

Presbytery of Boston

E-Connection

November 19, 2009

Gracias!

Thank you for your confidence, affirmation, and support in electing me to a new 5-year term as your General Presbyter, and granting me sabbatical time during the summer of 2010. In my opening remarks, I described a potential focus for our work together during the next two years as I visit sessions. Together we will seek to find ways for presbytery to more effectively support the health and growth of our congregations, and equip and support our pastors as they enter a rapidly changing future where skills may need to be re-tooled and strength derived from our connectional system. I am excited and energized by this vision of an externally-focused presbytery, and will share more details as I renew my commitment to either provide “Wayne’s Words” on a more regular basis, or develop this into a blog.

In keeping with the season of thanksgiving, Moderator Maria Chung wanted our worship focus on gratitude for our congregations and ministers, each committee and group that works to extend the mission of our presbytery, and the unity we find in that simple act of saying thanks. The following quote set the tone for worship, and is the theme of this column:

*“ Slowly I learned what I must have forgotten somewhere in my busy, well-planned, and very ‘useful’ life. I learned that everything that is, is freely given by the God of love. All is grace. Light and water, shelter and food, work and free time, children, parents and grandparents, birth and death – it is all given to us. Why? So that we can say **GRACIAS**, thanks: thanks to God, thanks to each other, thanks to all and everyone.*

Gracias!, Henri J. M. Nouwen, p. 187

During our time of prayer, we offered a big thank you to the Ft. Square Administrative Commission, and dismissed them with gratitude for good work and a job well done. We prayerfully recognized First Presbyterian Quincy as they concluded a year-long 125th Anniversary celebration, and later in the meeting presented them with a PCUSA symbol of our continued partnership. We also gave thanks for an inspiring and informative Presbytery Day, with good participation from 2/3 of our churches, despite the terrible weather.

The Presbytery Committee on Education for Mission also sponsored a pre-presbytery mission fair. There was an opportunity to learn first-hand about many of the programs and projects we fund through your PoB united mission pledge. We also were introduced to the work of the Cooperative Economics for Women in Revere, chosen by PCUSA Self-Development of People for a 2009 grant. We will feature them in an upcoming newsletter. Rob Weingartner, Executive Director of PCUSA Outreach

Foundation shared a vision of connecting local congregations with mission workers and ministry around the world. Information and a DVD are available from the office, or from Rob Perkins, who serves on the Outreach Foundation Board of Directors. Taik Joo Kim, PCUSA missionary serving in Kazakhstan and currently on furlough, was welcomed, and is available to speak to your congregation. You can contact either the General Presbyter or KCB for more details.

Finally, Beth Wieman was randomly chosen from eleven pastors who were recognized by ten different congregations for their ministry and faithful service. We will announce the prize once we negotiate with Beth and her family. Thanks to each and every one of you who took time to remember and recognize your pastor during the October Pastor Appreciation Month. The following pastors received recognition from members of their congregations:

Hurmon Hamilton, Elliott Hipp, Bart Kelso, Cindy Kohlmann, Liz Leavitt, Roger Lier, Rob Mark, Jennifer Wegter-McNelly, Sally Newhall, Burns Stanfield, and Beth Wieman.

So we have much to be thankful for, and as we approach Thanksgiving, let me take this opportunity to thank each of you for your dedication and faithfulness to Christ as together we seek to share God's Good News through the outreach of our congregations and presbytery. I keep you in my prayers, which always begin with GRACIAS!

Shalom,

Wayne Parrish, General Presbyter

Presbyterian Disaster Assistance

November 9, 2009

To: General and Executives Presbyters and Stated Clerks

Dear colleagues in ministry,

At this hour, Tropical Storm Ida is nearing the U.S. coastline after wreaking havoc in El Salvador, where well over 100 have been killed and tens of thousands left homeless. As Ida inches forward, and as families in Fort Hood, Texas, continue their struggles of healing, we are reminded of the ways that we are held together in Christ's one body. Storms and tragedies will continue to occur, but the church is steadfast in God's love.

We join you in prayer and preparation. You will want to know that Presbyterian Disaster Assistance is in communication with our church partners in El Salvador and with presbyteries most at risk from Ida. In addition, a PDA National Response Team has been mobilized at the request of presbyteries in the Fort Hood area and is already assisting churches as they seek to respond.

May God bless you in your ministry and all of us as we seek to be faithful in the unity of God's purpose.

Yours in Christ's service,

Bruce Reyes-Chow, Moderator of the 218th General Assembly (2008) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

Gradye Parsons, Stated Clerk of the General Assembly

Linda Bryant Valentine, Executive Director, General Assembly Mission Council

Board of Pensions Memo

Attention Church Treasurers and Business Administrators:

Submit Salary Changes Online Soon

Church treasurers and business administrators will be able to submit their 2010 salary changes online through a new feature on Benefits Connect, the Board's secure benefits Web site. Once a church treasurer or business administrator registers on Benefits Connect, he or she will be granted access to this new feature. Changing or confirming salaries will be completed through an easy-to-follow online process. Church treasurers and business administrators will receive more information by email in December.

Young Adult Volunteers

A national television audience learned this week what many of us have known for a long time—our Young Adult Volunteer (YAV) program changes lives. One of our recently returned YAVs, Shelvis Smith-Mather, shared his inspiring story during a CNN interview Sunday morning (watch it here: <http://www.pcusa.org/yav>). He told CNN that his faith was strengthened by seeing the African church at work in the face of poverty, conflict and other pressing problems "It's important to know that in the midst of the tragedy there's a whole lot of hope," he said. "There are a number people who are doing amazing works for God there and engaging in these issues, and that's encouraging."

Shelvis was ordained to the ministry of Word and Sacrament in July 2008. Not long after his ordination he and his wife, Nancy, who is also a PCUSA minister, went to Kenya through the YAV program. While in Kenya, Shelvis contributed to and edited a contextual Bible study manual aimed at fostering discussion around four critical issues—ethnicity, politics, land, and religion. These issues are the source of much conflict in the Horn of Africa and the continent's Great Lakes region. The manual includes a foreword by Archbishop Desmond Tutu.

"My hope in going was to see how the church was working globally, to see how the church is engaging issues, and to learn and grow," Shelvis said on CNN. His experience of learning, growing and seeing the church engage issues is repeated over and over again

in the lives of our Young Adult Volunteers. They are between the ages of 19 and 30 and commit to serve for one academic year in communities of need in the United States or abroad. This experience can inspire a lifetime of service to the church in a church-related vocation or as a lay leader.

I had to opportunity to meet Shelvis when he was a worship leader, along with YAV leader in Kenya, mission co-worker Phyllis Byrd [<http://www.pcusa.org/missionconnections/profiles/byrdochilop.htm>], at the All African Conference of Churches in Mozambique in December 2008. Several hundred people were spellbound as Shelvis sang in a deep, clear, *a capella* voice, "There is a Balm in Gilead" as he walked slowly down the center aisle from the back of the assembly hall. Shelvis spoke compellingly then of his experience as a YAV. How wonderful that he is able to share his witness in this widely broadcast interview.

My own daughter, Christie, was a YAV in San Antonio, Texas last year, working with refugees resettling in the United States. She, too, testifies to this being a transformative experience and she has many stories to share about lives so unlike her own, yet so inspiring in their hope and determination.

YAV applications are being accepted for the 2010–2011 year until January 20. I believe that growing this program can help us meet our goal of growing God's church deep and wide. It enriches the lives of the volunteers, the lives of the communities where they serve, and the life of our church. Please invite young adults you know to visit the YAV Web site and consider this life-changing opportunity.

Linda
Linda B. Valentine
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General Assembly Officers' Columns

The latest monthly columns by the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly and the Vice Moderator of the 218th General Assembly are now online at www.pcusa.org/oga.

Prayer Concerns & Celebrations

Prayers for Anna Foster and her family upon the death of Howard Foster. Howard was an Elder at Clinton, with service to both Presbytery and GA.

Prayers for Elder Kathy Ryan, Elder, Ft. Square, who was recently diagnosed with lymphoma.

Horatio Valdez II requests your continued prayers for his mother, Myriam Quinonez de Valdez, and his family.

Congratulations and best wishes to Rick Underwood, who has been accepted into the Doctorate of Ministry program at Austin Seminary.

PBS to air documentary on American religious history *Six-hour series coming in November 2010*

by Jerry L. Van Marter
Presbyterian News Service

LOUISVILLE - The Public Broadcasting System (PBS) will televise a six-hour documentary series on the history of religious life in America. The series - "God in America" - produced by WGBH in Boston, will air in November 2010.

"In America, religion matters and in American history, religion has always mattered," says promotional material for the year-from-now series. "The American story cannot be fully understood without understanding how religious ideas and spiritual experience shaped that history."

The shows will cover 500 years of American religious history, from the arrival of Columbus to the 2008 election of Barack Obama as president. It will track "the potent and complex interaction between religion and politics in the United States," as well as "the key role religious ideas and spiritual experience have played in important social reform movements from abolition to the social gospel and civil rights."

Included in "God in America" will be stories such as the native rebellion against Spanish colonizers and their priests; the mass spiritual upheavals of the Great Awakenings; the religious and spiritual dimensions of the Civil War; the high stakes debates in the courts and conflict in the streets over the meaning of religious liberty; and the intellectual and political struggles between the country's secular and religious cultures.

It will profile ordinary Americans and such religious and political leaders as John Winthrop and Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln and William Jennings Bryan, Billy Graham and the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Titles of the six hour-long episodes are "Revolutionary Religion"; "The Great Experiment" - about the constitutional guarantee of religious liberty and the separation of church state; "Baptized in Blood" - about slavery and the spiritual journey of Abraham

Lincoln; "Is Nothing Sacred?" - about how the major faith traditions split and were transformed by their varying responses to modernity; "Freedom's March" - about the resurgence of organized religion after World War II in response to communism and the civil rights movement; and "In God We Trust" - about the contentious three decades from the mid-1970s to the 2008 election that led to the rise of conservative evangelicals as a political force and the explosion of religious diversity in the country. A Web site will go live in April 2010 to provide resources for civic and religious groups that wish to use the series for educational and other programmatic activities.
<http://www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2009/09944.htm>

E-Connection Classifieds

A member of the Hyde Park church has a sister in Nigeria who is starting a new Presbyterian Church there. She is interested in finding some choir robes in good condition for an adult choir. They are not focused on any particular color, although they do not want black. If you can donate choir robes in various sizes for about 30 people, please contact Beth Wieman at ew8181@aol.com.

Church of the Covenant is currently seeking applicants for the position of YOUTH DIRECTOR. Applicants are requested to post or e-mail a letter expressing interest and a resume *to*:

Church of the Covenant
Attn: Youth Director Search Committee
67 Newbury Street
Boston, MA 02116
cotcbos@hotmail.com

Applications received by November 30, 2009 will be given first consideration. Please contact me if you have questions or require additional information. Thank you for your interest and assistance.

Sincerely,

Brad Day, Chair,
Personnel Committee
bradleyday@comcast.net
617-943-4229