



April 2014

Dear Commissioner or Advisory Delegate:

As outlined in the *Manual of the General Assembly*, one of the responsibilities of the Stated Clerk is to provide to commissioners and advisory delegates an electronic packet of information about each candidate who is standing for Moderator.

This booklet contains the following information for all candidates standing for Moderator of the 221st General Assembly (2014): a photograph, biographical sketch, personal statement regarding the candidate's sense of call to the office, a written presentation by the presbytery having jurisdiction over the candidate (if that presbytery has endorsed him or her), the candidate's selection for and information about Vice Moderator, and the candidate's responses to a questionnaire developed by the Stated Clerk.

Each candidate has chosen the layout for his or her material within the space limitations provided.

The election of the Moderator will take place during the plenary session of the General Assembly on Saturday evening, June 14, 2014. The process that will be used can be found in Standing Rule H.1.b(4).

Earlier on that Saturday, all three of the candidates will gather together during one of the Riverside Conversations being held in the convention center for a time to be with commissioners and advisory delegates interested in having conversation with them. The candidates have chosen to make themselves available in this way instead of having individual booths.

God's blessings to you as you continue to pray and prepare for the General Assembly.

In Christ,

Grady Parsons
Stated Clerk of the General Assembly,
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

**Questions for Candidates for Moderator
of the 221st General Assembly (2014)
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)**

Using no more than 500 words for each response, please answer questions 1 through 3 (required) and two additional questions.

1. We all have a story of faith. Where does your story encounter hope?

2. The theme of the 221st General Assembly is “Abounding in Hope” which reflects both scripture and the Foundations of Church Polity in the *Book of Order* which says “In affirming with the earliest Christians that Jesus is Lord, the Church confesses that he is its hope...” (F-1.0204). Describe some of the ways you have seen this hope expressed in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

3. What are some of the exciting possibilities facing the 21st Century church? What are the challenges that face the church in this century?

4. How does your church community make room for people to share their stories of faith? How can we listen to the stories of people who are not in the church?

5. The Special Committee on the Confession of Belhar has approached the Confession of Belhar through the lenses of “justice, unity and reconciliation.” How might the Confession of Belhar help Presbyterians both confess historic and current brokenness within the Church and seek authentic relationships for the present and the future?

6. How might the initiative to create 1001 new worshipping communities help the PC(U.S.A.) reach its goal of increasing its racial ethnic membership and come closer to becoming a multicultural community of faith, hope, love, and witness?

7. We are living in a war-torn world. What might the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and its congregations do to strengthen the ministry of peacemaking at this time?

8. In our interactions with people of other religions and faith traditions, as Presbyterians we seek respectful dialogical relationships and authentic witness. How do you understand the relationship between witness and dialogue with people of other religions and faith traditions?

9. What suggestions do you have for identifying new directions for the development of faithful leadership for the mission of Christ?



Mission Presbytery

Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

With God's help we are Mission Presbytery ...

Building together healthy congregations and trusting relationships (Eph. 2:22),

Partnering with one another in what we do better together (Phil.1:5), and

Sending disciples in witness and service (Matt.25:31-46 & Matt. 28:18-20).

March 31, 2014

Angie Stevens
Office of the General Assembly
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
100 Witherspoon Street
Louisville, KY 40202-1396

RE: MISSION PRESBYTERY ENDORSES THE REVEREND KELLY ALLEN AS CANDIDATE FOR MODERATOR OF THE 221ST GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Contact: Ruling Elder Ruben Armendariz
Acting Head of Staff and Church Development Consultant, 210-826-3296

At its Stated Meeting on Friday, February 28, 2014, Mission Presbytery unanimously endorsed the Reverend Kelly Allen as a candidate to stand for Moderator of the 221st General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

The Rev. Allen is the Pastor and Head of Staff of University Presbyterian Church in San Antonio, TX, where she has served since June 2009. Allen is the Chair of the Mission Outreach and Justice Committee's Immigration Task Force. She has been the Keynote Speaker for the Main Event Youth Conference and Midwinters Youth Conference. She has presented a women's conference workshop on immigration issues and a university's discussion on history of women's ordination in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Mission Presbytery has 146 churches, and almost 30,000 members.

Allen spoke of her sense of call: "One primary motivator for me to serve as moderator is that I have found such deep joy in my life as a pastor and in sharing leadership and ministry with congregations I have been privileged to serve, that I want to share this experience far and wide. Though I am well aware of the polarization and declining membership within the denomination, I am not despondent about the future. I believe a strong witness to the transforming power of the Holy Spirit can give us a witness beyond our numbers."

Bill Spinks, Clerk of Session from University Presbyterian Church spoke to the endorsement of Allen's local congregation: "From her first call to a church in the context of the flood of the century, to her enduring passion for nurturing communities of resilience and joy, Kelly has not backed down from her belief that God is making all things new. Teaching Elder Kelly Allen embodies the faithful call to 'Love the Lord your God with all of your heart, all of your mind, and all of your strength' in how she lives and how she ministers. Her deep compassion and pastoral tenderness are intricately woven with her scholarly inquisitiveness, punctuated with her persistence and perseverance. She offers strong perspective with clarity and laughter. To seek justice and kindness and to walk humbly with God is Kelly's default."

Vacant
Executive Presbyter

Rev. Karen H. Stocks
Stated Clerk

Ruling Elder Ruben P. Armendariz
Church Development Consultant & Acting Head of Staff

Ruling Elder Lita Simpson
Youth & Young Adult Ministries

Rev. Kathy Anderson
Executive Director - John Knox Ranch

Allen studied at Washington University, St Louis, MO (BA), Columbia Theological Seminary (M.Div.), and University of Birmingham, UK (MA). She has published in the *Presbyterian Outlook*, *Journal for Preachers*, *Review of Faith and International Affairs*, and she authored the small group manual for Mission Presbytery's Multicultural Youth Conference. She has served as an Adjunct Faculty Instructor, Eden Theological Seminary (UCC); as a member of the Presbyterian Disaster Assistance National Response Team; as a Volunteer Mediator in Buckinghamshire, UK; and on Giddings-Lovejoy Presbytery's Committee on Ministry, the Education and Nurture Committee; and the Latin American Task Force. She is married to John Rezentes, a high school science teacher, and they live in San Antonio TX. They have two children, David, 11, and Clare, 18. Additional information is available at <http://kellyallenformoderator.com>.

For more information or to contact Kelly Allen, please also see below:

Email: allenkelly3@gmail.com

Church: <http://upcsa.org>

Websites: <http://kellyformoderator.com/>
<http://www.kellysallen.blogspot.com>
<http://67.225.183.146/extras/articles/520-khan-army-of-peace>
(Review: *Radically Nonviolent Islam? Abdul Ghaffar Khan and his Muslim army of Peace*)

Twitter: [@kellysueallen](https://twitter.com/kellysueallen)

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/kellyallenformoderator2014>



Reverend Karen H. Stocks
Stated Clerk

STATEMENT OF FAITH

When I was four years old my family did not go to church. I had heard something on the radio about the crucifixion of Jesus. I had heard he was a kind and loving man. When my mother explained the crucifixion to me, I cried. I couldn't believe human beings could be so cruel, especially to a savior. Now I know that human beings can be that cruel, and the only God I can believe in is a God who is willing to enter fully into this human experience.

I believe that Jesus Christ is God's most profound identification with human suffering and the one who has invited me into the truest, most abundant life possible. I came to love God through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Compelled and fed by this story, I then came to know God as Creator-Parent, Christ-Redeemer, and Advocate-Holy Spirit.

I believe, with Paul, that 'the Church is the body of Christ,' and that we are 'individually members of it.' This is a present reality as much as a future one. The Church gathers around the sacred texts of the Old and New Testaments, joining with the great cloud of witnesses that have brought to us these narratives of Divine-human encounter. Through the sacraments of baptism and communion, we are grafted into a deep memory of grace and liberation and invited to live into the hope of the fulfillment of God's kingdom. Our witness in Christ is to be ever expanding, in hopes that the love of God and the reconciling hope of Christ will be offered as a cup of cold water to the most thirsty of the world.

As a child of God, I feel a powerful sense that 'nothing can separate me from the love of God in Christ Jesus.' This allows me to rest in God, depend on forgiveness, use my gifts to the full, and open my life to others. Trusting that the wisdom of God is all around me, I am invited into conversation, even transformation through others who speak and live truth which comes through traditions and cultures not my own. My life is continually enriched by being part of a worshiping community and developing individual disciplines of prayer, Biblical study and meditation.

PERSONAL INFORMATION

I grew up in St. Louis, Missouri, and have lived in Atlanta, Georgia; St. Genevieve, Missouri; Gerrard Cross, England; and San Antonio, Texas. I married John Rezentes in 1988, and we celebrated 25 years of marriage last year. We became foster parents within our first year of marriage and have fostered children from newborn to 17 years old over the years. We are biological and adoptive parents with a daughter, Clare, 18 and son, David, 11.



My life has been thoroughly enriched by participating in prison ministry, foster parenting, and learning about Benedictine spirituality. I love the outdoors, a good novel, and Masterpiece Mystery. I love leading church officer training, investigating challenges of faith in the workplace, planning worship with a team, and speaking out for justice issues in the community. My studies in England led me to write my dissertation on "Ritual as a local capacity for the building of peace," exploring the positive uses of religious practice in conflict around the world. This learning has had surprising and wonderful applications in my own ministry since then.



Pastoral Ministry

2009-Present—Pastor
University Presbyterian Church
San Antonio, TX

2007-2009—Pastor
St. Andrew's United Reformed
Church, Gerrards Cross
Buckinghamshire, England

2003-2007—Adjunct Faculty
Eden Theological Seminary
(United Church of Christ)
St. Louis, MO

1997-2007—Pastor
First Presbyterian Church
St. Louis, MO

1992-1997—Pastor
First Presbyterian Church
St. Genevieve, MO

Education

2008—MA, Politics and Religion
University of Birmingham
England

1992—Master of Divinity
Columbia Theological Seminary
Decatur, GA

1986—BA, Psychology
Washington University
St. Louis, MO

Service in

Giddings-Lovejoy Presbytery

- ◆ Committee on Ministry
- ◆ Coordinator of Annual Presbytery Pastor Retreats
- ◆ Katrina and Rita Recovery Action Teams
- ◆ Coordinator of interracial Small Groups
- ◆ Education and Nurture Committee
- ◆ Latin American Task Force
- ◆ Director of Family Camp

Service in

Mission Presbytery

- ◆ Immigration Task Force Chair
- ◆ Keynote Speaker at two Presbytery Youth Conferences

Other Service

- ◆ Organizing Member, San Antonio Criminal Justice Action Coalition
- ◆ Volunteer Mediator, Buckinghamshire, England
- ◆ Chair, Missouri Interfaith Disaster Response Organization
- ◆ Member, Presbyterian Disaster Assistance National Response Team

A SENSE OF CALL

I believe God calls us, not to “positions,” but to be certain kinds of people, using the abundant gifts of the Spirit we have been given. Drawing on my gifts and the gifts that have come from people who have mentored me, challenged me, taught me, and modeled life in Christ to me, I offer what I have to the larger church for its work in the world.

I have cultivated these leadership commitments throughout my ministry, and as moderator would continue to focus on these commitments and celebrate them in others:

1-A commitment to spiritual practices ... the practices that have characterized a vital life with God throughout the history of the church: prayer, worship, Sabbath-keeping, the deep reading of Scripture, generous sharing. Simple yet deep, tried and true yet fresh for each generation, neglected to our peril, in these practices we are drawn closer to God and into more resilient communion with one another.

2-A desire to build community among strangers ... our encounters with the “other” often reveal much about us. Changing neighborhoods, expanding variations of faith traditions, shared sidewalks with people whose pockets do not contain enough for the bus ride home-- can we see these as invitations to new relationships and new discoveries, enriching to the church and to our lives of faith? Most of all, can we see in these encounters an expressions of the Kingdom of God?

3-A willingness to be bold and bodily witnesses to gospel values. Are we as followers of Christ, seen and heard in the places where brokenness is experienced most profoundly? Do we maintain a silent pity for wounded humanity, when placing our bodies alongside struggling humans (or nonhumans for that matter) might make for life-giving change? Do the things others see and hear from us as we go about our Christian lives in the world prompt them to glorify God?

I believe when these are in balance, there is vibrant humanity at an individual level, and vibrant life at a congregational and denominational level.

These three emphases offer the invitation to think, not in terms of the polarities of social justice/evangelism, liberal/conservative, centralized/decentralized, but rather to integrate the best of all of these perspectives, while looking at the fruit of our words and deeds in the world.



QUESTIONS FOR CANDIDATES FOR MODERATOR OF THE 221ST GENERAL ASSEMBLY

We all have a story of faith. Where does your story encounter hope?

My most profound encounter with hope was after a car accident in 2003. Two beloved members of the congregation I was serving as pastor were killed, and I was seriously injured. From the moment I gained consciousness while pinned inside the car, I heard the voice of a woman who turned out to be a chaplain speaking to me through the broken back window, asking me if she could call my husband for me. An EMT spoke kind words to me while he and others lifted me gently onto a gurney. I felt enfolded with care when my whole being could have been filled with fear.

The reality of the deaths of two vibrant women brought our community to its knees in grief. Yet the wounded body of Christ—the church—embodied a resurrection hope I had never experienced. The church did this as truly one body, bone and muscle and skin inextricably linked. Church members, staff and presbytery leaders planned two funerals, others cooked for my family and visited me in the hospital. Neighbors readied our home for my return in a wheelchair.

Some say hope “floats,” but I would say it flows and seeps and saturates. Hope defined the tear-filled testimony of a church member and childhood friend of one of the deceased women offered at the sentencing of the man who had caused the accident. It was a testimony that revealed pain but did not demand revenge. Hope flowed into the neighborhood around the church into the home of a woman who wrote the church a letter surprised and grateful for the forgiveness that the congregation had demonstrated. Hope entered the journey of the mother of one of the women who had never entered the church before her daughter’s death and is now a deacon.

Across town, the man whose recklessness had caused the death of two women, was enfolded into another congregation, and was prayed over by the men in his church, who pledged to guide and mentor him as he began to grasp what this second chance might mean for him.

In this season of my life, I encountered the truth of our hope in Christ. I saw, and through my brothers and sisters in Christ, experienced a living message of hope: that nothing, absolutely nothing, can have the power to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

This is one story. There are countless others. I will gladly share them with you.

The theme of the 221st General Assembly is “Abounding in Hope” which reflects both scripture and the Foundations of Church Polity in the Book of Order which says “In affirming with the earliest Christians that Jesus is Lord, the Church confesses that he is its hope...” (F-1.0204). Describe some of the ways you have seen this hope expressed in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

I see hope expressed in the PC(USA) in many ways, people and places, such as ...

- ... a Presbyterian army chaplain deployed in Afghanistan who gathers with anyone who is willing, for worship and communion in a small chapel. She accompanies fearful, lonely, remorseful, courageous, and questioning soldiers of no faith or other faiths on their journeys as they face challenges and moral dilemmas most of us will never face
- ... a small group of women who have travelled with me every Thursday for over 4 years to share in Bible study and prayer with federal offenders in a local detention facility
- ... a recent conference in Tulcea, Romania, during which over eighty helping professionals learned about trauma-informed practices, concrete ways to help heal the broken lives of Roma Children, and the collaboration of PCUSA mission coworkers of Presbyterian Women that made it happen ...
- ... speaking of Presbyterian Women, they have been in the vanguard of the Spirit’s movement in the church for 200 years. Their current initiatives are immigration and anti-racism. They value Bible study, fund creative and healing ministries all over the world, and met in small groups before it was “hip” to do so!
- ... recent seminary graduates, young, old, passionate about Jesus and savvy communicators, deep thinkers, willing to sacrifice and experiment and live simply and reach out to everyone
- ... urban congregations that start community gardens and rural congregations that support Presbyterian Children’s Homes and Services
- ... *Living Waters for the World* and gracious separations that have truly been gracious
- ... *Presbyterians Today*, which helps us celebrate creativity and strong leadership and bloggers who make sure we know the Body of Christ is SO much bigger than the PCUSA
- ... ruling elders and deacons who share the Lord’s Supper in homes of those who cannot attend weekly worship
- ... conversations in adult Sunday School classes about big issues: climate change, poverty, public education
- ... adults willing to engage youth, straight and gay, in conversations about sexual ethics
- ... the new Presbyterian Hymnal, specifically the new Gospel “Gloria,” and the old “Leaning on the Everlasting Arms”
- ... those who present their children for baptism. This is perhaps the most daring and amazing expression of hope of all.

*Some say hope “floats,”
but I would say it flows and seeps
and saturates.*

QUESTIONS FOR CANDIDATES FOR MODERATOR OF THE 221ST GENERAL ASSEMBLY

What are some of the exciting possibilities facing the 21st Century church? What are the challenges that face the church in this century?

Following Jesus offers exciting possibilities and monumental challenges in any age. In our time, we probably will not succeed in inventing new ways to be Christian, brand new ways to be church. We will make the same mistakes and discover in doing so the extraordinary grace of God. We are likely to lead and serve and hope and change and retrench with the same vigor that the church in any era has done. We will meet with fluctuating amounts of acceptance and hostility from culture, family and neighbor.

Therefore, our first call is to humility, and a frequent backward glance. We are not looking back to the “good ol’ days,” but to the threads of courageous living, exuberant worship, and deep love for God’s world that can be found in the past and present of the church’s life.

I will name 3 of many challenges the church has always and still does face, and suggest the possibilities that could emerge from facing them with hope and energy.

Challenge 1:

Our relationship as Christians with political structures.

In other words, to whom are we loyal as followers of Jesus?

To face this challenge:

Deepen our spiritual practices and our commitment to being one body so the character of our life as a church surprises and intrigues those around us. But this is not enough. We also have to demonstrate in word AND deed that we are willing to stand with people who are being harmed by the way things are arranged. In other words, change ourselves, then change the world.

Challenge 2:

Is that person my brother/sister in Christ? Throughout history the question of who is my sister or brother in Christ has shaped theology, brought about new movements, and fueled warfare...” The center of Christianity is now the global south, not western Europe.

To face this challenge:

Become students of the life and faith of our sisters and brothers in the two-thirds world. Learn their stories, share their struggles, explore their example, seek honest dialogue. Be willing to feel awkward and confused. Seek out “the other” in our own neighborhoods and trust the Spirit’s work to bring connection and new life.

Challenge 3:

Is the world for our use or are we for God’s use? This challenge has gotten to a crisis point. We have grossly and shamefully abused the earth.

To face this challenge:

Make this question central to the church’s life. Our relationship with the earth is not a “special interest group” concern. Let scientists teach us in our churches, and public policy makers debate in our Sunday School rooms, and the gifts of creation always fill our worship. Our relationship with God’s creation defines us.

*... our first call is to humility,
and a frequent backward glance.*



QUESTIONS FOR CANDIDATES FOR MODERATOR OF THE 221ST GENERAL ASSEMBLY

How does your church community make room for people to share their stories of faith? How can we listen to the stories of people who are not in the church?

When I think about how community is built and faith strengthened, I think primarily of personal and often vulnerable conversations in which people reveal their deepest questions and most profound experiences of God. Where do these occur at University Church, San Antonio? Here are a few places...

- * The Board of Deacons: Our current Deacon moderator decided to ask one deacon at each monthly meeting to share his/her personal faith story. This idea irritated the “business as usual” crowd, yet this practice has enriched each meeting and strengthened the whole faith community.
- * Newcomer retreats: Newcomers share time with current church officers and other members. At a point during the retreat we gather in groups of 3 to share conversations about the faith journey “maps” prepared during a time of silence. Stories of addiction and abuse emerge as do testimonies of God’s healing grace.
- * Officer training: each church officer is asked to prepare and present a statement of faith, which are shared in small group settings. Many are written in a form of deeply personal testimony to the presence of God in a person’s life. Several have been asked to share these statements in worship.
- * Financial Stewardship season: each fall, when UPC engages in our campaign to encourage members and others to make financial pledges to the ministry of the congregation, we invite individuals to present a testimony to the congregation. Surprisingly, a presentation on “Why I give to UPC” turns out, almost always, to be a story of faith, touching on the blessings and wounds of a person’s life.
- * The Way of the Child: this contemplative Sunday School curriculum, which we use at UPC for preschool and elementary school children, invites the kind of interaction between children and the scriptural texts that results in the children sharing extraordinary stories of connection with their own lives.

An example of listening to stories outside the church...

A grieving parent with no church home calls to ask if we would consider having a funeral for their child, who has just died. Two other churches have said no because they are not members. What a sad commentary, that we do not have the time or inclination to respond to a family in their deepest time of need. What more significant outreach could there be? Offering to hold memorial services for families in the community with no church connection has become a strong ministry at UPC. The church staff and the deacons willingly offer dedication and support to nonmembers who turn to the church at this time. When these families gather in my study to tell me about the person who has died, faith stories emerge. Faith questions bubble up, and estrangements from faith communities are shared. There is often a beginning to some crucial healing in these holy moments.

In our interactions with people of other religions and faith traditions, as Presbyterians we seek respectful dialogical relationships and authentic witness. How do you understand the relationship between witness and dialogue with people of other religions and faith traditions?

I have invested a lot of time and energy in interfaith work. I consider dialogue a spiritual practice. It is a patient speaking of truth as I know it, and a humble listening for wisdom from others.

My church launched an adult interfaith education center 13 years ago. Named the “SoL” (Source of Light) Center, we offer short courses such as “the Global Refugee Crisis,” “Abraham in Judaism, Islam and Christianity,” and “The Spiritual Practice of Forgiveness.”

One course we offered was called “Who Speaks for Islam?” During the class, I interviewed women from Iran and Pakistan, and men from Turkey, Jamaica, Iraq and the US. I asked them about their jobs, their families and their practices of faith.

Though during this course none of us who were Christian spoke about our faith, this was the beginning of dialogue. Dialogue creates a space of honor and hospitality for the “other” and lets him/her tell their story on their own terms. By offering space to people from numerous places and experiences, we also communicated something I feel is very important about dialogue: do not set up a situation where one person represents an entire tradition. One of the most powerful moments of this interview process was when I asked the Turkish man, “what would you like the group to know that I haven’t asked?” he responded, “Thank you for not asking me about terrorism. Thank you for asking me about my life and what I care about.”

Dialogue is our witness to Jesus Christ, as we honestly share our stories with one another. Dialogue recognizes that we all have something to learn from others, and that God’s wisdom is not confined to the lips and hearts of those who share our particular faith. Dialogue can inspire and transform. We leave the results of these encounters to God.

What more significant outreach could there be than to offer to hold memorial services for families in the community with no church connection?

KELLY S. ALLEN HAS CHOSEN AS CANDIDATE FOR VICE-MODERATOR LESLIE A. KING

WACO, TX

MINISTRY

My experience in the church has allowed me to model my ministry on success standards that apply to churches of all sizes. Year in and year out, the ministry has honed the skills and talents I have to offer. The skill of administrative agility has been honed to effectively transition a congregation through growth and change. The skill of pastoral care to faith's frontline has been honed to lead an atmosphere in which people are known and celebrated. The rigor of the weekly homiletic task has honed a devotion to preaching the good and



challenging news of the gospel. The role of wife and mother of three has further enhanced my vision and practice of ministry in the local church which is made up of many individual households that come together to be a family.

FAITH

My faith is interdisciplinary. I believe very much in the priesthood of all believers.

Thus, my faith is curious and responsive to the other professional disciplines of God's people. Within disciplines

such as physics, psychology, the arts, mathematics, I find invaluable conversation partners who ponder mysteries with various modes and languages. And as we converse, I cannot help but be drawn to the classic hymn "Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me...."

SEEK YE THE CLUES OF REDEVELOPMENT

My inexhaustible interest is in working alongside a local congregation toward the discovery of *clues*. Clues often begin as mysterious experiences that can frustrate or confound. Those same clues are often the catalyst for the discovery of program, ministry and mission in Christ's name. Discovery is at the heart of redevelopment. I am passionate about church's clues.

PRIESTHOOD PREACHING

We, in the Presbyterian Church USA, affirm the priesthood of all believers. We affirm that each person has unmediated access to God and full responsibility in ministering to the community. Preaching, at its best, draws upon the wisdom of the priesthood of all believers. It is a joy and privilege to assist a specific congregation in recognizing the vitality of the gospel in their day to day lives.

THE LORD'S SUPPER

As I remember Jesus' sharing of the Passover with his disciples in that last meal, I am mindful that the company we keep in our Christian communities is not always like-minded. But even in the midst of our transgressions or malice, the Spirit of Christ is not dissuaded from us. It is around the Lord's Table, breaking bread and pouring cup, that we move beyond the temptation to be of like mind and become more reliant upon our diversity of understandings, that the congregational mind might arrive at greater understanding of God's call upon them.



Pastoral Ministry

2012-present—Pastor
First Presbyterian Church
Waco, TX

1994-2012—Pastor
Osawatomie Presbyterian Church
Osawatomie, KS

1992-1994—Youth Director
Wilmette Presbyterian Church
Wilmette, IL

1991-1992—Older Adult
Ministry Director
Central Presbyterian Church
Austin, TX

Education

2010—Doctor of Ministry
Saint Paul School of Theology

1994—Master of Divinity
McCormick Theological Seminary

1991—Bachelor of Arts
in Psychology
University of Kansas



The Presbytery of Western North Carolina

114 Silver Creek Road, Morganton, NC 28655

Phone: (828)438-4217

Fax: (828)437-8655

Gradye Parsons, Stated Clerk
Office of General Assembly, PCUSA
100 Witherspoon St.
Louisville, KY 40202-1396

March 25, 2014

Dear Gradye:

As the PCUSA spreads the Gospel to new generations in a diverse and complex world, Heath Rada embodies precisely the kind of leadership the church needs at this time. Ruling Elder Dr. Heath K. Rada was overwhelmingly endorsed to stand for Moderator of the 221st General Assembly by The Presbytery of Western North Carolina on April 30, 2013, at its meeting in Montreat, North Carolina.

Dr. Heath Rada comes with an impressive resume, but more important is our experience of him as a leader, team player, and faithful witness to Christ's love and grace. Heath is a man of vision and vitality. He is effective when discussing tough issues, engaging with the disenfranchised, heading committees to solve problems, listening to others, and speaking his own mind. He has a keen ability to cut through disagreements, acknowledge differences, and to find commonality.

Heath's personality is non-combative and humble. He has an infectious joy and wonderful sense of humor. He cares for and respects all people, including those with different theological perspectives and faiths. He has a unique ability to make the Gospel message contagious, but never offensive. Heath has an excellent understanding of reformed theology and the Bible, has a deep faith and an abiding trust in the Holy Spirit as his companion and mentor. This is exactly what the church needs as it approaches the second decade of the new millennium.

A former president of the Presbyterian School of Christian Education in Richmond, VA, (now part of Union Presbyterian Seminary), Heath served as chair of PWNC's commission to organize the renewal of the Montreat PCUSA Church and on the Presbytery's Committee on Ministry. As a commissioner to the Minneapolis General Assembly in 2010, he chaired the Bills and Overtures Committee. Dr. Heath Rada will be awarded Union Presbyterian Seminary's Outstanding Alumni Award this May during the Sprunt Lecture.

Heath served as chief executive officer of the Greater Richmond Chapter of the American Red Cross, is a ruling elder in the PCUSA, and a member of the Presbyterian Mission Agency Board. He is on the boards of the Montreat Conference Center, the Presbyterian Homes of North Carolina, and is a member of Grace Covenant Presbyterian Church in Asheville, NC.

Dr. Rada graduated from Virginia Commonwealth University and earned a Master of Arts from what is now Union Presbyterian Seminary and a doctorate in education from North Carolina State University.

As moderator, Dr. Heath Rada will be a role model for a people who "abound in hope."

Respectfully submitted,

Bobbi White
General Presbyter
Presbytery of Western North Carolina

HeathRada.org | heathrada@charter.net



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Building bridges.

Modeling love.

Listening and guiding

with compassion.

Page 1





PRESBYTERY OF THE JAMES
3218 CHAMBERLAYNE AVE., RICHMOND, VA 23227
804-262-2074 ~ 877-262-2074

March 18, 2014

Rev. Gradye Parsons, Stated Clerk
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
100 Witherspoon Street
Louisville, KY 40202

Dear Gradye:

At the 85th Stated Meeting of the Presbytery of the James held October 19, 2013, the Presbytery of the James unanimously endorsed Ruling Elder Heath Rada for the position of Moderator of the 221st General Assembly to meet in Detroit, MI, June 14-21, 2014.

Enclosed is a copy of the Resolution which was approved by the presbytery.

If you have any questions, please be in touch with me. I send my best wishes to you.

Sincerely yours,

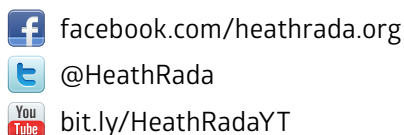
H. Carson Rhyne, Jr.
Stated Clerk

Cc: File
Dr. Heath Rada, email
Angela Stevens, Program Assistant, Office of General Assembly

From the POJ Minutes:
ENDORSEMENT RESOLUTION

Teaching Elder Richard Mahlmann (Lakeside) moved that the presbytery endorse the candidacy of Ruling Elder Heath Rada of the Lakeside Presbyterian Church for the position of Moderator of the 221st General Assembly. The motion was seconded and **PASSED**.

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Endorsement Resolution

WHEREAS, Ruling Elder Heath Rada is serving the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A) as a member of the Presbyterian Mission Agency; and

WHEREAS, Ruling Elder Heath Rada has previously served as a member of the Theology and Worship Ministry Unit and as a member of the Committee on Theological Education; and

WHEREAS, Ruling Elder Heath Rada's professional background includes serving as the President of the Presbyterian School of Christian Education for twelve years, directing the American Red Cross in Richmond, Virginia, and serving as interim CEO for the Red Cross in Ft. Worth, San Diego, and Minneapolis-St. Paul; and

WHEREAS, Ruling Elder Heath Rada is a certified Christian Educator; and

WHEREAS, Ruling Elder Heath Rada currently serves as an active elder at Grace Covenant Presbyterian Church in Asheville; and

WHEREAS, Ruling Elder Heath Rada serves on the boards of St. Andrews Presbyterian College and the Presbyterian Homes of North Carolina in addition to other volunteer responsibilities; and

WHEREAS, Ruling Elder Heath Rada was baptized at the Lakeside Presbyterian Church; and

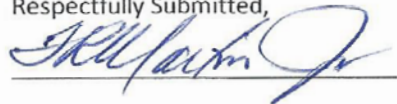
WHEREAS, elder Heath Rada was nurtured in the Christian faith at the Lakeside Presbyterian Church; and

WHEREAS, elder Heath Rada served as an elder at the Lakeside Presbyterian Church; and

WHEREAS, elder Heath Rada preached his first sermon at the Lakeside Presbyterian Church;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that by this resolution the Session of the Lakeside Presbyterian Church endorses Ruling Elder Heath Rada as a candidate for Moderator of the 221st General Assembly and recommends to the Presbytery of the James that the Presbytery endorse his candidacy as well.

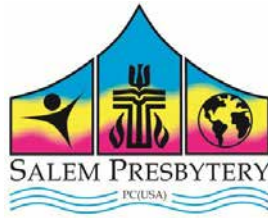
Respectfully Submitted,



Teddy Martin, Clerk of Session

8/18/13





Heath's Call to Stand for Moderator

It wasn't a blinding light or a voice from heaven. Nor was there writing on the wall - and in many ways, Dr. Heath K. Rada was the last to know.

This time, God's call began as a tap on his shoulder. Then another. And so on until colleagues coast to coast convinced Heath Rada that he should be the next Moderator of the Presbyterian Church USA - the highest position of leadership in the denomination.

"I was stunned," Dr. Rada said in an interview on his back porch at his home in Montreat where he and his wife Peggy came to "retire" - although the list of Dr. Rada's accomplishments, positions of service and influence since retirement is longer than most can claim in a lifetime.

"Could this be something God has in mind for me?" he goes on to ask aloud the question he has turned over in his mind since that first nudge. "I have a lot of energy for working within the Church, bringing people together despite their differences - and to celebrate those differences. I have great hope for what is happening in faith communities today, and I believe with all my heart that as brothers and sisters together in the family of God, we can continue to discern what it means to be the Church in today's world."

Dr. Rada did not immediately say yes to his colleagues, or to God. "This is a serious commitment. No one can do it unless they are confident it is something they were meant to do, God willing. I have prayed about it, talked to people I trust, to people who know me, my history and abilities, and I have opened my eyes and ears and heart to God. I am humbled to be asked, even more humbled to say yes. And this I can promise: I will give it my all, should I be chosen."

Page 1 of 3



About Heath

Dr. Rada's career is a model of wise, energetic, selfless service to Church and community. His commitment to peacemaking and justice skips like a stone across water: at age 12, young Rada and a black teenager paired as roommates at Camp Hanover, making it the first integrated church camp in the South. After attending St. Andrews University, and graduating from Virginia Commonwealth University, he then continued his education at Union Theological Seminary and the Presbyterian School of Christian Education in Richmond. Dr. Rada's path to his over-the-top successes began when he became the first Caucasian public school teacher in Henrico County Virginia to join the faculty of an all African-American school. Since then, he has been a faculty member of several colleges and universities here in the United States as well as visiting scholar on 5 continents. He has received numerous civic and Church-related honors, including Community Educator of the Year, the Hero Award from Henrico County, the Margaret Bowen Award for Distinguished Service in Christian Education, and accolades from the National Conference of Christians and Jews. A special television documentary was made about his life and his contributions.

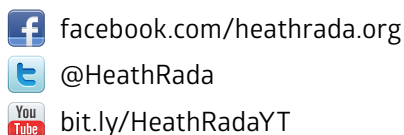
"I love people," Dr. Rada says, deferring modestly when asked about his well-known reputation for building community and working for justice. "My mother is responsible for that, I think. She taught me the importance of inclusiveness, and her care and concern for other people was not only obvious and inspiring, but contagious."

For 12 years Dr. Rada was President of his alma mater, The Presbyterian School of Christian Education - the first layperson ever called to head one of the Presbyterian Church's theological schools. From there, he spent the next 12 years as a senior executive for the American Red Cross, based primarily in Richmond but with stints as interim CEO in San Diego, Minneapolis/St Paul, and Fort Worth. In the aftermath of hurricane Katrina, Dr. Rada was an official representative of the ARC president and served as her liaison with the Governor of Louisiana.

He was part of the Church's delegation to Eastern Europe after the fall of the Berlin Wall, offering help to churches where Christianity had gone undercover during years of communist rule. He had the privilege of working and developing personal friendships with other well-known activists, including Desmond Tutu and Sir George McLeod, founder of the Iona Community in Scotland.

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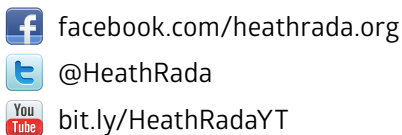
“If you think of the Church as the body of Christ, each person, each part, is crucial to its health. The whole isn’t working properly if people are marginalized or weakened by labels and stereotypes. We need each other, and we need transformational leaders in pulpits and congregations, board rooms and seminary classrooms to ensure we don’t lose our core mission as the ever-reforming people of God.”

Dr. Rada’s career is a running testament to his willingness to listen, to learn, and to lead. He has been a commissioner to the World Council of Churches, served on boards that touch every aspect of Presbyterian USA programming and mission, been in advisory positions at its seminaries, taken leadership roles in hospitals and Church-related colleges, chaired the Bills and Overtures Committee at General Assembly. Currently he on the board of Montreat Conference Center, the Presbyterian Home of North Carolina, the Presbyterian Mission Agency Board, and has recently rotated off the session of Grace Covenant Presbyterian Church in Asheville.

“Being moderator is not a position you should ‘run for’ or ‘campaign for’ in the aggressive political sense,” Dr. Rada says. “God is at work in the process. All I can do is to offer myself up to God’s will. I see it as a blessing to be considered by my peers as a candidate for the job. Should I end up in that position, I will give my all to honor that trust, to be the best I can be as together we serve a God who moves in mysterious and marvelous ways, not only in our shared history, but at this very moment in this time and place.

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Endorsements

Presbytery endorsements

- Presbytery of Western NC
- Presbytery of the James
- Salem Presbytery

Church Session endorsements

- Grace Covenant Presbyterian, Asheville, NC
- Montreat Presbyterian, Montreat, NC
- Black Mountain Presbyterian, Black Mountain, NC
- First Presbyterian, Boone, NC
- Lakeside Presbyterian, Richmond, VA
- Second Presbyterian, Richmond, VA
- St Andrew Presbyterian, Boulder, CO

*As Moderator,
Heath will build bridges,
model love, listen and guide
with compassion to do the work
of the Holy Spirit.*

For more background,
videos, and musings from
Heath, you're invited to
visit the web site:

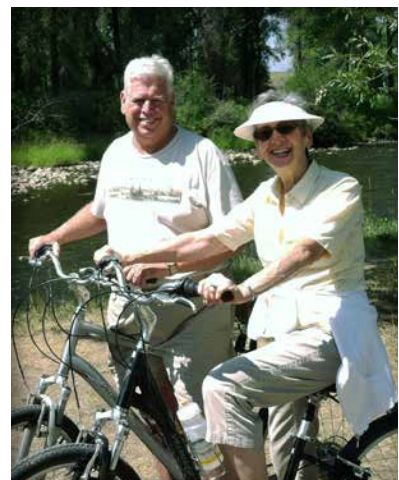
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*Heath's
granddaughter,
Anna Grace,
endorses
him, too.*






*Heath and
Peggy enjoy
the serenity
of a stroll on
the beach.*



*Two-wheeling
on a sunny day.*

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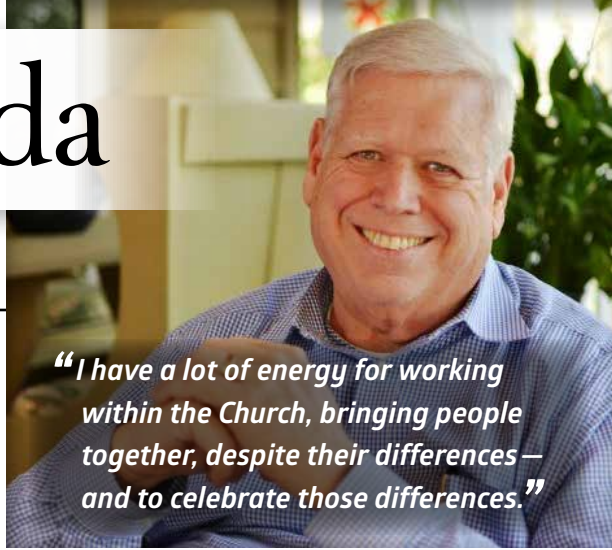
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Heath Rada



About Heath

Growing up in Richmond, VA, Heath learned early on that one size simply doesn't fit all—a lesson he has emphasized throughout his career. He maintains that if we constantly remind ourselves that it's okay to see things differently, to worship differently, and to embrace those differences, we as individuals, and our denomination as a whole, will grow and prosper.

Heath's education includes degrees from Virginia Commonwealth University, Union Presbyterian Seminary and North Carolina State University. He has also studied at St. Andrews University and Harvard University.

His experiences and demonstrations of leadership are vast, and have largely centered around the Church and humanitarian causes.

Having served as President of the Presbyterian School of Christian Education in Richmond (now Union Presbyterian Seminary), Heath later joined the American Red Cross as CEO of the Greater Richmond Chapter. He coordinated the Red Cross' efforts in Virginia and the District of Columbia. In his Red Cross career, Heath was also tapped as interim-CEO at the organization's chapters in San Diego, Minneapolis-St. Paul, and Ft. Worth. He retired from the American Red Cross in 2004.

As an active Church member, Heath has served in numerous capacities on the local, Presbytery, and national levels of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Currently, he is on the boards of the Presbyterian Mission Agency, the Montreat Conference Center and the Presbyterian




Homes of North Carolina. He recently rotated off the National American Red Cross Retirees' Board of Directors.

Wherever his work has taken him, Heath has always made time for civic and community involvement, working on numerous boards, including the Richmond Rotary Club, Sheltering Arms Hospital, Mission Hospital Foundation, Collegiate School, Council for America's First Freedom, and the National Conference for Christians and Jews, among others. He is a published author, a noted speaker and has been honored numerous times for his work in community.

Today, when not on the road, Heath resides with Peggy, his wife of 48 years, in Montreat, NC. He is the proud father of two adult daughters. One resides in Western North Carolina and the other in Boulder Colorado. His two seven-year-old grandchildren, Heath Blake and Anna Grace, rank among the greatest joys of his life. Get within sight-distance of Heath and you'll quickly observe his ready-smile and the twinkle in his eye.

Then, ask him if one size fits all in the Presbyterian Church. But, make sure you have some time.

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Biographical Highlights

Professional Experience

- President of Presbyterian School of Christian Education (now Union Presbyterian Seminary)
- CEO of the Greater Richmond Chapter American Red Cross
- Interim CEO of American Red Cross chapters in San Diego, Minneapolis-St. Paul, and Fort Worth
- Primary liaison between President of the American Red Cross and the Governor of Louisiana immediately following Hurricane Katrina
- Tenured faculty member and Director of NC Center for Community Education at Appalachian State University
- Guest faculty member for NOVA University
- Guest faculty member at Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah
- Guest faculty member at NC State University and University of NC at Chapel Hill
- Faculty member and Interim Dean of Students Southeastern Community College, Whiteville, NC
- 5th grade teacher at Virginia Randolph Elementary School—first white teacher to teach in an African-American school in Henrico County, Virginia
- Guest lecturer and teacher in Europe, Asia, South America, and Australia

Boards of Service

Current: Montreat Conference Center
(executive committee)

Presbyterian Homes of NC

Presbyterian Mission Agency Board
(executive committee)

Recent: St. Andrews Presbyterian University
Mission Children's Hospital Foundation
Board

American Red Cross National Retiree's
Association Board

Past: Advisory Board, School of Education,
Virginia Commonwealth University

Richmond Rotary Club Board of Directors
Baptist Theological Seminary of Richmond
National Conference of Christians and Jews,
Richmond Chapter (Chairman)

Council for America's First Freedom

The Collegiate Schools of Richmond, Virginia
Superintendent Search Committee, Richmond,
VA public schools

Sheltering Arms Rehabilitation Hospital

Governor Appointed Community Advisory
Commission and NC Volunteer Commission—
State of NC

Advisory Board for Richmond Community
High School (public school for gifted students)

Local Church: Elder in four PC(U.S.A.) churches
and twice Clerk of Session

Sunday School Teacher for children and adults
Lay preacher

Choir member

Community Involvement Committees

**PC(U.S.A.) Delegate to World Council of
Churches Assembly in Canberra, Australia**

General Assembly Committees

Committee on Theological Education
Committee on Theology and Worship

Presbytery Work

Committee on Ministry

Chair: Administrative Commission for
Montreat Presbyterian Church

Mediator for other churches considering leaving
the PC(U.S.A.)

Honors

First NC Community Educator of the Year

Humanitarian of the Year - Richmond VA

First Richmond Rotarian to receive Honorary
Paul Harris Fellowship

Speaker at Numerous Commencements and
Baccalaureate Services

Frequent guest speaker for community
organizations

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Questions for Candidates for Moderator of the 221st General Assembly (2014) Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

We all have a story of faith. Where does your story encounter hope?

So faith, hope, and love abide. In many ways they are hard to separate.

My mother worked as a church secretary. She was a widow, and during my growing-up years, we had very few material goods. But my home was rich in hope and support. I didn't feel deprived because I was always being told that I was loved, valued, and affirmed.

As time passed, I hoped for things, but they were not related to accumulating material goods. I experienced genuine happiness, even as a young person, by being the beneficiary of love. My hopes centered around goals, and they embraced such matters as attaining an education, hoping I might stand up for justice, finding good in other people, even when we disagreed, and finding employment opportunities that allowed me to make a difference in the quality of other's lives.

My local church was a huge contributor to this outlook. In the fifties, working single moms were not nearly as commonplace as they are today, so I became the "adopted" son of a congregation that nurtured me, had faith in me, and instilled in me the importance of hope in my outlook on life. Jesus and his teachings became real to me. I saw him daily in the faithful and hopeful people around me.

Eleven years ago my youngest daughter, who had been married a little over a year, was diagnosed with advanced ovarian cancer. Peggy and I were not given optimistic reports concerning her survival. The journey of surgery, chemotherapy, and lifestyle changes was filled with fear, apprehension, and much prayer. Yet, in the midst of it all came a peacefulness based on hope.

We came to accept the possible reality of death, but we had hope sustained by faith, that God was going to take care of us. I prayed for her healing. I wished mightily for her to continue living. But hopefulness became something greater than my selfish desire. Somehow that hope translated into acceptance.

One day I envisioned a knot-tied hammock strung between two trees. I saw each knot as representing someone who was demonstrating his or her love, faith and hope for the future. The hammock itself represented God's promise to fulfill that hope in ways far greater than I could imagine.

All I needed to do was to let go, fall into the hammock and know that I would be held up, that my desire for God's care would be ever present.

My daughter is alive and well today with no signs of cancer. We are grateful beyond words, but an even greater peace comes from absolute confidence that whatever might have happened, our hope for the promise of God's care was present. I have continued onward in that sweet pure knowledge that God's hammock was ready to hold me.

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Questions for Candidates for Moderator of the 221st General Assembly (2014) Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

The theme of the 221st General Assembly is “Abounding in Hope” which reflects both scripture and the Foundations of Church Polity in the Book of Order, which says “In affirming with the earliest Christians that Jesus is Lord, the Church confesses that he is its hope...” (F-1.0204). Describe some of the ways you have seen this hope expressed in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

There is a tension between being pastoral and prophetic.

Both acknowledge our need to be cared for and led to a closer understanding of God’s will. Both require faithfulness. Both infer the need for hope. Yet as the PC(U.S.A.) embarks upon a new day—much like reunions or divisions in past years—the Church we are becoming is not the Church we have been. Such transition causes dis-ease and unrest.

But as people of faith, we are also people of hope.

Traveling around the PC(U.S.A.), I have had the opportunity to see small and large, rich and poor, urban and rural, traditional and very nontraditional churches. I hear increasing diversity in languages, find maverick projects being undertaken, new traditions being adopted, fresh hymns being sung, innovative ecumenical and interfaith efforts pursued.

Small groups continue to grow in so many churches, and members and visitors alike are able to know one another in genuine ways, to affirm, celebrate or grieve with their sisters and brothers. In many instances the Bible serves as the textbook for their interactions.

Opportunities to reach beyond the traditional boundaries of the Church are the new order of

the day. My local church recently announced that we have more members under the age of 45 than older. In my own church, our community garden, which replaced our beautiful, carefully mowed front lawn, has brought together people from different cultures who work side by side. New members enter our doors because the garden provides a witness to a church that cares about “doing” rather than just talking.

Our program of Story Telling, which encourages both church members and others from the community to tell their personal histories and life experiences, has become so popular we need advance reservations just to attend the rehearsals! Even in a church of over 750 members, we get to know one another and share stories of who we are as people of faith.

I also see our denomination’s central offices becoming a place that resources rather than directs the local churches in programmatic efforts. Much work remains to be done, but it seems to be happening. How this will be handled with our form of government is a challenge, but people love the Church and want to see it work.

Then there are my two seven-year-old grandchildren. These children love attending church. They feel embraced, accepted, and affirmed by a faith community that showers them with kindness and affection. They see role models who teach them of the importance of community that will impact their lives forever.

Looking to the future, I am supremely hopeful: hopeful that in spite of ourselves, the Lord of the church is fashioning us into a people better than we can even now imagine.

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Questions for Candidates for Moderator of the 221st General Assembly (2014) Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

What are some of the exciting possibilities facing the 21st Century Church? What are the challenges that face the Church in this century?

Possibilities and challenges are often one and the same, and at this point in history, the Church has a redemptive message that is as relevant and as energetic as ever before.

- 1. Adapt to a changing world.** Our pool of knowledge doubles every three years. In 1950 it took 25 years to double that knowledge; and in 1900, a whopping 100 years. How do we maintain a solid foundation for the Church in such a fast-moving world? How do we assure Biblical authority in a setting that grows more complex every time we interpret it? Our single greatest challenge is, as always, to affirm that Jesus' love never changes, even though everything else may. To do this, we will love each other in a deeper understanding of what the Church is and does.
- 2. Take advantage of new technology.** Language is more inclusive, online interactions are less personal, more direct. Data are shared instantaneously. Yet, people seem disengaged. Being technically savvy is essential if we are to be in touch with each other. Faith is personal, to be sure, but we must find ways to balance privacy while opening the way for meaningful conversations within the body of Christ.
- 3. Recognize, evaluate, and celebrate new patterns of culture.** What is "Christian" behavior? How do we become increasingly diverse and inclusive when we also have basic foundations that set boundaries? How do we interpret the Ten Commandments? How do we deal with Biblical passages

that contradict one another? What does it mean to have a personal relationship with Jesus? What is sin? Has it changed? Does the Church reflect or does it determine our culture?

- 4. Adjust the patterns and practices we use in telling our story.** The Church has had an extraordinary impact on society—more than other non profits, or museums, or institutions of higher education. Is that still true? We are now called to explore differences and similarities that distinguish our denomination from other denominations, other faiths—keeping in mind that we are all God's children.
- 5. Explore all available resources to support our work.** We continue to cut activities because there is less money. Some people believe God's desire for us to support our neighbor is no longer the sole purview of the Church. Yet, we must remember it is not only our faith that binds us. We are meant to care for the poor and the afflicted, to minister to prisoners, to take responsibility for the quality of life for children and senior citizens alike.

In the language of a PC(U.S.A.) Presbyterian, we are constantly reforming. That does not mean we become less focused on serving Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, but rather to intentionally seek new ways to mold and carry out that mission. We will become a community of faith different from what we have known in the past. God gave us minds to be creative, and we must follow God's lead in being the Church in this new time and place.



Questions for Candidates for Moderator of the 221st General Assembly (2014) Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

How might the initiative to create 1001 new worshipping communities help the PC (U.S.A.) reach its goal of increasing its racial ethnic membership and come closer to becoming a multicultural community of faith, hope, love, and witness?

This is a win-win mission.

As I write this response, I am told that we have almost 200 new communities on board, with many more under consideration.

By broadening our understanding of what it means to be a PC(U.S.A.) worshipping community, we open the door to many different cultures and groups who share our belief in God and Jesus as Christ, but have a variety of backgrounds and experiences. They may not speak English. Others may not gather in traditional “church” buildings. Almost all experiment with varying forms of worship. Many do not “join” the Church, yet participate fully.

Together with them, we will find the love of Christ through interactions in small groups, in community service, in public demonstrations for justice issues, and in preaching and teaching the Bible. Welcoming these new worshipping communities broadens everyone’s understanding of what it means to be the Church. Some use new forms of technology. Some set midweek times of worship rather than weekends, and various forms of interaction options enable folks to articulate and grow their faith.

Our traditional Sunday morning services in congregations that are, in essence, all alike may soon not be the norm. They are no longer seen as the only way for the Church to either follow Christ’s call—or to survive.

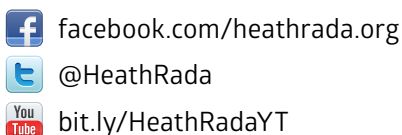
On the other hand, we cannot discount Churches that remain comfortable with the traditional, more familiar model. Some of

these congregations feel that the “1001 new worshipping communities” movement will water down support for the small, traditional still-active congregations across the Church. They want to see additional resources infused into their attempts to restore life to their congregations. Fortunately there are several new initiatives which are focusing on those congregations.

The effort to create 1001 new worshipping communities affords us the opportunity to infuse excitement and bold, fresh ideas into congregations that feel “stale.” New worshippers are made to feel part of our denominational family as their ideas are implemented into Churches that have been around a long time. This whole idea invites us to merge into the Church of today—and it might be a way to regain some momentum in the growth of the PC(U.S.A.) family.

As I said, it’s a win-win reality for the denomination.

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Questions for Candidates for Moderator of the 221st General Assembly (2014) Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

We are living in a war-torn world. What might the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and its congregations do to strengthen the ministry of peacemaking at this time?

Over the years I have had the privilege of spending time with some of our most influential peacemakers, as well as others for whom I have great admiration, and I am filled with hope in and energy for serving in the role of peacemaker.

Visiting with Desmond Tutu and his wife Leah at their church in South Africa in 1983, and having dinner in their home, allowed me the opportunity to hear this extraordinary man discuss his hopes to end apartheid and bring peace to his home country.

Likewise my two weeks with Alan Boesak who was a huge voice in bringing about peace in that country was transformative for me.

I also spent time in Palestine and in my own home with Archbishop Elias Chacour whose passion for peace led him to build a remarkable school where Israeli and Palestinian children can study together and build mutual respect. In addition, I have been in similar situations in Bolivia, in Indonesia, and other places where there has been unrest, anger, and turmoil. As president of one of our denominational seminaries, which had a large percentage of international students, I heard stories of political and military unrest in other countries, and I was part of their grief—and celebrations—as news came of successes and failures in their home countries in their quest for peace and justice.

Likewise, I have been in communities in our own country, as well as in local churches, that have been split over varieties of issues, where people have wept over hurt and mistreatment.

In all this, one thing has been obvious: peace can only come when one is willing to give himself or herself away for the sake of something bigger than individual comforts and perspectives.

Our Church has a voice in world affairs, as well as here at home, among our own. We need to get back to the basics of what our faith teaches: to love one another; to listen to each other; to show kindness, compassion, respect, and humility. We cannot change solely through confrontation.

Look at Tutu, Boesak, and Chacour. Look at Jesus' model. Jesus did not lambast those with whom he disagreed. He showed them love, and he cared about each one as though he had nothing more important to do. That's what I believe we as a Church need to do: be aware of the reality of issues and not base our assumptions on rumors or false reports. There are times when standing up for the rights of our sisters and brothers is appropriate, while at the same time recognizing the humanity and convictions of those whose views we do not share.

Love is patient and kind. It isn't arrogant or rude. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things and endures all things. Are we able to do that?

With God's grace, we can. We must.

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Heath Rada has chosen as candidate for vice-moderator:

Larissa Kwong Abazia



About Larissa

Wherever Larissa is called, she seeks to create a safe space for people from different backgrounds, perspectives, contexts and identities to possess a valued space at the table. She prayerfully works toward a Church transformed by God's love in which all people are celebrated as members of Christ's body. It is only as that one body that she believes we are truly able to both embrace the hurts and celebrate the blessings of one another.

Larissa grew up in a small Presbyterian church in East Hanover, NJ. The intimate congregation supported her faith formation, nurtured a spirit of leadership from a young age, and taught her that people of all ages and backgrounds are welcome at Christ's Table. This strong foundation continues to drive her hope for the future of the Church as it moves forward by not only teaching the young, but acknowledges that the young have so much to teach as well.

Larissa received her B.A. in English Literature from Rutgers University and her M.Div. from Princeton Theological Seminary. She also studied at the University of Sussex in Brighton, England.

Upon graduating from seminary, Larissa completed a year-long pastoral care residency at Thomas Jefferson University Hospital, followed by four years as associate pastor at Lake View Presbyterian Church in Chicago, IL. Subsequently, she worked as the Interim Youth Director at the First Presbyterian Church of Manasquan in New Jersey. She currently serves as the pastor of the First Presbyterian

Church of Forest Hills, a multicultural, multiethnic congregation in Queens, NY.

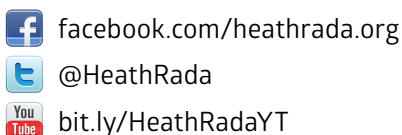
Larissa's experiences as a Chinese American, young adult clergywoman have exposed her to the positive and negative effects that others can have on one's sense of identity. As a result, she is passionate about God's call to beloved community where individuals are invited to bring all that they are to the Table.

She served as a core team member and co-moderator of Racial Ethnic Young Women Together (REYWT) where she was inspired by the denominational space dedicated to equipping and empowering young women of color through leadership development, training, and networking. During her tenure in seminary, she collaborated with several campus groups to create greater awareness for the need for cultural competency both inside and outside the classroom, resulting in the creation of the Office of Multicultural Relations. She has also worked with That All May Freely Serve, Presbyterian Women's Racial/Ethnic Dialog, the Advance Justice Committee of Chicago Presbytery, and the Youth Workers Collective in Chicago.

Larissa and her husband, Dan, have been married eight years. When she's not chasing after their son, Jonathan, she enjoys spending time with family and friends, cooking, traveling, eating great food, reading, and writing.

"I am called to live a life open to the unique ways that my gifts and talents intersect with the unfolding of the kingdom of God here on earth."

HeathRada.org | heathrada@charter.net



*Building bridges.
Modeling love.
Listening and guiding
with compassion.*

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Presbytery of Genesee Valley

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March 26, 2014

Dear Commissioners to the 221st General Assembly,

What a joy it was on November 26, 2013 for our presbytery to endorse the Rev. John Wilkinson to stand for the office of moderator for this Assembly. John will complete his term as presbytery moderator at our May meeting, and his leadership has been a great gift to us this year. Not only was the vote to endorse John unanimous, it was heartfelt, as teaching and ruling elders — from small churches and large, city, town and country — rose to speak to John's leadership, caring and generosity of time and spirit.

The Rev. Laurel Nelson, co-director of Lagom Landing, a validated ministry of our presbytery, said these words:

“I have appreciated John as a colleague, willing always to lead us into important study, and his gifts of making study fun. John is good at initiating things, but he doesn't hold onto outcomes for those things; he trusts the Spirit to move in the Spirit's own timing. He gathers small groups of colleagues to engage in important conversation, and usually mixes in some fun or a good meal. I appreciate how he is not bothered, or even distracted by what is non-essential, but, holding to the core of our faith, he prods but doesn't injure, he expects much, but somehow carries a gentleness in his expectations. He has built bridges over theological boundaries by continually modeling the essentials of committed Reformed faith. He has already been a trusted leader on a national level, and I believe John's service as moderator will serve our denomination, and most importantly, our savior Jesus Christ in the continued work of reconciliation for this particular time in the church's life.”

For the three years that I have served as Presbytery Leader, I have listened to a chorus, here in Rochester, NY and throughout the country, encouraging John to consider standing for moderator. We talked and prayed together about the possibility for several months before he said yes. It is an honor to commend his service to the General Assembly, through the voice of our presbytery.

Grace and peace,

Amy Williams Fowler

THE REV. AMY WILLIAMS FOWLER
Presbytery Leader

ELDER SUSAN B. ORR
Presbyter for Mission and Education

THE REV. NEIL FROOD, JR.
Presbyter for Pastoral Support and Development

THE REV. VAL FOWLER
Stated Clerk

THE REV. FRANK Y. ICHISHITA
Executive Presbyter Emeritus

BETH WEAVER
Office Administrator

ELDER JANICE BILOHLAVEK
Program Secretary

CHERYL BATTAGLIA
Financial Administrator

ABOUT JOHN

"I think it is hope that lies at our hearts and hope that finally brings us all here."

Frederick Buechner
A Room Called Remember

I AM GRATEFUL and humbled to stand as a candidate for General Assembly moderator. I have prayed and discerned. My family and colleagues across the church have encouraged me. The Third Presbyterian Church family has enthusiastically supported me and the Presbytery of Genesee Valley has unanimously endorsed me. My communities have confirmed that I have the gifts, the experiences, the vision and the passion to lead the church in this crossroads moment.

I was born into a Presbyterian manse in western Pennsylvania and raised in Ohio. My father is a retired Presbyterian minister and my mother was a dedicated public school educator. I am the oldest of three siblings, with one foot in the baby-boomer generation and one in generation X. My spouse Bonny Claxton and I have sought to provide the same loving, caring environment for our children Kenneth and Ann that I experienced as a child.

A "child of the church" in every sense of the term, church was and is a second home to me. Countless Presbyterians nurtured me, and many Presbyterian communities have formed me. That Presbyterian ecosystem shaped my call to ministry, which unfolded and evolved through the voices of many, many people.

My church leadership began early in my life — I balanced session meetings with piano lessons and soccer practice while still in high school and continued in the role of elder in my college congregation.

When not at church, I love baseball, college hoops, movies, TV (The Big Bang Theory, Sherlock, The Simpsons, Seinfeld, The Office), music of all kinds (hymns, Bruce Springsteen, U2, Mumford and Sons), and doing almost anything with my family!



"With an urgency born of this hope, the church applies itself to present tasks and strives for a better world."

The Confession of 1967
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

SINCE ORDINATION as a teaching elder, my leadership has been centered on the urban, metropolitan church — specifically in local congregations. Having been a small town and suburban Ohio boy, this has been a gift to me. I've had profound opportunities to relate to many diverse people and build bridges among constituencies from the church, the communities that they minister in, and the people who live and work in them. I love to share the good news that God is alive in the city, be it Rochester, or Detroit, or any urban setting.

My commitments have led me to discover where God's hope lives in our denomination. My service on the Theological Task Force on the Peace, Unity and Purity of the Church was a watershed experience for me. Twenty Presbyterians, chosen because of our differences, came together and modeled a new way to be church, thinking about what we believe and how we might live together.

Whether in my presbytery (where I currently serve as moderator), on a

John Wilkinson

Teaching Elder/Member of
Presbytery of Genesee Valley

Ordained 1989 by Presbytery of
Muskingum Valley

VOCATIONAL HISTORY

Third Presbyterian Church
Rochester, New York
Pastor, 2001 – present

Fourth Presbyterian Church
Chicago, Illinois
Executive Associate Pastor and
Associate Pastor for Mission and
Communication, 1994 – 2001

St. James Presbyterian Church
Chicago, Illinois
Pastor, 1989 – 1994

SERVICE TO THE CHURCH

General Assembly

- Committee on the Office of the General Assembly, 2006 – present
- Moderator, 2010 – 2012
- Theological Task Force on the Peace, Unity and Purity of the Church, 2001 – 2006
- Commissioner, 221st General Assembly, 2014
- Commissioner, 206th General Assembly, 1994
- Seminary Assistant, 200th General Assembly, 1988
- Youth Advisory Delegate, 196th General Assembly, 1984
- Youth Triennium Participant, 1980

Presbytery of Genesee Valley

- Moderator, 2013 – 2014
- Committee on Ministry, 2002 – 2006
- Urban Presbyterians Together, Co-convener, 2009 – present

continued

ABOUT JOHN



seminary board, or at the national level of the Presbyterian family, I have been asked to take leadership roles, and have sought to fulfill each calling with openness, integrity and grace. Whatever the outcome or accomplishment, the greatest gift has been in bringing people together and experiencing God's hope through these communities.

Hope has brought me here, and I look forward to sharing that with you, as Generally Assembly Moderator.

Hope of the world, God's gift
from highest heaven,

Bringing to hungry souls the
bread of life,

Still let Thy Spirit unto us
be given

To heal earth's wounds and
end our bitter strife.

Georgia Harkness, "Hope of the World"
Glory to God: The Presbyterian Hymnal

MY VISION for the church is one of profound hope. I believe that God is calling the church to new and amazing things in the uncharted waters of the 21st century. We needn't be anxious. Time after time, the Biblical message to us is "be not afraid." I am energized as I envision what it will look like as we live into that promise.

We have a rich theological and spiritual tradition and a great framework for being

church. Our task now is not to re-create the past, nor perpetuate the institution for its own sake, but to embrace our evolving, emerging future and to ignite new movements that bring the Bread of Life to a hungry and hurting world.

We are certainly facing conflict and numerical decline. Let's live with those challenges in new ways, becoming the joyful, compassionate Presbyterian community that God is calling us to be.

"The Spirit forms diverse
people into the one body of
Christ, giving a variety of gifts
that enable us to upbuild the
church and serve the world."

"Hope in the Lord Jesus Christ"
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), 2002

I PLEDGE MYSELF to moderate a General Assembly meeting openly and effectively, if chosen by our fellow commissioners. I will work to ensure that all voices are heard and that the decisions before us are clear. I will bring warmth and humor into our gathering, because the way we do our business is as important as the actual business we do. Throughout my ministry I have been a bridge builder and a space maker, and I will be that when we are together in Detroit.

Then following the General Assembly, my friend and colleague MaryAnn McKibben Dana and I will travel throughout the church, interpreting and advocating the assembly's decisions. We are especially interested in discovering places where hopeful and innovative ministry is happening, and sharing those experiences with the broader church. I am also committed to visiting places where denominational relationships might be frayed, not to defend or convince, but to listen and respond.

John Wilkinson

SERVICE TO THE CHURCH, continued.

Presbytery of Chicago

- Congregational Mission Strategy Council, 1997 – 2001
- Committee on Preparation for Ministry, 1992 – 1995

McCormick Theological Seminary, Chicago, Illinois

- Board of Trustees, 2012 – present

Colgate Rochester Crozer Divinity School

Rochester, New York

- Board of Trustees, 2003 – 2012
- Board Chair, 2008 – 2011

Covenant Network of Presbyterians

- Board of Directors, Executive Committee, 1997 – 2013

NEXT Church

- Organizing Team, 2010 – 2011
- Advisory Team, 2011 – present

Worthington Presbyterian Church, Worthington Ohio

- Ruling Elder, 1979 – 1981

Westminster Presbyterian Church, Wooster Ohio

- Ruling Elder, 1982 – 1985

EDUCATION

- Northwestern University, Ph.D. (2001) American Religious History
- McCormick Theological Seminary, Master of Divinity (1989)
- College of Wooster, B.A. (1985)



MaryAnn and I are grateful for the call to serve, and for the opportunity to share this adventure with an extraordinary group of commissioners and advisory delegates.

Q We all have a story of faith. Where does your story encounter hope?

MY FAITH STORY BEGAN IN HOPE at the

First Presbyterian Church of Akron, Ohio where my parents presented me for the sacrament of baptism. As the child of a teaching elder and ruling elder, I found in the church a second home, where I encountered hope filled Presbyterians serving within the church and taking the good news beyond its walls to transform the world.

I was confirmed, and then ordained as a ruling elder in my teen years, and the church continued as a place of welcome and hope.

In my college years, my world continued to expand, and when I wandered into a Presbyterian church on campus, it welcomed me in and launched me out! I travelled to the Middle East for the first time, and also, as a history major, began to consider more deeply how faith interacts — positively *and* negatively — with its culture. I continued to meet Presbyterians of every stripe who worshipped with joy and who sought to live out their faith at work, at home, in the public sphere, and who with hope believed that the transforming power of God's love makes a difference!

Seminary rocked this new student's world! Rather than having my faith dismantled, however, it provided a firm foundation. Having been loved and nurtured by the church, I discovered the Bible and the power of its hope in a new way. I encountered our robust and lively Reformed theology where hope is at the center — hope in a gracious and sovereign God, hope in the centrality of the Word, hope in Christ's life, death and resurrection, hope in the Spirit's call to reconciliation. I learned more fully of our Presbyterian commitments to order *and* ardor, to spirituality *and* social responsibility, to witness *and* service. I learned that we are better

together, and that the more of us that are at the table, the more faithful our decisions and witness will be.

That hope has stayed with me throughout my adult journey — in ministry that has focused on urban settings and our confessional heritage and as I have sought to live faithfully as spouse, parent, son, neighbor, citizen...and minister. I continue to contemplate the vows I have taken — baptism vows, ordination vows, marriage vows — and how I, if I were on my own — could never come close to living up to them. But I am *not* alone. We are not alone. Our hope is always and only in Jesus.

Time after time I have returned to Frederick Buechner's understanding of hope: "...Hope that we are known, each one of us, by name, and that out of the burning moments of our lives he will call us by our names to the lives he would have us live and the selves he would have us become."

That hope is not distant, or theoretical. It is real, and it is close, and I am grateful for it.

Q The theme of the 221st General Assembly is "Abounding in Hope" which reflects both scripture and the Foundations of Church Polity in the Book of Order which says "In affirming with the earliest Christians that Jesus is Lord, the Church confesses that he is its hope..." (F-1.0204). Describe some of the ways you have seen this hope expressed in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

I HAVE WITNESSED HOPE serving in varied

congregations and presbyteries and connecting Presbyterians of every variety! Yes, I've encountered fear and anxiety about our decline and division, but that fear and anxiety are always trumped by urgent hope! Hope wins — as people worship and serve and share good news with a hungry and hurting world.

I see hope at Third Presbyterian Church in Rochester as...

- A diverse community of faith gathers Sunday by Sunday to encounter God through Word and Sacrament
- Parents present babies for baptism
- Children learn from caring adults
- Youth are nurtured in faith as they navigate the challenging waters of adolescence
- Twenty-somethings check out our website, then wander in and discover an engaging community
- Couples present themselves for marriage
- We gather for a funeral of a beloved church member, clinging to the promise that "in life and in death we belong to God"
- We tutor students in the struggling Rochester City Schools
- We gather with our friends at Temple B'rith Kodesh for our long-standing annual pulpit exchange
- We speak out at a city council or school board meeting
- Volunteers hammer nails and hang drywall with Habitat for Humanity
- Hungry neighbors come for food or shelter
- We travel to New Orleans for Katrina re-building
- We travel to Kenya to visit our partner congregation

I see hope in the Presbytery of Genesee Valley as...

- We transform our meeting schedule and style — and our culture — so that relationships deepen and service flourishes, and we delve into evangelism, stewardship, advocacy, church transformation, and immigration
- Ten congregations, diverse-in-many-ways, form Urban Presbyterians Together, a consortium of mutual support that raises its voice in the city

- Congregations across the theological spectrum that once filed charges against each other now meet for shared theological dialogue and mission projects

I see hope in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) as...

- The movement to create 1001 new worshipping communities gains momentum. Clearly, the Holy Spirit is at work!
- Our new Form of Government provides needed latitude and flexibility to meet emerging missional needs
- We engage our theological heritage and consider the Confession of Belhar
- Several thousand Presbyterians have gone on Presbyterian Disaster Assistance trips or contributed generously to PDA
- Our seminaries grapple creatively with new models for delivering theological education in a rapidly-changing environment
- Congregations faithfully and prayerfully discern their relationship to their denomination
- General Assembly commissioners roll up their sleeves and tackle difficult subjects, trusting that the Holy Spirit will be present with them

I am Presbyterian enough to know that ours is a broken world and a flawed church. I am also Presbyterian enough to embrace Scripture's promise that "the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may **abound in hope** by the power of the Holy Spirit." (Romans 15:13)

Q What are some of the exciting possibilities facing the 21st Century church? What are the challenges that face the church in this century?

I BELIEVE that our possibilities and opportunities far outweigh our challenges. God has given us all

the gifts we need — the resources and vision and leadership — to respond faithfully in the uncharted waters of the 21st century. I agree with Phyllis Tickle when she writes in *The Great Emergence* that churches like ours, based on a deep tradition, will be well positioned to respond to the changes coming our way. I believe we are called to be agents of transformation and reconciliation, not waiting either complacently or fearfully to see what happens, but leading the church boldly into the places where the Spirit is calling us.

We know the challenges. The SBNR (spiritual but not religious) generation, those who respond "none" when asked about religious affiliation, are in our families and communities. We read survey after survey and blog post after blog post about the fading relevance of faith in the culture, especially for younger generations. We read about political division in our nation, about crushing poverty and the social divide. We live in a world that feels like a powder keg, ready to explode at any moment.

And yet...

Our Presbyterian family is poised for faithful response.

We must be mindful that we do not respond in order to recapture a vision of the church that once was, or to prop up the institutional church. Not at all.

We have extraordinary answers to the big faith questions of the day: Who is Jesus? How do I think about other religions? Does my life have meaning? Do we make a difference in the world? Potential moments to connect and serve are abundant.

We Presbyterians at our best insist that God cares for all of life, not just the "churchy" parts, and that all of us — ALL of us — are called and gifted to make a difference in the world.

Therefore, we can be a model of reconciliation to the broader culture

as we engage our very real differences with civility and respect. We can offer young people avenues of service. We can be an oasis for families seeking to raise children. We can be a voice for the voiceless in our cities and nations. We can be faithful world citizens. We can think about the faith in creative and lively ways. We can move beyond our walls into our communities to meet people and meet needs. **And people will notice this.**

If we do these things with urgent hope, we may not grow numerically — although we have in the congregations where I have served. We do them because we are called to faithfulness, as we remember that "hope does not disappoint." (Romans 5:5) And as we do them — with God's help — the world will be transformed. And God will be glorified and enjoyed.

Q The Special Committee on the Confession of Belhar has approached the Confession of Belhar through the lenses of "justice, unity and reconciliation." How might the Confession of Belhar help Presbyterians both confess historic and current brokenness within the Church and seek authentic relationships for the present and the future?

WHEN I TEACH new member gatherings at Third Presbyterian Church, or conduct leadership training in our presbytery, I talk about the ways that ours is a "connectional, constitutional and confessional" church. A General Assembly is a great venue to witness our connectional and constitutional nature; this year's General Assembly will also be a great setting to experience our confessional character.

As a confessional church, we have paused from time to time to write what we believe and given those articulations special status. Sometimes it's been at the point of church union or reunion, or church conflict, or national or international crisis.

Apartheid in South Africa was such an occasion, and though the apartheid era has officially ended, racism in that country and ours remains a pernicious force. The Confession of 1967 speaks of the need for racial reconciliation within the life of the church, and rightly so. That confession called the church to confess its divisions and strive toward a greater unity. Though progress has been made in the decades following, does Martin Luther King, Jr.'s assertion that the United States is at its most segregated at 11:00 a.m. on Sunday morning still ring true?

The Confession of Belhar focuses outward, to a nation and culture plagued by the sin of racism. It calls the church to accountability, but it also calls the church to lead the way in transformation, “that Christ’s work of reconciliation is made manifest in the church as the community of believers who have been reconciled with God and with one another...” Having lived in Indianapolis, Chicago and now Rochester, I can testify that racism — as it does in Detroit — continues to tear at our social fabric. A vicious cycle of crushing poverty, gun violence and failing public education is tinged with racial undertones. In Rochester I participate in community-wide conversations on race. The discussions are positive and the intentions are earnest. Yet the problem seems intractable.

I am hopeful that we as commissioners will consider Belhar seriously and send it to the presbyteries for their approval. It is not simply a powerful testimony from a recent era and an important ecumenical partner. It is a powerful testimony to the church now, and a mandate to the church to lead our culture to change now.

As we engage the words of Belhar, we will first confront our own racism — in our own souls and in the life of the church. That will empower us to provide

leadership, to share a vision of racial reconciliation (and other kinds of unity) in the face of so much brokenness.

If we believe in hope, and we do, perhaps in this era we will see a more racially diverse Presbyterian church, And perhaps that church can lead the world toward reconciliation and unity — Belhar’s vision — and even more so, Jesus’ vision, “that they all may be one.”

Q How might the initiative to create 1001 new worshipping communities help the PC(U.S.A.) reach its goal of increasing its racial ethnic membership and come closer to becoming a multicultural community of faith, hope, love, and witness?

I LOVE THE INITIATIVE to create 1001 new worshipping communities. I love the creativity and innovation coming from our denominational leaders, and I love the energy and passion spreading across the presbyteries.

Our presbytery is having conversations about how we may respond to this initiative. We are looking at the city of Rochester and our five-county region with new eyes. Where is there energy or passion? Where is there an underserved population, or a cluster of seekers, or the potential to connect those who may be hungry for spiritual community?

I appreciate that our new Form of Government recognizes the need to be flexible and provides missional latitude as we rethink church in the 21st century. This is especially true for the New Worshipping Communities initiative, as many of these communities may not represent congregations as we traditionally understand matters like leadership and membership. We must find ways to nurture vision and passion

where it exists, and concern ourselves less about how these communities conform to our Book of Order structures and annual statistical report categories.

That will be true for all kinds of potential communities. The often-discussed Millennial generation who, either in spite of or because of our efforts has little affinity for organized religion, might become attracted to an authentic, contemporary gathering. Perhaps we can re-connect with people in my generation (late baby boomer/early Generation X) who have drifted away from the church and who might long for deeper meaning in their own lives and a way to share their gifts in the world.

Or perhaps — and to the point of the question — a healthy portion of our 1001 New Worshipping Communities can reflect the racial and ethnic diversity that is the United States in 2014. As we move toward a nation that in 2040 will have no racial majority, cannot the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) lead the way in embracing that reality by fostering gatherings of seekers and followers wherever they are and not being hindered by requirements for what a congregation is and what ordained leadership looks like?

And when we do, not only will our racial ethnic participation increase — a worthy goal — but our life will be enhanced. We will reflect our national context more accurately, and more so we will reflect more faithfully the community God calls us to be.

As I write this, there are 200 reported New Worshipping Communities. By the time we get to Detroit, may there be even more! Perhaps one or two will develop while we are there, on our way to an extraordinary new vision of faith, hope, love and witness that will transform the church and be light to the world.

I ACCEPT WITH JOY John Wilkinson's invitation to serve as his vice moderator candidate for the 221st General Assembly. I am a 42-year-old teaching elder, and have served congregations in Texas, Georgia, and Virginia over the past sixteen years, eleven of those post-seminary.

Like many folks in our pews, I did not grow up Presbyterian. In fact, I am something of a Christian "mutt," having been formed by Roman Catholic, Southern Baptist, and non-denominational churches. And I spent many years away from church, deeply skeptical of all religious belief. Yet I have leaned on these formative experiences at various times in my ministry. The ritual and mystery of the Catholic church influence how I plan worship, and the beauty I seek to bring to our worship of God. My Baptist roots remind me that a relationship with Jesus Christ is not just a head trip, but an experience that should touch our hearts and lives. And my time away from the church allows me to engage the "nones" in my life with empathy and awareness.

" I believe that our theology, our approach to scripture, and our understanding of the sovereignty of God and the lordship of Jesus Christ are deep resources we bring to a hungry and complex world."

Then I met and married a Presbyterian preacher's kid. (I married into the family business.) I am proud to be Presbyterian — well, as proud as John Calvin would permit me to indulge in the sin of pride, of course! Having swum in the waters of the Reformed tradition for most of my adult life, I believe that our theology, our approach to scripture, and our understanding of the sovereignty of God and the lordship of Jesus Christ are deep resources we bring to a hungry and complex world.



Like the majority of our churches, mine is a small congregation — few in number but mighty in faith and commitment. As more congregations move to part-time pastors due to economic realities, part-time pastoring has been my pattern for more than six years. While it's a challenge, I appreciate the flexibility, balance and creativity it engenders. I consider myself tri-vocational, currently blending a 2/3 time solo pastor call with writing and conference leadership. And the third leg on that vocational stool is as mother to three children ages 11, 8 and 6.

The challenges facing the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) are complex. But the church is not gravely ill, as some have suggested. Rather, I argue we are experiencing the symptoms of pregnancy, with all its aches and pains, its worries and anxieties, and its promise of new life we can neither control nor predict. God is not finished with us!

As I lead retreats and conferences for churches around the country, from South Carolina to Seattle, I am struck that though our local contexts are different, and we disagree profoundly on any number of key issues, we are all seeking to love God with heart, soul, mind and strength and our neighbors as ourselves. We are striving to put our faith into action to embody Christ's reign "on earth as it is in heaven." And we are seeking to serve this world God loves with "energy, intelligence, imagination and love." It would be an honor to serve as vice moderator of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

MaryAnn McKibben Dana

Teaching Elder/Member of National Capital Presbytery

Ordained 2003 by Presbytery of New Covenant

VOCATIONAL HISTORY

Idylwood Presbyterian Church
Falls Church, Virginia
Pastor, 2009 – present

Burke Presbyterian Church
Burke, Virginia
Associate Pastor, 2003 – 2009

St. Philip Presbyterian Church
Houston, Texas
Director of Youth & Young Adult Ministries, 1998 – 2000

Writer, Author, Speaker

SERVICE TO THE CHURCH

General Assembly

- Theological Student Advisory Delegate, 214th General Assembly, 2002

National Capital Presbytery

- Committee on Ministry, 2005 – 2008
- Worship and Theology Committee, 2011 – present
- Stewardship Committee, 2013 – present

NEXT Church

- Co-Chair and Strategy Team, 2011 – present

National Conference and Retreat Leader, 2004 – 2014

Sabbath in the Suburbs: A Family's Experiment with Holy Time A Chalice Press bestseller, published 2012

Continuing Education for Youth Leaders Conference

- Planning Team, Class of 2001

EDUCATION

- Columbia Theological Seminary, Master of Divinity (2003)
- Rice University, B.A. (1994)