

# Presbyterian Promise News

Issue Number 22  
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## Reconciling Dialogue:

### First stop on the Road to San Jose

*What steps do you take to prepare to advocate for justice? How do you prepare a witness characterized by love and respect – and make it such a strong witness that others will know deep in their souls what it means to be in the presence of equally beloved Christian brothers and sisters? Not easily, for sure, but that was the tacit challenge facing representatives from the four groups most vigorously advocating LGBT equality in the PC (USA) as they gathered February 27 at the Stony Point Center in New York. Strategists, staff, and board members from That All May Freely Serve (TAMFS), More Light Presbyterians (MLP), the Covenant Network of Presbyterians, and the Witherspoon Society gathered in the Gilmore Sloane House for two full days of intense work, facilitated by Bob and Alice Evans and Elizabeth Velez of Plowshares Institute, our friends who worked with us here in PSNE during our Reconciling Dialogue Project. Though allies and personal friends, we recognized that developing better ways to work together, working at reconciliation, would serve us well in preparing to advocate and embody reconciliation, love, and justice at the 218th General Assembly in San Jose in June.*

*Presbyterian Promise took the lead in making this summit consultation happen. We developed, proposed and were awarded a grant from the Carpenter Foundation of Philadelphia. Nothing quite like this facilitated summit consultation had been tried before, and while we came together in hope and some trust, we knew that the work together would stretch us. Lisa Larges, TAMFS Minister Coordinator, reflects on those days at Stony Point.*

So, there are the jokes that begin with a Rabbi and a priest in a bar. There are jokes that open with St. Peter at the Pearly Gates. Then too, there are those jokes where the set up line is “I have some good news and some bad news.” You know, like:

Doctor: “I have some good news and some bad news.”

Patient: “What’s the good news?”

Doctor: “The good news is that the tests came back and

you have 24 hours to live.”

Patient: “Oh no, if that’s the good news, what’s the bad news?”

Doctor: “The bad news is that I forgot to call you yesterday!”

Or,

Lawyer: “I have some good news and some bad news.”

Client: “Well, give me the bad news first.”

Lawyer: “The bad news is that the DNA tests showed that it was your blood they found all over the crime scene”

Client: “That’s terrible! I’m ruined! What’s the good news?”

Lawyer: “The good news is your cholesterol is down to 150!”

Ok, thanks for your indulgence, and thanks for adding your own “bahdah boom.” But I can’t think of any other way to reflect on our time at Stony Point without lining it up as bad news and good news. In most instances, as happens with life sometimes, the bad news and the good news turn out to be the same. Consider:

The bad news is that we did not emerge with a unified strategy to bring forward together to this year’s General



Elizabeth Velez, Alice and Bob Evans  
at Stony Point Center

Dick Hasbany

Assembly. Producing a unified strategy wasn’t our goal convening there at Stony Point because we knew that our interests, strengths and constituents represent a diverse

tapestry of opinion and strategies. In all honesty, this diversity has led to some strong differences of points of view in the past, and some of those differences were quite present with us during our time together at Stony Point.

The good news is that we didn't emerge with a unified strategy to bring forward to this year's General Assembly. The open, probing, and creative exercises and conversations led by Alice, Bob and Elizabeth of Plowshares helped us to seek something more honest and life-giving than unified strategies. Together we worked at seeking ways to preserve the breadth of conviction and experience of our diverse viewpoints while identifying the places where we might join our strengths to further our common goals. Some of those plans have already been set in motion.

Part of one morning, the Plowshares folks led us in a lively discussion on the signs of the times. What's the mood in the church? Where are the opportunities? What new thing is happening? How are changes in our culture impacting the church? These were some of the questions that fueled our wide-ranging and provocative conversation. Much the same conversation has been taking place within each of our organizations. The good news emerging from those reflections is that we have a shared conviction that this may be the moment when our church will finally vote for equality, fairness and welcome. We didn't arrive at a unified strategy at Stony Point, but the good news is that we are coming to this General Assembly with the weight of our collective power behind positive overtures to restore the vitality of our church and delete G-6.0106B from our constitution.

The bad news is that it isn't easy. It would be far easier, or so we think, if there were just one overarching organization in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to advocate for full inclusion of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender members. It would be far easier if a small committee would get together and write the five year plan. It would be far easier if our own human failings, let alone our own deep convictions wouldn't trip us up from time to time.

The good news is that it isn't easy. We don't have a five year plan, but we do have relationships. Bob and Alice call the work they do "Conflict Transformation," which, at least as I understand it, takes conflict not as something to be resolved or managed, but rather as a force that has within itself the power to create something strong and good in and through our diversity. The work that they do is spiritual work, as it is rooted in the practical certainty of grace. The work that we are trying to do together isn't easy in the same way that faith isn't easy. Which is why, perhaps, the Plowshares folks had us end our time together, sitting in the beautiful round meditation sanctuary at Stony Point sharing stories of faith from our own lives. Those stories remind us why we're in this

together. As Michael Adee said, "We have a sacred trust."

Along with the other individuals and organizations represented at our summit gathering, let me express my thanks first of all to the staff of the Stony Point Center. They went out of their way to lavish on us a warm and generous welcome. Second, we were so privileged to have the years of experience and wise leadership of Plowshares. Their commitment to bring their skills and expertise to this justice work is invaluable. It is providential that Bob and Alice are Presbyterians, and we owe them a debt of gratitude. Lastly, That All May Freely Serve, More Light Presbyterians, the Covenant Network and the Witherspoon Society offer our warmest thanks to Presbyterian Promise for your stick-to-itiveness! Bringing off this summit required some real hanging in, and a lot of behind the scenes work. All of us together are deeply grateful to the Carpenter Foundation for the generous grant that made the summit not only possible but successful.

*A final note: the Stony Point summit consultation set some concrete things in motion. They do not ensure any revolution in San Jose, but they do suggest that the courage to become vulnerable and come together can pay off. As a result of our time together, the organizations have formed a moderator's communication group, the four organization's have resumed financial support of a justice oriented web site: ([www.justpresbys.org](http://www.justpresbys.org)), and a magnificent project to get a copy of Jesus, the Bible, and Homosexuality by former Moderator Jack Rogers into the hands of every elder and minister commissioner, every Youth Advisory Delegate (YAD) and every Theological Student Advisory Delegate (TSAD) is in full swing. This book project came together in an amazing, ad hoc, unruly, spirit-filled effort that involved each of the organizations. Contributions to support the project came from the organizations and individuals from all over the country. A mailing party at Pasadena Presbyterian Church stuffed and sent out over 900 copies of the book. None of this would have happened had we not made the first stop on the road to San Jose – one of trust, patience, vulnerability, and faith.*

*Lisa Larges with Dick Hasbany*

## **GA 218: Do Justice, Love Kindness, Walk Humbly with your God**

The General Assembly beginning June 21st will face many important decisions and several opportunities to do justice. Rev. Clifton Kirkpatrick, who has served as GA Stated Clerk for twelve years is retiring. Grady Parsons is the nominee to succeed him. Grady has been in the Stated Clerks office for eight years and has considerable experience with the national level of the denomination. If he is elected, we may anticipate reasonable continuity with how

things have been functioning. Three other ministers are also running for this position. The outcome will say much about how we function together for the next several years.

As happens at every assembly, this one will elect a Moderator. Four people have been nominated. One can read their official information and statements at: <http://www.pcusa.org/ga218/pdf/moderator-book.pdf>.

### **New Form of Government**

Consideration of a completely revised *Form of Government* is likely to be the major work for this GA. The final Task Force report and supporting documents are at: <http://www.pcusa.org/formofgovernment/> If this is adopted, our present *Form of Government* will be reduced from 118 pages to 78, and there seem to be fewer words per page as well. It will be a most significant change in the way we do our work together.

I have long wished our *Book of Order* might be shorter and easier for people to manage. This seems a promising step, though I have two concerns. First, this is a transformation from a polity of regulations to one that emphasizes theory and principles. Some (not all) of the details are to be moved to manuals. Is it not likely that this will lead us to drift yet further apart in our identity as well as our practices?

My second concern is that we lose the language of the current G-4.0403. "Persons of all racial ethnic groups, different ages, both sexes, various disabilities, diverse geographical areas, different theological positions consistent with the Reformed tradition, as well as different marital conditions (married, single, widowed, or divorced) shall be guaranteed full participation and access to representation in the decision making of the church" While the proposal [F-3.0303, G-1.0302] does affirm the church's call to express its diversity, our history has shown that the specific words of inclusion were necessary. Those who have been excluded generally do not feel welcome just because the rules no longer prohibit their presence.

For those of us who have lived with this book for years, having a bit of time to live into new possibilities may be both helpful and desirable. There are several overtures asking for at least two years and a process for study by presbyteries and Presbyterians prior to adoption. This is a complete rewriting. Familiar sentences appear in new and possibly unexpected places. Some sentences do not appear at all, or have been rewritten. Let's hope we're not bound to the way we've always done things, but perhaps some time to live into the new will help.

The GA that established the Form of Government Task Force instructed it to retain the language of G-6.0106b, which excludes people from ordination, and G-8.0200, which establishes that church property is held in trust. Such instruction is politically understandable. It

leaves the challenge of doing justice to this General Assembly, which is free to modify the *Form of Government* proposal before sending it to the presbyteries, if it chooses to send it.

### **Delete 'b'**

It is worth remembering the process to change the PC USA *Constitution*. First a presbytery approves an overture to the General Assembly. The Assembly assigns it to a committee for consideration, redrafting and recommendation. During this process, the "best" ideas from several overtures may be combined. Then the whole GA considers, amends and votes on the matter. If it passes, it is then sent to the 173 presbyteries, where it must be approved by a majority.

There are a number of overtures in roughly four categories that speak to Presbyterian Promise's core concern. Hudson River Presbytery was the first to submit an overture

[05-06, that's Committee 05 - Church Orders and Ministry, overture #6] asking for the deletion of G-6.0106b and repeal of the Authoritative Interpretations on this issue. Albany, Baltimore,

National Capitol, New York City and Redwoods Presbyteries concurred. Genesee Valley submitted a similar one [05-08]. This is familiar territory to readers of this newsletter. The Advisory Committee on the Constitution has a thorough background on the polity behind this long debate. At [www.pc-biz.org](http://www.pc-biz.org), switch to the "Committee" tab. Click on [05], then find [05-01] (You may have to sign up for pc-biz, which is free and gives you access to the working documents for this GA.)

Boston Presbytery has provided an alternative to just deleting 'b' [05-09]. They would replace it with this language: "*Those who are called to ordained service in the church, by their assent to the constitutional questions for ordination and installation (W-4.4003), pledge themselves to live lives obedient to Jesus Christ the Head of the Church, striving to follow where he leads through the witness of the Scriptures, and to understand the Scriptures through the instruction of the Confessions. In so doing, they declare their fidelity to the standards of the Church. Each governing body charged with examination for ordination and/or installation (G-14.0240 and G-14.0450) establishes the candidate's sincere efforts to*

### **Our Board**

Dan Blackford (Co-moderator)  
Rev. Terry Davis (Hartford)  
Rev. Barbara Hager (Co-moderator)  
Rev. Anne Fuhrmeister (Waterford)  
Dick Hasbany (New Haven)  
Jane Hindenlang (Treasurer)  
Ralph Jones (New Haven)  
Meg Nosenzo (Secretary)  
Wayne Osborne (Stamford)  
Keith Rhoden (Hartford)  
Janet Wade-Utay (West Hartford)  
Pat Wales (New Haven)  
Mary-Starke Wilson (Stamford)

adhere to these standards.” They would also repeal the Authoritative Interpretations and adjust the process of preparation and examination for office. The not unreasonable hope is that replacing a misguided standard with one that is more just and more workable might improve the chance of passage. Cincinnati and Santa Fe Presbyteries have submitted similar language [05-11]. New Hope offered yet another variation [05-13].

Additionally, there are a number of proposals before the Church Orders committee seeking to repeal the work of the Peace Unity and Purity Task Force and the AI from the previous assembly.

## Marriage

The Presbytery of Baltimore has submitted an overture seeking to change the PC (USA) constitutional definition of marriage from “a man and a woman” to “two people.” [04-08] Hudson River has concurred. New Brunswick [04-12] and Denver [04-13] have asked for a study of this topic.

This is perhaps the most controversial proposal before this assembly, but if it were passed, it would alter the discrimination inherent in ‘b’. It would make a powerful statement about inclusiveness to many, both gay and straight, who today won’t darken the door of a church. It would substantially help PC USA ministers of Word and Sacrament serving in places like Massachusetts that recognize same sex marriage.

Marriage may receive even more attention because the GA Permanent Judicial Commission recently ruled that Janie Spahr had not performed same-sex marriages. The PJC reasoned that since the *Directory for Worship* defines marriage as between a man and a woman, whatever Janie did, it could not have been a marriage. After noting the failure of several attempts to make the Church’s understanding of marriage more restrictive, the GA PJC went on to add a prohibition on calling a ceremony involving two people of the same sex a “marriage.” What’s clear, if anything, is that we are not clear about what a marriage is. This creates another opportunity for this GA to do justice.

## Heidelberg Catechism

This is the year’s most confusing issue. When the church adopted its *Book of Confessions*, it used an idiosyncratic translation of the Heidelberg Catechism, created by the United Church Press in 1962. In paragraph 4.087, the United Church’s translators simply created new text by replacing the original language with the *New English Bible’s* translation of 1 Corinthians 6:9–10. Neither the German or Latin early texts include “or of homosexual perversion.” Indeed, as is explained in the rationales for the related overtures, one of the translators has indicated that “homosexual perversion” was inserted as an antidote to the sexual revolution of the 1960’s. Professor Rogers

offers a fuller discussion of this in his book, *Jesus, The Bible, and Homosexuality* (pages 112-119). So, if we are people who take original texts more seriously than arbitrary processes, then we have a serious problem in our *Confessions*. And it is serious, as this point provides a



Presbyterian Promise  
at the May PSNE meeting

Ralph Jones

basis for justifying the exclusionary application of G-6.0106b. There are several other significant mistranslations, each with significant theological implications.

Northern Kansas, with Chicago, New York City and Pittsburgh [13-04], Boston, with Winnebago [13-05], and Newark [13-06] have offered overtures to correct the problem. Here’s where the confusion comes in. There is a specific, supermajority procedure for amending the *Book of Confessions*. Is a correction of the text an amendment? Can a General Assembly just order the correction based on good scholarship? If it did so, would the action stand up on appeal? While it seems unlikely that an amendment would be approved by the presbyteries, there is a pretty good chance that the Assembly will favor correction. (Although an attempt to correct this lost a few years ago.)

This GA has plenty to do. Beyond that, however, our presbyteries have their work cut out. Most of the GA’s significant actions are recommendations, subject to presbytery approval. Winning GA is important, but winning the presbyteries is essential.

We in Southern New England may well watch with interest. Indeed, much of the Assembly will be webcast live. The commissioner’s materials are available through pc-biz, where you can see exactly what is being debated and voted. There’s a progressive site that offers convenient access to insights from several concerned progressive groups: <http://www.justpresbys.org>. Are we are approaching a virtual voyeurist polity?

We in Southern New England are observers this year.

Our efforts to submit overtures failed when they were considered at the February 9 PSNE meeting. That is a cautionary tale. We must not assume that either this presbytery or this denomination will do justice unless we are personally involved and present.

*Ralph Jones*

## **Myth 1:**

### **We Threaten the Unity of the Church**

The PC(USA) will not split over the inclusion of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) persons in the community of called individuals serving as Elders, Deacons, or Ministers of the Word and Sacrament.

Ever since the church's beginning, LGBT people have served the church in ordained and non-ordained status. Today, along with those who are open about their gender and sexual identity, there are thousands serving in quiet ways; thousands who have never identified themselves as LGBT. These are called individuals who understand, too well, the consequences were they to "come out." Clearly, their service has not caused the church to split. For decades these leaders have made the church a meaningful place for a great many seeking God. They have, in many ways, kept the church together.

We all recognize the importance of being open witnesses. We also acknowledge the important work of our LGBT community, serving the church without the freedom of fullness enjoyed by our heterosexual sisters and brothers. As a result, it is difficult to agree with those who suggest that our community is asking for protection or insulation in this struggle for justice. More realistic is that our LGBT community depends on those who are able to insist publicly that this church change. What is clear is that this community depends on leaders to provide a voice for those unable to speak for themselves. Such a charge and call is not negotiable.

The presence or increase of LGBT people in ordained and leadership roles in this church is not a threat to its unity. The threat to unity is the misleading of its members. It is a misleading teaching that insists upon diminished status for the LGBT community in order that the church remains "whole." This great error is at the core of the threat to the unity of God's church, not those of us who are LGBT. It is an error that has taken on a near-mythological status. And, there are other myths.

Another myth, for example, is that "...given enough time, we (LGBT people) will no longer be an 'issue' in the church. Given enough time, everyone will be used to the idea of our being around and there will no longer be any conflict. We will, in effect, 'blend in.'" Myths are often accompanied by a moral, in this case in the form of a caveat: "If the attempt proceeds to move change along

'ahead of schedule' it will cause great harm to the church, culminating in certain schism." The potential danger of such thinking cannot be estimated. Such a direction is built on the foundation that marginalization, oppression, and exclusion – however temporary (going on forty years now) – is a "livable condition" in order to achieve a greater good. At the root of the problem lurk G-6.0106b, AI, and the discriminatory language of marriage. Regardless of all protests to the contrary, the resistance to removing such impediments must be to keep LGBT folk from serving this church fully. What other reasons could there be that justify a diminished status in God's church for any child of God?

Our LGBT community has been constitutionally relegated to a footnote in the history of PJC's, assemblies, and annotations in the *Book of Order*. On one hand the injustice is swept away with the promise of a better future, and on the other, juxtaposed with a demand for willingness to accept continued dehumanization as a reasonable sacrifice for order and a false grasp on unity.

The power for change is in our hands. We must come together as progressive partners and stem the illness that is consuming the soul of the church. Our LGBT community is not the cause of this sickness; instead, it is we who are called to bring a healing and a unity to the PC(USA) that really means something. I continue to call on all progressive advocacy groups to publicly join together to lead us in change of the PC(USA) and a new realized commitment to justice with a unified and strategic presence at GA 218.

*Ray Bagnuolo*

*Gay Christian, and Minister of the Word and Sacrament,  
Presbyterian Church (USA)*

## **“That All God's Children May Freely Wed”**

*The California Supreme Court's recent decision insuring the right of same-gender couples to marry in that state stands in sharp contrast to our Presbytery's February vote not to overture the General Assembly to allow ministers to perform such marriages. The civil state seems sometimes to have a better understanding of justice and equality than our church. Conversation in the church needs to continue. We welcome Obadiah Ballinger's efforts to nurture that discussion in our region.*

On a chilly afternoon last January, I received a call from Anne Stanback, the Executive Director of Love Makes a Family CT. The nonprofit organization advocates on behalf of same-sex couples for marriage equality within Connecticut. Anne and I spoke about a new staff position that Love Makes a Family was creating to work directly with faith communities in support of marriage

equality. In the course of our conversation, Anne shared a startling opinion: the single best place to find supporters of marriage equality in Connecticut is in church on Sunday morning. I asked her to repeat herself. Churches may be the best untapped resource for the cause of marriage equality.

You know why Anne's remark surprised me. We know from personal and painful experience that our churches can be more hostile than welcoming to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people. But members and friends of *Presbyterian Promise* also know the hope that we find in church. By the grace of God, our churches continually seek reformation in order to more adequately express God's love in the world. We trust God's Spirit to lead the Church, and on that journey we learn ever-better ways to expand justice and inclusive welcome in our congregations.

Marriages have changed from Bible times to become monogamous, equal for both parties, and inclusive of interracial couples. People of faith have been active in each one of these transitions. We believe that God seeks justice and fair treatment among people. The more we learn about what it means to be just and fair, the more we begin to change the way we understand marriage. In our time, church and society must recognize a full and equal participation of same-sex couples in the marriage covenant.

Language of "covenant" is unique to the religious context, yet it also carries into a secular context. The Church marries people because a marriage forms a sacred covenant between individuals, the community, and God. Presbyterian wedding vows say as much: "I do promise and covenant, before God and these witnesses...." This covenant forms a mooring for marriages buffeted by storms of social turbulence and threatened by the minor annoyances of daily living. Relationships left without this marital mooring more easily slip into isolation and separation, grieving God's heart and impoverishing the community.

Love Makes a Family works for civil marriage rights to strengthen these covenants, made between individuals and the community even if God has no mention in the vows. The rights and benefits afforded through civil marriage can safely protect the relationships that foster love, raise children and provide care among same-sex partners.

Civil unions have served as an important step on the road to equality, but they cannot remain the final destination. Even if civil unions provided every right and responsibility implied by "marriage" (which they do not), the separate system is itself discriminatory. This finding ultimately convinced the California Supreme Court that "domestic partnerships" could never be equal to marriage.

Only "marriage" carries the social endorsement of thousands of years. Only "marriage" crosses state and international boundaries with freedom. Only "marriage" requires no explanation in the emergency room and the courtroom. Only "marriage" comes in the cultural packaging that children of same-sex partners can understand. Only "marriage" for same-sex couples will ultimately fulfill the hope of equality that civil unions have helped keep alive.

All around our state, the commitment to fairness and inclusion holds fast in large, small, rural, urban, and suburban congregations. Through the conversations that arise in our places of worship, the Spirit moves, mends, encourages and reforms hearts, mine included. Working together, we can bring to pass marriage equality for same-sex couples and make this covenant a reality for all God's children.

*Obadiah Ballinger is a 2008 graduate of Yale Divinity School. As Religious Organizer with Love Makes a Family, he hopes to educate and mobilize congregations in support of marriage equality. To schedule a visit with your congregation, please call (203) 464-3455 or email obadiah@lmfct.org.*

## A Stole for Letty

Rev. Letty Russell was a groundbreaking feminist theologian of world-renown and a professor and pastor. To each of us here who knew her, she was personally an inspiration, a blessing and sometimes, when we needed it, a thorn in our side! Yet we loved her and want to celebrate several major aspects of her life in a stole that *Presbyterian Promise* plans to donate to the Shower of Stoles so people around the country can know her as we did.

I am a "committee of one" so far on this project, and I need various kinds of help. You can help as much or as little as you'd like. Here are some choices:

Give money designated to the stole (make a check out to *Presbyterian Promise* with a note saying it is for Letty's stole);

Come with me to the Almy store in Old Greenwich to help pick out the stole and fabric. It should not take very long and will be fun.

Help with making the designs for the stole. The Presbyterian emblem can be pre-sewn into the stole by Almy, but everything else must be hand made. I would like to include the following symbols, each drawn in a 5" by 5" square, to be transferred and then sewn on to the quilt:

- The World Council of Churches symbol/logo. It is an "oikoumene" -- a boat, with a cross, on the waves, dark blue.
- A design with a rainbow at top and Letty's full name, dates and places of birth and death, date and place of ordination, date and place of the

- union/marriage ceremony with Shannon.
- A simple line drawing of Harry Potter on a broom, if possible.
- The Presbyterian Promise symbol and name.
- A very simple drawing of Letty's "theology, action, reflection" spiral with very minimal words (1 or 2) labeling each section/movement.

Volunteer to sew once we have the designs.

Thank you all! If you think I am missing a very important item or symbol, please let me know. Also let me know if you just want to help but aren't sure what is most needed. Call 203-336-1874 or email me at msrevjd@optonline.net.

*Barbara Hager*

## What in the World is TAMFS Up To?

Our friends at That All May Freely Serve are trying something new at the 218th General Assembly – what they call a New Church Revolution Team. They invite us to imagine a bold, creative, life-giving and youth-led witness in San Jose, and declare: "We believe that the church will change through sustained exposure to liberational joy. Our aim is to disrupt the pervasive atmosphere of distrust and conflict and to foster an environment conducive to change." To find out more about the New Church Revolution team, go to [www.tamfs.org](http://www.tamfs.org) or call the TAMFS office at 585-425-4000.

*Dick Hasbany*

## Calendar

### It's June...do you know where your pride is?

June is the traditional month of "gay pride" and its many festivals and parades including two here in Southern New England: **Hartford, CT June 7** and **Providence, RI June 21**. With these events come opportunity – to demonstrate our fervent belief in God's radical love for and welcome of all people and to extend that welcome concretely with both information and an invitation to local Presbyterian congregations. Yes, even here in what we like to think of as enlightened, progressive New England, we continue to encounter those whose expectation of the church is one of condemnation or, at best, conditional acceptance. To these people, native New Englanders or new to the area, as well as many others, gay and straight, steeped in the faith or unchurched, looking for a church home or just passing by – we are the face of Presbyterianism and we can make a positive difference in peoples' lives. Some might even call it ...evangelism! And we can use your help! Setting up (and later taking down) the booth, greeting visitors and sharing the Good News and information about Presbyterian Promise and its

supporting churches, or just stopping by to say "hello" . . . we'll be looking for you . . . and thanks!

June is right around the corner and we need as much assistance as possible to make these events go as smoothly as possible. (Don't wait to be asked.) With Hartford PRIDE in Elizabeth Park, we'll especially need as many people as are willing to transport the booth, etc. to and from the venue. That's the downside. One of the perks is this is a beautiful venue bordering Hartford's West End and sure to draw a diverse crowd.

*Dan Blackford*

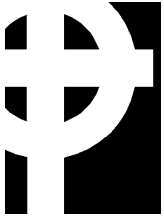
## Understanding Christian/Muslim Dialogue for Congregations and Communities a Ghost Ranch Course, August 4-10

In a worldwide climate of terror and fear, congregations and communities are hungry for a fresh approach to multicultural and interfaith dialogue. Misunderstanding of Islamic and Christian faith traditions has polarized our country and our congregations, just as attitudes toward undocumented refugees or gay and lesbian members have. This interactive course of case studies, role plays and interfaith exercises will equip pastors and lay leaders to be resources in generating new understanding and celebrating the diversity in faith in our world.

Instructors: **Robert and Alice Evans**, Directors of the Plowshares Institute; **Heidi Hadsell**, Hartford, CT, President of Hartford Seminary, an and expert in interfaith dialogue; and **Alwi Shihab**, Indonesia's Presidential Envoy to the Middle East, former Minister of Foreign Affairs for Indonesia, and a professor and Islamic scholar. For an application, please go to the Ghost Ranch website: <http://www.ghostranch.org/>

*Dick Hasbany*

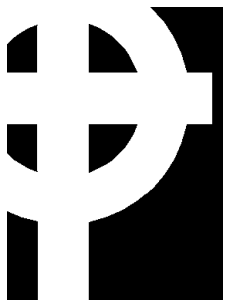
- **June 7 – Connecticut Pride:** Elizabeth Park (Hartford-West Hartford line) Contact Keith Rhoden, Jr., 860-244-2908, keithr118@yahoo.com
- **June 21 – Rhode Island Pride:** Burnside Park (downtown Providence) Contact Dan Blackford, 401-273-2435, provpresri@netzero.net
- **July 12 – (Saturday) Presbyterian Promise Board meeting:** Crossroads Presbyterian Church, Waterford, CT, 10:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.
- **July 27 – (Sunday) Presbyterian Promise's Summer Garden Party.** Plan to spend a sunny afternoon at Rev. John Merz's beautiful home in Simsbury, CT. More details and a full invitation will be coming soon. This will be a high point of the summer. Rain is unimaginable.
- **August 4-10 – Dialogue at Ghost Ranch.**



Presbyterian Promise News

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Proclaiming God's promise of justice and love in Jesus Christ  
By organizing inclusive and inquiring churches in the  
Presbytery of Southern New England  
Into a community of mutual support for the empowerment of  
Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender persons,  
And for outreach, education and Christian evangelism.

visit us at

**Crossroads Presbyterian Church**

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**First Presbyterian Church**

**First Presbyterian Church**

**Providence Presbyterian Church**

**Wilton Presbyterian Church**

**Waterford CT**

**Hartford CT**

**New Haven CT**

**Stamford CT**

**Providence RI**

**Wilton CT**

**(860) 442-3693**

**(860) 246-2224**

**(203) 562-5664**

**(203) 324-9522**

**(401) 861-1136**

**(203) 762-5514**

...working to extend the hospitality of Christ to all God's children...

<http://PresbyPromise.home.att.net>

Affiliations  
That All May Freely Serve  
More Light Presbyterians

Our ministry is one of reconciliation – introducing GLBT people and families to  
welcoming congregations even as we educate churches  
about what it means to be truly welcoming.