"Abandon hope, all ye who enter here!"—these words climax the inscription on the portal of hell imagined by the 14th-century Italian poet Dante (Inferno, canto III, l. 9).

In the Divine Comedy, Dante journeys through Hell and Purgatory, escorted by the ancient Roman poet Virgil, and then ascends upward through the regions of Heaven, escorted by his deceased loved one, Beatrice, to whom his poem is a memorial.

The allegorical theme of the Divine Comedy is the gradual revelation of God to the spiritual pilgrim, to the one whose journey begins with despair, in the realm of darkness but then moves, in hope, toward the realm of light.

The poem begins with these words: “Midway upon the journey of our life I found myself in a dark wood, where the right way was lost.” And some 14,000 lines later, having moved progressively from hell toward a light at first dim then ever fuller, Dante’s journey ends amidst the radiant glory of a beatific vision of the Supreme and Eternal Light that is God.

It’s at the point where Dante’s journey with Virgil is just getting under way that he encounters those words on the gate of Hell: “Abandon hope, all ye who enter here!” And it is those same words that certain minions of hell have been seeking to paint both on the portals of our city and on the portals of our new liturgical season, Advent—"Abandon hope! Yield to despair!"

The influential 20th-century theologian Paul Tillich argued that the temptation of our age is to abandon hope and yield to a despair brought on by our anxiety that life, at its root, is meaningless.

One sign that many in our civilization do indeed hold life at its root to be meaningless is what Douglas John Hall calls our “technicized rationalism.” By that he means that we allow scientific technique to operate in a way unanswerable to moral values. For example, a laboratory last year claimed to be able to clone human embryos, apparently because doing so is possible and doing so is potentially lucrative, whether or not doing so is morally good.

Another sign that many in our civilization hold life at its root to be meaningless is what Dr. Hall calls our “unlimited exploitation of the natural order.” By that he means that we in the West seek to sustain a lifestyle of consumption that could not be maintained were all the world’s citizens given equal access to Earth’s natural resources.

A study completed in 2001 at the University of...
General Assembly Budgets Slashed
reproduced from Presbyterian (USA) Newswire

Unexpected expenses and a scaled back investment income formula mean a total of at least $5 million is going to have to be trimmed from the next two General Assembly mission budgets — at least $1 million in 2003 and $4 million in 2004.

A similar reduction in the 2002 and 2003 budgets was made last April, resulting in the elimination of more than 50 positions at the Presbyterian Center. The 2003 mission budget approved by last June’s General Assembly totals just over $130 million. The 2004 cuts will be about 4 percent.

In messages to the General Assembly Council and national staff members last week, GAC executive director John Detterick said, “This is obviously not good news, but we are moving ahead to begin developing appropriate actions.”

Detterick said, “Because we budget so far out in advance, our figures aren’t always clear — they’re our best estimates. For 2003 and 2004 there’s a clear need for some adjustments.”

Four factors are contributing to a shortfall of somewhere between $1 million and $1.5 million next year:

* Increases of more than $400,000 in insurance premiums on the Presbyterian Center in Louisville and the PC (USA)’s conference centers in New Mexico and New York
* An increase in medical dues to the Board of Pensions — which rise 1 percent on July 1, 2003 — which will cost $100,000 next year and $200,000 in 2004 and beyond;
* Systems maintenance costs for the computer systems at the Presbyterian Center;
* A slight reduction in shared (unrestricted) mission giving from congregations and presbyteries.

Detterick insisted that giving by Presbyterians to the work of the General Assembly is “not the culprit.” On the contrary, he said, “Mission giving is relatively stable and I continue to be impressed with Presbyterians’ commitment to mission. Mission giving is not the driving concern here.”

Continued on page 4 >>>

UK Churches Urged to Embrace Harry Potter
reproduced from the AP Newswire

British and Irish churches are being urged to acknowledge the escapades of Harry Potter in their teachings, defying a global Christian trend of denouncing the boy wizard’s adventures as a corrupting force.

Many churches around the world greeted the arrival of the bewitching best-seller with ceremonial book-burnings and angry sermons, leading to criticism that they have lost touch with the modern world.

An independent report "Presence and Prophecy" commissioned by Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CBTI) said on Wednesday the stories posed some serious theological questions and were an example of the type of popular culture Christians should embrace.

“We’re not trying to Christianize Harry Potter,” Simon Barrow, CBTI Assistant General Secretary told Reuters on Wednesday. "But the books deal with serious, adult issues -- the struggle for love, truth and self-giving sacrifice for others."

CBTI is an umbrella organization for British and Irish churches, including the Church of England. The report will be debated by the Church of England’s General Synod next month.

The tale of the schoolboy sorcerer has sparked off a storm in the United States, but also in Australia, where the book was banned from 60 church schools.

Harry has been roundly denounced from the pulpit in Bulgaria, Germany and Taiwan.

“There have been some Christians who get very upset about this and say Harry Potter is leading people into the occult," said Barrow. "But Christians, rather than standing around and being snitty about this, should actually be immersed in this culture.”

A new book by U.S. author Connie Neal "The Gospel according to Harry Potter" concurs, describing 52 examples in Harry Potter of what she describes as "glimmers of the gospel."

Barrow quoted from a booklet "Transparencies," which was published alongside the 241-page "Presence and Prophecy" report: "How can we use popular interest in Harry’s story to ask people to think again about the selfish material world and the presence within it of Christian values?"

"Is this just to be a magic world in a story book? Or can it point toward the world that we really want to make a reality?"

The book "Girlfriend in a Coma" by Douglas Coupland is also lauded, as is "The Muppets Christmas Carol" television show.
Advent is a season when we, like Dante, are to start a spiritual journey upward, a pilgrimage in the company of wise guides from the old to the new, from the past to the not-yet, from the dark woods of this bad-old world to the enveloping light of the goodness and compassion of God.

Yes, Advent is a time for pilgrimage, a season for us, like Dante, to be on the move from the darkness of despair toward the light of hope, from the grim realities of this day toward the light of the One who is able to transform the world into a place of justice and peace. Advent is a time for us to journey toward the glorious God whose light will beam from the face of a newborn babe.

So let us during this season move beyond despair toward the light, the light symbolized for us by the candles lighted during Advent! Let us move on toward recovering the Christian vision of Heaven on Earth, the Christian vision that life’s meaning is to be found in establishing here on earth God’s just and loving will!
Children’s Entertainer Seeks Sanctuary at Rutgers!

Children’s entertainer Laurie Berkner shone as she took center stage in the Rutgers Sanctuary late this summer.

In her second appearance at Rutgers, Laurie had double the audience she had for her first visit - 321 adults and children filled the Sanctuary and sang along - with all the proceeds going to benefit the children in the Room to Grow project.

Body and Spirit hopes to provide two concerts a year starting in 2003 with different performers - but we all hope Laurie can come back too!

Body and Spirit Director Diane Nicole said: “It was a wonderful use of the sanctuary on a Saturday, and great to see over 300 people truly enjoying themselves at a community event!”

Investment income — which accounts for about two-thirds of the General Assembly’s revenue — is, however. And in 2004, the formula by which money flows from the church’s investments — most of which are administered for the denomination by the Presbyterian Church (USA) Foundation — is dropping from 6 percent of the average balance of funds to 5 percent.

Two other changes in the formula will have a lesser financial impact: calculating the payout on a rolling five-year average rather than a fixed five year average (which Detterick said will make the payout more closely follow market trends) and calculating the payout on June 30 rather than Dec. 31 each year (which will make budgeting more precise).

“The bottom line is that the new spending formula will mean that our revenues for 2004 will be about $2.5 million less than in 2003,” Detterick told the GAC in his “weekly letter.” He said the shortfall will be about equally divided between the unrestricted and restricted portions of the budget and “is entirely due to the impact of the drop in market values of investments.”

Asked how the impending budget cuts stack up against last April’s, Detterick said “we realized significant savings from tightening up operations last spring, so we won’t be able to save that much this time."

“In the past our tendency has been to simply spread existing work thinner,” Detterick added. “That’s not healthy. Last year and this year, we’re striving not to do that.”

Financial woes … cont. from page 2 >>
In the recent debate in Congress over giving President Bush authority to use force against Iraq, Rep. Eva Clayton, a North Carolina Democrat who also is a Presbyterian elder, turned to her church for guidance.

Members of Clayton's staff included in her briefing materials a statement of the Presbyterian Church (USA)'s position on Iraq, which calls for restraint and opposes a preemptive military strike.

Clayton, a member of Cotton Memorial Presbyterian Church in Henderson, NC, said the denomination's view was an important factor in her decision to vote against the controversial measure on Oct. 10.

"It was certainly a part of my deliberation," Clayton told the Presbyterian News Service by phone a few days later. "It was part of my reflection, and I appreciate it. I'm delighted where we are called to overcome 'evil with good.'"

Last summer the General Assembly of the PC(USA) called on the U.S. government to exercise restraint. Last month the General Assembly Council endorsed "A Call to Prayer and Action," urging Presbyterians to oppose a precipitate U.S. attack on Iraq and Bush's "new doctrine of pre-emptive military action."

"It was strengthening to me as a Presbyterian to see where my church was," Clayton said. "I was reassured by that."

Despite her vote against the authorization bill, it was approved in the House by a vote of 296 to 133, giving Bush authority to attack if Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein refuses to give up weapons of mass destruction as demanded by United Nations resolutions. Hours later, the Senate approved an identical measure, 77-23.

Of the 43 Presbyterians in the House and Senate - 26 Republicans and 17 Democrats - only 10 voted against the resolution.

Of the House's 33 Presbyterian members, 24 voted in favor of the authorization bill, among them John Linder (R-GA), Carolyn B. Maloney (D-NY) and Jim Ryun (R-KS). Those who voted against included John J. Duncan Jr. (R-TN), Thomas M. Reynolds (R-NY) and Lynn C. Woolsey (D-CA).

In the Senate, nine of 10 Presbyterians - seven Republicans and two Democrats - voted for the resolution, and only one voted no: Mark Dayton (D-MN). Among those who voted for the measure were Christopher Bond (R-MO), Jon Kyl (R-AZ) and John D. Rockefeller IV (D-WV).

The Bush administration claims that Saddam has kept a stockpile of chemical and biological weapons and continued his efforts to develop nuclear weapons, in violation of U.N. resolutions.

Those who opposed the use-of-force authorization cited a host of reasons, including doubts about Iraq's nuclear potential, fear that military action would divert attention and resources from the war on global terrorism, and their constituents' opposition to war.

Presbyterian Sen. Richard Shelby (R-AL), the ranking Republican on the Senate Intelligence Committee, voted for the resolution, saying, "I support this resolution because the threat posed by the brutal dictatorship of Saddam Hussein is real, immediate and growing."

He said the Iraqi leader has a deadly array of conventional, chemical and biological weapons, and is "doing everything in his power" to acquire nuclear arms.

"Saddam has developed the ability to deliver his poisons and pestilence by unmanned aerial vehicles that can easily be smuggled into the United States," said Shelby, a member of First Presbyterian Church in Tuscaloosa, AL.

Shelby said his position regarding the resolution was not influenced by PC(USA) policy.

A spokesperson for Presbyterian Rep. Ken Bentsen (D-TX), who voted for the measure, said he agonized over his decision but concluded that Congress should "speak with one voice."

"He felt that this was the appropriate course of action, although not the best way to go," said Dominic Nguyen, Bentsen's assistant for foreign affairs and defense issues. "He feels that for the sake of national resolve, he should support the president on this."

Bentsen, a member of First Presbyterian Church in Houston, TX, has "grave con-
Three Episcopal priests, all fans of the Irish rock band U2, are looking for sermons and homilies based on the supergroup’s lyrics for a book they hope to publish.

“This is not a book trying to prove anything about U2 themselves,” the Reverend Beth Maynard told the Presbyterian News Service in an email about the project. “This is a book of examples of how religious leaders are integrating spiritually informed pop culture into their proclamation of the gospel.”

One of the band’s biggest hits, “I Still Haven’t Found What I’m Looking For,” has lead singer Bono seemingly on a quest for God. He sings: “I believe in the kingdom come, Then all the colors will bleed into one.”

On “God Part II” he begins: “Don’t believe the devil I don’t believe his book, But the truth is not the same Without the lies he made up.”

And in the band’s most recent studio album, “All That You Leave Behind,” the track “Peace on Earth” has Bono pleading: “Heaven on Earth, we need it now, I’m sick of all of this hanging around.”

Maynard’s collaborators are the Rev. Raewynne Whiteley and the Rev. Mike Kinman. Their working title — borrowed from a U2 song — is Get Up Off Your Knees: Preaching the U2 Catalog.

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Presbyterian War Vote continued from page 5 >>

cerns” about the administration’s “proclivity for unilateral action,” Nguyen said, but is hopeful that it will “pursue every diplomatic option and venue available” before going to war.

Nguyen said he didn’t know whether the congressman’s religious beliefs affected his decision.

Dayton, the only Presbyterian in the Senate to vote against the resolution, told the Minneapolis Star Tribune that he had “no illusions” about the threat posed by Saddam Hussein’s arsenal, and no doubt that an attack might one day be necessary, but had heard nothing during a weeklong debate to “persuade him that the Senate needed to act in advance of any specific military plan.”

[For the PC(USA) official stand on the possibility of war in Iraq, see p. 9]

Here’s how all the Presbyterians in Congress voted on the measure:

**U.S. House of Representatives**

**Yes** - Ken Bentsen (D-TX), Shelley Moore Capito (R-WV), Howard Coble (R-NC), Jo Ann Emerson (R-MO), Bobby R. Etheridge (D-NC), Porter J. Goss (R-FL), Jim Greenwood (R-PA), Robin Hayes (R-NC), Joel Hefley (R-CO), Sue W. Kelly (R-NY), Jerry Lewis (R-CA), John Linder (R-GA), Carolyn B. Maloney (D-NY), Mike McIntyre (D-NC), George Nethercutt (R-WA), Earl Pomeroy (D-NC), Deborah Pryce (R-OH), Thomas M. Reynolds (R-NY), Jim Ryun (R-KS), John M. Spratt Jr. (D-SC), Cliff Stearns (R-FL), William M. Thornberry (R-TX), Wes Watkins (R-OH), Frank R. Wolf (R-VA)

**No** - Eva Clayton (D-NC), Diana DeGette (D-CO), John J. Duncan Jr. (R-TN), Nick Joe Rahall II (D-WV), Victor F. Snyder (D-AR), Thomas C. Sawyer (D-OH), Melvin Watt (D-NC), Lynn C. Woolsey (D-CA), David Wu (D-OR)

**U.S. Senate**

**Yes** - George Allen (R-VA), Christopher Bond (R-MO), Thomas Carper (D-DE), Mike Enzi (R-WY), Bill Frist (R-TN), James M. Inhofe (R-OK), Jon Kyl (R-AZ), John D. Rockefeller IV (D-WV), Richard Shelby (R-AL)

**No** - Mark Dayton (D-MN)
From the Pastor's Desk... continued from page 3 >>

sion of his spiritual journey from Hell through Purgatory and then upward through Paradise.

Dante tells us of encountering there in the highest Heaven the fullness of the Eternal Light whose depth encloses all that is, binding everything together by love in one simple Light (Paradiso, canto XXXIII, ll. 67ff). And, says Dante, in that light where everything Good is collected, a person is changed, such that he or she will never again consent to turn from that light to any other sight.

This Advent may we, too, come to the light and be changed, so that God may shine through us and make us incandescent—like Augustine and Dante, bright and visible witnesses to God in a grim and anxious world.

Walking the Iron: Native American Day
by Mary Birchard

In recognition of Native American Day on Monday, September 23, I gave a “Moment for Mission” at Rutgers Church to talk about a group of Native American New Yorkers – the Mohawks.

They have lived in upstate New York and Canada for 1000 years. That would place their early settlements in the 8th century.

Mohawks belong to the Six Nations Iroquois Confederacy. Their social system is matrarchal, and relies on a clan structure. Decisions are made through consensus; Thomas Jefferson is known to have studied this early democratic system.

Mohawks have served in both world wars, as well as in the Korean, Vietnam and Gulf conflicts.

They are perhaps best known for their skills as iron-workers. Mohawks first took up this trade in the latter part of the 19th century – some said because they had a good sense of balance and were unafraid of heights. Kyle Karonhiaktatle Beauvais, a Mohawk, said: “We have as much fear as the next guy. The difference is we deal with it better. There’s pride in walking iron.”

One of their first projects was the bridge that crosses the St. Lawrence River at Montreal, built in the 1880s. More well-known is their work on skyscrapers, not just in New York, but across the world.

Here in New York City, which was once Mohawk territory, their early prominence came when Mohawks worked on the Empire State Building, completed in 1931, the George Washington Bridge, also finished in 1931, Rockefeller Center in the 1930s and of course the World Trade Center in the 1960s and 70s.

At the foot of Broadway in the old Customs House, now housing the National Museum of the American Indian, a photographic exhibit of these iron-workers entitled Booming Out was a fascinating and moving display. It has since been replaced.

Poignantly the photographs picture the workers constructing the Trade Center.

After September 11, the sons and nephews of these workers returned to help dismantle the wreckage of the buildings. The Mohawks continue to work on other new buildings in New York.

An Iroquois Thanksgiving Prayer
We return thanks to our mother the earth, which sustains us.
We return thanks to the rivers and streams, which supply us with water.
We return thanks to all herbs, which furnish medicine for the cure of our diseases.
We return thanks to the moon and the stars, which have given us their light.
We return thanks to the sun, which has looked upon the earth with beneficence.
Lastly, we return thanks to God, the Great Spirit, in whom is enthroned all goodness, who directs all things for the good of her children. Amen.
Fewer than 400 people showed up for Gathering VII, the annual Roman-numerated “super bowl” of Presbyterian evangelicals.

That’s not necessarily bad news for the sponsoring Presbyterian Coalition, however.

In his “state of the church” address, the Rev. Jerry Andrews, a former co-moderator of the Coalition, said, “There’s a part of me that’s thankful that our turnout is down this year.” Characterizing last year’s meeting, attended by about 1,200 evangelicals, as a “Presbyterian Fire Drill,” he said this year’s more placid atmosphere reflected the fact that the evangelical wing of the Presbyterian Church (USA) “had such a good year last year in our fight in the presbyteries.”

The “fire” the Coalition was organizing to put out last year was Amendment A, a measure that would have removed from the PC(USA)’s constitution a provision - G-6.0106b - requiring that candidates for ordination “live either in fidelity within the covenant of marriage between a man and a woman, or chastity in singleness.” Proponents of the amendment hoped to clear the way for the ordination of gay and lesbian Presbyterians.

“My how things have changed in 12 months,” Andrews said. “Carmen Fowler is no longer in a presbytery, the constitution is no longer being upheld …”

Those are the issues that came up repeatedly during the Gathering: the recent refusal of Central Florida Presbytery to admit the Reverend Carmen Fowler, the Coalition’s executive director, to membership; and the several public announcements by local sessions around the country that they will not abide by G-6.0106b.

The Reverend J. Howard Edington, the pastor of First Presbyterian Church of Orlando, the host congregation for the Gathering (for the second year in a row), said his 5,500-member church “is being battered by this presbytery” and is a victim of “blatant persecution” at the hands of “a very small group of people that is making life miserable for us” and seems determined “to halt or hinder” its mission.

The presbytery ruled that Fowler “intentionally abandoned the exercise of ministry” when she left Rabun Gap Church in Georgia to take the job with the Coalition, which is not a “validated ministry” of the PC (USA).

Edington’s church has granted Fowler the privilege of preaching and sharing in other pastoral duties. “Our congregation loves her,” he said.

The Coalition headquarters is in a building at First PC.

Edington made his complaints during a workshop titled, “To Give or Not to Give, the Question of Per Capita and Mission Giving,” during which he said his church’s session decided to withhold the part of its per-capita payment that goes to support the General Assembly, about $37,000, and redirect it to a church in Brazil with which it has a formal mission relationship. He said the session was motivated in part by concern about “people on the WMD (Worldwide Ministries Division) who do not believe that Jesus Christ is the only savior.”

Edington noted that his church has continued to pay the portion of per-capita that goes to support the presbytery - but said it may withhold that, too. “If that happens,” he said, “this presbytery will be in serious financial jeopardy.” Edington said the church has asked to discuss the situation with the presbytery, but “to this day, no one from the presbytery has made the first contact.”

Laurel Blanchard, an elder from Portland, OR, who called Fowler “a new spiritual heroine” of hers, at one point called Fowler to the front of the sanctuary and had a crowd of about 20 people lay hands on her. Blanchard asked God to give PC (USA) evangelicals “the ability to be as wise as serpents and gentle as doves,” and to “call upon the warring angels to be with this congregation.”

Regarding the ordination issue, Andrews pointed out that “the church has spoken” three times now, upholding the “fidelity/chastity” provision by 20 (presbytery) votes in 1997, 60 votes in 1998 and 80 votes in 2001. He said the church “is becoming more confident and comfortable in its own commitment,” and has made G-6.0106b “one of the most successfully defended paragraphs in our Book of Order.”

Andrews said the church’s “legislative season” may be nearing its end, giving way to a “pastoral and administrative season” that will bring “a critical and careful re-examination of the belief of the church.” He said that, although the PC(USA) is experiencing a period of relative peace, “Our common life is not happy.” The church has embraced “peace, but not the truth on which the peace is based,” he said, and its current amity is based on “love of unity and dread of schism” rather than “love of truth and dread of error.”

“The church has not succeeded in defending its own constitut-

Continued on page 13 >>
The 214th General Assembly (2002) took the following action relative to Iraq:

"Based on our Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)’s Commitment to Peacemaking, the 214th General Assembly (2002):

- reaffirms actions of previous General Assemblies calling for the lifting of economic sanctions; and
- urges the United States government to exercise restraint in its contemplated military action against Iraq."

The two previous actions that called for the lifting of economic sanctions were taken by the 210th and 212th General Assemblies (1998 and 2000). These actions included the following public policy provisions that called for:

- the ending of all economic sanctions against Iraq that make it difficult or impossible for essential items to reach the people of Iraq (The 212th General Assembly further called "upon the United Nations to lift the sanctions immediately and upon the United States government to abandon its insistence on continuing them.");
- the maintaining of safeguards, such as military sanctions, that are designed to prevent the government of Iraq from acquiring or developing the means of mass destruction, in such a manner as not to prevent the delivery of items mentioned above;
- comprehensive efforts by the United Nations, the United States, and the governments of the Middle East to remove all weapons of mass destruction from that region, as part of the worldwide effort to eliminate such weapons and end their development;
- the government of Iraq to redirect its resources from developing and deploying instruments of destruction to enterprises that will benefit the Iraqi people;
- all parties involved to actively and wholeheartedly seek a negotiated solution based on diplomacy and not violence, peace and not war.

In light of the foregoing affirmations and the guidance of our General Assembly, the General Assembly Council of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.):

Calls upon all Presbyterians to

- pray for the leaders of the United States, Iraq, and the members of the United Nations, that they may receive the wisdom that leads to peace, not war, and that results in renewed commitment to use their great resources for the alleviation of poverty, hunger, and disease, and the rebuilding of the lives, communities, and nations that already have been destroyed by war;
- pray that Saddam Hussein will cooperate fully as United Nations weapons inspectors prepare to re-enter Iraq and will stop the oppression of his own people and threats of violence against neighboring states;
- pray for all who are fearful over the prospect of war, especially the families of all who will be placed in harm’s way in the event of military action, whether covert or in open warfare;
- pray for the Iraqi people who have been not only victimized by a repressive government, but also devastated by more than a decade of destructive and ineffectual economic sanctions;
- urge restraint on the part of our own government by communicating to each one’s Congressional representatives the policies of our General Assembly, and especially our desire for negotiated solutions to international problems rather than the resort to military violence.

Calls upon our President, Vice-President, Secretary of State, Secretary of Defense, National Security Advisor, Attorney General, and Congressional leaders to:

- speak in ways that encourage peace, rather than war, and refrain from language that seems to label certain individuals and nations as “evil” and others as “good;”
- oppose ethnic and religious stereotyping, affirming the value of all United States citizens and others around the world who embrace the visions of peace found in Islam and other faith traditions;
- guard against a unilateralism, rooted in our unique position of political, economic, and military power, that perpetuates the perception that “might makes right,” and sets us over against the larger community of nations;
- allow the decisions of the United Nations regarding the return of weapons inspectors to Iraq to run their appropriate course without undue pressure or threats of pre-emptive, unilateral action in the meantime by the United States against Saddam Hussein or Iraq;
- end the economic sanctions, which have been an ineffectual weapon against Saddam Hussein but have done untold damage to the Iraqi people, especially to the children.

Commends to individuals and groups this call to prayer and action and the resources on the PC(USA) Web site (www.pcsusa.org) as a help in determining how God is leading each to respond to this international crisis.
# Thanksgiving, Advent, and Christmas Calendar

* = Child Care Available

### November 24

**Reign of Christ Sunday; Stewardship Sunday**
- * 9:45 am Adult and Youth Class: "Christian Basics"
- * 11:00 am Worship, Dr. Shafer preaching

### November 27

**7:30 pm West Side Interfaith Service of Thanksgiving**
St. Paul & St. Andrew United Methodist Church, West End Avenue at West 86th Street

### December 1

**First Sunday of Advent**
- * 9:45 am Adult Class: "Who Is Mary?"
- 9:45 am Youth Class
- * 11:00 am Worship, Dr. Shafer preaching
- 11:15 am Sunday School for ages 3 through 9

### December 4

**First Wednesday of Advent**
- 12:15 pm Advent Lectionary Bible Study
- 6:30 pm Mid-week Candlelight Vespers
- 7:15 pm Advent Study: "Who Is Mary?"

### December 8

**Second Sunday of Advent—Holy Communion**
- * 9:45 am Adult Class: "Who Is Mary?"
- 9:45 am Youth Class
- * 11:00 am Worship, Dr. Shafer preaching
- 11:15 am Sunday School for ages 3 through 9

### December 11

**Second Wednesday of Advent**
- 12:15 pm Advent Lectionary Bible Study
- 6:30 pm Mid-week Candlelight Vespers
- 7:15 pm Advent Study: "Who Is Mary?"

### December 14

**2:00 pm Hanging of the Greens in the Sanctuary**

### December 15

**Third Sunday of Advent**
- * 9:45 am Adult Class: "Who Is Mary?"
- 9:45 am Youth Class
- * 11:00 am Worship, Elder Cheryl Pyrch preaching
- 11:15 am Sunday School for ages 3 through 9
- 12:45 pm All-Church Christmas Party and Luncheon

### December 18

**Third Wednesday of Advent**
- 12:15 pm Advent Lectionary Bible Study
- 6:30 pm Mid-week Candlelight Vespers
- 7:15 pm Advent Study: "Who Is Mary?"

### December 22

**Fourth Sunday of Advent**
- * 11:00 am Worship, Dr. Shafer preaching
- 11:15 am Sunday School for ages 3 through 9
- * 4:00 pm **76th Annual Candlelight Carol Service**, with choir, organ, and brass ensemble

### December 24

**Christmas Eve**
- * 6:00 pm Caroling on the Church Steps
- * 6:30 pm **Christmas Eve Candlelight Service**
  - Dr. Shafer preaching, with choir, organ, and brass quartet
- 8:00 pm Christmas Eve Reception

### December 25

**Christmas Day observances in the home**

### December 29

**First Sunday after Christmas**
- * 11:00 am Worship, 6th Annual Christmas Carol Songfest
- 11:15 am Sunday School for ages 3 through 9

### January 5

**Second Sunday after Christmas; Celebration of the Epiphany**
- * 9:45 am Youth and Adult Classes
- * 11:00 am Worship, Dr. Shafer preaching
- 11:15 am Sunday School for ages 3 through 9

### January 12

**Baptism of the Lord Sunday—Renewal of Baptismal Vows, Holy Communion**
- * 9:45 am Youth and Adult Classes
- * 11:00 am Worship, Dr. Shafer preaching
- 11:15 am Sunday School for ages 3 through 9
Rutgers Included in List of “Defiant” Churches
by Adam Keeble

Rutgers Presbyterian Church was named as one of 18 churches defying, or willing to defy, the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (USA) in a widely-circulated newsletter and website.

The Presbyterian Layman searched websites of More Light Churches, and found 18 whose leaders declared “they have violated, or intend to violate one of more of the constitutional provisions.”

The article adds: “Only a fraction of the 100-plus More Light Churches have websites, which means there might be many others in defiance whose ‘mission’ statements are not in the public domain.”

Among the standards the churches violate are, according to the Layman:

1. The "fidelity/chastity" ordination standard.
2. The prohibition against "marrying" same-gender couples.
3. The admission of members who declare that they are not Christian, but agnostic.
4. The proclamation that there are other "gateways" to God besides Jesus.
5. Open communion in which non-Christians are served the elements.

The full list named by The Layman is:

1. First and Franklin Street Presbyterian Church of Baltimore, Md. The congregation’s mission statement says that its "active members of our Church are entitled to vote and hold office." The statement emphasizes that policy includes people who would otherwise be disqualified under G-6.0106(b), the "fidelity/chastity" ordination standard. "We regret that G-6.0106(b) seeks to impose unprecedented requirements on the offices of elder and deacon, and we respectfully submit that this new provision of the Book of Order improperly interferes with our congregation’s inalienable right to elect its officers."

2 & 3. Two congregations – Sausalito Presbyterian Church in Sausalito, Calif., and McKinley Church and Foundation in Champaign, Ill., ascribe to eight principles of the Center for Progressive Christianity. Those eight principles are contrary to a number of constitutional standards.

4. Church of the Pilgrims in Washington, D.C.: "There is but one requirement for membership in the Presbyterian Church (USA), and that is acceptance and public proclamation of Jesus Christ as one's Lord and Savior. There are no other rules to bar or restrict membership. All persons, regardless of race, gender, religious heritage, nationality, sexual orientation, political persuasion, economic status, educational level, or physical health and ability are welcome in the church. ... All members are asked to serve in ways that reflect their abilities ... and, when called by the church, ordination as ministers, elders, or deacons."

5. West Presbyterian Church in Wilmington, Del.: "We covenant together to elect, ordain, and install as officers those members with suitable gifts who are called to ministry, who are persons of strong faith, exhibit dedicated discipleship, and share our love of Jesus Christ, and whose manner of life is a demonstration of the Christian gospel in the church and the world, without additional requirements or restrictions. Further, we covenant to uphold the constitution of the Presbyterian Church (USA) in all its provisions, except G-6.0106(b)."

6. Riviera Presbyterian Church, Miami, Fla.: "Membership in Riviera Presbyterian Church is open to all who confess Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. Because we believe that God makes no distinction among people, we welcome members into the church's ministries and ordained offices without regard to race or ethnic background, economic or social circumstances, gender, sexual orientation, marital status or disability."

7. Westminster Presbyterian Church in Tiburon, Calif.: "Welcomes into membership and the offices of the church all persons of faith, regardless of race, nationality, gender, sexual orientation or level of education, income, or other human conditions."

8. First United Church in Oak Park, Ill. – Presbyterian Church (USA) and United Church of Christ: "We welcome gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered people into the full life and ministry of the church."

9. Church of the Covenant in Boston, Mass. (United Church of Christ and the Presbyterian Church (USA): "A church which welcomes all persons into the life, membership and leadership of its congregation on an equal basis." In 1995, the church publicly proclaimed its stance on same-sex unions, saying, "We are called to name that these marriages/unions hold the same legitimacy and value as those weddings we traditionally have participated in throughout the his-

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tory of the church."

10. Northside Presbyterian Church in Ann Arbor, Mich.: "We invite everyone—regardless of gender identity, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, socio-economic status, or other worldly condition—to fully join us in worship, leadership, and community."

11. Trinity Presbyterian Church in New York City: "A congregation in which lesbian and gay persons can participate and serve fully as members and leaders. It chooses and ordains Elders and Deacons based on their character and Christian experience rather than worldly categories that separate and harm people."

12. Rutgers Presbyterian Church in New York City: "A church that welcomes individuals into full membership, including ordained offices, without regard to sexual orientation. Because we believe that all human beings are created in God’s image and are members of the Body of Christ, and because we wish to legitimize who we are, and to be explicit in what is already our common and historical practice, we … welcome and embrace all persons who seek to live faithfully into full membership and participation in the Presbyterian Church (USA), including the opportunity and the responsibility to serve in ordained leadership positions."

13. First United Presbyterian Church in Troy, N.Y.: "A church that welcomes lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender Christians into full membership and participation in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), including the opportunity and the responsibility to serve in ordained leadership positions."

14. Sixth Presbyterian Church in Pittsburgh, Pa.: "Even as the world seeks to divide us according to our economic, racial and ethnic group, age, gender, abilities, theological position, marital status, and sexual orientation, we believe that in Christ there is no such division. Our congregation is strengthened through its diversity. We welcome all to our church community and its activities. Our membership is open to anyone who confesses Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. The right and privilege to vote and hold office is extended to all active church members."

15. Church of Reconciliation in Chapel Hill, N.C.: "The Church of Reconciliation receives into membership those who profess their faith in Jesus Christ. We uphold the constitutional stance of the Presbyterian Church (USA) which entitles active members "to all the rights and privileges of the church including the right…to vote and hold office." We are gratefully open to the service and leadership of all who are called to ordained positions in our congregation. Neither race, nor gender, neither ethnic origin, nor sexual orientation, neither age, nor infirmity, neither economic condition, nor any other aspect of personhood will divide this Christian community."

16. Tabernacle Church in Philadelphia, Pa.: "In affirming that God works through all of us, we extend to anyone wishing to share in the worship, work and leadership of the church all privileges and responsibilities of membership, including ordination as elders. We will not exclude those whom the Spirit has called on the basis of sex, age, race, sexual orientation, country of origin, economic, cultural or religious background, disability, or any other human condition."

17. Clarendon Presbyterian Church in Arlington, Va.: "We have determined that we cannot agree to abide by [G-6.0106b] without violating our informed conscience, faith, and interpretation of our obligations. We covenant together to elect, ordain, and install as officers those members with suitable gifts who are called to ministry, who are persons of strong faith, dedicated discipleship, and love of Jesus Christ, and whose manner of life is a demonstration of the Christian gospel in the church and the world, without additional requirements or restrictions."

18. In a letter to The Layman Online, the Rev. Susan Halcomb Craig, the pastor of United University Church in Los Angeles, California and elder Susan Stouffer, moderator of the church’s Outreach Committee, wrote to say that the session was "shocked and dismayed to read an Layman Online article ‘Constitutional Defiance List Increases By 17 Churches.’"

The shock and dismay apparently arose from United University Church not being included on the original list. Craig and Stouffer wrote, "For many years our congregation has counted itself a member of the community of congregations that has publicly and in good faith and conscience declared our intent to refuse to cooperate with the discriminatory policies of the PC(USA) in reference to the full inclusion of lesbian, gay, Continuated on page 16 >>
Battle for PC (USA) … continued from page 8

Andrews added: “We are called to the hardest of tasks - to fight without hatred, resist without bitterness, and, if God wills it, to triumph without vindictiveness.” He asked his listeners, “Do you have the character?”

The Reverend Casey Jones, pastor of First Presbyterian Church in Pearland, TX, also spoke of an internal struggle Presbyterians must undertake: “If a society is held together only by law, it will not hold together. We will not have what we want through discipline and enforcement of the constitution.” What the PC (USA) needs, he said, is “a heart change.”

Jones, who said he is “not a polity wonk,” said “there needs to be a climate” in the church to keep officers from departing “from the essentials of Presbyterian polity and belief.”

“There is a certain way of interpreting … the rules in our constitution … that reflect the heart,” he said.

Andrews said, “The climate that Casey was talking about, this requires self-discipline and a character that we have not yet shown.”

Charles Wiley, an associate in the PC(USA)’s Office of Theology and Worship, addressed the group on church discipline. “I read headlines about a constitutional crisis, the lack of discipline in the church, and calls for submission to the will of the church,” he said.

“You are angry that the system is not working the way you think it should. And I think you are right. … Discipline in the Presbyterian Church is atrophied because we have failed to exercise a comprehensive and Biblical notion of the role of discipline in the Presbyterian Church and in Christian life.”

Wiley, who recently earned a doctorate in theology from Princeton Theological Seminary, made a distinction between what he called “extraordinary discipline,” formal action in response to heresy or heterodoxy, and “ordinary discipline … the practice of the church to assist Christians to stay true to their deepest desires … to stay true to the vows they make at baptism.”

Wiley said “ordinary” discipline, “this mode of holding one another accountable,” is “characterized by discernment, not an adversarial legal system” - but “almost everything I have heard or read about discipline in the PC(USA) over the past few years has focused solely on extraordinary discipline, completely overlooking the more dominant pattern in our tradition.”

“Ordinary discipline is not about ‘getting’ each other or holding each other’s feet to the fire,” he said. “In ordinary church discipline, we care enough about each other to treat one another with respect, with love and with the will to risk helping each other grow in Christ.”

A familiar worship practice that embodies ordinary discipline, Wiley said, is the passing of the peace, which he described as “a place in worship that gives space for reconciliation.”

He said discipline is not intended to be “an exercise of power obsessed with mere moralism.”

“When discipline is solely focused on extraordinary discipline and high-profile offenses,” he said, “we have lost the ability to realize it is in our everyday lives with each other that our sin seeps out. … Ordinary discipline implicates those that defy the constitution and those who bring charges against them.”

Wiley concluded, “many of you are here primarily to discuss the practice of extraordinary discipline. The question for all of us is whether or not we as individuals … are faithfully exercising ordinary discipline as well. … A discipline marked by a loving community, not by formal charges in an adversarial system.”

In a workshop, the Reverend Sue Cyre presented a number of proposed overtures to next year’s 215th General Assembly, including one that would restore annual Assemblies.

This year’s GA voted 344-167 to go to biennial meetings starting in 2006.

Cyre said her church, Dublin Presbyterian Church in Dublin, VA, has approved the proposed overture, but hasn’t yet presented it to the Presbytery of the Peaks.

She said every-other-year assemblies would be “less representative of the grassroots,” would leave more policy decisions in the hands of “GA entities like the GAC” and produce “no obvious cost savings,” she said. She called Assemblies “our connectionalism in action … an opportunity for the elders from local congregations to give vision and direction to the church.”

Other overtures in the package would assure the randomness of GA committee assignments; limit staff participation in the work of elected bodies, including GA committees; restrict the role of the General Assembly Council to policy implementation, as opposed to policy generation; limit the participation of advisory delegates to Assemblies by depriving them of the rights of “voice and vote” in committee deliberations; discontinue the effort to revise the sexuality curriculum; forbid the use of Board of Pensions benefits to cover so-called "partial

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Christian Education News

Adult Forum: China Then and Now – A Talk Illustrated by Slides led by W. Scott Morton. Sunday November 24th, 1:00 p.m. in the Daniel Russell Room (right after coffee hour).

The Rev. Dr. Scott Morton will share his personal experiences as a missionary in Northeast China (Manchuria) and introduce us to Chinese culture. The talk will include his thoughts on China today and the Christian Church now. A talk by Dr. Morton is not to be missed!

We will have snacks – or brown-bag your lunch. Please call Cheryl Pyrch by November 10th if you are interested in child care.

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Advent Study: Who is Mary? Come to our Advent Vesper Services on Wednesday nights - December 4, 11, and 18 - at 6:30 and then join us for light refreshments and study after the service (starting around 7:15). Come learn about some of the new feminist scholarship – we’ll also be looking at art and music in the Marian tradition. Led by Cheryl Pyrch.

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Who is Mary? Our adult classes in December will focus on Mary: mother of Jesus and woefully neglected in Protestant circles. Come learn about Mary in the Bible and in the life of the church. We’ll look at the new feminist scholarship and some art and music in the Marian tradition.

Choice of times:

Sunday mornings, December 1, 8 and 15, at 9:45 in the Session Room. Led by Christine Gorman and Lisa Pinto.

Wednesday nights, December 4, 11, and 18, at 7:15 p.m. in the Daniel Russell Room, after the Vesper Services which begin at 6:30. Led by Cheryl Pyrch.

What Do You Think?

1. You can’t straddle the doorway with faith.
2. Everyone has the right to say no without feeling guilty.
3. Why do big shoulders eventually turn into small ones?
4. Aging shows no discrimination.
5. Nature is cruel to everyone.
6. On 9/11, did anyone step over or leave behind an injured person because of race, religion, etc.?
7. “Maybe” is the same as “no.”
8. Fear will keep you from pursuing your dreams.
9. Some things in life don’t require a schedule.
10. You have to first know what’s offensive to know that you’ve been offensive.

’Til next time

J.M.C.
birth” abortions; reduce PC(USA) contributions to the National Council of Churches and the World Council of Churches; oppose ordination of certified Christian educators as ministers of the word and sacrament; impose term limits for PC(USA) leaders (“The same people are being recycled,” she said); and require the Presbyterian Health, Education and Welfare Association (PHEWA) to achieve financial independence by the end of 2003.

Cyre said evangelicals must get more involved in their sessions and presbyteries. If they are “intentional, united and persistent,” she said, “it’s not going to take all that much to reform this church.”

“The state of the church in part is because of our inattention,” she said, urging evangelicals to take a keen interest in the work of the General Assembly nominating committee, “a very powerful committee of 16 synod representatives that decides who will participate in the leadership of this church and who will not.”

Fahed Abu-Akel, the moderator of the 214th GA, appeared at the Gathering just before setting out for a visit to the Middle East that was to include a return to his native village near Nazareth. In his address, Abu-Akel, introduced as “the other man from Galilee,” mentioned none of the controversies r aging in the church.

He earned applause by telling his listeners: “I know it so deep it is in my bones that any attractiveness the church offers to the world must be rooted in Jesus Christ. I don’t understand why Presbyterians are afraid to say this.”

Abu-Akel said he and his brother as children “formed a coalition against my mother,” who wanted them to memorize the verbose Nicene Creed; they preferred the Apostles Creed, “which is one line long,” he said.

“The most powerful institution is the home,” he said. “The home needs to be the place where children can love God and be accepted.”

He recalled his arrival in the United States in 1966, when he “did not know the difference between a taxi and a limousine,” and recalled a driving trip he took with a companion from Florida to Detroit, MI, when he was surprised that “nobody from here to Detroit asked for a permit. ... It was the most liberating experience of my life.”

The moderator challenged “each minister, elder, member” of every PC(USA) congregation to “invite one person to church and to discipleship to Jesus Christ ... one person, that’s not a big deal ... and by next May, that will be five million Presbyterians who love Jesus Christ. ... We can experience Pentecost like in the early church. Let’s see what God can do in our midst.”

Representatives of three validated mission agencies - World Mission, Presbyterian Outreach and the Presbyterian Frontier Fellowship - suggested that Coalition members and their churches contribute to them through Extra Commitment Opportunities rather than depending on what one called a denominational “mission-funding system that simply doesn’t work.”

The Rev. Doug Pratt, of Memorial Park Presbyterian Church in Allison Park, PA, expressed disappointment about the denomination’s “failing vision” for missions, particularly “the elimination of 10 percent of our mission force while we continue to fund curriculum and political lobbying.”

During the workshop on per-capita giving, the Rev. Ron McHattie, the pastor of West Valley Presbyterian Church in Cupertino, CA, said he is sick of the “blatant refusal on the part of the denomination to listen to the person in the pew.”

He said denominational leaders “don’t give a rip” about anything, “as long as they can make enough money to raise a family ... as long as they get a check in the mail.” He said a number of families have left his congregation because of the denomination’s “heretical stances.”

Another said the elders of his church felt “an obligation to stay connected to the denomination” but he was “terribly discouraged with what I knew some of those dollars were going to support.” He said the session made its decision on the basis of this question: “If someone from our denomination knocked on your door at your home asking for money, would you give it?” and the clear answer was no.

Another person sparked no disagreement when she said denominational leaders in Louisville are “agents of Satan.”

Peggy Hedden said the withholding of per-capita is not a matter of protest but of stewardship. Giving unrestricted mission funds to the PC(USA), she said, is like “going into a department store and saying, ’Just give me whatever you want.’” She said sessions have a right to know “whether the money you’re giving is being used for God’s purposes.”

No one actually advocated the withholding of per-capita, but several participants asserted that such giving “has always been voluntary” on the part of sessions.

Hedden said organizers “did try to get somebody who was opposed to withholding per-capita, but we didn’t ask the right people.”

Much of the talk at the Gathering was clearly martial - envisioning a battle for the church, with combatants protected by the “breastplate of righteousness” standing firm “against the heavenly forces of evil” and wresting control of the denomination from Presbyterians acting “in opposition to (God’s) Word.”
bisexual and transgender Presbyterians in our church's full ministry and leadership."

The controversy over the 1993 ReImagining event had a major impact on the denomination. Unrestricted giving to the denomination fell dramatically. The denomination lost more than 38,000 members that year – nearly twice the losses of the previous two years.

In their letter, Craig and Stouffer confirmed that point, writing, "Please be aware that there are many congregations like our own that you may have overlooked in your research."

In case their congregation's defiance wasn't clear, Craig and Stouffer included in their letter a March 20, 1997, statement "issued immediately upon the adoption of what was then Amendment B (now G-6.0106b)." That statement reads:

"The passage of this Amendment and its inclusion in the Form of Government abridges our constitutional right to elect our own officers (G-5.0103) and forfeits the opportunity for all our members to participate in the privileges of our church, particularly the right to vote and hold office (G-2.0202). It furthers the atmosphere of intolerance in the Church."

"As a matter of conscience, the Session of United University Church reaffirms its commitment to be an inclusive community, demonstrating the grace of Jesus Christ, the love of God and the community of the Holy Spirit. We intend to continue to welcome all persons into full and active membership in our church. Therefore, we have determined that we cannot agree to abide by Amendment B."

Stated Clerk Clifton Kirkpatrick repeatedly has said that it is not his job to enforce the constitution, but he also has said ministers and elders have no right to defy the requirements of G-6.0106b. He's come under fire...