

Presbyterian Promise News

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Contents

- ♦ Pushback, Reconciliation
- ♦ God finds us...
- ♦ Mourn & Dance
- ♦ Cut loose!
- ♦ Overseas
- ♦ Reflections
- ♦ Desmond Tutu
- ♦ Popcorn
- ♦ Calendar

Pushback, Reconciliation, Justice, Fellowship

Dick Hasbany

Elder Dick Hasbany is editor of Presbyterian Promise News, Clerk of Session at First Presbyterian Church, New Haven and co-moderator of Presbyterian Promise.

The PC (USA)'s presbyteries demonstrated an amazing openness to the spirit when they voted by a large margin to amend the denomination's discriminatory ordination standards. Years of education, relationship building, and seemingly endless debate seem to have nurtured a hidden openness to listen to the stories of faithful LGBT Christians, an openness to look at scripture with new eyes, and a desire ultimately to act with new insight to create a new and more welcoming and faithful church. One of the first manifestations of this church is the October 8 ordination of Scott Anderson in Madison, Wisconsin. Rev.



Dick Hasbany

Anderson is the first openly gay Presbyterian to be ordained since the passage of 10-A (now *Book of Order* G-2.0104). (For more developments, see "Popcorn")

The adoption of the new standards seems to have served as a catalyst for the diverse strains in the church to redefine their relationship to the body of Christ that is the PC (USA). Three congregations in the Presbytery of Southern New England are in the process of seeking separation. Somewhere around 2000 Presbyterians, calling themselves Fellowship of Presbyterians, met in Minneapolis, August 25-26. While the Covenant Network of Presbyterians' co-moderators reported that the tone "was one of warmth, kindness, and respect, and the articulated values included an appreciation for PC (USA) denominational staff, avoidance of stone-throwing, and a commitment not to speak or act out of anger," the co-moderators reporting feeling "grieved ... at the premise underlying the gathering – that in order for

some Presbyterians to engage in faithful ministry, they must "differentiate" themselves from the rest of the Presbyterian Church (USA)." (Reported via Covenant Network web site, August 31, 2011)

The Covenant Network is following "pushback" developments as some churches and presbyteries try to find ways to nullify the action of the church as a whole by changing operation manuals, proposing and adopting anti-gay language in sexual misconduct policies, and overtures for next year's General Assembly. One church in California has proposed this change in its by-laws: "First Presbyterian Church shall without exception hold to the ordination standards as expressed in the 2009-2011 *Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (USA)*. Specifically, it shall continue to be the policy of First Presbyterian Church of Upland to abide by G-6.0106 b." While we are not sure if this proposed change has been officially adopted by the church, it indicates the strength of the reaction. Somehow the church needs to decide if it will have all kinds of ordination standards or one. A presbytery in the middle of the country has moved to place language from the old standards into its sexual misconduct policy: "It is further the policy of the Presbytery of Plains and Peaks that each minister member of the Presbytery, and all persons serving in pastoral relationships under the jurisdiction of the presbytery, shall adhere to biblical standards of personal sexual behavior, including sexual fidelity within the covenant of marriage between one man and one woman, and chastity in singleness."

The Covenant Network believes that most of these efforts are unconstitutional. It is clear that the denomination, rather than resolving a protracted issue has entered a new period of wandering in the desert – that the promised land of reconciliation and forbearance and a constructive connectionalism remains a challenge to the church.

In *Presbyterian Promise News* #30 we have tried to assemble a few snapshots of life in the PC (USA) at this moment of stress, indicating some of the points that continue to vex us as people of God, the areas where we need to continue to work for justice and love, and the opportunities that exist for us to live lives of prophetic reconciliation.

God finds us in our togetherness

Cynthia Bolbach

The General Assembly's current moderator, Cynthia Bolbach, delivered the following sermon at the More Light Conference in Rochester on September 3, 2011. She was elected from a field of six candidates for the office, the only elder, and the only person to express unqualified support for same-sex marriage. Moderator Bolbach is an executive vice president of BNA, Inc. and is a member of First Presbyterian Church in Arlington, Virginia. The sermon is based on Mark 2:1-5 and is a reflection on the curious need to find ways to work with others if we are to see and be a witness to Jesus.

In my office at BNA, where I work when I'm not off on church business, I have a small poster, actually more postcard sized, nicely framed.

When you first look at the poster, you think it's one of those inspirational photos – you see this grouping of hands all clasped together, like a basketball team just before they're about to break the huddle. And of course the hands are in all different colors, – black, brown, white. So your first thought is, "isn't this nice – an inspirational moment celebrating people coming together in all their diversity."



Cynthia Bolbach

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The poster has a two-line caption. The first line, in large bold letters, says simply, "Meetings."

Under that is a second line, in much smaller letters. That line reads, "None of us is as dumb as all of us."

"None of us is as dumb as all of us."

It's a description – let's face it – that could be used to describe many church meetings.

But – given the reality that it CAN describe many church meetings – what does that mean for us as Presbyterians – we who believe that we best discern the will of God when we come together, yes, in meetings?

We hope that as we come together it would be like the day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit came down and all who were gathered there understood each other even though they were speaking different tongues.

The reality is, however, that all too often, in too many of our church meetings or our church gatherings today, we speak in the same language yet no one understands.

We might wish that we would always agree. We might hope that we wouldn't always be quite so argumentative. We might fantasize about giving up the hard work of deciding difficult issues together and instead go off and try to be Christian on our own.

That's an attractive fantasy, but the reality is that none

of us can be Christians alone. As much as we'd like to avoid the squabbling, the disagreements that come about in meetings or whenever people come together, we can't. We need to come together because we want to be Christians. And it is ONLY when we come together that we can proclaim the Gospel authentically.

And as proof I offer the Gospel story about the paralyzed man who wants to see Jesus, wants to hear him preach. But because of the large crowd that had gathered at the house where Jesus was, he can't get through the crowd. Left to his own devices, he would not, could not see Jesus.

But he is not left to his own devices; others are there to help him. They lift him up onto the roof of the house, cut a hole in the roof, and then lower him down. By their action, the paralyzed man sees Jesus.

The paralyzed man could not have seen Jesus on his own. And let's be honest, neither can we.

Every one of us is paralyzed in some way. Maybe we're paralyzed by a prior, unhappy experience in the church. Maybe we're paralyzed by fear that faith in Jesus Christ will cause us to be ridiculed or not taken seriously in a post-modern age. Maybe we're paralyzed by the sobering reality of what humans have done to other humans across the centuries, ostensibly in the name of following Jesus. Maybe we're paralyzed by the untimely death of someone we loved, wondering how a God of love could allow something like that to happen.

Whatever the cause, paralysis afflicts each of us, at some point in our lives as we seek to follow Jesus, as we, like the man in the Gospel story, seek to hear him preach.

How can we overcome that paralysis.

The Gospel tells us: we have to rely on others to help us. We have to rely on those who we know and on those who we don't know. We have to rely both on people we like and people we don't like. We have to rely on anyone who is committed to following Jesus and who can think creatively, like those in the Gospel story, to help us see Jesus.

There's a lot we don't know about this story of the paralyzed man. We don't know that motivated those folks to step out of the crowd and take action. We don't know if they knew each other, or if they liked each other. We don't know how long it took for them to punch the hole in the roof. We don't know if they had to deal with an angry homeowner.

But it's what we do know that matters. We know they came together. They stepped out of the crowd. They did what they had to do to get the paralyzed man into the room where Jesus was. The paralyzed man saw Jesus. And so did they.

Twentieth centuries later, they challenge us: Can we step out of a crowd? Can we allow ourselves to rely on those we don't agree with, on those who are different from us?

Can we work with each other despite our disagreements, despite our differences? Are we willing to

take risks, to make decisions some people might disagree with?

Are we ready to start breaking holes in roofs? Are we ready to help each other see Jesus? At the first General Assembly I attended, in 1997, I heard Frederick Buechner, the noted Presbyterian pastor and author, say that he wasn't going to church much anymore because he "couldn't find God there."

I don't know if he still feels this way.

But we don't come to church to find God. We come to church, we come to our community of faith, to help each other overcome our paralysis, to help each other see Jesus.

We come so that, together, when we see Jesus, we can confess, with Peter, that he is the "Christ, the son of the living God."

When we make that confession, we set out on a journey together. A journey to break as many holes in as many roofs as possible in order to allow other people to see Jesus. People who we might not choose as our friends. People who we might not like. But people who wait, and who need, to see Jesus. Just as we want, and need, to see Jesus.

When we set out on that journey, we don't know exactly how long, how contentious, how messy, or how difficult it will be.

What we do know, though, is that eventually our journey will lead us to the foot of a cross.

And then to an empty tomb.

And it is there that God finds us.

God finds us, in all of our diversity, in all of our disagreements, in all of our messiness, but also in our togetherness as friends seeking Jesus.

God finds you. God finds me. God finds the church.

Thanks be to God. May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you, and with all God's people, now and forever.

A Time to Mourn, AND a Time to Dance

Tony De La Rosa,

Ruling Elder Tony De La Rosa is the Interim Executive Presbyter of the Presbytery of New York City.

Tony grew up in Los Angeles, but was schooled in the East, graduating from Phillips Academy and Yale College. He earned a Master of Divinity from Yale Divinity School and a Juris Doctor degree from Yale Law School. He has served for 20 years with several General Assembly-level entities, most recently as a member of its Special Committee to Study Issues of Civil Union and Christian Marriage.

The More Light Presbyterians (MLP) national conference

this year took place at Third Presbyterian Church in Rochester in early September, and I was privileged to be in attendance at the gathering and see many old and new friends. I expected that the conference would be a time of celebration of the PC (USA)'s recent approval of Amendment 10-A, a major achievement in the life of our organization. For me, 10-A's passage represented the culmination of over thirty years of concerted prayer, outreach and education on the gifts of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons in the life of the church. Surely, I thought, if there was any time for us to celebrate, it would be now.



Tony De La Rosa
© MLP

Instead, I encountered an atmosphere that struck me like a post-victory letdown. Instead of elation, I found that a somewhat pensive and melancholy air pervaded much of our time together. We were still experiencing the deep mourning that comes from years of loss and exclusion. We could not fully escape the collective pain of our past and allow ourselves to revel in seeing the beginning of our open welcome into church leadership finally come. I believe this subdued tone was intended in part to honor those in our movement who had left our company without experiencing the delight of our present-day vindication. I wholeheartedly supported that effort to acknowledge our sorrow. Our time together was – and still is – "a time to mourn," as the Teacher in Ecclesiastes reminds us.

Nevertheless, I feel it no less respectful that our movement also seek to honor those in our midst today who labor with openness, grace and integrity of selfhood within the church as its duly chosen leaders "following the risen Christ," as the More Light Presbyterian Mission Statement proclaims. In the effort to bring healing to those who continue to experience deep pain from this generation's woeful experiments with "definitive guidance," "authoritative interpretation" and the former G-6.0106b, I caution us not to overlook lifting up and celebrating those who have overcome these same barriers to service and thrive in their ministries.

So let us lift up our voices in prayers of thanksgiving to God for the gifts made so manifest in our community. Let us honor the ministry of Scott, Ray, Mieke, Michael, Leanna, Nathan, Chris, Laurene, Jon, Brian, Sara, Trice, Bear, Susan, Erin, and so very many more who are our Church's chosen and duly ordained leaders. They have served and continue to serve in the PC (USA) with distinction. Let us celebrate the gifts of those elders (both ruling and teaching) proclaiming the grace of Jesus Christ to whom they bear witness in their faithful openness as LGBT people of faith. For today is also "a time for dancing," and their gifts know no bounds.

We have cut her loose!

Susan Kenna

The Reverend Susan W. Kenna moved to New York's North Country in November 2007 to become Manager of the Pastoral Care Department at Adirondack Health's Uihlein Living Center, a nursing home in Lake Placid. She is a minister member of Northern New York Presbytery. She graduated with



Susan Kenna

honors from Phillips Theological Seminary in Tulsa, OK. The year following seminary she trained for professional chaplaincy at a 750 bed hospital in Oklahoma City. She says of her journey, "I began in the life sciences as a biologist and I remain in life sciences as a chaplain!" Reverend Kenna reflects here on her journey to ministry as a questioning woman and a low profile retreat that helped her run the race.

We all have stories about our journeys in our beloved PC (USA), whether we are GLBTQ or allies. My story is just as full of exhilaration and angst as the next person's. I was raising my children during the late 1980's and the 1990's. I paid only slight attention to church polity then, but I heard rumblings within the church where I held membership. Our pastor invited the local gay and lesbian alliance to use our church as a meeting place but not everyone in the congregation was pleased.

The congregation elected me an elder and I began to attend presbytery meetings. In 2000, I excused myself from a family vacation and visited the 212th General Assembly held in Long Beach CA. My eyes were opened wide in Long Beach not only to church polity but also to justice issues; it was time for me to pay attention to the rumblings. In the months leading to the Long Beach GA and following, God tugged at my heart to seek seminary education. During my seminary years, I sought out and listened to GLBT persons from my denomination and others. I reached out to people who knew what was going on in More Light Presbyterians (MLP) and the Covenant Network of Presbyterians (CovNet). I was told of a retreat for GLBTQ inquirers and candidates held at a secret location in Michigan. CovNet, MLP, Presbyterian Promise, Presbyterian Welcome, and individuals continue to sponsor this retreat.

My decision to attend the retreat was settled once I spoke with one of the retreat organizers. We spoke about where I was in the process of ordination and I explained that I was discovering "new" aspects of my sexuality. The buzz word at that time was "integrity," and it may still be. I asked how I was to go through the process of pastoral formation with integrity as a person categorically banned from ordination. Was it necessary to reveal the most intimate part of my life to the committees I answered to?

I attended this retreat for two years. There I met and strategized with some of our big hitters and saints. In this

safe environment we built community as we worshiped God, explored Presbyterian polity, played games, ate, and relaxed. For me, it was a time of re-creation. My spirit felt healed. I learned I was not alone in my search for home. I still remember the distinct feeling of love when I realized that Presbyterians from across the nation supported us – the ones God called. We were supported through their financial gifts for the retreat, and gifts of knit gloves and scarves, and prayers! We could be our authentic selves without explanation or defense of our personhood and call to ordination in a church with an infamous chastity clause in its constitution.

I had two concerns as I prepared and traveled to my first retreat. The first was whether or not I would fit in. Ministry is my second career so I expected to be older than most of the inquirers and candidates. And I was "white bread," only a few years into my membership of the GLBT family. This concern was immediately and completely allayed as I was met at the airport.

My other concern was more important and far reaching. At that time I needed my presence at the retreat to be confidential. I was from a divided presbytery and a homophobic state. I feared I would be blocked from ordination if I was found out. I am not sure at what point this fear was relieved, but I know the organizers were very tightlipped about everything. For example, even as a participant I didn't know the specifics of where the retreat site was! Everything was done to insure that our identities were secure and we would remain safe. Such was the justifiable fear that lesbian and gay candidates felt during the period.

Phillips Theological Seminary educates and trains leaders in many denominations. My multi-denominational experiences affirmed my belief that the PC (USA) holds high scholastic standards. I appreciate our tradition and our reformed theology. Yet our denomination seems to have more roadblocks and gatekeepers than others. I remain in the PC (USA) because of our traditions and theology, but also because we continue to make progress on social and justice issues. I believe that I can't work toward positive change if I am on the outside. Personally, the secret retreat gave me courage, tools, strategies, advisors and friends for my ministerial journey. It was life-giving. For GLBTQ persons, especially inquirers and candidates, to have retreats, advocates and supporters to turn to are vital.

To have 10-A passed this year is huge. I have kept who I love quiet for a decade; I don't broadcast her. With the passage of 10-A, I will still do that but for different reasons. I no longer fear that someone will defrock me. I should hope that people will see my gifts for ministry as the most important aspect of who I am and not that I am a woman who loves women. I feel God brought me to the Presbytery of Northern New York during my first call to ease me into ordained ministry, because for them, the issue of ordination of GLBT persons is basically a non-issue (which has its pluses and minuses).

In my position of chaplain, I meet and provide spiritual care to people of all denominations and various faiths. On the occasion when I have disclosed my ordination in the PC (USA), I have felt both pride and embarrassment, especially when I know or my gaydar tells me I am ministering to "Family." Today, I am so happy and proud of what we have done! I no longer have to make apologies about how the denomination tied the wings of God's Holy Spirit; we have cut her loose! My soul celebrates as I think of all the inquirers, candidates, and regular individuals who have been waiting, waiting, waiting... for now their way and ours is clearer than before. With the passage of 10-A, we will never again have to look someone in the eyes and declare they are unable to hold an ordained office in the PC (USA) because of whom they love. Praise the Lord!

Overseas Reactions

Dick Hasbany

The PC (USA) is internationally connectional to some extent, partnering in mission with Presbyterian churches around the world. It should not be a surprise that the passage of new ordination standards this year has provoked reaction beyond our own churches and judicatories.

The first formal reaction came on August 19 when the National Presbyterian Church of Mexico voted to end its 139-year partnership in mission with the Presbyterian Church (USA), in response to the passage of amendment 10-A. The lopsided vote to break the relationship (116 to 22) will, according to the *Presbyterian Outlook*, "jeopardize the continuation of the work that eleven PC (USA) mission co-workers have been doing in Mexico – including significant work along the U.S.-Mexican border – as well as the future of short-term congregational mission trips to Mexico and more than two-dozen partnerships that PC (USA) presbyteries and synods have established in Mexico." At the same special assembly, the Mexican church voted 158 to 14 to sustain its policy of not ordaining women.

The *Outlook* reports that other international churches, including those in Syria, Lebanon and Egypt, have expressed nuanced concern about the adoption of 10-A. The Presbyterian Church of Ghana, though it did not break the relationship with the PC (USA) decided at its recent General Assembly "to sever relationship with any partner church that ordained homosexuals as ministers and allowed for same-sex marriages." Ethiopian Christians have indicated that they were grateful that the new standards did not mandate ordination, using instead slightly more acceptable "you may" language rather than "you shall" language.

Rev. Hunter Farrell, director of Presbyterian World Mission, has reported that partners in Australia, Britain and Colombia have sent letters of support for the new policy. Archbishop Desmond Tutu has written a prophetic letter of

support to PC (USA)'s Stated Clerk Rev. Gradye Parsons, which we include following John Webster's article. Not surprisingly, it provides what may be the final word and perspective on the action and movement in our church.

We asked John Webster, whose experience working in international denominational settings goes back decades to reflect on this aspect of the church's new situation.

Some Reflections on G-2.0104b and Relations with Churches Overseas

John C. B. Webster

John Webster is a member of the Presbytery of Southern New England. He has served as a fraternal worker and diaconal worker of the PC(USA) in India (1963-1981, 1994-2001) as well as the founding President of the Association of Presbyterians in Cross-Cultural Mission (1984-1994).

In the year following the 1978 UPCUSA General Assembly which debated the report on "The Church and Homosexuality," the Moderator of the UPCUSA visited United Theological College in Bangalore, South India, where I was teaching. He



John Webster

met informally with the fellowship groups that I and an Indian colleague hosted. I had each student in the circle introduce himself and tell us what the major issue confronting his church was. When the Moderator told us that the ordination of homosexuals was the major issue confronting the UPCUSA, the students' jaws dropped in amazement. They were clearly more surprised than offended by what they had heard; this issue was so far off their radar screens that

they could not take it in. Thanks to the beginnings of a gay rights movement in India and the mess which the worldwide Anglican communion has made of handling this issue together, they would not be surprised today, but this is probably not among their churches' most pressing priorities.

In April the Director, Associate Director, and Area Coordinators of PC (USA) World Mission sent a letter to our partner churches around the world to alert them to the anticipated changes in our ordination standards. Three key sentences near the end of that letter were: "We will continue to listen closely to the particular needs and gifts of our partners as we discern together how God leads us in God's mission. We always remember that we serve at the invitation of our global partners. We have always taken into consideration that our partners in other places in the world might have differing views on who is suitable for ordination, or who is suitable to be appointed as a mission co-worker."

In August, despite our pleas for a period of discernment before taking action, one global partner of long standing, the National Presbyterian Church of Mexico, voted to end its relationship with the PC (USA) because of this change in our constitution. There is a very conservative church which has strongly opposed the ordination of women. I do not know what considerations lay behind the decision to sever ties immediately, what its practical ramifications (in terms of relocation of mission personnel, mission trips to Mexico, presbytery partnerships with Mexican presbyteries, etc.) might be, or how many other such relationships are now in jeopardy. I do know that this is not the first time a partner church has chosen to sever ties with us and that this is not the only issue which has caused a parting of the ways. In this instance we did what we believed God wanted us to do and in response the National Presbyterian Church of Mexico did what they believed God wanted them to do.

For more than 100 years we have been working on partnership relationships with churches that our missionaries helped to start and during the past half century have entered into partnerships in mission with churches whose origins lay elsewhere. My missionary experience with a partner church was a very happy one; other missionaries have been less fortunate in that respect. Things happen or habits develop in the internal life of churches which place considerable strain on both the partnership and the particular people who make it "real". This latest rupture will probably lead to some fresh soul-searching about the pre-conditions of lasting partnerships in mission. That should be welcomed at a time when the PC (USA) has been facing budgetary constraints and the consequent necessity of tough choices. I also want to watch how this 'divorce' affects the dynamics of other partnerships. For decades we have been the dominant partner in these relationships; we gave and other churches received. Our shrinking resources and increased costs in sending out mission co-workers have probably been changing that. What is to be done with a de jure equal but de facto dominant partner with whom one has fundamental disagreements? Mexico's 'opting out' may be another step towards less dominance in partnership relationships. That may be a healthy development, despite the pain involved, and it may represent a humbling state of affairs which our membership could well have a tough time adjusting to. This is not to suggest that we were wrong to amend our constitution because dominance in partnership relations takes priority over principle, but it does indicate that many of the assumptions, priorities, and practices of partnership need constant attention and honest critique. We are living in a different world than the one we grew up in.

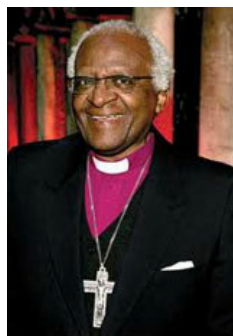
Desmond Tutu to the PC (USA) – “You Have Accomplished an Act of Justice”

To Rev. Grayde Parsons, Stated Clerk, PC (USA)
Dear Brother in Christ,

I am writing you with the request that you share these thoughts with my brothers and sisters in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.):

It is incumbent upon all of God's children to speak out against injustice. It is sometimes equally important to speak in solidarity when justice has been done. For that reason I am writing to affirm my belief that in making room in your constitution for gay and lesbian Christians to be ordained as church leaders, you have accomplished an act of justice.

I realize that among your ecumenical partners, some voices are claiming that you have done the wrong thing, and



Bishop Tutu

I know that you rightly value your relationship with Christians in other parts of the world. Sadly, it is not always popular to do justice, but it is always right. People will say that the ones you are now willing to ordain are sinners. I have come to believe, through the reality shared with me by my scientist and medical friends, and confirmed to me by many who are gay, that being gay is not a choice. Like skin color or left-handedness, sexual orientation

is just another feature of our diversity as a human family. How wonderful that God has made us with so much diversity, yet all in God's image! Salvation means being called out of our narrow bonds into a broad place of welcome to all.

You are undoubtedly aware that in some countries the church has been complicit in the legal persecution of lesbians and gays. Individuals are being arrested and jailed simply because they are different in one respect from the majority. By making it possible for those in same-gender relationships to be ordained as pastors, preachers, elders, and deacons, you are being a witness to your ecumenical partners that you believe in the wideness of God's merciful love.

For freedom Christ has set us free. In Christ we are not bound by old, narrow prejudice, but free to embrace the full humanity of our brothers and sisters in all our glorious differences. May God bless you as you live into this reality, and may you know that there are many Christians in the world who continue to stand by your side.

God bless you.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Desmond Tutu', with a large, stylized flourish at the end.

Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu
(Cape Town, South Africa)

Popcorn

2-4 September – Presbyterian Promise was well represented at the national More Light Presbyterians Conference in Rochester, NY. Jane Hindenlang, Dick Hasbany, Keith Rhoden, Ralph Jones and Pat Wales attended. Highlight: Four exciting sermons in forty-eight hours (and they're available for viewing on the MLP web-site)!

17 September –



Presbyterian Promise

At Hartford Pride in Bushnell Park

Keith Rhoden, of First Presbyterian, Hartford, and Dan Bender, Pat Wales, Jane Hindenlang and Ralph Jones personed the booth on a glorious day.

8 October – Scott Anderson was ordained in Madison, Wisconsin, becoming the first out gay person to be ordained in the PC (USA). Scott was previously ordained, but resigned that role when he came out some years ago. He has served on the PC (USA)'s committee to study marriage, and is director of the Wisconsin Council of Churches.

11 October – East Iowa Presbytery passed two overtures concerning same gender marriage. One asks the coming General Assembly to issue an authoritative interpretation stating that Teaching Elders may perform same gender marriages in states where the civil authority has authorized them and the second proposes new, inclusive language for our Directory for Worship.

16 October – Today we celebrated the ordination of Scott Clark. Scott was ordained at First Presbyterian Church, San Anselmo, CA. Scott Clark is one among a group of qualified LGBT Presbyterians who are seeking to follow their call from God to serve in ministry. Michael Adey, Executive Director, More Light Presbyterians said: "Scott's ordination is a remarkable moment in the life, ministry and witness of the Presbyterian Church (USA). Scott's ordination and those who will be ordained next are all part of building a Church that reflects God's heart. We celebrate this moment and its witness to God's love for all persons."

17 October – 900 United Methodists in New York and Connecticut announced their intention to make weddings available to all people, gay and straight, in spite of their denomination's ban on gay marriage. The announcement marks the kick-off of a project called "We do! Methodists Living Marriage Equality."

20 October – The Public Policy Advocacy Network of the Synod of the Northeast held a panel discussion on "Gay Ordination, Gay Marriage" the evening before the annual Synod Assembly meeting at the Stony Point Center. The conversation was earnest and welcoming as Teaching Elders and other church leaders (mostly Ruling Elders) tried to understand the denomination's new polity and how to be pastorally responsible in the several states that now provide same gender marriage.

Calendar

November 12, 2011 – Presbytery of Southern New England meeting at Greenwood Community Church, Presbyterian, Warwick, RI. The Presbytery will receive a recommendation that it continue advocacy status for Presbyterian Promise.

December 10 – Presbyterian Promise Christmas Party.

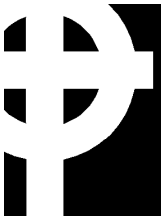
You're Invited! Please confirm to Pat Wales.

The PresProm holiday party will be held on Saturday December 10th at Ralph Jones' house in Hamden, CT. Festivities start at 4 p.m. All supporters and party happy Presbyterians are encouraged to join us for light refreshments and libations. Contributions of food and/or drink are welcome. Contact Pat Wales at patwales@att.net or 203-230-8303 if you wish to contribute.

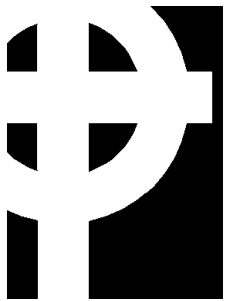
RSVP please so we can prepare appropriately for the party!!



January 15, 2012 – Presbyterian Promise Annual Meeting at First Presbyterian Church in Hartford, CT. 4:00 PM.



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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.

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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://PresbyterianPromise.org>

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.