

**Way Forward Work Group  
Final Report  
Presented to the Presbytery of San Diego  
March 11, 2008**

In keeping with the recommendation made in the Final Report of the Task Force on the Way Forward, the Way Forward Work Group was formed to address the ten specific areas identified by the TFWF Final Report as vital to the way forward for the Presbytery of San Diego. Seven work group chairs were selected by Rev. Dr. Jack Baca, 2006 Moderator of the Presbytery of San Diego after it was determined that three of the ten areas identified in the TFWF Report could best be addressed by combining them with another group:

- Elder David Buck—Rethink Church Property
- Rev. Paul Cunningham—Initiate Networks and Partnerships
- Rev. Bob Davis—Maintain Vigilance and Develop Contingency Plans
- Rev. Dr. Mike McClenahan—Lead as a Presbytery in a Post-Denominational Setting as we Create a New Way of Being a Presbytery
- Rev. Dr. Steve Locke—Engage National Leadership
- Elder Loreto Remorca, Jr.—Redirect Per Capita and Mission Giving
- Rev. Margaret Walls—Reaffirm our Theological Identity and Strengthen Local Ordination Standards (Replacing Rev. Dr. Tim Beal who left our presbytery in June, 2007)
  
- Chair—Elder Elizabeth Crews
  
- Ex. Officio—Rev. Dr. Clark Cowden, Executive Presbyter  
Rev. Dr. Chris Lenocker, 2008 Vice Moderator/Moderator Elect

For the past fifteen months the seven work groups have actively explored the area of concern with which they were tasked. The WFWG chairs have met monthly to discuss our findings and collectively determine how our separate tasks were interrelated. Most of all, we have sought God's will and wisdom as we actively discerned our way forward as a body of believers.

Listed below is the final report of each work group for your consideration and approval. At the beginning of each report you will find the specific task(s) this work group was given to explore and strategize. Following the seven reports are two additional recommendations made by the combined WFWG for approval by the Presbytery of San Diego.

We appreciate the support, input and prayers of those who walked along side us as we undertook this overwhelming task. It has been an honor to serve the Presbytery of San Diego, and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, the One who sets our course and guides our way as we move forward together.

With Gratitude,

Elizabeth Crews for the Way Forward Work Group

To clarify our desire to become a missional presbytery, it is the recommendation of the Way Forward Work Group that the Presbytery of San Diego adopt the following declaration:

### **The Presbytery of San Diego Declaration**

As of today, we, the Presbytery of San Diego declare that we are no longer primarily a governing body. We declare that we are a relational community and that we are becoming a mission agency.

**The Past/A Governing Body:** In recent years, our Presbyterian Church (USA) has described the identity of presbyteries as governing bodies. This gives the impression that the main reason we come together is to govern ourselves. It suggests that rules, regulations, and policies are what is most important about our life together. This is probably a result of the corporate and regulatory model of church that our denomination has followed in the twentieth century. While this may have been sufficient in the past, it does not describe who we are today or who we hope to become in the future. While we will continue to govern as needed, it is not the primary adjective that defines who we are. Our polity alone cannot be the reason enough for us to meet together.

**The Present/A Relational Community:** The main reason we as a presbytery come together today is for relationships: our relationship with God through Jesus Christ, our relationships with personal friends, and the relationships that congregations have with one another. It is through our God-given relationships that we experience joy, sorrow, purpose, fulfillment, and hope. Our connections are providing a bridge for us towards our emerging future. As a relational community, we will emphasize listening, learning, and praying. We have taken vows to abide by the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (USA) and we will continue to do so, lovingly holding one another accountable in relationships. Our polity helps us set up appropriate boundaries for our relationships. It is a means to an end, it is not an end in and of itself. We see the value of being a part of a connectional system with other presbyteries and other communities who share a similar identity in Christ.

**The Future/A Mission Agency:** Our dream is that we will learn to become a mission agency together. As the early church laid hands on people and sent them out in mission (Acts 13:1-3), we hope to do the same. We live in a mission field and all of us are sent by God into it. God has a mission and God's mission has a church. We hope to discern what God is doing in our world and join Christ in the mission He has already initiated. We hope to learn new skills for new forms of mission for this new millennium. We hope to launch new missional experiments to discover together how God's Holy Spirit is leading us. We want to be a sent people who are shaped by God's mission, energized by God's mission, and defined by God's mission. The reason we will come together is to discern where and how to be in mission together. We hope to connect with other mission agencies in California, the United States, Mexico, and around the world, extending the Kingdom of God here on earth. As we move into our new future,

we desire to be both humble and bold. We are humble because we do not have all the answers, we are learning as we go, and we know we need each other's wisdom and insight. We want to be bold because we do not want to be trivial or waste our time on what is not important. We long to make a difference in the world.

**Lead as a Presbytery in a Post-Denominational Setting**  
**As we Create a New Way of Being a Presbytery**

The Work Group on the Way Forward asks that the Presbytery of San Diego receive and implement the following report:

**Work Group Chair:** Rev. Dr. Mike McClenahan

**Tasks:** (From the TFWF Final Report Adopted by the Presbytery of San Diego on November 21, 2006):

1. **Lead as a presbytery in a post-denominational setting** – Engage our entire Presbytery and its member congregations in a process of education and reformation as we recover the church’s missional identity, which is best defined as being inwardly strong and outwardly focused. Consider how to survive and thrive in this emerging post-denominational culture. Re-invent our Presbytery meetings, gatherings, and communications to make them missionally relevant and supportive. Annually evaluate the missional effectiveness and progress of our Presbytery and member churches with regard to church health, congregational growth and vital ministries that further the Kingdom of God here on earth.
2. **Create a new way of being a presbytery** – Explore such possibilities as realignment within geographic areas based on like-mindedness; parallel presbyteries within synod; blessing and releasing one another to separate ministry and mission – modeled after Paul and Barnabas.

**Report and Recommendations:**

The post-denominational setting of the communities we serve provides an opportunity for us to learn together to be missional churches supported within the Presbytery of San Diego. A **missional church** is “a community of God’s people that defines itself, and organizes its life around, its real purpose of being an agent of God’s mission in the world.” (Alan Hirsch) Our presbytery will focus on education and gatherings that leads to missional transformation.

**Our recommendations**

1. **Pilot Missional Leadership Gathering** of pastors, elders and staff who meet monthly around God’s word and resources to gain insights and best practices of missional church and to pray for each other’s ministries.
2. **Pilot the Missional Church Project** with 5-6 congregations who join together over 18 months. The pilot will include the mission-shaped congregation survey and the mission-shaped pastor leader survey.
3. **Pilot the Missional Pastor Project** where we invite 5-6 pastors to join together over 12 months. The pilot will include the mission-shaped pastor leader survey.
4. **Affiliate with the Presbyterian Global Fellowship as a presbytery**, a movement within the PC(USA) “to transform mainline congregations into missional communities following Jesus Christ.”

**5. Encourage sessions to affiliate with the PGF** and celebrate those churches at presbytery meetings beginning May 2008. (Affiliation Packet attached)

**6. Attend the Inside Out Conference** presented by the PGF in Long Beach August 14-16, 2008. Our goal is for two thirds of our churches in attendance.

**7. Redesign Presbytery Meetings.** The Vision Team of Council will redesign Presbytery meetings to create a culture of celebration, missional transformation and learning, including

- **Sharing** God's word and praying for our churches and the world.
- **Celebrating** stories of missional change, growth and learning.
- **Inviting** a broader cross section of our ordained leadership to attend. Currently elders who work are not able to participate in Presbytery meetings. Encourage churches to nominate next generation elders as Presbytery representatives.
- **Limiting** the work of Presbytery to essential business.

**8. Encourage** cross-denominational ministry and mission within our communities with Christian organizations and churches beyond the PCUSA, including close pastoral relationships and church partnerships, as an exhibition of the kingdom of God that transcends denominational boundaries.

#### **Supporting Documentation:**

1. PGF Affiliation Packet—Available through the Presbytery Office
2. What is the Missional Church? Article by Mike McClenahan

### **What is the Missional Church?** Mike McClenahan

The missional church is:

*“The inwardly strong and outwardly focused gathering of believers sent into the world to demonstrate the kingdom of God by its being, doing and saying.”*

■ *inwardly strong and outwardly focused* The phrase captures the “worship-connect-grow” of the church as much as the “serve-impact” of the church. Inwardly strong is not an end in itself, but the foundation upon which they become outwardly strong. Likewise, an outwardly focused church becomes inwardly strong as it trusts God’s leading, engages the world, and demonstrates the kingdom.

“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, **baptizing** them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, **and teaching** them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” **Matthew 28:19-20 (TNIV)**

■ *gathering of believers*. The church is not the building or worship services people attend. It is the community of believers gathered (ekklesia=assembly) in one local expression of the entire body of Christ.

Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. **1 Corinthians 12:27**

“Surely this is one of the most exciting hopes of Christian ministry: to be an instrument of the Spirit’s upbuilding of a community that, by the very quality of its life together, signals ultimate hope to the world.” --**Richard John Neuhaus in *Freedom for Ministry***

■ *sent*. God is the *missio dei*, the sending God, who sent his Son into the world and who seeks us and sends us into the world.

But the Lord God called to the man, “Where are you?” **Genesis 3:9**

For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost. **Luke 19:10**

■ *into the world*. The scope of mission is summarized in three concentric circles of the world, which keeps us from thinking that mission is what we do or send overseas. The apostolic sending is to every nation, including our own. The sending into the world is emboldened and empowered by the spirit who takes the church places across barriers they would not naturally go because of comfort, familiarity or prejudice.

But you will receive power and you will be my witnesses here in Jerusalem, in Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth. **Acts 1:8**

Rather than occupying a central and influential place, North American Christian churches are increasingly marginalized, so much so that in our urban areas they represent minority movement. It is by now a truism to speak of North America as a mission field. (***Missional Church***, Guder)

Three spheres for mission:

1. Jerusalem = neighborhood
2. Judea and Samaria = local
3. ends of earth = global

■ *to demonstrate the kingdom*. Although it is God’s kingdom and God’s power, we are God’s co-workers in the demonstration of the kingdom. Because it’s God’s kingdom, God is already at work in the world and we anticipate what God is doing and join him in

his work. We don't necessarily build, extend or create the kingdom, as much as we receive it, enter it, and demonstrate it. Because it is God's kingdom, we are dependent upon him to be engaged in his work in the world. We are God's ambassadors of the kingdom of God in three basic behaviors

1. **Being** God's community with authenticity and hospitality.

As you [Father] sent me into the world, I have sent them [the disciples] into the world. **John 17:18**

All the believers were together and had everything in common.... And the Lord added daily to their number those who were being saved. **Acts 2:44,47b**

2. **Doing** God's works by meeting spiritual, physical, emotional and intellectual needs.

He has shown all you people what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God. **Micah 6:8**

But I will come to you very soon, if the Lord is willing, and then I will find out not only how these arrogant people are talking, but what power they have. For the kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power. **1 Corinthians 4:19-20**

3. **Saying** God's praise boldly and often so that our being and doing are understood.

All your works praise you, LORD; your faithful people extol you. They tell of the glory of your kingdom and speak of your might, so that all people may know of your mighty acts and the glorious splendor of your kingdom. Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and your dominion endures through all generations. **Psalms 145:10-13**

Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven. **Matthew 5:16**

"Evangelism is joyfully sharing the good news of the sovereign love of God and calling all people to repentance, to personal faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, to active membership in the church, and to obedient service in the world."  
**1989 PC(USA) General Assembly Statement on Evangelism.**

## Resources

<http://pgf.typepad.com/> Presbyterian Global Fellowship Outbox is a blog articles, reflections on the missional church.

Eddie Gibbs, **Leadership Next, Church Next, and Emerging Churches** (with Ryan Bolger)

Darrell Guder, **The Continuing Conversion of the Church, Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America**

Alan J. Roxburg, **The Missional Leader: Equipping Your Church to Reach a Changing World**

**Twelve qualities of the missional church<sup>1</sup> fit in these three categories:**

1. Being God's community with authenticity and hospitality.

- The missional church is a community where all members are involved in learning to become disciples of Jesus.
- A missional community is indicated by how Christians behave toward one another.
- People within the community hold themselves accountable to one another in love.
- The church understands itself as different from the world because of its participation in the life, death, and resurrection of its Lord.

2. Doing God's works by meeting spiritual, physical, emotional and intellectual needs.

- The church seeks to discern God's specific missional vocation for all its members.
- It is a community that practices reconciliation.
- There is recognition that the church itself is an incomplete expression of the reign of God.
- The church practices hospitality.

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<sup>1</sup> Posted on the PGF Outbox as "The Missional Roadmap" [www.pgf.org](http://www.pgf.org)

### 3. Saying God's praise boldly and often so that our being and doing are understood.

- The community has a vital public witness.
- The missional church proclaims the Gospel.
- The Bible is normative in this church's life.
- Worship is the central act by which the community celebrates with joy and thanksgiving both God's presence and God's promised future.

#### Questions to consider:

- How effectively or intentionally are we demonstrating the kingdom in the world in being, doing, or saying?
- Would you characterize our church as being more inwardly strong, or outwardly focused?
- What mission time, energy and financial resources are spent demonstrating the kingdom in Jerusalem? Judea and Samaria? The ends of the earth?
- Does our church have the same passion or energy for one sphere as another?
- Does our church have the identity of being sent into the world? Or do we intend to attract unbelievers to our buildings?
- In the missional church change is a lifestyle, not an event. How well does our church do change?

## **Reaffirm Our Theological Identity & Strengthen Local Ordination Standards**

The Work Group on the Way Forward asks that the Presbytery of San Diego receive and implement the following report:

**Work Group Chair:** Rev. Margaret Walls

**Tasks:** (From the TFWF Final Report Adopted by the Presbytery of San Diego on November 21, 2006):

3. **Reaffirm our theological identity** – Create a process to keep our theological standards, as expressed in the Book of Order and distilled in our Essential Tenets and Reformed Distinctives, before our Presbytery, congregations and leaders. Diligently employ and uphold these standards in the work of our Committee on Ministry and our Committee on Preparation for Ministry. Refine and reaffirm the Essential Tenets and Reformed Distinctives on an annual basis and engage our Constitution as we work with all the recommendations of the TFWF.
8. **Strengthen local ordination standards** – The Presbytery of San Diego will continue to require candidates for ordination, installation, and membership in the presbytery to comply with all standards for ordination and office as set forth in the Constitution of the PC (USA). These candidates will be asked to review our Essential Tenets and Reformed Distinctives and declare any significant theological exceptions.

**Report:** The Report of this work group is the booklet, “What We Believe.” It is available through the Presbytery Office, or on line at: [www.presbyterysd.org/WFWG](http://www.presbyterysd.org/WFWG)

## **Rethink Church Property**

The Work Group on the Way Forward asks that the Presbytery of San Diego receive and implement the following report:

**Work Group Chair:** Elder David Buck

**Task:** (From the TFWF Final Report Adopted by the Presbytery of San Diego on November 21, 2006):

4. **Rethink church property** – Explore options that would give churches the opportunity to own their property – such as implementing a jubilee principle that would give property without cost; give opportunity for a church to purchase their property outright; give opportunity for a church to fund new mission projects in a local area and receive the rights to their property.

## **Report and Recommendations:**

### **Introduction**

We explored options that would give churches the opportunity to own their property and discovered none that could be accomplished within the provisions of the Book of Order and the responsibilities of the Presbytery to its congregations. In January we distributed a proposed Property Covenant for discussion and comment. Most of the comments we have received since that time have suggested that the Covenant was not really a Covenant between the Presbytery and its churches but rather a declaration of action that we might take should a congregation determine that it would like to leave the denomination with its property.

The actions recommended by the Way Forward Task Force in 2006 were a response to the assumption that "...actions taken by the 217<sup>th</sup> General Assembly constituted a potential significant change in our ordination standards." Recent findings of the General Assembly Permanent Judicial Commission suggest a different conclusion.

An unofficial review of property issues has not shown a mass exodus from the more than 10,000 congregations in the PC(USA). Since the 217<sup>th</sup> GA in 2006, through the end of 2007, a total of 32 congregations have voted to leave the denomination. Of the 32, the majority of which are still pending, 12 have been dismissed by their respective presbyteries. Eight of the 12 had property issues that were settled by all parties, with one still pending. Legal action was filed first by five congregations and two presbyteries. All of those have yet to be resolved.

We therefore offer for adoption by the Presbytery of San Diego a further revised Property Covenant that we believe more clearly states the duty of the presbytery to act in a responsible way when considering property ownership should a congregation desire to leave the denomination.

### **Property Covenant**

The congregations and members of the Presbytery of San Diego are seeking to find a positive way to move forward into the future together. One emotional issue that has brought mistrust and tension to this relationship has been church property. For those seeking to leave the PCUSA it is a stumbling block to their future ministry. and for some churches who are not wishing to leave

it has intensified their mistrust of GA. For other churches, that see the “trust clause” as a symbol of our connectedness, it is and as essential for future ministry and mission.

- The Presbyterian Church (USA) is but one denomination within the Church (G-4.0101)
- Our constitution states that all church property is held in trust for the “use and benefit of the Presbyterian Church (USA) (G-8.0201)
- Presbyteries have the express power to dismiss a congregation (G-11.0103i)
- Presbytery’s trustee responsibilities include both care and concern for God’s call to the local congregation as well as a determination of the missional interests of the Presbyterian Church (USA) (G-11.0103a,b,c,)
- For the sake of clarity and unity, we members of the Presbytery of San Diego chose to agree to the following covenant with each other.

As a preferred means of settling disputes, the Presbytery of San Diego agrees to covenant with its member churches to try to settle matters of separation and property relationally and pastorally, rather than seek out the judgment of the courts in accordance with the spirit of I Corinthians 6:1-11.

In that spirit we agree to the following:

- Resist the temptation to covet church property and agree to work together to resolve the disagreement before church property is discussed.
- Be open to work together to find a resolution
- Not take preemptive measures that would inflame the discussions before they begin.
- Accept that the result of the discussions between church and presbytery could lead to the possibility of the presbytery releasing the church from the PCUSA, either by agreement or rightful action.
- Determine that the presbytery has the right to negotiate any property dismissal or settlement so stated in the Book of Order.

Agree that judicial action may be necessary by either the church or presbytery if it is so determined that it would be in the best interest of either body.

## **Redirect Per Capita and Mission Giving**

The Work Group on the Way Forward asks that the Presbytery of San Diego receive and implement the following report:

**Work Group Chair:** Elder Loreto Remorca, Jr.

**Task:** (From the TFWF Final Report Adopted by the Presbytery of San Diego on November 21, 2006):

5. **Redirect per capita and mission giving** – Create clear guidelines for congregations and the Presbytery for the giving of per capita and mission dollars based on support of the Great Ends of the Church and a strong missional focus – such as redirecting per capita to global, national and local ministries of the PC (USA) that reflect the purposes stated above; give mission dollars to mission entities that reflect the above focus and purpose.

### **Report and Recommendations:**

### **Supporting Documents:**

1. Presbyterian Global Fellowship Mission Giving in the PC(USA)
2. Directed Mission Support Pledge Form for 2008

## Initiate Networks and Partnerships

The Work Group on the Way Forward asks that the Presbytery of San Diego receive and implement the following report:

**Work Group Chair:** Rev. Paul Cunningham

**Task:** (From the TFWF Final Report Adopted by the Presbytery of San Diego on November 21, 2006):

6. **Initiate networks and partnerships** – Explore ways that the presbytery can network and partner with other like minded entities with whom we share similar theological and missional convictions – such as the Presbyterian Global Fellowship, other presbyteries, congregations, pastors and leaders.

### Report and Recommendations:

#### Networks and Partnerships

To network and partner with other pastors and congregations implies a willingness and desire to set aside time for one another. If we are not willing to set aside time in our busy lives for networking and partnering then our recommendations will not carry us very far. However, our hope is that pastors and congregations will be intentional about making time to connect with one another in creative and hope filled ministry and mission opportunities.

San Diego Presbytery recommends pastors and congregations engage in networks and partnerships on a national, regional and local level in the following ways:

National level: We recommend that San Diego Presbytery formally affiliate with Presbyterian Global Fellowship as a “*missional presbytery*.” The mission and purposes of PGF are discussed in this report. We also recommend that local congregations, Sessions and their pastors explore the possibility of affiliating with PGF as “*missional churches*.”

*Rationale: See discussion on PGF from section 1 of this report on how to become a missional presbytery.*

Regional Level: We recommend that San Diego Presbytery initiate “formal” conversations with Los Ranchos Presbytery and Santa Barbara Presbytery about how we can encourage and support one another as we attempt to become “missional” presbyteries.

*Rationale: These 2 Presbyteries currently have task forces or work groups focusing on strategies for becoming missional presbyteries. There may be other Presbyteries in the west who are also working on these kinds of strategies that we are not aware of. If so, we would also recommend initiating conversations with them.*

Local Level: We recommend that pastors network with other PCUSA pastors in their communities and focus on how they can encourage one another, as well as hold each other accountable.

*Rationale: In our fast paced lives we believe it is important for pastors to be intentional about being together and supporting one another in an informal setting. These gatherings could happen during lunch, a gathering for prayer, etc.... The hope is that as our pastors know and care for one another, their congregations can also become more connected and begin to engage in ministry and mission together.*

## **Maintain Vigilance and Develop Contingency Plans**

The Work Group on the Way Forward asks that the Presbytery of San Diego receive and implement the following report:

**Work Group Chair:** Rev. Bob Davis

**Tasks:** (From the TFWF Final Report Adopted by the Presbytery of San Diego on November 21, 2006):

7. **Maintain vigilance** – Diligently monitor the decisions and actions of Permanent Judicial Commissions locally and nationally, in particular with regard to ordination and property. Track Synod and General Assembly PJC decisions and actions and communicate that information to the Presbytery, congregations and individuals via website or newsletter. It is vital that we keep ourselves informed so that we are prepared to pursue remedial or disciplinary action when necessary to ensure constitutional compliance.
10. **Develop contingency plans** – Explore responses to potential future scenarios that would require Presbytery action – such as a GAPJC decision to set aside ordination standards.

### **Report and Recommendations:**

#### **I. Introduction**

The work of this part of the Way Forward Work Group is necessarily nebulous. Vigilance means watching for events that unfold; contingency requires anticipation and hypothetical conjecture. It is a combination of two of the tasks assigned in the November, 2006 report.

In short, the landscape has not changed all that much since the 217<sup>th</sup> General Assembly (2006). Ordination standards are not settled, but there are now three decisions of the General Assembly Permanent Judicial Commission (GA PJC) declaring that presbyteries shall not allow exceptions to compliance with G-6.0106b. Membership losses continue at an alarming rate across the denomination. Individual congregations across the denomination have made a move to transfer membership to the Evangelical Presbyterian Church according to the New Wineskins movement. Giving remains high; undesignated giving to the denomination continues to diminish.

The task I undertook, then, was to identify those things external to San Diego Presbytery that might have an impact on how we do ministry here. Because of the breadth of topics covered here, it must be emphasized that this is a summary report. Events change, conditions change, and directions change; thus, even though it is titled a Final Report, this is a status report along the way.

#### **II. Vigilance**

##### **a. Permanent Judicial Commission cases**

##### **i. Ordination**

Three GA PJC decisions were issued in February, 2008. Their holdings can be summarized by

the headnotes in the Bush v. Pittsburgh Presbytery case:

1. **No Departures from “Fidelity and Chastity” Requirement:** Candidates and examining bodies must follow G-6.0108 in reaching determinations as to whether the candidates for ordination and/or installation have departed from essentials of Reformed faith and polity. Such determinations do not rest on distinguishing “belief” and “behavior,” and *do not permit departure from the “fidelity and chastity” requirement found in G-6.0106b.*
2. **Examinations of Candidates:** *Ordaining and installing bodies must examine candidates for ordination and/or installation individually.* The examining body is best suited to make decisions about the candidate’s fitness for office, and factual determinations by examining bodies are entitled to deference by higher governing bodies in any review process.
3. **Statements of “Essentials of Reformed Faith and Polity”:** Attempts by governing bodies that ordain and install officers to adopt resolutions, *statements or policies that paraphrase or restate provisions of the Book of Order and/or declare them as “essentials of Reformed faith and polity” are confusing and unnecessary,* and are themselves an obstruction to constitutional governance in violation of G-6.0108a. (**bold in original; italics mine**).

The result was that the resolutions approved in Olympia, Pittsburgh and Washington Presbyteries were declared to be unconstitutional; however, no license has been granted to presbyteries by the Authoritative Interpretation to allow exceptions to ordination standards established in G-6.0106b.

These decisions are powerful, unequivocal statements that G-6.0106b is binding. Every candidate must be examined, thus the resolutions were voided. That said, the decisions are unambiguous that no candidate is exempt or excused from compliance with the constitutional standards set forth in G-6.0106. Scruples are not permissible; they shall not be accepted.

Application to the other three pending cases remains to be seen.

1. San Francisco Presbytery was correct in examining Lisa Larges. Based upon the clarity provided by the GA PJC's decisions, San Francisco Presbytery acted irregularly by approving her examination in light of her stated non-compliance with G-6.0106b. Her continued non-compliance with G-6.0106b also should result in San Francisco Presbytery's removal of her name from the enrolled candidates for Ministry of Word and Sacrament.
2. Twin Cities Presbytery was correct to consider reinstating Paul Capetz' ordination. Based on the clarity provided by the GA PJC's decisions, Twin Cities Presbytery acted irregularly by approving his reinstatement in light of his stated unwillingness to comply with G-6.0106b.
3. John Knox Presbytery's care of Scott Anderson is a little more complex. Anderson was a member of the Theological Task Force on Peace, Unity and Purity. [His biography for that Task Force was given](#) as follows:

Scott Anderson is a long-life Presbyterian who currently serves as executive director of the Wisconsin Council of Churches. Scott served for twelve years as director of the

California Council of Churches and is a former Presbyterian minister. He lives with his life partner, Ian MacAllister, in Madison, Wisconsin. Scott served as national co-moderator of More Light Presbyterians.

In [November, 2006, Anderson](#) was enrolled by John Knox Presbytery as an "Inquirer" -- the first stage of the process to be ordained as a Minister of Word and Sacrament in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). At the time, there was a general perception that his enrollment would not be subject to challenge until the point he would seek to move to candidacy, based upon the decision in [Sheldon, et al v. Presbytery of West Jersey \(212-12\)](#). However, in another decision this past year, [Stewart v. Mission Presbytery \(218-04\)](#), the GA PJC wrote,

[T]his Commission notes with concern that the record shows that both the Presbytery and the SPJC appear to have relied on the Book of Order: Annotated Edition entry for the Sheldon, et al. v. Presbytery of West Jersey, Minutes, 2000, p. 589, case, rather than the language of the case itself. Such reliance was misplaced. The erroneous explanation given under G-14.0305d of the Book of Order: Annotated Edition to the Sheldon case provides "An inquirer may be received as a candidate even if not currently eligible for ordination because of G-6.0106b, but could not be ordained if found at the time for certification of readiness for ordination not to be in compliance." The annotation is a misstatement of the cited case. Sheldon concerned an inquirer being considered for candidacy who was a celibate gay man, and therefore eligible to become a candidate. Furthermore, the GAPJC specifically found in Sheldon that "...the evidence supports a determination that the candidate has not violated the standard of G-6.0106b." Sheldon concludes by stating, "However, if the [Presbytery] should determine the Candidate to be ineligible for candidacy at some point in the future, the [Presbytery] should remove the Candidate's name from the roll of candidates, as provided by G-14.0312." The correspondence in the record from the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly also cites Wier v. Second Presbyterian Church, Ft. Lauderdale, Minutes, 2002, p. 339, which is more relevant to this case: "If the governing body has reasonable cause for inquiry based on its knowledge of the life and character of the candidate, it has the positive obligation...to uphold all the standards for ordination and installation."

Based on the clarity provided by the GA PJC's decisions, and if Scott Anderson's position and circumstances have not changed, John Knox Presbytery should remove his name from the enrolled list of inquirers or candidates to be a Minister of Word and Sacrament.

## **ii. Same-Sex Marriage**

A second kind of case involving sexuality-related issues is a disciplinary case involving Jane Spahr, an ordained minister of Word and sacrament, who performed a "same-sex marriage." She was acquitted at trial by Redwoods Presbytery's Permanent Judicial Commission. The Synod of the Pacific sought to refer the appeal (now allowable to prosecuting committee's pursuant to D-13.0102) to the General Assembly Permanent Judicial Commission; however, the GA PJC declined (218-07).

On August 27, the Synod of the Pacific PJC reversed the decision of the Redwoods Presbytery PJC. In a split decision, it found that the Rev. Spahr had violated the Constitution. Nonetheless, the censure was a "rebuke," the mildest form of censure.

## **B. Political Developments**

Vigilance includes keeping abreast of political developments within the denomination. The following is a brief survey of various special interest groups within the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). The landscape has changed somewhat since the movement to biennial (every other year) General Assemblies.

Although real power and real decisions are made in presbyteries, special interest groups have had a significant influence. A survey of decisions of each of the 173 presbyteries was beyond the scope of vigilance. Trends were easier to trace through the special interest groups. Overall, there are few truly new developments within the working of the special interest groups. The New Wineskins has had the most dynamic impact on the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) by providing encouragement and a procedural vehicle for congregations to depart from the denomination. Even that, however, is not particularly new – from its inception, the New Wineskins has been criticized as a separatist movement. From a vigilance and contingency standpoint, the Presbyterian Global Fellowship model – doing mission together via affiliation and confessional connection – may represent the polity future.

The Covenant Network continues to pursue changes to ordination standards to allow for the recognition, ordination and celebration of active gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered individuals and relationships. The strategy has moved from seeking to change the standards via amendments to the Book of Order into seeking to change the standards via judicial decisions and amending interpretations of the Constitution.

### **1. New Wineskins**

The New Wineskins grew out of the renewal movements in the late 1990's and the Confessing Congregations in the early 2000's. They describe themselves as

a group of nearly 200 Presbyterian churches across America who believe we have received a vision and accepted the call to work it out. What we have seen is a movement of God's Spirit across the world which is transcending denominational lines and drawing millions to meet Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior for the first time. New wine of fresh faith in Christ is being poured out from heaven. We want to be part of what God is doing. But here at home, mainline denominations struggle with theological confusion, ethical compromise and numerical decline. We envision a church, therefore, that is theologically clear and passionate because it is based on shared essential tenets of historic orthodox faith. We envision a church that is brimming over with compassion because we are clear about the Biblical ethics we share. We envision a church that is missionally driven. Our focus is on outreach, on spreading the gospel in word and deed beyond our walls. We envision a church that is reshaped in polity in order to serve, not impede, our mission, in order to deepen trust and accountability.

The practical outworking of the New Wineskins effort has been mixed: some congregations have been called to seek re-affiliation with the Evangelical Presbyterian Church while others have discerned a call to remain in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). The Evangelical Presbyterian Church has provided access to realignment by approving a non-geographic transitional presbytery for New Wineskins congregations.

Certainly, those congregations looking to realign have generated the most headlines. As of November 1, 2007, sixteen congregations across the Presbyterian Church had taken action to realign. Some sought pre-emptive action against presbyteries in order to secure property, others negotiated settlements, and others still were released with property. There are additional congregations around the country that have begun conversations about the potential for moving to the EPC. Other Way Forward Task Force subcommittees will address the property implications of the New Wineskins movement.

Overall, the New Wineskins does not appear likely to generate a large-scale “split”; rather, it appears that any movement will be on a congregation-by-congregation basis. In other words, making a choice to go to pursue New Wineskins as an option is something that starts with the congregation – it is not a choice that will be imposed on every congregation in a denomination-wide action.

The attractiveness of the New Wineskins is likely to be impacted by the handling of the developing ordination standards cases. If San Francisco Presbytery, Twin Cities Presbytery or John Knox Presbytery are permitted act “scruples” to G-6.0106b – despite the three February, 2008 GA PJC decisions –moving into a transitional presbytery would be an attractive alternative. It sets up as a “safe-zone” and first step from which choices about where and how to affiliate in the future can be made.

## **2. Presbyterian Global Fellowship**

Presbyterian Global Fellowship’s stated mission is “to transform mainline congregations into missional communities following Jesus Christ. We are committed to a vision for missional renewal, to connecting congregations and leaders with one another and with the global church, to sharing ideas and resources worldwide, and to stewarding our material gifts in service of Christ’s mission.”

The first purpose is to use new media to develop affiliated partnerships of congregations and presbyteries to pursue mission outreach across the globe. The second purpose was to develop like-minded connection among congregations disaffected by the troubles in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). “The congregations who initiated PGF were responding to the crisis within the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). The PC(USA) has been mired in theological, moral and institutional crisis. PGF was formed to give congregations and individuals the opportunity to identify with a fellowship in which they can confess the Lordship of Jesus Christ with integrity, take full advantage of new forms of partnership, and get on with the mission of the church!”

For San Diego Presbytery, Presbyterian Global Fellowship is interesting as a new way for Presbyterians to affiliate for mission purposes based upon commonly-held confessional convictions. Participation is voluntary. There is no (or extremely limited) institutional organization to uphold. Polity considerations are minimal because connections are tied to supporting missionaries or coordinating mission efforts. Taken to an extreme, it could be defined as a congregational system with a para-church worldwide mission organization structure. Other Way Forward Work Groups will delve into ways in which San Diego Presbytery can go forward in ministry together and how we can network with others, maintaining our Presbyterian distinctives while adapting to a more affiliation-oriented connectional context.

### **3. Covenant Network**

The Covenant Network held its annual meeting in November, 2007. The Covenant Network vigorously pursues its founding goal: to build up the church by removing barriers to ordained service by gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender members and by so doing, to further the unity of the church.

The opening night keynote speaker, Scott Black Johnson, suggested that the denomination was moving from a season of “legislation” to a “judicial” season:

About nine months ago a friend said to me, “Scott, I think that the legislative period in the life of our troubled denomination is drawing to a close and we are entering a judicial season.” I asked him to elaborate. “Well,” he said, “it’s like this. We have fought and fought and fought over the Book of Order. We have battled ourselves into a bloody stalemate, and now I think, with the passage of the PUP report, we are not going to have as much energy for the next charge onto the legislative fray. Instead, we are going to move to a time when individual cases are being decided on the floors of presbyteries, and at session meetings, and in front of the Permanent Judicial Commission. This means that our church’s conflict will no longer be focused on a generic issue; it is going to be about specific candidates.” I think his analysis was pretty good, although it remains to be seen whether this change of venue will move us (as a denomination) a single step closer to the kingdom of God. What I do believe is that if we are, in fact, entering a judicial season in sorting through the church’s current turmoil, if we are entering a time then these issues will be considered in the context of ecclesial courts, then, it is the time, my friends, for witnesses.

As identified previously, Lisa Larges, Paul Capetz and Scott Anderson are likely to be the first two test cases in the new “judicial” season.

For San Diego, the Covenant Network’s continued engagement in both legislative and judicial efforts could have a direct impact on continued connection with other presbyteries. Depending on the outcome of the test cases, presbyteries may address ordination standards differently. If local option would become a reality, it is likely that congregations in this presbytery would perceive that development as a reason to pursue options like New Wineskins or other alternatives to remaining in the status quo Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

## **II. Contingency**

In short, things are changing. Even if denominational leaders act as if things can remain the same, the truth is this: unless something changes quickly, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) will continue to trend towards dissolving and disintegrating within a generation.

By any measure, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is not a healthy organization. Membership is acutely and chronically down. Missionaries commissioned by the General Assembly – contrasted with those sent out internationally, nationally, or locally by individual congregations – are down. The number of adult baptisms is down. The number of infant baptisms is down.

These are long term trends more than short term aberrations.

The most immediate potential to have an impact on ministry and mission in San Diego Presbytery is:

### **The 218<sup>th</sup> General Assembly (2008)**

In some ways, this year is like any other year with a General Assembly. The standard overtures are already being submitted for consideration by the 218<sup>th</sup> General Assembly (2008) including efforts to eliminate G-6.0106b, to un-do the recent GA PJC decisions upholding ordination standards, and to re-write the Authoritative Interpretation of G-6.0108 that was approved by the 217<sup>th</sup> General Assembly (2006).

In other ways it is very different.

#### **1. The Stated Clerk**

Perhaps the biggest issue for the 218<sup>th</sup> General Assembly will be the election of a new Stated Clerk. The next Stated Clerk will need to be a communicator of a missional vision for the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

For San Diego Presbytery, the election of the Stated Clerk will have an impact on our relationship with denominational leaders. A new leader, with a new style and vision, will certainly be a factor in the health of the denomination.

#### **2. Ordination Standards**

The three GA PJC decisions discussed previously establish an unequivocal support of the denomination's historic ordination standards. That said, standard overtures are already pending for the 218<sup>th</sup> General Assembly (2008): eliminate G-6.0106b; un-do the Authoritative Interpretation issued in the GA PJC decisions of February 2008; and amend the Authoritative Interpretation to make G-6.0106b explicitly an essential tenet that is not subject to scrupling.

For San Diego Presbytery, now is not the time to get excited about business to be handled by the ordination standards business to be handled by General Assembly. The proposed business rarely makes it through General Assembly without amendment; often the amendments change the outcome in large fashion. It is worth watching, it is not worth fretting.

#### **3. Financial**

In the March, 2007, General Assembly Council Meeting, the 2007 Revised Budget (Projected Receipts) [Appendix 28, page 3 of 5] says

- PC(USA) has a mission budget of \$103,264,569.
- Of that \$103 million, \$72,688,019 is restricted giving -- special offerings or designated by the giver.
- Of the \$30,576,550 that is undesignated, \$12,900,000 is expected from congregations.

In other words, a little more than ten percent of the church's budget is from undesignated giving received from congregations. When the Way Forward Work Group met with Stated Clerk Clifton Kirkpatrick in July, the question was asked – and remained essentially unanswered – whether

there was an “out there” out there. In other words, are presbyteries, synods, and the General Assembly financially stable enough in the near future in order to be able to maintain the current connectional relationships.

When the Way Forward Work Group met with Associated Stated Clerk Mark Tammen, he admitted that the current system was unsustainable. The best illustration is the Synod of the Southwest which is dependent upon large financial grants from the General Assembly to remain financially viable. If the trend continues that less and less undesignated giving is received each year, the General Assembly will not be able to provide continued financial support. If that support dries up, what happens to the congregations and presbyteries? Mark Tammen agreed that this scenario is real and that a change is coming – whether it is to move to very small or to very large presbyteries is uncertain.

For San Diego Presbytery, the question is whether the denomination takes steps that are likely to generate financial viability across the 173 presbyteries; and, if not, what steps are being taken to move into a new polity. Should the proposed Form of Government be the extent of the effort to become healthy, it will be imperative for San Diego Presbytery to be prepared for the likely scenario of being presented with a request to receive into membership congregations from the dissolved presbyteries of the Synod of the Southwest.

#### **4. The impact of the proposed Form of Government**

There is a proposed substitute for the Form of Government (G- sections of the *Book of Order*). The Task Force assigned by the General Assembly with the responsibility of preparing this proposal released a draft in September, 2007, before sending it forward to the 218<sup>th</sup> General Assembly (2008) in San Jose.

### **III. Conclusion**

None of the items listed require immediate reaction or response from San Diego Presbytery. The work that other Way Forward Task Group committees are doing are significantly more important and are much more likely to develop a healthy presbytery. The three most pressing items for our continued prayerful vigilance and observation are the developing judicial season, the financial condition of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), and the proposed Form of Government. Even while we are being vigilant and observing, the lack of an immediate grave external threat highlights the importance of developing, maintaining, and expanding a collective Presbyterian witness to this community.

### **Engage the National Leadership of the PC(USA)**

The Work Group on the Way Forward asks that the Presbytery of San Diego receive and implement the following report:

**Work Group Chair:** Rev. Dr. Steve Locke

**Task:** (From the TFWF Final Report Adopted by the Presbytery of San Diego on November 21, 2006):

9. **Engage the national leadership of the PC(USA)** – Invite our national leadership into our conversation and seek their advice on the implications of any proposed changes.

#### **Report and Recommendations:**

In order to satisfy the requirements of this recommendation we invited Clifton Kirkpatrick, Stated Clerk of the GA, to a meeting with the Task Force and other leaders for a conversation regarding subjects such as the missional purpose of the GA, the state of property issues throughout the PC(USA), the effect of designated mission giving on the GA and other related issues that are concerns within our presbytery. We also invited Mark Tammen, Advisory Committee to the Constitution, to a pre-presbytery meeting to preach and discuss the New Form of Government document being presented at the GA in June. Both these conversations were fruitful, providing us with an understanding of the GA philosophy and goals, as well as helping us pursue the necessary changes within our presbytery. We suggest that further conversations will be necessary as we continue our way forward.

## **Create a Council-Level Vision Team to Keep Us Moving Forward**

It is the final recommendation of the Way Forward Work Group that a Council-level Vision Team be created to insure that the Work begun by the Task Force on the Way Forward and continued by the Way Forward Work Group will be sustained. We recommend that this Vision Team be selected by the Executive Presbyter on an annual basis and moderated and resourced by the current Vice-Moderator of Presbytery, with the agenda for the team being set by the Executive Presbyter. The Vice Moderator will act as Vision Team liaison and be responsible for reporting to both council and presbytery. The Vision Team will be tasked with the discernment and direction of our perpetual way forward as a missional presbytery equipped to boldly move into the future our Sovereign Lord has set before us.

