

Presbytery of Boston February 2009 E-Connection

“What Have We Got to Lose?”

A monthly column for the church-at-large by The Reverend Bruce Reyes-Chow, Moderator of the 218th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

I was privileged last month to participate in the Congressional Black Caucus inaugural interfaith prayer service as a representative of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). And while the historic nature of the presidential inauguration was certainly important, I was most struck by the constant remembrance of the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King's commitment to non-violence in response to the shackles of oppression.

As I sat there, I could not help but wonder what it is that shackles us today. Where are our acts of civil disobedience called for in the world, our communities, and the church? Yes, things have changed much since the days of the greatest tensions of the civil rights movement, but we as human beings must always be vigilant to those places where we hold each other down, respond to evil with evil, and stay silent when we should speak.

Dr. King talked about the power of non-violence resting in the fact that it does not offer a response in-kind to those who choose violence and intimidation. A non-violent response to violence changes the terms of the relationship. It disarms – maybe not at first, but in the end, the love, power, and spirit of non-violence conquers all.

When it comes to the future of the PC(USA), I think we need to claim and live out words of non-violence. Too many times, I have seen words lofted between people with the sole purpose to cause pain, marginalize, bully, and shackle the other into some rigid characterization not of their making. We use words to hurt or conquer. We use words to flex our muscle, hold onto our power, and, too often, destroy the other.

What if we were to use words of non-violence that do not respond to evil with evil or exacerbate conflict? What if we were to use words – challenging, prophetic, and loving – that are meant to change the ways in which we move through difficult times? What if we were to use words that confuse the status quo of intentional, destructive interactions and, instead, allowed ourselves to be all that God intends – a community of people working to be a model of peace and reconciliation in a world that yearns so desperately to see one?

(continued on page 2)

What if? What have we got to lose? This will be my prayer and my commitment this Lenten season. I hope you will join me.

Please continue to be part of the many conversations at www.mod.reyes-chow.com.

GA Moderator announces names for special committee to study civil union and Christian marriage

Committee of 13 will begin work in March

LOUISVILLE—The Reverend Bruce Reyes-Chow, Moderator of the 218th General Assembly (2008) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), has selected members for the General Assembly Special Committee to Study Issues of Civil Union and Christian Marriage.

Last summer’s General Assembly directed the Moderator to “appoint a special committee, representing the broad diversity and theological balance of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), to study the following ... including any policy recommendations growing out of the study:

- The history of the laws governing marriage and civil union, including current policy debates.
- How the theology and practice of marriage have developed in the Reformed and broader Christian tradition.
- The relationship between civil union and Christian marriage.
- The effects of current laws on same-gender partners and their children.
- The place of covenanted same-gender partnerships in the Christian community.”

The special committee is to make its report to the 219th General Assembly (2010) next summer in Minneapolis.

Of the thirteen on the special committee, six are between the ages of 36-45, six are between 46 and 55, and one is older than 55.

Reyes-Chow used a video clip posted on his blog (www.mod.reyes-chow.com) Tuesday evening in advance of today’s release to comment about the selection process to fill this and additional special committees that will be announced later this week.

In the clip, he explained that he had extended an “open invitation to submit names – promising to select people that I believed could bring passion, thought, intellect, experience, foresight and vision” to the task.

(continued on page 3)

Reyes-Chow said, “Those who have been chosen have a deep commitment to the church, a deep love for Christ, and are seeking and yearning for a way to be church in new and discerning ways.”

He continued, “We owe our deepest gratitude to those who have accepted this calling – the privilege and responsibility of serving on task forces and study groups at the General Assembly level of our denomination.”

Named to the special committee are the Reverends Clayton F. Allard (Grace Presbytery), Emily J. Anderson (East Tennessee Presbytery), Margaret Aymer Oget (Greater Atlanta Presbytery), Steve Hancock (Arkansas Presbytery), Tracie Mayes Stewart (Salem Presbytery), James Szeyller (Charlotte Presbytery), and William Teng (National Capital Presbytery); and elders Luis Antonio De La Rosa (Pacific Presbytery), Katina Miner (San Francisco Presbytery), Stephen L. Salyards (San Gabriel Presbytery), and Lisa Cooper Van Riper (Foothills Presbytery). Emily W. Miller (Shenandoah Presbytery) and Derrick Weston (Pittsburgh Presbytery) will also serve as members.

Szeyller will serve as chairperson of the group.

Staffing the committee will be the Reverend David Gambrell, associate for worship, Theology Worship and Education (General Assembly Council), and the Reverend Vernon Broyles, volunteer in mission, Office of the General Assembly.

*Sharon K. Youngs, Communications Coor.
sharon.youngs@pcusa.org*

“Come One, Come All”

A monthly column for the church-at-large by The Reverend Gradye Parsons, Stated Clerk of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

I will admit it up front: This column is an unabashed promotion for the Big Tent event, June 11-13, in Atlanta. The Big Tent will bring together several of our Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) summer conferences in one place at the same time so that participants might experience the breadth and width of the ministries of the PC(USA).

One of the hopes of moving to biennial General Assemblies was to create opportunities for Presbyterians to come together nationally in non-legislative meetings in non-GA years. As someone once told me, the church needs conversations that aren't required to produce a product at the end. The Big Tent fits that description to a tee.

Ten conferences will be held in conjunction with the Big Tent – National Multicultural Church, Stewardship and Investment, Evangelism and Church Growth, Healthy Ministry, Peacemaking, Presbyterian Communicators Network, the Presbyterian Health Education and Welfare Association's Social Justice Biennial, plus the Racial Ethnic Convocation and the New Immigrants Ministries Convocation.

(continued on page 4)

One of the ten, the National Elders Conference, is especially close to my heart. I believe the key to the renewal of our church is reclaiming the vision of elders as it is described in chapter six of the Book of Order. There is an important spiritual ministry. This will be the second event of its kind and should help folks get ready to fill those important shoes.

Participants who come to the Big Tent will be able to attend their usual conference and drop in on parts of other conferences. There'll be shared meals, common worship, and a common workshop time with a broad category of subjects. Find out more at www.pcusa.org/bigtent.

As you can tell, I am a big believer in the Big Tent. It will be a unique opportunity to experience the various and exciting ways God is working in the PC(USA) – a real smorgasbord of ministry delights. So, mark the date and spread the word. Gather a crew and come to Atlanta. It will be the “happening spot” in the PC(USA) in June!

Note to Presbytery of Boston Members: If you are interested in attending the Big Tent event, we encourage you to register now to take advantage of the Early Bird Discount. Contact The Presbytery of Boston office.

Presbytery of Boston Meeting Calendar

February

- 18 – CS&D, 7:30, Presbytery office
- 20 – CEM, 2:00 p.m., NPC
- 26 – Council

March

- 3 – Nominating, 11:30, NPC
- 9 – ICL, 3:30, NPC
- Reports Deadline**
- 11 – CPM, 5:00, Presbytery office
- 23 – **Stated Meeting of The Presbytery of Boston, First Presbyterian Church of Worcester**

Prayer Concerns & Celebrations

Prayers for Ken Dewar, who is recovering from surgery.

Wren Collé's father died on January 19. She, her husband, Don, and her brother, Dave, would appreciate your prayers for their family and friends.

(continued on page 5)

First Presbyterian Church of Quincy is celebrating its 125th anniversary this year!

Sam Yoon, an elder at Bethany, has prayerfully considered his call to political leadership in Boston and has decided to run for mayor. See:

http://www.boston.com/news/local/massachusetts/articles/2009/02/09/yoon_launches_groundbreaking_bid_for_mayor/.

Ordination Anniversaries

Wayne Parrish	2/16/86	23 years
Justus Fennel	2/25/57	52 years
Dennis Friedrich	2/25/79	30 years
Leslie McKinney	2/25/01	8 years
Alice Hageman	3/9/75	34 years
John Malcolmson	3/15/60	49 years
Diane Cusumano	3/16/97	12 years
Susan Gleason	3/26/00	9 years
JoAn Bott	3/27/60	49 years
Hurmon Hamilton	3/29/92	17 years

Congratulations and thank you!

Read the Synod's *Nor'E-News* Online

The Synod of the Northeast's February newsletter (and past issues, too) can be downloaded from the Synod's website at

<http://www.synodne.org/mediagallery/album.php?aid=38&page=1>.

2009 Stewardship Kaleidoscope

March 9 - 11, 2009, Stewardship Kaleidoscope in Kansas City. This event, like last year's, is sponsored by a partnership of several middle judicatories, the General Assembly Council and the PEER Network. You will find great potential in this event for you, your staff, pastors, elders, treasurers, financial secretaries and others responsible for cultivating the spiritual discipline of stewardship in your congregations, presbytery or synod. Please note that the early registration discount deadline is February 23, 2009.

Please note that both the keynote presenters and workshop leaders have been recruited to offer a broad perspective on financial discipleship, including annual campaigns, planned giving, endowments, preaching, interpretation and promotion from both the congregation and judicatory perspective. You will find the brochure and instructions for registration and hotel reservations at www.heartlandpby.org/kaleidoscope.

“Cross Examinations”
Clergy Lenten Theological Conversation
with
Professor Mark Heim of ANTS

4:00 p.m., SUNDAY, MARCH 15 to 4:00 p.m., MONDAY, MARCH 16

Rolling Ridge Retreat Center, North Andover, MA

“Cross Examinations” will explore non-violent views of the atonement and the meaning of the cross today. Cost is \$50 (subsidized by the Committee on Ministry and the East Boston Fund.) Please contact The Presbytery of Boston to register: 617-244-4766 or presbyteryofboston@verizon.net.

Project Bread

Project Bread’s FoodSource Hotline
1-800-645-8333 TTY: 1-800-377-1292

With the high cost of living in the Commonwealth and more than 522,000 people across the state struggling to put food on the table, chances are that a friend or neighbor of yours is having difficulty making ends meet this winter. Project Bread’s FoodSource Hotline can help. The FoodSource Hotline is the only comprehensive information and referral service for the hungry in Massachusetts. Counselors can provide information and screen callers for food stamp eligibility, connect them to school meal programs, and direct them to emergency food resources right in their neighborhood. Counselors can assist callers in 160 languages and the calls are both personalized and confidential. Extend your goodwill and reach out to those in need. A call to Project Bread’s FoodSource Hotline may be all it takes to provide comfort to someone who is struggling.

In response to the increased demand for help, Project Bread’s Food Source Hotline has extended its hours to:
Monday – Friday: 8:00 A.M. – 7:00 P.M.
Saturday: 10:00 A.M. – 2:00 P.M

Upcoming Events

February 18-19 - *Presbyterian Global Fellowship Winter Gathering* at Peachtree Presbyterian Church. Reggie McNeal will be the featured presenter. Schedule and more details will be updated at www.pgfconference.org. East Boston Fund scholarships are available. Contact the Presbytery Office if you are interested or need more details.

February 21 – Gratitude & Creation, 4:30 to 9:00 p.m., Park Street Church, Boston
Sponsored by Boston Faith & Justice Network, Mass. Council of Churches and the Episcopal Diocese of Mass. (*see flier attachment*)

March 6-7 – Synod Design Consultation, Stony Point, NY

March 9-11 – “Stewardship Kaleidoscope” Presbyterian Stewardship Conference. Kansas City, MO. See: www.heartlandpby.org/kaleidoscope.

March 13-16 – “*Enough for All Creation*” in Washington D.C. Join us at the 7th annual Ecumenical Advocacy Days, as we explore ways to bring about a world with 'Enough for All Creation'. Learn about the connections between climate change, migration and poverty in the U.S. and around the world. Come together with faith-based advocates and activists from across the United States in the nation's capitol as we discuss the abundance of our world and how it can be allocated in a way that is fair and just for all Creation. Register now at www.advocacydays.org

March 14 – **Discussion of Amendments to the Constitution (Location TBD)**

March 15-16 – **Theological Conversation “Cross Examinations” with Prof. Mark Heim (ANTS), 4 p.m. to 4 p.m. at Rolling Ridge Retreat Center, N. Andover, MA.**

March 15-18 - "*Conversations on Renewal and Transformation in Mainline Congregations*" with Diana Butler Bass, Marcus J. Borg, and Brian D. McLaren. Louisville Seminary will welcome this celebrated trio of church leaders/scholars at the Seminary's annual Festival of Theology. Register online.

March 18-19 – “*No Conflict Necessary.*” 11:00 Wed. to 4:00 Thurs. at the La Salette Retreat Center, 947 Park St. **Attleboro, MA 02703.** Contact the Synod of the Northeast for more information.

March 28 – **NE Form of Government discussion group**

April 20-22 – “*Deep and Wide: Engaging the Church in Multicultural Outreach.*” A conference at Stony Point sponsored by the Board of Pensions. For more information, contact Rev. Chris Foster (cjfoster@alumni.princeton.edu)

April 23-24 – *Presbyterian Writers’ Conference* at Columbia Theological Seminary, Decatur, GA. For more information, contact Steve McCutchan at steve@smccutchan.com or Twila Belk at twilabelk@mchsi.com.

April 25 – **NE PPG**

May 3-7 – “*Engaging the Other: Pentecost Spirit for a Changing World.*” Early Ministry Institute (EMI), Stony Point Conference Center.

May 16 – **Conflict Resolution Workshop** (Contact David Dorer for more information).

June 2-4 – 2009 Interim Ministry Network Conference, Pittsburgh, PA. See: <http://www.imnedu.org/>

June 11-13 – *The Big Tent*. Event to feature conferences by ten PC(USA) ministries and groups. (New Website with promotional video just launched at [https://www.pcusa.org/bigtent/.](https://www.pcusa.org/bigtent/))

(continued on page 8)

July 11-15 – “*God Will Do Wonders Among You.*” Church-wide Gathering of Presbyterian Women, Louisville, KY. For more information, visit www.pcusa.org/pwgathering.

Don't Forget to Register for Ecumenical Advocacy Days

"Enough for All Creation" - March 13-16

"The Thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly." John 10:10

Join us at the 7th annual Ecumenical Advocacy Days, as we explore ways to bring about a world with Enough for All Creation. Learn about the connections between climate change, migration and poverty in the U.S. and around the world. Come together with faith-based advocates and activists from across the United States in the nation's capitol March 13-16 as we discuss the abundance of our world and how it can be allocated in a way that is fair and just for all creation.

We live in an increasingly interconnected world and have an enormous impact on each other and creation. As the earth's temperature rises we see a strain on resources. Food, while plentiful for some, is desperately scarce for others. Lack of clean water makes children sick and burdens women. Global warming and growing resource deprivation forces some people to migrate and others to wage war over food, water and oil. Our increasingly co-dependent economies lift a few individuals up to great heights while keeping others living lives of destitution.

This year, Presbyterian delegates will again have the opportunity to gather for dinner on Saturday night, as well as for lunch and a special “denominational” time earlier that day. Don't miss it!

For more information and registration go to <http://advocacydays.org/>

from: *WITNESS IN WASHINGTON WEEKLY*

The Washington Office of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

