

Jul 2014

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# THE EPISTLE

The Newsletter of St. Paul Presbyterian Church

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**Worship @ 10:15 a.m. Sunday School: Adult @ 9:00am; Sr. High @ 9:40; K-6 @ 10:30**



**JUNE 29: SAWYER FETROW BAPTISM** Sawyer Ann Fetrow, daughter of Brittany and Travis Fetrow, will receive the sacrament of Baptism. We will tackle the second question in this summer series: *"Do you have to clean up your act to become a Christian?"* Check

out Ephesians 2:1-10 and John 1:1-4, 9-13 in preparation. Don and Carrie McLaughlin will sing "I won't take less than your love" for special music.

**JULY 6: CELEBRATION OF COMMUNION** Our question of the day will be *"What about those who don't believe or have not heard (about Jesus)? Is there a way for Jews, Muslims and Hindus to get to heaven?"* You can read Psalm 96 and John 14:1-11a in preparation.



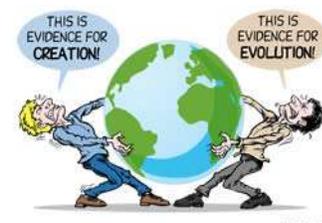
## SUMMER SERMON & TALKBACK SERIES: *INQUIRING MINDS WANT TO KNOW!*

This series will tackle tough theological, Biblical, or ethical question that church members have submitted! Following worship those who would like to may grab their refreshment and cookie and meet with Pastor Bill in the "Fireside Room" for a time to discuss the sermon and it's implications.



**JULY 7: VBS PROGRAM** Fasten your safety belt as our Vacation Bible School children present, in skit and song, what they learned at "Weird Animals," where weird is wonderful and unconditional love meets never-ending truth.

**JULY 20: CREATION AND EVOLUTION** is the next topic in our "Inquiring Minds" series. You may read Genesis 1:1-4, 24-28, and 1:31-2:7 in advance to get the most out of worship this morning. Contact Lois Keister if you would like to share some special music for this Sunday!



**JULY 27: FAVORITE HYMNS AND STORIES SERVICE** Join us as we hear the stories behind, and then sing, some of the most beloved hymns of all time including Amazing Grace, What a Friend We Have in Jesus, and Sweet Hour of Prayer.

**AUGUST 3: MISSION TRIP PRESENTATION** Join us as our senior high youth share what they learned and experienced during their June Mission Trip to Newport, Tennessee.



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**STEWARDSHIP ROAD - RANDOM THOUGHTS**  
by Dean Nihart

**As we go through the twists and turns in life, it is always helpful to know that God is driving the bus and not us.**

**Teach your kids about stewardship and what it means to give.**

**Giving to your church allows you to feel good about supporting something outside your personal home. We are supporting our church home, and fulfilling God's will.**

**Speaking of good stewards, please pass along a big thank you to everyone who has been serving so selflessly on the Re-Visioning Committee. There is more good news to come out of this group.**

**Pastor Bill received kudos from a Session member who had heard two different retired Pastor's speak highly of Bill's sermons! Way to go Pastor Bill and I know many, many folks who agree!!**

**Isn't it wonderful to see our young and less young members interact?! We are truly blessed with an inter-generational community that cares! Engage in conversation with people on both sides of this age-coin. There is much to learn, and new relationships can be fostered.**

**It is hard to move into a new community. It can be difficult to be a visitor at a different church. Say hello, act with kindness and remember when you were the new kid on the block.**

**So many people help our garden grow! Bless all of you!**

**Never stop believing. Never stop caring. Never stop giving of yourself, your time and your talents. Never say never!**

**Smile, pray and be thankful we have so many good stewards here. I love our people and our church! Thank you God for St. Paul!**



**REVISION PLAN APPROVED, TO BE SHARED WITH CONGREGATION SOON!**

**On Sunday, June 22, six elders and six member of the ReVision Task force met after worship for four and a half hours to review the ReVision Final Report that the committee prepared based upon the feedback of the seven small groups that met over the winter of 2014. After discussion with committee members, the elders made a few minor adjustments to the report, assigned accountability for each initiative to committees, and approved it unanimously. An executive summary and the report itself will be e mailed/mailed to the congregation. On Sunday, September 7, 2014 (Rally Day), a question**

**and answer session will be held after worship.**

ALOHA!

I'm taking a little space to say *thank you* to St Paul for the privilege of being your Epistle editor. As you know already, this is my last issue as editor. I hope you have enjoyed whatever changes and tweaks I have done over this term. The main purpose of this note is to ask the congregation to welcome and support Sue Van Essen as she steps in as your new Editor! Please keep her supplied with current information from the Committees and special activities, and help her by remembering the 20<sup>th</sup> of the month as a preferred deadline! Also – every new Editor will more than likely make changes to the format, supply a different “wrinkle”, and otherwise make the newsletter her own! You all know Sue! She will do a most outstanding job for you, as she does in all things!

I would also like to acknowledge Dean Nihart for his most outstanding record of sending articles faithfully and unbelievably early every month! (most received by the 7<sup>th</sup> or so of each month!) Thanks also to all who have sent articles and pics – as communications are so important to keep us informed and also to enjoy what we have accomplished. For a small church - this congregation accomplishes a LOT! Give yourselves a pat on the back – and thank Sue when you see her!

Signing off - *Steve Nichols*



### YOUTH DIRECTOR OPENING

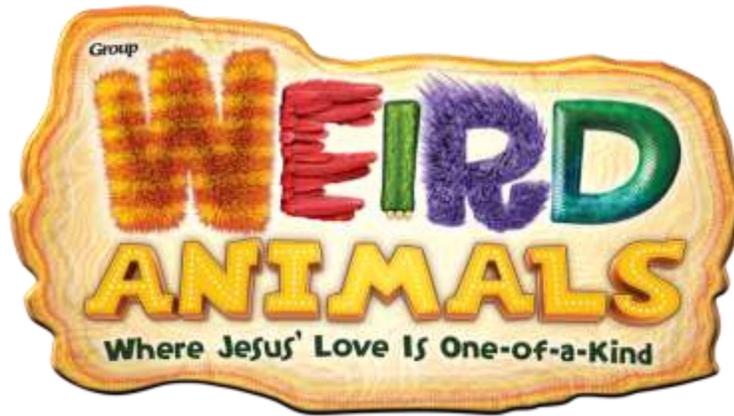
## GOOD WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH? LOVE THE LORD? KNOW SOMEONE WHO IS?

St Paul is seeking a full-time Director of Youth and Children's Ministries to work directly with Elementary, Middle School, and High School youth and take a leadership role in the church's mid-week inter-generational youth program, Sunday School, and other on-going congregational and community youth activities. Candidates must have a strong personal commitment to Christ, good organizational and teaching skills, and enjoy having fun with kids of all ages. The preferred background consists of either a Bachelor's degree in an education-related area, or a degree combined with one or more years of experience with leadership in church youth programs. You can find the full job description [here](#) or on the home page of [www.stpaul-johnston.com](http://www.stpaul-johnston.com). [Apply here](#) or send your resume and two references to the church office by July 18th at the latest.

## d365 New App Makes Devotionals More Accessible

devotionals 365 days a year

D365.org has launched a new iOS app that makes the daily devotions posted online available to its users anywhere they may be, 24/7. Reflecting a new theme based upon the Revised Common Lectionary each week, d365.org is designed to inspire readers to live a relevant faith in a changing and complex world. The mobile app for iPhone and iPad contains the same five devotional steps as the website: Pause, Listen, Think, Pray and Go. These steps allow the user to encounter Christ, reflect on scripture and receive encouragement to live out their faith. More info is available at <http://www.pcusa.org/news/2014/6/5/devotions-go/> and the app is available for free on iTunes.



VBS starts in just over a week and we are super excited! There will be a 2nd decorating night on Wednesday, July 2 from 6:30 - 9:00pm. This is a great activity for all ages. When we worked on June 18, we had 15-20 people. We got a lot done and had a great time, so come join the fun!

We really want to grow our VBS program and we need everyone's help to make it happen. If you have not already done so, please give an invitation to a neighbor or friend; you can find them on the tables in the narthex and fellowship hall. We also have invitations ready to go in the little bags that hang on doors. If you are willing to take a little time to hang some on doors, please talk to Bill and he will direct you to a neighborhood we are hoping to cover.

Our mission project for VBS this year will be the Animal Rescue League. While they especially prefer cash donations (that we will happily add to whatever the kids bring) in order to get exactly what they need at the time, here is a list of some items you may have around your home that you might want to contribute as well:

- *Bath towels (full size)*
- *Mattress pads (cut off elastic, please)*
- *Paper towels*
- *Paper plates*
- *Plastic grocery bags (used as poop bags)*
- *Shoe boxes*
- *Bleach*
- *Latex gloves*
- *Dish soap*
- *Trash bags (20 gallon or larger)*
- *Post-It notes*
- *White copy paper*
- *Acrylic yarn, size P crochet hooks, & size 13 or 15 knitting needles*

For a complete list of all items they accept for donations, go to their website [www.arl-iowa.org](http://www.arl-iowa.org), click on the drop down menu for "Get Involved" and click on the Fetch List. You can bring items in the Sundays before and after VBS or during the week, put them in the VBS Donation box in the hallway, and we will make sure they get to the ARL.

*Cross Ministries Back to  
School Giveaway  
July 31, 2014*



***Your Help Is  
Needed!***



Children of low income and NO income households are most affected by the poverty their families experience. The best way to get them out of the poverty cycle is through *education*.

If a child has to start school without the basic supplies needed it puts them at a major disadvantage.

Therefore the CROSS Back to School giveaway is an investment in the future for us all.

For every **\$15.00** that you donate one child living in poverty in our community can receive a new backpack filled with the grade appropriate supplies needed to begin the 2014-2015 school year. This year on July 31, CROSS ministries expects to serve 1,500 school children. St. Paul can help them meet this need.

**You can return your donation to Charissa, Sue VanEssen, Arla Darling** OR send your donation to: Cross Ministries 1050 24<sup>th</sup> Street DesMoines, IA. 5031

**Matthew 25:31** *"Trully I tell you, whatever you did do for one of the least of these, you did for me."*

'Trully I tell you, **whatever you did not do** for one of the **least of these, you did not do** for me.

**"No one can make you feel inferior without your consent."  
- Eleanor Roosevelt**

# C A L E N D A R

## **July Worship schedule:**

Jul 6th - 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost  
Jul 13th - 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost  
Jul 20th - 6<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost  
Jul 27th - 7<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost

## **July Driving Schedule:**

6 Rob  
13 Doug  
20 Mike  
27 Rob



## **Coffee Hosts and Greeters**

Jul 6th - Susan & Loren Van Essen  
Jul 13th - Morris Family  
Jul 20th - Lois & Jerry Kiester  
Jul 27th - Birt Family

## **July birthdays**

1 Robert Morris  
5 Marsha George  
6 Janet Barger  
10 Lois Kiester  
10 Charli Richter  
14 Ruth Cooper  
17 Nancy Silverthorn  
20 Donna Larson  
20 Mike Wilson  
21 Jack Barger  
22 Dick Garland  
22 Shelly Garland  
22 Nick Flodin  
23 Bernadette Greedy  
23 Elizabeth Mills  
25 Elaine Voyce  
26 Jeanne Hansen  
29 Peggy Gilmore  
30 Sarah Sanders  
31 Hunter Garland



## REDUCE, REUSE, RECYCLE: 10 WAYS TO GO GREEN & SAVE GREEN

Pastor Bill put this in the bulletin for Stewardship of Creation Sunday on June 22, and we thought it was worth sharing with those not able to be present. Keep reading for 10 simple things you can do today to help reduce your environmental impact, save money, and live a happier, healthier life.

### 1. Save energy to save money.

- Set your thermostat a few degrees lower in the winter and a few degrees higher in the summer
- Install LED's when your older incandescent bulbs burn out.
- Unplug appliances when you're not using them. Or, use a "smart" power strip that senses when appliances are off and cuts "phantom" or "vampire" energy use.
- Wash clothes in cold water whenever possible.
- Use a drying rack or clothesline to save the energy otherwise used during machine drying.

### 2. Save water to save money.

- Take shorter showers to reduce water use.
- Install a low-flow showerhead.
- Make sure you have a faucet aerator on each faucet.
- Plant drought-tolerant native plants in your garden.

### 3. Less gas = more money (and better health!).

- Walk or bike to work
- Consider telecommuting if you live far from your work. Or move closer.
- Lobby your local government to increase spending on sidewalks and bike lanes.

### 4. Eat smart.

- If you eat meat, add one meatless meal a week.
- Buy locally raised, humane, and organic meat, eggs, and dairy whenever you can.
- Watch videos about why local food and sustainable seafood are so great.
- Whatever your diet, eat low on the food chain. This is especially true for seafood.

### 5. Skip the bottled water.

- Use a water filter to purify tap water instead of buying bottled water.
- Bring a reusable water bottle, preferably aluminum rather than plastic, with you when traveling or at work.

### 6. Think before you buy.

- Go online to find new or gently used secondhand products.
- Check out garage sales, thrift stores, and consignment shops for clothing and other everyday items.
- When making purchases, make sure you know what's "Good Stuff" and what isn't.

### 7. Borrow instead of buying.

- Borrow from libraries instead of buying personal.
- Share power tools and other appliances

### 8. Buy smart.

- Buy in bulk. Saves money and packaging.
- Wear clothes that don't need to be dry-cleaned.
- Invest in high-quality, long-lasting products.

## 9. Keep electronics out of the trash.

- Keep your cell phones, computers, and other electronics as long as possible.
- Donate or recycle them responsibly when the time comes

## 10. Make your own cleaning supplies.

- The big secret: you can make very effective, non-toxic cleaning products whenever you need them. All you need are a few simple ingredients like baking soda, vinegar, lemon, and soap. Google it!

--Courtesy of Worldwatch Institute

**The Great March for Climate Action**  
A mobile community marching from LA - DC 3/1/14-11/1/14



## Need Hosts and Casseroles for Marchers

The Great March for Climate Change, including our own Rev. Bob Cook, will be making its way into Iowa in August. **He will be speaking at St. Paul Presbyterian on Sunday, August 10. Specifically, the group will be in Des Moines August 11 and 12 and hosts are needed to house the marchers on those days.** The weary travelers will need sleeping facilities, dinner and breakfast, use of laundry facilities and general hospitality. If you're willing to help, talk to [Sue VanEssen](#) or [Pastor Bill O'Connell](#). We are looking for a commitment of 15 sponsor homes from our St. Paul family. Some of us can host more than one marcher so don't be shy to help these weary travelers with respite and comfort! Make your home a "stay day" for a marcher!

Like to help, but can't provide a home? The march is also organizing a "**casserole campaign**" to help feed the marchers while they are in Iowa. Each cooker is asked to create one casserole, but anyone inclined is free to make more. Cookers in Des Moines will deliver casseroles on July 30th. Cookers outside of Des Moines are invited to bring the casserole directly to the marchers. 65% of the marchers are vegetarian and/or vegan. To get more details and to sign up go to <http://climatemarch.org/events/iowa/casserole-challenge/>

*The following blog was taken from the Great March for Climate Change website:*

## Stay Day

June 12, 2014 by [Ki Coulson](#) [By: Mary DeCamp]

What a luxury to have a "marcher in the home stay" along the Climate March trail!

At various points along our route from Los Angeles to Washington, DC, the Great March for Climate Action schedules days off for the marchers and arranges for us to stay with host families in the community. Today is such a day. We are in Colorado Springs, CO, and I am lucky to be staying with a lovely couple in their home. Typically our days fit a routine where we wake up early in our tents in some campsite. We've had some gorgeous spots and some not-so-hot spots. I think the best was camping on sacred ground in the Laguna Pueblo, NM amid the flowers and colorful cliffs. We arise early and start the morning preparation for breakfast. Everyone gathers to eat breakfast and pack a lunch before taking down tents, loading up gear, and gathering for announcements. Then we are off, walking another stretch of the road.

When we arrive at our day's destination, the kitchen has to be set up for the chef and prep crew. We rotate duties, so we enjoy a mix of culinary offerings. I always love it when John A. cooks because he is able to whip up something delicious while cleaning out the refrigerator of the leftovers from previous meals. We set up camp chairs in a circle to welcome the marchers and give them a chance to sit and chat while they nurse their feet, knees, backs, or whatever body part is objecting to the long walk. Our average is 15 miles a day, give or take 5 miles. So long days are around 20 miles and that can be punishing to the flesh and bones. After a brief break, marchers head for the gear truck that carries the tents, sleeping bags, duffles, chairs, and various equipment from place to place. They reclaim their stuff and find a suitable place to set up their mobile quarters for yet another night. Tarps are laid out, mallets borrowed and loaned to drive tent stakes, and tension poles are threaded through the various tent hoops to transform the rolled nylon and plastic into our tiny portable bedrooms. We eat, we enjoy a fire (if and when conditions warrant), another crew takes care of the dishes clean-up, and various groups meet to discuss upcoming plans. If we are in bear country, we lock up the trash cans, the compost barrels, and our recycling bins in the food truck for the night. We use our eco-commode when nature calls. Marchers often brush their teeth, do yoga, wash themselves, read, write, listen to music, fire up their computers, and all those mundane daily chores out in public.

But on stay days? We get warm, soft, dry beds to sleep in. We get hot showers and clean hair. We get amiable conversation with interested and supportive friends. We have a chance to catch up on personal care or to attend to details that haven't been done. What a lovely break from the routine!

Check out our route and our timeline. If you know of anyone who lives in the cities we'll be visiting, let the person or family know that they could adopt a marcher for a night, too, if there's a "stay day" scheduled. It is fun for everyone.

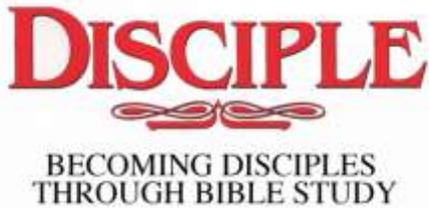
Love,  
Mary DeCamp

Note from Ed. There won't be a backpage this month due to the length of the Epistle and my desire to not suffer the wrath of the Ladies putting together the paper version! Also – the lyrics to the **Song of the Month** will be omitted for the same reason. This editions' song is *Forever Reign* by Hillsong. There will be a shortened version of this song in this years' VBS music!

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3f3sNiYpuF4&index=14&list=PLcHqC9YNzSaB621igMmxfeMUvroQqYr3L>

(ctrl + left click to follow link)

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## DISCIPLE IS FILLING UP!

The 2014-2015 academic year is going to be “The Year of the Bible” at St Paul! Our worship services will be coordinated with the weekly readings for the “Disciple” Bible study program. You may simply come to worship and enjoy an overview of the Bible. Or you may go one level deeper and follow the daily readings on your own. The greatest benefit, however, will be gained by those

who take part in a small group with no more than a dozen people. Pastor Bill will be teaching at least two classes (one during the day and one during the evening) and perhaps a third if there is enough demand.

DISCIPLE 1 is a life-changing 33-week overview of the Bible! If you have always wanted to learn more about the Bible but not known where to begin DISCIPLE is the program you need! No Bible knowledge is required to take DISCIPLE, just a willingness to learn. Here's what's involved:

- Meeting in a small group once a week for 2 1/4 hours. Classes include video presentations from leading scholars, discussion, sharing, caring, laughter & prayer
- Reading the Bible daily for 30-45 minutes
- Beginning reading in mid-August, ending early -May
- 16 weeks on the Old Testament
- 17 weeks on the New Testament
- Weeks off for Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Years

Here are some reflections from people who have taken the DISCIPLE class from Pastor Bill in the past:

- Tiffany, 40: *In the fall of 2009, I enrolled in the Disciple class, although I was a bit reluctant to do so. I was talking myself out of doing it for the same reasons that keep me from doing most things...not enough time. Well, what I found is that this class and study time was one of the BEST ways to spend my time.*
- Burt, 80: *I have been a Presbyterian for 80 or more years. The study of the bible through Disciple was the first comprehensive program I have ever received. Bill did a great job of explaining the text, and other members of the class joined in for further interpretations. The class studied as a unit, frequently asking questions. It was not all easy, but it was always direct and honest. If your Christian faith is a little weak, I recommend trying the Disciple class. You will be glad you did!*
- Allison, 34: *I feel like I have developed a bond with everyone that was in Disciple with me. Some of the people I knew already well and some I barely knew at all even though I had known who they were for most of my life....we laughed, cried, sang, prayed, and just overall enjoyed fellowship with each other for the better part of a year. I am so grateful to each of them for sharing their experiences with me, because I learned so much from them.*
- Gary, 45: *Taking the Disciples 1 class has given me the opportunity to learn more about the bible and the biblical times when Jesus walked the earth. This class has made me a better person and given me an unusually keen outlook on life that I would not have received anywhere else. I recommend this class to anyone, especially to those who think they have it all figured out.*
- Judy, 62: *The Disciple rewards are many. It is a carefully planned study that guides the student through most of the Bible and helps to clarify the who, what, where, when, how and why of this vital book. The time spent with classmates and teachers was valuable and resulted in an increased understanding and appreciation of the lessons and of each other.*
-

Those who have expressed an interest in the DISCIPLE experience so far include: Joyce Allard, Pauline Chambers, Sue Conrey, Arla Darling, Julie Decker, Brittany Fetrow, Brent Johnson, Renee Kraemer, Sue Loeffler, Carrie & Don McLaughlin, Dennis Meyer, Dean & Janet Nihart, Patty Schroeder, David Smith, Lisa & Whitey Stange, John Temple, Sue & Loren Van Essen, Harlan & Lois Watson, and Rhonda Westercamp. That's twenty-four folks to date! To register your interest in this experience, you can call the church office or visit [www.stpaul-johnston.com](http://www.stpaul-johnston.com) and look under "Adult Activities."

### NEW MEMBERS CLASS: JULY 16!

Interested in membership at St Paul? We will be holding an "Inquirer's" class Wednesday, July 16 from 6:00 to 9:00 pm for those considering God's call to membership. Through videos, PowerPoint, and conversation, this class will explore:

- *Basic Christianity*
- *St Paul's history*
- *Presbyterian beliefs and organization*
- *The purpose driven philosophy of ministry*
- *What it means to be a member of St Paul*

We'll have coffee and a dessert break. Childcare will be available if needed. Attending the class simply means you are interested in exploring membership, not necessarily ready to commit to it. Contact Pastor Bill ASAP if you are interested! Also contact him if you are interested, but the 18<sup>th</sup> is a bad date for you. He may be setting up a second class for those in this situation.



### HIGHLIGHTS OF THE 221<sup>ST</sup> GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE PC (USA)

The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (USA), which meets every other year, met June 14-21, 2014, in Detroit, Michigan. Some highlights of the assembly:

**MODERATOR.** The committee chose as its moderator Heath Rada (christened #modeRada on Twitter), the only ruling elder among three candidates, and a hearty North Carolinian who selected as his vice-moderator his demographic opposite: Larissa Kwong Abazia, a young Chinese-American pastor from New York. From the start, the

young adult advisory delegates (YAADs) resonated with the white-haired Rada, who passed out Heath bars and danced during breaks on the platform.

**DIVESTMENT.** Two years after a GA rejected a similar proposal by just two votes, commissioners gasped when the divestment vote result was posted – 310-303 – for a proposal that the PC (USA) begin phased divestment of about \$16.5 million from three companies that provide equipment used by the Israeli military in the occupation of Palestine: Caterpillar, Hewlett-Packard and Motorola Solutions. The assembly did specify that its action was “not to be construed” as support of the global Boycott, Divest and Sanctions (BDS) movement. *“In no way is this a reflection of a lack of love for our*

*Jewish brothers and sisters,”* moderator Heath Rada said immediately after the divestment vote, one of the first by an American mainline Protestant denomination.

**SAME-SEX MARRIAGE.** In response to the contention that the denomination’s restrictions were impeding pastors’ ability to provide pastoral care to committed same-sex couples in their churches, the GA approved two measures to permit ministers to perform same-gender marriages in jurisdictions where legal (at present, 19 states plus the District of Columbia). In addition, an authoritative interpretation, approved 371-238 (61% in favor), took effect immediately after the assembly adjourned, giving PC(USA) ministers freedom of conscience to perform same-sex marriages. The assembly also voted 421175 (71% in favor) to recommend for ratification by the presbyteries a constitutional amendment adjusting the definition of Christian marriage, changing the phrase “a man and a woman” to “two people, traditionally a man and a woman.”

Both actions support freedom of conscience. The proposed amendment says explicitly, *“Nothing herein shall compel a teaching elder to perform nor compel a session to authorize the use of church property for a marriage service”* that either of them *“believes is contrary”* to their *“discernment of the Holy Spirit and their understanding of the Word of God.”* Adoption of the amendment requires ratification by 87 of the 172 presbyteries, the votes to be taken over the next 12 months.

Realizing that their actions would please some and alienate others both in the United States and overseas, commissioners also pleaded for reconciliation with those who would disagree. Asked after the votes on same-sex marriage how much it would cost to send representatives to each presbytery for conversations about unity, Stated Clerk Gradye Parsons said he wasn’t sure, *but “the cost of not doing this is higher.”*

**BELHAR CONFESSION.** The assembly approved recommending for presbyteries’ ratification (by two-thirds vote) adding the Belhar Confession, written in South Africa and focused on justice and reconciliation, to the PC (USA)’s Book of Confession.

**BROKEN PRESBYTERIAN RELATIONS.** Already 350 churches have left the PC (USA) for other denominations over the past four years. Now more departures are expected. Also, Hunter Farrell, director of World Mission, said preliminary inquiries indicate 17 of the denomination’s 54 global-partner denominations may break relations with the PC (USA) over the same-sex marriage decision.

**LANGUAGE ABOUT ISRAEL.** The assembly disavowed a controversial study guide, “Zionism Unsettled,” produced by the Israel Palestine Mission Network. The commissioners overwhelmingly rejected a proposal to trim back references to Israel in liturgical materials published by the church.

**GUN VIOLENCE.** The assembly appealed to fellow Presbyterians to work to reduce gun violence by advocating for stricter background checks and a ban on semi-automatic assault rifles.

**FOSSIL FUELS.** Despite pleas from the YAADs that *“we can’t wait”* to protect the earth, the assembly voted not to divest from fossil fuel companies, choosing instead to explore related issues that might lead to action by a future assembly.

**DRONES.** The assembly passed a resolution criticizing secrecy in the U.S. military’s use of drones for surveillance and targeted attacks, calling for legislation governing the use of military drones.

**YOUNG ADULT COMMISSIONERS?** A proposal to turn YAADs into voting YACs failed, given that the new title would not require them to be ordained elders.

**MID COUNCILS.** The assembly approved consolidating the number of synods from the current 16 to somewhere between 10 and 12 reconfigured synods.

--By Leslie Scanlon, *Outlook* National Reporter and Jack Haberer, *Outlook* Editor. For complete reporting, go to [www.pres-outlook.org](http://www.pres-outlook.org).