



Spring/Summer 2012

# The Covenant Connection

A newsletter of the Covenant Network of Presbyterians (Vol. 15 #1)

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## 220<sup>th</sup> General Assembly (2012) – Pittsburgh, PA, June 30 – July 7

For the first time since our founding in 1997, and thanks to hard work before, during, and after the 219<sup>th</sup> GA (2010), we will be arriving at the 220<sup>th</sup> General Assembly in Pittsburgh celebrating a Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) that is free of the discriminatory provisions of G-6.0106b. While we are rejoicing, however, we know that some of our brothers and sisters are intent on reversing course; this GA will be crucially important for those who share the vision of “a church as generous and just as God’s grace.”

The Covenant Network will, as always, have a strong presence at the General Assembly as it sets the course for the PC(USA). *Whether or not you plan to be in Pittsburgh, you can contribute to the success of our efforts.*

For more information on all these opportunities, **contact National Organizer Tricia Dykers Koenig** at 216-658-1770 or [triciadk@covnetpres.org](mailto:triciadk@covnetpres.org). The amendment of G-6.0106b was a monumental team effort, and *we need your involvement now more than ever if the PC(USA) is to continue to move forward.*

### *If you plan to attend General Assembly, join us for:*

- **The Commissioners’ Convocation Dinner, Friday, June 29, 6:00-8:30 p.m.** On the night before the GA convenes, commissioners and observers will have an opportunity to get off to a good start by thinking together about how to make a difference in the coming week. **CovNet Interim Executive Director Nancy Enderle** will share a Covenant Network perspective on issues facing the Assembly. Candidates standing for Moderator have been invited to introduce themselves.
- **The Covenant Network Luncheon, Monday, July 2, noon-1:30 p.m.** Featured speaker **Scott Anderson**, Executive Director of the Wisconsin Council of Churches and the first LGBT person to be ordained following the adoption by the presbyteries of Amendment 10-A, will reflect on “Our Missional Imagination in a Post-10-A Church.” Additionally, the Board will honor our retired founding Executive Director Pam Byers, and introduce the new Executive Director.
- Resource-sharing and conversations at our **booth in the Exhibit Hall.**
- **Volunteering on the CovNet Team.** From hospitality, to running errands, to supporting commissioners and advisory delegates; whether for an hour, or a day, or for the whole week -- we have a number of opportunities for you to serve, learn, make new friends, and make a difference in the church’s witness.



### *Even if you won’t be in Pittsburgh, your support is vital:*

- **Help us connect with commissioners and advisory delegates** who share our vision of the church and would appreciate our support at GA. Put in a good word for CovNet, and suggest that they contact us before GA.
- **Encourage commissioners and advisory delegates to attend our events.** In addition to alerting them to our Friday and Monday meals, some CovNet members and chapters have offered to purchase their commissioners’ tickets.
- **Make a financial contribution now.** General Assembly stretches our budget and affects cash flow; your generous donation will enable us to continue our work.
- **Keep praying!** Commissioners and advisory delegates, staff and volunteers with the Office of the General Assembly and the other GA agencies, the CovNet team and other observers, all Presbyterians and others who are affected by the decisions of the General Assembly, the folks in Pittsburgh who are preparing to welcome us – may all rejoice in God’s gracious presence, and may God’s will be done.

### *For more information:*

- **The 220<sup>th</sup> General Assembly website**, <http://oga.pcusa.org/section/ga/ga220/>, where you will find registration information and a link to all GA business at [pc-biz.org](http://pc-biz.org).

## The Covenant Network Needs Your Support

Thank you for making a gift in support of Covenant Network. It is a critical time for the organization and we are in serious need of your gifts to protect the progress we've achieved at the upcoming General Assembly. Reversing what has been accomplished would be devastating for the church and it will take a great deal of energy and organization to keep that from happening.

With the passage of 10-A, we're working hard to promote a new season of welcome that needs to be celebrated and frankly, lived into. The Covenant Network has launched a Season of Welcome campaign designed to share the individual stories of those whose God-given gifts for ministry are now being experienced by the church, or in many cases, experienced publicly. We need your help to support the work of facilitating and celebrating ordinations of those previously denied opportunities to serve the church.

And finally, with schism breaking out and efforts to tear the church we love apart, the Covenant Network has recommitted itself to working toward the unity of the church, engaging in conversation with those with whom we disagree, seeking understanding and reconciling. This is an extremely crucial time in the life of our church and we are committed and uniquely positioned to strengthen the church in this critical time.

The Covenant Network has provided faithful, consistent leadership to the Presbyterian Church which has been made possible through the gifts of generous supporters, including individuals and congregations. As we continue our important work, please stand with us by giving generously to support our mutual endeavors. Co-Moderator, David Van Dyke



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David Van Dyke'.

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## General Assembly Recommendations: Keep Moving Forward!

The gains we made with the successful passage of Amendment 10-A (now G-2.0104) are under threat at General Assembly in June. Presbyteries have submitted 15 overtures (representing 8 separate proposals) that would amend G-2.0104 or a related paragraph, many of which seek to return the PC(USA) to the former prohibitive standard, the same standard that we committed to change so many years ago.

Our highest priority at this GA, therefore, is to preserve the progress achieved with Amendment 10-A. To that end, we lift up for the assembly's consideration Overture 97 from the Presbytery of Sacramento (Item 17-07), which asks the GA to make a statement declaring, in part:

The 220<sup>th</sup> General Assembly (2012) acknowledges that faithful Presbyterians earnestly seeking to follow Jesus Christ hold different views about what the Scriptures teach concerning the morality of committed same-gender relationships. Therefore, while holding persons in ordered ministry to high standards of covenant fidelity in the exercise of their sexuality, as in all aspects of life, we decline to take an action that would have the effect of imposing on the whole Presbyterian Church (USA) one interpretation of Scripture in this matter. We commit ourselves to continue respectful dialogue with those who hold differing convictions, to welcome one another for God's glory, and not to vilify those whose convictions we believe to be in error. We call on all Presbyterians to join us in this commitment.

Another priority is to address and resolve the urgent pastoral crisis faced by ministers and sessions of congregations amid changing structures of family life. Members of congregations in states where same-gender marriage has become legal are seeking to celebrate their marriages in the sight of God and the presence of their church community, with their pastor officiating.

The General Assembly will consider actions that include both proposed changes to Book of Order language as well as Authoritative Interpretations that would provide local, pastoral latitude. We commend overtures that would confirm the discretion of pastors to conduct such services as they minister to all families, even as the church has a broader conversation regarding the theological and cultural meanings of marriage.

The work of the Covenant Network of Presbyterians clearly is not finished! Many issues remain active in the PC(USA) that could diminish the advances made on behalf of a church 'as generous and just as God's grace.' As always, we will continue to be a force in the denomination, seeking to work in ways that support the denomination, maintain unity and enable a diversity of people to hear one another, learn from each other, and work and live together faithfully in PCUSA.

## Keeping in Touch

As the Covenant Network continues to work for the full inclusion of all of God's people in the whole life of the church and as we continue to work for the unity of the church, we have been assessing how best to stay in touch with our supporters and friends across the church. When the Covenant Network first came into being in 1996, we still lived in a largely paper-based world. The Internet and World Wide Web were in their infancy and we never imagined how our communication patterns might change. Over the years, the Covenant Network has shifted its communication patterns as new opportunities have arisen. We now use paper-based newsletters, a web site, Facebook, and email. While the Covenant Network doesn't currently have a Twitter feed, many of our supporters do.

We are grateful that there are so many different ways that we can stay in touch with the whole church. And our communication now has an immediacy that we never could have achieved 15 years ago. As we continue to do our work in the church, we have made some decisions about how we still stay in touch. Because many of you do not regularly use electronic methods of communication, we will continue to produce a paper newsletter. As in the past, we anticipate that these newsletters will be produced on a quarterly basis. However, to save production and mailing costs, the newsletter will be shorter than it has been in the past. (If you are receiving the paper newsletter and would prefer to receive your information electronically, please email Nancy Enderle ([nancy@covnetpres.org](mailto:nancy@covnetpres.org)) and she will remove you from the mailing list.) You can also find the Covenant Network at our website ([www.covnetpres.org](http://www.covnetpres.org)) new articles are frequently being added so check back often. You can also friend us on Facebook. Covenant Network staff and board members maintain an active presence on Facebook. You can also receive email updates from Covenant Network staff as well—again, if you are not currently on the email list, please email Nancy Enderle.

Over the years, the Covenant Network has learned over and over that the church grows and matures as we form relationships with one another. The Network remains committed to an effective and comprehensive communication approach so we can continue to build relationships across the church. You can help us and expand these vital relationships by sharing your newsletters, emails, web links, and Facebook posts with your friends and the members of your congregation. You can also help us broaden the reach of our message by donating generously to the Covenant Network so that page by page and pixel by pixel we create a church as generous and just as God's grace.

*Dan Anderson-Little, member of the board of directors, chair of the communications committee.*

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## Staff Updates

It has been a big year of transitions for Covenant Network! It started last June with the retirement of Pam Byers, who served as the Executive Director since Covenant Network's founding. Nancy Enderle has been serving from Madison, WI as the part-time Interim Executive Director since June of 2011, and during the transition, Jason Fredrick was responsible for the office and financial accounts out of the San Francisco office at Calvary Presbyterian Church. Jason moved to New York State in February and is no longer working for Covenant Network. Though he worked for less than two years with Covenant Network, he made a huge impact on the organization and brought his skills as an accountant and data base manager at a critical point in the transition between Executive Directors. Presently, Nancy is working with a temporary accounts manager in Madison and will wait to hear about the permanent Executive Director's location and goals for the accounting function of Covenant Network. Mail will continue to be received at the San Francisco office and forwarded to Nancy in Madison.

In March, Lou East, who first served as the South-East Regional Coordinator and later had responsibility for Communications and Conferences, resigned to spend more time helping her family and working in a co-pastorate with her husband. Lou served Covenant Network for over nine years and was a valuable and graceful colleague. She will be missed. Fortunately, she has contracted to work with Covenant Network during the General Assembly. Her expertise will be important as we maintain our presence and commitments on the national level. Thank you Lou!

The search committee for the Executive Director has been meeting in recent months and hopes to present a candidate at our events at General Assembly. When that person is in place, staffing plans and projects will be reviewed further. For now, our National Coordinator, Tricia Dykers-Koenig, is responsible for communications. The Conference committee is exploring new models for regional conferences that build on the strength and potential of our national network of congregations. (For more information on conferences see the article by Co-Moderator, Mary Lynn Tobin).



## The Covenant Network Conference Hits the Road!

In 2012, instead of one annual conference, the Board decided to offer several regional conferences (and, of course, you are welcome to attend any or all of those if you have the inclination!). Representatives from the Board will be at each conference.

A trial regional “mini-conference” was held on April 28 at Davis Community Church in Davis, CA for folks in Sacramento, San Francisco and Redwoods Presbyteries. It included worship, updates from board members, and opportunities for people to discuss and be creative about how our congregations might experiment with becoming “Gracious Guests” (check out Scott Anderson’s challenging sermon at under “conferences” at [www.covnetpres.org](http://www.covnetpres.org)) and “Spilling the Beans” to the world about inclusive Presbyterians churches.

Those in attendance commented on how much they enjoyed “many marvelous conversations” with other allies and advocates, the enthusiasm and hopefulness they experienced, as well as the opportunity to share strategies, feedback and refinements.



*Mary Lynn Tobin*

**Coming Soon to Your Area** – on or around the first weekend in November (watch the website and Facebook for updates) – conferences in: Atlanta, Baltimore, Chicago, Denver, Kansas City, Milwaukee, New York City, Philadelphia, Seattle and the Twin Cities Area, MN.

There is much work to be done – holding ground on inclusivity is as difficult, if not **more** difficult than making breakthroughs. And further challenges to maintaining the unity of the church arise daily. We hope you will join us and others in your area.

Mary Lynn Tobin

## A SEASON OF WELCOME

*“... I wonder if Amendment 10-A passed because we came to know each other – our joys, our struggles, our hopes, our fears. We served alongside, listened to, and prayed with one another. We saw the heart of God within each other and could no longer deny the unity with which we have been bound together within the Body of Christ.”*

That quote from recently ordained teaching elder, Katie Ricks, is just one of many inspirational insights you’ll discover at Covenant Network’s new website: [aseasonofwelcome.org](http://aseasonofwelcome.org). The web site features a collection of stories of LGBT Presbyterians who can now live more openly and serve more fully in the PC(USA). These stories highlight the many gifts that have been shared with the church and have blessed our denomination over the years, even when the way to ordination was not accessible. If you know any LGBT ruling/teaching elders or deacons who would like to offer their stories, please invite them to visit the website and share their views about this new day in the PC(USA).