

**Stated Meeting of the Presbytery of San Joaquin**  
**April 12, 2007**  
**Lemoore Presbyterian Church**  
**Lemoore, CA**

**Attendance:**

*Pastors:* Clark Cowden, Randy Scheer, Charles Castles, Gus Wright, Jamie Evans, Tedd Lyons, Jung Kil Suh, Eric Thompson, Aahmes Overton, Sharon Stanley, Paul Armstrong, Thomas Elson, Tony Winterowd, Roger Minassian, Carl Knoch, Ron Owens, Chris Erdman, Jim Rogers, Bill Ekhardt, Ken Crabtree, Sung Chang, Karl Schafer, Paul Gendron, Kurt Teng, Tom Parsons, Noel Anderson, Terry Barnhill, David Abdo, Mgrdich Melkonian, Rich Hansen, Lana Roberts, Jae Son Han, John Bosavanh, Lorna Bosavanh

*Elders:* Sue Benson, Dick Frasch, Trent Jones, Bryon Walker, Verna Den Hartog, Jim Clark, Beryl Linenback, John Davis, Midge Barrett, Chuck Barrett, Chuck Kinney, Joseph Wilson, Sandra Eaton, Barbara Gurnwald, Nancy Collins, Gregg Wilkenson, Fred Leavitt, Lana Jackson, Stuart Conrad

*General Council:* Mel Khachigian, Ruth Smith

*Corresponding Members:* Mark Frey (Cascades Presbytery)

The meeting was opened with prayer by moderator Rev. Rick Irish at 4:35 pm. The Host pastor, Sandy Brown, welcomed us to Lemoore.

**Moderator's moments:**

Rick Irish presented a plaque, with thanks for his service, to past presbytery moderator Vince Correll.

**Consent Agenda:**

Motions from the Stated Clerk:

1. To approve the minutes of the February 3, 2007 presbytery meeting.
2. To seat corresponding members who are present.
3. That the Presbytery of San Joaquin approve a request for inclusion in the Presbyterian Church (USA)'s group 501(c) (3) ruling and acknowledge its relationship with Calvin Crest Conferences. It approves its programmatic purpose and agrees to exercise oversight responsibility for Calvin crest, its programs, and its financial integrity.

All three items were *approved*, with the addition of Larry Ingoldsby and Lana Roberts who were also in attendance.

**Stated Clerk/Evangelist Presbyter's Moments:**

An Investigative Committee was formed at the last presbytery meeting, to investigate a disciplinary charge against a pastor of the presbytery. A motion was made to add Glen Duysen and Beth Downie to the Investigative Committee. The motion was *approved*.

Members of the presbytery introduced friends and guests.

**CPM - Ruth Smith**

Robert Rose was certified ready to receive a call.

Kim Thompson, at her request, removed herself from the call process.

Dino Rustin and Steven Sherrill were introduced as new inquirers from First Pres, Bakersfield.

Brian Wallace, a new inquirer from Sierra Vista Pres, Oakhurst, was introduced, although he was not present.

Adam Knudson was examined for ordination. Vote was taken to reconsider him back into examination. Approved 25, Opposed 19. Voted and approved.

**Board of Pensions** - Rev. Mark Frey introduced himself and explained some of Pensions Heath Care Benefits and Pensions issues.

**Worship**

The Presbytery moved into a time of worship led by Kurt Teng with a message by Scott Henderson.

**COM** – Nothing to report

**Nominating** - Ken Crabtree

Recommended Terry Holland (2007-1) and Verna Den Hartog (2008-1) to Finance & Property—Voted and approved.

**Personnel** – Terry Barnhill

Presented the position of Mission Support Assistant at 19 hours a week. Recommended Tom Parsons for position—Voted and approved.

**Calvin Crest Board** – Scott Henderson

Discussed the mission of Calvin Crest and the work being done there.

**MINISTRY CONNECTIONS:**

**Future Discernment Team/ Denominational Cabinet** – Ron Owens

Discussed the third reading of the Property Covenant. Motion to approve the amendments—Voted and approved.

*Property Covenant* (Third Reading)

**Introduction**

The congregations and members of the Presbytery of San Joaquin are seeking to find a positive way to move forward into the future together. One emotional issue that has the potential to keep us from thinking and acting clearly and responsibly is the issue of church property. We too easily become subject to the temptations of suspicion, fear, lack of information, false information, gossip, and rumor. These make it difficult to trust God with the future of our presbytery and our denomination. Because we read about property issues that have been mishandled in other parts of our denomination, we are concerned that the same tragic scenarios may be repeated in our presbytery. For the sake of clarity and true Christian unity, we as a presbytery choose to make this covenant with our churches.

“[Y]ou are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God’s people and members of God’s household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus Himself as the chief cornerstone. In Him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in Him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by His Spirit.” Ephesians 2:19-22

“The unity of the Church is a gift of its Lord and finds expression in its faithfulness to the mission to which Christ calls it.” (G-4.0200) We believe our unity, our true connectionalism, comes from Christ, our Chief Cornerstone and that our unity in Christ serves as an essential basis for evangelism. (John 17:20-23) It is our prayer that we would all be one in Christ, just as Christ and the Father are one. We encourage every congregation and every member to stay and renew this denomination. Yet we will exercise forbearance, not coercion, towards any who believe after due consideration and prayer, that they are called to minister in a different Reformed community.

**Facts**

The Presbyterian Church (USA) is but one denomination within the Church (G-4.0101).

Our constitution states that all church property is held in trust for “the use and benefit of the Presbyterian Church (USA)” (G-8.0201).

A congregation must have written permission from the presbytery before it 1) sells or encumbers any of its property, 2) leases any property for the purposes of worship, or 3) leases any property for more than 5 years (G-8.0500).

Presbyteries have the express power (a technical term meaning they are the only ones who can take this action) to dismiss a congregation (G-11.0103i).

Only a presbytery may dismiss a congregation (PCUS, 1976, pp. 92-99, Strong and Bagby v. Synod of Mid-South (No.1-1976)).

Presbyteries have the authority under G-8.000 and G-11.0103i to evaluate questions concerning church property in light of the particular circumstances presented in each instance and to exercise good judgment in accordance with Authoritative Interpretations of G-11.0103 made by the General Assembly in 1988, 1989 and 1990.

It is the duty of every church member to follow the biblical model of conciliation and mediation rather than judicial proceedings litigation (D-1.0103 – which says “unless after prayerful deliberation they are determined to be necessary to preserve the purity and purposes of the church”).

### ***Covenant***

As a primary means for settling disputes, the presbytery covenants with its members and congregations to settle property disagreements relationally, rather than through judicial proceedings in the courts of the church or by initiating settlement in civil court, thereby violating I Corinthians 6:1-11. In furtherance of this goal, the presbytery covenants to:

- refuse the temptation to love church property and assets too much. (These are important ministry tools, but they are not the most important aspect of our ministry.);
- be open, honest, and transparent, speaking the truth in love;
- exercise pastoral oversight of congregations in the spirit of I Peter 5:1-5, “...shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God.... And all of you clothe yourselves with humility toward one another....”;
- work pastorally with any pastor, session or congregation that seeks dismissal from the Presbyterian Church (USA);
- not take any preemptive action against any pastor, session or congregation who considers faithfully following the Great Ends of the Church (G-1.0200) in another Reformed denomination (which includes not secretly filing papers in civil court claiming ownership of church property);
- interpret “use and benefit of the Presbyterian Church (USA)” in G-8.0201 to mean solely whatever furthers the Great Ends of the Church (G-1.0200);
- interpret its express power “to coordinate the work of its member churches, guiding them and mobilizing their strength for the most effective witness to the broader community for which it has responsibility” (G-11.0103b) to allow that in some cases, after careful and prayerful consideration, a congregation, with its property and any financial assets, may be dismissed from the Presbyterian Church (USA) without penalty.

However, this does not abrogate provisions for litigation judicial proceedings described in D-1.0103 should litigation those be determined to be necessary after prayerful deliberation by the presbytery.

### **Rationale**

First Corinthians 6 is more than a little clear in directing believers to come together instead of going to secular court. The historic principles of the PCUSA are similarly clear stating that “all church power... is only ministerial and declarative” (G-1.0307) and that church discipline “must be purely moral or spiritual in its object, and not attended with any

civil affects” (G-1.0308). Further, in I Timothy 6:10, we read that “the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil.” As people of faith, as ordained presbyters who are bound together by common vows, we must follow biblical principles for conflict resolution rather than employ tactics that “crucify our Lord afresh.”

In John 17:21, Jesus prays that those who believe in Him would be one. The Presbyterian Church (USA), like all Christian denominations, is only one part of the Church for which Christ prayed. The Great Ends of the Church are the proclamation of the gospel for the salvation of humankind; the shelter, nurture, and spiritual fellowship of the children of God; the maintenance of divine worship; the preservation of the truth; the promotion of social righteousness; and the exhibition of the Kingdom of Heaven to the world (G-1.0200). Therefore any ministry that truly furthers the Great Ends of the Church also benefits the Presbyterian Church (USA).

Motion to approve the document was voted 30 to 21—Voted and approved.

**Council Motion – Rick Irish**

“In order to do God’s work we must do it God’s way. To know God’s way we must listen for His directions through His Word and by His Spirit. This requires intentionality and time. Therefore, let us identify people in our Presbytery, both lay and clergy, who demonstrate an intimate and humble relationship with Jesus Christ, a readiness to know His mind, a discerning spirit, and a willingness to think creatively. Then let us invite them to be a part of a group of six to twelve who will seek God’s direction for our Presbytery and thereby provide input for those in leadership.”

This group would be accountable to the Moderator of the Presbytery. An evaluation would be conducted at the end of 2008 to see how well it is working. MOTION to bring a group of 6 to 12 people together to listen and suggest future direction of the Presbytery was voted and approved.

**Presbyterian Women – No report**

**MISSIONAL MINISTRIES:**

**LifeSpring NCD – Rich Latta** talked about how LifeSpring is growing, and he was enthusiastic about its progress.

**CDT – Jim Rogers**

**Freeze Relief:**

Members of our presbytery so far have given \$14,000 towards Freeze Relief. The committee is in the process of preparing another grant request to GA in addition to the \$10,000 the Presbytery has already received, as the need is still great.

**One Minute Messages were given**

Closed with prayer at 9:12 p.m. The next meeting of Presbytery will be Thursday, June 21, 2007, from 4 to 9 pm at FIRM in Fresno.

Respectfully Submitted,

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Rev. Clark D Cowden, Stated Clerk