



DOE RUN NEWS

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Reflections of the 218th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (USA), held June 21-28, 2008 in San Jose, California

Reported to the Doe Run Presbyterian Church by Elder Ed Martin via the church newsletter.

What does God ask of you and me? There is not a word of more than four letters in that question, but oh what a gigantic question put to the Christian conscience and community. Scripturally the answer is in a passage from the Old Testament book of the prophet Micah, chapter 6, and verse 8. But every person has to pray for what this means personally and how that meaning manifests itself in one's life as a Christian and as a child of God. The Biblical passage reads: (Micah 6:6-8)

6 "With what shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before God on high?

7 ... for the sin of my soul?"

8 He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?

This is the prophetic word of our Lord giving us life direction, as three big concepts —justice, kindness, and humility ringing out as cornerstones of living a Godly life.

Note: some may argue this passage changes John 3:16-17: 16 "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. 17 "Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him." John 14:5-6 further states 5 "How can we know the way?" 6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." Salvation is in Christ, by Christ and through Christ; it is not by any good deeds we perform. The Micah passage to mortals is not saying salvation comes through good deeds; it is asking for a right human spirit that will foster the cleansing of sins for our salvation. Thus it does not stand against New Testament dogma.

Micah 6:8 was the theme of the 218th General Assembly. And I watched as justice, kindness, and humility permeated the decisions and actions of most of the men and women commissioners and participants. It seemed that most commissioners were seeking to live up to the charge of the Biblical theme —seeking justice with as much kindly love and Godly humility as possible within the framework of one's own passions and spiritual interpretations. What a joy it was to see this dictate of our God working for the good of the larger church, albeit with sluggishness. How proud it made me to be a part of a loving, compassionate Presbyterian Church body. This working of the Assembly with due diligence and getting to know and interact and connect with the other commissioners and observers from Donegal Presbytery were for me the most rewarding aspect of the Assembly.

Now let me be perfectly honest in this report. My religious and spiritual leanings tend to list heavily to the main stream centrist-ecclesiast positions with a lot of personal sympathy extended toward liberal social issues that traditionally are endorsed by the liberal progressive (left) wing of our church. The third wing (right) of the church is made up of conservative-evangelicals. Some might think that, based on the information above, I would not support conservative-evangelical stands. But some of their positions I firmly support. I like to think this slipping and sliding in my positions is Micah 6:8 leading me toward justice and kindness. I fear my humility still needs lots of work!

On any given social issue or Biblical based spiritual issue, the hard core right and/or left wings of the denomination comprise from 15 to 25 percent of the national membership. The numbers swell when issues like Christian/Muslim vs. Jewish Relations, ordination standards and interpretations of Biblical vs. historical standards, re-definition of marriage, abortion positions, church polity changes, and confessional changes. When these issues come up centrist members tend to shrink and both the liberal and conservative sides swell, getting close to the 25 percent on each side. Right now the centrists are still the majority membership and the church is strong. But these issues will not go away, and I foresee in the not too distant future a number of churches on the more extreme sides of these issues leaving the denomination. And probably this will be good for those churches leaving and for the denomination as a whole. Certainly there will be less tension and greater joyfulness in the local churches and presbyteries. The sad thing is the issues will continue to be divisive. Unlike our friends who flee, the issues will stay!

Let me make another observation on the controversies in our denomination. We function quite well considering how fractured we are. Our city churches are mostly liberal; our rural churches are conservative; our community churches are centrists; our oldest churches tend to be conservative; our west coast churches are liberal; our New England churches virtually were abandoned to the UCC and Roman Catholic denominations. We still have African American churches and other minority churches after our denomination fought for civil rights, and many of the minority churches are carrying on a vital ministry in their communities. For a century we had two types of southern churches and two types of northern churches and though united now, many of these churches continue to maintain their unique missions and religious ways. And these are all within the body of the PC(USA). Think of the number of other types of Presbyterian denominations and independent Presbyterian churches there are. Most of these are break-a-way churches that could not tolerate some aspect of the denomination. As a denomination, we have been fighting since the first General Assembly. And for the most part, we have been fighting over many of the same issues since the early 1700's. So—it seems we like to fight! Also remember, Doe Run began as a break-a-way church that came back to the fold.

As I prepared for the GA by reading overtures (these are proposed positions to the assembly for decisions/votes in up or down recommendations after reviewed by a GA committee to which the overture was assigned), pamphlets, reports and position statements/treatises, I quickly came to the conclusion that I needed to position my votes with the left (liberal) side of certain social and spiritual issues. The argument that “the time is not right. Wait until a future GA to pass the liberal agenda or you will destroy the church” just did not make sense to me. So I left for the GA with the intent to vote for many of the liberal agenda issues. Just an interesting observation, I had asked in worship announcements for anyone who had strong positions on issues to discuss their positions with me during a coffee hour. Only two members chose to do this—both were liberal leaning activists! You know who you are; thanks for your input.

My committee assignment was with Committee 15, Pensions, Foundation, and Presbyterian Publishing Corporation. While working on this committee, I spoke for or against several of the overtures and/or asked questions regarding clarification of rationale for several overtures. The most interesting overture was one requesting the Pension Board to provide coverage for families with permanently disabled children. They have not provided coverage beyond a certain amount in the past for these children. The Pension Board wanted our committee to vote against the measure. I am pleased to report that we upheld the original request. Also an overture was passed requiring the board to publish times when they funded abortion clinic work—which is frequently but infrequently for pro-life clinics. We had the fewest overtures to examine so our committee work was completed in two days. Also our work was pretty much controlled by standard operating procedures of a business nature. What this did for me was to afford me the time to observe other committees at work and to talk with pastors and elders at these meetings. These conversations, my own observations, plus conversations with my fellow Donegal commissioners caused me to change my position on certain hot button issues and to backpeddle on my more liberal agenda.

The committees I observed were charged with “perfecting” overtures dealing with the twelve “Hot Button” issues identified by “Presbyterians for Renewal.” These issues are concerns for the denomination because they impact, both positively and negatively, the spiritual well being of all divisions of our denomination—the local churches, the presbyteries, the synods, and the general assembly. The position paper, “218th General Assembly 12 Issues,” published by “Presbyterians for Renewal,” presented a strongly convincing Biblically faithful, missionally minded paper. This report does not afford a detailed account of all twelve issues, but I want to share certain ones that made me realize that “the time is not yet right” to “right” some of these issues. Also I will cluster some of the issues so I can get multiple points across to you. I do pray that the right time will come soon.

1. In Christian-Muslim Relationships, I could not vote for a statement that claims both religions worship the same God, for I don’t see Christ or a salvation plan with the Muslim faith. Certainly I can encourage continued dialogue with members of the two faiths, but not at the expense of our relationship with the Jewish nation and faith. Also in my eyes the divestiture of stock in American companies that support the Jewish militant position for survival would be an improper move and would almost certainly strain relationships in that area of the world.
2. Ordination standards is one of the issues that suffers from the Lazarus syndrome. One is sure it is dead, but it rises to walk once again. This issue was not to surface again until the 2010 GA. Somehow it did! Personally I have never seen a GA, synod, presbytery, or local church submit an overture that permits promiscuity. Yet the homophobic conservatives immediately assume that promiscuity is part of the proposal to allow ordination of clergy, elders, or deacons. How unchristian is it to deny a church leadership role to an otherwise committed person, gay or straight. “The hairy monster coming to get you” verbiage would not be tolerated for other minority groups — It is against the Law, you know. We Presbyterians have fought civil rights battles alongside African Americans, Asians, Hispanics, single parents, and others over the last half-century. Most homosexuals are not felons; they do not need to be treated as such.
3. Another aspect of this issue is that a 1996 Authoritative Interpretation permits ordination to clergy, elders, and deacons who live in fidelity/chastity. There is no mention of homosexuality in that AI. Does this smack of hypocrisy or was it don’t ask; don’t tell? For three consecutive GA’s there have been attempts to alter the Heidelberg Catechism, to drop a reference to homosexuality in the answer for question 87, thus opening the door for ordination standards to be changed. For the conservatives, who believe that dropping the passage would violate scripture and automatically open the door for ordination of homosexuals, this is a major issue and one that would see several congregations leave the church. It was defeated. Don’t assume the liberals will let it go. So expect it to come up again.
4. Another issue that needs time before it is accepted is the concept of marriage of same sex couples. My good friend Noah Webster still lists marriage as a union between a man and a woman to propagate a family. I know that societies that lock themselves into past thinking are dying societies. I know that human rights need to be guaranteed for all. But why not change laws to ensure rights for people in committed civil unions? In our present society, same sex marriage is a set up for a no win conclusion. This is not just a game of words.
5. No one likes to see people dying. But so many are, for so many awful reasons. But the most awful reason to me is “it doesn’t suit me just now” or “I don’t want it.” The fact that thousands of babies are aborted every year breaks my heart. On this issue I am ultra conservative. I cannot cry for the loss of four thousand in a foolish, pointless (I am not sure the people of the families of people who died in the 7/11 massacres would say pointless) war, or for those innocents murdered in Dafur, in the streets of warring cities, by criminals or ruthless, terrorist warmongers all over the earth and not weep for the babies dying in a brutal termination of life. I don’t judge the mothers, but I do question the values of a society that permits this to happen. How can we fulfill the scriptural

mandate of nurturing and cherishing human life in the image of God and still accept this waste of life? Ben Sheldon, one of the honorably retired pastors in Donegal Presbytery, was the founder of Presbyterians Pro-Life. He lives in Elverson. His son, John, pastor at First Church in Ocean City, NJ, is the current president.

6. The last of the issues I want to discuss in this report is the attempt to adopt a new form of government for the PC(USA), generally referred to as the Form of Government (FOG) Task Force report—thus FOG Report. This was an attempt by GA06 to come up with a plan to streamline the form of government (church polity—the G sections of the Book of Order) of the church, which since the mid 1980's has been growing almost out of control. Rev. Gemechisa Guja, pastor of the Oromoo Fellowship meeting at First Church in Lancaster, was on the task force. I spent a good deal of time with him trying to see what good could come out of their study. Generally I favored the desire to streamline the codified polity, but there was much here that simply dropped polity and charged the presbyteries with creating their own polity that would work for them. I have grave reservations about this, for I think it would cause fracturing of the church. This report will go to the presbyteries for a vote.

Now as a result of the above stated issues, I supported a number of conservative issues that I had not initially intended to support. I believe that my changed vote to maintain some old standards was valid, for too liberal change would cause a schism in the conservative churches that would rock the “churches one foundation.” But time will change this eventually! Hopefully the discussions on the issues that were sent back for presbytery approval will begin the healing process—at least it should open the door for dialogue. This will occur if we can only get the centrist to talk, the conservatives to listen, and the liberals to stop rolling their eyes.

Going to and participating in the General Assembly was one of the most rewarding experiences of my life. I thank the session and the presbytery for placing its confidence in me. And I thank the congregation for their prayers and support.

I can't end this report without mentioning the worship services at GA. They were phenomenal. The opening service on Sunday, June 22nd, held simultaneously at the Civic Auditorium and the San Jose State University Event Center, was rich in liturgical splendor and filled with congregant participation. There was pageantry and drama and perfection. The Tuesday, June 24th, service was magnificent as far as production was concerned, but the sermon was a blistering denouncement of white people in their treatment of persons of color. The minister speaker wanted every white person there to acknowledge culpability in the bad treatment of minorities one, two, or even three hundred years ago. Had I been able to get out of my row, I would have walked out of the service. During the week I heard many complain about his delivery—especially bad since the topic of his sermon was “Walking Humbly.”

Although I did not vote for him, the Reverend Bruce Reyes -Chow, pastor of Mission Bay Presbyterian Church, a new church development church in San Francisco, was elected moderator of the 218th General Assembly on the second ballot, Saturday night, June 21st. Personally I think Bruce is the face of the emerging new Presbyterian Church. He is a person of color, Philippine and Chinese. He is filled with energy and charisma. He is liberal enough to accept people of all persuasions and credos into the church. He is the face of the future!

One of the most surreal and scary times of my life occurred in San Jose when a group of ultra conservatives from a religious cult came to the convention site to protest what they perceived too liberal actions by delegates. We ran the gauntlet with the protesters screaming that God had damned the Presbyterian Church and the delegates would rot in hell as a result of our actions. They were protesting

ordination standards that were being discussed; the funny thing was nothing had been passed. Let me tell you—these people were the ugliest of ugly. Their faces and body motions were distorted and filled with hate as they screamed their vile rants.

My friends, even though the church is so big that the left hand does not always know what the right hand is doing, the Presbyterian Church (USA) is alive and well, and it has a great future. But we may all have to shed a little bit of the frozen chosen stuffiness of our past. Blessings to you all.

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Financial News: July 2008

<u>Income</u>	<u>Expenses</u>	<u>July Deficit</u>	<u>2008 Surplus</u>
\$8,448	\$8,705	\$257	\$1,740

Per Capita charges for 2008 are \$25.39 per member.

Saturday, September 6: Let's cheer on Victoria Sapper and the Lock Haven Marching Band at West Chester University! Lock Haven will play West Chester in football. Kick off time is 1:00 pm. We will meet at church at noon.

Splinters: How did the summer go so quickly? And now for the new fall season of The Splinters (drum roll please). All women of Doe Run are invited to a special luncheon and this time you don't have to make a sandwich! Susan from Private Affairs Catering, Ltd. (www.pvtaffairs.com) will entertain us as she prepares our lunch. Note the change of date and time. The lunch will be Tuesday, September 9, 2008. Susan will start the demonstration at 11:00 am and lunch will be served at 12:30. If we are not too full, we will have our business meeting after lunch. The cost for this will be \$20.00. So please join us for fun and lunch, I'm sure Doris Spencer will have a good joke for us. As usual, I will need a count of those attending by Tuesday, September 2. Hope Forbes (610 -269-3592).

The kitchen needs some supplies: paper towels, small plates and juice cups. Can you help?

Church Picnic at Bert Reel Park! Mark your calendars for Sunday, September 14, 1:00 pm. Sign-up sheet on bulletin board at entrance of church.

PNC: Interview with second candidate soon. First candidates interview went well. The committee is hopeful, between the two, we have found a new leader for Doe Run's future.

City Gate Mission: September-napkins; October-coffee creamer; November -all size freezer bags; December-creamed soups

Lathea Moskel would like to thank everyone at Doe Run for their prayers, phone calls, visits, e-mail messages, wonderful soup, desert and cards during her recent hospital stay. It was so thoughtful and was really appreciated.

Laura Deckman would like to thank all those that donated stuffed animals to Child Evangelism of Chester County.

Congratulations! To Steph and Bill Anderson on the birth of Lucy Elizabeth Anderson, born August 7, 2008.

Communion: When served by Intinction, Doe Run will now have a separate chalice and plate of bread for those with gluten allergies.

Save the Date: Sunday, November 16, 2008 at 9:30 am. New Consecration Sunday returns! Free brunch for all following one worship service at 9:30 am. Guest speaker will be Rev. Phoebe Kitson -Davis, Interim Pastor at First Presbyterian in Parkesburg. This Stewardship campaign was not only very successful last year, but was enjoyed by all! Stay tuned for more information and your invitation to the free brunch on November 16.

Doe Run invites you to help support Bettye Prindle and her family! Deacon Bettye lost her son-in-law a few weeks ago and she and her husband Richard are now responsible for their four granddaughters (with the help of her son and daughter -in-law). The four girls range in age from 8 -16. The Session of Doe Run, along with the Deacons and Trustees, invite all members to help support this family dealing with great change. If you are interested in helping, there are two ways to do so. 1) They have been enjoying gifts of Cocoa Puffs, Honey Nut Cheerios, frozen pizzas, toilet paper, paper napkins, laundry detergent, cans of fruit juice and prepared meals. If you would like to drop some of these items by their house, their address is 203 Molineaux Dr. (right behind the church). 2) If you would like to help in a Session approved campaign to ask local businesses to donate gift cards to the church to be given to the Prindles, a copy of an official letter from the Interim Pastor with this request and church tax identification number will be on the table in the Narthex beginning Sunday, August 31. Consider picking up a copy and asking your local grocery store, chain store, pizza place, diner, etc. if they will give a gift of their services to Doe Run to be passed on to the Prindles for their use. The business can keep the letter for their records. Let's do what we can to show the Prindles and their family our support!

Review of Vacation Bible School 2008, Discovering Jesus Miraculous Power: Monday's theme for the day was "Jesus gives us the Power to be Thankful...AHA!" And we were truly thankful for our first day. Thanks to all who helped, everything ran smoothly and we started our first day with 50 children. We had prepared for 50 and were a little worried that if more children attended the following day we would not have enough supplies. But knowing we would never turn away one of God's children, we knew God would provide, and HE DID!

Monday started out wet and stormy, but once again God provided perfect weather for us for the whole week. Miss Tracey was a trooper, no matter how hot it got she looked and acted COOL!! From water games to exploding soda bottles the children had a fantastic time and the feeling we got from seeing 50 smiling faces was truly amazing.

Each morning Miss Shelly did sonic sing and play. We raised the roof with 50 children singing God's wonderful praise. One day we even had a presentation from Mr. Gary with dry ice and bubbles, the children were in awe! Each day we had a visit from Professor Wilma (me in strange glasses), who had a lot to learn about Jesus and the children helped her learn as the week went on. It was great to hear the kids repeat everything they had learned.

Bible blast was run by Miss Susann, one day she even had the kids walking on water...it was awesome.

Wacky crafts and missions were run by Miss Kim. From making slime, bouncy balls and shrinky dinks with our memory verse buddies, the children accomplished a huge amount each day while learning about the Bible story for the day.

Mr. Gary ran the cinema science with a little help from Chadder. Doing experiments and blowing up tube balloons...the kids looked forward each day to hearing how you can roll science in with a Bible story.

Test tube treats, WOW!! The kids had a wonderful array of snacks all prepared by Miss Louise and Miss Rose. We had grateful grins, mucky mud and many more creative snacks that without these two ladies help would not have been possible. Thank you from the bottom of all our stomachs.

Miss Lisa had probably one of the toughest jobs. Day 2 she had 16 preschoolers and younger, but with the help of her many assistants it ran very smoothly with very little tears from leaders and kids. Everyone had a great time and you could see the love of our Lord shine through with every smiley face and hugging that was going on with the little ones.

Each day we had a little friendly competition to see which group could bring in the most pennies for our GO Ball Mission. Each ball costs \$10, instead of asking each child for \$10, we asked for just pennies...WOW!! The kids were told that the group that brought in the most pennies would get to have ice cream first at the Friday night ice cream social. Mention ice cream and the kids go to the end of the earth for pennies. Each morning we filled individual buckets with the pennies they brought in and weighed them on our penny scale (which was kindly lent to us by Highland Baptist Church). This part of the day really got things going. The results were: Monday -Yellow Won; Tuesday-Yellow; Wednesday-Green; Thursday-Green; Friday-Blue Won with green second. Green won overall. We had 8 balls donated from people in church and managed to raise enough for **68** balls. So, breaking it down, our total of pennies was **\$600**. Miss Hope had the lucky job of counting our pennies. At the end of each day we closed with a final fusion where Miss Hope came out and told us the total for that day, which usually came with a joke or a little story. One day she told us she no longer counted sheep in her sleep, they had been replaced with pennies. Thank You Miss Hope, you were wonderful.

There were so many people helping us, we are truly Thankful!! From Crew leaders and people behind the scenes, helping us to set up each day and registering the children, they all know who they are and Shelly and I just want to send you a huge hug and thank you.

Each day we were given small challenges, but with the help of Mr. Jeff we solved them all. He stepped in as Lightman in final fusion, was at the receiving end of a hose pipe -thanks to Josh and even when we lost electricity just walking around he soothed our nerves. Thanks Mr. Jeff, you were a rock!!

Each day I ran the Spotlight drama, this was a fun job and the kids loved it. Each day I was given a list of photographs I had to take. After the pictures were taken I put them into the computer. At finale fusion each day we played the Bible verse clip for that day...it was great! The stars of the clip we showed were your kids. The look on their faces when they saw themselves on the big screen was priceless. How lucky we are to have such wonderful children to allow us to teach them all about God and how lucky they are to live in a Country where it's OK to learn.

Learning more about our mission made me realize how lucky we truly are and that with the help of our Go Balls the children in Niger, South Africa can learn all about Our Lord, know what it's like to be loved by him and experience the good, down to earth fun of playing with a soccer ball. Thank you to everyone who made our VBS so successful and thank you for letting us run it, it was the most rewarding job we've ever done in our lives.

Lisa and Shelly