presbytery meeting will be held at ChristChurch, Bellaire, on Sat., Aug. 25.

## Endowment Fund announced

Elder Joe Snyder, St. Stephen PC, Houston, has established the Judy Snyder Memorial Fund in honor of his wife who passed away in December 2005. The fund will provide financial assistance for students in a commissioned lay pastor program.

The Fund is a living testimony of Judy's life for Christ. A retired school teacher, Judy was an elder, choir member, and a Commissioned Lay Pastor at St. Stephen PC, Houston.



Elder Joe Snyder

## First Presbyterian in Liberty granted request to dissolve

After struggling with the sense of what God wants for its congregation, members of First PC, Liberty, voted unanimously to request permission of the Presbytery of New Covenant to dissolve the congregation and sell or distribute all properties owned. Presbytery concurred with this request, effective Dec. 31, 2007.

An Administrative Commission is authorized to take possession of all property, financial records, and inventories of equipment and to arrange for transfer of title to the Presbytery. Letters of dismissal will be issued by the Presbytery to those on the roll. Those who do not transfer their membership at this time will have their membership held by the Presbytery until the time they choose to join another church. According to the *Constitution* of the PC(USA), all property is held in trust for the PC(USA).

The Stated Clerk clarified that we do not dissolve the corporation; members of Presbytery become the trustees of the corporation.

Special worship services are planned in celebration of the ministry of First PC, organized in 1952, both at the church and at the Presbytery meeting in November.

## New Candidates enrolled

Two were enrolled as Candidates to the Ministry of Word and Sacrament. They spoke before the presbytery about their own Christian pilgrimage. **Charles Packard** (First, Houston) told of his delight at being at Cho-Yeh this day, because it is a place that has special meaning to him – he served as a camp counselor here. And it was in a camp setting that he remembers first hearing after giving a devotional that he should become a pastor. Now he is enrolled at Austin Seminary with one year remaining in his journey to ordination. At this time he feels called to a ministry to seniors.

**Christina Stone** (First PC, Houston) spoke of God's invitation to a relationship with him and how God is faithful to us although we are not deserving. Christina said that the church she attended while in college taught her what it means to be in community, and how being active in numerous opportunities in churches has taught her that God is calling her to the ordained ministry. She, too, was once a counselor at Cho-Yeh.

Those who will continue to support these candidates on their journey surrounded them as they were charged. "Remember to step back from the academic world," counseled the Rev. Kevin Boyd. "The journey will not always be easy. You will doubt yourself and sometimes even your relationship to God. But remember, "There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free." (Roman 8:1-2)



Deborah Cooper (l.) asks the questions from the Book of Order to Christina Stone (ctr.) and Charles Packard (r.)

## Task Force recommendations approved

By Dick Baker, Postlude Reporter and member of Grace PC

As the meeting commissioners met in the beautiful piney woods setting of Camp Cho-Yeh, they heard and approved the recommendations of General Council's special Cho-Yeh Task Force. The actions fell into three areas:

1. Amend the Cho-Yeh Bylaws to provide for an independent, self-perpetuating Board of Directors. It will be required that a majority of the members of the Cho-Yeh Board be members of PC(USA) churches.
2. Amend the Covenant Agreement between Cho-Yeh and the Presbytery to reflect the present actual working relationship, and to safeguard the Presbytery's future interests in Cho-Yeh by ensuring that in the event of the dissolution of Cho-Yeh, the Cho-Yeh property would revert back to the Presbytery.
3. Convey title to the original 293 acres of land from Presbytery to Cho-Yeh.

In response to commissioner questions, it was pointed out that Cho-Yeh has been a

separate 501(c)3 non-profit corporation since 2001, largely operating independently from Presbytery. However, because Presbytery has appointed the Cho-Yeh Board and retained title to some of Cho-Yeh's land, the Presbytery has retained some legal liability for the operations of Cho-Yeh. Furthermore, Cho-Yeh has encountered some complications and restrictions in obtaining financing needed for future capital improvements due to the present relationship with Presbytery. The proposed changes are designed to provide greater legal separation between the Presbytery and Cho-



Elder Jody Harrington listens to question concerning Cho-Yeh motion.

## Guidelines for Sabbatical Leave approved by COM

The Committee on Ministry, having approved Guidelines for Sabbatical Leave, encourages congregations to implement policies granting Sabbatical Leave for church professionals.

Sabbatical Leave for Ministers of Word and Sacrament and Certified Christian Educators is different from vacation or days off. Sabbatical Leave is a gift to a church professional after serving a congregation for 6 continuous years and at 6-year intervals after the first sabbatical. It is a prolonged period of time away from the congregation for study, spiritual renewal, or whatever the professional finds restorative. This time, beyond the normal study leave, is intended to enhance effectiveness in ministry and provide valuable spiritual renewal and refreshment for those who continuously serve God's people.

Sessions and church professional are urged to consult with the Committee on Ministry (COM) when planning a sabbatical. Guidelines for Sabbatical Leave are available from the Committee.

## Churches urged to participate in funding

The Rev. John Howard Reed, Central PC, Houston, spoke on behalf of the Theological Education Fund. Local congregations are asked to give 1% of their budgets to this fund, which is the only denominational support that our ten seminaries receive. Ten congregations in New Covenant give 1% of their budgets to the fund. Howard challenged our churches to increase their giving and increase the number of New Covenant churches that reach such a goal from 10 to 20.

Yeh, while preserving Cho-Yeh's Presbyterian connection and the Presbytery's future interest in the camp. The Task Force recommendations were approved in a single combined vote 115 for, 24 opposed.

## New Ministers welcomed

Three pastors introduced themselves to the presbytery, and the assembly was asked to extend to them the right-hand of fellowship during the lunch break. **The Rev. Mark Downs** has



Rev. Mark Downs

been called to serve as Pastor of Heights PC, Houston. He extolled the potential he is seeing in Heights PC. "The bones are there; we have a great location in the city; we ask for the prayers and help of presbytery," he said. Mark is transferring from the Presbytery of East Tennessee. He received a BA in Psychology from Westminster College in Missouri and his MDiv from Columbia Theological Seminary in Decatur, GA. He was ordained in 2003.

**The Rev. Mauricio Chacon** has been called by Memorial Drive, Houston, to serve as Associate Pastor for NCD in Spring Branch. Mauricio said he is encouraged about this new challenge as a result of four

meetings he has already had with the people in the community. He asked for prayers for this new ministry. Mauricio is transferring from San Francisco after forty years and where he was serving as moderator of the presbytery. He received his MDiv from McCormick Theological Seminary and currently serves on its Board of Trustees. He is a Candidate for DMin in Pastoral Care and Counseling at San Francisco Theological Seminary.

**The Rev. Jack Barden** is returning to Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary where he received his MDiv in 1988. He is now serving there as Director of Admissions. Jack served as associate pastor

of Northwoods PC, Houston, in the early 90s and associate pastor of St. Luke's PC, Houston, from 1988-1990. He is transferring from Missouri Union Presbytery. He received his BA from University of the South in Tennessee and a DMin from ACTS/McCormick Theological Seminary in Chicago where he received the John Randall Hunt Prize for Outstanding Doctor of Ministry Thesis and Academic Record.



Rev. Mauricio Chacon



Rev. Jack Barden

# CODA

Elders and minister commissioners to the presbytery meeting conducted the following additional business and received reports at its May meeting:

- Granted Honorably Retired Status, effective July 31, 2007, to the Rev. David L. Northcutt. Recognition will be given at August Presbytery meeting.
- Approved a request from Woodforest PC for the church to enter into a long-term lease agreement with a business adjacent to the back of the church property. The company will use the land for a 30 foot wide driveway connecting the business property to a public road.
- Approved motion to accept the report of Special Examination Committee that candidate Candice Klein passed an oral exegesis exam and that it be accepted in lieu of a written exegesis exam administered by the PC(USA).
- Approved motion to continue paying bills and obligations through July and August until Presbytery approves the 2007-2008 budget at its August meeting.
- Approved Terms for the Stated Clerk from a 25% to 40% of a full-time job with \$21,000/year compensation and \$800 per year for continuing education.
- Elected individuals to serve on designated presbytery committees as recommended by the Nominating Committee. The name of Kathy Redden, Memorial Drive PC, was added to the list of names in the Presbytery Packet. She will serve on the Care of Church Professionals Committee, Class of 2008.
- On behalf of presbytery, Committee on Preparation for Ministry (CPM) adopted the Presbytery Candidate Indebtedness Policy and enrolled Juan Herrera (St. Andrew's, Houston) and Andy Slaughter (Grace, Houston) as Inquirers.
- General Council has amended the Vision Initiatives Grant Guidelines to provide that grants are for one year only and that successful applicants may apply for renewal the following year.
- An Audit Committee has been established, as part of General Council, and a permanent General Council Oversight Team established.
- A change in committee structure combines the Connectional and Equipping Ministry committees to form the new

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