

Minutes in Seconds
Digest of Actions Taken at Stated Meeting of
The Presbytery of Susquehanna Valley
United Presbyterian Church Walton NY, March 28, 2009

The meeting theme was “**Micah 6:8.**” We were welcomed by Host Pastor **Lisa Ruth Mays**. First time commissioners and guests were introduced including a newly elected **Treasurer Jack Bell**. The Rev. Dr. **Thomas G. Long** (Presbytery of Charleston-Atlantic and Professor of Preaching at Candler School of Theology at Emory University in Atlanta) was seated as a corresponding member.

Minutes of December 6, 2008 Presbytery Assembly meeting in Bainbridge were approved as corrected, with any additional attendance or spelling corrections to be sent to the Stated Clerk in the next week.

Morning Worship featured Tom Long preaching on the theme “**Do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with your God.**” His stirring stories included Grace Thomas, gubernatorial candidate for Georgia 50 years ago, who answered the accusation that she was a communist by saying she got her ideas about justice from Sunday School, and also the Ash Wednesday that First Presbyterian Church Atlanta ended up with about 60 homeless and 40 legislators from the capitol building across the street.

IEPTT Cheryl Ann Elford presented a PowerPoint on “Hope in a Time of Change” and examined changes throughout the decades after 1900. We need to question spiritually, culturally, “Where is God at work? How can we join God’s work? Where is our hope?” Her written report addressed our lengthy time of transition as a presbytery, and offered help for training in Healthy Congregations.

Stated Clerk Janet Adair Hansen had balanced the ministers and elders enrolled as members of presbytery. There are now three judicial processes underway – the Remedial Complaint (Aug. 2008), the Request for Vindication (Oct. 2008), and new disciplinary allegations against minister members (Dec. 30, 2008). The Executive Team appointed an Investigating Committee per presbytery By-Laws.

A **Necrology** memorializing elders who had died during 2008 was followed by singing “For All the Saints.”

Proposed **Constitutional Amendments** were debated and voted with paper ballots at different places in the meeting. The Ecumenical Amendments (K-N) were all approved in the morning vote. Before lunch Amendment A on affirming Christ at membership was approved 68 yes, 16 no, 3 abstaining.

Discussion on **Amendment B** began with the “Motion to Postpone Indefinitely” – which allows discussion on the merits. After lunch the Motion to Postpone failed 15 yes, 68 no, 3 abstain. After more discussion, the assembly eventually approved 59 yes, 23 no, and 2 abstain.

At the end of the business meeting, votes on the remaining Amendments C-J also were approved. This means **ALL the Proposed Amendments were affirmed by the Presbytery of Susquehanna Valley.**

Allen Presby, for the Council **Personnel sub-committee**, addressed the timeline of securing more permanent presbytery leadership by the end of 2010, when our Interim Executive Presbyter will conclude her work with us. Conversations with neighboring presbyteries of Cayuga-Syracuse and Utica are pointing to first sharing financial bookkeeping services.

Received the 2008 Financial Reports by former Treasurer Dana Wolfe. New Treasurer Jack Bell noted that \$27,000 is being drawn from designated funds to meet the present year budget.

Approved the sale of the Laurens Presbyterian Church Manse.

Council Moderator **Deb Fleming** recognized those churches fully paying **Per Capita, Mission pledges and those supporting all five Special Offerings**. [Note: 2008 financial books were closed about 1 week into the new year, and checks received after that are counted with 2009.]

Brad McFall, Stewardship of Creation Enabler and **Joyce Donahue, Hunger Action Enabler**, gave the **Justice in Mission** report, highlighting the Cry of Creation for justice, and Hunger Program efforts like Centsability, monthly fasts for the Global Food Crisis, and Bread for the World's "Offering of Letters."

For the **Transformation Team**, Judi Gage promoted the last chance to register for the upcoming **Acts 16:5 Initiative** at the end of April.

Patty Wolfe highlighted the **Christian Nurture** team via a PowerPoint: 4 Senior Highs went on the PPG February Presbyterian UN trip; college students Christopher DuMond (Masonville) and Megan Gregory (Ithaca) went to Ecumenical Advocacy Days in Washington DC, the Middle School Retreat will be overnight Ithaca May 1-2; camperships available to help attend summer church camps. The Presbytery Resource Center is now managed by volunteers Patty Wolfe & Mary Ellen Whitmore, who can take requests by phone or e-mail; resources are listed on-line.

Nadine Stenson spoke for the **Ethiopian Partnership**; she and John Schwartz are the new co-chairs. \$12,000 was given in the Fall of 2008 to our WWBS partners to support the Birhane Yesus Elementary School, the Bethel Evangelical Secondary School, and the Gidada Bible School. She and husband Terry Fitz-Gibbon will attend the Ethiopian Mission Network conference at the end of April in Sacramento. Volunteers are needed to tutor English in Dembi Dollo this summer.

The **Committee on Ministry** said hello to United Methodist minister **Martha Vink**, who is serving United Ministries in Delhi, and said goodbye to **Matthew Medford**, who after serving United Presbyterian Church in Cortland as Associate Pastor for over 10 years is going to Hubbard, Ohio (Eastminster Presbytery) as solo pastor. COM also recommended **Judi Gage** to become **Commissioned Lay Pastor at Bovina Center** for a year starting April 1st; after reading her statement of faith and discussion, she was enthusiastically approved. The revisions to COM Policy #1 were also approved.

The **Committee on Preparation for Ministry** presented for first reading proposed **Confidentiality Protocols** that will be discussed and voted on at the June assembly meeting. Candidate Doug Hatch has been certified as ready to receive a call.

Tom Long's afternoon workshop promoted **Presbyterians maintaining the "character of Reformed worship gathered around the eventfulness of the Word."** (1) God summons us to worship; (2) Healthy fear of cultural idolatry; (3) Sacraments are where Christ meets us – neither magic nor mere remembrance; (4) Intrinsic connection between worship and mission; (5) Covenant community together (all ages) in worship – not private personal devotions. Long said Presbyterian worship needs to change, recovering the intrinsic sense of power and drama, becoming more diverse musically without losing excellence, providing hospitality to visitors and strangers, and making room for a palpable sense of mystery and awe in worship.

The **Committee on Lay Preaching** is offering Continuing Education Saturday May 2nd, with Mark Montfort leading a morning session on the Hebrew Bible, and Pat Raube leading Faithful Worship in the afternoon. On Saturday May 16, Jill Schaeffer will talk about the development of the Trinity, and Cheryl Ann Elfond will lead a class for lay pastors on moderating Session.

The **Committee on Nominations** has not met; there remain vacancies, including for an Elder, Class 2011 on COM and two new resignations from the Permanent Judicial Commission.

The **Committee on Representation** had met for the first time in three years. COR, following GACOR ideas, has adopted promoting "**Cultural Proficiency**" in our presbytery.

There being no new business, the assembly concluded with worship around the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. The Rev. Tom Long gave the closing benediction and prayer.

There were 42 elders, 44 ministers and 17 visitors registered as present at this meeting. The next Presbytery Assembly will be **Tuesday June 16, 2009 at Northminster Presbyterian Church in Endwell.**