



# ALBANY PRESBYTERY E-NEWS

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## HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE JANUARY 28 PRESBYTERY MEETING AT WESTMINSTER, ALBANY *submitted by Cass Shaw, General Presbyter*

Attendance was high as presbyters gathered at Westminster Church in Albany for the first stated meeting of Albany Presbytery in 2012. Westminster volunteers were out in force, and provided excellent hospitality. Ghanaian members of the congregation were up all night preparing a feast for lunch! Hot and spicy, slow cooked traditional Ghanaian fare, and plenty of it, it delighted us all. The Open Space portion of the meeting featured six different conversations. Presbyters gathered around such topics as “Resistance to Change,” “Stewardship of Our Buildings,” “Death and Dying,” “Occupy Wall Street,” as well as discussions of the budget projections, per capita issues, and the two overtures to General Assembly proposed by Granville, Westminster, and the Greenwich congregations.

The Presbytery elected commissioners to the 220<sup>th</sup> General Assembly, which will be held in Pittsburgh, PA this coming July. Bonnie Orth, pastor of the Mayfield Church will be our teaching elder commissioner. Sal Scheccitano, musician at the Brunswick Church and member of the Presbytery Council, will be our ruling elder commissioner. Patrick Nelson, elder at the Stillwater Church, will be our young adult advisory delegate.

Presbyters voted strongly in favor of the overture from the Granville Session, which recommends to General Assembly that a new Authoritative Interpretation be issued on the matter of examination of officers-elect. The overture states:

***“Because members of an examining council are to assess the fitness of officers-elect on a case-by-case basis, in light of each person’s faith, life and witness, and because such assessments are to be made in collective discernment under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, an elder-elect shall not be required to commit during examination as to how he or she might assess the fitness of other officers-elect in the future.”***

Presbyters also strongly supported the overture from Westminster and Greenwich Sessions, which recommends to General Assembly that a new Authoritative Interpretation be offered on the issue of whether or not pastors may officiate at the wedding of same sex couples. The overture states:

***“Teaching elders and commissioned ruling elders authorized to conduct services of marriage may, at their sole discretion, following the discussion required in W-4.9002a, officiate at a service of Christian marriage for two persons who meet the legal requirements of the state and whom the elder determines demonstrate sufficient commitment, responsibility, maturity, and Christian understanding. Sessions may permit the use of church property for such services. Teaching elders and commissioned ruling elders may decline to conduct such services, and sessions may decline to permit the use of church property for such purposes.”***

The rationales and background information on both overtures may be found on the presbytery’s website in the pre-meeting packet for the January 28<sup>th</sup> meeting. (Cont’d on page 2)

(Cont'd from page 1)

Later this month the Council will also be circulating materials for Sessions and congregations who would like to study the issue further, which have been gathered and put together by a special task force consisting of Terry Diggory (Saratoga Church), Nick TeBordo (the Cohoes Church), Laura Rogers (First United, Troy), and Michael Burkley (Lake Luzerne).

The Peacemakers Task Force offered a Statement of Support for the Occupy movement, which the presbytery endorsed. The Council will be sending a letter to all Sessions informing them of the Statement and inviting them to share their concrete plans for such support with the Peacemakers Task Force.

Finally, Presbyters approved the plan to fold the Commissioned Ruling Elder program into the ministry of the Committee on Preparation for Ministry, and Paul Ferenczy was welcomed back into temporary membership in the Presbytery as he begins his service as the Interim Pastor for the Johnstown congregation.

Our next stated meeting of Albany Presbytery will be at the Schoharie Church on Saturday, April 21, 2012. The meeting will begin with mission projects during the morning, helping with the flood recovery work throughout the Schoharie Valley, and then business will be conducted in the afternoon. Please stay tuned for more details, and begin thinking about how to include LOTS of your members and friends in the morning activities. Youth groups are welcome, as are any people willing to spend a couple of hours helping our neighbors and friends recover from the devastation of Hurricane Irene.



## **The Road Show Continues with Two Presbytery Workshops in February**

**Saturday, February 11 – The New Form of Government at the United Presbyterian Church of Schaghticoke, on Main Street in Schaghticoke, NY 10 AM to 12 Noon** - led by Dan Rogers, Stated Clerk – come for an introduction to the new Form of Government and learn how it will impact your congregation. Dan will also offer resources and support for congregations to bring your own by laws up to date.

**Sunday, February 12 – Legacies, Gifts and Endowments - at the Broadalbin Presbyterian Church, 54 West Main Street, Broadalbin, NY 6 PM light dinner, 6:30 PM Workshop begins** - led by Cass Shaw, General Presbyter – Come learn effective strategies and receive valuable resources for managing endowments, encouraging legacy gifts and development of a long term donor base.

# NEWS AND EVENTS



## DOING WORSHIP DIFFERENTLY

A Program by John Bell at Kirkridge

May 21—May 24, 2012 - Cost is \$435

For over 25 years, John Bell and his colleagues have worked with ordained and lay people in mainline churches, enabling them to find new ways of expressing themselves in song, the sharing of scripture and liturgical action. This event will reflect on insights and practices which are meant to be shared.

The liturgy of the Christian churches has always been in transition.

We do not celebrate Eucharist as either the first or fifteenth century Christians did. Our churches have changed shape as much through ecclesiastical philosophy as architectural fashion. Hymns which our grandparents sang can sometimes cause embarrassment when suggested for public use today.

However, in our contemporary context the growth of mega-churches, the influence of tele-evangelists and the popularity of saccharine spirituality and success theology can confuse Christians who want to be loyal to their biblical and denominational roots. The appeal of worship products rather than processes can lead to cheapness and gimmickry. So what is essential to preserve and what can we change?

John Bell and his colleagues work across the globe but principally in the UK and North America, and here he will share good insight and good practices which have enabled new life to emerge in local worshipping communities.

John Bell is a member of The Iona Community and the Wild Goose Resource Group. He is a hymn-writer, author and occasional broadcaster, but retains a primary passion for congregational song. He lectures, preaches and conducts seminars across the denominations.

For more information on this and many other programs offered at Kirkridge, please visit their website at:

[http://www.kirkridge.org/index.php?page=shop.product\\_details&flypage=flypage-ask.tpl&product\\_id=155&category\\_id=1&option=com\\_virtuemart&Itemid=214](http://www.kirkridge.org/index.php?page=shop.product_details&flypage=flypage-ask.tpl&product_id=155&category_id=1&option=com_virtuemart&Itemid=214)

## Seeking Interim Coordinator

CREO is seeking an Interim Coordinator starting in January 2012. Twelve hours per week, \$20/hr, 6 month contract. For a full job description visit the [CREO web page](#).

Letters of interest and résumés can be sent to: [CREOBoard@gmail.com](mailto:CREOBoard@gmail.com) or to  
CREO, Attn. Deb Jameson  
PO Box 6877  
Albany, NY 12206

# Happy Groundhog's Day! Or Merry Candlemas!

By Pat Townsend, New York Institute of Power & Light (NYIPL) Board Member



February 2 is about halfway between the Winter Solstice and the Spring Equinox. Too much coincidence—these holidays must stem from ancient pagan Gaelic and Roman feast days celebrating the halfway point of winter. European badgers were supposed to see their shadows on February 2, and when the Germans immigrated to Pennsylvania, they found that the groundhog (or woodchuck) was the nearest equivalent. Punxsutawney Phil and his European cousins come out on this midway point in winter to check on sun and shadow and predict the rest of winter's weather.

We lived for several years near the Equator, where days and nights were of nearly equal length the year around and you didn't need a clock to tell you it was time to get up. Back in Buffalo we've become more sensitive to the gradually lengthening days already in January and certainly by the time of 'Lent' (from the Old English *lencten*, lengthen).

Whatever its origin, the Christian holiday of Candlemas, 40 days after Christmas, also traditionally marks the end of the Christmas season. For Christians, the significance of the day was that the baby Jesus was taken to the temple for his mother's purification ritual. At the temple, an old Jewish man, Simeon, predicted that Jesus would be a **light** to the Gentiles. Later, Christians brought their beeswax candles to be blessed on that day. Nowadays, some people take down the last of their Christmas ornaments in February. (We have only solar powered LED lights on the cherry tree in our front yard, so I do not feel obliged to take them down until the tree threatens to leaf out.)

This year I'm going to give an LED light bulb to my daughter for Candlemas. Somehow I missed my chance at Hanukkah, Christmas, and Epiphany. All of these winter holidays are celebrations of light in the dark and bleak days of winter. Any of them us a wonderful occasion for communicating to your family your ethical commitment to reducing electricity production that contributes to global climate change.

It was the Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life ([COEJL](#)) that gave me the idea of giving away light bulbs back in 2006 with their wonderful Hanukkah campaign, "How many Jews does it take to change a light bulb?" (The symbolism of the Menorah is that a little oil miraculously lasted as long as it was needed.) COEJL recommended energy-saving ideas for each of the days on which a family lighted a candle.

I asked myself, "How many Presbyterians does it take to change a light bulb?" and I gave a compact fluorescent light bulb to each family in our tiny congregation and in my extended family as a Christmas present. It's not too late to come up with a present for Groundhog's Day or even for Tu B'Shevat, the Jewish environmental holiday that falls on February 7-8 this year.

## DO YOU HAVE A QUESTION OR CONCERN FOR THE BOARD OF PENSIONS?

Our General Presbyter, Cass Shaw, serves on the "Executive Forum" of the Board of Pensions (BOP). Several times a year she and several other Presbytery executives meet with the senior staff of the BOP to raise concerns and help the Board serve all its members better. Cass will be traveling to Philadelphia on Feb. 15, and is eager to take with her any questions or concerns you have. Please email Cass at [cshaw@albanypresbytery.org](mailto:cshaw@albanypresbytery.org) with any issues you'd like her to raise at this meeting.

## WHAT CHRISTIAN EDUCATION RESOURCES DO YOU USE?

The Presbytery is compiling a list of great Christian Education resources, and we'd like to know what you use in your congregation. Is there a particular program you love? Are you reading specific books or coming together to examine certain timely topics? We would like to have a portion of our website dedicated to sharing the best resources we know about, and need your input! Please email or write to the Presbytery office and tell us what resources you think are best.

### CAPITAL REGION THEOLOGICAL CENTER NEWS

Get your New Year off to a good start: Exercise your mind!

***The Church & Its Money*** w/ **Rev. Dr. Norman Tellier**, *St. George's Episcopal Church*, March 3, 9am-3pm, For everyone who handles money in the church; \$75 by Feb 3; \$85 thereafter; Reg. deadline: February 15, 2012.

***Befriending Our Inner Teacher: Biblical Foundations & Practices of Discernment***, w/ **Rev. Marjorie Thompson**, *First Reformed Church of Scotia*, March 8 & 9, 9am- 4pm, The distinguished author of *Soul Feast* helps us seek a deeper understanding of ourselves, others and Christ. One day: \$85 by Feb. 8; \$95 thereafter; Both days: \$165; Reg. deadline: February 21, 2012.

***Come Into the House of the Lord: The Worship Conference***, w/ **Rev. Ron Rienstra & Panel of Local Presenters**; *Brunswick Presbyterian Church*, March 22-23, 9am-4pm; Find new enthusiasm and inspiration for the work of creating engaging worship, using music, senses, technology and more. One day: \$85 by Feb 1; \$95 thereafter; Both days: \$165. Reg. deadline: March 6, 2012.

***In the Potter's Hand: Spiritual Formation***, w/ **Sister Kitty Hanley**; *Begins April 11*; A Lay Theological Education Program 20-hour course. \$275; \$250 to Audit. Reg. deadline: March 26, 2012.

**Dr. Randall Zachman/ Fr. Dennis Tamburello Dialogue**, *Siena College*, April 20, 6:30-8:30 pm, \$25 by Mar. 23, \$35 thereafter.

***Works of Love: The Challenge of Being a Disciple***, w/ **Dr. Randall Zachman**, *Siena College*, April 21, 9am- 4pm; Explore the call to discipleship through the theology of Soren Kierkegaard—Dr. Zachman makes it understandable for everyone! \$85 by Mar. 23; \$95 thereafter; Combined with Friday Dialogue: Both events \$105. Reg. deadline: April 5, 2012.

***Unprotected Texts: Misconceptions About Sexuality & the Bible***, w/ **Dr. Jennifer Knust**, May 10 & 11, 9am- 4pm; This author and B.U. professor provides a compassionate and liberating model for navigating what the Bible does or does not say about human sexuality. One day: \$85 by Feb. 1; \$95 thereafter; Both days: \$165. Reg. deadline: April 24, 2012.

**SHANE CLAIBORNE: A Call to the Simple Way of Radical Christianity**, June 22 & 23. See website for details. Consider how you can join ranks with Shane to equalize the carbon footprint he will leave during his visit! Groups forming now! Special student rate: Students under 25 only \$10 for both days!

Register online at [www.capitalrtc.org](http://www.capitalrtc.org) or by phone at 518-462-2470. Watch our website for information on these and **many other courses** available in 2012. Scholarships and group discounts available for most classes; please contact us for an application.

### **To All Sessions,**

The Office of the General Assembly has just sent out two new resources:

The new constitutional musing on G-5.05 Joint Congregational Witness, which can be found with the other constitutional musings on the Constitutional Services website at: <http://oga.pcusa.org/constitutionalservices/musings.htm> .

Also, there is a new video discussion between Marcia Myers, Director of Vocation and Andrew Black, Director of Constitutional Services, about ordination standards for the Presbyterian church (U.S.A.) including examples of ordination questions and answers. You can find this video at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tuq8t0f4kfw&feature=youtu.be>

We hope your presbytery committees and commissions, as well as your congregational leaders will find these resources helpful. If you have any questions or concerns please contact us at:

[joanne.green@pcusa.org](mailto:joanne.green@pcusa.org); Toll free: 888.728.7228, x. 5808 or Direct: 502.569.5808

In Christ, Cass L. Shaw, General Presbyter

## **In Search of Blue Presbyterian Hymnals!!**

If you know of a church that might have them, please contact the Presbytery office. Thank you!



RURAL &  
MIGRANT  
MINISTRY

December 28, 2011

Dear Albany, Presbytery

It is with great joy and sincere appreciation that of your generous support in the amount of \$3,000.00 + an additional gift of \$1,500 from the Council of Albany Presbytery has been received for 2011. These gifts significantly help support our work with farm workers and rural poor families through education, advocacy and our Youth Empowerment Programs. In addition, this gift helps RMM to be hopeful in the midst of our daily struggle with limited resources and increasing needs to minister to those who labor so that our tables are filled each day.

Our work is possible because of your support and prayers. As we look forward to 2012, we invite you to continue journeying with us as we seek to bring Hope, Justice and Empowerment to those we minister with and to throughout the year.

With gratitude,  
Rev. Richard C. Witt  
Executive Director

## SUMMER CAMPING OPPORTUNITIES

**Now is the Time** for youth and their families to begin deciding where to attend camp this summer. Albany Presbytery has partnered with three area camps:

**Holmes Presbyterian Camp** in Hudson River Presbytery,  
**Skye Farm Methodist Camp** and  
**Fowler Camp** of the Reformed Church.

All are eagerly ready to welcome Albany Presbytery youth. **Scholarship money from Albany Presbytery is available for those who need assistance.** You will find our campership policy and application forms at [http://www.albanypresbytery.org/youth\\_scholarships.html](http://www.albanypresbytery.org/youth_scholarships.html)

### Proverbs 3:5-6

*“Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not unto your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him and He shall direct your paths.”*



## Albany Presbytery is insured through the Insurance Board of the United Church of Christ. They are holding these upcoming webinars you do not want to miss!

You can visit their website [www.insuranceboard.org](http://www.insuranceboard.org) often for a list of upcoming webinars. You can register for any of their webinars there. You can also access their website for other valuable information!

**Adult/Child Interaction 2.0 - Why So Many Rules?**  
Feb 1, 2012  
11AM & 3PM Eastern

Review of basis for interaction guidelines, and specific examples including "lessons from Happy Valley" (State College, PA). Special attention given to social media guidelines.

**Convicted Sex Offenders As Congregants 2.0**  
Feb 29, 2012  
11AM & 3PM Eastern

Review of the challenges of accepting a convicted sex offender to your congregation. Also discussion of related **clergy/penitent privilege**. Guest: Don Clark, Esq., Special Counsel to the UCC.

**Building Trust, Preventing Disaster 2.0 – Financial Controls and Other Insights**  
Mar 21, 2012  
11AM & 3PM Eastern

Review related elements of church by-laws and basic principles of financial control: separation of duties and audit. Added insights from claim experience and work with Churches. (Especially valuable for newly elected leaders.)

**What Is Your Church Worth?**  
Apr 18, 2012  
11AM & 3PM Eastern

**Will your church be underinsured after a partial loss?** Review of the components of building value and insurance considerations. Covers stained glass and other special items, and understanding when a professional appraisal is needed.

**Facebook for Your Church -- The Right Way**  
May 16, 2012  
11AM & 3PM Eastern

Facebook for your church is not a casual decision. It takes planning and forethought about consequences — there's a right way and wrong way. What to post and not to post and what to respond to. A review of the "nuts and bolts" of setting up a "business" Facebook page and the controls required to manage the risks of using social media.

If you would like to subscribe to the E-news and/or the Prayer List, please send your email address to: [info@albanypresbytery.org](mailto:info@albanypresbytery.org) or give it to your pastor to relay to the Albany Presbytery office.  
If you would like to unsubscribe, then please do the same.

We welcome articles on matters affecting the whole presbytery from all who wish to submit them as we appreciate different perspectives that may influence our life together. Please send your articles in a Microsoft Word document to [sbraymer@albanypresbytery.org](mailto:sbraymer@albanypresbytery.org)