

Presbytery of Boston

September E-Connection

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

August 12, 2008

Dear Friends,

I hope you are well and enjoying the summer months. I write this in the midst of one of my annual continuing education events in beautiful Pacific Grove, CA. This is an event I have been coming to pretty much every year since I was ordained and is one that anchors my journey – not just in my ministry in this denomination, but as a child of God, striving to be faithful every day.

One of the best parts of this event is that people here are made up of an amazing array of ministry and personal contexts and experiences. I am always moved by the stories of service that are shared, not just because people are doing great things in the name of Jesus Christ, but because people, year after year after year, continue to be energized and inspired to be the hands, hearts, and minds of Christ in the world.

As we were engaged in the academic segment of our day this morning, I couldn't help but think about the gift it is to be in a place where we could listen to the stories of faith that each of us brought. Their stories in some ways become my stories, mine become theirs, and, in the end, we have a deeper understanding of who God may indeed be for each of us.

This is the posture I am taking as Moderator of the 218th General Assembly – to listen. Some would have me make judgments, declarations, and pronouncements about the relative merits of what I hear as I begin my itineration time. However, I think the best thing I can model right now is to listen to what we are saying and, in response, through the gift of this position, share with the church what we are in fact saying to one another. This does not mean that I will claim any kind of false objectivity or that I will not form a personal opinion or assessment, but it does mean that my primary posture right now is to listen.

Living the discipline of listening is crucial right now. With the many, many, many, many – Did I say many? – voices, perspectives, and opinions being raised in just as many venues and contexts, it would behoove us to remember that listening is a vital part of our discernment. As I engage in this practice, I firmly believe we must force ourselves to not only listen to the voices with whom we already know we agree to best discern the will of God for our lives. Regardless of the issue: theological, social, or ecclesiastical, listening to opposing voices can be one of the most difficult and rewarding opportunities of

our collective life as a denomination. And regardless of where we end up as a denomination, if we do not do this, we will not get there with grace.

Now I am not talking about some “pie in the sky, if we just listen we will soon be surrounded by puppies and butterflies and the world will be a better place” ideal, but a posture of listening that embodies humility of spirit grounded in a confidence of faith. In other words, I believe that we can be confident in our faith, beliefs, and discernment so that listening to other voices does not weaken our faith, but deepens it. Just because we hear it, does not mean we have to believe it; but if we never hear it, we'll never know of the possibilities.

As I approach this discipline in my own local ministry as well as Moderator, here are a few reasons why I am committed to listening to the other.

- Listening to the other pushes me to better articulate, re-examine, and refine what I believe. If I can't articulate what I believe with confidence and conviction, beyond scripted slogans and bumper-sticker faith, I may need to think about the deeper foundations of where I have landed at this point in time. Listening to the other challenges me to come to a deeper understanding of what I claim to believe.
- Listening to the other makes known to me possible “blind spots” or unintentional ramifications of what I believe, say, etc. During the General Assembly, someone who disagreed with me on my position on homosexuality said that all this talk of “the inevitability of ordination of GLBT folks” was not helpful to him as he was trying to find a way to remain in community within our denomination. He basically said to me that even if that is what you think, voicing it can often say to someone who is in disagreement, “We are just waiting for you to evolve, mature theologically, and/or catch up to the rest of us.” And while some may feel this way, using this as an argument for change is weak at best and condescending at worst. His story taught me something that day and I have no other choice but to remember that as part of our church's story.
- Listening to the other builds community. This seems like a no-brainer, but as we know, oftentimes interactions disguised as dialogues or discussions are really opportunities to debate and/or talk at one another. Listening rarely happens because, if we really did listen, we would have to admit that the other person was not pure evil and was quite possibly even human. This may seem extreme, but we all do it. When we can put someone in a box: liberal, apostate, oppressor, progressive, conservative, neo-con, emergent, etc., we can deny their very humanity – that of struggle, discernment, creation, and faith. But when we take the time to listen, even if we are diametrically opposed, have colliding personalities, or we think they are just plain wrong, we can no longer so easily set aside the Christ-centered covenant we have with them. By listening we inherently claim community.

Let's work to listen to one another. We don't even have to like one another. In fact, we may not. But I think it is in all of our best interests for the building up of the body

of Christ, in whatever form we take in the future, to listen.

Trying to listen,

Bruce

www.pcusa.org/gamoderator

www.mod.reyes-chow.com

News from Presbyterian Women

Presbyterian Women's History of Giving: From 1989 to 2007, support to Presbyterian Women through mission pledges amounted to \$61,644,282.00. Of that, \$52,465,326.00 was given to the overall budget of PC(USA). This support was given without restrictions so it could be used where it was most needed. In addition, PW also supported the mission of the church during that period through the Birthday Offering, \$17,002,501.00, and the Thank Offering, \$20,008,798.00. Although Presbyterian Women in the Presbytery of Boston have not asked for pledges from individual churches, your gifts are greatly appreciated and help us increase our annual pledge to the Churchwide organization.

Global Exchange: Twenty-eight Presbyterian women and staff, representing all sixteen synods, are participating in the 2008 Global Exchange, September 8-26. They will join women of the Czech Republic, Ukraine, and Hungary. Our synod representative is Jenny Lee. We hope to have her visit Boston Presbytery next spring.

Thank Offering: Resource materials are available through PC(USA), PDS Prepaid Processing, PO Box 643674, Pittsburgh, PA 15264-3674 or call 800/524-2612.

Churchwide Gathering: For a preview of the July 11-15, 2009 event, check with Beth Denier at the Presbytery meeting. *Horizons* will also have information this fall.

Presbytery Day: The PWP Coordinating Team is planning our workshop, "Putting a Human Face on Immigration." Plan to have a group attend that event on October 25 at the Needham Church.

Do you need help getting a PW group started? Does your group have a new moderator? The Presbytery PW Coordinating Team would like to keep in touch with local PW groups or potential groups. Contact Beth Denier at a.denier@verizon.net or call 781-231-9247.

Horizons is moving: As of October 15, 2008, the fulfillment house for *Horizons* is changing from PDS to Congers, New York. After that date, subscriptions and inquiries should be mailed to: Horizons/Presbyterian Women, PO Box 421, Congers, NY 10920-0421

866/802-3635 (toll free) / 845/267-3478 (FAX)

horizons@CambeyWest.com (email)

www.pcusa.org/horizons (web site - no change)

Prayer Concerns & Celebrations

Prayers for Rick Underwood and his family as they mourn the recent loss of Rick's father.

Ken Dewar has a preliminary diagnosis of lupus, with several more tests to rule out other causes of his anemia and weight loss.

Wren Collé asks for continued prayers for her parents and family.

Received from Jane Bailey, Clerk of Session for Roxbury Presbyterian Church on August 24: "Mrs. Hilda Jane Miller passed away last week. She is the wife of one of our former pastors-Rev. Francis Miller. She may be known to many of our Presbytery members. RPC will be hosting a memorial service, the information about which I will send you as soon as I know."

We warmly welcome Roger Lier as Interim Pastor of First United Presbyterian Church in Cambridge.

Rob Mark is beginning a new position as a chaplain at Harvard.

Carole Parrish's artwork will be featured at the Oasis Coffee House (at First Presbyterian Church Waltham) this month, and an artist's reception is being planned. Keep checking their website www.oasiscoffeehouse.org/ for more information. You may also see Carole's work at the September Presbytery meeting.

From Alison John: "Rob and I are going to Africa in October with a small group of pastors through The Outreach Foundation (a PCUSA mission organization). Here is more info on the trip-

'PURPOSE: Amidst turmoil, religious pressure, poverty and disease, the church in Africa continues to grow by leaps and bounds. We have much to learn from our partners there. The trip will feature visits with church partners in Malawi, Mozambique and Zimbabwe. Co-leaders for the trip will be The Outreach Foundation's Rob Weingartner and Ted & Sue Wright, PCUSA missionaries and regional liaisons based in Lusaka, Zambia

This will be an opportunity to experience the vitality and challenges of the African church and to reflect upon, at a critical distance, our own congregations' opportunities for missional renewal. We will meet with church leaders in each place we visit, and we will explore with them what it means to be members together in the body of Christ. Before returning home, we'll debrief at a private game preserve.

Toward the end of the trip we'll have a full-day seminar on partnership involving a cross-cultural group that will include many Africans. We'll do some serious reflection on biblical and contextual understandings of partnership, on mutuality, dependency, communication, and practical matters.'

Presbytery of Boston Meeting Calendar

September

3 – Council, 7:00 p.m., NPC

- 4 – COM, 7:00 p.m., NPC
- 8 – **Reports Deadline**
- 11 - CS&D, Presbytery office
- 16 – CEM, 6:30 p.m., NPC
- 22 – Presbytery Meeting, First Presbyterian Church of Waltham

Upcoming Events

Peter Koutoujian, the chair of the Massachusetts Legislature's Joint Committee on Public Health, will be meeting with Jean Southard and a couple of the members of First Waltham on **September 8 at 2:00 p.m. at the Waltham Church**. One subject will be medication and other necessary health care items that are not being covered by Mass Health. They will also be talking about providing care for younger people with severe disabilities who are inappropriate for nursing homes or subsidized apartment complexes designed for the elderly. First Waltham invites other pastors or congregants in the Presbytery who know of unmet health care needs to join them for the discussion.

The Community Day Center of Waltham is having a big yard and bake sale fundraiser on **Saturday, September 13, from 9:30am-1:30pm**, rain or shine, at **First Presbyterian Church of Waltham**. All proceeds will benefit the Community Day Center of Waltham, a day shelter that supports the homeless and low-income adults.

The **Institute for Christian Leadership** (formerly the Leadership Training Center) will be celebrating a graduation on **Saturday, September 20, at 7:00 p.m. at NPC**.

Lord's Day Alliance Annual Conference, October 2-3 in Boston. See www.sundayonline.org.

32nd Annual Racial Ethnic Convocation - October 3-4, 2008 - "*Drawn in and Sent Out by Jesus*". The flyer and registration form can be downloaded from the Synod's website at www.synodne.org/mediagallery/album.php?aid=39&page=1.

October 19-21, Reverend Professor Peter Gomes to deliver the Massachusetts Bible Society Beck Evening Lectures. See www.massbible.org.

Take Back Your Time Day, October 24. Resources available through MCC (www.masscouncilofchurches.org) and www.timeday.org.

Remember that October is Clergy Appreciation Month!

Ordination Anniversaries for October & November

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| Stan Johnson | 10/5/86 | 22 years |
| John Chung | 10/8/00 | 8 years |
| Horatio Valdez-Romero | 10/9/59 | 49 years |
| Martha Spear | 10/11/87 | 21 years |
| Aida Spencer | 10/14/73 | 35 years |
| William Spencer | 10/14/73 | 35 years |
| Allen Fairfax | 10/24/04 | 4 years |
| John Buchanan | 10/31/56 | 52 years |
| Sen-Yuan Su | 11/6/83 | 25 years |
| Bart Kelso | 11/21/82 | 26 years |

Congratulations and thank you!

Mileage rate Increase Announced by IRS

“The Internal Revenue Service...announced an increase in the optional standard mileage rates for the final six months of 2008. Taxpayers may use the optional standard rates to calculate the deductible costs of operating an automobile for business, charitable, medical or moving purposes.

The rate will increase to 58.5 cents a mile for all business miles driven from July 1, 2008, through Dec. 31, 2008. This is an increase of eight (8) cents from the 50.5 cent rate in effect for the first six months of 2008, as set forth in [Rev. Proc. 2007-70](#).

In recognition of recent gasoline price increases, the IRS made this special adjustment for the final months of 2008. The IRS normally updates the mileage rates once a year in the fall for the next calendar year.” *Excerpted from the IRS Newswire*

Mission Yearbooks

We will take your orders at the September meeting, but they must be prepaid and then picked up at the November Presbytery meeting to avoid shipping charges. Information can be found at <http://www.pcusa.org/missionyearbook/>. Order forms with price information will be sent out to presbytery members by email before the meeting.

Presbytery of Boston Directory

Did you know that the Presbytery of Boston Directory is available online? When you log on, go to the “About Us” page, and you will find the “directory” link in the left-hand column. Please keep us informed of any changes in your contact information: presbyteryofboston@verizon.net.