



Presbytery of Yukon

July 7, 2016

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Beulah Nowpakahok

The family of Rev.
Kim MacInnes-Green
in her passing

Lydia Agnassaga and
her family

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Curt's Reflections from General Assembly

Ten Presbytery of Yukon folks traveled to General Assembly in Portland last month to participate one way or another. Three of us participated as commissioners or advisory delegates.



From Left:

Sara Johnston, Ruling Elder Commissioner

Rev. Henry Woodall, Teaching Elder Commissioner

Charlie McNeil, Young Adult Advisory Delegate

One, among only three recipients of this assembly's PC(USA) Woman of Faith Award, came from our presbytery.



Lucy Apatiki from The Gambell Presbyterian Church

At the presentation ceremony for her Woman of Faith Award (in her hand)

For her leadership in organizing the "New Beginnings" Reconciliation Event in 2012.

Three came to staff the presbytery booth:



*Doreen Simmonds and Danna Larson at our booth.
Mike Apatiki successfully avoided the camera.*

And two came on their own as observers.

Because we were there, some of us also signed up to speak to the General Assembly Committees on concerns vital to life in Alaska. We were busy in many ways.



Doreen Simmonds (from Utqiagvik Presbyterian Church—Barrow), testifying before the Immigration and Environment Committee. She also testified before the Social Justice Committee.

Besides electing a classmate of our own Rev. Reid (pastor, Barrow) as new stated clerk (congratulations to the Rev. Dr. J. Herbert Nelson!), the General Assembly addressed a number of important issues this year. Three seemed to me to be of particular interest to Alaska.

First, the General assembly found that the Holy Spirit was moving many items of racial justice before the General Assembly at this time. They therefore took action for the 2016-2018 years to be Years of Jubilee, to explore issues of racial justice across our country, so that Presbyterians may know more about them and may engage in ministries of increased justice and reconciliation.

As a part of that Spirit movement, they therefore also voted to repudiate the Doctrine of Discovery. This was an issue that many of our churches were watching, because this is the religious and moral doctrine behind the laws our nation used to seize Native lands. This doctrine also implied that Christians could treat non-Christians unjustly, which contributed to the acceptance of slavery and racism in our country.

The proposal was to spend two years studying the issue before a vote to repudiate it, because few in our denomination know anything about this doctrine, or its importance. However, the assembly decided not wait 2 more years. Instead, they acted to repudiate it now. However, they also asked that PCUSA churches become more aware of this doctrine, how it has added to injustice in our world and in our nation, and to seek out how to recognize the many ways this doctrine continues to infuse itself into our life today. This is a call to understand so that we may repent and make changes. Our presbytery will certainly need to engage in that kind of study and action.

The second thing of interest was passage of an overture requesting the PCUSA apologize to all Native Americans, both those who are part of the PCUSA and those never affiliated with us. The source of this overture was concern that arose in Baltimore Presbytery as they became aware of the

damage that boarding schools had caused to Native American peoples across the country. However, this made them aware of more problems, which led to this overture. The overture not only speaks an apology on behalf of the denomination, but it goes further to ask the church (and presbyteries) to enter into dialogue with the communities we have affected, to seek reconciliation and a new beginning.

By God's grace Lucy Apatiki from our presbytery award at this General Assembly for similar work between our presbytery and the community of Gambell. That fact was noted by many at the Assembly as they weighed the potential for good this overture represents.

The third movement I thought of interest to Alaskans was passage of an alternative overture for "phased divestment from fossil fuel companies." The assembly decided not to vote for divestment from fossil fuels, even though this is the move the climate change leaders across the world are recommending. Instead, the assembly voted to divest from companies that are not participating in negotiations a low emissions future. The assembly felt that holding onto shares, and dialoging with companies that will listen, would be more effective than simply backing away from the table. However, if companies stubbornly resist negotiations for change, as some already have, the PCUSA will divest from those companies.

One interesting note in this decision was a strong pronouncement that climate change is an urgent issue, and all parties must take it seriously. We heard almost no conversation from climate deniers. The arguments were about which strategies are best for Christians who care for God's beloved creation.

One issue that may have great potential for the future was about defining the purpose of the General Assembly meetings and reshaping the form they should take. Many people expressed appreciation for overtures from Foothills Presbytery and elsewhere. Those overtures looked for ways of freeing the assembly to address all the great ends of the church, rather than getting bogged down on one or two issues. Yet, it became clear that the suggestions available to us were not yet refined well enough. There were simply too many practical problems.

The assembly therefore established a commission that will continue with listening sessions across the country. The commission will return with the hallmarks of a vision for the General Assembly, and with suggested ways of restructuring the church in light of that vision.

Although the General Assembly voted not to approve these overtures for change, they officially expressed gratitude to the Foothills Presbytery for opening this conversation and raising new possibilities worth exploring. This effort may reshape how the General Assembly serves the church, as well as what meetings of the General Assembly will look like. It's an exciting time!

As I conclude, I hope everyone will recognize that this Assembly was particularly historic in approving the Confession of Belhar. Changes come

only rarely to our Book of Confessions. Please note that the Confession of Belhar powerfully addresses racism and society. I believe it to be a work of the Spirit that this new confession was approved at the very moment when our world is struggling with systemic racism, terrorism and tremendously suffering refugees. God speaks when the time is right. We must simply be ready to listen, and act. God is good.



Incoming Stated Clerk J. Herbert Nelson (left) embraces outgoing Stated Clerk Gradye Parsons

Donations Needed for Gambell Building

The village of Gambell, situated on Alaska's remote Bering Sea, needs a church and building that will serve as a spiritual and social center. The Presbytery of Yukon has joined in this effort, trying to raise part of the money needed. But this spring they hit a roadblock.

In order to begin operations this fall, the fire marshall is requiring a sprinkler system that will cost \$70,000. The money must be raised immediately to allow the needed building supplies to be shipped before the last barge in August. The money must be raised by July 15 to assure construction in 2016. Please go donate at our GoFundMe page:

<https://www.gofundme.com/25qun7wb>

The building is sorely needed for at least three reasons. First, the community is currently in the 3rd year of a food shortage due to new and dangerous hunting conditions caused by climate change. The building will provide space for a community food bank and for daily meals provided by the Sr. Nutrition Program.

Second, the community building used for cultural events failed FDA codes. The new building will provide space for cultural events that include food.

Third, space is needed for worship and other religious events. The current church building is run down and not able to adequately provide either for worship or for the social ministry that the community needs.

To a great degree, the people of St. Lawrence Island live a traditional subsistence lifestyle based on hunting and gathering. Cash is in short supply. Yet current needs require a building, and state code requires a sprinkler system that we have not yet funded.

Please know how grateful we are for the help you can offer. Your donation can help us cross this hurdle. We would so like to help the

people of Gambell to address these needs this year, but we can't do it without your help. You have our most heart-filled thanks for any gift you can offer.

Elmendorf AFB Seeking Protestant Music Director



Location: Elmendorf AFB, Alaska

Requirement:

- A degree in music from an accredited institution is preferred. (A minimum of four years of experience in Protestant Church music may be substituted.)
- Knowledge of Protestant Liturgy, Christian Hymns and Contemporary Christian music is required. Ability to lead worship while playing an instrument conducive to leading worship in a blended traditional/contemporary service and the ability to evaluate any subcontractor's competence/performance in these areas is required. Ability to coordinate all music activities of the Contemporary Family Worship Service is required. Previous experience in a Protestant military chapel setting is preferred/not required.
- The contractor must be able to play worship songs chosen by the worship service pastor and sing in key with 95% accuracy.
- A résumé shall be included with bid submissions and an interview/demonstration of qualifications may be required.
- Previous experience in a Protestant military chapel setting is preferred/not required.

Company: Sawyer Contracting LLC

Point of Contact

Contact Person: Anne Rose

Email: anne@sawyercontracting.com

Office: 407-602-7780 ext. 102

Fax: 321-765-6437

For more detailed information on current music positions available,
Please contact us today.

Mark Your Calendars

July 19-23, 2016



2016 Presbyterian Youth Triennium

Purdue University

Who: Youth grades 8 - 12

For more information:

www.presbyterianyouthtriennium.org/

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