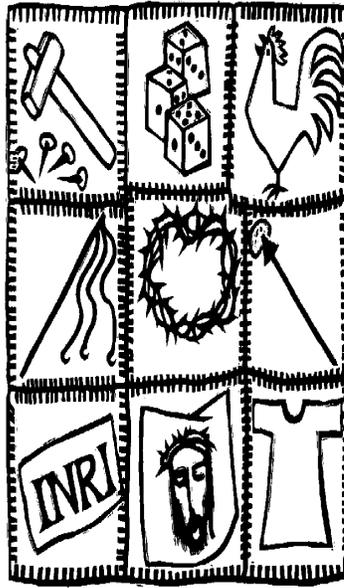


# Renewal

## From the Pastor’s Desk ...

The Reverend Dr. Byron E. Shafer



Pentecost, along with Christmas and Easter, is one of the three major holy days of the Christian calendar.

For both of the monotheistic faiths with which we are most familiar—Christianity and Judaism—certain days in early June are important sacred days. On the Christian calendar, Sunday, June 8, is Pentecost. And on the Jewish calendar from Thursday sundown, June 5, to Saturday sundown, June 7, are Shavuot—The Feast of Weeks. The Jewish festival is called Weeks because it occurs seven weeks after the most important Jewish festival of all, Passover. In antiquity that seven-week period was the interval of time between the harvest of barley (marked by

Passover) and the harvest of wheat (marked by the Feast of Weeks). As we will see, the themes of Pentecost and Weeks are remarkably similar, and that is no accident—because the Christian holy day of Pentecost originated within the Jewish Feast of Weeks.

In Ancient Israel, the Feast of Weeks was one of the three great pilgrimage festivals. In Jesus' time, Jews came from around the world to celebrate these festivals in Jerusalem. They came from all the countries surrounding the Mediterranean Sea and from as far east as Afghanistan and Pakistan. By Jesus' day, Jews had added to the celebration of the wheat harvest the commemoration of God's giving of the commandments to Moses and Israel on Mt. Sinai and God's establishing of a covenant with Israel. The festival was celebrated not on remote Mt. Sinai, but on the new mountain of God, Mt. Zion. Mt. Zion was another name for Jerusalem. The Jews who lived far away from Jerusalem in Rome, or Libya, or Persia could not travel to Jerusalem every year for those feasts. A pilgrimage to Mt. Zion was the trip of a lifetime. Many pilgrims would time their once-in-a-lifetime trip to take in the two festivals that were separated by just seven weeks—Passover, which celebrated Israel's escape from slavery in

Egypt, and Weeks, which celebrated God's giving of the commandments to Moses on Mt. Sinai and the establishment of God's covenant with Israel. Boatloads of Jewish pilgrims would arrive at the harbors of Caesarea and Joppa in advance of Passover. And, from the lands of the east, caravans of pilgrims would arrive on donkeys, horses, and carts of all kinds. And many pilgrims remained in Jerusalem for nearly two months, from the beginning of Passover through the end of the Feast of Weeks. At

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## GA News: 215th General Assembly Opens with Flourish

reproduced from PC(USA) Newswire

The service was enhanced by visual imagery projected on giant screens and by a very long, dramatic communion table with blue ceramic plates [and] chalices.



The Opening Service of Worship and Holy Communion at the 215 General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (USA) gave several thousand commissioners, visitors, staff members and volunteers an experience of worship on the grand scale that has become a hallmark of this service from year to year.

From the opening invocation, with a flute solo by Calvin Standing Bear, a Native American from Denver, to the closing “Highland Cathedral,” featuring bagpipes, organ and a massive choir, the music was stirring and inspiring. Bear, originally from the Rosebud Reservation in South Dakota, wore Native American dress and was accompanied by a powerful combination of drums from the orchestra.

John Kuzma, minister of music at Denver’s Montview Boulevard Presbyterian Church, conducted the choir. He had written an anthem on commission for this service, on the Assembly theme, “A

House of Prayer for All Peoples,” a reference to Isaiah 56:1-8.

The anthem featured the adult choir accompanied by a diversity of instruments representing various cultures and traditions — including organ, orchestra, steel drums, bagpipes, Indian rain stick, cymbals, and brass. Kuzma also arranged most of the music for the service. One hymn, “Where Mountains Lift the Eye,” focused on the Creator God who through the movement of “plates of bedrock” thrust the Rocky Mountains into the sky. The mountains are a constant presence to the west of Denver.

In addition to the adult choir, children’s and youth choirs added their textures to the music. Listeners were caught up and blown away in the whirlwind of sound created by the massed choir on the opening hymn, “Alleluia! Sing to Jesus!” and enfolded in peace during the children’s choir’s anthem, “With One Heart and One Voice,” conducted by Leslie Britton. The congregation was brought to its feet clapping when the youth choir performed “He Never Failed Me Yet!” conducted by Fannie C. Scott.

The service was enhanced by visual imagery projected on giant screens and by a very long, dramatic communion table with blue ceramic plates, chalices and bowl created by potter Sandy Pond.

The Rev. Fahed Abu-Akel, moderator of last year’s 214th General Assembly, preached a sermon titled “A House of Hospitality and Prayer,” on the theme text from Isaiah, as well as texts from 1Peter (“Above all, maintain constant love for one another, for love covers a multitude of sins”) and the Gospel of John (“In my Father’s house there are many dwelling places”; “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”)

Noting that, in the early church, the focus was on the people of God, rather than the ministers, Abu-Akel recognized a long list of groups within the PC (USA), having them stand for applause. He gave special recognition to his wife, Mary Shibly Zumot, who read the Gospel lesson, the Rev. Clifton Kirkpatrick, stated clerk of the General Assembly, and Elder John Detterick, executive director of the General Assembly Council.

Abu-Akel then preached about the Biblical story, his own life story and the challenges facing the PC(USA). He recounted his experiences during his travels in China and Sudan, where he said people gather by the thousands to worship in the name

of Jesus Christ.

The moderator linked the Bible story about God’s wishing his house to be a house of prayer for all peoples. He told about his childhood, when his mother taught him the scriptures and the Nicene Creed. When his family was routed from their home by Israeli soldiers, and forced to move to a refugee camp, his mother stayed behind, saying that she’d rather be killed than to give up their house, land and church.

“Four hundred Palestinian villages were destroyed by the Israelis during the war,” he said. “That injustice is still present today.” He urged his listeners to pray for justice and reconciliation between the Palestinians and Jews, and said only America can lead the way to peace in the Middle East, a land important to Muslims, Christians and Jews alike. He said Jerusalem should be a city of hospitality.

Abu-Akel said the principal challenges facing the PC(USA) are staying united and maintaining a focus on mission. He spoke of the Scottish Presbyterian missionaries who came to his home village in Palestine, and said PC(USA) missionaries have changed the world — so that now

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## From the Pastor's Desk... continued from page 1 >>

Passover the town's population increased around 600%. Over the ensuing seven weeks, the crowds diminished, but at the Feast of Weeks, Jerusalem's population was still at least double the resident population.

The Jewish pilgrims and the Jewish citizens of Jerusalem shared a religion but not a common language. Hebrew was no longer spoken. It was strictly a literary and liturgical language. The Jews of Jerusalem and Palestine spoke Aramaic, and the Jews outside Palestine spoke a variety of native languages. The most widely spoken language in the Roman Empire was Greek. And the name that Greek-speaking Jews gave to the Feast of Weeks was Pentecost.

The story of Pentecost is told to us by Luke, who wrote not only his gospel but also the Book of Acts. As Luke tells the story, Jesus' closest followers had remained in Jerusalem after Jesus' death, resurrection, and ascension. Remember, they were all Jewish.

So they remained in Jerusalem for the period between Passover and Weeks, like so many other Jewish pilgrims.

Therefore, it was on a Jewish Day of Pentecost about the year 30 that Jesus' closest disciples and countless other Jews from all over the world were in Jerusalem to celebrate a renewal of God's covenant. But for about 3,000 of the Jews gathered in Jerusalem, the day would culminate in a most unexpected event.

For them, the climax would not be the ritual sacrifice of a goat on the altar of the Temple. For them, the climax would be their receiv-

ing of baptism and the Holy Spirit in the courtyard surrounding the temple.

For them, the day would be not so much a celebration of the commandments carved on two tablets of stone as a receiving of commandments written by the Holy Spirit on their hearts.

Pentecost has been called the Birthday of the Church, first because it marks the return of God's bold spirit into the hearts of Jesus' timid disciples, and second because it marks the first large-scale reception of new followers into the Christian community through baptism. The new followers were moved by the same energizing, transforming Spirit that seized the disciples themselves.

Luke tells us that the disciples were gathered together in a house when the wind and tongues of fire came upon them. Then, filled with the Holy Spirit, they began to speak in other languages.

At the sound of the wind and proclamation, many Jewish pilgrims gathered around the disciples' house and heard them witnessing to God in the pilgrims' native languages.

Luke wants us to hear his Pentecost story of wind and fire in the context of an earlier account in his gospel—the account of John the Baptist's prophecy about the Messiah.

There (3:16), John says: "I baptize you with water, but one who is more powerful than I is coming .... He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire." The wind and fire of Pentecost are the Holy Spirit and fire of John the Baptist's prophecy.

Luke also wants us to hear his Pentecost story of wind and fire in the context of the stories in the Book of Exodus that underlie the festivals of Passover

and Weeks—the story of the Exodus from Egypt and the story of the establishment on Mt. Sinai of the covenant between God and Israel. In the Book of Exodus, God saved Israel from Egypt by a driving *wind* (Ex. 14:21; 15:8-10), and then God came to the people at Mt. Sinai amidst peels of thunder and flashes of *fire* (Ex. 19:18-19). God came to Israel at Mt. Sinai. Now God comes to Jesus' disciples on Mt. Zion, that is, Jerusalem.

After the wind and fire have come upon the disciples, the Jewish onlookers think the disciples are filled with new wine. So exuberant and spirited are the disciples that the onlookers think they are drunk! To which Peter responds in protest that it's only nine in the morning! But of course in the symbolic sense intended by Luke, the disciples *were* filled with new wine.

Luke's gospel offers us the metaphor of Jesus putting the new, fermenting wine of his word not in old, inelastic wineskins but in fresh, expandable wineskins. And at Jesus' Last Supper with his disciples, he gives them the wine of the new covenant. What more fitting time for the disciples to be filled with the effect of new wine than the Feast of Weeks—the Feast of the Covenant.

So that particular Day of Pentecost around the year 30 was the birthday of the Church. On that day God created a welcoming church, a multi-cultural church, an enthusiastic church, a prophetic church. Let me reflect a bit on each of these attributes of the church—welcoming, multicultural, enthusiastic, and prophetic.

First, God created a welcoming church. Let us re-

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Pentecost has been called the Birthday of the Church, first because it marks the return of God's bold spirit into the hearts of Jesus' timid disciples...

## Rutgers Ready for Organ Transplant

by Joy Wyatt

Our Moeller organ is about to celebrate its 80<sup>th</sup> birthday. You need to know that, in order to understand why our organ behaves the way it does. Up here in the choir loft, we all think of the organ as just another cranky, idiosyncratic musician.

Recently we've come to understand that it is very tired and it has worn-out parts, not unlike some of the rest of us. Sometimes, the organ just does whatever it feels like doing, despite the valiant efforts of the organist to tame its wheezing, atonal honk. When you hear that kind of sound again, just think of it as a cry for help.

The condition of the organ's mechanical parts is best described as "decayed". Many of the organ's pipes are simply lying on the floor of the organ chamber to my left. You may have noticed the wind-tunnel effect that occurs when the organ is turned on

after the sermon.

There is air leaking from windchests and lines, and duct tape is no longer up to the task of containing it. To quote one of the experts who has familiarized himself with our instrument, "the instrument, in its present condition, is unable to effectively function, and is operating only by virtue of the skill and know-how of the organists who play it."

Hymn singing is central to our worship culture, and the organ is central to our hymn singing tradition. Therefore, the Session has agreed that it's now time to find help for our geriatric organ. A committee has interviewed organ builders, reviewed their detailed proposals, and settled on a course of action, which the Session has just ratified.

During 20 months between June and December 2004, our beautiful organ will be restored to more than its former glory. Our refurb-

ished instrument will employ some of the benefits of modern digital technology while retaining the traditional features of an acoustic instrument that make it so well suited to Rutgers' worship space. Much of the instrument will be removed and taken to the factory where organ builders will repair damaged parts and prepare them for reinstallation.

This work will be done in stages, so that we will have the benefit of the organ in our services throughout much of the work period. There will be a few-week period where we will make do with the piano while the console is restored. At the end we should have an instrument the sound of which is both fuller and more nuanced, and therefore will enhance both traditional and modern repertoire.

We are lucky to have an instrument worth restoring. Stay tuned for information still to come about this significant project.

## Standing Room Only at Rutgers, May Concert Triumphs

by Marshall Williamson, Rutgers' Minister of Music Emeritus

"All of the singing was of the highest level of professionalism"

Another first Sunday in May, and once again the Lord was smiling on Rutgers Church.

The annual R. Wellington Jones concert to benefit the Christopher Roberts Homeless Shelter drew a standing-room-only crowd, Metropolitan Opera divas Lucina Amara and Theresa Stratas, and Dino Anagnost, director of the Little Orchestra Society, among the cheering throng.

Lynne Morris gave well-informed remarks on Wellington's piano selections: J. S. Bach's Organ Prelude in g minor transcribed by A. Siloti, and three Shostakovich Preludes. Wellington was in top form on this occasion.

Lynne Morris also introduced three new works by Vittorio Fugeri. "The Voice of Children" was sung by Jacquelyn Carpenter and "What Is Love?" and "A Dream (He Dreams, She Dreams)" were sung by Anna Marie Mackey and Alburtt Rhodes. The songs were eclectic

and wide-ranging, and all three singers did beautifully. The composer accompanied with great flair.

Following the intermission came "Eugene Onegin." Dr. Vera Roberts spoke passionately about Pushkin's novel-inverse and the process that caused its composition by Tchaikovsky.

The opera, sung in English translation by Henry Reese, was performed with very few cuts. It was produced by R. Wellington Jones. Reverend Charles Amstein gave informative narrations between scenes.

The large cast included Alicia Alexander (Tatiana), Louise Mike (Filipvenya), Ko Kaiden (Onegin), Edward Bruce Stevenson (Levski), Ladie Whitaker (Larina), Maria Myhrberg (Olga), William Himmelbauer (Prince Gremin), John Nelson (A Peasant) and Stephen Whitley (The Captain). Clarence McMillan and Erec Njal added lively dance steps.

Each year our pastor, the Reverend Dr. Byron E. Shafer, makes a show-stopping cameo appearance. This year he appeared as Monsieur Triquet, singing with beguiling tone in impeccable French with flair and panache, Dr. Shafer once again triumphed.

Special mention must be made of the chorus who sang and acted with great enthusiasm and vigor.

All of the singing was of the highest level of professionalism. The entire performance was held together by pianist/conductor Christina Stanescu. She played with beautiful tone and in the Russian style. The ensemble was always together - a remarkable feat.

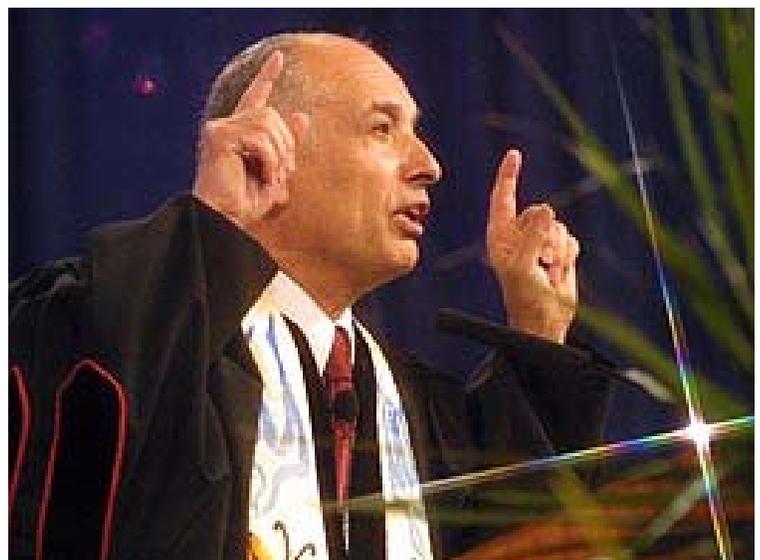
The board of deacons hosted a gala reception on the 5th Floor following the performance.

The afternoon must be considered a total triumph! Congratulations to all!

there are more Presbyterians in Korea than in the whole of the United States. He said the same is true of Kenya and the Middle East.

Abu-Akel said God is helping us by sending the world to our doorstep in the United States. And he supported the Mission Initiative, the PC(USA) campaign to raise \$40 million for international mission and new churches in this country, especially in racial-ethnic communities.

Inviting participants to the Communion table, he said: "This is the Lord's table. The Lord is the host. We are the guests."



The Reverend Fahed Abu-Akel preaches his sermon

Continued from page 3 >>

joyce over that and celebrate it. Luke's story tells of a small, leaderless band of disciples who shared the good news by the power of the Holy Spirit—with the result that by the day's end 3,000 new followers accepted the invitation to be baptized.

Second, God created a multicultural church. Let us rejoice over that and celebrate it. When the good news was first proclaimed by the disciples it was proclaimed not just in their own language, Aramaic, but also in the languages of all nations. On any given Sunday in the Presbytery of New York City, liturgy is conducted in about a dozen different languages! That is true multiculturalism—liturgy and scripture in the languages of all peoples.

The renewal of the covenant that took place on the Day of Pentecost around the year 30 was not just a renewal of the covenant with Israel. It was also the establishment of a new covenant, a covenant with *all* nations.

Third, God created an enthusiastic church. Let us rejoice over that and celebrate it. The new followers were baptized not only with water but also with the Holy Spirit. And they became so enthusiastic, so lively, so spirited that people thought they were drunk on new wine. Jesus is new wine. Jesus is an intoxicating, effervescent teacher of the freedom of God's Spirit. God gave birth to a church that is *intended* to live in ferment. God created a church whose new, fermenting wine

cannot be contained in old, inelastic wineskins. Jesus' wine needs new, elastic wineskins. The essence of the church is to change and grow through the power of the Holy Spirit.

And fourth, God created a prophetic church. Let us rejoice over that and celebrate it. To be filled with the wind and fire of the Spirit is to continue the ancient tradition of prophecy, visions, and dreams. On Pentecost, Jesus' disciples received the gift of prophecy—the power of the Spirit to witness and to speak to peoples in their own languages, the power of the Spirit to speak to the spiritual and moral issues of the time. By the power of the Spirit, God's gift of prophecy, and of visions, and of dreams was given to the whole church.

As a part of that church, you and I have inherited that prophetic mantle. You and I are called to envision humankind's future. You and I are expected to have the vigor, urgency, and moral stamina of the prophets, so that we can call all of humankind to actualize the prophetic vision of peace and justice on earth.

When God created the Church on Pentecost, God created a welcoming church, a multicultural church, an enthusiastic church, a prophetic church.

Weeks, wine, wind, and water. What a day Pentecost was — and *is!* Praise God. Alleluia!

On any given Sunday in the Presbytery of New York City, liturgy is conducted in about a dozen different languages!

You and I are called to envision humankind's future. You and I are expected to have the vigor, urgency, and moral stamina of the prophets...





## More Light Presbyterians Celebrate Diversity, Take on Hate Crimes at GA

reproduced from PC (USA) Newswire



James Byrd, Jr.'s death became one of the most notorious hate crimes in U.S. history.

Three groups working for the full inclusion of gay and lesbian Presbyterians in church leadership —More Light Presbyterians, That All May Freely Serve and the Shower of Stoles Project — celebrated the lives and ministries of homosexuals in the Presbyterian Church (USA) at a dinner meeting at the Hyatt Regency Hotel.

Jim Rigby, the pastor of St. Andrews Presbyterian Church, of Austin, TX, a More Light congregation, spoke on "Turning the Page from Pain to Hope," relating how he and a family in his congregation worked together for the passage of a Hate Crime Protection Law in Texas.

The family is that of James Byrd Jr., an African-American who in 1998 was the victim of one of the most notorious hate crimes in U.S. history. Three white men picked him up in downtown Austin, beat him severely, then tied him to the bumper of a truck and dragged him along a country road until he was dead.

James Byrd Sr. appeared with Rigby in a room festooned with more

than 200 colorful stoles symbolizing the inclusion of gays and lesbians and other minorities in the church.

A new annual award established in the memory of the Rev. Howard B. Warren, a founder of the Presbyterian AIDS Network, was presented to Rigby.

Warren, a former director of pastoral care at the Damien Center in Indianapolis, IN, was a long-time General Assembly advocate for people with HIV/AIDS. He died on March 14.

Another award was presented to Mitzi Henderson, an elder at First Presbyterian Church, of Palo Alto, CA, in recognition of her service as a co-moderator of More Life Presbyterians.

Another More Life leader, Rosemarie Wallace, of Mesa, AZ, was the recipient of the annual David Sindt Leadership Award.

Thirteen churches in Hudson River Presbytery who have dissented from PC(USA) policies on gays and lesbians in church leadership were presented Inclusive Church Awards for 2003.

### On a Lighter Note...

There were two men shipwrecked on an island. The minute they got onto the island, one of them started screaming and yelling, "We're going to die! There's no food! No water! We're going to die!"

The second man was propped up against a palm tree and acting so calmly it drove the first man crazy. "Don't you understand?! We're going to die!"

The second man replied, "I make \$100,000 a week."

The first man looked at him quite dumbfounded and asked, "What difference does that make?! We're on an island with no food and no water!"

The second man answered, "I make \$100,000 a week and I tithe 10 percent on that \$100,000 a week. My pastor will come and find me!"

\*\*\*\*\*

A man was in front of me coming out of church one day, and the preacher was standing at the door as he always is to shake hands. He grabbed the man by the hand and pulled him aside. The Pastor said to him, "You need to join the Army of the Lord!"

The man replied, "I'm already in the Army of the Lord, Pastor."

The Pastor questioned, "How come I don't see you except at Christmas and Easter?"

He whispered back, "I'm in the secret service."

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A little boy was afraid of the dark. One night his mother told him to go out in the yard and bring her the broom.

The little boy turned to his mother and said, "Mama, I don't want to go out there. It's dark."

The mother smiled reassuringly at her son. "You don't have to be afraid of the dark," she explained. "Jesus is out there. He'll look after you and protect you."

The little boy looked at his mother real hard and asked, "Are you sure he's out there?"

"Yes, I'm sure. He is everywhere, and he is always ready to help you when you need him," she said.

The little boy thought about that for a minute and then went to the back door and cracked it a little. Peering out into the darkness, he called:

"Jesus? If you're out there, would you please hand me the broom?"

## AIDS "Wiping Out a Generation" in Africa, GA hears reproduced from PC (USA) Newswire

The two women who coordinate Presbyterian Church (USA) efforts against AIDS in Africa brought a familiar but harrowing story to the annual International Health Breakfast.

Janet Guyer, the AIDS coordinator for southern and eastern Africa, and Carol Weinberg, the coordinator for central and west Africa, began with the observation that 14,000 people are infected with HIV/AIDS every day - 95 percent of them in developing countries, most in sub-Saharan Africa. Of the worldwide total of 41 million people with the virus, they said, more than 29 million are in Africa, where infection rates are still

rising and the disease is "wiping out a generation."

While showing heartening slides of Presbyterians and others engaged in AIDS-education and -prevention programs in Africa, they recounted the sorrowful statistics: Ethiopia has five million AIDS orphans, Malawi nearly one million, Congo 2.7 million.

Guyer, a PC(USA) pastor, asked rhetorically, "How can the church be the church in Africa in response to AIDS?" She and Weinberg, a nurse, described a number of programs in which the PC(USA) works through partner churches in Africa that are becoming ever more deeply involved in education, prevention and orphan-care programs.

"We want to focus on what the (partner) churches are doing," Weinberg said. "We're just lifting that up this morning."

The co-hosts of the event were the Medical Benevolence Foundation (MBF) and the International Health Ministries program area of the Worldwide Ministries Division.

Pam Ator, associate executive director of MBF, pointed out how PC(USA)-related Project C.U.R.E. was able to respond to an appeal from Taiwan for surgical masks needed there for medical personnel caring for patients sickened by the SARS virus.

Project C.U.R.E., a PC (USA)-related program that collects tons of surplus and discarded medical supplies in the United States each year and ships

them to parts of the world where they are desperately needed, secured 5,000 masks and delivered them to Taiwan in a matter of days.

"I am not sure it gets any better than this," Ator said. "I'm not sure God would have asked for anything more - or expected anything less."

She pointed out that the money that pays for the foundation's work represents "gifts from hundreds of Presbyterian congregations and individuals."

The breakfast organizers distributed information on a number of Extra Commitment Opportunity (ECO) accounts through which Presbyterians can support the fight against AIDS, among them: ECO#051674, AIDS Orphans and Vulnerable Children in Africa; ECO#051700, Home-Based Care Kits in Africa; and ECO# 051701, AIDS Mother-to-Child Transmission Prevention.

Guyer said the experience of Uganda, which reduced its AIDS infection rate in adults from 15 percent to 5 percent, proves the efficacy of the "ABC" approach, which promotes (A)bstinence, (B)eing faithful, and (C)ondom use. In Uganda, she noted, it was the churches that led the ABC campaign.

"That's it, that's my message: AIDS is prevent-

### What Do You Think? by J.M.C.

1. Why is it, when you go to a new doctor and you fill out all those forms, the doctor doesn't take the time to read the answers?
2. Rain, sleet nor snow stops you from going to or doing anything you want to do.
3. Every change in our lives lets us know we're not in control of anything.
4. Sometimes it's a blessing to have a short-term memory.
5. When you get rid of the old, it allows you to start over with new energy and more creativity.
6. Mirrors don't lie, so who are you looking at? An honest, reliable person? A liar? A cheat?
7. You have to give a person a chance to prove you're wrong.
8. Do you get the feeling that everyone thinks you have the answer to any and every situation?
9. When you find someone's lost money, you look around and pick it up, and feel happy. When you lose your money, you feel sick.
10. Even if you're tired and over worked, no one wants to hear it every time they see

## Africa Resolution Passes — After Five Years in the Making reproduced from PC (USA) Newswire

Commissioners to the 215th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (USA) on Thursday approved a “Resolution on Africa,” a document that was five years in the making and was considered one of the major items of business before the Assembly.

The Assembly voted to include background material on the resolution in the minutes of the GA, but did not agree to spend an estimated \$17,820 from the 2003 per-capita budget to have printed copies sent to every PC(USA) congregation.

The resolution calls on Presbyterians to “open ourselves to Africa afresh” and to join “with African sisters and brothers in the struggle for peace, justice, and the wholeness that is God’s will for all people.” Some of its recommendations would strengthen mission and other partnerships in Africa; increase funding for self-development of people, HIV/AIDS abatement and action against the other “diseases of poverty” (tuberculosis and malaria); and advocate for human rights.

Acting on the recommendation of the Assembly Global Ministries Committee, the commissioners voted 462-31 to approve an overture on Cuba that calls for a restoration of Board of Pensions payments to retired PC(USA) employees and their families living in the Communist country.



The Reverend Dora Arce Valentin

The Rev. Dora Arce Valentin, moderator of the Presbyterian Reformed Church in Cuba, appealed to the commissioners to help retirees without full access to their pensions because of U.S. Treasury regulations on payments to Cuba. Valentin appeared before the Global Issues Committee earlier in the week.

The Assembly agreed with a committee recommendation to remove from the overture references to the U.S. economic embargo of Cuba and the restoration of normal diplomatic relations. Jim Cook, a committee member, said “this is not the right time” to mix political issues with the need for a restoration of desperately needed pension payments.

World tensions were at the heart of debate on a commissioner’s resolution calling for prayer for Tai-

wan and action in response to the SARS-virus epidemic there. The committee amended the measure to “affirm the urgent need of the Taiwanese people for health services and information,” but removed any specific advocacy, on the advice of the Worldwide Ministries Division (WMD).

Marian McClure, the WMD director, told the commissioners that the PC(USA)’s relationships with China and Taiwan must be handled with care. She warned against using more specific language without first consulting with Christians in China and with the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan. The Assembly agreed, and defeated a substitute motion with sharper language by a vote of 435-55.

The Assembly agreed by voice vote to spend an estimated \$47,100 of 2004 per-capita funds to send an eight-member delegation to Taiwan and China in connection with a directive to “continue to monitor” issues regarding Taiwan and relations between the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan and the China Christian Council, the Republic of China (Taiwan), and the People’s Republic of China.

# 2003 movies at Rutgers

236 West 73<sup>rd</sup> Street, 5<sup>th</sup> Floor (212) 877-8227

## Thursday Evenings at 7:00pm

sponsored by the Board of Deacons

**Free Admission**

**Hosted by**

**DR. ROGER FRANKLIN**



### June 12th • Firestorm (1997) Color, 90 mins.

It's a race against time to capture escaped convicts and stop a raging forest fire becoming the one thing that every smoke-jumper fears – a firestorm! **Howie Long, Scott Glenn and Suzy Amis** are featured.

### June 19th • The Rookie (2002) Color 118 mins.

“It's never too late to believe in your dreams.” Based on a true story of a 35-year-old school teacher who broke into baseball's major leagues. You will be cheering through the ninth inning! Stars **Dennis Quaid**.

### June 26th • Lilies of the Field (1963) B&W 94 mins.

**Sidney Poitier** won an Oscar as an amiable wanderer “coerced” by the Mother Superior (**Lila Scala**) of an impoverished order of German nuns, to build a chapel for them in the Arizona desert. You'll come out singing “**Amen!**” with them.

### Sept. 4th • Duck Soup (1933) B&W, 77 mins

Political satire and wild humor that was ahead of its time, with **Margaret Dumont, Louis Calhern, Raquel Torres and Edgar Kennedy**. “*The quintessential Marx Brothers classic!*” – Video Movie Guide 2001.

### Sept. 11th • A Night at the Opera (1935) B&W, 92 mins.

Considered by many to be the best of the Marx Brothers' films, where they take on the opera world - *Il Trovatore* will never be the same again! **Allan Jones and Kitty Carlisle** co-star, with **Margaret Dumont and Sig Rumann**.

## Deletion of "Fidelity and Chastity" Clause Fails — Again reproduced from PC (USA) Newswire

After more than three hours of debate, the Committee on Church Orders and Ministry approved an Overture Tuesday that calls for the deletion of the "fidelity and chastity" provision of the PC(USA) constitution.

If the Assembly concurs, the 173 presbyteries of the Presbyterian Church (USA) would undertake a third up-or-down vote on the measure. In previous votes after the Assemblies of 1997 and 2001, efforts to delete failed by large margins in votes of the presbyteries.

The contested provision, G-6.0106b in the Book of Order, says candidates for ordination in the Presbyterian Church (USA) must live either "in fidelity within the covenant of marriage between a man and a woman, or chastity in singleness." It is often invoked as a prohibition of the ordination of sexually active gay and lesbian candidates.

In addition to calling for the deletion of G-6.0106b, the overture would modify G-6.0106a, which describes the qualities or "gifts" a candidate for ordination should exhibit;

and adopt an "authoritative interpretation" that would in essence annul previous Assembly actions having to do with the ordination of gay and lesbian Presbyterians.

The overture, 03-07, from the Presbytery of Des Moines, was approved by a vote of 35-29-2.

Earlier, the committee defeated a motion to refer 03-07 to the Theological Task Force on Peace, Unity, and Purity of the Church. Advocates of that course intend to file a minority report.

"Do not fear sending this out to the presbyteries," said the Rev. Michael Smith, the overture advocate. "They're getting better and better about discussing it."

"Don't be concerned about the pain if it doesn't pass the presbyteries," he added. "The pain is in the waiting. It's been 25 years. Does it have to be longer?"

Among those who opposed the overture was elder Gary Clickard of the Presbytery of St. Augustine in Florida. "This is the fourth time we have considered this as a body," he said. "We should keep in mind the

people we are representing. They want G-6.0106b to remain in."

G-6.0106b was added to the Book of Order in 1997. The Assembly church orders and ministry committee referred a similar overture to the 2002 Assembly, but that Assembly refused to forward it for a presbytery vote.

Janet Sims, an elder from Grace Presbytery in Texas, was among a number of committee members who noted that the Rev. Susan R. Andrews, the newly elected moderator of the 215th General Assembly, said before her election that this is not the time to act on this issue.

"I agree with people on the other side that said there is a process in place," Sims said. "We need to give the task force time to do its work. God's delay is not God's denial. God has His own time schedule."

Sadly, the GA rejected the Committee's recommendation to delete G-6.0106b by a vote of 2 to 1.

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## Renewal is YOUR newsletter!

*Renewal* is a bi-monthly newsletter circulated to friends and members of Rutgers Presbyterian Church in New York City. The church tries to make its content relevant to you, and what we feel you want to hear about.

But we need YOUR help to see it flourish and realize its potential as a valuable supplement to the events going on in and around the church, as well as offering new takes on issues which the church takes to its heart.

The next issue of *Renewal* will be circulated after the summer in time for Homecoming Sunday. If you have ideas, articles, photographs - or just want to have your say in what you would like to see in upcoming issues, please contact Jennifer Hanson, the new executive assistant to the Pastor, at (212) 877-8227 x 213, or by e-mail at [jhanson@rutgerschurch.com](mailto:jhanson@rutgerschurch.com).

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### **GA News: Committee Urges End to Cuba Embargo** reproduced from PC(USA) Newswire

The General Assembly Committee on Global Ministries heard an impassioned plea Monday from the moderator of the Presbyterian Reformed Church in Cuba for better relations between her country and the United States.

The committee responded to the appeal from the Rev. Dora Arce Valentin by unanimously approving Overture 03-24, reaffirming the church's call "for an end to the U.S. embargo against Cuba and the restoration of diplomatic relations" between the two countries.

Valentin, speaking through an interpreter,

pleaded for the committee's help, contending that the "lock between the two peoples is reality." She reminded the commissioners that the world does not belong to any one nation, but to God. The committee members responded with a standing ovation.

The most important consequence of the strained relations between the two nations is that the Presbyterian Church (USA)'s Board of Pensions is unable to pay benefits owed to retired pastors and teachers in Cuba. U.S. regulations allow payment of only a small portion of the owed benefits.

The committee removed from the overture the call for a "restoration of normal diplomatic relations" between Cuba and the United States, to make it less political and less likely to spark opposition.

The committee approved other overtures that would: oppose Free Trade Area of the Americas legislation; call for the creation of a "list of resources" on the Middle East; urge action to prevent migrant-worker deaths along the U.S.-Mexico border; and recommend U.S. ratification of the international Convention on Climate Change and the

Kyoto Protocol, which seek to safeguard the environment, in part by reducing greenhouse-gas emissions.

The committee also approved a General Assembly Council recommendation to send a delegation to the Middle East in response to an invitation from the Synod of Syria and Lebanon, long-time PC (USA) partners. The purpose of the trip would be to correct impressions in the region that the U.S. war on Iraq is essentially a war against the Muslim world.