

The January newsletter is dedicated to the conversation surrounding the difficult decisions facing members of the presbytery. Some of our churches are feeling called to leave while others are called to stay.

Both have wondered why... why leave, why stay.....

This is to give a forum to help express what is on our hearts. The February newsletter will be available for your comments and additional thoughts. The deadline for the February newsletter is January 15.

LETTERS TO THE PRESBYTERY

Stated Clerk of General Assembly

Dear friends,

Over two thousand years ago, the shepherds and, later, the magi did not have a GPS when they set out on their journey to find the newly born Christ child. But they had something infinitely better. The magi had a brilliant star, the shepherds had directions from not just one but a host of angels leading them directly to the stable where Jesus, God-With-Us, lay.

This king in a manger must have been a big surprise to them. The Bible is full of stories of journeys that have surprising endings. The overarching theme seems to be that God cares as much about what we learn on the way as God does the destination.

We are in one of those journeys as a church. Our travel seems to be focused on a horizon beyond our sight. What lies out there for us? Is there a surprising life-giving grace-filled gift? Will we have the open eyes and open hearts to receive this newness?

This is what I know on this journey. I can think of no better traveling companions than you. You are sisters and brothers committed to Christ and his church who give far more than gold, frankincense, and myrrh on a daily basis. Your imagination sees the possible every day.

I also know that God has much more mission for the PCUSA to do. So while we may get weary on our journey we have some additional road to travel.

May God bless you with a renewed spirit this Christmas.

Gradye Parsons

Rev. Dr. Dana S. Allin

Indian River Presbyterian Church

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Tropical Florida Presbytery,

In Amalie's last report to the presbytery, she encouraged those who were discerning leaving the PC(USA) to help answer the "why?" question that is currently circulating around the presbytery, "Why are we considering leaving the PC(USA)?" I commend her for opening the dialogue in this written fashion as it helps people to think through what they are saying rather than reacting to what others are saying.

This is an emotionally charged time in the denomination and the presbytery. I heard several people at the November presbytery meeting talking about those who are considering "divorcing" those in the PC(USA). While I resist the analogy, I understand the frustration and hurt that many are feeling as a result of our decisions to consider departure.

Let me say first that I deeply love this denomination. I love my colleagues in this presbytery and the other presbyteries where I have served. I consider it a privilege to have friends on all sides of the issues in the denomination. I was baptized, confirmed, ordained as an elder, and ordained as a pastor in the exact same spot in my home church in Goleta, California, and so I am personally mourning the potential separation between myself and the PC(USA).

I feel, however, that we are at a Genesis 13, Abram/Lot moment, in the PC(USA). The herds and herders of Abram and Lot were in constant battle and Abram said (and I am paraphrasing), "There shouldn't be fighting because we are brothers. So let's go in two different directions." I want to write this letter as graciously as I can. At the same time, in order to answer the "why" question, I will say things that many don't agree with. Please know that my aim is to "speak the truth in love."

What I see in the PC(USA), and even in our own presbytery, is constant and never ending battles. These battles are not glorifying to God and turn our attention away from mission and ministry. We have always had battles, and there will be battles in any denomination. However, the "big tent" has gotten so big that the two views, in my opinion, are incompatible with one another, and are beyond the point of agreeing to disagree.

The main strife is over the authority of scripture and, in my opinion that is the fundamental issue with a variety of ramifications. The greatest concern for me in the passing of 10-A wasn't just the removal of fidelity and chastity, as troubling as that was, it was that scripture was relegated to guiding ordaining councils not the standard under which we have authority. So I see on the progressive side, scripture being authoritative, but subject to the Spirit's move through culture. I can't affirm that, and if that is the view of scripture then what is the theological and moral standards for officers? I will never vote to ordain or install someone who sees scripture in that light. And what I also see on the progressive side is a move not to ordain and install those like me who hold to a classic view of scripture and a Reformed Christian faith.

I will give you an example in Christian Askeland, a member of our congregation, who received his Ph.D. from Cambridge, England in early Egyptian manuscripts. He was recruited by the PC(USA) to be its missionary at the Evangelical Theological Seminary in Cairo, Egypt. The week after 10-A passed, but before it officially was law, he was called by the PC(USA) and told that he had to publically support the view of scripture as "the guide" for ordaining councils as

well as the ordination of those not living in fidelity in marriage or chastity in singleness. He said I can't go along with that and resigned the position. I find it unsettling and frustrating that while those on the progressive end of the church have been allowed to say, "Jesus alone is Lord of the conscience" to not conform what I consider orthodox theology and practice. And yet, Christian Askeland could not claim the same right to have Jesus as Lord of his conscience in order to preach and teach to classical views of scripture and sexuality. How can I in good conscience be party to a denomination that does this?

This leads me to my other concern, which is the political landscape of the PC(USA). It appears to me that we seem to be most adamant about making rules to not make rules. Los Ranchos Presbytery and others have tried to make the former G-6.0106b the standard for their presbytery. They have also tried to specify essentials. These actions were taken to court, and so far the decision has been that you can't specify any blanket standards for ordination. Ironically, at the same time, there seems to be a move to make a blanket standard that you must approve the ordination of people involved in sexual activity outside of marriage. The Covenant Network has issued their rationale and desire for the "Kenyonization" where pastors couldn't refuse to participate in ordinations because of their own conscience. I assume in the not too distant future the participation in same sex marriages. Whether this happens or not is yet to be determined, but I predict this will be the conflict for the next decade in the PC(USA).

These concerns seem to be heightened with the new Form of Government. The idea that higher councils can "control and direct" lower councils concerns me. I am concerned about the removal of synods for the mere fact that the GA then becomes the next council above the presbytery. In the last five years, the GA commissioned the "Louisville papers" to show presbyteries how to bankrupt churches who are considering leaving. While I am thankful for the posture of Tropical Florida, I feel like I am looking over my shoulder as to when the GA is going to jump and "control" Tropical Florida in this matter.

At the local level, all of this is very disconcerting to our members and potential members. We have lost members and potential members, we have had people who say they can't join while we are PC(USA), and others are saying if we don't make a move in the next year they will need to leave. While we will probably lose some members if we leave the PC(USA), we will undoubtedly have a mass exodus if we don't. So for the sake of the peace, unity and purity of our congregation we will most likely need to make that move.

I will conclude by saying again, that I love this denomination and I love our presbytery. I grieve over the personal feeling the denomination has left me. The "tent" of the PC(USA) hasn't actually gotten wider, it has just moved to the left. I feel as if I am no longer even in that tent. I think as Abram and Lot affirmed for the sake of peace, we may need to go in different directions. This peace will allow more energy for all of us to focus on our mission.

In Christ,

Dana

Pat Ashley

In response to Amalie's invitation to write for the newsletter, I offer a concern, a suggestion, an observation, a question, and a belief.

I did not attend the November presbytery meeting, as I was out of the state. I was surprised to learn that the presbytery had taken an action on the "Motion to have the PUPAC review denominations where congregations are wishing to be dismissed" without ever having heard or seen of it before the presbytery meeting itself. My concern is that sometimes we are taking action precipitously on matters that are delicate and complicated. My suggestion is that all actions, especially those related to gracious separation, at the very least be included in mailed presbytery packets. Perhaps they could/should be distributed via e-mail as well.

The observation is that we are attempting to function as a presbytery with a significant portion of our leadership considering leaving the denomination (and, therefore, our presbytery). My question is, How can we be healthy in such a circumstance? This is a real question, not a rhetorical one, and I welcome response.

I believe that the fact of ten churches requesting to participate in our gracious separation discernment process is cause for sorrow. I trust absolutely that renewal and new vision will come of it. At the same time, I believe it is cause for confession: we have failed to find God's way to live well together.

Dr. Larry Schenk

Peace Covenant Presbyterian Church

Here's why I am staying in the PCUSA. I support the changes we have made in our ordination standards. I believe they put an end to yet another form of discrimination in our church and society. The time has come for us to stop treating our gay, lesbian, bi-sexual, and trans-gendered brothers and sisters as second, third, fourth and fifth class citizens in the Kingdom of God.

It is time that we as a Church focus our attention on the calling, gifts, abilities, and preparation for ministry of those God has set apart for leadership as Deacons, Teaching-Elders, and Ruling-Elders. Many of our congregations are already doing this with regard to those we employ as choir directors, organists, educators, and in other positions of ministry, focusing on their God-given gifts of creativity and ability and not on their sexuality.

Many of those opposed to the new standards for ordination and who are subsequently leaving the denomination are doing so on what I believe is a literalistic and legalistic interpretation of a few passages of scripture. Let's be honest, we all do the same thing at times. However, we do so selectively, ignoring similar prohibitions regarding a variety of other subjects in Leviticus; refusing to single out others listed in I Corinthians and labeling them as unfit for ordained ministry; ignoring the fact that the vast majority of Paul's writings are about grace and not law; and turning a blind eye to the fact that Jesus has absolutely nothing to say on these matters. The author of Leviticus is not my savior; Paul is not my savior; Jesus is my savior, so I will listen most closely to him. Jesus did not read Scripture literally or legalistically – for proof I point you to the "You have heard it said, but I say to

you..." passages in the Sermon on the Mount. He was decidedly aligned with the least, the last, the lost, and the lonely, and believed that love was the basis on which all things should be done.

The time has come for us, as Jesus did, as Paul did, as our church has done for centuries, to move beyond the selective application of Scripture which supports our cultural biases; to move beyond a literalistic and legalistic reading of Scripture; to move beyond "the law" and embrace the grace of God for all God's people.

I have grown up in a time and a culture that has often treated some among us differently – African-Americans, women, immigrants, and those of varied sexual orientation. Thankfully, with regard to the first three of these groups I did not grow up in a church that felt or acted that way, and I'd like to be able to say that during my ministry, during my lifetime, the same could be said with regard to the last of these groups. The Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. used to say: "The arc of history always bends towards justice." For me this is a justice issue.

Finally, to quote Leslie Weatherhead: "It is not what we generally think of as sin which keeps us from the Kingdom, but things like supposed superiority, pride, vanity, intolerance, egotism, quarrelsomeness – really, of course, the worst sins of all – all those things which prevent the family feeling, the feeling that we are just like others, and all children in God's family."

This is why I am staying.

Randy Bare, Teaching Elder
Presbytery of Tropical Florida.

I am grateful for Amalie's invitation to share our thoughts on what is going on in our denomination and how it affects us in our Presbytery, our churches and each of us as teaching elders. I wanted to speak personally about this. My wife Carrie's grandfather was a PCUSA pastor, her mother was the church organist at a PCUSA church for over 30 years and Carrie is a PCUSA ruling elder and was a Youth Advisory Delegate to the 1969 UPCUSA General Assembly. I began to follow Christ as a college student through the ministry of First Presbyterian Church Berkeley, and became a candidate in the Presbytery of San Jose in 1984 and was ordained as a Minister of Words and Sacrament by the Presbytery of Twin Cities in 1990. I have been blessed to work with colleagues in the Presbytery of Twin Cities, the Presbytery of San Francisco and now the Presbytery of Tropical Florida for almost 25 years. For my entire adult life, I have been part of the PCUSA and have been enriched by relationships with colleagues with whom I agree but also with colleagues with whom I disagree. So, this is a wrenching time for me. Loyal members of our formerly PCUS congregation have shared with me that they cannot stay in the PCUSA in good conscience and have already resigned their membership. Others have quietly drifted away. Others feel just as strongly that the PCUSA is their spiritual home. As a parish pastor, I find myself in an extraordinarily difficult space in attempting to be a faithful shepherd to my entire flock.

As a minister member of Presbytery, the difficulties are also wrenching. The church where I now serve as a Teaching Elder and Pastor has entered the discernment process under our Presbytery's gracious separation policy. That decision by our Session to enter this process means that I have therefore entered a parallel process of discernment with our Committee on Ministry. As I go through this process, I am grateful both for our Presbyterian tradition of doing things in a decent and orderly way and for our shared commitment to living under our polity. I

am also grateful for these wise words from our Constitution. *"To be one with Christ is to be joined with all those whom Christ calls into relationship with him. To be thus joined with one another is to become priests for one another, praying for the world and for one another and sharing the various gifts God has given to each Christian for the benefit of the whole community. Division into different denominations obscures but does not destroy unity in Christ. The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), affirming its historical continuity with the whole Church of Jesus Christ, is committed to the reduction of that obscurity, and is willing to seek and to deepen communion with all other churches within the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church. F-1.0302a.*

It is my prayer, that my fellow Presbyters will be priests for one another, praying for one another during this season. Regardless of what decision our congregation takes, and regardless of what decision I make, I am committed to making real in my own life the words captured in our Constitution. I am committed to deepening communion with all of my fellow Presbyters, including those who reach may reach different conclusions in their discernment process. Our Lord Jesus calls us to very high standard of discipleship. Part of that discipleship is maintaining relationships with those with whom we disagree. We need time to deal with such a complex set of issues that involve deep and strong convictions and feelings on all sides. But I am confident that as we go through this process, our shared commitment to the bonds of fellowship will continue. Practically speaking, no matter what happens in our discernment process, all of us will remain part of member communions in the World Alliance of Reformed Churches. But underneath that institutional community, we will have shared bonds of friendship forged through living into this current conflict. If we stay engaged with each other and work through these complex issues faithfully, I believe God will bless us richly.

Rev. Randall Gill

First Presbyterian Church of Boynton Beach
On A Jeremiah Journey

We believe that at this time we are called to remain in the Presbyterian Church U.S.A. It causes us great sorrow that close friends are choosing to begin the process of leaving. As a pastor, I have always relied on these friends for counsel and support.

"Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there? Why then has the health of my poor people not been restored?"
Jeremiah 8:22

We will stay within the PCUSA. Like Jeremiah, we want to be witnesses to the Truth, even during painful times. This issue is more than sexuality. It is about what we believe about Scripture

and the call to serve Christ through mission. We believe we don't live in a perfect world, and Christ reaches out to all people. Jesus was an untiring advocate for human dignity. He calls us to live lives of care and respect. Jesus says, "Come, still there is room at my Great Banquet." There are Sundays when our congregation truly looks like the kingdom of heaven. In an urban setting, we are reaching a variety of people, poor and needy, who live in our immediate neighborhood. As a church, we want to hold together and keep our eyes on Jesus. We love the church, even those with whom we disagree. Pray for us as we work for renewal in the Presbyterian Church U.S.A.

Rev. Dr. Douglas J. Brouwer

First Presbyterian Church, Fort Lauderdale

The situation in which our denomination finds itself is sad and difficult. I have friends on both sides of the issue, and I sense that the conflict has taken a toll on many of these friendships. Sadly, there are topics that we just can't discuss. I wish there were another way to resolve the issue that confronts the PCUSA without separation, but that hope now appears lost. Another "Reformed Body" seems all but certain.

My own thinking over the years has been shaped in significant ways by Richard Mouw, president of Fuller Theological Seminary. Rich was one of my philosophy professors at Calvin College when I was a student there, and a few years later he preached at my ordination. I now count him a friend (and I would like to think he feels similarly about me). Rich spoke last summer at the "Fellowship of Presbyterians" event in the Twin Cities, and he urged those in his audience to avoid separation. Among his arguments was that the evangelical voice is needed within the larger Presbyterian tradition. He challenged us to listen both to those who are more conservative than we are and also those who are more liberal. Rich, to his credit, has modeled this behavior for the church many times in recent years.

Recognizing that many of us are tired of fighting over ordination standards, and are therefore looking for a safe haven elsewhere, Rich warned his audience that "there is no safe haven. Our safety," he said, "can only be found in that place of missional fidelity," where Christians align themselves with what God is doing in the world. I've been trying hard these last few years to do just that. I would welcome the opportunity to do that with my new colleagues here in the Presbytery of Tropical Florida, and yet it seems likely that some of my newly formed friendships in this Presbytery will come to an end.

I did not grow up in the Presbyterian Church. I came to the denomination in the late 1970s as a seminary student who suddenly and painfully found himself without a denominational home. I didn't know that by going to Princeton Theological Seminary I was closing the door on the tradition in which I was raised and which I loved. And so, today I am more grateful than I can say to the denomination that embraced me when I desperately needed an embrace, that provided for me a path to the ministry I felt called to do.

Beyond that, I helped to ordain my older daughter a couple of years ago as a minister of word and sacrament in the PCUSA, and she has found a ministry in this denomination where lives are being changed and where people are hearing the Word of God proclaimed fearlessly and with great conviction. So, this denomination is now something I share at an important level within my own family.

It would be an understatement to say that my feelings today are decidedly mixed. On the one hand, I feel deep appreciation and gratitude, but all of that is tempered by a growing unease with what our denomination has become. More than anything I want to get beyond the conflict that has consumed the 31 years I have been ordained in this denomination. What does the future hold for me? I don't know, but for now I'm holding onto that "place of missional fidelity" described by my old teacher and friend.

And of course I am grateful to our friend, Amalie Ash, for asking us to speak to each other in this way. My prayer is that this conversation will be helpful to us as colleagues and friends. Much is at stake.

Rev. Dr. Robert Lloyd Sullivan

Why am I staying in the PCUSA?

Ever since 1964 when I was ordained as a Presbyterian Minister the question regarding Gays has been brought to the General Assembly. And every year those attending General Assembly have consistently opposed the ordaining of Gays. Finally, this year the changing of a few words has opened the door a crack to let Gays into the leadership of our congregations. The pressure for this change remained incessant for the past 50 years.

Do most of our congregations oppose the ordaining of a Gay person? I know they do! And that is really where the decisions are made regarding this issue, not by the General Assembly. For the past 50 years the "Layman" has

carried on a smear campaign against our General Assembly-which incidentally its voting members are not G.A. Staff but the Elders and Ministers we as congregations have sent to that gathering. I believe their negativism has contributed to un-necessary discontent within some of our congregations.

The issue of "Abortion" has also tended to divide us. Who is right and who is wrong? There isn't time to work this one out in this writing but some people feel very strongly about their position. And there are countless other social issues. Where is the tolerance for differing perspectives?

We are living in a time of great change. Not only are we as individuals facing economic losses but losses in church membership. That is very upsetting to most of us! That makes some of us angry or depressed! We want to find someone to blame. The Government and Wall Street make good targets. But so does the Institutional Church.

I believe that those who have chosen to withdraw from the Presbyterian Church of the USA have done, and will do, much harm, not only to our denomination but also to the congregations who become caught up in controversy. I have seen over the years that it is often the larger and more affluent congregations that leave our denomination. Why is that? And what part does the Pastor of that church play? Is he the pawn of his congregation or does he offer the kind of leadership that keeps a congregation together and focused

on the real work our Lord has asked us to do?

Then there is the issue about who gets the church property after a scism? In most cases generations of church members have financially paid for those church buildings and believed in the Presbyterian Church of USA. Now why should a particular group of people in this one moment of time snatch those church buildings away? I don't think t's right! It might even been considered thievery! I feel that any congregation who doesn't want to remain within PCUSA should move out of that church building and go and start their own church from scratch like those who came before them.

In brief, I'm very upset about the divisiveness that is occurring within our Denomination! I think it is the wrong thing to do and the wrong time to do it!

James R McClean – Elder

Faith Presbyterian Church, Palm Springs, Florida

Why do people go along with the crowd, even when they know it's wrong?

Simply stated, people go along with what they think is the popular opinion out of a desire to avoid reprisal or isolation—even if they object to that opinion personally. Instead of Silence.

This is exactly what is happening to us today—Christians are not immune from wanting to "get along." Think about it: We don't want to ruffle feathers or seem confrontational. So instead of speaking out to defend traditional marriage or explain our position on the dignity of human life etc., we remain silent.

This shouldn't be. Now is the time to break this "spiral of silence." Will you help us become a people who will not remain silent when they simply don't want to be "out of step" with what is perceived as the majority opinion? I say *"perceived" because, often, the "acceptable" opinion is actually a minority one.* Its dominance flows from the way in which it is presented by the media and by strong-willed advocates. Many are being coerced into silence in the debate over so-called gay "marriage." Actually, "debate" is a misnomer. Most Americans oppose gay "marriage." Every

voicing their own opinions, they remain silent. It leads to what can be called the "Spiral

time the question is on the ballot, voters uphold its traditional definition.

Yet people are often afraid to speak out. They are afraid of being labeled a "bigot", a "homophobe", or even a "monster".

The result is the "spiral of silence."

Through our teaching we are a winsome case for biblical Truth. For example, we can explain and demonstrate how societies thrive when they develop a strong, healthy marriage culture. We have certainly seen the consequences of the breakdown of marriage in the faces of thousands of children. The good news is these kinds of spirals are fragile: Once exposed, they unravel. If brave people insist on speaking out, and do so in a winsome and appealing way: Then the fears and illusions that created the "spiral of silence" lose their power.

People begin to realize that they are far from alone.

Shelly A. Sands

Clerk of Session

Trinity Presbyterian Church, Key West Florida

The new Gracious Separation Agreement (GSA) I feel is another way for several people to find ways to satisfy their own selfish ambitions and not take into consideration the church as a whole in the way God would want us to be.

About a few months ago we as a body voted to transform Tropical Florida Presbytery from a "Reducing to a Reproducing Presbytery.

The goals set by the committee who formulated this new change in the way things are done at Tropical Florida Presbytery are as follows:

- Make new Christians and make new churches.
- Support churches in helping them envision and develop their futures.
- Support pastors and lay leaders through leadership development.
- Enable congregations to work together to nurture partnership in mission.

Apparently the same group of people who devised this new way of restructuring our Presbytery is the same group of people who is sitting on the commissions that makes all the decision and who are part of the churches that is planning

their gracious separation agreement (GSA) under minding the same people who look up to them.

The name for this commission (PUPAC) which stands for Peace, Unity, and Purity Administrative Commission also called (Discernment AC).

There is no peace, no unity, no purity in this commission and I question their discernment which I feel is base on a evil spirit as opposed to a good spirit.

I would like to see that name change from PUPAC and the very same people who adopted the mission goals not served on this committee because of their plans to leave the denomination. I feel they do not have the whole church in heart but only looking to satisfy their own ambitions.

Dr. Leon Lovell-Martin

Associate Missional Presbyter

Congregations in a Period of Discernment: Ten congregations within our presbytery have requested the opportunity to be involved in a period of discernment as they contemplate their future within the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). The decision by the leaders of these congregations to consider withdrawing their membership from the PCUSA resulted from the adoption of a constitutional amendment, which they felt rejects the authority of scripture and contradicts the confessions of the church. The amendment eliminated the sexual standard of “fidelity and chastity” for church officers. The new language outlining the requirements for ordained service is stated as follows:

Standards for ordained service reflect the church’s desire to submit joyfully to the Lordship of Jesus Christ in all aspects

of life (G-1.0000). The governing body responsible for ordination and/or installation (G.14.0240; G-14.0450) shall examine each candidate’s calling, gifts, preparation, and suitability for the responsibilities of office. The examination shall include, but not be limited to, a determination of the candidate’s ability and commitment to fulfill all requirements as expressed in the constitutional questions for ordination and installation (W-4.4003). Governing bodies shall be guided by Scripture and the confessions in applying standards to individual candidates.

Let us join in prayer for the pastors, ruling elders, and members of these congregations as they seek to discern where the Holy Spirit is leading them in this time of uncertainty.

ADMINISTRATIVE PERSONNEL ASSOCIATION

HOW DOES THE GRACIOUS SEPARATION EFFECT THE ADMINISTRATIVE PERSONNEL ASSOCIATION?

What do I do if my church is leaving the denomination under the Gracious Separation Agreement and I am a member of the Administrative Personnel Association of the Presbyterian Church (USA)? Can I still remain a member of the association? And, why should I remain a member if my church is leaving?

The APA has a membership option for you if your church is leaving under the Gracious Separation Agreement. You can retain your membership and your certification credits by becoming an Affiliate Member.

The courses offered through the APA apply to many areas of your job as staff member in a church. Administrative classes

cover such topics as Conflict Management, How to Run a Meeting, Newsletters and Bulletins, Personnel Issues, Risk Management, Stewardship Programs and Capital Campaigns, and many, many more topics that are relevant to your job. Spiritual Studies has classes on Bible history, Biblical Interpretation and Theology. And, of course, the Technology classes are a must for any church staff person. By continuing your membership with the APA, you can use the skills gained through the APA to help you and your church.

If you have any questions, please don’t hesitate to contact Barbara Prieto, the Florida Region APA President at 305-666-8586 or rivierachurch@bellsouth.net.

Every January, many of us tend to make a new year's resolution. Whether it is to lose weight, exercise more, spend more time with family and friends, reaffirm our commitment to God or grow as an individual by taking education classes, we look at January as a way of starting the new year with a commitment.

This sense of a new beginning also applies to our professional lives and with the lives of those who we work with each and every day. Your administrative support staff; your secretaries, day care workers, bookkeepers, office managers and administrative assistants, are counting on you to help them begin this new year with a new sense of commitment. The commitment of enhancing the skills that they already possess by funding their membership to the Administrative Personnel Association of the Presbyterian Church (USA) as well as budgeting the funds for them to attend an APA conference. This investment for your support staff, a mere \$75 for the membership dues and approximately \$500 for attendance at an APA conference, is a great way to start off this new year.

This year's Florida Region Conference will be held from May 16th through May 20th in Sarasota, Florida. After January 24th, the registration form can be found on the Florida Region's website, www.floridaapa.org. This is a great gift that you can give those in your office who are most supportive of you. Allow them the opportunity to reaffirm their commitment to you and your organization by encouraging them to make the resolution that this is the year that they are going to start the process to become more educated about Presbyterian Church USA history, theology and polity.

Contact Barbara Prieto, Florida Region President, at 305-666-8566 or rivierachurch@bellsouth.net to find out how your staff can begin this new year right by becoming affiliated with this great association.

Nancy Fine
Membership Chair, Florida Region of the Administrative Personnel Association of the Presbyterian Church (USA)
www.floridaapa.org

SHARI'S SHOUT OUT



Happy 2012!

Truly hope your Christmas was especially blessed. Here we are with a clean slate to start anew – what will the year bring?

Statistical Reports were sent to all Clerks of Session on December 9th. Please keep in mind that the February 22nd deadline for submission will be here in the blink of an eye. Necrology reports are due the end of January. Churches are asked to respond (None) if no elder died during the year, so that I may hear from everyone.

Church Representation at Presbytery. A letter was included with the above mailing providing each church with the number of Commissioners having voting rights in

2012. Please let me know if the letter goes astray or you have any questions.

Boundary training sessions are currently being planned – two, perhaps three sessions – for 2012. In preparing the listing for the Committee on Ministry, it was surprising how many Teaching and Ruling Elders had never attended. When the dates become available, please register as soon as possible. In accordance with Presbytery policy, Ruling Elders serving on COM, CPM and PJC are to attend.

Thank you all for your friendship and for all you do. I can't promise not to nag this year; but with your help, I won't!

God bless us every one!

LET'S TALK ABOUT MONEY

 From Susan Carpenter

IMPORTANT NOTICE: To ensure the deductibility of your church contributions, do not file your 2011 income tax return until you have received a **written** acknowledgement of your contributions from the church. Some of your contributions may not be tax-deductible if you file your return **before** receiving a written acknowledgement of your contributions from the church.

UNDERSTAND KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN HEALTHCARE REFORM

The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA), or federal healthcare reform, determines certain “dos and don’ts” for the Medical Plan of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), with several provisions, such as the small employer tax credit and the prohibition against placing lifetime caps on healthcare benefits, already in place.

Additional provisions are scheduled to go into effect in 2012 and 2013, and the entire law will be in full force in 2014.

To help you, as well as plan members, understand what the PPACA requires of employers and consumers and how the law affects coverage under the Medical Plan, the Board of Pensions has created a new web page, Pensions.org/healthcarereform

Here you’ll find descriptions of the major provisions of PPACA, listed by year of implementation. Those provisions that require **you to take action** are highlighted. By keeping track of and responding to these action items, you can see to it that your employing organization complies with the law and maximizes potential benefits from the legislation.

The Board will update Pensions.org/healthcarereform as the law and its implications unfold. Please bookmark the page in your web browser so you can refer to it quickly.

Questions? Please call Member Services at 800-773-7752 (800-PRESPLAN).



TECH TALK

This year we will be preparing our newsletters to go out on the 25th of the month. Please submit your articles no later than the 15th of the month.

BIRTHDAYS

- 02 Dr. Mack Sigmon – First, Delray Beach
- 02 Rev. David Kwon – Korean, North Miami
- 08 Dr. Maurice Stone - HR
- 09 Rev. Robert Coleman – Goodwill, Ft. Pierce
- 12 Rev. Jack Noble - First [Pink Church], Pompano Beach
- 14 Rev. Mardoqueo Munoz - HR
- 20 Rev. Michel D. Yonts- Faith, Pembroke Pines
- 21 Rev. Aaron Janklow – First, Delray Beach
- 22 Dr. Jacqueline Rhoades - HR
- 23 Rev. Suk Won Han – Korean, Palm Beach
- 24 Rev. Jefferson P. Rogers - HR

ORDINATIONS

- 01 Rev. Moises J. Senti - HR
- 01 Dr. Jacqueline Rhoades - HR
- 01 Dr. Raul Fernandez-Calienes - MOS
- 07 Dr. Dana Allin - Indian River, Ft. Pierce
- 15 Dr. David Massey - Plantation Church, Plantation
- 21 Rev. Robert Coleman – Goodwill, Ft. Pierce
- 22 Rev. Martin Anorga – HR

January 2012	February 2012
2 Office Closed	2 Noon COM (Region 2&3) 1:00 COM
3 Region 2 Gathering – 1 st Fort Lauderdale	10 Newsletter Deadline for Submissions
5 Noon COM (Region 2&3) 1:00 COM	14 Packets Mailed
10 Deadline for GA applications	23 9:30 – FRC Board of Pensions Retiree Luncheon
12 10:00 Covenant Group	25 Presbytery Meeting – Sunrise PC
17 10:00 CON/COR 4:00 Coral Gables	
19 Region 1 lunch First Stuart 1:00 Multicultural TF	
26 9:30 FRC	

Access the annual calendar online: <http://www.tfpby.org/calendar.html>

OTHER NEWS AND EVENTS

IT IS NOT TOO LATE TO PARTICIPATE IN SOUPER BOWL OF CARING?

JOIN THIS MOVEMENT TO FIGHT HUNGER AROUND THE TIME OF THE SUPER BOWL!

Go to www.tacklehunger.org now to sign up!
Join today in this simple, youth-led movement to fight hunger.
All you have to do is follow these 4 steps:

1. Register your organization at www.tacklehunger.org-NOW
2. Collect your donations on or near Super Bowl Sunday-February 5th
3. Report your collection at www.tacklehunger.org
4. Donate the collection to the charity that your church chooses

If you have questions, contact Emily Heeg, Florida Director, at emilyheeg@yahoo.com or 904-288-8414.

HAITI MISSION UPDATE

As we approach the second anniversary of the January 12, 2010 earthquake in Haiti, it might be helpful for us to look at the world picture of response. It is heartening to know that the World Bank is continuing to work there. Last month it endorsed a new 12-month strategy. See the following update, obtained from <http://reliefweb.int>.

[Read the full article online](#)

WINTER COURSES IN CORAL GABLES BY EDEN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

- **Dr. Christopher Grundy**, Assistant Professor of Preaching and Worship at Eden Theological Seminary will be teaching a class on **Christian Public Worship** right here in Florida. The course will be taught *during the evening* at Coral Gables Congregational United Church of Christ January 17-20 and January 23-26. There will also be a class session on Saturday January 21 from 8:30-3:00pm
- Starting in February, **Dr. Kristen Leslie**, Professor of Pastoral Care and Theology, will be teaching the course **Pastoral Theology and Care** at Coral Gables. This course will be offered one week-end a month (Friday and Saturday) during the months of February, March, April and May. This will be a hybrid course involving on-line instruction and in class work. What congregation wouldn't appreciate their pastor taking time to brush up on their pastoral care skills?

- Eden will also be offering an on-line course Biblical Studies 1: **Torah and the Former Prophets** taught by **Dr. John Bracke**. This course begins in February.

ATTENTION SEMINARIANS – SCHOLARSHIPS MONMOUTH

What college was meant to be.

We would like to introduce you to the new Presbyterian Scholarship available at Monmouth College. The Presbyterian Scholarship awards students who are interested in connecting their faith to an education at Monmouth College.

Two Presbyterian students per state are eligible for a \$5,000 scholarship. These scholarships are renewable for up to three additional years. It is our hope that you will assist us in awarding these deserving students by nominating them at monmouthcollege.edu/scholarships. Students may apply for this scholarship at the aforementioned website or by submitting the enclosed scholarship form. Additionally, students must receive a letter of recommendation from you, their Presbyterian pastor, on church letterhead. Please address these letters to: ATTN: Vice President for Enrollment.

If you have any questions regarding these Presbyterian Scholarships, contact:

Monmouth College Admissions - 700 East Broadway,
Monmouth, IL 61462 –
monmouthcollege.edu
800-747-2687

For additional information on Monmouth College please use the following links:

General Information www.monmouthcollege.edu

Admission Application

<http://www.monmouthcollege.edu/admissions/apply>

Scholarships (including this Presbyterian Scholarship)

<http://www.monmouthcollege.edu/admissions/financialaid/scholarships.aspx>

Schedule a visit to campus

<http://www.monmouthcollege.edu/admissions/visit>
