

PRESSING NEWS

The Presbytery of Western Colorado

January—February 2012



GOODBYE AND GOD BLESS TO OURAY; AND HELLO TO ALL: A NEW DAY!

The Presbytery meeting in Delta was a good one, thanks in large part to excellent prep work by Jim Cory, Bill Postler, and Bob Galbraith. Alisa Secrest and the Delta congregation provided warm, generous hospitality that added to a loving environment. And each of you while expressing deep convictions, strong feelings and varied perspectives, did so in a people sensitive and Christ like manner. Thank you all!

Together we the Presbytery voted decisively (27 to 6) to honor the Ouray Christian Fellowship's desire to withdraw from the PCUSA and the Presbytery and to proceed with this request according to our Separation Agreement and the settlement as negotiated with the Ouray Congregation by our Response Team many months ago. This settles all matters including property issues (see the particulars in previous minutes and other documents).

We understand the Fellowship intends to affiliate with the Evangelical Free Church. We express our sadness in their leaving our Presbytery but we affirm that we are all still in fellowship with the larger Kingdom of God and ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ. We wish our sisters and brothers in the Ouray Christian Fellowship the very best. God's blessings on them and through them. There is conversation about a joint worship service in Ouray with Presbytery representatives participating to formally ask God's continued blessings on us all and to express our best wishes and prayers for each other. We can do this now with sincerity and genuine love but not without some lingering pain. Thankfully, I already see and feel the effect of God's healing of that pain within me and others. May we all heal and move forward in hope and love and a restored joy.

To the remaining churches of the Presbytery I ask you to imagine with me a rather logistically impractical idea. What if the Ouray Church sent a different small delegation to worship in each of our churches to say good bye to each of us? What would we all discover? That we all love the Lord? That we are diverse like all of God's creation? That the Spirit of God is with us all? Would every member of Ouray and every member of our churches realize what we are all losing when one church is leaving?

Those of us with a long history with the people and place of Ouray are truly grieving a significant loss. The loss is not of property but of relationship. (Bob Galbraith revealed that the property is not the original building, nor the original location of the historical Presbyterian Church in Ouray, which had been sold and

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moved long ago). Properties and all material things come and go. Sure it was a scared space and will always be. We worshiped there, held working meetings there and enjoyed refreshing retreats there in one of the most strikingly beautiful settings in God's creation. But more important are God's beautiful human "re creations", the people and loving relationships of that setting which we will not forget from the past and which God will continue to produce in the future.

My sadness is slowly turning to gladness. I look forward to visiting Ouray, hiking the trails, soaking in the waters, dining in splendor, and visiting that sacred space whatever the sign on the door. Most of all I want to love people inside and outside of that and all churches of Jesus Christ.

Meanwhile I hope we can all learn from our mistakes and failures and forgive others as God forgives us. Let us draw large circles of inclusiveness to all of God's people and fewer lines of division between any people. Let's build bridges of love and understanding to a diverse and fractured world and tear down any wall that separates anyone from the love of Jesus Christ. May our time, resources, energy and gifts be dedicated to move forward in His love. Hello to all, it's a new day.

Reverend Dan Straw
Presbytery Moderator
Presbytery of Western Colorado

Pray for the People of South Sudan; Mission Personnel are Safe



January 3, 2012 – At least 150 people, mostly women and children, have been killed after fleeing attacks by fighters from a rival ethnic group over the past few days. Some 6,000 fighters from the Lou Nuer ethnic group have been pursuing members of the Murle community, [according to the BBC](#).

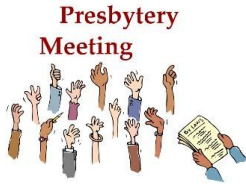
Presbyterian World Mission and the Presbyterian Church of Sudan are coordinating with the local government to take all possible actions into consideration and arrange for the safety of mission personnel in the region.

Please pray for the people of South Sudan, particularly the Murle and Lou Nuer communities and for reconciliation with one another. Continue to pray that [South Sudan partner churches and organizations](#) continue to provide an important witness to the grace, peace and love of Jesus Christ during this crisis. Stay updated on what is happening in South Sudan [here](#).

Wishing you a New Year of blessings, both given and received,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Bruce Whearty".

Bruce Whearty
World Mission Church Support
100 Witherspoon Street
Louisville, Kentucky 40202



Presbytery Meeting

Presbytery in Brief

At our Feb. 14-15 meeting at the Presbyterian Church of Delta:

Highlights

- ✚ Installed the Rev. Dan Straw as Moderator of the Presbytery for 2012 and RE Roger Koch as Vice Moderator.
- ✚ The Presbytery spent a significant amount of time discussing the withdrawal of the Ouray church from the PCUSA. After a great deal of discussion and debate the Presbytery approved a motion (by a vote of 27 to 6) to accept the original agreement proposed last year by the Response Team. In that agreement the Ouray church committed to make a series of mission gifts to churches and projects within the Presbytery (totaling \$20,000) and the Presbytery, while maintaining the validity of the Trust Clause in our Form of Government, agreed to relinquish its interest in the property of the First Presbyterian Church of Ouray to that congregation. (The Trust Clause states that all property of local congregations is held “in trust” for the denomination.) The central argument for passing this motion was the belief that the property in fact belongs to neither the local church nor the Presbytery, but to God and the Kingdom of God. Although many in the Presbytery are saddened by the departure of the Ouray church, there was still a sense that God is working through that church in the Ouray community.
- ✚ Discussed a proposal from Council urging all of the remaining churches in the Presbytery to refrain from any consideration of withdrawal and to commit to supporting the present restructuring plan for the Presbytery for a period of two years. While no vote was taken and no action required, there seemed to be a broad willingness on the part of the churches in the Presbytery to make this commitment. However, it was also noted that much will depend on the actions of the General Assembly and the broader denomination over the course of the next two years.
- ✚ Heard a report on the development of our new Presbytery website (with Beth Gilleece as our Communications Administrator) and on the development of the “cluster model” for our Presbytery.
- ✚ Elected Cluster Leaders as follows: northern cluster – The Rev. Mary Hammond Atkinson and RE Brigitte Evenson; central cluster – RE Thelma Starner and a person to be named later; southern cluster – RE Heather Lundquist and the Rev. Steve Nofel. General Presbyter Jim Cory will help train the cluster leaders over the course of the coming year to take over some of the GP’s responsibilities. And Steve Gammill, Bob Galbraith and Jo DeVinny will work with those leaders as they develop initial plans for their clusters. Steve Gammill made it clear that this is “a process” and that the clusters may develop independently with different goals.
- ✚ Noted that there will be only **two** Presbytery meetings in 2013 (in May and September). The winter meeting will be replaced by cluster gatherings. Clusters may also gather at other times over the course of the year.
- ✚ Heard a report from those who had attended the Fellowship Gathering in Orlando. The Fellowship is establishing a new Reformed denomination: the Evangelical Covenant Order of Presbyterians. The Rev. Tom Hansen noted that this new denomination is not primarily a reaction to changing ordination standards; even more it is about “doing church” in a new ways and reaching out to people who are not particularly interested in church. Tom indicated that it will require “high accountability” from all who join this group or affiliate with it.
- ✚ Heard a report that the Mission Budget for 2011 had a deficit of \$5575, and that the Ecclesiastical Budget showed a surplus of \$7625.
- ✚ Elected the Rev. Bill Postler to a two year term as Stated Clerk (beginning July 1, 2012).
- ✚ Remembered the contributions of the Rev. Max Kendrick to this Presbytery and gave thanks for his life.
- ✚ Heard an invitation from the Rev. Rick Underwood for anyone within our Presbytery to join with folks from Lake City for a pilgrimage to Israel, Palestine, Jordan and Egypt in late 2012 or early 2013. (For more information, contact Rick directly.)

The next Presbytery meeting will be May 16 & 17 (Wednesday and Thursday), 2012, at the Montezuma Valley Presbyterian Church in Cortez.

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT

By Jim Cory, General Presbyter

Last June our denomination approved the amendment 10-A to the *Book of Order* which eliminated the “fidelity and chastity” and “marriage is between a man and a woman” clauses in G-60106b. This in turn opened the door for the local option of churches and presbyteries to ordain people to be elders, deacons, or pastors who are homosexual or gay.

I’m a “centrist” and want our denomination to hold together and not split apart, so I voted against 10-A. I knew that approval of 10-A would upset a number of members and congregations and that they would consider leaving our denomination. Although I didn’t support 10-A, it is something that I can live with since it provides for local option. Each congregation and presbytery can decide who they will ordain. Our presbytery voted two to one against 10-A, so ordination of homosexuals or gays is highly unlikely to happen in this presbytery.

For sessions and congregations who may want to consider leaving the PC (U.S.A.) or affiliating with the Presbyterian Fellowship Group that has been formed, I would advise them to think long and hard before moving in this direction. I say this after experiencing the church breakups in the early seventies when the Presbyterian Church in America broke off from the Southern Presbyterian Church. Congregations and families were torn apart when forced to vote on staying or leaving the denomination. Church members who did not want to take sides on the issue also left their congregations because they didn’t want to be involved in this negative fight. In addition there were bitter and expensive legal battles over the church property. The result was smaller congregations on either side of the issue filled with anger and hurt.

If you have ever been in a congregation where the membership is forced to vote on the removal of their pastor, the same dynamics are at work. Members of the congregation are forced to take sides on the issue which in turn causes them to leave the congregation if their side is defeated. Those who don’t want to be involved leave the congregation as well resulting all in all in a major down sizing of the congregation.

It would seem to me that there will be fewer membership losses if congregations will not force their membership into a voting issue on staying or leaving the denomination or affiliating with the Presbyterian Fellowship Group. Let those who have strong feelings personally about the 10-A issue leave if they so desire, but don’t let them make it a congregational voting issue. I hope sessions will think about what I have said long and hard before doing anything that they may later regret.

Although I don’t know exactly where you are in this process, we are all facing critical decisions in our life together. I hope we can keep lines of communication open as we discern where God is leading us.



PRESBYTERIAN DISASTER ASSISTANCE RAPID INFORMATION NETWORK

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Photo used with permission from Baitulmaal.

Stand in the GAP for Syria

In Syria, tens of thousands of people are **caught in the crossfire** between government and opposition forces resulting in thousands of **Syrians fleeing their homes** to escape the violence.

Stand in the GAP to help make a difference in the lives of the Syrian people who are seeking refuge.

Presbyterian Disaster Assistance (PDA) has provided a **solidarity grant** from One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS) funds to help meet **basic humanitarian needs** of the affected people of Syria.

Give: Your generous support of [OGHS](#) and gifts designated to [DR000081](#) (Middle East/Syria) will help meet essential needs of affected families.

Act: [Use resources](#) from the PC(USA) website to educate others about the needs of the people of Syria.

Pray for the people of Syria and all who have been impacted by this crisis.

Thank you for making a difference!

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[Presbyterian Disaster Assistance](#)

A One Great Hour of Sharing Ministry

[Email](#)

(800) 728-7228, x5839

Christmas Day Blessings



Miracles Happen

This little article comes with the warning you had better be sitting down when you read it.

On Sunday, Christmas Day, December 25, I went over to church about 8:30 a.m. to set up and get ready for 9:30 worship. There was a Wal-Mart sack tied to the handle of our north door. It was tied so tight, I had to go to the kitchen for scissors to cut it away.

Then I had to cut open the sack, which was also tightly wrapped in brown paper and clear packaging tape. I must admit, I was thinking that someone had left my wife and our co-pastor, Kim, and I a present. I was somewhat ungrateful as it took a full three or four minutes to carefully cut through all the tape and paper.

When I pried it open, I received one of the biggest shocks of my life.

It was Ed and Marlene Duran's camera.

That camera was stolen when we opened our church to the community for a Halloween party back on October 29. We had more than 250 people from the community pass through our doors in about three hours that day.

The theft of the camera, of course, was bad, but it was worse than you can immediately imagine. The memory card in the camera had pictures of Ed and Marlene's daughter Christy who passed away in November 2009. The picture card had photos of Christy with her baby granddaughter, Lyric, and many other family memories. That memory card is literally priceless.

We spread the word as best we could, that we just wanted that memory card back. "You can keep the camera, no questions asked." Marlene even wrote a letter to the Cortez Journal asking for it to be returned.

In the meantime, it was a transformative time for many of our church members. We had many long talks and had to search our hearts. We had come to forgive and ask God to be with the folks who stole the camera.

Then it came back to us on Christmas morning. It came with a note of apology:

To whom it may concern

As of October 30 I found this Merchandise among family and friends and family! I am Sincerely Sorry for any problems we may have caused!

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year

p.s. hope this ends up to the right person!...

The shock and surprise I felt when I found the camera and the memory card intact on Christmas morning, followed a not so pleasant surprise on Christmas Eve.

On Christmas Eve night, the computer ate, gobbled up, took to never to be returned our sermon for Christmas morning. There was no auto-back-up – nothing. It was just gone.

We racked our brains, and figured out that hadn't happened to either Kim or I for more than 20 years. The computer ate our sermon. It was gone.

Of course we were frustrated. We were too tired and too pressed for time to recreate an almost completed sermon, so we woke up on Christmas with the idea that we were going to wing it.

Guess what became the center of our new sermon that we were basically winging? God's grace on Christmas morning!

I didn't even tell Kim what I had found. I just unexpectedly pulled the gift of the camera out from under the pulpit as I spoke of God's unexpected and unmerited favor. We all gasped, and tears flowed freely the rest of the morning.

The grace and love of God was shown as we baptized an infant a little later that morning. The grace and love of God was shown when we welcomed a new member of our church family. The grace and love of God was shown by our forgiving in Christ's name, and Christ obviously touching someone's heart during the holy Christmas season.

The only way to end this article is by quoting what our co-pastor says all the time about grace: "God is Good! God is Good All the Time!"

Rev. Steve Nofel, Co-Pastor
Montezuma Valley Presbyterian Church, Cortez

THE LAND THE SKY THE LIGHT

GHOST RANCH



Ghost Ranch Workdays

Work out those winter couch potato kinks by spending a few days with us at Ghost Ranch preparing for the busy summer months. Join us for up to five hours a day painting, repairing, trimming and organizing while making new friends and enjoying this invigorating place. Ghost Ranch Workdays are April 27-29 and May 25-28. Register on-line at www.ghostranch.org or call the registrar at 505-685-4333, extension 4155.

Georgia O'Keeffe Landscape Tour Guides (by- the-day)

If you're a fan of Georgia O'Keeffe, the Georgia O'Keeffe Landscape Tour needs more Tour Guides to join the team of dedicated volunteers who provide these educational and informative tours for our guests. You'll learn all about Georgia O'Keeffe's life, her time at Ghost Ranch, her painting sites, as well as the exciting history of Ghost Ranch. A commitment to lead the Tour 2-3 times a month is requested.

Tour Guide to Live at the Ranch

If you're up for a longer commitment, Ghost Ranch is looking for an out-going individual who loves the Ranch to live on site from April 1st - December 1st, 2012. Duties include both guiding and driving the Georgia O'Keeffe Landscape Tour and the new History of Ghost Ranch Tour. As with all live-on-the-Ranch volunteer positions, room and board are provided in exchange for 40 hours a week of work.

For more information or to apply for either the by-the-day or live-on-the-Ranch Tour Guide positions contact the Tours Coordinator, Karen Butts, at 505-685-4333, extension 4120 or by email at karenb@ghostranch.org.

Your help is needed

With the Presbytery's new web site the office is updating the physical address and email address database. Would you please update your information with the Presbytery office either by phone call 970-240-8455 or email Beth at bethwco@montrose.net.

Also If you know of someone who would like to receive a copy of our newsletter but currently does not receive one please notify the office.

Thank you for your assistance



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Return Service Requested

Bob Getty will be Ordained on Sunday, March 11, 2012

You are cordially invited.

Service begins at 3:00 pm
Calvary Presbyterian Church
Bayfield, Colorado

Bob has been called as Co-Pastor for the
First Presbyterian Church of Waverly, Ohio