

Presbytery of Boston
E-Connection
July 29, 2010

**Report to Boston Presbytery regarding the
Uniting General Council of the World
Communion of Reformed Churches**

Some 300 delegates from 108 countries met at Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan, from June 18-26 with the theme, “Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace.” Their primary goal was to act on the recommendation that the Geneva-based World Alliance of Reformed Church (WARC), of which PC(USA) has been a member since WARC’s establishment in 1974, merge with the Grand Rapids-based Reformed Ecumenical Council (REC) to form the World Communion of Reformed Churches. Perhaps the first and most important thing to say about this General Council is that it took place and accomplished this primary goal. The new organization, which will be based in Geneva, has 230 member churches and represents 80 million Christians from Presbyterian, Uniting and United, Reformed and Waldensian churches worldwide.

Jerry Pillay, of the Presbyterian Church in South Africa, was elected WCRC president. The 22 member executive committee, which will carry on the work of the WCRC until its next assembly in 2017, consists of 14 ordained clergy and 8 lay persons, 13 men and 9 women, two under 30 and 20 over 30. They come from 18 countries in the eight designated regions of the world. 18 are members of a WARC-related church, 4 are member of a REC-related church. Cliff Kirkpatrick, former PC(USA) stated clerk, and REC’s Peter Borgdorff will also be Exco members as presidents of the predecessor organizations.

The U.S. State Department’s denial of visas to more than 70 of those who were scheduled to attend – as delegates, experts, and stewards - cast a pall over the gathering. Our deliberations were diminished by their absence.

I was elected an alternate to this gathering by the 2008 PC(USA) General Assembly. At the last minutes my status was “upgraded” to delegate, due to a crisis in the family of one of the other clergy women delegates. This, of course, made the gathering much more interesting to me, since I then had voice and vote.

The organization of the General Council was familiar to anyone who has attended General Assembly: initial gatherings in plenary sessions, dispersion to nine issue-oriented groups (mine was Worship and Spiritual Renewal), reports back from the working groups, discussions and votes in plenary, election of those who will lead the Communion for the next seven years. We also had daily Bible study in small groups, and lively twice daily worship in the college chapel (I hope perhaps we can make use of some of material

from the WCRC worship book in future presbytery worship.) The participation in worship of indigenous native Americans contributed greatly to the spiritual dimension of our work. Sadly, on the evening following our closing worship Christina Mandang from Indonesia, our organist during the assembly, was hit by a car when returning from supper. She died several hours later, surrounded by the Indonesian delegation and Setri Nyomi, WCRC general secretary..

Although I have attended other international and ecumenical gatherings, it was an unparalleled experience to meet in such a gathering during the World Cup matches. During breaks in our proceedings partisans from each country involved gathered in the hall in front of mounted TV sets to cheer on their favorite team. Fortunately, the final games took place after we left.

Although there was consensus on many matters, there was also, of course, some controversy. The women's pre-conference sent a strongly worded statement regarding the importance of gender balance in the work of the WCRC. The youth present also made a strong plea for greater inclusion of persons under 30 in national delegations. The appeals were heard --- but it is unclear to what extent their recommendations will be implemented.

The section on Justice in the Economy and the Earth, seeking to follow up the recommendations of the 2003 Accra Assembly, made some controversial recommendations which led to extensive debate.

I personally was most troubled by the discussion of the ordination of women. Several of the churches members of the former REC do not ordain women. One of the sessions brought the recommendation that the WCRC support women's ordination. This was adopted. This group further recommended that those churches which do not currently ordain women take significant action by 2017 to change their exclusionary policies and, if they fail to do so, that WCRC consider suspending their membership until they comply. The debate which ensued was reminiscent of that in the PC(USA) 40 years ago – ordination of women is not scriptural, we are going too fast, we do not want to coerce any of our churches to any action. The recommendation failed. I watch with interest to see what if any action will be taken on this issue in 2017.

For further information, see the web site, www.reformedchurches.org/

The Uniting General Council ended approving a message using the theme, "Called to communion, Committed to justice." Those present acknowledged that communion and justice are inextricably linked. I fervently hope and pray that the actions of member churches will incarnate that interconnection in their actions during the next seven years.

Alice Hageman

July 26, 2010

To read more, including the WCRC final message, see <http://www.reformedchurches.org/>

The theme of the 2010 Youth Triennium was taken from the Book of Esther – For Such a Time as This. And what a time it was indeed for 5,000 who came - youth, returning college students who came to help, over 170 adult small group leaders and scores of other adult and young adult volunteers. Kids waited to get into the prayer room and flocked into worship. No one there seemed bothered by the weather one evening as kids did crafts at tables and played games on the grass of the lawn, signed letters to heads of state for the end of using children as soldiers, wrote postcards to orphaned children, put words on a prayer wall, sang and read poetry at the outdoor open mike and just strolled around in clusters with new friends and friends from back home. Dressed in their bold, teal-colored Triennium T-shirts, they made for a beautiful and powerful vision. On Friday night, worship led by the Rev. Graham Baird, pastor of a thriving new church development – now a large congregation – in Paso Robles, Calif., encouraged those gathered to be bold with their lives and to take risks for the sake of the gospel. "All the people who followed Jesus were great risk takers," Baird said. Tony Campolo followed Baird's message on Saturday with a strong message to follow Christ's example in vocation and life. To learn more about these outstanding speakers and the whole amazing experience, visit the website <http://www.pcusa.org/browse/news-post/tag/Presbyterian%20Youth%20Triennium/> where our news stories about Triennium are archived.

“Step into Greatness”

Triennium preacher tells young people to resist envious ‘haters’

by **Bethany Furkin**
Presbyterian News Service

WEST LAFAYETTE, Ind. — As a young girl, the Rev. Debra Matthews was inspired to "step into greatness" at a Stillman College step show. The young adults who were performing weren't much older than the thousands of youth gathered at the Presbyterian Youth Triennium here this week.

Matthews told the several thousand Triennium participants not to doubt their ability to influence people and change the world. Don't settle for mediocrity, but realize that the enemy will tempt you along the way, she said.

The scripture reading for July 21 Triennium worship was not read so much as it was acted. Young adults told the story of Jesus' 40 days in the desert, during which Satan tried to tempt him with promises of food and power.

We will also be physically tempted, Matthews said. Whether it's with food, drugs, alcohol or other substances, the enemy will try to distract us from greatness, she said. The enemy will also offer power and prestige, banking that we'll take the short cut to greatness. But we must not succumb to such temptations, Matthews said.

"If you're going to be great in God, you must be full of the Holy Spirit," she said.

And this fullness can make others attack. When other people see your strengths, it makes them realize their own weaknesses.

"I think we call them haters," Matthews said, to cheers from the youth.

But it's important to remember to step into greatness for God and to do all things for God's glory.

"If you're doing this for your own glory, then reap your rewards now because you ain't got nothing else coming," Matthews said.

During the two-hour worship service, youth also participated in energizers, listened and sang along with a band and watched a live game show based on the Triennium's covenant. Moments of call

Take a risk

Baird encourages youth to follow Jesus, not play it safe

by **Bethany Furkin**
Presbyterian News Service

WEST LAFAYETTE, Ind. — There are two kinds of people in the world: those who play it safe and those who take risks. So said the Rev. Graham Baird, preaching July 23 at the [Presbyterian Youth Triennium](#).

"Play-it-safers" don't hang out with unpopular kids, choose profitable careers and marry people who will make them look good, Baird said. But "risk-takers" hang out with those on the margins, choose careers that inspire them and marry those they love.

Preaching from John 3: 1-5, Baird spoke about Nicodemus. Jesus told him that he can't play it safe if he wants to be born again.

"All the people who followed Jesus were great risk takers," Baird said.

Many of the parents who sent their youth to Triennium probably did so because they saw it as a safe way for teens to spend a week. But coming to Triennium — like any choice to follow Jesus — isn't safe.

The world will try to get you to play it safe, Baird told the thousands of youth gathered for worship. Teenagers face incredible amounts of peer pressure — more so than any other age group. But peer pressure never changes. Everyone has experienced it at some point. What can change is how one reacts to it.

"My prayer for this denomination is that we would become a risk-taking denomination," Baird said.

These risks don't need to come in our theology or in our doctrine, but in our lives. "The reason we should risk is because Jesus risked for us," he said. "It is the risk worth taking."

An offering was collected during the service. The money raised will be split between the Presbyterian Roundtable on Human Trafficking and Hearts with Haiti.

Esther for a new generation

Transferring old stories to young minds at Presbyterian Youth Triennium

by **The Rev. Marci Auld Glass**, *pastor of Southminster Presbyterian Church in Boise, Idaho.*
Presbyterian Youth Triennium

WEST LAFAYETTE, Ind. — Participants at the Presbyterian Youth Triennium have been talking about answering God's call in their lives, under the triennium theme "For Such a Time as This."

Rich Richards, who wrote the Small Group Manual for the July 20-24 event here, had his own call experience with the manual. "This was a Moses moment for me," he said. "Quite literally."

A member of the Triennium Design Team called him, asking if he would consider writing the manual. They called Richards because they knew of his integration of the visual arts in worship, programming, and youth retreats. Small groups are a key component of triennium, which draws thousands of Presbyterian teens to the Purdue campus here every three years.

"I think you might have the wrong number," he told them.

They assured him they knew exactly who he was and called him specifically because they wanted a manual that would be arts-focused.



Richards said he experienced three different emotions that led him to accept the call: doubt, fear and confidence — not confidence in himself alone, but confidence in what the Spirit had been doing in his life the last few years.

"You might not think doubt, fear, and confidence would bring someone to say 'yes,' but it did for me," he said.

Richards quickly became excited about the challenge. He is dyslexic and has other learning delays, so the opportunity to offer participants a different experience in small groups — particularly for people who have similar learning delays and conditions as he does — was a challenge into which he dove head first.

This manual incorporates, in addition to visual arts, opportunities to use other senses and styles of learning, such as physical movement and tactile expression.

Both youth and adult participants really enjoyed this year's small group experience.

Samantha Gavin, a youth participant from Pittsburgh said of her small group: "We broke into five smaller groups and read the section on Esther and the questions we had made it feel like you were there. I understood the story a whole lot better. It was a lot better than if we would have just read the Bible story through."

Small group leaders who have led small groups at many different conferences really appreciate this manual. "It fits the theme well and really flows into worship seamlessly, one leader said. "The arts components are opening conversation channels quickly."

Each group was given a small artist's mannequin to use in sharing time. Richards bought one at an IKEA store because he thought that he could somehow, someday, use it with his youth group. "An idea arose for sharing time — if you hand someone the mannequin and say, 'use this to show how you feel right now,' it allows everyone to participate at their own level."

Some people will talk about it as they manipulate the mannequin to reflect their day. Others will work silently and then just hold the mannequin up as if to say, "you figure it out." But the small artist's mannequin offers everyone a way to share without having to speak.

Richards, a 1996 graduate of PC(USA)-related The College of Wooster, majored in music and minored in art history. He is currently director of youth and young adult ministries at the Presbyterian Church of Lawrenceville, N.J., but has recently accepted a call to be director of music and worship arts at Alamance Presbyterian Church in Greensboro, N.C.

Permanent Judicial Commission Appeal Decision

The Appeal Decision by the Permanent Judicial Commission of June 25, 2010 is available on the Presbytery of Boston website. Go to the "Presbytery Meeting" page; the documents are posted above the Notice of the Stated Meeting.

Prayer Concerns & Celebrations

Linda Christensen's mother, Alice Swanson, passed away on July 25. The family has set visiting hours calling hours for be Friday July 30 from 5:00 to 8:00 at Chesmore Funeral Home, 854 Washington St. in Holliston. The burial will be family only A memorial service will be held for Alice Swanson at Hartford Street Presbyterian Church on Sunday Aug 8 at 1:30 pm. In lieu of flowers, the family requests donations to the Hartford Street Presbyterian Church Memorial Fu

Prayers for Roxbury PC's clerk of session, Linda Evans-Green, who recently lost her step-daughter, Thalia Britney Kerr, age 23, to an accident in NY.

For Alice Hageman and her husband, Aubrey, whose brother-in-law died unexpectedly on July 9th.

For Peg Ferguson, as she continues her recovery from surgery.

Jay David is awaiting a second kidney transplant.

Carole Parrish is recuperating from an auto accident.

For Wayne and Carole Parrish, as they prepare to move from Concord to Sudbury on August 16.

Prayers of thanksgiving for the ministry of Rick Underwood, and for God's abiding care for Rick and his family as they leave New England to seek a new call.

Prayers of thanksgiving for Sam Yoon's ministry at Bethany church and his service to the city of Boston. May God's blessings be upon him and his family in their new home.

For Cindy Kohlmann and her husband, Eric Markman, and Rob Mark and his wife, who are on a month-long mission trip in South Africa. And for the members of the Burlington, Sudbury, Waltham, Quincy Young Sang, Newton, KCB & Primera Iglesia churches, who also have served, or will serve, on mission trips this summer.

Prayers of thanksgiving: construction and permits are almost complete for KCB addition.

Susan Gleason becomes pastor of Haverhill Church in September

Churches in Transition

Hartford Street Presbyterian Church is calling a pastor.

The United Presbyterian Church at Whitinsville is in transition.

“Thy Will Be Done”

The Boston Premiere of “*THY WILL BE DONE*” is coming to the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, beginning on September 10. This film is a documentary of Sara Herwig's family, faith, marriage, interrupted path toward ordination, and the Waltham Church family. Contact the MFA for film dates and times.

Events

Please note: If you know of upcoming events that would be of interest to members of the Presbytery of Boston, please send your information to:
presbyteryofboston@verizon.net

August 11-14 – “*Church Unbound*,” Montreat Conference Center, NC. Keynote speaker, preacher, and workshop leader Brian McLaren. See www.covnetpres.org or www.montreat.org.

August 14 – *Gospel Concert*, Fourth Presbyterian Church, **South Boston**, 7:15 pm. Tickets \$10; children free. To benefit programs in the community.

September 10 – “*Thy Will Be Done*” documentary film begins showing at the Museum of Fine Arts, **Boston**. See more information on page 7 of this newsletter.

September 18 – “*All in the Family*” seminar, at the Presbyterian Church in **Burlington**, 9:00 to 4:00. \$15 per person; \$30 per church. This seminar will take a look at family systems theory and how it relates to church life, boundaries, assessing the health of our congregations and much more. The Rev. Dr. John Mokkaosian and the Rev. Dr. Dayl Hufford will conduct the program. As psychotherapists, clergy, and Clinical and Executive Directors of the New England Pastoral Institute who are continually providing consultation to congregations facing difficult circumstances, they are aptly qualified to address these issues for us. Please save the date and bring as many from your congregation as possible! Sponsored by CS&D.

October 18-22 – 2010 “Transformation Conference,” sponsored by Grace Presbytery and the PC(USA) Office of Church Growth, at First Presbyterian Church in Fort Worth, TX. Online registration is available at:

<http://gamc.pcusa.org/ministries/church-growth/church-transformation/>

October 23 – Presbyterian Partnership Group (PPG) Presbyterian Women’s meeting at First Presbyterian Church in **Worcester**. The program will include Fair Trade Shopping – Displays – Mission Trip Reports – Greetings from PW Synod guests – Music – Lunch – Worship with Communion – and will close with a special passing of the peace. Registration is \$12.00. For further information, contact Beth Denier at 781-231-9247 or a.denier@verizon.net.

June 30-July 2, 2011 – “Big Tent: Grow Christ's Church Deep and Wide,” Indianapolis, IN.

****Scholarships for seminars and conferences are available through the East Boston Leadership and Education Fund; please contact CS&D (chair-person Martha Spear) or Wayne Parrish for further information.**