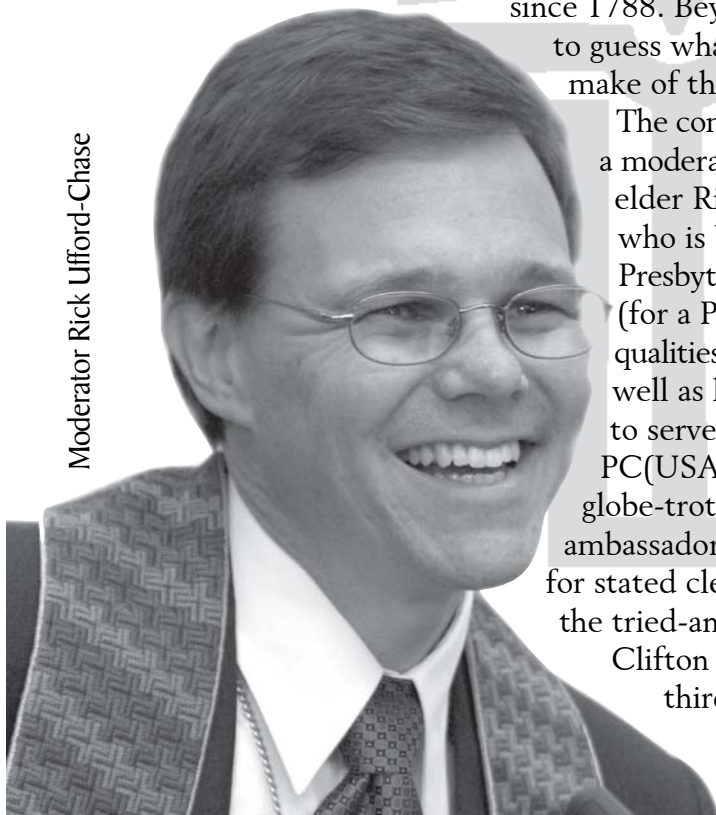




'THAT ALL MAY HAVE LIFE IN FULLNESS'

This year's General Assembly was the 216th — and last — annual legislative gathering of the Presbyterian Church (USA). From now on these meetings will be held only every other year; 2005 will be the first without a national Presbyterian Assembly since 1788. Beyond that, it's hard to guess what historians will make of the 2004 Assembly.

Moderator Rick Ufford-Chase



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The commissioners elected a moderator, 40-year-old elder Rick Ufford-Chase, who is both youthful (for a Presbyterian) and exuberant (for a Presbyterian) — qualities that will serve him well as he becomes the first to serve for two years as the PC(USA)'s public face and globe-trotting goodwill ambassador. But in their choice for stated clerk, they turned to the tried-and-true, re-electing Clifton Kirkpatrick to a third four-year term.

The two most highly-charged issues — ordination standards and abortion — both had minority reports that prevailed by the narrowest of margins over the recommendations of Assembly committees. On some issues, the commissioners were cautious: They re-affirmed the church's policies on abortion, for example, and



ASSEMBLY IN BRIEF 2004

JUNE 26-JULY 3 • RICHMOND, VIRGINIA

retained its sexual-conduct standards for candidates for ordination. On others — including the war in Iraq, violence in Israel/Palestine, church discipline in sexual-abuse cases, and civil rights for gays and lesbians — they took somewhat bolder stands.

In the end, as one preacher suggested, the commissioners were like Abraham and Sarah in the Old Testament — called by God to follow faithfully, even if they couldn't always tell where they were headed. On their uncertain journey, they were capably led by Ufford-Chase and Kirkpatrick. They discharged their vow to try to discern God's will, and seemed content to let God, and history, be the judges.

Leaders

Ufford-Chase — the founder of “BorderLinks,” an ecumenical ministry that reaches out to people on both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border — was elected moderator over two opponents.

The commissioners apparently were impressed by Ufford-Chase's commitment to risky, life-on-the-line mission work. “God can use us to transform the world,” he said. “I have found that fear and fulfillment go hand-in-hand.” Alluding to the gospel



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Stated Clerk: *Cliff Kirkpatrick easily won re-election as the PC(USA)'s top ecclesiastical officer, defeating three conservative challengers on the first ballot with 66 percent of the votes. Kirkpatrick said he “has tried in all I've done to work for renewal and reconciliation” in the denomination, and believes “there's more work I have yet to do.”*

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Vice Moderator: Rev. Jean Marie Peacock

story of Jesus beckoning the disciples to join him for a sail on the storm-tossed Sea of Galilee, Ufford-Chase said, "We are invited to get in the boat with Jesus, like those disciples. I want to be part of a church that says 'Yes,' and gets into that boat with Jesus."

In other actions relating to leadership, the Assembly welcomed Ufford-Chase's pick for vice moderator, the Rev. Jean Marie

Louisville Seminary president: Dean K. Thompson

Princeton Seminary president: Iain Torrance



DAVID P. YOUNG



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Peacock, associate pastor of Lakeview Presbyterian Church in New Orleans, LA; confirmed the elections of Robert E. Leech as president of the Presbyterian Foundation, James L. "Jay" Hudson as president of the

Presbyterian Investment and Loan Program; Iain Torrance as president of Princeton Theological Seminary and Dean K. Thompson as president of Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary; and elected 243 ministers and elders to GA-level committees, boards and commissions.

Theological Award: Henry Luce III received the Award for Excellence in Theological Education. He was recognized for contributions to PC(USA) seminaries by the Henry Luce Foundation, which since 1964 has given 35 grants to Presbyterians totaling more than \$11 million. Carnegie Samuel Calian, president of Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, presented the award.



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Worship

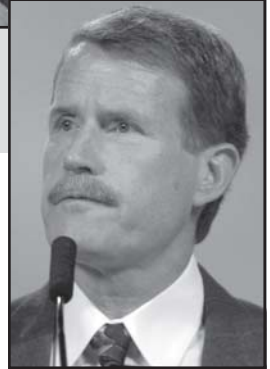
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The Opening Worship and Commissioning Service was held in Richmond Coliseum. Ginter Park Presbyterian Church in Richmond provided the central communion table.

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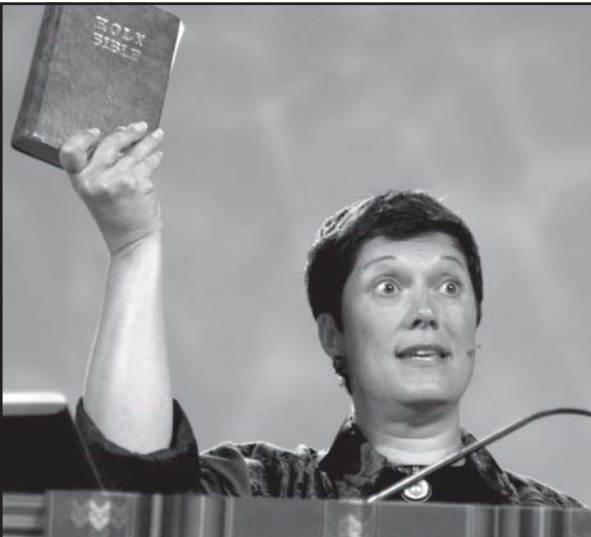
The Rev. Teri Thomas, pastor of Northminster Presbyterian Church in Indianapolis, preached a sermon on Jesus' words in Luke 6: "Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks."



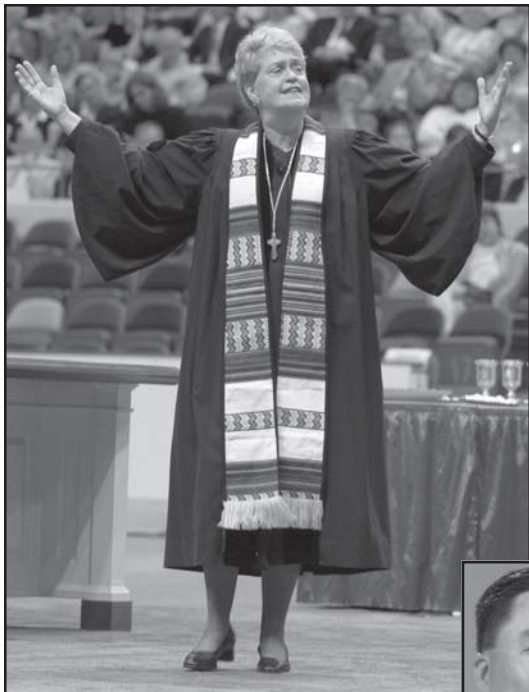
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When we try to talk about controversial issues, we trot out our pet dogmas. It would be too easy to hear this as a story of lost sheep returning to the fold. But it's also a story of the lost fold returning to the sheep left out.

—Chris Glaser,
on Luke 15



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Jesus, our Shepherd, makes it clear that there are sheep of other folds, who may well be invited to mess up what we thought we understood as our familiar and homogenous flock. Why? Because it is up to God.

— **Susan R. Andrews**, on John 10

The owner of the vineyard was fair to the first workers, but generous to the last ones. This parable is ultimately about the difference between God's time and our time. ... Jesus was teaching that chronological time means very little to God.

— **Jin S. Kim**, on Matthew 20



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In worship we come to God as a living sacrifice, giving up our desire to go our own way, to go God's way instead. God wants to know: 'Is You Is or Is You Ain't My Baby?'

— **Christian Methodist Episcopal Bishop Thomas L. Hoyt Jr.**, on Romans 12



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God knows, accepts and loves you — the 'you' that you are, stripped of definitions and responsibilities. You are a beloved child of God.

— **Presbyterian Youth Connection co-moderator Patricia Massey**, on John 16

Music Break: *Chip Andrus, associate for worship in the PC(USA) Office of Theology and Worship, provided music during breaks in the plenary hall.*



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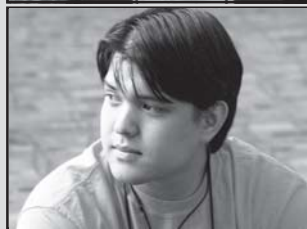
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Justice Award: *Rev. Glenda Hope accepted the Moderator's Justice Award on behalf of San Francisco Network Ministries. The ministry began in 1972 with eight people sitting on the floor in a house church. Since then it has developed programs to help people living in the Tenderloin, a part of San Francisco notorious for crime, prostitution and drug dealing. The ministries include computer training, low-income housing, a safe house for women leaving prostitution and memorial services for poor and homeless people whose deaths otherwise would not be acknowledged.*

YADs: YADs are Youth Advisory Delegates — presbytery-elected high school- and college-age commissioners who add a youthful voice and a valuable perspective to the Assembly. This year there were 165 YADs from the 173 presbyteries. Like their adult commissioner counterparts, YADs are assigned to committees and attend all plenary sessions. In committee, they have full “voice and vote” during deliberations. In plenary sessions they have voice, but vote in a separate YAD tally that is only advisory. YADs also elect their own moderators, hold their own caucuses and offer prayers during plenary sessions.



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YAD Co-Moderators: *Helen Halverson from Cape Coral, Fla., and Anthony Eflering, from Maple Grove, Minn., were elected co-moderators of YAD. Helen is a senior at Ft. Myers High School. Anthony studies at the University of Minnesota.*



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The vote against ordaining “self-affirming, practicing homosexuals” saddened many. At the urging of the moderator, more than 350 people gathered in the park outside the Richmond Coliseum for prayer after the Assembly vote.

The life of the church

The Assembly voted to retain an “authoritative interpretation” of the PC(USA) constitution that forbids the ordination of “self-affirming, practicing homosexuals” as church officers.

A committee had recommended that the interpretation, adopted in 1978, be declared no longer binding on presbyteries and sessions. Instead, the commissioners voted 259 to 255 to substitute a minority report that maintains the standard while the church continues in a period of “discernment” under the leadership of the Assembly’s Theological Task Force on Peace, Unity and Purity of the Church, which will make its final report to the 2006 Assembly.

The commissioners approved an interim report in which the group encourages every presbytery to create gatherings of Presbyterians of diverse theological views to “covenant together” to discuss what the task force has affirmed — that Jesus Christ himself is the church’s peace, unity and purity.



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2004 Women of Faith Award: *The recipients were, from left, Christine Mann Darden, Ruth Rivera Lane, and Rogene F. Henderson, honored for their important contributions in the fields of science, technology and engineering. Darden is assistant director of the Langley Research Center, a National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) facility in Hampton, VA. Henderson, a toxicologist with a doctorate in chemistry from the University of Texas, is a senior scientist at the Lovelace Respiratory Research Institute in Albuquerque, NM, a non-profit facility that specializes in research in respiratory health. Lane is founder, president and CEO of AllOut Marketing Inc., in Wayzata, MN, a firm that offers marketing services to companies in the fields of medical technology, biotechnology, pharmaceuticals and diagnostics. She has degrees in biochemistry and medical technology.*

The appropriate approach to this world, with its mysteries, quandaries, tragedies — and comedies, too — is not so much that of guilt as that of glory.
— **J. Barrie Shepherd**, on John 9



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Mission Service: Fred and Margie Stock received the Bell-Mackay Prize for mission service at the Presbyterians for Renewal Breakfast. Stock has specialized in outreach to tribal peoples and has also supervised and mentored other pastors. Margie has taught at two schools in Egypt, led Bible studies and done literacy work in Pakistan, and "provided the ministry of hospitality in the home, without which in many cultures there is no prospect of developing meaningful relationships for witness to the gospel," said Marian McClure, director of the PC(USA)'s Worldwide Ministries Division.



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The Assembly approved 10 constitutional amendments reforming and streamlining the church's procedures for dealing with cases of child sexual abuse. The changes were suggested by a committee that investigated abuse of missionaries' children in the Congo over a period of decades by a now-deceased Presbyterian

missionary. The amendments are intended to protect the rights of survivors, promote healing, and open up judicial processes so survivors' voices can be more clearly heard.

The Assembly set the GA per capita apportionment at \$5.57 for 2005 and 2006, up 6 cents.

The Assembly also approved an amendment to give leaders of immigrant fellowships in the PC(USA) the status of elders in presbyteries, include privileges of voice and vote in meetings; turned down an amendment that would have extended voting rights in presbyteries to Certified Christian Educators; voted against increasing the number of Youth Advisory Delegates for biennial Assemblies; decided against a fifth annual special offering; and set the GA per capita apportionment at \$5.57 for 2005 and 2006, up 6 cents from this year.



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Teresa Rodriguez, an artist from Auburn University, designed this poster honoring survivors of abuse. Eleven refers to the proposed Book of Order Amendments.



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Eva Stimson, editor of Presbyterians Today, spoke at the Presbyterian Writers' Guild Luncheon, where she received the David Steele Distinguished Writer Award.



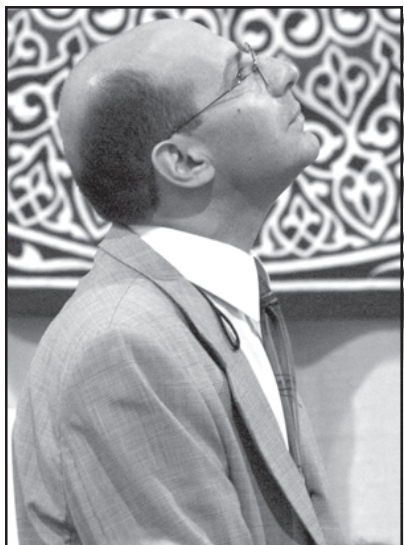
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Banners, pulpit drapes, exhibit-booth tablecloths, staff members' vests and tote bags for Assembly participants were all made from native Peruvian blankets called mantas, which feature distinctive, bold stripes and geometric designs woven in fields of neon red, yellow, green, blue, purple and white.

Information about the Mission Initiative campaign, Joining Hearts and Hands, a five-year, \$40 million campaign to renew the church for mission, was on display in the Exhibit Hall.



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War and peace

The Assembly approved several measures opposing the Israeli occupation of Palestine, including a call to gather data in support of a selective divestment of stock in multinational corporations doing business with Israel, a strategy suggested by ecumenical guest Mitri Raheb, pictured here, a Lutheran pastor from Bethlehem, who challenged the commissioners to do more than just issue another statement.

The Assembly declared that the war in Iraq “has been unwise, immoral and illegal,” and urged the United States to fulfill its moral responsibility for the reconstruction of Iraq, which it said can best be managed by the United Nations. The resolution also deplors the torture of prisoners in Iraq and Cuba and calls Presbyterians to repentance on the U.S. government’s behalf.

II



DAVID P. YOUNG

The Rev. Younan Shiba, pastor of the Assyrian Evangelical Presbyterian Church in Iraq, was at the Assembly.



Maj. Barbara "Barb" Sherer, U.S. Army chaplain, shared Iraq war experiences at the Presbyterian Council for Chaplains and Military Personnel lunch.

In other peacemaking actions, the Assembly urged the U.S. to demilitarize its anti-drug efforts in Colombia, diverting money to humanitarian and economic assistance; urged the Bush administration to rescind new travel and trade restrictions on Cuba; asked church agencies to continue monitoring the relationship between China and Taiwan while maintaining relations with both the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan and the China Christian Council; and expressed opposition to the Central American Free Trade Agreement because "it fails to adequately protect workers' rights, human rights, food security and environmental standards."

United States Representative Robert "Bobby" C. Scott, D-Virginia (3rd district), spoke at the Washington Office dinner, where he was presented the 2004 Partnership in Mission Award for Public Policy Advocacy.

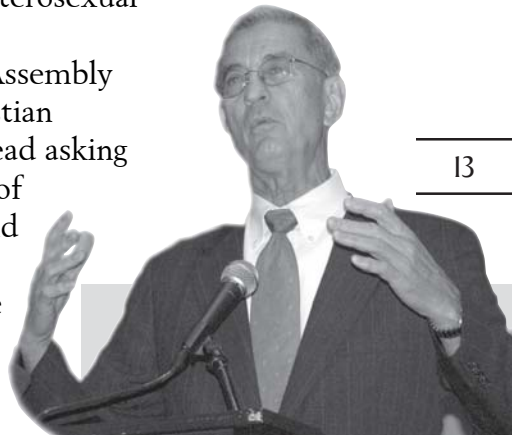


Social Witness

Commissioners voted to instruct PC(USA) leaders to send a pastoral letter to congregations on the subject of problem pregnancies. By substituting a minority report — by a vote of 260 to 256 — they rejected a committee proposal to revise the church’s 2003 policy on late-term abortion by removing fetal suffering, rape and incest as conditions under which the procedure might be permissible.

The Assembly approved a paper, “Transforming Families,” on how the church can better minister to families of all forms. Last year’s Assembly sent the document back to the church’s Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy for more work on its Biblical and theological underpinnings. Critics had objected that it put same-sex families on the same moral plane as those headed by married heterosexual parents.

On other social issues, the Assembly declined to endorse the “Christian Declaration of Marriage,” instead asking Presbyterians to join in a year of prayer for marriage renewal and reconciliation; affirmed the church’s definition of marriage as between a man and woman, but urged state and federal governments to legally recognize same-gender civil unions; re-affirmed the church’s support for fetal-tissue and stem-cell research; and refused to call for repeal of the USA Patriot Act, but urged President Bush and the Congress to conduct a “careful, unhurried review” of the controversial legislation.



DANNY BOLIN

Millard Fuller, president of Habitat for Humanity International, presented a certificate of appreciation to the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), which Moderator Rick Ufford-Chase and Stated Clerk Clifton Kirkpatrick accepted. He also signed copies of his book, The Theology of the Hammer.

Evangelism and outreach

The commissioners voted to ask PC(USA) agencies to reexamine and strengthen the relationship between Presbyterians and Jews in the context of evangelism and new-church development efforts. But by a vote of 260 to 233, they voted not to suspend Assembly-level funding of “Messianic Jewish” congregations like one in Philadelphia that sparked controversy last summer.

They asked the church to work to better equip Presbyterians to witness to their faith in interreligious contexts, but decided against asking a task force to develop new policy on religious pluralism, voting instead to redouble church efforts to promote available interfaith resources.



The Rev. Ronald P. Byars, professor of preaching and worship at Union Theological Seminary/PSCE, led the Prayer of Confession at a daily worship service.



DAVID P. YOUNG

One Voice, a diverse choir working toward healing and reconciliation, sang "God's Gonna Set This World on Fire" at the Ecumenical Worship Service.

In other matters related to outreach, the Assembly voted to amend the preface of *The Book of Confessions* and add footnotes explaining and renouncing 16th- and 17th-century condemnations of the Catholic Church; affirmed the PC(USA)'s support for the National Council of Churches USA and urged other member churches to increase their financial contributions; and urged the church to support the Mission Initiative: Joining Hearts and Hands, a five-year campaign to raise \$40 million for overseas missions and new-church developments in the United States, especially in racial-ethnic and new-immigrant communities.



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Rev. Dieudonne Massi Gams, was the ecumenical representative from the Camerounian Presbyterian Church EPC.

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Rev. Robert Edgar, general secretary of the National Council of Churches USA, spoke at the Peace Breakfast, sponsored by the Presbyterian Peace Fellowship.



DANNY BOLIN

2004 Assembly in Brief

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*Sentiments outside of the
opening worship service:
"God Is Love."*

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