



July 2018

The Banner

Newsletter of the Presbytery of Arkansas

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Thoughts from General Assembly

By General Presbyter Stewart Smith

In June, I attended my second General Assembly meeting of the PC(USA) as a mid-council leader. One of the reasons mid-council leaders attend the biennial meeting is

to help interpret actions of the General Assembly to our presbyteries and the churches in our presbyteries. That aspect of interpretation was especially needed during the many years that our denomination debated and wrestled with issues related to sexuality and ordination. This year, I have not had one phone call from someone in the presbytery who is upset or needs clarification from something that happened at General Assembly.



Mid-council leaders do not have voice or vote at the General Assembly meeting. We are observers. And it struck me this year just how much our church has changed since I attended General Assembly as a commissioner back in 2004. In 2004, I was bombarded with material as I walked into the convention center. Various affinity groups had either invitations to gatherings which were designed to sway opinion on controversial topics or flyers that stated their position and/or opposition to issues under consideration at the meeting. There is very little of that going on at General Assembly today. Yes, there are some groups that are visible that are getting their message across and you might see an occasional flyer, but it is drastically reduced from prior years.

Back in 2004, as the daily schedule would unfold, I worried about how the **Presbyterian Layman** would report and interpret a sermon that was preached, or a prayer was prayed or an action that was taken. I learned first-hand that year how "one-sided" their reporting was. In my opinion, it did not accurately reflect what I heard and witnessed, and it seemed their "spin" was designed to sway public opinion among those who were not there. This year, as the week progressed I looked to see how the **Presbyterian Layman** was reporting on the meeting and noticed there had not been activity on their website since 2017. There was no report on the Assembly, which in my mind corresponds to the lack of phone calls we have received at the presbytery office.

One of my colleagues who has attended many assemblies over the years said, "this was by far the best General Assembly meeting I have attended." Even with the numerous challenges we face as a denomination, there was a hopeful spirit and a more unified spirit than most assemblies have had. And I observed that the commissioners listened carefully and in most cases came to good "common sense" compromises on the controversial issues. Please see [this link](#) for a summary of actions taken at the Assembly from The Presbyterian Outlook magazine.

The theme of this year's General Assembly was "Renewing the Vision: Kindom

building for the 21st Century." Deborah Krause (Eden Theological Seminary) and Raj Nadella (Columbia Theological Seminary) led Bible studies on committee days that looked at texts in the synoptic gospels that describe the kingdom of God. They focused their study on the idea of "kindom" as opposed to kingdom. Our idea of the word kingdom is one of a top-down monarchy. The Bible study leaders contrasted that to an idea of "kindom" which is a more horizontal structure of power in which everyone is a beloved child of God. "The kindom of God is not built through competition but in mutual cooperation and solidarity." The leaders noted that the idea of "kindom" is supported by Jesus' life and teachings. Jesus criticized the power structures of his day and broadened the definition of family to extend beyond blood relationships.

We are siblings in Christ serving together in the Presbytery of Arkansas. I pray that in these anxious and challenging times that we can strive together to work towards being a more hopeful, a more welcoming and a more diverse church. I pray that we can avoid any tendency of competing with each other and instead attempt to work together in a spirit of mutual cooperation and solidarity. We are called to be faithful in a very challenging time and context of ministry. I am glad to be part of the Presbytery of Arkansas family with you and am blessed to be a partner in ministry with each of you.

Stewart

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New Office Phone System

The Presbytery office has a new phone system. We signed a contract with Ring Central, a VOIP (Voice Over Internet Protocol) provider. The system is in place, but we have been assigned a temporary number until the current office phone number is moved over. We will continue to use the 501-663-2424 numbers for calls and the 501-224-2429 to receive faxes.

It could take as long as two weeks (July 22) for the numbers to be transferred over to the new system. This system will provide several options that our old system did not provide for a lower monthly cost. Calls will be routed to the cell phones of staff members through the system.

Rather than providing you with the temporary number, please know that in the meantime calls to the current office number are forwarded to either Stewart or Kenneth. And you can reach any of us directly by using our cell phone numbers until

the new system is operational. We thank you for your patience as we researched and now have implemented this new system. Kenneth will send out a presbytery-wide email when the phone numbers are transferred over, and the system is working.

Cell Phone Numbers

| | |
|----------------|--------------|
| Stewart Smith | 479-466-0195 |
| Leslie Belden | 479-466-1061 |
| Kenneth Rich | 501-831-2757 |
| NiAnn Thompson | 501-337-2360 |
| Hannah Lahodny | 501-680-9321 |
| Michael Vinson | 501-514-1230 |

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Nominations Sought for Committee, Ministry Area Service

Presbytery's Committee on Nominations is seeking names of qualified and willing persons to serve on presbytery ministry areas or committees or subcommittee beginning in 2019. To download the current form, [click here](#).

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Steven Kurtz Installed as Pastor at Central Presbyterian--Fort Smith



The presbytery's Administrative Commission that installed Rev. Steven Kurtz as pastor of Central Presbyterian, Fort Smith on June 24 is pictured above. Back row (from left): Elder Ed Wilkinson, General Presbyter Rev. Stewart Smith, Moderator of Presbytery Rev. Leslie Bethell Roper. Front row (from left): Rev. Young Doo Kim; Elder Ann Smith, First, Fort Smith; Elder Margaret Sparkman, Central, Fort Smith; Rev. Kurtz; Rev. Rita Wilson, HR and Clerk of Session David Whitt, Central.

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People and Church News

NEWS OF OUR PEOPLE

--Congratulations to **Rev. and Mrs. Robert A. "Chip" Hatcher** on the birth of their first grandchild, a boy Robert Alvin "Trip" Hatcher, III on June 9. Parents are Marshall and Emma Hatcher of Memphis. "Chip" is pastor of Westminster Presbyterian, Hot Springs.

--Best wishes to **Katherine Norwood** and John Kubar who were married on May 19 in Louisville, KY where both just graduated from Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary. Katherine is a member of Second Presbyterian, Little Rock and a candidate for ministry under care of the presbytery.

--**Christi Boyd**, mission co-worker as a facilitator for women and children's interests in Africa, wrote "Beyond the Dress" in the May/June "Horizons magazine for Presbyterian Women." She is supported in her work in the Democratic Republic of Congo by Westminster Presbyterian, Hot Springs, among other churches.

--**Andrea Baird** is the new director of the Bright Horizons Early Learning Center at First, Rogers.

NEWS OF OUR CONGREGATIONS

--**First, Fort Smith** organized an art show on June 10 by a church member who painted/printed greetings cards and artworks of the place and places youth visited in Haiti, which proceeds benefited the Haiti Educational Foundation.

--**Presbyterian Church of Bella Vista** Men's Fellowship sponsored a blood drive on June 11 and a roadside cleanup on June 23.

--**First, Dardanelle** presented their graduating high school senior with a gift Bible signed on the front blank pages by church members and friends.

--**First, Conway** children age 4 through second grade will spend a day learning

about the church's ministries to those in need in Conway.

--**Wynne Presbyterian** planned their inaugural Intergenerational Women's Night Out on June 20 and will host Vacation Bible School on August 5-7.

--**First, Morrilton** hosted Parents Night Out with supper for Conway County Foster Parents on June 15.

--**First, Yellville** scholarshipped two children in foster homes in that county to attend Ferncliff's summer camp session.

--**First, Harrison** rejoiced in their Vacation Bible School "Rolling River Rampage" where over 40 children enjoyed Bible stories music, crafts, science projects and puppets.

--**First, Bentonville** is hosting Ferncliff Day Camp for children graduated from kindergarten through grade 6 during the weeks of July 9, 16 and 23.

--**Grace, Little Rock** will have Christmas in July activities, including collecting new undies for men and women which will be dedicated on July 29.

--**First, Springdale** now offers online/text giving with the launch of their new church website in June.

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Resource Center News

by [NiAnn Thompson](#), Resourcing Director
Phone 501.663.2424, ext. 104
Monday & Wednesday, 8:30 a.m. to 5:45 p.m.



PRESBYTERY FACEBOOK PAGE

If you have events that you want the people of the Presbytery to know about, post them to our Facebook page at www.facebook.com/PresbyteryOfArkansas. Rev. Anne Russ at First, North Little Rock (Argenta) at 501.374.7677 or email revruss@gmail.com will be glad to answer your questions.

CHILDREN'S BOOKS FOR SUMMER ENJOYMENT (and perhaps a children's sermon or two)

"**The Real Story of The Flood**" (Acc. #BK9947) by Paul I. Maier and illustrated by Robert T. Garrett is a large-size beautiful telling of humanity's second chance through a vessel large enough for a pair of every kind of animal, a faithful man and his family, and God who created, destroyed and saved the world.

"**The Real Story of The Exodus**" (Acc. #BK9948) also by Paul L. Maier and illustrated by Gerard Taylor from Concordia Publishing House is also a 12x10 illustrated book for older children and young youth which ranges from the baby rescued by princess to the death of the people's leader before they enter the

Promised Land.

"In God's Hands" (Acc. #BK9949) by Lawrence Kushner and Gary Schmidt illustrated by Matthew J. Baek is "a charming tale to remind us all that our kindness works miracles" even in a "little, ordinary town" with David so poor he can barely feed his family and Jacob so consumed with staying rich that he thinks only of money. "A perfect story for anyone who has ever prayed for a miracle. Or received one."

"The Brick Bible: The New Testament" (Acc. #BK9966) is subtitled A New Spin on the Story of Jesus as told and illustrated by Brendan Powell Smith. The author is "an artist known for his divine use of Lego Bricks" with which he has produced nearly 5,000 illustrations, retelling more than 400 stories from the Bible. A very engaging, whimsical and accessible book for children and those who love them.

"Growing God's Way" (Acc. #BK/CD9958) is subtitled 'Stories and Songs of the 5 Solas' by Grace Chung and illustrations by Cami Ferreira. This children's rhyming book and CD of songs is built on five themes as key beliefs since the 16th century: scripture alone, faith alone, grace alone, Christ alone and the glory of God alone.

STEWARDSHIP EMPHASIS SEASON DRAWS NEARER

Would your Session, pastor or financial/stewardship committees read **"Not Your Parents' Offering Plate: A New Vision for Financial Stewardship"** (Acc. #BK 9961 or #9962) by Clif Christopher? His chapters focus on themes of survival of the fittest, reasons people give, all members are not equal, the pastor Must be a fundraiser, three pockets of giving, and top ten things I would do now.

RESOURCE ROUND-UP

The Resource Center Advisory Board and I continue to gather all overdue resources back into the Resource Center. If you have been contacted to return an overdue DVD, book or curriculum piece (or know you will be soon), please return those items to the Presbytery's Resource Center in the Presbytery Office. Thank you!

(Your Resource Center receives funding from the presbytery's Mission of the Church ministry area.)

Presbytery of Arkansas Youth News



Youth and their leaders from the Presbytery of Arkansas (shown above) attended the 2018 General Assembly in St. Louis. When the group was not observing meetings, they worked on mission projects around St. Louis in conjunction with St. Louis Urban Mission. Big thanks to Julianna Whitson (far left) and Rev. Brian Brock (far right) for leading!

Upcoming Youth Events and Trips sponsored by the Youth Advisory Team

Montreat Youth Conference (Montreat, NC) - July 21-28, 2018

(These dates are also posted at www.presbyteryofarkansas.org under "Ministries," then "Youth Council.")

Want to stay updated about Youth Ministry happenings in the Presbytery?

"Like" us on Facebook!

Search

PresbyteryofArkansasYouthMinistry

on Facebook,

or go to

www.facebook.com/PresbyteryofArkansasYouthMinistry

This page is for anyone wishing to stay updated about Youth Ministry happenings in the Presbytery -- Youth Workers, parents, youth, Educators, Pastors.

(Presbytery's Youth Ministry receives funding from Presbytery's Ministries with Youth, Young Adults, and Campus Ministry.)

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THE P.L.A.C.E. CENTRAL 2018 REGISTRATION--LAST CALL!!

The Changing Face of the Church

Offered by
The Mission of the Church Ministry Area
of the Presbytery of Arkansas



The P.L.A.C.E. Central
Brought to you by the **Presbytery Leadership Academy**
for **Congregational Enrichment**

Workshops and Leaders to Date:

1. Growing Young: Best Practices for Helping Young People Find a Home in your Congregation led by Certified Christian Educator Theresa Spragins, First, Conway
2. What is NEW! from Board of Pensions led by Regional B of P Representative Kevin Keaton
3. Single Shooter Situation led by Little Rock S.W.A.T. Officer Henry Moore (presented twice)
4. The GREAT Great Ends of the Church led by Rev. David Dyer, HR, Westminster, Little Rock
5. Leading the "Purple" Church led by Rev. Steve Hancock, Second, Little Rock
6. Church Giving in the 21st Century led by Malinda Kirchner, Director of Planned Giving at Second, Little Rock
7. Clerk of Session Training led by Clerk/Elder Sam Highsmith assisted by Tracy May, Second, Little Rock (covers two workshop time slots)
8. "Transformative Conversations"- Gospel's Call to Bridge the Radial Chasms in Our Society led by Rev. Frank LeBlanc (covers two workshop time slots), Westover Hills, Little Rock and Woodson Walker, Mosaic Church of Little Rock
9. Navigating Change in the Church and Staying Spiritually Safe in Times of Change, both led by Rev. Michael Vinson on Presbytery Staff
10. Honduras Mission Programs and Opportunities for the Presbytery, led by Elder Duke Monroe, First, Jacksonville
11. We Need A Little Christmas Now! Led by Rev. Carol Clark, HR

August 4, 2018

9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

**Second Presbyterian Church,
600 Pleasant Valley Dr., Little Rock, AR**

Registration for the August 4th event ends on Wednesday, July 25th. To download the complete packet of flyers, details about workshops and registration forms, [click here](#).

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Presbyterian Pilgrimage Coming: October

Why do people go on their Pilgrimage? Well, there are several reasons a person might go:

- * A chance to get away from "the world" and hear the still, small voice of God;
- * For those who constantly serve others and need a break, it's a chance to "be served" by others;
- * Some may feel a little "stuck" in their spiritual journey, and come to be able to hear God's voice more clearly, so they know more clearly what their next step(s) might be;
- * Some might be struggling with grief or guilt, and just need to be able to hear - loud and clear - the love of God;
- * Some, honestly, may come just for the fun of it (and it is a fun time).

This fall, at Ferncliff Camp & Conference Center, the foliage should be beautiful. The fall Pilgrimage is October 25-28. Mark your calendars now, and make your reservation (below).

When you attend your Pilgrimage, you experience the love of Jesus Christ as lived out in practical ways. You learn practical tools for walking the Christian path day-by-day. You sing with joy, taste good food, and you laugh out loud. AND, you have a chance to experience all of this away from the day-to-day cares of the world.

"It felt like a preview of Heaven," a participant said about their Weekend.

All costs except room and board are donated by volunteers. Room and meals cost \$200 for the three-day Pilgrimage, but confidential scholarships are available upon request. (Arkansas Presbytery helps support these scholarships.)

To register online, or to learn more, just go to the Pilgrimage website, at www.pilgrimage-arkansas.org.

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MISSION GRANTS AVAILABLE TO CONGREGATIONS

Mission of the Church Ministry Area again encourages congregations to submit grant requests for this last year of three of the Unified Mission Emphasis: helping the "most vulnerable of the very young and old." These might range from a diaper drive to treats for nursing home residents. If you have some project to launch or one to keep afloat, consider applying for a grant of up to \$500 with Mission of the Church. This may be done by emailing: ktpearson@suddenlink.net. Include in the request: the purpose of the program/project, proof of Session approval, the overall cost of the ministry, the amount desired for the grant, how the grant money, if received, would be utilized, as specifically as possible, submitted at least six weeks in advance of use. Several grants have already been awarded.

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ATTENTION: Presbyterian Women of the Presbytery of Arkansas

MARK THESE DATES for these upcoming important events!

Questions? Contact Ila Blacketter-Wolfe at ila.nb.wolfe@gmail.com or Cathy Rogers at ccrogers86@gmail.com.

2018 Churchwide Gathering of Presbyterian Women

Thursday, August 2 - Sunday, August 5, 2018

Louisville, Kentucky

Register at www.presbyterianwomen.org/gathering

Fall PW Gatherings Across the Clusters of the Presbytery

Synod of the Sun Presbyterian Women Gathering

July 25 - July 27, 2019

First Presbyterian Church of Tulsa, Oklahoma
More information to come!

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HONDURAS MISSION TRIP

Sept. 29-Oct. 6, 2018

You're invited to join the next AR Presbytery community development trip to Honduras, Sept 29 - Oct 6, 2018. The team will travel to Tegucigalpa to assist in the building of a new church called Nuevo Suyapa in the La Bandera neighborhood, working alongside the Honduran work team. We will have the pleasure of staying and eating in Villa Gracia, now owned and run by the Presbyterian Women of Honduras. We will travel by private bus in-country. The team will have the opportunity to meet Alex Rodas, our In-country Trip Coordinator, as well as Dori Hjalmarson, our new Mission Co-Worker. We will also have the opportunity to visit future or previous project sites.



Dori Hjalmarson

Leigh Woodruff of First United Presbyterian Church of Fayetteville has traveled to Honduras annually since 2014. She will make sure all participants are well oriented and prepared for the mission trip. Call or email Leigh for more information and to fill out an application. Only 20 participants will be accepted. Building or Spanish skills are a plus, but certainly not required. The estimated cost per person is \$1,500 for flight, room, board, bus, and contributing building materials.



Villa Gracia

Perhaps this is the moment for which you have been created. Esther 4:14



New Church site

Note from Leigh "Mission work will not only help others, but it will change you. Gain a new perspective on the world and yourself by joining a mission team. Safety is always our first priority, and we are grateful to never have any problems. The Hondurans we work with are kind, caring people who are thankful to have the extra work hands. You will experience something life-changing."

If you feel God calling you to Honduras, contact Leigh Woodruff at (479) 601-1437 or leigh.woodruff@yahoo.com. Monetary donations are also greatly appreciated to help a team member or purchase additional building materials.



Leigh with a group of girls

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Concealed Carry Law Survey

In response to the implementation of Arkansas Acts 562 and 859 (regarding concealed carry of handguns in houses of worship) that went into full effect January 1, 2018, it could be helpful for congregations to share with one another where they are in response. While each church's context is unique, as a connectional church, let us share information to help each other in times of discernment. You may download a copy of the form [here](#).

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Do You Have News for the Banner?

If you have something you would like us to consider for inclusion in the Banner newsletter, please send it to: kenneth@presbyteryofarkansas.org, niann@presbyteryofarkansas.org, and stewart@presbyteryofarkansas.org. We cannot guarantee your submission will be published, but we will do our best to include what we can.

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Prayer List for Congregations -- 2018 can be found [here](#).

Prayer List for Congregations -- 2019 can be found [here](#).

(Note: some web browsers may require you to press and hold the "Ctrl" key while you click the link to

reach the linked website).

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[Presbytery Calendar](#)

PRESBYTERY STAFF:

General Presbyter [STEWART SMITH](#)

Temporary Stated Clerk [LESLIE BELDEN](#)

Resourcing Director [NIANN THOMPSON](#)

Director of Mission Support [KENNETH RICH](#)

Interim Staff Resource for Youth [HANNAH LAHODNY](#)

Staff Resource for Mission Discernment [MICHAEL VINSON](#)

Treasurer [BOB BOEHMLER](#)

Moderator of Presbytery [LESLIE ROPER](#)

Moderator of the Coordinating Team [RUTH HAMILTON](#)

Vice Moderator of Presbytery [DAVID STRICKLIN](#)

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The Presbytery of Arkansas is a council of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), which is part of the Reformed family of churches within the universal Church of Jesus Christ. Our vision is *to make visible the body of Christ* (Acts II).

We are composed of over 10,000 Presbyterians gathered in 82 active churches, located in various towns and cities in the northern two-thirds of the State of Arkansas.

Phone 501.663.2424 Fax 501.224.2429 <http://www.presbyteryofarkansas.org>

Presbytery of Arkansas, 9221 N. Rodney Parham Rd., Little Rock, AR 72227