

The News of San Fernando Presbytery

Every Church a Mission Center

January, 2008

Photo by Thomas Hawk

North's Notes



Thoughts from Executive
Presbyter Jerry North

CALLED PRESBYTERY MEETING TO DISCUSS NEW FORM OF GOVERNMENT, INSTALL MODERATOR

A called meeting of Presbytery will be held this month to inform members about dramatic changes that are taking place within the PCUSA. The 217th General Assembly created the nine-member Form of Government Task Force (FGTF) to offer recommendations for a radical revision of the Presbyterian Constitution. These recommendations will be voted on at the

218th General Assembly in June 2008. The meeting will take place on Tuesday, January 22 at Canoga Park Presbyterian Church, beginning at 5:00 pm.

The reason for revising the Constitution is simple: To enable the church to witness to God's Word as effectively as possible. The following is from the PCUSA web site.

Over the past twenty or so years, the Form of Government has gradually morphed from what it was intended to be – a constitutional document – to a regulatory primer, a manual of operations for how

every session, every presbytery, every synod must operate. As it is now, the Form of Government attempts to impose "one size fits all" rules and regulations on all congregations, presbyteries and synods, even though they don't all face the same situations and issues. The Form of Government we are proposing is what we believe it was

always intended to be: a constitution, a document that lays out the overarching structure and standards that govern how we live together in the PCUSA, while at the same time allowing congregations, presbyteries and synods to proclaim God's Word in the way that is most effective in their particular corner of Christ's kingdom.



See page 2 for a message
from new PSF Moderator
Rev. Ken Baker.

Having posted the proposed changes on the PCUSA web site, the task force received comments and feedback through November 15, 2007 and then met at the end of that month to finalize their recommendations. These recommendations will be submitted to the 218th General Assembly for approval this coming June.

Rev. Stephen Smith, Stated Clerk for Pacific Presbytery and a member of the Form of Government Task Force, will be present at the called meeting to explain the task force's recommenda-

tions. After his presentation there will be a period for questions about the changes and discussion by members of Presbytery.

Another purpose of the meeting will be to install the new Moderator, Rev. Ken Baker of Glendale Presbyterian

(Continued on page 2)

As we begin this new year, my prayer is that we might appreciate what God is doing in our midst as individuals, congregations and presbytery. We are looking at a busy year with the search for a Stated Clerk, a revising of our new church and transformation work within the presbytery, a look at the Form of Government report as prepared by the Task Force which was authorized to redo the Book of Order by the General Assembly in 2006, a presbytery Church Leadership Development event and the 2008 General Assembly in San Jose, CA.

There is much to be involved in all aspects of our Christian lives. Instead of New Year's resolutions, let us consider the words of Paul as found in Galatians 5: beginning with verse 22 (from the Message - Eugene Peterson)

"But what happens when we live God's way? God brings gifts into our lives, much the same way that fruit appears in an orchard - things like affection for others, exuberance about life, serenity. We develop a willingness to stick with things, a sense of compassion in the heart, and a conviction that a basic holiness permeates things and people. We find ourselves involved in loyal commitments, not needing to force our way in life, able to marshal and direct our energies wisely."

May these verses be our prayer for 2008.

Blessings,
Jerry North,
Executive Presbyter

**A MESSAGE FROM
REV. KEN BAKER,
2008 PSF MODERATOR**

This coming year will be a significant one in the life of San Fernando Presbytery. In addition to our ongoing responsibilities, we will seek a new Stated Clerk, we'll review a proposed major change to the Book of Order, and consider a proposed overture from one of our congregations.

But from the long-term perspective, we have a bigger challenge. We need to develop new strategies to assist our existing churches in ways that make a real difference for ministry, AND we need to implement a new strategy for new church development, sometimes called church planting. That's quite an undertaking, and not something we can accomplish through our own efforts or in one year. But the Presbyterian witness in our Northern L.A. County ministry area is too important to allow the future to rely on approaches from the past.

Ultimately, God will do with our efforts what God will do. But 2008 gives us a real opportunity to move in some new directions as a presbytery and I'm grateful to be on that journey this year with you.

PRESBYTERY MEETING

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Church. Ken has been a member of San Fernando Presbytery since 1999 and has served on a number of committees, as well as having edited this newsletter for several years. A message from Ken is included on this page.

To read the task force's recommendations in full, as well as a discussion of their possible implications, go to the following address on the PCUSA web site:
<http://www.pcusa.org/formofgovernment/>

You can download the entire document in PDF, in addition to a list of frequently asked questions. As a member of the task force, Rev. Smith will also be able to answer questions at the called meeting.

**PRAYERS SOUGHT FOR PAKISTANI
PEOPLE IN WAKE OF ASSASSINATION**

The following is a letter from Robert Johnson and Marianne Vermeer, missionaries serving the people of Pakistan

January 2, 2008

Dear Friends in Christ,

The people of Pakistan need your prayers. Since the assassination of Benazir Bhutto, there has been an air of uncertainty and melancholy here. Many of those who did not support Bhutto still see her death as a blow to civil society and the chance to return the nation to democracy. Now that the violence has stopped, there are even more difficult questions that have arisen, none with apparent answers.

What this nation needs now is healing: healing from the grief of Benazir's death, healing from the rage that accompanied that grief, healing from the anger being expressed at the government right now.

As always, the common people — the huge majority who would never harm a neighbor under any circumstance — are the ones who suffered. They are the ones who always need to be borne in mind, and held up in prayer, whenever you hear about political violence.

Right now, there is relative calm. Pray for the sake of the nation that it stays that way. Pray for the peace of the church, which is primarily comprised of some of the poorest people in the nation. And, especially pray for the tremendous troubles right now in Kenya, and God's work there. But the real message here is: Pray. Pour your heart out to God for the church and world. Your sisters and brothers in mission depend on you. God bless you all.



A group of Pakistani Christians meeting for prayer and study.

A WORD FROM RETIRING CLERK JAN SPERRY

I want to thank each of you for the opportunity to serve as your Stated Clerk and for the kind and generous gifts you presented to me at the November Presbytery meeting. I was surprised and overwhelmed by the out-pouring of your affection. While I look forward to retirement, I will surely miss my contact with you, the people of the Presbytery of San Fernando. You have blessed an important chapter of my life, and I'm indeed grateful.

— Jan Sperry

**THE
FUTURE
IS
NOW!**

**2008 LEADERSHIP
DEVELOPMENT EVENT**

**KEYNOTE SPEAKER
EDDIE GIBBS**

**Saturday, February 23
8:00 am to 1:30 pm**

**Granada Hills 1st Presbyterian Church
10400 Zelzah Ave., Northridge**

The day will begin with a time of gathering, perusing mission and ministry displays, and talking about ways our congregations can become involved. Eddie Gibbs will speak immediately following a time of worship. Participants will then choose two one-hour workshops to attend. Lunch will be served at the end of the day.

At lunch we will be organizing informal "roundtable discussions" where workshop leaders will eat with event participants, share ideas and answer questions.

You should have already received a registration form with the December newsletter, but if not, you can still register on-line at www.sfpresby.org. Those who register on-line can pay at the door on the day of the event.

This event was designed to equip, empower, and inspire our leaders to engage their congregations in the building of God's kingdom in new and exciting ways. We hope to see you there!

CHECK OUT OUR WEB SITE!

Do you know what can be found at www.sfpresby.org?

Have a question about the Presbytery's policy on renting space to an outside organization? Are you considering entering into a housing agreement with your pastor? Or perhaps obtaining a loan from PILP or another lender? Are you unclear about what is or is not considered effective salary by the Board of Pensions? Find these answers and more on the *Policies* page.

Looking for information on the upcoming 218th General Assembly? Or the actions of the 217th Assembly in 2006? Need to order supplies or books from Louisville? Clerks, are you looking for session minutes guidelines and checklists, forms for your inquirers/candidates, or help in putting together personnel policies? These and other resources are all available on the *Resources & Links* page.

Read the current issue of this newsletter ... in color! Looking for an old issue? Check out *Newsletter Archives*. To see recent additions to our resource center, click on *New in the RC*. Review the *2008 Budget*, visit the websites of your sister *Churches*, find and contact a committee chair on the *Committees* page, or update your personal calendars from our *Calendar* page.

Mission Advocate Wendy Gist has her own page, *Mission Advocate*, in which she provides timely and relevant ways in which we can address issues of poverty, hunger and peacemaking.

And don't forget to register for the 2008 Leadership Development Event on our *Home* page ... no stamps or envelopes required.

If you have updates or suggestions, please email Pat Johanson at pjohanson@sfpresby.org.

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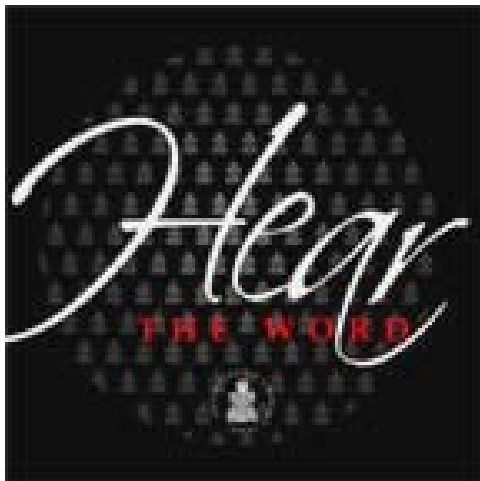
**NOW YOU CAN
LISTEN TO
LECTIONARY
READINGS VIA
PCUSA PODCAST!**

PCUSA now offers podcasts of lectionary readings that can be accessed using iTunes and other popular media players. Each podcast includes four lectionary readings for one of the Sundays or festivals of the church year: an Old Testament reading, a Psalm, an Epistle and a Gospel reading. Following each set of readings is a prayer for the day from the *Book of Common Worship*.

The Presbytery of San Fernando News is published monthly by the Communication & Church Support Committee of the Presbytery. Contributions are welcomed. Deadline for each issue is the 25th of the preceding month.

Dr. Gerald O North
Executive Presbyter

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May these scriptures be a source of challenge and hope as you prepare your heart and mind for Sunday worship, and may the Word of God guide and nourish you in the service of daily living. To access these resources, go to:

<http://www.pcusa.org/devotions/podcast>

