

Minutes in Seconds
Digest of Actions Taken at Stated Meeting of
The Presbytery of Susquehanna Valley
First Presbyterian Church, Delhi NY March 6, 2010

The meeting theme was “**Growing in Evangelism.**” We were welcomed by Host Pastor **Allen Presby**, who highlighted the Scottish heritage of the church, which was 200 years old in 2005. Princeton Seminary professor Darrell Guder was seated as a corresponding member. First time commissioners were introduced.

Consent Agenda approval included the Stated Clerk Report with roll of Presbyterian ministers, Council motions to approve the **Presbyterian Women representative** on Council (**JoAnn Gray**) and **Nominating Committee chair Marilyn Myers**, COM Policy 8 as revised, year-end Financial Reports through Dec. 31, 2009 and January 2010 Financial Report, plus Minutes from the Garrattsville Administrative Commission. (Minutes from Schwartz Administrative Commission had been withdrawn.)

The Rev. Dr. Barbara J. Schwartz made a motion to substitute language on page 11 of **the Proposed Minutes of December 5th Presbytery Assembly** meeting at East Guilford to delete bullets and insert reference to the Settlement Agreement of Sept. 15, 2009. Motion to postpone approving the minutes until the next Assembly meeting in June was passed.

The **Stated Clerk** report fulfilled GA requirements to list the past members of the Permanent Judicial Commission, noted that all but 5 churches had now submitted 2009 GA Statistics, and highlighted the “Annual Balancing of the Rolls” report. For 2010 the presbytery effectively has **57 minister members and 65 elder members**. In response to a motion from the Dec. 5, 2009 assembly to consider balancing members with elders chairing Ministry Teams, it is not possible (the Book of Order specifies membership may be granted to elders chairing standing committees) and not necessary (elders already outnumber ministers).

Worship at 9:30 AM featured stringed instruments. Host Pastor Allen Presby preached on 2 Kings chapter 6, “*Do not be afraid, there are more with us than with them,*” reminding us not to be anxious about our churches, but confident in our Lord. The **offering was dedicated to help Haiti** through Presbyterian Disaster Assistance and collected **\$1709** (\$1000 was committed by the Session of First Presbyterian, Delhi). The Rev. **Doug Horne** in his prayers remembered the elders who had died in 2009 (**necrology**).

Interim Executive Presbyter Cheryl Ann Elfond reported that she and **Presbytery Moderator Chris Burger** had attended a conference in Detroit on churches moving back into the neighborhood. Picking up on the assembly theme, she reminded commissioners of the D. T. Niles quote, “*Evangelism is just one beggar telling another beggar where to find bread*” and then encouraged those present to pair up and share how they had been spiritually nourished (found bread) in the past week.

Council Moderator **Pat Raube** brought actions items on the **Council Report**. The Council asked the presbytery to embrace the overall theme “**Grow the Church Deep and Wide**” (originally from the 2008 General Assembly) and in particular to have church members invite someone to worship on Pentecost Sunday, pray weekly for churches on the presbytery calendar for prayer, and bring others who might be interested to this year’s assembly workshops that will all be around the theme of evangelism and growing the church.

The Council Report was interrupted by the 11:00 AM Order of the Day **Workshop on the Missional Church** given by **Darrell Guder**. In 1928 Latin American missionary John McKay wrote an essay about the “evangelistic duty of Christianity” saying that the church must earn the right to be heard. The good news must be communicated in ways congruent with the story; Christians are incarnational witnesses of God’s love just as Jesus was in his time and society of 1st century Palestine. In our global society we need to see how the story of the incarnate Christ can be enfolded in other cultures and ethnicities beyond Western Anglo European. The New Testament doesn’t say one word about church buildings, but Jesus set the example for his disciples of going out and inviting others to follow him and learn from him.

After Lunch, Good News announcements were shared, including the **May Clergy Retreat** with Marjorie Thompson at the Fatima Retreat Center in Pennsylvania, special Lenten programs, **March 16th elder training** at the Bovina Center church, and various church suppers. Pastor **Dave Robinson** from the **Dryden Church**

described their weekend snack backpacks they provide to school children (WEB) as a mission outreach. It costs about \$3.50 a week to supply healthy snack food to a child (who gets school lunches on weekdays). The Dryden Kitchen Cupboard (church mission), Dryden Central Schools, a Girl Scout troop and Social Workers all help.

Elder **Lynn Reeves** from the **Afton Church** introduced the **GA Overture** on seminaries providing education about **Peacemaking**; Elder **Leslie Anne King** noted that the **Owego** Session concurred. After the Stated Clerk explained the process that an Overture undergoes when sent to GA, and clarification from **Len Bjorkman** about the General Assembly agencies that would consult with the seminaries, the Overture as amended was approved to be sent on to General Assembly.

The Council Report resumed with the other action item for the presbytery to approve the **shared Bookkeeper** position to begin in January, 2011, with Susquehanna Valley, Utica, Cayuga-Syracuse and Northern New York presbyteries all using the same accounting software and sharing the cost – about \$8,000 each. A grant from the Fab Five PPG will help with a consultant and computer software to get started. Information in Council's written report included embracing the Core Values from the 2005 Revisioning Report (Transformational, Spirit-Centered, Missional, Relational, Faithful to Christ, Trustworthy), listed Council members serving on council sub-committees, and notice that churches' **minutes will not be approved in the Fall of 2011 without a record of a financial review having been conducted within the past year.**

Committee on Lay Preaching chair Janet Schwengber noted the written report gave dates for Lay Pastor training classes either Sat. May 15 or 22. Rev. **Carol Wilson** invited clergy and elders to come to the **Sat. May 1st training for Lay Preachers** which will focus on sermon preparation and preaching skills.

Marilyn Myers presented names for election to office on behalf of the **Committee on Nominations**, and the following were elected: Elder **Dean Veenhof** (Gilbertsville) to **Committee on Ministry** (Class of 2012), Elder **Nancy Thane** (Christ, Cortlandville) to **Permanent Judicial Commission** (Class of 2015), Elder **Janet Schwengber** to chair the **Committee on Lay Preaching**, and **2010 General Assembly Commissioners** – Rev. **Janet Abel** (Immanuel) (Elder **Chris Burger** was elected Dec. 5) and **Youth Advisory Delegate Benjamin Peak**, plus **Alternates Rev. Tim Devine** (Endicott, First), Elder **JoAnn Gray** (Owego), YAD alternate **Ryken Ruuspakka** (Owego).

There was no report from the Committee on Preparation for Ministry, and the **Committee on Representation** had a written report showing our only diversity is on the COR itself.

The **Committee on Ministry** report given by Rev. **Mark Montfort** presented two candidates for part-time **Lay Pastor** positions – **George Budine for Nichols** and **Shirley Davis for Margaretville/New Kingston**. Each candidate is a Commissioned Lay Preacher and has completed additional Lay Pastor classes. Budine was examined first on his theology and sense of calling, then Davis; each was approved by the presbytery, and commissioned. Finally, the presbytery approved granting the **Rev. Sharon Dittman the status of Honorable Retirement** as of Nov. 30, 2009 (mistakenly reported as “information” instead of action at the Dec. 5, 2009 assembly). **Boundary Awareness Training** will be offered **Tuesday April 27th at Union Presbyterian Church** in Endicott; registration deadline is March 30th.

The **Justice in Mission** ministry team wants to highlight what other churches besides Dryden are doing about **Hunger** issues and how they are responding to the issue of gas drilling in our geographical region. Craig Kunkle accompanied high school youth to the **Presbyterian UN Seminar** in February organized through the Fab Five PPG. **Stewardship of Creation Enabler Brad McFall** highlighted youth mission/advocacy trips, one to the West Virginia regarding mountaintop removal coal-mining and the other to South Carolina regarding “Tagging Turtles for Jesus” with Dr. Lehr Brisbin (Savannah Ecology Center).

Elder Nadine Stenson highlighted the **Ethiopian Partnership ministry team**, which had display materials on a resource table. There is an **Ethiopian Mission Network conference in late April near Pittsburg** and our presbytery needs to send a representative to attend; Global Mission head Hunter Farrell will be a speaker.

There were no reports from the Christian Nurture or Transformation ministry teams. Council member (and Lay Pastor for Bovina Center) **Judi Gage** closed the meeting in prayer. 44 elders, 36 ministers and 13 visitors signed in to this meeting. The next Presbytery Assembly will be **Tuesday evening June 8th at Guilford Center Presbyterian Church.**