

Presbyterian Promise News

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An Education in Love

*June O'Neil, Elder, First Presbyterian Church Hartford and
Presbyterian Promise board member*

On September 20, 1958 my twin brother escorted me down the aisle of the Emanuel Lutheran Church in Meriden, Connecticut to be handed over to James Henry O'Neil, Jr. In a surprisingly short time the minister said that through the power invested to him by the State of Connecticut he would now pronounce us husband and wife. He told James that he could kiss the bride and James did – twice.

Later as we were greeting the guests the minister handed us a certificate that proved we were indeed married. Before God and our families and friends we made our vows that said we would love, honor and obey, for richer and poorer, through sickness and in health, till death did us part. On September 20, 1958 we could only see the positive side of the vows. On October 28, 1959 our first son was born. On November 5, 1962 our second son was born. On November 22, 1962, the doctor told us that James had emphysema. There was no cure, and on December 3, 1975 he died after 120 days in Intensive Care.

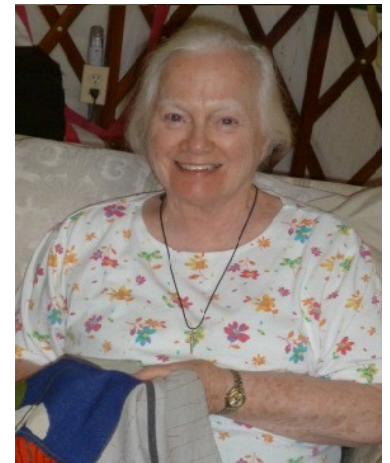
During those 120 days, I, as his wife, could visit as often as I wanted for as long as I wanted. Because we lived two blocks from the hospital a pattern developed where I visited three times a day for meals, which I fed to him because he would not eat for the nurses, and again at bed time with our sons. Soon the nurses allowed me to bathe him. It was an early form of hospice that we were practicing though we didn't know it had such a name. When he died I was considered a widow and had full Social Security and VA benefits to support myself and my children while I continued studying at University of Connecticut for my Master's Degree in Social Work. This additional piece of paper gave me the opportunity to work with patients as a social worker for the Visiting Nurse Association.

In time the patients included those who were suffering with AIDS. These were the early years of the epidemic. We were certain that it was a sexually transmitted disease. There were none of the drugs that are now in use, and AIDS was certain death with no promise that it would be dying with dignity. My supervisor advised me to fill an accident report each time I visited a man with AIDS, just in case I accidentally caught the disease. I didn't fill out that form. I was

working with a new type of client. I certainly did not approve the life style on one hand, but my job was to give help where help was needed – helping them obtain Title 19 and other benefits, helping them cope with the reality of their situation.

All of this came a few short years after I was instrumental in denying a Yale Divinity student the opportunity to intern at First Presbyterian Church in Hartford. He had told the minister that he could not work at the church unless people knew about his homosexuality. The congregation was given the opportunity to decide if he would be accepted or not. Two other mothers attended the meeting with me, and we made it clear that he was not acceptable. We were not going to tolerate any man who loved men to influence our sons. We equated homosexuality with pedophilia, and our sons were not going to be victims. The minister said nothing to show us that our reasoning was faulty.

My first AIDS client was a tall, shy black man. He lived with friends who made him do housework and baby sit three kids under five years of age. He was unable to work, and his family had disowned him because he was gay and had AIDS. He wanted desperately to move into his own apartment. It was my job to find an apartment for him after helping him get Title 19. One day I had a tele-



June O'Neil

phone number and a name for him to call for an apartment. Herman bent his 6' 4" frame down to hug me and tears came into my eyes. Over his shoulder I could see that the three kids were standing there with chicken pox. Herman did not have an immune system. He died two weeks later.

Suddenly family members appeared. In life he was dead to them. In death he was cause to have a funeral with all the crying and hysteria such an occasion can bring on. I went to the funeral because Herman was a sweet loveable guy – someone I really wanted to help. Herman was the first of many.

As time went by and I met more of these unfortunate men I saw LOVE. Many men who had no contact with their families did have partners who did not have the certificate I had proclaiming my legal right to live with this man, bear his children, stay by his bedside in Intensive Care, decide when and where the funeral would be, and get the money to keep the family together while I completed my education. Because the partners had no legal rights they had no access to the dying man once he entered the hospital and went into Intensive Care. Too often negligent families came forward and claimed the body and made it clear that the partner should not attend the funeral and embarrass them. But where had they been when the man soiled himself and needed a diaper change, when he vomited time after time? Who held his hand when he died? There was no legal document that said the partner should stay and watch his lover deteriorate before his eyes. Only love kept them there through all the horrors.

I would leave the presence of these men feeling shame for my lack of tolerance in the past. I often wished that I knew for certain that my husband loved me as much.

PSNE Considers Marriage Overtures

Elder Dick Hasbany, Presbyterian Promise Co-moderator

Six sessions have approved two overtures related to same-gender marriage and sent them to the Presbytery of Southern New England for consideration at its February 8 meeting in West Hartford. If the Presbytery approves, these overtures, along with two others, will be sent to the 221st General Assembly in Detroit in June.

The texts of the marriage overtures and the proposed rationales follow. One calls for an authoritative interpretation that would provide relief of conscience for pastors who feel that their pastoral duties include being able to officiate at same-gender weddings in states where such marriages are legal and the couple seems ready to enter into a Christian marriage. The other overture amends the *Directory for Worship*, providing theological perspective and language that does not prohibit same-gender couples from being married in a Christian marriage. The texts of these overtures have been passed by other Presbyteries. PSNE's approval would constitute concurrence. The rationales are unique to PSNE, however, which entitles the Presbytery to send an overture advocate if it so wishes.

As we understand it at the time of writing, the Presbytery's Roundtable (formerly Council) has decided to place the four proposed overtures on the consent motion. This means that adopting the consent motion will forward the overtures to GA. If any commissioner requests, any or all of the overtures may be removed from the consent docket and deliberated by the full body. Because that is very possible, it seems wise for supporters to be ready to speak respectfully, cogently, concisely, and lovingly.

**Authoritative Interpretation of W-4.9000 –
Granby: First, New Haven: First, New Canaan: First,**

West Hartford: Westminster, Stamford: First, Wilton Presbyterian Church propose:

The Presbytery of Southern New England respectfully overtures the 221st General Assembly (2014) to issue the following Authoritative Interpretation of the *Book of Order*, W-4.9000:

On Issuing an Authoritative Interpretation of W-4.9000 to Affirm Pastoral Discretion in Performing Marriage Ceremonies.

Worship is a central element of the pastoral care of the people of God (W-6.3001, 6.3010) in which a teaching elder's discernment of the leading of the Holy Spirit is indispensable. The necessity of ensuring the exercise of freedom of conscience in the interpretation of Scripture (G-2.0105) in the planning and leadership of worship has deep roots in our Reformed tradition and theology. Because a service of marriage is one form of such worship, when a couple requests the involvement of the church in solemnizing their marriage as permitted by the laws of the place where the couple seek to be married, teaching elders* have the pastoral responsibility to assess the capabilities, intentions, and readiness to be married of the couple (W-4.9002), and the freedom of conscience in the interpretation of Scripture (G-2.0105) to participate in any such marriage they believe the Holy Spirit calls them to perform. Exercising such discretion and freedom of conscience under the prayerful guidance of Scripture, teaching elders may conduct a marriage service for any such couple in the place where the community gathers for worship, if approved by the session; or in such other place as may be suitable for a service of Christian worship. In no case shall any teaching elder's conscience be bound to conduct any marriage service for any couple except by his or her understanding of the Word, and the leading of the Holy Spirit. The Authoritative Interpretation of this section by the 203rd General Assembly (Minutes 1991, at 21.124-128), and the subsequent Authoritative Interpretations of the General Assembly Permanent Judicial Commission relying upon it, are withdrawn and replaced with this Authoritative Interpretation.

**As in other places in the Directory for Worship, the use of "elders" in this paragraph should be understood to include ruling elders commissioned to pastoral service.*

Rationale (Authoritative Interpretation)

The church is now in a state of disunity regarding same-gender marriage. Such disunity is costly to the church's treasure, time, and more importantly, its witness to Jesus' call to loving covenant.

During such a time, we must be humbly conscious of the work of the Holy Spirit through Christian conscience. Teaching and ruling elders and their congregations have come prayerfully to recognize that some faithful same gender couples are asking to be held to the same standards of mutual love and commitment as heterosexual couples. To deny the availability of Christian marriage for otherwise



PRESBYTERIAN
PROMISE

A Weekend
with
Alex McNeill*

Presbyterian Promise invites you to meet and talk with Alex McNeill, the new executive director of More Light Presbyterians, one of the major voices advocating and working for LGBT equality in the Presbyterian Church USA. The weekend will focus on how we can live into the dream of equality in the PCUSA and on transgender issues and what we still need to do to make sure all are welcomed, respected and included in God's Presbyterian family. Join us for all three public events.



Saturday, February 22, 9:30 – 12:30

Connecting the Dots: Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation: A workshop

Have you ever felt tongue-tied in discussing the nuances of gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender identities? Have you wished there was a better way to talk about gender identity and sexual orientation that doesn't segment people into categories but unites us all in a journey of discovery and expression? We promise this workshop will inspire new ways of thinking and teaching others about gender and sexuality that you won't want to miss.

Wilton Presbyterian Church, 48 New Canaan Road, Wilton, Connecticut

Sunday February 23

Two opportunities to meet Alex:

– 9:30 to 10:30

Christian Education class focusing on transgender issues. You are invited to join members of the New Haven Church in this class and stay for worship.

First Presbyterian Church, New Haven, 704 Whitney Ave, New Haven.

– 3:00 to 5:00

Presbyterian Promise Annual Meeting: Shaping the Future, a Lively Conversation with Alex McNeill

Alex will join Rev. Bill Goettler, First Presbyterian Church New Haven and Margaret Fox, Yale Divinity School, Yale Law School and Candidate for ministry in the Presbytery for Southern New England, in lively conversation about the future of MLP and the entire LGBT movement and its continuing witness to God's welcome and love. There will be music and food and joy. Be with us.

First Presbyterian Church, New Haven, 704 Whitney Ave, New Haven.

**Alex Patchin McNeill* is the new Executive Director at More Light Presbyterians. He is the first openly transgender person to head a mainline Protestant organization. He is a life-long Presbyterian, and a nationally known educator and advocate for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender Christians. Alex holds his Master of Divinity from Harvard Divinity School. He currently lives in Maryland just outside of Washington, DC with his wife and three dogs.

qualified same gender couples is to reject their equal inheritance through Christ. That rejection denies our traditional belief that marriage is a gift God has given to all humankind.

Additionally, teaching elders who act in good conscience and officiate at the weddings of same-gender couples they deem ready for Christian marriage find they may be charged with the offense of violating their ordination vows for an act that the General Assembly Permanent Judicial Commission (GAPJC) has said was not clearly prohibited when those vows were taken. In the current situation, compliant teaching elders, sessions and congregations may find themselves to be denying the common humanity that is at the very focus of church life and worship.

The GAPJC has acknowledged that existing interpretations have exacerbated disunity and has requested guidance.

The proposed Authoritative Interpretation ensures that while the church is in this period of discernment and disagreement over same-gender marriage, teaching elders officiating over same-gender marriages where such marriages are permitted by law can act in good conscience, and that faithful and honest dialogue can happen in a context of pastoral care rather than chilling prosecution and judicial action.

Throughout Scripture marriage is used as a metaphor for Christian unity, for God's love and covenant with us, for the union of Christ and the church. May the church act to make this metaphor ever more evident.

Amending W-4.9000 –

Granby: First, New Haven: First, New Canaan, First, West Hartford: Westminster, Stamford: First, Wilton Presbyterian Church propose:

The Presbytery of Southern New England respectfully overtures the 221st General Assembly (2014) to direct the Stated Clerk to send the following amendment to the presbyteries for their affirmative or negative votes:

On Amending W-4.9000, Marriage.

Amend W-4.9000 by striking the current text and replacing it with the following:

Marriage is a gift God has given to all humankind for the well-being of the entire human family. Marriage involves a unique commitment between two people to love and support each other for the rest of their lives. The sacrificial love that unites the couple sustains them as faithful and responsible members of the church and the wider community.

In civil law, marriage is a contract that recognizes the rights and obligations of the married couple in society. In the Reformed tradition, marriage is also a covenant in which God has an active part, and which the community of faith publicly witnesses and acknowledges.

If they meet the requirements of the civil jurisdiction in which they intend to marry, a couple may request that a service of Christian marriage be conducted by a teaching elder in the Presbyterian Church (USA), who is

authorized, though not required, to act as an agent of the civil jurisdiction in recording the marriage contract. A couple requesting a service of Christian marriage shall receive instruction from the teaching elder, who shall agree to the couple's request only if, in the judgment of the teaching elder, the couple demonstrate sufficient understanding of the nature of the marriage covenant and commitment to living their lives together according to its values. In making this decision the teaching elder may seek the counsel of the session, which has authority to permit or deny the use of church property for a marriage service.

The marriage service shall be conducted in a manner appropriate to this covenant and to the forms of Reformed worship, under the direction of the teaching elder and the supervision of the session (W-1.4004-.4006). In a service of marriage, the couple marry each other by exchanging mutual promises. The teaching elder witnesses the couple's promises and pronounces God's blessing upon their union. The community of faith pledges to support the couple in upholding their promises; prayers may be offered for the couple, for the communities which support them, and for all who seek to live in faithfulness.

A service of worship recognizing a civil marriage and confirming it in the community of faith may be appropriate when requested by the couple. The service will be similar to the marriage service except that the statements made shall reflect the fact that the couple are already married to one another according to the laws of the civil jurisdiction.

Rationale (Amendment)

The church is now in a state of disunity regarding same-gender marriage. Such disunity is costly to the church's treasure, time, and more importantly, its witness to Jesus' call to loving covenant.

During such a time, we must be humbly conscious of the work of the Holy Spirit through Christian conscience. Teaching and ruling elders and their congregations have come prayerfully to recognize that some faithful same gender couples are asking to be held to the same standards of mutual love and commitment as heterosexual couples. To deny the availability of Christian marriage for otherwise qualified same gender couples is to reject their equal inheritance through Christ. That rejection denies our traditional belief that marriage is a gift God has given to all humankind.

Additionally, teaching elders who act in good conscience and officiate at the weddings of same-gender couples they deem ready for Christian marriage find they may be charged with the offense of violating their ordination vows for an act that the General Assembly Permanent Judicial Commission (GAPJC) has said was not clearly prohibited when those vows were taken. In the current situation, compliant teaching elders, sessions and congregations may find themselves to be denying the common humanity that is at

the very focus of church life and worship.

Historic descriptions of marriage (including W-4.9), as descriptions, are no longer accurate or complete. Their use as prescriptions has preempted the historic relational, pastoral roles of teaching elders and sessions, their discretion and conscience. The proposed amendment will reprioritize those roles and honor Christian conscience.

The GAPJC has acknowledged that existing interpretations have exacerbated disunity and has requested guidance. The proposed overture to amend the *Directory of Worship* would provide that guidance.

Throughout Scripture marriage is used as a metaphor for Christian unity, for God's love and covenant with us, for the union of Christ and the church. May the church act to make this metaphor ever more evident.

PSNE v. Merz: Why?

Elder Ralph Jones, Presbyterian Promise board member

Why? That's pretty much the first response when the PSNE vs. Merz case is mentioned. Why was this even needed? Didn't the Laurie McNeill case settle the matter? Well yes, but perhaps also no. Perhaps there are many reasons the case needed to go forward, and perhaps they will never be fully known.

A bit of background, mostly explained in an article Rev. Merz wrote for the March 2009 *Presbyterian Promise News*. John traveled to Vermont where he was civil unionized with his partner, Bill back in July 2003. That relationship was prayerfully confirmed in Connecticut a month later. Then in October 2008, the Connecticut Supreme Court ruling took effect. It was up to the Connecticut legislature whether civil unions would continue to be recognized. To be certain their shared parental relationship with their daughter would remain legal, John and Bill would have to get married (again). In John's words:

So, on January 8th in our still decorated from Christmas living room, surrounded by members of our church "group" (a church-fellowship group), Bill and I were wed a third time. This time it was a legal marriage, recognized by the state of Connecticut and officiated by two faithful Christian ministers. And it was Presbyterian. The liturgy was Presbyterian. The witnesses were Presbyterian. The two grooms were Presbyterian (Bill became a new member and deacon of our church in 2008). Everything was Presbyterian about it except that it will not be a marriage that is recognized by the Presbyterian denomination. All those present agreed that God was surely in our midst that evening and God once again blessed our relationship.

From this has developed a saga. Various members of this presbytery have asked if the church acted properly in ordaining Bill. That led to a review of their session's process

for examining candidates for ordained office. A complaint was filed concerning Graham Robinson, the Presbyterian minister at the marriage. That was settled when, in order to expedite his transfer to another presbytery, he accepted the discipline of rebuke:

Whereas, you, Reverend Graham Scott Robinson, have been found guilty of the offense of officiating at a same-sex religious marriage ceremony as an ordained minister within the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). By this action you implied to the world that the PCUSA permitted and approved of same-sex marriages, when the PCUSA and its Constitution clearly define marriage as only between a man and a woman. (W-4.9001) Therefore, the Presbytery of Southern New England, in the name and authority of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), expresses its condemnation of this offense, and rebukes you. We urge you to use diligently the means of grace to the end that you may be more obedient to our Lord Jesus Christ.

Perhaps two thirds of those present at the meeting where this rebuke was read stood in Graham's place. Certainly the "define" would have been debated had this gone to trial.

All during this time various questions about Rev. Merz's role in his marriage were being discussed, back and forth, by the Presbytery Council and its Committee on Ministry. Since John is a "Minister," his ministry must be validated annually according to General Assembly mandate and criteria specified by this Presbytery. This was done by about a 70% vote of the whole Presbytery, and has been reaffirmed several times since.

In October 2012, the General Assembly Permanent Judicial Assembly issued its decision in the case brought against Rev. Laurie McNeill for her marriage to, Lisa Gollihue. They sustained the Newark Presbytery PJC finding that, given the current denominational uncertainty about the nature of marriage, there was no guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

Despite all this, in February of 2013, charges were brought against Rev. Merz. And in due course, after all the preliminaries, on 23 November 2013 in Cromwell, Connecticut, the Presbytery of Southern New England's Permanent Judicial Commission heard the case. The Commission unanimously found Rev. Merz not guilty of all charges.

At issue was whether the Rev. Merz's marriage to Bill Starkowski violated his ordination vows, the *Directory for Worship* and/or the *Confessions*. The particular charges are identified in the pre-trial documents. Elder Sam Hamilton, PJC Moderator, explained that the Commission had not ruled on the motion to dismiss as they felt that the arguments about that motion were likely to be substantially the same as those at trial.

The Rev. Parker Williamson, editor emeritus of *The Presbyterian Layman*, represented the prosecuting committee. Mark Robertson, of Fulbright and Jaworski, was council



Mark Robertson, John Merz

for Rev. Merz. Approximately seventy-five presbyters witnessed the trial, filling the room to capacity. The majority were supporters of Rev. Merz.

As the charges as filed were improperly stated, with several alleged violations listed in a single charge, the PJC granted prosecution's request that they be restated so that each citation would be listed separately. The three pretrial charges thus became six.

In his opening statement, Rev. Williamson noted that we were all under the authority of scripture and that scripture supersedes all authority in this (trial) room. Further, that existing cases have not addressed what scripture says about this matter.

Mr. Robertson countered that the issues had been decided in the cases concerning Rev. Laurie McNeill and that these decisions were further supported by Benton, White v. St. Angelo, Spahr, and Southard. These are available on the [General Assembly Permanent Judicial Commission's](#) web.

The prosecution called Robert Gagnon, New Testament professor at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, to testify about what scripture has to say. Although there was question as to the appropriateness of such testimony, and the PJC indicated that it would be subject to later review, they decided to allow brief testimony.

Professor Gagnon cited Genesis 1:27 and 2:24 as the foundation for Jesus' and other Biblical teachings on marriage. He argued that many citations are not needed. When the matter is not in dispute in the Bible, a single statement is sufficient.

The defense noted that these issues were not among the charges specified.

Closing arguments largely restated what had been covered, with the defense pointing to established cases and the prosecution claiming the authority of scripture. Surprisingly, in his response to the defense closing, Rev. Williamson introduced the censure of the Rev. Graham Robinson, the pastor who had presided at Rev. Merz's wedding and a matter that had been resolved without trial by this PJC. Defense was allowed to state that polity is different for officiants and for those getting married.

On 9 December, the written decision was released. The full text, along with the pretrial documents, is available on the [Presbyterian Promise website](#). The discussion provides both insight and some background.

The PPJC saw five of the six charges as sufficiently distinct from those covered in the McNeill case that they needed additional consideration. The first three involved violation of ordination vows. Charges five and six concerned violation of scripture and confessions. Number four was taken as sufficiently similar to McNeill that that held controlling precedent.

Regarding the ordination vows, the PPJC extensively cited the 2010 minority report from the Special Committee to Study Issues of Civil Union and Christian Marriage.

Second, there truly exist variant interpretations of Scripture

that in turn dictate different pastoral models and advocacy models. The ongoing controversy around this issue and others will not be resolved until consensus is reached on the interpretation of Scripture. Unity cannot be reached through polity inventions.

Perhaps of greatest significance is the PJC finding concerning alleged violations of the *Book of Confessions*:

In its historical context, this confession is concerned with polygamy, not with same-sex marriage. As a result, it does not provide sufficient guidance on the subject of this case to sustain a verdict of guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

Regarding the confessions, the Prosecuting Committee overstates their authoritative control. They are subordinate standards of the church, subject to the authority of Jesus Christ, the Word of God, as the Scriptures bear witness to him. Book of Order F2.02 Confessions address the issues, problems, dangers, and opportunities of a given historical situation. The theology and ethics of confessions of every age are shaped by what seem to be the normative or preferable sexual, familial, social, economic, cultural, and political patterns of a particular period of history. Confessional Nature of the Church Report Book of Confession, p. xv.

"The ongoing controversy ... will not be resolved until consensus is reached." Perhaps this trial was needed to say that one cannot be disciplined for difference of understanding when there is no consensus. Perhaps that will help us move toward greater mutual understanding. Let us hope!

Salons

*Elder Dick Hasbany with Elder Jane Hindenlang,
Presbyterian Promise Co-moderators*

Presbyterian Promise has been experimenting by offering what we called salons, or Sunday Afternoons with Presbyterian Promise. We started with a "country retreat" in August, which featured a full day of reflection on the parable of the prodigal son, and followed up with a salon led by candidate for ministry, Tricia Thelen. We are hoping to offer another salon in the spring.



We see these programs as the "Promise" part of Presbyterian Promise. They are meant to be creative and reach out to people who may not be interested in

our policy focused programs or meetings. The events give young leaders (not necessarily LGBT) a chance to share gifts in ways that the normal paths to ordination may not provide. The salons in no way are meant to replace the opportunities and obligations that inquirers and candidates

have in their preparation, but they do give young leaders a chance to lead and be the gift to the church that we in the movement have claimed they are for decade. Finally, we hope that the salons will be in tune with our Presbytery's exploration of new ways of being the church, and believe that they are in keeping with our mission creating welcome and empowering LGBT folks.



Jane Hindenlang, Co-moderator of Presbyterian Promise and Tricia Thelen reflected on "The Lord Will Perfect that which Concerns Me," the salon held December 8, 2013 at the Hartford Church.

Jane Hindenlang: We are all works of art made in God's image. This salon was a distinct departure from Presbyterian Promise's usual platforms of outreach and advocacy, but it felt right to try something different. It was a unique way to promote our vision and mission of a just and inclusive church by empowering gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and queer persons.



This workshop drew a mix of people of different ages, genders, ethnicity, race, and sexual orientation several of whom did not know of Presbyterian Promise and its work.

We talked about our own experiences with body image, and then we were challenged to view our own body forms and that of others in a more intimate, hands-on activity. So many different shapes and sizes: rounded bellies, lopsided

breasts and shoulders, slender hips. I don't know if I have more compassion and love for myself/my body following this experience. However, it did make me think more about our transgender or gender-variant brothers and sisters. Presbyterian Promise has recently been more intentional in providing education about transgender issues, but I feel this is an area in which we can take more action.

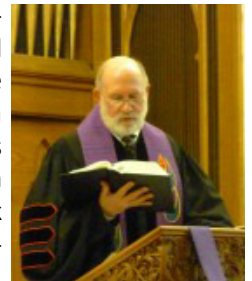
Tricia Thelen: I thoroughly enjoyed the eclectic mix of people of all ages who participated in the body form salon. We accomplished a lot in a very short time. Those who

attended were able to work in teams to create tape forms of their own bodies, and some even completed full upholstery of their body forms. Some chose to help others instead of creating a personal piece, and that collaboration enabled forms to be built quickly. The experience helped all of us to look at our bodies differently, seeing them as pieces of art to be appreciated and decorated and cherished. It also reminded us that just as our bodies are no two exactly alike, so too our God-given personalities, orientations, drives, passions and impulses are as varied. We celebrated that truth at this workshop, and I hope it left a lasting impression on each of us who attended.

Thank you to Presbyterian Promise for believing in this message and continuously looking for ways to share it! Thank you for giving me the opportunity to present this salon. It is something I believe in with all my heart.

Remembering David Wentroble

Rev. David Wentroble died January 21st at the Bridgeport Hospital Burn Unit. He had suffered severe burns a month earlier in a fire at a Danbury gas station. At the time of his death, he was a member of Hudson River Presbytery, chaplain at Nyack Hospital and serving Central Presbyterian Church in Haverstraw, New York.



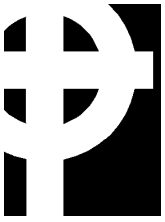
A memorial service is planned for March 8 at 2 PM at First Presbyterian Church in Stamford, CT.

Elder Pat Wales shared these memories:

I first met Dave Wentroble at a presbytery meeting in 1991. He enjoyed doing crossword puzzles. He appreciated overnight presbytery meetings (when they were held years ago) because he felt that he could get to know people better. Being a true Presbyterian, he signed up to participate in a presbytery committee; the first one being Stewardship and Mission, and he inspired me to do the same. It gave us a chance to talk in person during the breaks.

I knew that Dave was a graduate of Pittsburgh Theological Seminary but I found out later that Pennsylvania was his home state. He came to this presbytery to be the chaplain at Greenwich Chaplaincy Services. He mentioned several times how grateful he was for the financial support received from sponsoring churches. During his tenure at the Chaplaincy Services, Dave was pursuing his DMin. When he found out that I was a medical librarian, he tapped into my services to request specific articles to support his thesis. I was happy to comply.

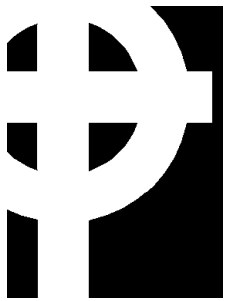
Dave was a gracious host and a great cook. He'd invite friends over to swim in the pool and nourish ourselves with good food. I remember a wonderful sunny weekend when several Presbyterians came to his abode to relax and enjoy his hospitality. He will be missed dearly. God has other plans for him now but Dave will remain in our hearts.



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.

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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.