



**FEBRUARY 15, 2008**

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**1. CUTHILL NAMED TO EXECUTIVE POSITION FOR TWIN CITIES AREA:** The Presbytery of the Twin Cities Area picked a long-serving Presbyterian minister to serve as interim transitional executive presbyter when it announced the call of the Rev. Robert Cuthill to the position this week.

Cuthill takes on the interim role following the Rev. Sarai Schnucker, who had been in the interim position before leaving this month to become executive director of the Des Moines (Iowa) Area Religious Council.

Cuthill has been in Minnesota since 1979 when he began fulfilling a call as executive to the Synod of Lakes and Prairies, a position he held until he retired in 1995. Since retirement, Cuthill has filled two interim pastor positions and served as moderator in five other congregations.

Cuthill said, "I was surprised when the personnel committee contacted me and asked if I would please have a conversation with them about serving as the interim transitional executive presbyter."



He added, "I was not too sure if I even wanted to take that first step. Life is all too good and comfortable in retirement. However, I discovered a long time ago that a surprise call may be an invitation to an adventure for service and growth. The Spirit does move in mysterious ways."

Schnucker, in leaving the presbytery, noted, "I've discovered so many things that I didn't know I knew and together we've been able to do so many things that we didn't know we could do. I've renewed old friendships and made new friends who I know will be friends for life."

Before coming to Minnesota Cuthill was the executive presbyter in Great Rivers Presbytery in Illinois from 1973 to 1979. Prior to that role, Cuthill served in multiple positions in Missouri, including associate executive presbyter in St. Louis, new church development pastor in Creve Coeur, and pastor in the Moberly, Fredericktown and Cornwall.

Cuthill holds degrees from Maryville College in Tennessee, Louisville Presbyterian Seminary and McCormick Theological Seminary in Chicago.

He and his wife Carolyn, married for 52 years, have four children, seven grandchildren and five great-grandchildren.

**2. 'CHAT WITH CHUCK' DESCRIBES VIDEO CONFERENCE MEETING:** The Presbytery of Northern Plains conducted its first-ever presbytery meeting by video conference Jan. 25 with commissioners participating from four sites throughout North Dakota – West Fargo, Grand Forks, Jamestown and Minot. The Rev. Chuck Traylor, executive presbyter, noted in his February 2008 "Chat with Chuck," "I thought the folks at the various sites became ever more comfortable with the video format as the day went on." His complete column can be found at [www.northernplainspresbytery.com/Chat%20with%20Chuck/CWC.htm](http://www.northernplainspresbytery.com/Chat%20with%20Chuck/CWC.htm).

**3. SOME THINGS ARE NOT NEGOTIABLE:** "Membership in the Body of Christ demands a public confession of faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior; to make an oath based on the belief that in Christ one is dead to sin and alive by means of Christ's grace. To lessen this mandate is to make the church even more irrelevant than it already is to a world

in desperate need of the grace of Jesus Christ." The Rev. Chuck Traylor, executive presbyter of the Presbytery of Northern Plains, recently wrote the comment above in response to an article in the Dec. 17 issue of The Presbyterian Outlook. The article, Traylor wrote, "left me flabbergasted and, for a little while at least, made me begin to wonder if our Presbyterian Church (USA) has completely been reduced to irrelevance." Traylor's full response can be found at

[www.northernplainspresbytery.com/Chat%20with%20Chuck/Chat%20With%20Chuck%20January%202008.pdf](http://www.northernplainspresbytery.com/Chat%20with%20Chuck/Chat%20With%20Chuck%20January%202008.pdf).

**4. IOWA WOMAN IS YOUNG ADULT VOLUNTEER IN HOLLYWOOD:** Jennifer Dunbar of Cedar Falls, Iowa, is serving a 12-month stint as a Presbyterian Young Adult Volunteer in Hollywood, Calif. A recent article in Monday Morning in the Presbytery, the weekly newsletter of the Presbytery of Missouri River Valley, noted, "Our presbytery's Mission and Mission Interpretation Committee has helped with expenses while Jennifer works in Hollywood. Jennifer recently wrote: "My job at a day shelter for homeless youth ages 12-24, continues to be challenging but brings me joy every day! When I started, I thought our job was to provide basic needs for the homeless youth. On the surface that was correct, but I now spend most of my days being educated myself! These youth have taught me so much of what it means to live on the street, to have your family kick you out and take advantage of you, to have a system that takes you in as a child and kicks you out as an "adult.'" More of Dunbar's blog can be found at [www.jendunbar.blogspot.com](http://www.jendunbar.blogspot.com).

**5. SPRING COMMUNICATORS CONFERENCE SET AT MONTREAT:** The Presbyterian Communicators Network is planning three regional conferences during 2008, opening with one at the Montreat Conference Center in North Carolina that runs April 30-May 2. Online registration will open soon, according to Mindy Marchal, creative services associate in the Communications and Funds Development office of the General Assembly Council. Other regional conferences are scheduled at Stronghold Conference Center in Illinois Aug. 25-27 and Menucha Camp and Conference Center in Oregon Oct. 29-31. "We will be talking about communicating faith in the Web 2.0 world we live in. We'll also have sessions covering Podcasting, Crisis Communication Planning, Keeping Your Writing Fresh, Evaluating Your Communications and other interesting topics. We will also spend time in worship each day and be renewed to the spirit of Christ, connect with other church members serving in similar roles, and learn new and better ways to tell the stories of God's presence in our lives," Marchal said. The conference fee for the entire event is \$250.00, which includes all the programs, group meals and two nights lodging. Commuter rates will also be available. The network Web site, [www.pcusa.org/comnet](http://www.pcusa.org/comnet), will be updated soon with details.

**6. UNITED SEMINARY OFFERS 'THE SPIRITUALITY OF WRITING:'** Barbara J. Rogers and Pam Wynn, collaborators on an opera, "Ruth," drawn from the biblical story, will present the next installment of United Theological Seminary's Writer's Series, "The Spirituality of Writing," March 6 in New Brighton, Minn. Rogers, the composer, has served on the piano faculty at Northwestern College in St. Paul, Minn., since 2000. Wynn, a poet, is the author of "A Good Soul" and "Diamonds on the Back of a Snake" is an adjunct faculty member at United. Complete information about the presentation can be found at [www.unitedseminary.edu/ce/sjp.asp#series](http://www.unitedseminary.edu/ce/sjp.asp#series). The world premiere performances of "Ruth" take place at Northwestern College April 25, 26 and 27. For more information, go to [www.nwc.edu/display/6038](http://www.nwc.edu/display/6038).

**7. LUTHER SEMINARY TO HOST CHILDREN'S SUMMIT:** Luther Seminary of St. Paul, Minn., will be host to a Children's Summit April 4-5, described as an opportunity for

pastors, lay leaders and parents to focus on issues related to faith, culture, congregational ministry and advocacy for children. The event will feature plenary speakers Joyce Ann Mercer, associate professor of pastoral theology at Virginia Theological Seminary, and Mary Hess, associate professor of educational leadership at Luther Seminary. Mercer will present "Welcoming Children" and Hess will present "Show and Tell: Living with Faith in a Media World." There will also be several workshops focused on building faith in children, as a family and as parents. A complete list of workshops is available at [www.luthersem.edu/childrens\\_summit](http://www.luthersem.edu/childrens_summit).

**8. HASTINGS COLLEGE SEEKS VOCATION, VALUES DIRECTOR:** Hastings College, a Presbyterian college in Hastings, Neb., is searching for a director of vocation and values/assistant or associate professor of religion. Working closely with the Religion/Philosophy Department and the Chaplain's Office, the director is responsible for administering all activities related to the college's Vocation and Values grant supported by the Lilly Endowment Inc. The complete job description can be found at <http://www.hastings.edu/igsbase/igstemplate.cfm?SRC=MD013&SRCN=index&GnavID=27>.

**9. CHURCHES GROWING, DOING EXCITING MINISTRY SOUGHT:** The General Assembly Council communicators are looking for stories about growing and vibrant churches to spread the information throughout the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). "We often hear stories about congregations doing exciting ministry resulting in churches that are alive, vibrant and growing – but we know there are many more that we don't hear about and we're hoping you'll share them with us," wrote Mindy Marchal, creative services associate in the Communications and Funds Development office of the General Assembly Council. "If you have a story of a congregation experiencing growth and transformation please share it with us so we can share it with others." Stories can be sent to Marchal at [mindy.marchal@pcusa.org](mailto:mindy.marchal@pcusa.org).

**10. KIRKPATRICK OUTLINES ISSUES FACING 218<sup>TH</sup> GA:** The key issues coming before the 218th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) were outlined in Louisville Feb. 13 during a joint meeting of the General Assembly Council (GAC) Executive Committee and the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly (COGA). "There are a number of critical items," the Rev. Clifton Kirkpatrick, stated clerk of the General Assembly, told the joint group assembled. Topping a "Preliminary Top-10 List" are a new form of government and steps toward partnership in world mission. The Form of Government Task Force (FOGTF), created by the 217th GA (2006), will bring its recommendations for a revised polity to the upcoming assembly meeting June 21-28 in San Jose, Calif. The complete story can be found at [www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2008/08118.htm](http://www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2008/08118.htm).

**11. FORT WORTH ELDER ELECTED CHAIR OF GAC:** Carol J. Adcock, an elder from Fort Worth, Texas, was unanimously elected chair of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) General Assembly Council (GAC) at a meeting in Louisville Feb. 13. Adcock is a member of St. Stephen Presbyterian Church in Grace Presbytery. Michael W. Kruse, an elder from Kansas City, Mo., was elected vice chair. He is a member of Ward Parkway Presbyterian Church in Heartland Presbytery. Adcock and Kruse will begin their two-year terms immediately following this summer's 218th General Assembly in San Jose, Calif. The complete story can be found at [www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2008/08119.htm](http://www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2008/08119.htm).

**12. UNRESTRICTED MISSION REVENUES EXCEED 2007 BUDGET:** Following years of decline in unrestricted financial giving, a vital source of funding for the General Assembly mission budget, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) leaders got some encouraging news this week. Receipts for all unrestricted gifts – money that is not designated for a particular

purpose and can be used where needed to fund the church's mission – exceeded last year's budget projections by \$254,000. Likewise, receipts for Shared Mission Support contributions, another type of unrestricted gift, exceeded expectations by \$32,000. The findings were included in the PC(USA)'s year-end financial report for 2007, which was distributed to the denomination's General Assembly Council [[www.pcusa.org/gac](http://www.pcusa.org/gac)] Executive Committee at a meeting in Louisville Feb. 13. The complete story can be found at [www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2008/08120.htm](http://www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2008/08120.htm).

**13. PDA SENDS TEAM IN RESPONSE TO ILLINOIS SHOOTING:** Presbyterian Disaster Assistance is sending members of the PDA National Response Team to DeKalb, Ill., at the request of John Rickard, executive presbyter of Blackhawk Presbytery. Team members are going to assist the presbytery and churches in the DeKalb area in their response to the shooting at Northern Illinois University. A former graduate student at NIU opened fire in an auditorium style classroom Thursday. As of Friday noon, seven people are dead and 15 are wounded, some seriously. Response team members are the Rev. Laurie Kraus, Helen Robinson and Rick Turner, who have advanced training and experience in responding to traumatic situations. They will offer support to church leadership in this response.

**14. PDA RESPONDS TO SOUTH-CENTRAL TORNADOES:** Violent tornadoes moved through the south-central United States in early February, killing at least 55, marking the deadliest U.S. natural disaster since Hurricane Katrina in 2005. According to Church World Service, with 67 tornadoes in all, it was the most prolific outbreak of tornadoes since May 1985. Presbyterian Disaster Assistance has been in contact with presbyteries in the affected areas to develop and implement assistance plans. PDA will assist with One Great Hour of Sharing funds and by sending members of the PDA National Response Team if outside assistance is needed. Those who want to respond financially can do so by designating gifts for U.S. Disaster, DR000015. Donations may be sent through normal mission giving channels. Gifts by credit card can be made by calling PresbyTel at (800) 872-3283 or online at [www.pcusa.org/pda/donate/accounts.htm](http://www.pcusa.org/pda/donate/accounts.htm). Checks payable to Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) can also be mailed directly to Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), Central Receiving Services, 100 Witherspoon Street, Louisville, KY 40202-1396.

**15. 2 PRESBYTERIANS AMONG KILLED IN MISSOURI SHOOTING:** Two of the five people fatally shot by a gunman last week at a city hall in suburban St. Louis were Presbyterians. The shooting rampage in Kirkwood, Mo., Feb. 7 left a third Presbyterian, the city's mayor, fighting for his life. The two Presbyterians killed were Kenneth Dale Yost, 61, Kirkwood's longtime public works director and member at First Presbyterian Church of Kirkwood, and Thomas F. Ballman, 37, a Kirkwood police officer who worshipped at St. Mark Presbyterian Church in nearby Ballwin, Mo. The complete story can be found at [www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2008/08115.htm](http://www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2008/08115.htm)

**16. ACSWP APPROVES POLICY DOCUMENT, RESOLUTIONS:** The Iraq war and providing the homeless with affordable housing, particularly in hurricane-ravaged New Orleans, are among the subjects of eight documents going to this summer's 218th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). The seven resolutions and one policy paper, which also cover issues ranging from energy, voting rights and electoral reform, to ministering to those with serious mental illness, were approved during a recent meeting of the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy (ACSWP) [[www.pcusa.org/acswp](http://www.pcusa.org/acswp)] which develops social-justice policies for GA consideration. The complete story can be found at [www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2008/08098.htm](http://www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2008/08098.htm).

**17. STORYTELLING KEY AFTER KIRKPATRICK'S KENYA VISIT:** Now that an ecumenical delegation of religious leaders sent by the World Council of Churches (WCC) has returned from its trip to Kenya, interpreting and sharing what the group learned will be a primary next step, said delegation leader the Rev. Clifton Kirkpatrick. "There's a whole lot of telling the story" that will be taking place, said Kirkpatrick, president of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and stated clerk of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). "We certainly learned more to share." The seven-member group spent Jan. 30 to Feb. 3 in the troubled nation as part of the WCC's "Living Letters" initiative in solidarity with churches facing situations of violence. Violence has plagued the East African country since December when presidential elections were contested. The complete story can be found at [www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2008/08099.htm](http://www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2008/08099.htm).

**18. NEW BOOK PROVIDES COPING HINTS FOR MINISTERS:** A version of the primer for all things Presbyterian has been released for pastors. The Presbyterian Handbook for Pastors, published by Presbyterian Publishing Corporation's imprint Geneva Press, was released in January. The book comes on the heels of its predecessor, The Presbyterian Handbook, which focuses on Presbyterian culture and theology and has sold approximately 250,000 copies since its January 2006 release. With information covering everything from call and administrative matters, to pastoral care and worship, the compact Presbyterian Handbook for Pastors acts as a ready reference guide for ministry leadership. "How to Know When It's Time to Find a New Call," "How to Run a Staff Meeting," "How to Make an Effective Hospital Visit," and "How to Keep Both Your Job and Your Family" are just some of the issues covered in the book. The complete story can be found at [www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2008/08095.htm](http://www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2008/08095.htm).

**19. PRESBYTERIAN PAN-AMERICAN SCHOOL PLANS FUNDRAISING:** If things go as planned, the Presbyterian Pan American School will celebrate its centennial anniversary with a new look for the campus, solidly positioning the college preparatory school for the next 100 years, school officials hope. The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)-supported racial-ethnic school located on the Texas Gulf Coast is overdue for a significant renovation, and a \$15 to \$20 million fundraising effort is expected to expand the campus and modernize buildings that haven't been touched since the 1950s. Dormitories are over capacity, the building where students gather for activities is small and worn down, and the dining hall is barely sufficient to handle the roughly 150 students enrolled. The complete story, along with photographs, can be found at [www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2008/08111.htm](http://www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2008/08111.htm). A message from the Pan American School President Jim Matthews can be found at [www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2008/08112.htm](http://www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2008/08112.htm).

**20. 'FROM RUSSIA WITH LOVE' IS BLOG OF RUSSIA MISSION VISIT:** Presbyterian News Service Coordinator Jerry Van Marter returned recently from a 12-day assignment in Russia, where he visited Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) mission workers in that country and reported on their ministries. Accompanied by Gary Payton — the PC(USA)'s area liaison for Russia, Ukraine, Belarus and Poland — Van Marter traveled to Moscow, Smolensk and St. Petersburg. In addition to numerous stories filed with the Presbyterian News Service, Van Marter also blogged his personal experiences. That blog can be found at <http://www.pcusa.org/pcnewsrussia.blogspot.com/>. Other information disseminated by the Presbyterian News Service can be found online at [www.pcusa.org/pcnews/](http://www.pcusa.org/pcnews/).

**21. RELIGION & ETHICS BLOG SPEAKS OF FAITH AND POLITICS:** The blog, "One Nation: Religion & Politics 2008," an element of the Public Broadcasting System's news program, "Religion & Ethics Newsweekly," addresses in-depth coverage of the intersection

of faith and politics in the 2008 presidential campaign. The blog can be found at [www.pbs.org/wnet/religionandethics/blog.html](http://www.pbs.org/wnet/religionandethics/blog.html).