

DIGEST

A short review of the Presbytery of Grand Canyon meeting of January 22, 2005
held at First Presbyterian Church, Sun City –
Co-hosted by First Presbyterian Church, Peoria

Roll for January 22, 2005

Churches: Of 70 churches, 48 were present and 22 were not.

Commissioners:

Ministers Of the 101 non-retired members on the combined roll of active members in service in congregations, in other service, in ministry beyond the jurisdiction and members-at-large, 57 were present and 44 were not.

Of the 113 retired ministers on the rolls, 22 were present and 91 were not.

Elders Of 139 Elders authorized to attend as voting members from churches under the Imbalance Procedure approved on January 24, 2004, 71 were present.

Of 9 Commissioned Lay Pastors 7 were present and 2 were not.

Of 15 Elder Officers of the Presbytery or Elder members of Council 10 were present and 5 were not.

Summary Voting Members Present (unduplicated count)

Ministers 79

Elders 88

Total 167

Corresponding Members Enrolled 5

Visitors Present 31

Call to Order

Moderator Rev. Gale Watkins called the meeting to Order with the singing of *Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee* and prayer at 9:00 a.m. The Stated Clerk was present, and a quorum reported.

Presbytery 104 by Rev. Gale Watkins

The Moderator began: “If you’ve taken part in a lot of Presbytery meetings, you’re so accustomed to it that you no longer notice. But if you’re new, you can’t help but wonder — what’s with all this paper? You look around and see the old hands. They never look up, no matter who is speaking. Their focus is on their papers, which they sort and shuffle like a riverboat gambler. This is my fourth orientation, Presbytery 104, and today’s topic is paper.” The Moderator then went on to outline the various “C” [Call]; “P” [Packet] and other papers, neither marked “C” or “P,” and how these various papers are either numbered and/or used in a presbytery meeting. He concluded: “But even if one of these papers isn’t discussed, who knows? It may have a message so valuable to you that it made the day worthwhile. Is it a good thing that we use all this paper? I suppose that reading routine items saves us a lot of time — that may be a good thing. And churches with recycling bins will make some money when their commissioners return. But it would not be so good if we spent all our time looking down at our papers, sorting and shuffling; and then got up to leave, only to discover that there were some people here too. There are people here. It may be good at some point to lift your head, look around, even say hello.” The

full text of his remarks has been posted on the web at
<http://www.pbygrandcanyon.org/pdfs/presbytery104.pdf>

Service of Worship

A Service of Worship was held under the leadership of outgoing Moderator Rev. Gale Watkins whose Sermon was titled *Redeemed People, Redeemed Speech* with Scripture Readings from Proverbs 15:1-2,4,7; 18:4,6-8,20-21; 25:11-12 Ephesians 4:4:1,14-16, 22-32. Participants in the Worship Service were: The Rev. John Barklind, Grif Vautier, and Mac Schafer and Elders Dick Coffelt, Connie Brodland and Cecil Patterson. The “Lighting of the Peace Candle” was accompanied with a Litany of Confession of Hope for those suffering from Mental Illness and those who surround them. The Rev(s) Barlkind and Vautier administered the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper. A time of remembering those ministers and elders who died in the Faith was held. Elder Cecil Patterson was installed as Moderator of the Presbytery of Grand Canyon. The music ministry with combined choirs from First Presbyterian Church, Sun City and First Presbyterian Church, Peoria was under the direction of Dr. William Van Ornam, Organist and Choir Director.

http://www.pbygrandcanyon.org/pdfs/pres_mtg_jan05/sermon_jan2005.pdf

Reflections from the Moderator – Elder Cecil Patterson

Newly elected Moderator, Cecil Patterson, centered his remarks of reflection on the importance of volunteerism and dedication to service of our church members that are the hallmarks and at the core and heart of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

Presbyterian Frontier Fellowship – Caroline Kurtz

Caroline Kurtz spoke of the work of the Presbyterian Frontier Fellowship, a validated mission support group of the denomination. PFF raises vision, prayer and financial support for mission outreach to unchurched groups of people throughout the world. Already raising support for nearly 100 projects with various groups, PFF is also constantly finding new frontier mission opportunities.

Caroline commented that the media suggests that Islam not Christianity is the rising faith. However, she pointed out that Christianity is enjoying a radical revival and a return to spiritual roots in many parts of the world. While in the Western World our congregations age and shrink and we are faced with declining membership, God is doing amazing things around the world. In the North American Continent there are 260 million Christians, in Asia 313 million Christians, in Africa 360 million Christians, and in South America there are 480 million Christians. The center of gravity of Christian churches has shifted and third world Christians have exploded. Presbyterian Frontier Fellowship has projects underway in Siberia, India, Africa, and Asia

As a member of the PFF staff, Caroline has visited projects in India, among the untouchables; in Hungary and the Ukraine among the Roma or Gypsy people; in Ethiopia among rural animists coming eagerly to follow Jesus; and in Turkey, where they say “To be a Turk is to be a Muslim,” but where there is a growing interest in the message of Jesus. In August, she coordinated another service trip to Turkey, and in November another trip to Ethiopia. Next spring, she is planning a trip to visit and assist PC(USA) missionaries in Tajikistan.

To encourage churches to engage in these mission projects, Caroline Kurtz has spoken in many congregations and presbyteries throughout the denomination and she thanked Grand Canyon for the opportunity to be present to address the presbytery on the exciting mission work of the Presbyterian Frontier Fellowship.

***The Trinity, God’s Love Overflowing* - Presentation and Small Group Discussion**

The Rev. Dr. Charles Wiley, member of New Hope Presbytery, and Associate for Theology in the Office of Theology and Worship of the Presbyterian Church (USA) in Louisville, led a discussion of the draft paper *The Trinity, God’s Love Overflowing* presented at the 216th General Assembly (2004) and now before the church for additional study and comment. Dr. Wiley works with General Assembly Theological issues and issues around science and faith. He has authored or co-authored: *Hope in the Lord Jesus Christ, Ordinary and Extraordinary Discipline: Mutual Accountability in the Reformed Tradition*, and the theological section of *Transforming Families*. Born in Surinam, South Africa as the son of Pilgrim Holiness missionaries, his life has been marked

by a strong sense of God's love and a commitment to the mission of the church. He received his B.A. in Religion from Davidson College in 1984. After earning his Master of Divinity at Duke, he earned a Ph.D. at Princeton Theological Seminary.

In the draft paper before the church for study, *The Trinity: God's Love Overflowing*, the Trinity is described as "the sum of the gospel"—we cannot fully comprehend the Christian gospel apart from the doctrine of the Trinity. *God's Love Overflowing* is in three parts: Confessing God's Overflowing Love (more doctrinal in mode), Participating in God's Overflowing Love (more liturgical), and Shalom: Embodying God's Overflowing Love (more missional). The paper treats the Trinity as a treasure to understand and live out more than as a problem to be solved: "The church's doctrine of the Trinity proclaims that God's abundant and costly love is present to the world through Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit." How might this understanding of God permeate our theology? How might it saturate our worship? How might we understand our mission in the world to be participation in the mission of the Triune God?

Following an initial presentation by Dr. Wiley presbyters were divided into small groups for discussion of the following questions: "Do you ever get confused trying to speak of the Trinity? What are we saying about God when we say that God is 'one in substance, and yet distinct in three persons? A central claim of our understanding of the Trinity is that it is not fueled by speculation but by the outpouring of God's abundant love for us...' Many people in the church might instinctively disagree. What do you think?"

After reassembling for the remainder of the presentation, Dr. Wiley closed with presbyters being asked to take a few minutes to meditate on the following while it was read slowly several times:

"All Christian spirituality is Trinitarian – a way of perceiving and being by which we are conformed to the person of Christ, brought into communion with God, other persons, and every living creature by the creative and bonding presence of the Holy Spirit, Love's Gifting." (Downey, Michael, *Altogether Gift: A Trinitarian Spirituality*, Maryknoll, NY, Orbis Books, 2000.)

Annual Report of the Presbytery Executive and Chairperson of the Presbytery Council

Ken Moe, Executive Presbyter

Here are some excerpts from his report: "The presbytery finished 2004 in the black, which is good news... The sale of the Interchurch Center is in process... Please pray that no hitches develop in the sale process..."

A major challenge we will be facing in 2005 is with our property in Ganado. At present, we are leasing most of the land and buildings to the Navajo Health Foundation, which is operating Sage Memorial Hospital. The current lease extends to 2034, but the hospital is currently conducting a feasibility study regarding construction of a new hospital building, which includes considering sites other than our Ganado property. The Ganado Task Force is working diligently to consider the best use of the land, as well as management issues if the hospital should move or be closed for other reasons... Stay tuned for developments in 2005.

I am encouraged by the new efforts of the Evangelism/Church Development Committee to do strategic planning for developing new churches in the presbytery...

I want to devote a little time to reflecting on a change in our corporate life that has accelerated over the past year. Whether this is a beneficial thing or not I'll leave for you to decide. The ethos of the Presbytery of Grand Canyon historically has been characterized by frontier friendliness and a live and let live philosophy... Traditionally, the presbytery as a whole has honored and respected the work and decisions of committees, commissions, and elected officers.

In recent years that ethos has been changing somewhat. I see an increase in ideological activism, with activists making concerted efforts to influence and affect the work of churches and the presbytery. In the past, various issue-oriented organizations simply advocated their views through publications and public forums, but there is a trend now toward direct action aimed at governing bodies, sessions and the presbytery.

I recognize that some of what I am about to say may be heard as self-serving, but so many people have approached me with concerns about the activities of a particular group that the matter needs to be brought before the presbytery.

In recent years, a group calling itself the Truth in Love Network has been active within the bounds of this presbytery... This group has sought to influence and challenge the work of the presbytery Nominating Committee and other entities of the presbytery...I don't know what this level of activism portends for our future as a presbytery. It is certainly a change from the more genteel way of doing business that we have known in the past. My observation is that escalation of activism from one side usually invites escalation from the other side, so if this trend continues, we may be in for some stormy power struggles. I hope not, but I fear it is yet another example of our denominational descent into de facto congregationalism. Such activism is akin to the shadow denomination concept developed a few years ago by members of the Presbyterian Coalition...

Now, maybe I'm overly sensitive to these kinds of issues. After all, my job as a church bureaucrat is to protect the interests of the institution over against its critics. And God knows; the institution sometimes needs critics. So, I'm looking for wisdom about these matters from the assembled presbyters. I think it would be good for the various entities of the presbytery to spend time discerning and discussing what the appropriate boundaries for advocacy groups ideally should be.

Shifting subjects... Historically, Grand Canyon Presbytery ranks near the top among presbyteries in giving to special offerings...once again responding generously to special needs, this time to victims of the tsunami. To date, the presbytery has received \$28,242 from fourteen churches and individuals to pass on to Presbyterian Disaster Assistance, and I am confident that more will come. For this we can all be grateful. Thank you."

Kate Wilmoth, Chair of Presbytery Council

Here are some excerpts from her report: "Let me begin by thanking you, the members of Grand Canyon Presbytery for giving me the opportunity to serve the church in a different way these past three years. It was mostly a pleasant time, always a growing time, and sometimes a challenging time for me as I served as Moderator Elect, Moderator, and Chair of Council...

At our January 6th Council meeting we took a few minutes to reflect on this past year, and one of the positive comments was that the Committees of Presbytery were doing their business in a manner that did not require Council to rethink or redo their work.

Another reason, I think, it was a good year was the way Council members listened to each other and showed respect for each other during discussions and decision-making. It seemed to me to be a very congenial group of people with strong commitments to the Church and to each other and to the committees that they chaired.

This Council updated a paper that was developed by the 1996 Council titled, *Council Members' Commitments to Each Other*...We decided to adopt and adapt as preamble to our list of commitments, the preamble to the mission statement of the General Assembly's Peace, Unity and Purity Task Force. (Only the names have been changed...)

Preamble:

"We the members of Presbytery Council, covenant together that: We will be in prayer for each other and for our work that we may faithfully serve God, follow Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church, and be guided by the Holy Spirit."

Some of our relational commitments are:

- Include all who have a stake in an issue, if possible
- Address a conflict or disagreement with a Council member before mentioning it to anyone else
- Fully listen to and respect each individual
- Represent the Council's decisions as my own
- Place the Council's interests before my own
- Speak with candor and honesty

- Trust each other
- Be tolerant and understanding when expectations are not met
- Call a “time out” when I feel any of these pledges is violated

It occurred to me that it might be a good use of valuable time for each committee of Presbytery; each church session and Board of Deacons, and even each committee of session to draw up their own list of commitments, to use as a guide when the agenda gets sticky. As we all know, after tempers flare it is way too late to set up rules of conduct... I think this might give us all a chance to think about how we relate to each other as we do our work together as the people of God. A chance to practice civility, if you will, and learn how to disagree without being disagreeable --- to stand for our convictions without being obstinate – to be candid without being arrogant – and so on.

I do believe this would not only make our work easier, more productive, more rewarding, but also create a much better, more authentic witness to those we serve and the world-at-large.

I also want to personally thank all of you who have expressed your support and encouragement to me over these past three years. Thank you so very much, and God Bless.”

The full text of the Joint Report of the Executive Presbyter and Chair of the Presbytery Council has been posted on the web at: http://www.pbygrandcanyon.org/pdfs/2005annual_report_pe_councilchair.pdf

Recognition for Service and Expressions of Thanks

Outgoing Chair of Council – Elder Kate Wilmoth

A presentation was made to Kate, in recognition of her dedicated service as Moderator-Elect, Moderator and Chair of Council. Presbyters responded with a round of applause.

Actions Taken

Election of Moderator-Elect

Upon nomination by the Nomination Committee and an opportunity for nominations from the floor, the Presbytery elected Rev. Dr. David Hodgson as Moderator-Elect. Rev. Hodgson serves as Pastor to Congregational Church of the Valley (UCC) and holds dual standing in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) the United Church of Christ. He was ordained by Newark Presbytery in 1967 and has been a member of the Presbytery of Grand Canyon since 1993. He received his Doctor of Ministry in Theology degree from San Francisco Theological Seminary in 2003. In Grand Canyon, prior to serving Congregational Church of the Valley, he served as Interim Pastor to Gilbert Presbyterian Church and Kingman Presbyterian Church; was a Minister Commissioner to the 209th General Assembly (1997) and has served on the Social Justice and Peacemaking and Representation Committees as well as Member-at-large of the Presbytery Council.

New Members Received

Cynthia Jennison, a member of Ohio Valley Presbytery, called to be Associate Pastor to Mountain View Presbyterian Church was introduced and received into membership.

Oren J. Foust Jr. (Jerry), a member of Shenandoah Presbytery, called to be Designated Pastor to Historic First Presbyterian Church was introduced and received into membership.

Thomas A. Erickson (HR), a member of National Capital Presbytery, who recently served as Interim Pastor to National Presbyterian Church, Washington, DC and who previously served as Pastor to Valley Presbyterian Church prior to retirement, was introduced and welcomed back into membership.

Yearly Report Of Imbalance

The Stated Clerk called attention to the Yearly Report of Imbalance of minister members and elders commissioners provided with the Call to the Meeting. Presbytery ADOPTED the proposed Motion that the Presbytery of Grand Canyon, in accordance with the policy adopted at its June 19, 2001 Stated Meeting, invite the Sessions of the 27 churches beginning with number 2 (Apache Junction – John Calvin) on the printed Alphabetical Listing of Churches on the Basis of Location/Church and continuing on to number 28 (Paradise Valley – Palo Cristi) on the list, to elect one additional Elder Commissioner for the remaining meetings in 2005 through the first meeting of 2006.

Annual Meeting of the Corporation

The Presbytery Meeting was recessed, and the Annual Meeting of the Corporation was called to order with prayer by Elder Kate Wilmoth, President of the Corporation. Presbytery VOTED to name the following as officers of the Corporation as indicated: President – Rev. Gale Watkins; Vice President – Elder Cecil Patterson; Treasurer - Elder Shirley Randolph; Secretary - Elder Richard Coffelt; and Executive Secretary - Rev. Kenneth Moe. Rev. Moe reported that the Annual Audit for 2004 was in process with the Henry and Horne Accounting Firm. Following the closing prayer by Rev. Watkins the Presbytery meeting was reconvened

Bills And Overtures Committee Report

The members of the Bills and Overtures Committee presented recommendations concerning the Proposed Constitutional Amendments Approved by the 216th General Assembly (2004) and Recommended to the Presbyteries for their Affirmative or Negative Votes. Questions were invited from the floor for the purpose of clarification. The voting will take place at the March Stated Meeting.

Thanks to the Hosts

Thanks were given to First Presbyterian Church, Sun City and First Presbyterian Church, Peoria and all those who were so helpful in arranging this meeting.

Next Meeting

The next Stated Meeting of Presbytery will be Friday – Saturday, March 18-19, 2005 at John Calvin Presbyterian Church, Apache Junction.

Adjournment

Presbytery adjourned with Elder Cecil Patterson giving the closing prayer at 3:45 PM.