



IN THE LOOP

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News of Eastminster Presbytery

Not Just Another General Assembly

The July 13 meeting of Eastminster Presbytery had just adjourned and I joined a small group of presbyters in friendly conversation. One of those persons was G.A. commissioner Elmarie Parker. We started talking about this past General Assembly and I commented that this Assembly had a different feel to it than previous As-

semblies I had attended. I wondered why. Elmarie answered my question. She shared that, as G.A. Committees met, there was an intentional focus on discernment. It was common for the Committee Moderators to halt debate in order to spend time in prayer. The same was true on the floor of G.A. during plenary. The commis-

sioners knew who they were and who they were serving. All were seeking to do the will of God, honor Jesus Christ, and be guided by the Holy Spirit. That's not to say that other G.A.'s have not, but this Assembly did it with far more intentionality.

We'll have plenty to discuss in the months ahead as we explore the implications of this past G.A. For now, let it suffice to say that we are learning, in the midst of our diversity, to act more like a community of Christian disciples.

Dan Schomer
General Presbyter

Happy Campers

The July 13 presbytery meeting appeared to be a positive experience for those who gathered in the activity room and dining hall of Joseph Badger Meadows Camp and Conference Center. The presbytery shared the facilities with the Sunshine Camp designed for developmentally handicapped adults. Sunshine Camp Director Sheila Slaughter had the campers shout out the call to worship with joy and enthusiasm. Campers and presbyters sat together during a delicious dinner. Happy presbyters and happy campers left the table well fed in more ways than one.

For once, gray was not the dominant color for hairdos at this presbytery meeting. How refreshing to be invaded by younger folks. With camp summer staff, the Westminster Boardman youth group, and the youth

headed for Triennium, the over 50 set felt outnumbered at times. When Nate Slaughter shared a Christian rap number during presbytery worship, no one fainted or fled into the night screaming. Some of us even...dare I say it...clapped our hands in a lame attempt to create a beat. Proud Dad Ross Slaughter smiled a lot. We all were having fun being a community of faith.

But not everything at this meeting was light-hearted. There was sadness too. It was shared that, due to budgetary constraints, Camp Director Doug Hoffman may not be with us after the end of 2010. It's always tough to tell a staff member who is doing a great job, "You may not be here next year," but that is what was necessary. General mission pledges from our congregations are down from 2009 and Doug's salary

and benefits are paid from those general mission dollars. JBM Committee moderator Chuck Chalker shared that he is looking for some creative ways to keep Doug living in the Director's house and serving the camp in some limited way. I informed the presbytery that a significant block of time will be requested on the docket of the September presbytery meeting so that the presbytery may consider options for the camp in 2011.

Chuck Chalker asked the presbyters to pray for the JBM camp, and I seconded it. All say "aye" by praying for the JBM camp!

Inside this issue:

Not Just Another General Assembly 1

Happy Campers 1

Quote of the Week 2

Spotlight on Israel and Palestine 2

Fun Facts

During the proceeding of the 219th General Assembly, LeBron James and his move to Miami was never mentioned. The same could not be said for the media.

The next two General Assemblies will be within easy driving distance of Eastminster Presbytery. In 2012 it will be in Pittsburgh and in 2014 it will be in Detroit. According to Stated Clerk Dale Riley, Eastminster Presbytery will be invited to help with COLA (the Committee on Local Arrangements) in 2012.

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Quote of the Week

Peace is more inclusive than is usually perceived at first glance but is grasped by following more closely the teachings of Christ. Although peacemakers may never be able to achieve complete peace, it is the duty of believers to seek the many ways of peace in order to make God's peace a reality where ever we may be found.

Excerpt from draft Mission Statement submitted to Eastminster Presbytery for discussion and adoption

Spotlight on Israel and Palestine

The General Assembly debate on the report on Israel and Palestine was thought by many to be a powder keg. The report in its original form had elicited both strong support and opposition. By the time it came out of committee and onto the floor of presbytery, it had been altered to a form that narrowed the divisions and gained the approval of the Assembly. According to Presbyterian News Service: *"Coming into the 219th General Assembly (2010), few thought that agreement on issues relating to the Middle East would be possible. Diverse perspectives divided Presbyterians from each other, and from the Jewish community. However, during the committee deliberations and again in the plenary session, through God's grace, a place of broad consensus was found—common ground for continued peace-making work in Israel/Palestine.*

The paper calls for:

- *An immediate cessation of all violence, whether perpetrated by Israelis or Palestinians;*
- *The reaffirmation of Israel's right to exist as a sovereign nation within secure and internationally recognized borders;*
- *The end of Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories;*
- *An immediate freeze on the establishment and expansion of Israeli settlements in the West Bank, and on the Israeli acquisition of Palestinian land and buildings in East Jerusalem;*
- *And many other steps toward peace in the region.*

At its July 13 meeting, the presbytery was blessed by the report of the Rev. Janet Lowery who had returned from a six-week sabbatical in Israel and Palestine. Janet and G.A. commissioners had provided a pre-presbytery gathering and Janet went on to report on the floor of presbytery. Janet expressed her gratitude to the Board

of Pensions for the \$3,000 grant she received. Janet's description of her adventure and the printed report she distributed gave us insights into the joys and challenges of the land we call holy. Janet wrote, *"Since returning, I have enjoyed fresh sermon insights and sharing information with my church through a series of classes. I read the Middle East report of the Presbyterian Study Committee with understanding and attended GA as an observer. My conclusion is that the current impasse between Israel and the Palestinian Authority is unsustainable and woefully unjust. This land has had more than its share of conflict over the centuries: God owns it and loves all its inhabitants. We should do whatever we can do as US citizens and Presbyterians to encourage dialogue and compromise. It is an incredibly beautiful, complex region.*