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**Details on pp. 32-33**



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## The Co-Moderator's Column



### Mission in the Big Tent

By Bill Dummer

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There was another “big tent” event of sorts last month in Cincinnati: World Mission Celebration '09. Since my Honorable Retirement in 2006, one of a few more hats I wear is as Coordinator of Milwaukee Presbytery's partnership with a presbytery in Ghana. As such, each year I attend the meeting of the Ghana Mission Network. In 2007 and this year the network met in conjunction with the World Mission Celebration. And, as in 2007, I also registered for the WMC to learn what I can about global/world mission.

Two of the workshops at the WMC focused on the Dallas Mission Invitation Working Group. Our former Co-Moderator, Jake Young, represented the Witherspoon Society at the original Dallas Mission Invitation consultation in January of '08. [“An Invitation to Expanding Partnership in God's Mission” (a.k.a. The Dallas Statement) is on the PCUSA website at <http://www.pcusa.org/calltomission/read-invite.htm>.] Jake let me know about these Working Group workshops, so I switched to them from two others I had signed up for, so I could represent our organization.

At the first session we met in randomly-assigned small groups that were each to flesh out a couple of the eight characteristics of doing mission in partnership. The group I was in worked on the following two characteristics:

- Provides mutual encouragement and honors different gifts in ministry and recognizes interdependence and the need for mutual transformation.
- Communicates openly (both listening and speaking); acts transparently; and is mutually accountable.

Even though I had not been at the Dallas meeting, I was able to contribute to the conversation, based on my experience with the Ghana partnership for three years and the network for seven. Most of the Sample Practices that the workshops came up with are close to my own thinking, in terms of theology of mission and concern for the whole gospel.

Some of the plenary speakers were pretty good (each of five of the six plenary sessions focused on a different continent). Hunter Farrell, director of Presbyterian World Mission delivered the opening plenary address. I hope the 700 people present were listening when

he said things such as: “We need to work with our partners to identify the root causes of poverty and injustice.” “Our partners are calling us to go deeper. Our partners are calling us to share and trust.”

The theme of the celebration was **branches of the same vine**. I heard this demonstrated not only in the plenary presentations, and saw it as well in the exhibit hall. This is not your grandparents’ world mission (missionaries sent to bring the world to Christ through evangelization). This is also not your parents’ world mission, when a thousand fraternal workers were sent out by a central denominational mission board. For example, the World Mission office is searching for a new Associate for *Africa* (to take the place of Doug Welch, who has been promoted to Associate Director in charge of

partnerships). Only a few years ago, there were two or three staff people for Africa. The Presbyterian limb of the same vine now has many branches. There were 40 exhibitors. Justice-oriented mission was represented by ACSWP, Presbyterian Women, Young Adult Volunteers, Church World Service, Akrofi-Christaller Institute of Theology, Mission & Culture (a graduate institution in Ghana whose students come from all over Africa to learn indigenous theology), Sabeel International, Presbyterian Peace Fellowship, Compassion Peace and Justice, and Presbyterian Hunger Program.

The other side of the spectrum was represented by the Medical Benevolence Foundation, The Outreach Foundation, Presbyterian Global Fellowship, Presbyterian Frontier Fellow-

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**If you’re looking for a community of progressive Presbyterians, witnessing and working for peace and justice in God’s world, we can help provide you with information, theological reflection, and companionship on the journey.**

**Just use the membership form on our website at  
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ship, World Mission Initiative, and New Wilmington Mission Conference. I think the other 26 would be somewhere in the middle of the road. The exhibit booths were all intermingled.

In the spirit of the Dallas Statement, we met in an atmosphere of working together on the common ground of doing mission in a changing church and a changing world. It was an opportunity to learn from each other how to do better what we hear God calling each of us to do. If there was a sense of competitiveness among the various organizations present, I did not feel it.

Voices/Witherspoon is a respected and welcome participant at the mission table. Let us grow and be strong so we may maintain our support for a whole gospel mission of justice and wisdom.



## About using this on-line version of *Network News*

### A note on the URL links

Because many of you will be reading this issue of *Network News* on-line, we are trying to provide working versions of all the URL links included here. The problem is that when some links are too long to fit on one line, they get broken into two or more lines, and then they won't work. So we've tried to shrink them to fit on one line of type, which means they get really really small.

Sorry if this creates problems for you, but we hope it will be helpful!

### If you print this issue for yourself, you get to choose the page size!

To print it in the size intended for publication (6 by 8 inches), when you click on "Print" in the Adobe Reader software, look at the choices on the "Print" screen, and set the "Page Scaling" choice at "None."

To print it in full 8 1/2 by 11 inch pages (with larger type!) set the Page Scaling choice at "Fit to printable area."

### For a better quality print version, please download a higher-resolution file at

<http://www.witherspoonsociety.org/NN%20fall%2009%20lg.pdf> .



## The Editor's Spot

# “Be still, and know ...!”

## A reflection for the time of Advent

### Living in a noisy world

Does anybody else get the feeling that things are getting just too noisy? There's too much talk – much of it loud, mean-spirited, hostile, appealing to our deepest fears and darkest anxieties. And a lot of the talk is aimed not at finding solutions to problems, not at improving life for our neighbors or the wider world. It seems to be aimed at just the opposite: gaining more power and wealth for those who already have a goodly share of those, and keeping others from getting even a little bit more of the good life.

But let's face it: this is not a brand new digital-age problem. Our biblical tradition tells of a time centuries before Jesus' birth, when our ancestors undertook a mighty economic development project that we have come to call the Tower of Babel. The Creator, not welcoming such attempts at reaching for the heavens, sabotaged the whole venture by scrambling the builders' languages so they couldn't communicate, and therefore couldn't work together to finish the job. Too much noise, blocking real communication, ended the first skyscraper.

of more languages, and perhaps less true communication, than the people of Babel had to deal with. It's not just a matter of English and German and Swahili and Urdu and technological languages and scientific jargon and computer code. It's also the mind-numbing quantity of it all, even when it's a language we think we understand. I'm reminded of this every day when I go on-line to check news, keep in touch with friends, and putter with the Voices/Witherspoon website.

With websites and blogs and social networks and e-mails, there's always more out there than I can possibly comprehend. More than I can begin to care about, even. A lot of it is good stuff – intelligent, informative, interesting. But it's all too much.

And when this happens to a nation, or now to the world of nations, it takes a toll. Too easily we become overwhelmed by the noise, and lose sight of what matters for ourselves, for our communities and nations. Differences of opinion are instantly magnified into “culture wars,” and even explicitly religious wars, as those with whom we differ are identified as infidels, to

Today we find ourselves in the midst



be dealt with only by some kind of extermination.

### **Noise from the Right ...**

It's easy, of course, to think that all the noise is coming from "the other side" – whoever that may be. Probably most of us on the progressive side of the Presbyterian Church are more than weary of the noise coming from the right: the endless rants about protecting the purity of the church from people who would live "lives of sin"; diatribes attacking those who believe that justice and fair play require respect for immigrants, even those without legal documentation; outrage toward those who urge that medical care be made available and affordable for all people ... and on and on.

One of the most stupefying recent examples is the "Prayer for Obama" bumper stickers and T-shirts, citing Psalm 109:8 – usually without actually quoting the words, which read "Let his days be few; and another take his place."

Yes, there's a lot of noise from the Right, and some of it is indecent to say the least.

### **... and noise from the Left**

But it isn't really that simple. People and groups on the Left have engaged in some pretty noisy debate, too. Recently, as the caricatures and ugly words about President Obama have multiplied, I recall from just a year or

two ago the images depicting President Bush as a monkey – and a not very bright-looking monkey at that. And there were the endless lists of Bush's verbal gaffes as well. So let's be clear: the making of ugly noises is not a monopoly of one side or the other.

While this goes on all around us, we need to pay special attention, perhaps, to the noise-making within our church. In some ways that noise is a more serious threat to our communities and our personhood than the noise-making, in civil (or not so civil) society, for it can touch us more deeply at the very spiritual core of our beings as persons and as communities.

### **What can we do about the noise?**

Well, in a not very genteel phrase, perhaps we can all try to shut up. Just stop making noise, stop yelling, stop the name-calling and the uncivil language. And be quiet.

And there's scriptural warrant for that, of course. The psalmist reminds us that God calls us to "Be still, and know that I am God!" (Ps. 46:10 – and let's notice that God is more civil than some of us, and doesn't say "Shut up!")

Especially in this season of Advent, God invites us to an inner discipline of silence – a discipline which can also be a liberation. It brings to mind the slogan of some in the activist '60s:

“Don’t just do something, stand there!”

In this season of waiting, expectancy, hope, we are reminded each year of how everything in life is ultimately and utterly beyond our control. And we can recognize the noise as expressing our anxiety about our lack of control, and our ceaseless efforts to take the control we want so desperately.

### How can the silence help?

God’s invitation to stillness is not a threat from a scolding parent saying “Hush!” or even “Shut up!” It’s an invitation to know the God who becomes present to us and in us, as the foundation and center and end of our lives.

And in that stillness we learn this: God alone is God. Not me, not you, not anybody or anything. That seems like a nice pious thing to learn, right? But it’s revolutionary, because it tells each of us, from the mightiest head of empire to the humblest slave, that we ultimately do not make the rules. And it tells each of us as well that nobody rules over us. Or as a friend of mine was wont to say now and then, “You’re not the boss of me.” Therein lies revolution!

This tells us about our own limits – we’re not divine, we’re not the center of the universe, we’re not the boss. But it also tells us this: We are not alone. This Creator God who claims

our allegiance also promises to be present with us, within us, as comfort and refuge and hope. We can stop our anxious noise-making, we can breathe deeply in the stillness, and be at peace with ourselves and with the world in which we – often uneasily – live.

So this call to stillness is a real gift, and a liberation from our anxieties about controlling the world around us. It’s a liberation, too, from our need to be saviors of the church and the world. That’s a temptation for both conservatives and progressives, though we respond to the temptation in different ways, we all get caught by it.

This season, with its call to stillness, reminds us that none of us has a monopoly on either Truth or Righteousness. So we are invited, all of us, to humility and openness, which will lead us to respect other persons, even those with whom we differ – even as we urge them to respect others as well.

What comfort this is! We can trust in the reality of a caring God beyond all our frustrations with the injustice and pain of the world – and frustrations with our own lives as well. We can indeed be a joyful and passionate community even in the midst of struggle, for we know the victory is won ... *God’s* victory for *all* of creation, not *our* victory by getting our way.

One thing concerns me about what

I've tried to say here: Isn't there a danger that all this stillness and silence and trust can lead to inaction, accepting things as they are? That certainly doesn't fit with the mission of Voices of Sophia and Wither-spoon!

Here's one way to think about it:

**Stillness leads to listening leads to action.**

Silence is the first step toward an attitude of listening – to the still small voice of the Spirit of God, or to the silenced voices of the oppressed in the world. We can't hear, after all, until we learn to be quiet.

But when we do hear, we may be changed. When I was a senior in college, long ago in the 1950s, I heard the voice of the people of Asia through M. A. Thomas, a priest from the Mar Thoma Orthodox Church in South India. He was visiting U.S. students for a year in conjunction with the quadrennial conference of the Student Volunteer Movement, an ecumenical student movement for mission, which was started in the 1880s, and merged into a broader ecumenical student movement in the 1970s. Hearing him describe the life of Christians in India, which had so recently gained independence from British colonial rule in part through the courageous, non-violent leadership of Mahatma Gandhi, changed my way of looking at the world, at my faith and my church, and at the direc-

tion of my life.

So if we learn to be still and then to listen, we may be changed by the people whose voices we learn to hear – and to respect.

But our listening may change those to whom we listen, as well. There are millions of people in the world, and in our own neighborhoods, who are so marginalized from life by their poverty, or their disabilities, or perhaps just their innate reticence, that they cannot voice their needs or their hopes. So they remain passive – or become active in ways that hurt themselves and those around them. Like a good counselor whose listening helps clients voice their feelings, and so make changes in their own lives, we may enable people to tell their stories, articulate their fears and their hopes, and so build links with other people and finally make changes in their situations as individuals and as communities.

President Obama seems to favor that style. We can see from today's news that it doesn't guarantee quick success, as in the current debate on reform of our health care system. But it certainly offers more hope than the patterns of loud talk, threats and the use of force, that we've seen in recent years.

But one thing that may help us in listening, understanding, and enabling other voices to be heard, is the affirmation of the psalmist that God alone

is God – so we are on guard against the constant temptation to claim Truth and Justice as our own, even as we define those who oppose our views as tools of Satan. Yes, we are committed to struggle for justice, as we have tried to express in our new Mission Statement. (See page 34.) But we know we have no monopoly on concern for justice and the true well-being of society and our fellow citizens, and we certainly do not have a corner on knowing the best way to achieve that well-being, *shalom*, for all.

But what good will this humility do when it often seems that our friends on the Right (in church and society) argue with such certainty that they are right and we are wrong? There is no guarantee that all sides will come together for the common good, but at least we might lower the noise level a bit, and find some people with whom, for all our differences, we can yet build some bridges for shared action.

### **How can we get past the impasse?**

Being still, listening, and resting secure in the One God who stands beyond all these arguments, may ease our need to argue, and help us to hear the deeper concerns and anxieties of the people who disagree with us. This is not to justify more study commissions that simply postpone action. But it is to affirm that sometimes – by the grace of God – minds can be

changed. (I'm thinking of the recent statement by Prof. Mark Achtemeier at the Covenant Network conference, explaining how he has reversed his long-held opposition to ordination and marriage for LGBT Presbyterians.) Change *can* happen, and we may encourage it by listening more than by shouting.

In that confidence, let's keep listening, working, talking, giving reasons for our differences when need be and seeking to understand the reasons given from the other side. Then we just might begin to shape new and creative ways to deal with these afflictions, and find ways to bring them to reality – with humility and patience, and in the power of the Spirit who lives in us.



## Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Calls for Just Health Care Reform

### Questions and Answers

*This very helpful statement was posted recently by the Washington Office of the Presbyterian Church (USA), at <http://www.pcusa.org/washington/healthpolicy.htm> It is also in PDF format at <http://www.pcusa.org/washington/health-policy-qanda.pdf>*

#### What does the PC(USA) support?

- For over 60 years, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) General Assemblies have been calling for reform of the U.S. health system, urging the establishment of a national medical plan that will ensure health coverage for all persons residing in the United States.
- The most recent General Assembly (2008) “endorse[d] in principle the provision of single-payer universal health care reform in which health care services are privately provided and publicly financed... as the program that best responds to the moral imperative of the gospel.” [*Minutes*, 2008, p. 1133]
- Any reform plan should be guided by these values:
  - **Universal Accessibility:** We believe that all people possess inherent worth as children of God, and that God’s promise extends to all. Health coverage must be available to all persons living in the United States, regardless of income, race or ethnicity, geography, age, gender, employment status or health status. [*Minutes*, 1994, p. 574; *Minutes*, 2002, p. 634]
  - **Equity:** Because the right to acquire adequate health care springs out of our worth as living human beings, rather than out of any particular merit or achievement belonging to some but not to others, adequate health care should be defined equally for all people. [*Minutes*, 1976, pp. 203-207]
  - **Responsible Financing:** Since society has an interest in the health of its people, those individuals and organizations who can pay should help to finance the care for those individuals and families who cannot pay [*Minutes*, 1991, p. 817]. While concerns for the costs of health care are appropriate, these concerns must continually be balanced against the objectives of access to adequate, quality care for all. The sacrifice of access and quality at the shrine of cost containment is too high a price to pay and should not be tolerated. [*Minutes*, 1988, p. 525]

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## Does the church support socialized medicine?

No, the church supports health reform that is privately provided and publicly funded. Socialized medicine generally refers to health care systems that are run by government, in which medical facilities are owned by government and health care providers are employed by government. PC(USA) General Assemblies have not commented on such a system, nor is the U.S. Congress considering such a proposal.

## Why does the church support single-payer?

The single-payer health coverage envisioned by the 218th General Assembly is a system in which health insurance is publically financed, while medical care is provided by private practitioners. One example of a single-payer health care system would be a “Medicare for all” approach, though single-payer requires only that financing come from a single source, rather than the multiple sources that currently provide U.S. health coverage (employers, government, individuals, etc.). The 218th General Assembly (2008) adopted an overture supporting the principle of single-payer health care. The overture outlined the serious crisis in the U.S. health system, highlighting the rapidly swelling ranks of the uninsured, the increasing occurrence of medically-caused bankruptcies, and efficiency of government-run Medicare and Medicaid programs, when compared to private insurance companies.

## On what authority is the church speaking on this issue?

In keeping with our polity, public witness by the National Offices on the topic of health care reform is based entirely on General Assembly policy. The Stated Clerk’s recent statement (Aug. 2009), which can be viewed at [http://www.pcusa.org/oga/newsstories/clerk-healthcare\\_aug09.htm](http://www.pcusa.org/oga/newsstories/clerk-healthcare_aug09.htm) , draws almost exclusively on the *Rationale* of the 218th General Assembly (2008) overture on single-payer health reform, the entirety of which can be found at <http://www.pc-biz.org/Explorer.aspx?id=1833> .

## What is the role of government and why should it be involved?

The 1988 General Assembly summarized John Calvin’s explanation: “civil government is ordained by God to order and serve the human community and therefore to be held in respect and honor. Service in the public order is the highest vocation for Christians. The civil state by its own definition and tradition is to serve the causes of justice, the common well being. We believe that the church must not only call upon the political order to serve the causes of justice but actively participate in efforts to shape public policies and institutions so that they serve human needs effectively and equitably.” (*Minutes*, 1988, p. 47)

## Why does the church care?



Presbyterians believe that God desires *shalom*—wholeness and healing—for every person, not just for those who can afford it. Health is much more than the absence of a physical or mental malady or the pursuit of physical or mental perfection. Jesus' command to love our neighbor requires persons with plentiful resources both to comprehend the condition of those persons without basic health care and to share the means to health. [*Minutes*, 1999, pp. 341-342]

### **What is the PC(USA) doing now?**

The PC(USA), through its Washington Office, is engaged in public witness at the federal level. On health care, the Washington Office is following closely the legislative process and evaluating health reform proposals in light of General Assembly social witness policy statements.

Further, the Washington Office is engaged with ecumenical and interfaith partners to lift up the voices of people of faith. Through Washington Office organizing and publications, Presbyterians are invited to get involved in the public policy process.

The ministry of the Washington Office is to communicate General Assembly policy to decision-makers and to provide resources to Presbyterians, so that they might be engaged in public debate and witness.

### **How do I get in touch with the Washington Office?**

You can reach the Washington Office by calling (202) 543-1126 or by emailing [ga\\_washington\\_office@pcusa.org](mailto:ga_washington_office@pcusa.org).

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## **Help others get to know us!**

Especially at this time as our two progressive Presbyterian groups merge to form one strong new voice, we need to let people know about us. *And you can help!*

If you'd like to spread the word about Witherspoon/Voices, we can provide you with membership brochures and copies of previous copies of *Network News*.

If you want to form a local chapter, we can provide you with multiple copies of our newsletter, and perhaps even find an active Witherspoon/Voices member in your area who could pay you a visit.

For help in forming a group, contact Gusti Newquist, our Membership Coordinator, at [gustinewquist@mindspring.com](mailto:gustinewquist@mindspring.com)

For brochures and newsletters, contact Communications Coordinator Doug King at [douging2@aol.com](mailto:douging2@aol.com)

## Presbyterians played active role in protests at American Bankers' meeting in Chicago

by Doug King, editor

The American Bankers Association's annual convention in Chicago, October 25 - 27, was the scene for a widely-reported series of major protests. Dubbed "the Showdown in Chicago,"

<http://www.showdowninchicago.org/> the protest included groups like the National People's Action, the Service Employees International Union, Americans For Financial Reform and the AFL-CIO. Sen. Richard Durbin (D - Illinois) addressed the protesters on Sunday evening, while on the "inside," conference speakers included Newt Gingrich, conservative columnist George Will and FDIC chairman Sheila Bair. (Bair also spoke to the protesters, [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2009/10/26/showdown-in-chicago-sheil\\_n\\_333969.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2009/10/26/showdown-in-chicago-sheil_n_333969.html) > adding her support to the movement by decrying bailouts and the notion of "too big to fail" institutions.)

Among the group of some 200 protesters from Central Illinois, members of the Central Illinois Organizing Project (CIOP), <http://www.ciop.org/> > was Witherspoon member Jack Porter, of Bloomington, who has sent us a variety of news reports of Presbyterians and



Over a thousand taxpayers marched to their second protest of the day--Wells Fargo. They delivered a letter to Wells Fargo CEO John Stumpf, spelling out their demands for changes in the bank's practices and predatory lending.

others who took part.

There were four busloads from Central Illinois, including groups from First Presbyterian Church of Normal, IL, and New Covenant Community of Normal, which is affiliated with PCUSA, UCC, and Disciples. First Presbyterian Church of Springfield, IL, which has been active in helping the creation of Homeless United for Change (HUC), which participated in the Chicago action, and First Presbyterian Church of Decatur, were also involved in the organizing for the event.

How did this all get started? A little background:



William Greider wrote in *The Nation* (August 25, 2009) <<http://www.thenation.com/doc/20090831/greider2>> about Federal Reserve chairman Ben Bernanke's ability to charm the nation and the media – right, left, and center – into trusting him to deal with the financial crisis when in fact he was ignoring many of the most dangerous developments in the banking system. But then Greider mentioned one exception:

While the big media led cheers for Bernanke's reappointment, I was out in Decatur, Illinois, with a group of ordinary citizens who confronted the Fed for its failure to address the real pain and loss people are suffering. The Central Illinois Organizing Project brought together 500 people on a Saturday morning to deliver their own demands to the three Fed officials in attendance (Bernanke was invited but did not show). Among the propositions was a brilliant challenge to the central bank: the Fed should use its awesome influence (and maybe some of its money) to organize an investment consortium of banks to finance some real-life development projects in Peoria and Pekin. This could be a pilot project that demonstrates how this venerable institution can reform itself by serving the broader public interest.

That August meeting in Decatur was a crucial step toward the "Showdown in Chicago" event in October. CIOP was deeply involved in that meeting of 500

people with representatives of the Federal Reserve. As Jack Porter notes, "that gathering of 500, with all the preparation involved, directly led to our participation in Chicago. It helped to frame the issues and to empower our relatively conservative Central Illinois folk to get into the streets."

According to Don Carlson, executive director of CIOP, the themes of the CIOP participants in the Chicago event were "Break up the big banks!", "Stop foreclosures, use bank bonuses to keep families in homes!", and "Reclaim America!"

The Rev. Eugene Barnes <<http://www.prwatch.org/node/8654>> of the CIOP opened one evening session by saying: "Welcome to the Showdown in Chicago. We have come together to reclaim America and hold Wall Street accountable. Imagine a story as terrible as this: the same financial institutions that created the crisis, sent the economy into a tailspin, handed out bonuses on top of bonuses, and needed hundreds of billions of dollars of taxpayers money, are back in business as usual."

A number of high school youth from the churches were part of the group. One of them, Catherine Holland, wrote this in reflecting on her experience:

As a 15 year old, I attended the Showdown in Chicago because I wanted to be a part of change in America. I wanted to observe it, learn from it and participate in it.

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Continued on page 27

## Observations on the “Manhattan Declaration”

Christian Right leaders promise “resistance” against anything that doesn’t fit their convictions

Gene TeSelle

A group of religious conservatives, characterizing themselves as “Orthodox, Catholic, and Evangelical,” issued the “Manhattan Declaration” on November 20, 2009, stating their opposition to (1) abortion and stem cell research, (2) any form of marriage other than a union of husband and wife, and (3) any government limitations on “conscience clauses,” which allow individuals and religious institutions to refuse to participate in anything related to abortion or same-sex unions.

[For the full text of the declaration, go to [http://www.demosnews.com/manhattandeclaration/press\\_kit/manhattan\\_declaration\\_signers](http://www.demosnews.com/manhattandeclaration/press_kit/manhattan_declaration_signers)]

They pledge, furthermore, that “no power on earth, be it cultural or political, will intimidate us into silence or acquiescence,” and they explicitly raise the possibility of civil disobedience, stating that they “will not comply with any edict” or “bend to any rule” that violates their principles.

In backing up this stance they quote several passages of Scripture and mention the “civil rights crusades of the 1950s and 60s,” specifically citing the “Letter from Birmingham Jail” of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. More broadly they give examples from Christian

history, including opposition to slavery, championship of “child laborers chained to machines,” challenges to the divine claims of kings, and advocacy of “the rule of law and balance of government powers” that made modern democracy possible.

In response, the Rev. Barry Lynn, executive director of Americans United, said that the aim of this coalition of religious conservatives is not to protect religious freedom but to impose religious doctrines upon all U.S. citizens by government decree. He called it a politicization of faith and said that “it would be a disaster if government started favoring one religious perspective over others.”

Recently the House version of the health care reform bill was revised at the behest of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops to limit reproductive choice. And at the state and national levels religious leaders have often led the attack upon same-sex marriage.

“Conscience clauses” have been used to challenge laws guaranteeing reproductive rights or adoptions by same-sex couples, or to make their administration chaotic and unworkable.



Let me start by giving the signers their due. Many social and political advances have been inspired by Christianity. But let's also look more closely at the signers' claim to be successors of all that is good in the Western tradition.

The West is indeed unique in the way it differentiates between church and state, and this tradition owes much to the popes, who during the early middle ages resisted the authority of the emperors in Constantinople during several major doctrinal controversies. Having declared the independence of the church, they then asserted it against rulers in Europe as well. But differentiation did not mean "separation" of church and state, either for Catholics or for Protestants.

Eventually the wars of religion in the sixteenth and seventeenth century convinced people that religion simply caused too much trouble when it was made a factor in public life. So they began to acknowledge religious pluralism and eventually religious freedom. This usually happened against the advice of church leaders, and it was originally championed by people who were condemned as "latitudinarians" or just plain unbelievers. In Virginia there was a pragmatic but ultimately constructive alliance between Baptists and Presbyterians, who happened not to be the established church, and rationalists like Jefferson and Madison.

The same mixed picture applies to slavery. The Bible seems to legitimate

it. Many people assumed that one could trade one's freedom for one's life. It was in opposition to majority opinion that Bartolomé de las Casas and others began speaking about "inalienable rights." The abolition of slavery was indeed championed by Wilberforce and other British evangelicals. But the Quakers and some of the Enlightenment figures were ahead of them. Once again there is a mixed record, suggesting that progress comes through interaction among diverse perspectives, not through deduction from a single doctrinal base.

While they allude to the civil rights movement, some of the signers of the Declaration are clearly aligned with social and political movements that opposed civil rights five decades ago, changed from Southern Democratic to Republican in order to keep the traditional relations of power, and today continue to champion "right to work" laws and other means of maintaining economic inequality.

It is gratifying to hear the Manhattan Declaration mention "child laborers chained to machines," but the signers and their allies have not been in the forefront of those who criticize the many contemporary versions of the same thing, at home and throughout the world — child labor, hazardous working conditions, constant pressure on workers to grant more concessions — or seek ways to regulate and monitor what happens in the workplace. At least some of the signers have been vocal in championing free trade,

NAFTA, and the World Trade Organization, and in criticizing the Accra declaration of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, which condemned the reigning “neoliberal economics” on grounds of faith as well as justice.

The Declaration, then, is helpful in reminding us of the relevance of religion to political life. But it is highly selective, emphasizing some issues as non-negotiable in the political as well as the religious realm, while ignoring many others. And it is aligned with a conservative political agenda.

The signers might disagree with Barry Lynn’s assertion that they are trying to impose “one religious perspective” upon the people of the U.S. They are careful to base their positions not only on the Bible but on “natural human reason” and “the very nature of the human person.” On these grounds they argue, as the Catholic Church has done since the middle ages, that their position is morally binding upon all persons everywhere.

The problem is that there are also disagreements about the “nature of the human person” and about the responsibilities of practical reason in responding to a range of issues concerning life and death, sexual orientation, and the role of the state in regulating external actions while guaranteeing freedom for debate and disagreement.

Notions of natural law and inalienable

rights have made a crucial contribution to our life together. But any survey of these notions will indicate that they have changed through the centuries, mostly by taking more groups and more activities under their protection. Not only have they changed. Claims can conflict. And as medical and scientific knowledge increase, they pose new dilemmas. Legislatures and courts find themselves confronted by all these conflicting claims and all these dilemmas.

This is the setting in which “culture wars” flourish. The problem, as James Davison Hunter points out, is that there are competing moral visions; those who disagree are put outside the bounds of legitimacy, and there is an urge to “force political solutions.” Such actions are defended, of course, with the argument that religion is an “absolute commitment,” exempt from the normal rules of political behavior and even claiming to define those rules.

The West has learned, through bitter experience, that many different factions can claim the right to carry their “absolute commitments” into the public sphere. As a result it has chosen to keep those claims out of the public sphere and develop the rules and institutions of the “secular state,” even as it acknowledges the relevance of religious commitments to politics and to all issues of human good.



## GA PJC issues technical rulings in closely-watched ordination cases

Larges may be examined for ordination, Capetz' restoration stands, high court says in rulings that fail to define limits of 'scrupling'

by Jerry L. Van Marter, Presbyterian News Service

LOUISVILLE — November 4, 2009 — The General Assembly Permanent Judicial Commission (GAPJC) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) — the highest court in the church — has issued two technical rulings that leave unresolved the extent to which conscientious objection to the church's sexual conduct standards may disqualify candidates for ordination.

The Nov. 2 rulings involve Lisa Larges, a lesbian candidate for the ministry in San Francisco Presbytery, and the Rev. Paul Capetz, a gay theology professor in the Presbytery of the Twin Cities Area who set aside his ordination in 2000 and then sought reinstatement in 2007.

The rulings effectively allow San Francisco Presbytery to proceed to examine Larges for possible ordination and the Presbytery of the Twin Cities Area to restore Capetz to ordained ministry in the PC(USA).

Larges and Capetz both relied on an authoritative interpretation of G-6.0108a of the Book of Order issued by the 2006 General Assembly. As part of its approval of the report from

the Theological Task Force on Peace, Unity and Purity of the church, the interpretation allows candidates for ordination and installation as church officers to declare a "scruple" or conscientious objection to any provision of the church's Constitution.

It is then up to the ordaining body to determine whether the scruple is a sufficient enough departure from the essentials of the Reformed faith to be disqualifying.

Though it applies to any constitutional provision, the declaring of scruples has so far only been utilized in objection to G-6.0106b, which requires of church officers "fidelity within the covenant of marriage or chastity in singleness."

Larges, who has been a candidate for the ministry for more than 20 years, was certified by San Francisco Presbytery as "ready for examination with a departure [scruple]" on Jan. 15, 2008 by a vote of 167-151.

Three minister members of the presbytery filed a remedial complaint with the Synod of the Pacific PJC, alleging that the presbytery's actions

and those of its Committee on Preparation for Ministry were improper. They sought to have the presbytery's vote voided and Larges removed from the presbytery's roll of candidates.

The synod PJC agreed that the presbytery had erred by addressing the scruple prematurely — during the certification for readiness rather than during a subsequent examination for ordination — and voided the January 2008 vote. It refused to instruct the presbytery to remove Larges from the roll of candidates.

The three San Francisco Presbytery complainants appealed that ruling, telling the court that “the burning question to which the church needs a clear answer” is whether scrupling allows a presbytery to “waive” constitutional ordination standards.

The court didn't address that question, instead affirming the synod PJC's ruling that the proper time for a presbytery to consider a scruple and whether it is disqualifying is during the examination for ordination, not during the CPM's certification for readiness stage of the process.

Larges is scheduled to be examined for ordination by San Francisco Presbytery on Nov. 10.

At that time, the court ruled, the presbytery is required “to determine whether the Candidate has expressed an interpretation of Scripture that

represents a serious departure from essentials of Reformed faith and polity, and if it determines that she has, it must then decide whether the departure infringes on the rights and views of others or obstructs the constitutional governance of the church.”

For the second time, the GAPJC ruled that the Presbytery of Twin Cities Area did not err when it voted to restore Capetz' ordination in January 2008. A professor at United Theological Seminary in Minneapolis, Capetz had set aside his ordination in 2000, four years after the PC(USA) added the commonly-called “fidelity and chastity” provision to the Book of Order. But when scrupling was reinstated in 2006, he sought restoration to ordained ministry, also declaring conscientious objection to G-6.0106b.

In a related March 2009 decision that affirmed the presbytery's decision, the GAPJC also ruled that the Synod of Lakes and Prairies PJC must conduct a trial to determine if the presbytery had in effect waived an ordination requirement.

That trial was held on May 12, 2009, and the synod PJC ruled that the presbytery acted properly, adding that it “took extraordinary care to make it clear that their decision applied only to the current expression of [Capetz'] departure and was not making policy or setting precedent....”



Capetz has repeatedly said he will not “take a vow of celibacy.” The GAPJC said that a remedial case (alleging faulty process by governing bodies) is not the appropriate way to address an ordained person’s alleged misconduct.

“If there is any question about Capetz’ conduct, including whether he has led a life in obedience to Scripture and in compliance with the historic confessional standards of the church,” the court said, “he, like any other officer of the church, may be held accountable for his conduct under the Rules of Discipline.”

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The PJC decision on the case of Paul Capetz is posted on the PJC website, in PDF format: <http://www.pcusa.org/gapjc/decisions/pjc21908b.pdf>

And the decision in the case of Lisa Larges is also posted: <http://www.pcusa.org/gapjc/decisions/pjc21911.pdf>

For our earlier posts on the ordination issue: [http://www.witherspoonsociety.org/2007/ordination\\_&\\_exclusion.htm](http://www.witherspoonsociety.org/2007/ordination_&_exclusion.htm)

**Lisa Larges is approved for ordination**

San Francisco Presbytery votes 156-138, allows G-6.0106b “scruple”

by Anitra Kitts, Special to Presbyterian News Service

BERKELEY – November 11, 2009 – Lisa Larges was approved for ordination to the Ministry of the Word and Sacrament by the Presbytery of San Francisco Nov. 10.

She has accepted a call to serve in a validated ministry as Minister Coordinator of That All May Freely Serve (TAMFS), an organization that works for the full inclusion of all members in the life of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), including as ordained officers.

The vote to approve Larges’ ordination was 156-138.

The rest of the report is at <http://www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2009/09978.htm>



## Baltimore Presbytery approves sending overture for inclusive marriage

The Presbytery of Baltimore at its Stated Meeting on November 19, 2009, voted to approve sending to the 219th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) [2010] an overture to amend the Directory For Worship regarding marriage. The vote was 75 in favor, 62 against, and 1 abstention.

Below is the text of the Baltimore Overture. You can read the Overture, complete with the rationale, on our website at [http://www.witherspoonsociety.org/2008/marriage\\_equality.htm#Balt%20Ovt](http://www.witherspoonsociety.org/2008/marriage_equality.htm#Balt%20Ovt)

### OVERTURE TO AMEND THE DIRECTORY FOR WORSHIP

UPON the overture of the session of Govans Presbyterian Church, and with the concurrences from the sessions of Brown Memorial Park Avenue Presbyterian Church, Brown Memorial Woodbrook Presbyterian Church, Deer Creek Harmony Presbyterian Church, Dickey Memorial Presbyterian Church, Faith Presbyterian Church, First and Franklin Street Presbyterian Church, Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church, Light Street Presbyterian Church, Maryland Presbyterian Church, Roland Park Presbyterian Church, and St. John United Methodist-Presbyterian Church;

The Presbytery of Baltimore at its Stated Meeting on November 19, 2009, voted to approve (75 in favor, 62 against, 1 abstention) that the following overture be sent to the 219th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) [2010];

THAT the Directory For Worship of The Book of Order be amended in the following manner: (strike through indicates portions to be deleted; italics indicate additions)

W-4.9001 Marriage is a gift God has given to all humankind for the well-being of the entire human family. Marriage is a ~~civil contract~~ *covenant* between ~~a woman and a man~~ *two people* and according to the laws of the state also constitutes a civil contract. For Christians marriage is a covenant through which ~~a man and a woman~~ *two people* are called to live out together before God their lives of discipleship. In a service of Christian marriage a lifelong commitment is made ~~by a woman and a man to each other~~ *between two people*, publicly witnessed and acknowledged by the community of faith.



W-4.9002 a. In preparation for the marriage service, the minister shall provide for a discussion with the ~~man and the woman~~ *two people* concerning

(The remainder of this section remains the same)

W-4.9004 The service begins with the scriptural sentences and a brief statement of purpose. The ~~man and the woman~~ *two people* shall declare their intention to enter into Christian marriage and shall exchange vows of love and faithfulness. The service includes appropriate passages of Scripture, which may be interpreted in various forms of proclamation. Prayers shall be offered for the couple, for the communities which support them in this new dimension of discipleship, and for all who seek to live in faithfulness. In the name of the triune God the minister shall declare publicly that the ~~woman and the man~~ *two people* are now joined in marriage.

(The remainder of this paragraph remains the same)

W-4.9006 A service of worship recognizing a civil marriage or civil union and confirming it in the community of faith may be appropriate when requested by the couple. The service will be similar to the marriage service except that the opening statement, the declaration of intention, the exchange of vows by the ~~husband and wife~~ *couple*, and the public declaration by the minister reflect the fact that the ~~woman and man~~ *two people* are already ~~married to one another~~ *united* according to the laws of the state.

At its November 19, 2009, Stated Meeting, Baltimore Presbytery voted to amend the original rationale and to replace it with the rationale that now follows the overture.

The overture, complete with the rationale, is posted in full at [http://www.witherspoonsociety.org/2008/marriage\\_equality.htm#Balt%20Ovt](http://www.witherspoonsociety.org/2008/marriage_equality.htm#Balt%20Ovt)

*Provided by Don Stroud on behalf of That All May Freely Serve: Baltimore.*

For more information on the overture, you are invited to contact Don at [Donestro@aol.com](mailto:Donestro@aol.com).

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## How about a lawsuit on behalf of clergy's right to perform same-gender marriages?

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*Ronald Goetz, a "Proud PFLAG Dad" is proposing a lawsuit on behalf of clergy and churches whose rights are being violated because they cannot perform marriages for same-gender couples. This is a turn-the-tables approach toward those Christians who argue that marriage equality somehow violates their freedom of religion. What do you think? Mr. Goetz is looking for advice and input. He writes:*

"Proposed Class-Action Lawsuit on Behalf of Churches  
and Ordained Clergy Because of the Violation of their  
First Amendment Right to Free Exercise of Religion"

There are many denominations that are on record as supporting Marriage Equality and want to marry same-sex couples as a matter of religious faith.

There are thousands of Open and Affirming congregations nationwide that support Marriage Equality and want to marry same-sex couples as a matter of religious faith.

There are additional thousands of ordained clergy who want to marry same-sex couples because of their religious faith.

The first amendment states, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof."

Congress includes state and local jurisdictions, which cannot violate your civil rights either.

Thousands of churches and ordained clergy are being denied the free exercise of their religion in violation of their first amendment right.

I urge that this violation of the constitution be resisted through a class-action lawsuit, or some other appropriate vehicle. We are also guaranteed the right to petition the government for redress of grievances.

I would like responsible parties (clergy, denominational officials, attorneys) and enthusiastic supporters to contact me. I need input, encouragement, and pro bono advice.

Please contact me at [kings.lgbt@hotmail.com](mailto:kings.lgbt@hotmail.com) and let me know what you think. Thanks!

Ronald Goetz  
Proud PFLAG Dad

## More Light Presbyterians celebrate passage of Hate Crimes Act.

from Michael Adee, More Light Presbyterians

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October 22, 2009

**Editor's note:** On October 28, the President signed this bill into law. Huffington Post carried one thoughtful report on the signing, from Paul LeGendre, Director of the Fighting Discrimination program at Human Rights First:

[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/paul-legendre/obama-signs-the-hate-crim\\_b\\_337198.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/paul-legendre/obama-signs-the-hate-crim_b_337198.html)

The National Board of Directors and Staff of More Light Presbyterians are grateful that the Senate passed the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr. Hate Crime Prevention Act today by a vote of 68-29. President Obama has promised to sign this act which has already been passed by the House of Representatives.

“It is difficult to imagine how any Senator or U.S. Representative could have found moral, ethical, religious or legal grounds to oppose the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act. As decent human beings, caring American citizens and particularly as Christians, we are to seek protection from harm for every person regardless of human difference in our communities, nation and world. Having lobbied in Wash-

ington, DC for this hate crime act alongside faithful Presbyterians and clergy from other faith traditions, I rejoice that justice was done today in our Nation's capital.” said Michael J. Adee, Executive Director & Field Organizer.

We want to thank the thousands of Presbyterians who have supported including sexual orientation, gender, gender identity or disability to hate crimes law by writing letters, calling your members of Congress, by making lobbying visits and through your prayers.

with hope and gratitude,  
Michael

Michael J. Adee, M.Div., Executive Director & Field Organizer, More Light Presbyterians  
[michaeladee@aol.com](mailto:michaeladee@aol.com)  
<http://www.mlp.org/>

## Presbyterian Health, Education and Welfare Association (PHEWA) seeks nominations to recognize ministries of social justice

Press release from PHEWA,  
October 26, 2009

The Presbyterian Health, Education and Welfare Association (PHEWA) is seeking nominations for five awards that will be celebrated during the 219th General Assembly in Minneapolis, MN on July 5, 2010.

PHEWA, part of the Compassion, Peace & Justice Ministry of the General Assembly Mission Council, is a voluntary membership organization dedicated to social welfare and justice ministries. Ten networks are a part of PHEWA, organized for grassroots implementation of General Assembly policies in the areas of community ministries and faith-based community organizing, addictions, domestic violence, HIV/AIDS, reproductive options, specialized pastoral ministries, child advocacy, disabilities, health and wholeness, and serious mental illness.

“There are a lot of good people out there doing remarkable work with folks that find themselves marginalized or forgotten. These awards recognize those ministries and, by doing so, help to remind of us of God’s call to love kindness and to do justice,” said Nancy Troy, PHEWA Executive Director during the years 2000-2009.

PHEWA seeks nominations of:

- PC(USA) Congregations that, either through ecumenical or interfaith community ministry, or through a special project of the congregation, have been faithful, creative and effective in their ministry to and with the community. The COMMUNITY TRANSFORMATION AWARD is presented by the Presbyterian Association for Community Transformation (PACT).

- Persons, congregations, or PC(USA) entities that are exemplary in their affirmation, support, and advocacy for the gifts, rights, and responsibilities of persons with disabilities in the total life of the church. The NANCY JENNINGS AWARD is presented by Presbyterians for Disability Concerns (PDC).

- PC(USA) Congregations or church professionals that have contributed significantly in the field of addiction prevention, intervention and recovery. The DAVID HANCOCK AWARD is presented by Presbyterians for Addiction Action (PAA).

- PC(USA) Congregations that have demonstrated outstanding leadership in their ministry with those who have a serious mental illness and with their families. The FLORENCE IVERSEN KRAFT AWARD is presented by the Presbyterian Serious Mental Illness Network (PSMIN)



- The Presbyterian AIDS Network (PAN) will present their first biennial Faith In Action Award to a PC(USA) Congregation that, through prayerful action and through their ministry, walks alongside sisters and brothers who are infected or affected by HIV/AIDS; initiating or supporting activities within the U.S. in meaningful and lasting ways. The ministries should result in increased sensitization to the issue and demonstrated impact on those affected. The recipient congregation for this Award will be one that shows God's unconditional love for all people by striving to break down the walls of stigma and discrimination around HIV/AIDS.

Learn about past recipients of PHEWA's awards by going to: <http://www.pcusa.org/phewa/awards.htm>

To nominate a ministry, congregation or individual for the 2010 awards, please submit the following information, by February 15, 2010: Name of person/congregation being nominated, the contact person for the nomination with addresses, phone numbers, email addresses for both, and a two page description of the ministry, including why they are deserving of this recognition.

Electronic submissions are preferred, but nominations sent by mail will also be considered. Send to: [susan.stack@pcusa.org](mailto:susan.stack@pcusa.org) or to: PHEWA, 100 Witherspoon St., Rm. 3228, Louisville, KY 40202-1396

## Are you a Witherspoon/ Voices of Sophia member?

### Let's keep in touch!

Join our members' e-mail list to receive occasional notes on matters that the Board considers truly important to be shared.

This will probably not be more than half a dozen during a year - so we won't overload your already bursting email box.

Just send an email to [dougking2@aol.com](mailto:dougking2@aol.com)

Please put "Witherspoon Voices elist" in the subject line.

## **Longtime PC(USA) leader – and long-time Witherspoon member – Dan Little dies**

Pastor, seminary leader succumbs to brain cancer

by Bethany Furkin, Presbyterian News Service

LOUISVILLE—November 17, 2009—The Rev. George Daniel Little, a pioneering leader in urban ministry and theological education in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A), died Nov. 16 after a battle with brain cancer. He was 79.

Little had a long history with McCormick Theological Seminary in Chicago, his alma mater. He began there in the 1950s as part of the seminary's then-new urban ministry training program. He returned in 1993 to serve as interim president and was also a life trustee. He was named McCormick's Distinguished Alumnus of 2009 in June.

After his 1954 graduation from McCormick, Little and his wife, Joan McCafferty Little, moved to London. There, they worked with the Presbyterian Church of England to learn more about urban ministry.

The couple returned to the United States in 1958, when Little was called to be the organizing pastor of a new church development in a Pittsburgh multi-racial neighborhood.

Little also had experience on the national church level. In 1962, he joined the Board of National Missions of the United

Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. After the church's 1970 reorganization, Little became director of budgeting for the General Assembly Mission Council. He was then named executive director of the GAMC, a position he held for seven years.

Little's experience with parish ministry wasn't limited to his time in Pittsburgh — he also served congregations in Ithaca, N.Y.; Prairie Village, Kan.; Minneapolis and Madison, WI. He died in Madison while under hospice care.

Little was preceded in death by his wife.

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Cont. from "Chicago protests," page 14

There is more to a person's education than books and this was an opportunity for me to get connected with the real issues at hand. When I got on that CIOP bus Sunday afternoon, I knew that banking in America was defective, however, I didn't understand to what extent. In less than 48 hours of being a part of this protest I learned of the misuse of bailout money given to the banks, housing foreclosure being widespread (every 13 seconds a home is foreclosed) and that, although Wall Street is trying to set the reforming agenda, we must not let this happen. As a citizen of America I feel it is my duty to speak out against what is unjust, that is why I attended the Showdown in Chicago.

## Plan now for next summer!



Photo courtesy of Ghost Ranch

### **GHOST RANCH SEMINAR**

**July 26-August 1, 2010**

#### **WE'RE ALL IN THIS TOGETHER: CONFRONTING THE STRUCTURES OF INJUSTICE**

In partnership with The Witherspoon Society/Voices of Sophia  
and The Presbyterian Peace Fellowship.  
Jane Hanna, Coordinator

If it seems there are many critical issues confronting us, it is because there are. How do we respond to the biblical call for justice in a world facing deepening global inequality, environmental challenges, and the escalation of violence in human relationships? We are fortunate to have three eminently qualified people prepared to address these questions. We will use *A Social Creed for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* to discern a moral, ethical and spiritual response to the many challenges humankind must meet. In presentations and discussions we will search for the prophetic spirit to guide our efforts toward a more just and humane world.

**Gary Dorrien**, Reinhold Niebuhr Professor of Social Ethics at Union Theological Seminary and Professor of Religion at Columbia University. An Episcopal priest, he was previously the Parfet Distinguished Profes-

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sor at Kalamazoo College, where he taught for 18 years and also served as Dean of Stetson Chapel. He is the author of 14 books and approximately 225 articles that range across the fields of ethics, social theory, theology, philosophy, politics and history. Prof. Dorrien has a long record of involvement in social justice and anti-war organizations. His most recent books are *The Making of American Liberal Theology* and *Social Ethics in the Making*. His next book, due in 2010, is *Economy, Difference, and Empire*. ([www.utsnyc.edu/garydorrien](http://www.utsnyc.edu/garydorrien))

**Grace Yia-Hei Kao** is an Associate Professor of Ethics at the Claremont School of Theology, where she teaches and researches issues related to human rights, religion in the public sphere, feminism, environmental ethics, and Asian American Christianity. She was previously Assistant Professor of Religious Studies and Women's Studies at Virginia Tech. Dr. Kao has published chapters and articles on a variety of topics, including ecofeminism, the relationship between religion and violence, and the prospects and challenges for interreligious cooperation and peace. Georgetown University Press will soon publish her first book, *Grounding Human Rights in a Pluralist World*, in their Advancing Human Rights series. ([www.cst.edu/academic-resources/-faculty.kao.php](http://www.cst.edu/academic-resources/-faculty.kao.php))

**Elizabeth Hinson-Hasty** is Associate Professor of Theology at Bellarmine University in Louisville, KY where she teaches a broad range of courses including *Theology from the Margins* for which she was recently awarded a Kentuckiana Metroversity Instructional Development Award. She is also a Minister of Word and Sacrament in the Presbyterian Church (USA). Much of her work has bridged the gap between church and academy. Dr. Hinson-Hasty currently serves as an elected member of the Advocacy Committee for Women's Concerns (ACWC) and was part of the PC(USA) committee that drafted the Social Creed for the 21st Century. She is the author of *Beyond the Social Maze: Exploring Vida Dutton Scudder's Theological Ethics* and co-editor of *Prayers for the New Social Awakening*, with Christian Iosso and *To Do Justice: A Guide for Progressive Christians* with Rebecca Todd Peters. ([www.bellarmino.edu/cas/theology](http://www.bellarmino.edu/cas/theology))

**Note:** Just follow the links after the speakers' bio sketches for more about them.

## New Director of Public Witness sought for Washington Office

**Director of Public Witness -  
Washington D.C. Office**  
(Compassion, Peace and Justice)  
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)  
Washington D.C.

This job reports to the Director, Compassion Peace and Justice

Relocation is negotiable and travel is required frequently.

This is a **Full-Time** position.

### Overview

**Min: \$72,120**

The Presbyterian Church (USA) focuses on national and international mission work. It works with congregations, presbyteries, and synods as the central provider of resources that enable individuals, congregations, and governing bodies to carry forth the mission of Jesus Christ in the world.

### Job Skills/Requirements

#### Position Purpose

Provide overall direction, management of staff and operations of the Presbyterian Washington Office. Will provide a point of focus as PCUSA gives expression of its faith in the public square. As the primary liaison with the Office of the Stated Clerk, the wider church, ecumenical and interfaith partners and the general public this position provides leadership to holistic vision of public witness in the Reformed tradition. The Director plans and conducts programs of effective

advocacy of General Assembly public policy positions within the federal government agencies and international bodies; organizing Presbyterians for public policy advocacy at the federal government level; serving governing bodies; congregations and individuals; developing and providing resources; working cooperatively with the Divisions; strategic planning with ecumenical and interreligious partners; helping Presbyterians become engaged in public issues of social justice at the National and International levels.

### Responsibilities

#### Advocacy & Witness

- Serves as spokesperson for the PCUSA at public hearings and press conferences and interpreting the public policy of the GA for media and the general public
- Develops overall strategy for advocacy and witness, working collaboratively with GAMC staff and other partners to set priorities for public policy engagement for each congressional session
- Responds to issues and concerns of GA public policy issues
- Develops relationship with members of Congress, Congressional staff and administrative staff with particular attention to Presbyterian concerns
- Gives organizational and issue leadership in the ecumenical and interfaith community and coordination of the interreligious agenda
- Works collectively with colleagues and partners, demonstrating accountability to the Washington Office Program Staff
- Provides public policy leadership and issue analysis from a Reformed theological perspective on matters of concern facing the church and society

### Constituency Development

- Meet with groups within PC(USA) as requested on the policy issues of the GA
- Provides leadership in the Second Tuesday Briefing for the Presbyterians
- Publishes articles in the Washington Office Stewardship of Public Life Networks Program and the other PC(USA) publications
- Provides program services such as public policy leadership on issues analysis at congregational gatherings, meetings of the presbyteries and synods, GA level meetings and other requested groups

### Compassion, Peace & Justice Leadership Team

- Assists and participates in the overall vision and mission of Compassion, Peace and Justice by participating with other ministry areas within CP&J
- Attends and participates in the staff retreats and meetings
- Attends Coordinators meeting by conference call

### Administration

- Manage and direct the day to day operations of the Washington Office, including supervision and guidance of staff
- Establish mechanisms to train and motivate employee and measure performance
- Facilitate regular staff meetings to ensure efficient management of office
- Provide oversight of everyday budget management

### Qualifications

- Advanced degree in theology, ethics, public policy analysis or equivalent
- Ordination as a minister of the Word and Sacrament preferred

- 5 or more years of related experience in public policy advocacy or church leadership with an emphasis on ministry in the public arena
- PC (USA) Member or Reformed Church Tradition
- Strong preaching, writing and public speaking skills
- Knowledge of PCUSA GA Policy, denominational structure and procedures
- Knowledge of ecumenical and Interfaith ministry
- Skilled in policy analysis and advocacy
- Ability to relate well to persons of different background, perspectives and roles in both government and the church

Office Location:  
Washington DC

### Additional Information/Benefits

The PCUSA benefits package includes:

#### Company Paid Benefits

- Medical
- Vacation Pay
- Sick Pay
- Holidays Pay
- Death and Disability
- Pension Plan
- Short and Long-Term Disability
- Employee Assistance Program

#### Voluntary Benefits

- Dental insurance
- Flexible Spending accounts
- 403(b) Retirement Savings Plan

Find this position announcement on the PCUSA website at  
<http://www.mycareernetwork.com/clientResumeMgr/jobDetails.asp?jid=88885&cid=803>  
 To submit an application, scroll to the bottom of the page.

## Calling all artists, doodlers, creative thinkers, feminists, progressive Reformed theologians & independent minds

We are merging two progressive Presbyterian organizations —  
Voices of Sophia and the Witherspoon Society —  
and now we need to live into a new identity.



Sooo ... we're looking for a new  
name and a new logo!



You can help.  
Join one or both of these contests and win huge  
prizes!

Check out our new **MISSION STATEMENT** on page 38 –  
you may find great new ideas!

### LOGO

Your logo submission should express the mission and character of the new, united organization. (These include peace, justice, affirmation of women's distinctive experience and perspectives, and an inclusive and hospitable community of faith in the Reformed tradition.) Please submit an image that **will fit within a 3" by 3" square** (though it does not need to be exactly that size), and that can be reproduced in a variety of formats – black and white, grayscale, and in one, two and four colors.

### NAME

Please suggest a name of one to four words that will reflect the mission and character of the group, as outlined in the "Logo" paragraph. If you wish, feel free to add a brief explanation of your suggestion, in **no more than 50 words**.

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**AND THE WINNERS WILL RECEIVE . . . !**

The winning entry to each contest will receive:

Your choice of a \$50 cash award,

OR your choice of free tickets to any three of our events during the 219<sup>th</sup> General Assembly (July 2 - 10, 2010) in Minneapolis: the pre-Assembly "Reformation 2010" conversation, the Voices of Sophia Breakfast, the Commissioner Orientation, the Witherspoon Luncheon, and (ta-daa!!) the Witherspoon Dance.

All entries will become the property of the Witherspoon Society/Voices of Sophia.

**PLEASE SEND YOUR ENTRIES BY DECEMBER 31, 2009**

ONLINE with "Name and Logo Contest" in the Subject line, to Mitch Trigger at [mitch@revtrigger.org](mailto:mitch@revtrigger.org)

OR BY MAIL to  
Mitchell Trigger  
First Presbyterian Church  
35 Church Street  
Rockaway, NJ 07866

***Got questions?***

Please call Mitch Trigger at (973) 784-4818, or send him an email: [mitch@revtrigger.org](mailto:mitch@revtrigger.org)

To receive regular e-mail notices of additions to the Witherspoon website, just send a note to [dougking2@aol.com](mailto:dougking2@aol.com)

Please put "web updates" in the subject line.

## Voices/Witherspoon events planned for GA 2010

Here are preliminary announcements of the events that Voices/Witherspoon will be holding during the 219<sup>th</sup> General Assembly in Minneapolis, MN, on July 3 - 10, 2010. We'll add further details about ticket prices, locations, speakers and more, as they become available.

**Saturday, July 3 - 7:00 - 8:30 AM**

### Witherspoon Society/Voices of Sophia Commissioner Orientation

Everything Presbyterian progressives need to know in order to be effective participants in the Assembly. This is a wake-up call that will include a continental breakfast, interactive sharing, worship, and information about GA issues. Come and be energized for our week together!

**Sunday, July 4 - 12:00 Noon - 2:00 PM**

### Witherspoon/Voices Awards Luncheon

Join us for a great celebration as Voices of Sophia and the Witherspoon Society begin their new life together as a single organization.

Our keynote speaker will help us consider the state of the Presbyterian Church today, from the perspective of progressives and advocates of social justice - and then look at ways we might help our church remain faithful to our call.

The two awards that we give at each Assembly will be presented: The Whole Gospel Congregation Award will be presented to a congregation in the Twin Cities area that seems to exemplify the commitments of Witherspoon and Voices to living out the radical, liberating Good News in our own communities and in the world. The Andrew Murray Award will go to an individual whose life and work exemplify those same values within and beyond the PC(USA).

NOTE: Our Membership Business Meeting (and our first meeting as a newly merged organization!) will be held immediately following the conclusion of our Luncheon program.

**Tuesday, July 6, 7:00 - 8:15 AM**

### Voices of Sophia Breakfast

Relmaging Church: De-Centering Privilege as an Act of Global Citizenship

Our speaker will be the Rev. Dr. Christine Smith, professor of preaching at United Seminary of the Twin Cities (UCC), and preacher at the first "Re-Imagining" in 1993.



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What is social privilege? How might Christians “de-center” (relocate) themselves socially? How is de-centering a prophetic act of justice in our world? Dr. Smith will challenge us to look at the complex language of margin and center. She will also discuss actions and spiritual disciplines that all of us, as privileged citizens, can adopt in order to live more justice-loving lives. Christine Smith is eminently qualified to re-imagine a just church in a global world.

**Tuesday, July 6, 9:00 PM to 1:00 AM**  
**Witherspoon Dance and Party**

Time for a break! This is a great chance to relax and enjoy great music, dancing, and conversation - and an informal place to meet and mingle with others at the Assembly.

**NOTE:** At the past few General Assemblies, the Witherspoon Society has held a **pre-Assembly conversation**, usually with one or more speakers about topics of particular interest for the coming Assembly, but with a good deal of time for conversation among people attending from various progressive groups related to the Presbyterian Church. Due to the number of official Assembly-related events planned for the days immediately before the opening of the Assembly, we have decided it would be nearly impossible to gather the people and resources necessary to make this meeting worthwhile. With regret, therefore, the Board has decided not to schedule the “Conversations” as in the past. Maybe next time!

**Are you planning to be at the Assembly?**  
**Looking for a relatively inexpensive place to stay?**

We have arranged a group rate at the Normandy Inn and Suites, a Best Western Hotel about 5 blocks from the Convention Center in Minneapolis. We'd be happy to have you stay there, too, saving a little money and adding a little fellowship.

For more about the hotel, go to <http://www.bestwesternminnesota.com/hotels/best-western-the-normandy-inn-and-suites/>

To make a reservation on our group rate, contact Doug King for details — e-mail [douging2@aol.com](mailto:douging2@aol.com), or phone (608) 782-5275.

## Virginia West (Ginny) Davidson: A *Shero* to Me and to Many

by Sylvia Thorson-Smith

I miss Ginny Davidson. Even though she lived across the country in Rochester, New York, and even though her activity in recent years has been limited, I liked knowing she was there. For 35 years, Ginny Davidson has been my *shero*, and her death on October 19 has left me feeling the loss of a woman who's been an inspirational presence in most of my adult life.

I met Ginny following her selection as Vice-Moderator of the UPCUSA General Assembly in 1974. Through a remarkable set of circumstances (the hand of God?), her beloved friend and former pastor was serving as an associate pastor of Grace Presbyterian Church in Wichita, Kansas. Bruce was instrumental in arranging for Ginny to speak at Grace, my church as well, and we struck up an immediate friendship. Ginny was several steps ahead of where I would soon be adventuring; she was a member of COWAC (the Council on Women and the Church), and she was blazing the trail on gay rights, with her resolute conviction that the ordination of lesbians and gay men was consistent with the Gospel. Our paths on this journey of advocacy were forged through mutual friendship with Bruce, who, in those days of closeted, cautious truth-telling, had revealed to Ginny (and would soon to



Ginny Davidson

me) that he was gay.

From then on, Ginny Davidson became for me a singular role model and a shining witness to the power of love, the passion for justice, and the possibility of transformative change. Ginny was a feminist who was always the first to read new books by women and liberationist theologians. She led me (always in partnership ) through the mine fields of the last four decades and was largely responsible for helping me act on the creative tension between my anger at all forms of injustice and my faith in the core values of Christianity.

I have too many indelible memories of Ginny to possibly recount them in

this brief space, but some of my favorites are:

- attending my first feminist theology weekend with her in 1976 where we thought we were being so outrageous to talk about women and the P word (*Power*);
- participating in the procession at the Baltimore (1991) General Assembly as Ginny and others led the first witness in solidarity with LGBT persons, all of us pained and angered by GA's failure to adopt the gay-affirming sexuality report;
- attending "Re-Imagining" in Minneapolis, 1993, with Ginny and a host of friends who were thrilled by the brilliance of global feminist theology, worship, justice, art, and creativity;
- meeting together with about 50 others in 1995 to organize Voices of Sophia in response to the backlash against "Re-Imagining";
- many delightful stays in her home on various occasions, always sitting up 'til at least midnight drinking regular "caf" coffee and talking about anything and everything;
- wanting to be with her as much as possible at annual General Assembly and Voices of Sophia gatherings – strategizing for justice, sharpening feminist analysis, calling for LGBT inclusion, and having an extravagantly good time in the doing of all of it; and
- along with Marvin Ellison and Johanna Bos, speaking at Ginny's 85<sup>th</sup> birthday gathering in Rochester, NY – celebrating the fact that only

Ginny Davidson would want to have a theological conference for her birthday party.

As her memory began to fail in recent years, and she was no longer able to attend

Presbyterian events, I realized that I wouldn't be seeing her regularly anymore. So, in November of 2008, I joined Janie Spahr on a visit to Ginny – one that was filled with tender, unforgettable moments of recognition and remembrance. Even though she was not fully the Ginny of our decades together, I was so grateful to be in her presence once more and tell her how much I loved and was shaped by her.

This bit of writing is a tribute to my amazing *shero*, and I hope many of you who read this will recall your own story of what Ginny Davidson has meant to you. We are not the same people we would have been without her in our lives – thank God! She changed me, she changed us, she changed the Presbyterian church, she changed the world. Our greatest gift back to her can be our continued energy for change and social justice. Truth-telling and transformation: dear Ginny, we will keep do them in your spirit.

*Sylvia Thorson-Smith is retired in Tucson, Arizona, and serves on the merged board of the Voices of Sophia-Witherspoon Society.*

# News of Witherspoon/Voices

## **Voices/Witherspoon Board approves a new Mission Statement.**

In a conference call on November 19, 2009, the Voices/Witherspoon Board voted unanimously to adopt a new statement of our mission, to reflect the merger of our two organizations and the changing demands of our times.

We welcome any comments you'd like to share about this new statement! Just send a note to [dougking2@aol.com](mailto:dougking2@aol.com), or call our Membership Coordinator, Gusti Newquist, at (520) 325-1001.

Another request: As you reflect on this mission statement, it might suggest new ideas for a new name for our merged organization. Or even an idea for a new logo, for which we have so far received no suggestions! See pages 32-33 for more about this gigantic contest - and join in!

The new mission statement reads:

**We are a playful and passionate community of women and men in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) who are called to proclaim the Gospel vision of God's extravagant love and justice in church and society. We seek the wisdom of the Spirit for following Christ's example and for living into the hope of sustained gender equality, racial reconciliation, full human rights for LGBT persons, economic justice, environmental wholeness, an end to war and all forms of violence, and a justice-loving shalom over all the earth. We commit to risking the transformation of our own selves and our organization to live into this vision, even as we invite both church and society to meet this challenge.**

## A thank-you note to *GeneTeSelle*

Gene TeSelle, who is already an emeritus professor at Vanderbilt Divinity School, is now – at least unofficially – Emeritus Issues Analyst of the Witherspoon Society as well.

Having served as President of Witherspoon from 1996-2000, he returned as Issues Analyst in 2001, and has served faithfully and brilliantly in that demanding role ever since. We are deeply indebted to him for his consistent supplying of careful comments and analyses of issues in our Presbyterian Church, and in the wider society.

He promises to continue thinking and writing for us, even as the burdens of coordinating our analysis of issues is shifted to the capable shoulders of Sylvia Thorson Smith.

So to Gene, I offer my very warm thanks! And to Sylvia, thanks for taking on this responsibility – and welcome!

*Doug King*

## The next issue of *Network News*

will bring you news and analysis of the Presbyterian Church (USA) and our shared calling to serve peace and justice in the world.

### We welcome your news and reflections!

Please contact *Network News* editor Doug King:

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H - 608-782-5275  
C - 952-270-8134  
E-mail: [douging2@aol.com](mailto:douging2@aol.com)

**Deadline for the Winter 2010 issue is February 10, 2010.**

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## Some blogs worth visiting

**Voices of Sophia blog**

<http://voicesofsophia.wordpress.com/>

**Witherspoon's Facebook page**

<http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=50517709365>

**John Harris' Summit toShore blogspot** <http://summittoshore.blogspot.com/>

**John Shuck's Shuck and Jive**

<http://www.shuckandjive.org/>

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