From the Senior Pastor’s Desk

By Freddy Fritz

Actions of the 43rd General Assembly of the PCA

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July 2015

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Each year the Stated Clerk of the PCA gives a summary of the actions of the General Assembly. Dr. Roy Taylor has written his summary, and I would like to give you a somewhat abbreviated version of it. You can read the full version of his summary at http://byfaithonline.com/actions-of-the-43rd-general-assembly-of-the-pca/.

The 43rd General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America met in Chattanooga, Tennessee, June 8-11, 2015, hosted by Tennessee Valley Presbytery. The Assembly had met at Chattanooga previously in 2005. Almost 1,400 commissioners attended; 1,086 teaching elders, and 308 ruling elders. Seventy-nine of the 82 presbyteries were represented.

Mr. Jim Wert was elected as moderator. He lives in Atlanta, where he is a long-serving ruling elder at Intown Community Church and is active in Metro Atlanta Presbytery. He led the Assembly through its business with care and efficiency.
Dr. Sean Lucas, pastor of First Presbyterian Church of Hattiesburg, Mississippi, and Dr. Ligon Duncan, Chancellor of Reformed Theological Seminary, introduced a Personal Resolution calling on the General Assembly, upon the 50th anniversary of the Selma-to-Montgomery March and the Civil Rights Acts of 1965, to express repentance for the failure of some churches and Christians of that time (1960s) to stand in solidarity with African-American brothers and sisters and for failing to pursue racial reconciliation adequately. This became the single issue on which the Assembly spent the most time. The Overtures Committee discussed the matter for nine hours, consulting with some members of the newly formed African-American Presbyterian Fellowship. Sympathetic to the need to pursue corporate and personal repentance, and at the same time recognizing the complexity and gravity of racial sin, the Overtures Committee (OC) unanimously recommended that the matter be referred to the 2016 General Assembly for consideration. The Assembly wanted to deal with the issue. The floor debate, lasting for about two hours, centered on whether it was wiser to address the issue immediately or take a year to develop a more comprehensive response. Among the many speakers, Dr. James M. Baird, one of the committee of twelve that had developed the process for founding the PCA, spoke at length, recalling that the founders of the PCA in 1973 were primarily concerned with the theological, spiritual, organizational, and legal aspects of founding a new denomination. He expressed regret that racial reconciliation had not been given proper priority at the time and that the founders had failed to take into account sufficiently the need for racial reconciliation. His remarks and his spirit were well received. Prior to the vote regarding the disposition of the overture as well as following the vote, there were extended periods of prayer. Dr. Taylor noted that he has attended every General Assembly of the PCA. In his opinion, the periods of prayer and expressions of repentance and brotherly love on the Thursday evening session of the 2015 General Assembly were the most evident and powerful work of the Holy Spirit at any PCA Assembly heretofore.

Many of the more thoroughly debated issues that come to the Assembly come through the Overtures Committee. The PCA General Assembly is non-delegated. That is, every PCA church may send at least two ruling elders and all of its teaching elders, if they so desire. The Overtures Committee (OC) is a quasi-delegated assembly within the non-delegated General Assembly. Each presbytery may send a ruling elder and a teaching elder to the OC. This year there were fewer overtures than usual, six of which were...
referred by the Stated Clerk to the Overtures Committee. There were also five personal resolutions introduced as new business, accepted by the Assembly, and referred to the OC.

- One overture proposed an amendment to the Book of Church Order (BCO) to provide for final binding decisions to be rendered by Presbytery Judicial Commissions. The Assembly did not approve the proposed change.
- Two overtures asked the General Assembly to form a study committee to prepare proposals to amend the Westminster Confession and Catechisms regarding the details of Sabbath observance. The Assembly did not approve the formation of this study committee.
- One overture proposed an amendment to a baptismal vow parents take (BCO 56-5, Q. 3) at the covenant baptism of a child in order to eliminate any reference to dedicating children in the baptismal rite. The Assembly did not approve the amendment because the term had been used in the BCO since 1894 and BCO 56-4 requires that the presiding minister explain covenant baptism before it is administered.
- Another overture asked the Assembly to amend the BCO to require ordained officers (teaching elders, ruling elders, and deacons) to testify in trials when an officer is accused of doctrinal error. The Assembly did not approve this BCO change.
- Still another overture proposed a BCO amendment that would have required ruling elders or deacons who have not been in active service for three years to be considered for divesture from office without censure. The Assembly did not approve the amendment.
- The Assembly approved one presbytery overture and three personal resolutions asking the Assembly to express appreciation for the lives of four men who have died in the past year: TE John W. King, RE Richard Chewning, TE Tom Cheely, and TE J. Robert Fiol. Moreover, a resolution commending TE Jim Smith for his long-term service as chairman of the floor clerks was approved.

The following was reported from the various agencies and committees of the PCA:

- **Dr. Lloyd Kim**, a veteran missionary to Cambodia, was elected as Coordinator of Mission to the World, the first Asian-American to serve as a coordinator. He holds a Ph.D. in New Testament from Fuller Theological Seminary.
• **Reformed University Ministries** reported that campus ministries were begun on 11 new campuses in 2014 and that five new ministries are to be launched in 2015.

• The Assembly approved an **Administrative Committee**’s proposal that the 2018 Assembly convene on Wednesday afternoon and adjourn on Friday noon, shortening the Assembly.

• The **Committee on Discipleship Ministries** reported that their name change better reflects their role in helping PCA churches fulfill the Great Commission to make more and stronger disciples.

• **Mission to North America** reported that the Coordinator, Dr. James C. Bland, will retire in 2016. It also reported the division of Palmetto Presbytery into three South Carolina Presbyteries. Actions of 43rd GA 4.

• **Covenant College** reported that 100% of the class of 2014 had been admitted to their first or second-choice graduate schools. A $19 million dollar renovation-construction two-year project is underway. The college is ranked the #6 regional college in the South by US News and World Report. Churches that give $10 per member to Covenant College qualify for the college’s Church Scholarship Promise program.

• **Covenant Theological Seminary** reported that after two years of full-time equivalent enrollment decline, enrollment was up 25% over 2013. The M.Div. revision is in its second year of operation.

• **The PCA Foundation** received $13.2 million and distributed or granted to ministries $7.7 million in 2014. The majority of the grants were to PCA ministries and churches.

• **PCA Retirement & Benefits, Inc.**, has launched ServantCare, an accessible, affordable and confidential counseling resource to PCA ministers and their wives. ServantCare is provided by the Christian Counseling and Education Foundation to PCA Presbyteries.

• **Ridge Haven Conference Center** served 3,500 campers last summer, 1,700 fall guests, and 1,400 winter guests. The lake has been expanded by 30%, additional docks have been installed, and an additional 4.5-acre recreational complex is being developed.

Each year churches are supposed to report their statistics to the Stated Clerk’s office. A number of our larger churches and growing younger churches did not file annual reports in 2014. So our actual statistics are probably better than our reported statistics. Our statistics are mixed, with some increases and some decreases. Some statistics for 2014 as compared with 2013 are:

• Churches and missions – 1,831, an increase of 23
• Churches transferring in or organized – 22
• Churches dissolved or transferring out – 11
• Total professions of faith – 9,425, an increase of 299
• Candidates for ministry – 545, an increase of 179
• Licentiates – 129, an increase of 41
- Ministers – 4,556, an increase of 140
- Communicants – 281,790, a decrease of 977
- Non-communicants – 72,170, a decrease of 481
- Total membership – 358,516, a decrease of 1,318, – .99%
- Total Family Units – 136,849, a decrease of 477
- Sunday School Attendance – 96,623, a decrease of 2,680
- Per capita Giving – $2,708, an increase of $89
- Per Capita Benevolences – $451, a decrease of $1
- Total Reported Disbursements – $766,520,059, an increase of $17,300,662

Finally, the following was given regarding suggested prayer, offerings and events:

- Prayer for Covenant College as determined by local sessions.
- November 2015, a Month of Prayer for Global Missions (MTW).
- A special offering for MTW Compassion Ministries on a date chosen by local sessions.
- November 8, 2015, a Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church Worldwide (MTW).
- Annual Relief Ministry Offering (RBI).
- 2015 PCA Women in the Church Love Gift (CDM) for Reformed University Ministries.
- 50 Days of Prayer leading up to the 44th General Assembly (CDM & MNA).
- The Assembly approved the request that churches contribute to the Administrative Committee on the basis of 0.35% of total tithes and offerings (excepting capital campaign projects).

The 44th General Assembly will convene in Mobile, Alabama, June 21, 2016.

Volunteer Sought to Help Church Planter with Newsletter

Have you ever wanted to lend a hand in church planting, but wondered how to serve? MNA SecondCareer Ministry may have the answer for you. For example, Pastor Bill Powis of The Cleveland Project is seeking a volunteer to assist him in preparing and editing his newsletter utilizing MailChimp. This would include updating and maintaining his subscriber list. This job could be done over the internet with no need to travel. Learn more about this and other opportunities to serve at www.pcamna.org/second-career or contact Gary Ogrosky at gogrosky@pcanet.org (phone 770-695-4811).
**JULY BIRTHDAYS**

3- Lena Phillips
6- Eli Nichols
6- Christine Todd
6- Joey Weir
7- Justin Brown
9- Rick Hallstrand
14- Earl Myers
14- Isaac Nichols
16- Barbara Hess
17- Zach Gawrych
17- Debbie Jordan
18- Bob Moore
18- Albert Lok
19- Steve Wilbraham
21- Eileen Fritz
21- Kristine Wyss
22- Gertrude Hunter
23- Pat Smith
27- Joshua Barber
28- Luke Montoney

**JULY ANNIVERSARIES**

2- Mr. & Mrs. Peter Wu
5- Mr. & Mrs. Jeremiah Hawkes
12- Mr. & Mrs. Phil Lear
12- Mr. & Mrs. James Nichols
18- Mr. & Mrs. Rene Palacio
23- Mr. & Mrs. Roy Hunter
25- Mr. & Mrs. Brian Carrier
31- Mr. & Mrs. Jerel Tomasello

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**Missionaries Supported by TBPC**

*Mission to the World*
- Peter & Lauren Dishman
- Esaie & Natacha Etienne
- Ken & Tammie Matlack
- Carla Stevens

*Reformed University Fellowship*
- Jeff & Jenny Lee

*New Harvest Missions International*
- Nathaniel & Cherita Adawanu

*Serving In Missions*
- Rene & Lili Palacio
- Wycliffe Bible Translators
- Don & Judy Vander Ploeg
- Kevin & Gertrude Nicholas

*Ven Con Nosotros Church*
- Dr. Oscar & Elizabeth Alvarez

*PRCC*
- Chaplain Ted Hamm
- Chaplain James Cochell
Thank you

Thank You to everyone who participated in the WM fellowship at the Tilted Teacup on Saturday, June 13th. A good time was had by all, and the scenic drive to Brooksville bore witness to the beauty of God’s great creation.

We thank God for bringing new workers to the vineyard of WM. We welcome Elaine Gibbons who has expressed a desire to become an active member in the Women’s Ministry. Please pray that she will be led to use her gifts in leadership.

Looking Ahead

Our next sister to Sister will be on Saturday, August 8th, at the home of Jeanne Higby from 11:00 to 1:00. Dress for a luau with flowers and leis to add to the festive atmosphere. Invite a friend or family member to join our fellowship, and a dish to share on the buffet table. Mark your calendar so you will not miss the event.

A Women’s Encouraging and Equipping Conference will be available to all women in the church on Saturday, September 19th. Attending would be beneficial for all women who are active in the ministry, those praying about a commitment, or those who are interested in learning more about the role of WM. In addition, there is a Friday night event for those who would like to make a weekend sojourn. Paula Miles, PCA Women’s Ministry Trainer, will be the speaker who will lead four sessions and small group discussions from 8:30am to 3:00 pm Saturday. The conference will be held at Covenant Presbyterian Church in Lakeland, at the cost of $25.00 for the Saturday session and an extra $5.00 if you attend the Friday evening event. Registration forms will be available at the welcome table in July.

Our next WM 15 will be on July 12, 2015. Please join us to share ideas and help plan future events.

July Events

There will be no planned events in July. Take this opportunity to get involved in the VBS week. Or, you may take some of your leisure summer time to get together with your prayer partner for Christian love and prayer.

WM Need

Ginny Bremer has announced that she wishes to step down from the position of WM coordinator. She plans to continue in her position until a new coordinator can be found and mentored until she is comfortable in taking over, or until June of 2016. In addition, we continue to seek a shower coordinator, a Christmas brunch coordinator for the 2015 Christmas Brunch, and a photographer/historian. Please prayerfully consider taking on the Lord’s work in one of these positions. If you have any questions about the actual duties of any of the positions you can contact Ginny Bremer directly. Keep in mind that several ladies can co-chair a coordinator position.
It’s been an interesting few months in America; hasn’t it? And troubling when you look beyond the headlines. For context, let’s begin in the summer of 1976. The Olympic Games, hosted in Montreal, was the hot topic. One reason: Team USA had a chance for gold in the decathlon for the ninth time since the modern edition was inaugurated in 1912 at the Stockholm Olympics. The winner that year was American Jim Thorpe. When Sweden’s King Gustav V presented the award to Thorpe, he remarked “You sir are the world’s greatest athlete”. The moniker stuck, and the competition to earn it was fierce during the 1976 contest. In the end, America’s entry earned the gold and instantly became an American icon. That man was Bruce Jenner.

If you entered his name today on biography.com, you might be surprised to find yourself reading the life story of someone named Caitlyn Jenner. The website explains: “Caitlyn Jenner, formerly known as Bruce, is a gold medal-winning track star who set a world record in the decathlon at the 1976 Summer Olympics…In 2015, Jenner revealed that she is transgender and has become a woman, now known as Caitlyn”. Mr. Jenner’s actions may seem quit strange for those born and raised in an era when it was a scandal if a man simply dressed as if he were a woman. Why would a man decide he wants to transform into a woman? More perplexing, why would he go through extensive surgery and hormone treatments to realize that desire? Mr./Ms. Jenner explains it this way: “Bruce was always telling a lie about who he is, and I can't do that any longer…I am a woman”, he said in April. Oh, so that’s it. He was convicted that he needed to stop living a lie and start telling the truth. More to follow on that.

Now for something more recent but no less unusual. Two months ago, Rachel Dolezal was the leader of the Spokane chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). When it became known last month that she was not, in fact, a person of color, she stepped down but didn’t back down. In an interview on NBC’s Today show, host Matt Lauer asked Dolezal directly: “are you an African American?” After a brief hesitation, she responded “I identify as black” while a smirkish smile crossed her face as if even she recognized the incredulity of her statement.

Throughout the interview, she was unapologetic about her claims of being a black woman. Likewise, she seemed at ease with the many lies and deceptions she wove into the compelling cover story that held up for years. In fact, she went on to cast her dishonesty as the work of a crusader committed to fundamentally changing definitions that have persisted for centuries: “I hope [it] really can drive at the core of definitions of race, ethnicity, culture, self-determination, personal agency and, ultimately, empowerment.” She didn’t specify why she thought those definitions needed to change.

And while some words take on new interpretations over time, it’s rare that they change so dramatically as ‘black now means white, and white now describes black.’ The notion that your birth sex can be transformed into another sex simply by personal declaration is equally ludicrous. For millennia a person’s sex has been determined at birth by observation. Why the change now?

To paraphrase Woody Allen, because people want what they want. And they don’t want a trifle like truth to stand in their way. Yet you can’t change truth. There is only one truth for any given issue. Your truth can’t differ from another’s truth on the same matter. Truth is truth, and you can tell it’s truth by whether or not it corresponds to reality.

Bruce/Caitlyn Jenner can proclaim from the highest mountain that he’s a woman, but his chromosomes tell a different story. Either he’s right and the chromosomes are in error or the chromosomes are
right and he’s not. His claim doesn’t correspond with reality and therefore cannot be true. Rachel Dolezal can say she is black, but a close examination of her genes would her show her claim to be false.

You can’t change the truth simply by changing definitions to enable your whims, desires or dreams. Suggesting your body doesn’t reflect your true identity or essence is to question God’s qualifications as creator. Seeking to fundamentally change the body God gave you is to imply you should take on the role of a superior re-creator. Nevertheless, such hubris toward Him is nothing new. As Isaiah 16:9 says, “You turn things upside down! Shall the potter be regarded as the clay, that the thing made should say of its maker, "He did not make me"; or the thing formed say of him who formed it, "He has no understanding?"

Can America learn from Isaiah’s indictment? We haven’t yet. Even so, you’re in a position to move us in that direction. Know the truth and help others know it. After all, many Americans appear to be unfamiliar with it.

1 http://tinyurl.com/nmdpyph
1 http://tinyurl.com/nmdpyph
1 http://tinyurl.com/pveuhct
1 http://tinyurl.com/pveuhct
1 http://tinyurl.com/n2e4s43
1 http://tinyurl.com/qh9rntr
1 http://tinyurl.com/p3lfhb2

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Some things to consider regarding the Supreme Court’s ruling on homosexual marriage:

There’s no doubt the ruling last week is indicative that the Biblical worldview has become a minority perspective in America. But, as Russel Moore (president of the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention) said recently, "...the church should not panic. The Supreme Court can do many things, but the Supreme Court cannot get Jesus back in that tomb.”¹

In addition, the right the court created would be less likely to be invoked if those who coveted it came to understand why their worldview is wrong. Think of the gains the pro-life movement has made since the 1973 Supreme Court decision that ruled abortion a right. Those gains began when the public conscience was confronted with a worldview with a focus on life. We can help enable similar gains by confronting our world with a worldview focused on true love.

¹http://tinyurl.com/pq37e4f

~ Joe Burns
The baby crib in the Narthex was overflowing with donations from our congregation to the **Assure Women’s Center**. Thank you for contributing diapers, baby clothing, toys, car seats and money for the Center, which provides biblically-based encouragement, support, and services for women facing difficult challenges associated with an unplanned pregnancy. All services the Center provides are personally tailored to the individual woman and her circumstances, and these services are free and confidential.

Ginny Bremer and I delivered all of your donations, along with $166, to the **Assure Women’s Center** at the end of May. We had the pleasure of meeting with Cheryl Mather, Executive Director, and Rita Monday, Office Administrator. They were most appreciative of the bounty received from TBPC!

The **Assure Women’s Center** is an outreach ministry dedicated to presenting the Gospel in word and action. The Center’s newest acquisition is an ultrasound. Ultrasounds are important if a woman is thinking about abortion. It will verify that she is actually pregnant and determine how many weeks along she is. As different abortion methods are used in different weeks of pregnancy, this information will clarify what abortion procedures, and other options, are available to her. Please note the adjacent photo of the “peanut,” a term of endearment used to show what a baby looks like at just 10 weeks gestation.

During a tour of the Center, we were reminded of the long-standing relationship Tampa Bay Presbyterian Church has had with the center (formerly named “Pregnancy Care Center”). It remains at 14620 North Nebraska Avenue, Building C, Tampa, FL 33613; www.assurewomenscenter.com.

How can we at TBPC help the Center? We can pray for its finances, volunteer recruitment, adequate space for the new ultrasound services, and – most of all – that the women coming to the Center for help will have changed hearts and minds about abortion for their little one.

*“And whoever welcomes a little child like this in My Name welcomes Me.”*  
**Matthew 18:5**
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>1 6p PHOS Youth Dinner and Meeting</td>
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<td>4 Independence Day; 7:45a Men's Bible Study</td>
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<tr>
<td>5 8:45 Adult CEF, Youth &amp; Children's Sunday School, CE&amp;F; 10:30a Worship Service; CE&amp;F Summer Quarter begins</td>
<td>6 6:30p Women's Bible Study; Church Office Closed</td>
<td>7 10:30a Staff Meeting; 8p Outreach Team Meeting; 8p Missions Committee Meeting</td>
<td>8 6p PHOS Youth Dinner and Meeting</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11 7:45a Men's Bible Study; 9a Men's Ministry Team Meeting</td>
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<tr>
<td>12 8:45 Adult CEF, Youth &amp; Children's Sunday School, CE&amp;F; 10:30a Worship Service; 12:30p Welcome Lunch; 5p PHOS Youth Meeting</td>
<td>13 11a Staff Meeting</td>
<td>14 7p NTCA Board Meeting</td>
<td>15 6p PHOS Youth Dinner and Meeting</td>
<td>16 7p Session and Diaconate Meetings</td>
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<td>18 7:45a Men's Bible Study</td>
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<td>19 8:45 Adult CEF, Youth &amp; Children's Sunday School; 10:30a Worship Service; 5p PHOS Youth Meeting</td>
<td>20 11a Staff Meeting</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>22 6p PHOS Youth Dinner and Meeting; 7p Summer Choir Rehearsal</td>
<td>23 7p Leadership Team Meeting</td>
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<td>25 7:45a Men's Bible Study</td>
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<td>26 8:45 Adult CEF, Youth &amp; Children's Sunday School; 10:30a Worship Service; 5p PHOS Youth Meeting</td>
<td>27 9a Camps Kilimanjaro VBS Begins; 11a Staff Meeting</td>
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<td>29 6p PHOS Youth Dinner and Meeting</td>
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The Sunday Schedule

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<th>Location</th>
<th>Sunday School for Children</th>
<th>Christian Education &amp; Fellowship for Adults</th>
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<tr>
<td>8:45 AM</td>
<td>Classroom Wing</td>
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<tr>
<td>10:30 AM</td>
<td>Sanctuary</td>
<td>Sunday School for Children</td>
<td>Christian Education &amp; Fellowship for Adults</td>
<td>Worship Service</td>
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19911 Bruce B. Downs Boulevard
Tampa, Florida 33647
Phone: (813) 973-2484
Fax: (813) 973-4673
Email: office@tampabaypresbyterian.org

www.tb pca.org