

Presbyterian Promise News

Issue Number 27
August 2010

Contents

- ◆ Ordination Recommendation
- ◆ Many Hands
- ◆ Advocate Statements
- ◆ Reflections
- ◆ Southard's Remarks
- ◆ Discernment
- ◆ Calendar

THE GA ISSUE

10 – A

The Ordination Recommendation

[The recent General Assembly sent proposed amendment 10-A to the 173 presbyteries recommending they approve it as part of our church's Constitution. Following the text are excerpts from the rationales offered by the Western Reserve and National Capitol presbyteries that may help us understand the value of the amendment.]

Shall G-6.0106b be amended by striking the current text and inserting new text in its place: [Text to be deleted is shown with a strike-through; text to be added or inserted is shown as italic.]

~~"b. Those who are called to office in the church are to lead a life in obedience to Scripture and in conformity to the historic confessional standards of the church. Among these standards is the requirement to live either in fidelity within the covenant of marriage between a man and a woman (W-4.9001), or chastity in singleness. Persons refusing to repent of any self-acknowledged practice which the confessions call sin shall not be ordained and/or installed as deacons, elders, or ministers of the Word and Sacrament."~~

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."

RATIONALE excerpts

Western Reserve

The integrity of the church demands that those who serve

in ordained office meet high standards—

And yet no person follows perfectly; each of us is entirely dependent for our salvation, and for our growth in faith and obedience, on the grace of Christ:

The current text of G-6.0106b ... has brought continual contention to the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

The PC(USA) has no consensus in the interpretation of Scripture on issues of same-sex practice. When convictions about important issues are so different, and so firmly-held, our long-standing Presbyterian commitment to freedom of conscience and mutual forbearance is vital to maintaining our fellowship:

The proposed amendment would maintain high standards for ordination and installation by renewed focus on the questions candidates must answer, but without imposing a single, highly contested interpretation of Scripture on the whole church.

National Capital

Our fellowship in Christ includes bisexual, gay, lesbian, straight, and transgendered persons, and, by the grace of God, we are all capable of living honorable, faithful Christian lives filled with the Holy Spirit. Thus we believe it is time to remove categorical barriers constraining lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered church members from ordained service as deacons, elders and ministers of the Word and Sacrament in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). We believe this because of scripture, not in spite of it; because of our confessions, not in spite of them; because of our polity, not in spite of it; because of who we are, not in spite of who we are, for we are all beloved children of God.

Our current ordination policy is at odds with the foundational principle of Jesus' teaching — that God is love. In times of controversy, individual passages of Scripture should be interpreted in light of the broader story, and all of Scripture should be interpreted in accord with Jesus' "two-fold commandment to love God and neighbor ..." ("Presbyterian Understanding and Use of Holy Scripture," adopted by 195th General Assembly (1983), Minutes, 1983, Part I, p. 615).

Our current ordination policy divides the body of Christ,

Our current policy continues to relegate lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered members of the church to second-class status, dishonoring their relationships and placing on them a burden of celibacy that is not required of other members. ...the current policy places all members in the position of "... [boasting] of the merits of [their] own works, or ... in works of supererogation ... [a] damnable idolatry..." (The Book of Confessions, The Scots Confession 3.15).

The Confession of 1967 says, "... every church order must be open to such reformation as may be required to make it a more effective instrument of the mission of reconciliation" (Ibid., 9.40).

Our current ordination policy contradicts the basic principle of the church which holds all men and women who are church members responsible for answering God's call to special ministries as elders, deacons, or ministers of Word and Sacrament (G-6.0106a).

Our current ordination policy contradicts the Great Commission of Christ (Matthew 28:18-20) and the Great Ends of the Church (G-1.0200)

Our current ordination policy stands as a barrier to reconciliation,

We invite the church to proclaim that our polity will reflect a church as welcoming as God's grace, as loving as God's heart, and as reconciling as God's word.

Our current ordination policy denies both our common humanity and the freedom of the Holy Spirit to work in new and surprising ways among us for reconciliation, and contradicts the Reformed understanding of God's grace in Jesus Christ. We are charged with interpreting Scripture according to the movement of the Spirit and to what Calvin called the "inner testimony of the Holy Spirit."



Before the Assembly: Many Hands

Elder Richard Hasbany

[Dick Hasbany is co-moderator of Presbyterian Promise and an organizer of the distribution efforts. He is also the photographer.]

They proved the old adage true – many hands make light work. More than 25 worshippers at the New Haven church stuck around after the service on May 5 for a mailing party. This so-called party involved light lunch and heavy envelope stuffing, the final steps in a project to provide each of the 900+ commissioners and advisory delegates to the 219th General Assembly with copies of the DVD, *Anyone and Everyone* and Jack Rogers' book *Jesus, the Bible, and Homosexuality*.



This was the second time that advocacy groups in the PC(USA) cooperated to raise funds and get into the hands of commissioners, young adult advisory delegates (YAADs), and theological student advisory delegates (TSADs) materials that put the current controversy over LGBT ordination into scriptural, theological, historical and personal perspectives. The partners in the project included Covenant Network of Presbyterians, That All May Freely Serve, More Light Presbyterians, Presbyterian Welcome and this time, Soulforce. Presbyterian Promise has played a major financial and hands-on role both times, but in this second go round, we were delighted to get (literally) knee deep into the mailing with a lot of energetic friends at New Haven.

There is no way to determine the impact of getting this material to commissioners in advance of their being asked to consider the related overtures. Certainly the Assembly's votes on those overtures were positive. The written responses we received from recipients of the mailing were also positive. One person who wrote that she was not sympathetic to LGBT ordination thanked us for the material and promised to consider it. The following note from a YAAD was one of the most powerful of the responses. The writer turns out to have had Connecticut connections.

I would like to thank First Presbyterian Church for the movie "Anyone and Everyone" and Jack Rogers' book "Jesus, the Bible, and Homosexuality" which were recently mailed to me, because advocating justice and compassion towards the LGBT community is an issue that is very important to me. I will be certain to find opportunity to discuss the inclusion of the LGBT community in the Presbyterian Church this summer when I am a YAAD at General Assembly.

I was also glad to receive the movie and the book from your congregation for a couple of personal reasons. One of my

best friends is currently struggling with coming out, and I have been praying for guidance and help for my friend, and the timely arrival of the movie and book seemed like an



answer to my prayers. Also, although I now live in . . . Kentucky, I was baptized at First Presbyterian Church in 1992 (my parents, Jim G and Sue G , were members of First Presbyterian Church

until we moved to Kentucky in 1995). I am glad to hear that First Presbyterian is a More Light church, and I hope to spread the message of inclusion that First Presbyterian has embraced when I am at General Assembly this summer.

Thanks, Laura G

At the Assembly: Advocates Speak

By the time overtures reach the General Assembly each has been touched by hours of prayer, consultation among the authors, word crafting, and then efforts to get the presbytery to forward the overture to General Assembly. Once submitted, overtures are reviewed by the General Assembly's Advisory Committee on the Constitution, which reports to the respective committees the constitutional appropriateness of each overture. Committee members have an extraordinary work load in sorting through the language and intent of overtures, and listening to the overture advocates, whose job it is to interpret how an overture faithfully furthers God's love through the governance and policies of the church. There may be no better way to understand how the overtures coming to presbyteries this year from the 219th General Assembly will further the work of a loving, welcoming, church, fully functioning in the reformed, Presbyterian tradition than by looking at a selection of the advocates' statements to the Church Orders and Ministry Committee as it considered the ordination proposals. While we hope to replace G-6.0106.b, perhaps what strikes us about these statements is the hope for a fuller expression of God's love and will and work in the world.

Statement of Tricia Dykers Koenig, Minister Member of the Presbytery of Western Reserve and National Organizer, Covenant Network of Presbyterians.

Let's talk about Scripture. We acknowledge that some "traditional" readings of Scripture hold that same-sex expression is sinful; but we know that Jesus told his disciples to expect new insights through the Spirit (John 16:12ff).

And we've come to understand what Jesus meant. Time and again, the church has experienced a "new openness" (G-3.0401) as groups of persons once considered less worthy

have been brought into full acceptance. We can see that happening in Scripture itself. Even the early church was challenged to welcome Gentiles, traditionally considered "unclean," as full members of the community. This meant setting aside the age old Laws that the first disciples had grown up learning. (Acts 10-11)

Over the last several decades, whatever consensus there was about same sex expression has broken down. More people have come to know gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender persons in our families, churches, and communities; and more of our preconceived notions have been challenged by the faithful lives and abundant gifts we are observing in these, our sisters and brothers.

Further, many seminary professors and other faithful lovers of Scripture have been hearing a different message in God's Word, calling us away from the former things – a message that we are convinced is from the Holy Spirit. On careful reading, we discover that biblical prohibitions, such as in Leviticus and Romans, are aimed at concerns that have nothing to do with the committed, loving relationships we see today.

For years now, the majority of Biblical scholars in our seminaries have not believed that Scripture prohibits same-sex relationships. Consider the interpretations advanced by the Rev. Dr. Jack Rogers, Moderator of the 213th General Assembly who taught at Fuller and San Francisco Seminaries. You have all received his book *Jesus, the Bible, and Homosexuality*. In it Jack applies the Presbyterian Church's long-standing Reformed principles of Scripture interpretation to examine all of the texts traditionally used to justify the exclusion of our gay sisters and brothers from ordained service. His conclusion is clear: these texts do not justify our history of exclusion. He goes on to demonstrate that, taken as a whole, scripture "proclaims God's radical welcome for all who have faith."



Our conclusions are grounded in Scripture. We listen for its voice by reading in literary and historical context; by applying the rule of Christ that interprets all Scripture through what we know about Jesus' life and teaching; and by adhering the rule of Love that insists: "Any interpretation of Scripture is wrong that separates or sets in opposition

love for God and love for fellow human beings.”

We are not alone in hearing this word from the Lord. The PC(USA) could join a growing number of ecumenical partners, including the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, meeting a year ago in this very building, who decided to begin putting this conflict behind them by honoring the consciences of all who seek God’s will, even when we come to differing conclusions.

Of course, we’d like everyone to share our interpretation, but it’s not necessary for all of us to agree in order for the church to move on from this conflict. What is necessary is for the PC(USA) to return to our historic principles – freedom of conscience in the interpretation of Scripture, and mutual forbearance as we all live by our Biblically-informed convictions.

Statement of Mary Speers, Minister Member of the Presbytery of New York City.

You’ve heard from us now about biblical interpretation, the Constitution of the PC(USA), the practical issues of applying G-6.0106b, and personal stories... Now I want to talk to you about evangelism. Our congregation is a family church.

In our everyday conversations, we discuss our husbands, our wives, our parents and children. Together we celebrate baptisms, weddings, baby showers, bridal showers, anniversaries...

We are happy and excited for our people when they’ve met somebody new, and we weep with them when something sad happens in their family life.

But here’s the thing: Our church is like a growing number of others nowadays in the Presbyterian Church (USA). We talk about all families.

I came to this congregation almost nine years ago as an “out of the closet” Lesbian. They welcomed my life partner so completely that within a year she had “minister’s wife syndrome!” Young, straight couples with children, and interracial couples too, began to join our church. Ours is no longer an aging congregation. The new members said they came because the pastor was gay, so they knew the church was a safe place for their children to go to Sunday school. That’s evangelism.

We celebrate with a new Lesbian member who is about to become a foster mother for a gay teenager rejected by his birth family. We celebrate with a young straight couple who, having grown up and married at our church, chose a Presbyterian Church in their new town because it had a rainbow symbol out in front.

Churches that affirm all families, gay and straight, are safe places for all the families out there with no church at all — the very people we are trying to reach. That’s evangelism. Thank you: God bless all our families.

Statement by Rev. Chris Shelton, Minister Member of the Presbytery of Hudson River and President of the Board of Presbyterian Welcome, NYC.

In this room are sisters and brothers, all seeking passionately after the will of God.

On one side, people of good faith seem to hear Jesus setting a standard, drawing a line. They have heard the Spirit saying that sanctified sexual relationships come in only one design, and they try to extend the love of Christ by calling people away from what they see as sinful.

On the other side, people of good faith seem to hear Jesus calling everyone, inviting us all into ministry. They have heard the Spirit speaking a resounding “whosoever” through the voice of Scripture – and these people take that to mean everyone – even those whose sexual identities are crafted differently by the hand of God.

My own family lives across these lines. People of deep faith – reading the same Bible – singing the same hymns – praying for the same daily bread from the same gracious God.

My human brain says someone must be wrong. My Reformed heart nudges back reminding me that no one is wrong, everyone falls short of the Glory of God. And yet, God’s purpose is being worked out in the midst of all things, even this period of conflict and consternation, to get us to pay attention.

Surely we can see that the more tightly we have gripped the reins of the Church, the more anxious we have become, the more we have fallen in numbers and in spirit. We have, all of us in various ways, failed to demonstrate our faith in God through these years of division. At the foundation of our Reformed Faith is the simple, yet profound notion that God alone is God. It is God who first chose us, who first loved us, and it is God alone to whom we belong in life and in death.

God will call as God will call – calling David who had been overlooked, calling Sarah who laughed right back, calling Jeremiah who thought he was only a boy, calling Ruth who came from another country, calling Paul on the road of persecution, calling Mary, a unwed girl.

G-6.0106b gets in God’s way. It has not drawn us closer to God; indeed, it tempts us to think we can be like God, made pure by our own repentance and not by God’s grace. Let’s be clear ... none of us standing here believes that being gay or living fully into a committed same-sex relationship is sinful. We understand that well-intentioned people of faith disagree about that.

But G-6.0106b gets in God’s way for us all, regardless of where we stand in those disagreements. This paragraph mistakenly casts the church in the role of judge of who is a sinner and who is not ... and who has adequately repented and who has not. Our spiritual ancestors, the Apostle Paul and John Calvin call to us across time reminding us that we are all sinners. If we could make ourselves holy, then why would we need the grace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ?

Reflecting on our calling as fallen but forgiven children of

God, Calvin wrote, "We ought to embrace the whole human race without exception in a single feeling of love; here there is no distinction between barbarian and Greek, worthy and unworthy, friend and enemy, since all should be contemplated in God, not in themselves. When we turn aside from such contemplation, it is no wonder we become entangled in many errors." (Institutes, II, viii, 55)

God longs to untangle us, and the Spirit has something better for the Church.

Something better than our arguing, our wrangling, our endless back and forth.

Something better than our decline in energy, to say nothing of our decline in numbers.

The Spirit has something better for us — a gift that we've been offered time and again.

The Spirit offers us the startling and wonderful gift of grace. And like our Lord Jesus, it is sure to surprise us at every turn. Our invitation to the Church today is simply to let God be God, and to allow God to call whom God is calling.

General Assembly Reflections

Elder Ralph Jones

[Ralph Jones was the Overture Advocate from this Presbytery for replacing G-6.0106b. He is also on the board of Presbyterian Promise.]

This General Assembly had a very wide rainbow of work. Its business included:

- Receiving a major study on the Middle East which has been forwarded to the churches for study.
- Proposals to adopt the Belhar Confession and
- do a new translation of the Heidelberg Catechism
- A proposed total revision of our Form of Government.
- Adopting a policy not to meet in states where travel by immigrants might be risky.
- Asking for a moratorium on executions and
- Calling for an end to gun violence.
- Calling for ending US combat operations in Afghanistan.
- Authorizing the Board of Pensions to provide benefits to same gender spouses and domestic partners.
- Considered changing the definition of marriage to two people.
- Recommending replacing the present ordination standard with one that is better theologically and includes more of the rainbow.

That last was why I went to GA – to work as one of the overture advocates from twenty-one presbyteries trying to make more generous our understanding of who may be ordained. That work went reasonably well. Two-thirds of the Assembly Committee on Church Orders and Polity voted to replace the present standard. And this proposal gained 53% of the full Assembly vote a few days later. Now the matter is

before the presbyteries.... See Arthur Shippee's article in this newsletter.

There was a rainbow of people there:

- There were gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people whose experience of the church is that it is the chief obstacle to their participation in God's kin-dom.
- There were those whose very faith seemed to be crumbling as they contemplated GLBT people in leadership. I remember the Korean Young Adult Advisory Delegate who asked to lead the Committee on Marriage and Civil Union in prayer before they voted on allowing ministers to perform same gender marriages. He was near tears, seeing his whole experience of church coming apart in ways he could scarcely imagine. (Nevertheless, the committee voted solidly for a change in the definition, though the assembly almost as solidly said no.)
- I remember the young woman, perhaps also a YAAD, demanding that the church help her maintain her "purity."
- I remember the elder from the hill country of Texas lamenting the many churches in her area that were without pastor but would not consider calling a woman.

I remember a rainbow of stories:

- Doug Nave's keynote at the Covenant Network dinner:

One of the things that makes us Presbyterians is a belief that God speaks to individual believers in that sacred forum we call the conscience. We were born in the Reformation protests against the rule of popes and bishops. We believe that requiring someone to disregard his or her conscience, in favor of man-made rules, is the sin of idolatry.

It is always jarring to me when I attend a Presbyterian gathering and find the church reducing the extraordinary richness and challenge of committed relationships to a tawdry fixation on sex. Maturity comes in the recognition that sex is an indivisible part of that deeply human, and humanizing, experience called love. We Presbyterians have had a number of deep divisions in our history – in 1729, 1758, 1869, and 1927, to name a few. Each time, after a period of rancor and debate, we resolved our differences through a return to the founding principles that I mentioned earlier: an acknowledgment that God alone is Lord of the conscience; that there are many things which, important as they are, are not so essential they justify a rupture in our communion; that we owe each other the duty of mutual forbearance in such matters. This should all sound very familiar, because it is the solution that the General Assembly offered to the church in our debates about sexuality, in 2006 and 2008. This solution is in our history, and in our DNA.

- The fourteen year old who pointed the Church Orders Committee to the welcome to be found in a Bible nearly as big as he was.
- Two from the More Light Presbyterians luncheon:
Bear Ride's life journey that demanded she choose between the love of her life and her vocation.

Jean Southard's being caught between her constitutional duty to provide pastoral care to the members of her inclusive church community and the assumed constitutional prohibition on performing same gender Christian marriage.

- And from almost ten years ago, I remember Rev. Jerry Andrews' observation to the effect that we've gone to different seminaries, we read different books and we read The Book differently. I keep coming back to that insight as the core issue. Christian Education has failed us in profound ways.

I remember the rainbow scarves. People all over the country knitted these for More Light Presbyterians. They were given to commissioners and visitors as an invitation to conversation. They somehow gave people permission to speak to strangers. While I was there, these bands of color began appearing on more and more shoulders – signs that God's rainbow of people was growing – signs that God's rainbow people were amongst us and not about to be invisible.

None of the options before the 219th GA would prevent people leaving the denomination. That is going to happen. Realistically, and it was hard for people to face this, the choices were about which people would leave and for what reasons. This is nothing new. "Liberals," "progressives" whatever you may prefer to call us, have been leaving for years. We usually leave quietly, one by one. We evaporate. "Conservatives," at least these days, are protesting quite loudly and seeking to take their church buildings with them.

I'm left with a question. What's wrong with the promise of the rainbow? Why is it that we can get along with neighbors who go to the church, synagogue or mosque across the street, but can't stand to stay in the same denomination with people whose views differ? Surely most of us know that beneath and behind our nominal differences, we belong to one another. And yet, the take away from this Assembly is that we are becoming two smaller denominations; smaller, still trying to inhabit the same ecclesiology; smaller, but possibly more empowered and less encumbered in our efforts to follow Jesus.

Southard Reflects on What Welcoming Christians Need To Do

Rev. Jean Southard

[Jean Southard is a Minister Member of the Presbytery of Boston, recently retired as pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Waltham MA. Last year her presbytery tried her for performing a same gender marriage. That case is being appealed. This is a short version of her remarks to the More Light Presbyterians lunch at General Assembly.]

Friends, we live in a global village. We can no longer think of only the situation here at home. Looking around the world, it is clear that Christians in most parts of the world,

except for Europe, tend to be conservative. In some cases they are so far to the right that they are influencing their governments to pass laws against our gay and lesbian brothers and sisters, causing them to be ejected from their homes, imprisoned, or even put to death.

How did those Christians get to be so conservative? They weren't born that way. They are conservative because they have been taught. While we neglected the commandment to go into all the world sharing the news of God's love with everyone, our evangelical Christian counterparts have been out there doing the job. They are decades ahead of us. But we must no longer leave this mission and ministry to them.

We have to stop being too polite to tell others what we know they need to hear. The world needs to hear that God loves everyone – no exceptions. It is time for us to out-evangelize the evangelicals. We need to go, send missionaries, and make sister churches in places like Uganda, Rwanda, and Kenya. We need to build schools and staff hospitals, all the while preaching the good news – God loves everyone – no exceptions. We can no longer afford to sit on our hands and let others do our job. May God bless us in this undertaking.

Shippee Reflects on Getting Ready in PSNE

Rev. Art Shippee

[Art Shippee is Chair of this presbytery's Ecclesiastical Relations Committee.]

A season of discernment, discussion, and decision is approaching, part of which will appear all too familiar to some. After a brief review of what GA did, I will reflect on how we are to approach our own roles in deciding what to do in response. We must consider how we respond with care, for I think that the how may be more important in the end than the what. Decisions will be made, but how wise and how loving those decisions are will shape the identity and health of our church and its congregations. May God guide our hearts and minds.

The 219th General Assembly has finished its work and forwarded to the presbyteries for votes three overtures requiring significant reflection and discussion, along with eight others less momentous or controversial (see <http://www.pc-biz.org>). The Presbytery of Southern New England will consider and vote on these over three meetings in November, February, and May. We have the twin responsibilities of moving towards decisions, and moving in ways that are discerning, goodhearted, intelligible, and, in sum, Christian. It is the responsibility of the Ecclesiastical Relations Committee (ERC) to bring these to Presbytery and its commissioners for study, discussion, and vote.

No amendment concerning marriage equality was passed, but the committee's majority and minority reports have been

commended for study. The issue shows rapid movement in our society, as decisions in the U. S., Mexico, and elsewhere show, and the issue will return in our church. We have now a time to reflect on an old tension between the profound bond of openness that is at the heart of Christian marriage and society's expectations and forms of marriage in which that profound bond is embedded.

An aspect that fascinates me in all this is that, regardless of how one may assess the justice of an issue, we are committed to a corporate decision, arrived at through discussion and debate, and settled democratically by vote. In other words, it's not enough to be right; one must also convince others one is right. This democratic and deliberative approach flows from our understanding that the community of believers is the Body of Christ and that a prime vehicle of the Holy Spirit is through individual believers coming together in community. Our Presbytery is a community of communities, and we're given the grace to be able to listen to others who have arrived at different points of view.

I think we must all listen better. We must listen more critically to our allies, to strengthen the argument for our own case, and listen more sympathetically to our adversaries in debate, to discover the insight they bring and learn what we can from it. No one is likely to approach these three overtures with a blank mind, but one having a well-founded and firm opinion can still approach them with an open mind. An open mind brings both risk and responsibility. An open mind risks discovering that there is a compelling reason to arrive at a different decision. An open mind also takes the responsibility to listen to alternative voices, to take heed of their wisdom, and to develop a cogent response.

Two years ago when the last amendment of G-6.0106b came to us, as part of our process for debate and discernment, I offered the RIPE protocol, the acronym standing for Relevant, Important, Persuasive, and Edifying. Whatever one thinks of the acronym, I think the four factors are worth considering. We should make sure our words speak directly to the issues involved, are important, add value to the conversation, and are persuasive, namely persuasive to others. It's easy to convince our friends, but let us think, how we can present an argument that will appear convincing or at least cogent and valid to others. And finally, we should make sure our words are edifying, so that they help build up our community. These factors are at the heart of the genre of the persuasive essay, a form I teach but one enjoying little social support at the moment. I have a feeling I will be advocating the ideals of the persuasive essay in the coming months for they are conducive to the peace, unity, and purity of a community engaged with them.

Finally, scripture and the role of scripture in our lives, personal and communal, will be part of the debates. I have some hopes that we may raise this set of issues up into view and examine it together in various contexts. Towards that examination, I offer two ideas.

WE WANT YOUR E-MAIL!

We still love the look and feel of real paper, but...

Mailings are expensive, and often slow. From time to time, we want to let you know about events and other opportunities for just actions. If you'll send us your e-mail address, we can do this more readily.

Perhaps you'd rather receive this newsletter electronically. Just let us know. Or maybe you want some other change in the way we contact you. We will read your note and do our best to answer your request.

Just send an e-mail to PresbyPromise@att.net Tell us about your preferences.

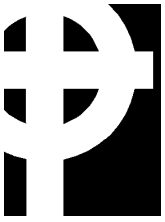
First, I just came across this in a piece about John Henry Newman. In an essay on 'The Mission of Saint Benedict' in 1856, Newman remarked on how Benedictine spirituality exhibited a 'poetical frame of mind' wholly distinct from a 'scientific' consciousness: whereas 'the aim of science is to get a hold of things ... to master them, or to be superior to them', the 'poetical frame of mind' requires 'that, instead of fancying that we can comprehend them, we should take for granted that we are surrounded and comprehended by them ourselves.'" (Bernard Manzo, "The Test of Literature: John Henry Newman's Holy Imaginings," Times Literary Supplement 7/30/2010). I think that to approach scripture in a poetical frame of mind is to risk listening to Jesus personally and dialogically, with a distinct "I/Thou" quality of openness to God's will. The science of scripture must be accounted for, but for scripture to be fulfilled, as the Gospel of Matthew puts it, there is required something more, something affirmative and personal.

We may also want to ponder Acts 15 and how it presents the church dealing with Gentile converts. Believers who are Pharisees raise the serious issue that Gentiles should keep the law of Moses. The deliberation of the council of apostles and elders looks, in outline, a lot like Paul's argument in Galatians, especially concerning the witness of the works of the Holy Spirit in the community. Their process seems more poetical than scientific. Their aim, Luke shows us, is to obey God as befits the children of God, a worthy goal.

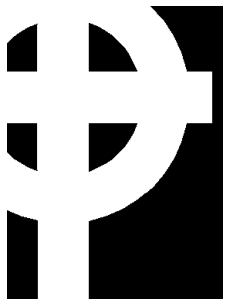
I am under no illusion that in the coming months all will speak with the wisdom required. What will happen to our presbytery or denomination as a corporation of diverse congregations, I do not know. Personally, I will risk loving, listening, and learning, and I will invite others, including you, to take that risk as well.

Calendar

- September 12 – Presbyterian Promise Board Meeting
- Oct. 24 – Presbyterian Promise visits United Presbyterian Church, Milford



Presbyterian Promise News
 704 Whitney Avenue
 New Haven CT 06511



Presbyterian
 Promise
 News
 is published by
 PRESBYTERIAN
 PROMISE
 Inc
 704 Whitney Ave
 New Haven CT
 06511

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	Waterford CT	(860) 442-3693
First Presbyterian Church	Hartford CT	(860) 246-2224
First Presbyterian Church	New Haven CT	(203) 562-5664
First Presbyterian Church	Stamford CT	(203) 324-9522
Providence Presbyterian Church	Providence RI	(401) 861-1136
Westminster Presbyterian Church	West Hartford CT	(860) 521-6240
Wilton Presbyterian Church	Wilton CT	(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.