



THE CHURCH CHIMES

Peters Creek Presbyterian Church • 250 Brookwood Road • Venetia, PA 15367

July 2008

REACH... BUILD... SERVE...

Peters Creek Staff

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This summer...

Summer Worship Services

8:30 Traditional Worship
10:00 Blended Worship

Creekside Friends Ice Skating Party

Friday, July 25

12:30 - 2:20 PM

Blade Runners, Bethel Park

Don't miss out on the chance to cool off and have a great time of fun with Creekside Friends. See page 5 for more information.

All Church Wild Things Baseball Game

Wednesday, August 13

7:05 PM

Tickets go on sale July 13 in the Narthex.

Seats are reserved so get your tickets early!

Would you like to Share a ride? Meet at the church parking lot at 6:00 PM.

Church Picnic

Sunday, August 24

11:00 AM

Peterswood Park

Join us for a church picnic with fun for all ages. Following the 10:00 worship service.

Youth Activities

July 11	Road Trip to Sarris for Ice Cream - 1:00 meet at the church
July 16	Cedar Point Trip - Leave the church at 7:00 AM - Return late
July 20	Putt Putt Golf - Coolsprings Bethel Park - 3:00 PM
August 3	Cookout - Youth Hall - 5:00 PM
August 5 - 7	Teen Leadership Retreat
August 13	Wild Things Baseball Game - Meet at the church 6:00 PM
August 24	Church Picnic



FROM THE PASTOR



Dear Friends:

Greetings and peace!

For many years most churches have kept individuals on the church membership roll as long as the member showed up for worship at least once a year and brought an offering with them. While this has been considered the pastoral thing to do, churches are now raising the bar by redefining what it means to be an active member.

In January, and again in March, I asked the Session to begin a complete review of our Active Membership Roll. The Membership and Fellowship Ministry Team began this process in April by contacting approximately 175 of our members to begin conversations with them in hopes of encouraging them to become *active* in our life and ministry. The Session will complete this process before the end of the summer.

This process has raised a simple question, ***“What does it mean to be an active member of the church?”***

I define an active church member as a Christian who has joined a church and with their brothers and sisters in the congregation:

1. Worships regularly;
2. Prays daily;
3. Studies and obeys the Scriptures;
4. Volunteers in at least one area of ministry;
5. Serves those in need;
6. Supports the church with their financial gifts;

While many Christian congregations expect far less of their members than I have listed here, there are an increasing number of congregations that expect more. There are even some churches that ask members to sign a *membership covenant*, in which they promise to keep their membership vows.

Now here's a fascinating detail. ***Congregations that expect more of their members are healthier, experience growth, make a significant difference in their communities, and positively impact the lives of their members.***

Have we lowered the standard for membership too low at Peters Creek? How many of the 6 membership standards listed about do you meet?

Think about it! Pray about it! Do something about it!

I hope to see you at worship on Sunday!

Blessings and peace,

Rus Howard, Teaching Pastor

ADULT GROUPS THIS SUMMER AT THE CREEK

2nd & 4th Monday at 1:00 PM
Cross Stitches Group - A2

Wednesdays at 6:15 AM
Eat 'n Pray - Narthex

Thursdays between 7 & 10 AM
Farmhouse Coffee with Rus

2nd & 4th Fridays at 7:00 PM
Single Moms -
location varies

SESSION UPDATE

The Elders met on June 10, 2008. The meeting was opened with worship, which included a brief message, celebration of the Lord's Supper, and prayer.

After worship the Elders discussed and acted upon the following business.

- Received a report from the Membership and Fellowship Ministry Team regarding their work in reviewing the church rolls and their communications with church members. After lengthy discussion, the Session moved 14 members to the Inactive Membership Roll. The Elders anticipate completing this membership review process before the end of July.

- Received a report from the Music and Worship Ministry Team about the progress made towards implementing a Saturday evening Contemporary Worship Service this fall. Plans and preparations are on track.

- Received and approved a recommendation from Rus Howard that we establish a **Leadership Preparation Class** to prepare all interested members for serving in leadership rolls within the life of the congregation. The class will be open to all members. The Session established as policy that anyone nominated to serve as a Ruling Elder must complete this seminar prior to standing for election as a Ruling Elder.

- Received an update from the Legal Team regarding the declaration that we are the rightful owners of our property and facilities. Even though court hearings were concluded 6 weeks ago, we are still waiting for a final ruling from the court. The team anticipates a favorable ruling from the courts.

- There was a brief discussion about the deficit of the General Fund and the state of the economy. Our current year-to-date deficit stands at -\$19,000. It is hoped that church members will continue to be faithful in their giving and will help us close this deficit as we move through the summer.

- Rus Howard announced that a new **Membership Orientation and Preparation Class** would be held in July in order to receive those individuals who want to join us in our ministry and service to God.

After completing all business, the Elders shared prayer concerns and closed the meeting in a season of prayer for our members in need, our ministry, and in thanksgiving for God's blessings and guidance.

UPCOMING CLASSES

Leadership Preparation Seminar

In September 2008, Rus Howard, our Teaching Pastor, will be leading a *Leadership Preparation Seminar* for our current leaders and for those interested in assuming a leadership role in our ministry at Peters Creek.

Some of the topics to be covered in this 10-hour seminar will be:

- What do we believe?
- What is distinctive about the Evangelical Presbyterian Church?
- What does it mean to be a leader in the church?
- Our mission statement, core beliefs, values, and the primary purposes of our ministry!

This seminar is open to all members. Individuals who wish to serve as an Elder are required to complete this seminar before being elected to serve as an Elder.

If you are interested in participating in the *Leadership Preparation Seminar* this fall, please contact Rus Howard at drrus@comcast.net or by calling the church office at 724-941-6210. The exact schedule for the fall seminar will be announced in late August and will be designed to fit the schedule of those who want to participate in the class.

Church Membership 101

Are you interested in learning more about our ministry or in becoming a member of the church? If so, please contact Rus Howard, our Teaching Pastor, at drrus@comcast.net or by calling the church office at 724-941-6210.

Rus Howard will be leading our next **Church Membership 101** seminar in two sessions on Wednesdays July 16 and July 23 from 7-9 PM, in Hinman Hall. Childcare will be provided for both sessions. Those who complete both sessions and desire to join the church will be received into our membership at the end of the seminar.

MISSION AND OUTREACH



Working Miracles through Mission Giving

Home of Life and Nutrition is an orphanage located in the San Andres Sajcabaja area, it is one of the poorest area in Guatemala. San Andres is a five hour trip from Guatemala City with the last 22 miles taking an hour plus to travel over very rustic mountain roads. The town of San Andres has 2700 inhabitants with the majority consisting of Mayan Indians. The children's home is on the southeast corner of town.

*Jesus said:
Let the children come to
me and do not let
them be restrained,
because such as
these belong to
the kingdom
of God.
Mark 10:4*

The Home of Life provides shelter and 3 meals a day. But for chow time to happen the cooking fire has to be stoked with pine firewood brought in by pick-up. They also provide a solid education, which is vital to break free from the cycle of poverty and illiteracy. Through the generous giving to the School Scholarship Fund the children are successfully breaking that cycle. All financial needs are met through the generous giving of friends of Home of Life and Nutrition (Hogar de Vida y Nutricion) They receive no help from Guatemalan governmental agencies.

One day a man came to the door of the orphanage and had an infant girl who was only one day old and wanted them to care for her. If they were not there she would have been left abandoned. Through your help and donations these children will have a secure home surrounded by people who care for them.

For more information visit the web site. www.homesoflife.org

Habitat for Humanity

Peters Creek Church Receives Certificate of Appreciation

On Saturday, June 21, Washington County Habitat for Humanity held a Home Dedication Celebration for three homes that were turned over to three families who have met all the requirements including 350 hours of sweat equity, savings and learning requirements and ability to repay a 0% interest mortgage.

The dedication included visiting each home, meeting the family, and prayer and blessing of the family and home.

Following the house dedication a Volunteer Recognition Ceremony was held. As part of the recognition six churches were honored.

Peters Creek received a Certificate of Appreciation for its support of Habitat. Peters Creek supports Habitat with money, volunteers who work on job sites, and individuals who make donations to the annual golf outing.



CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

Creekside Friends Ice Skating Party

Join us for a fun outing in July!!! Kids in Kindergarten to 5th grade will meet at Blade Runners in Bethel Park, July 25 from 12:30 to 2:20 PM. In case you haven't heard, Gina won a drawing from WORD FM for a free ice skating party for up to 20 people. This party includes 2 hours of ice skating plus pizza, soda, and cake! Don't miss out on the chance to cool off and have a great time of fun with Creekside Friends. Sign up on the Friendship Slip at church or call the church office to register.

Creekside 2-5-2 Children's Worship

Worship for children Kindergarten to 5th grade is held each Sunday during the 10:00 worship service throughout the summer.

The worship theme in July is SELF-CONTROL - choosing to do what you should do, not what you want to do. The memory verse in July is *A man who can't control himself is like a city whose walls are broken down.* Proverbs 25:28

VBS FUN



LETTERS, THOUGHTS AND PRAYERS

Howard Jack and daughters Kathy, Marianne, and Carol wish to express their gratitude for the card shower for his 85th birthday and for the many cards sent regarding his accident and recuperation. These have been much appreciated and re-read many times. Your good wishes, thoughts, and prayers have been most helpful during my recovery. Your visits have been welcome and always provide a significant break in the day's routine. I look forward to getting back to church.

Volunteers Needed! Meals on Wheels of Peters Township is in need of Kitchen Volunteers and Drivers. If you have time available to volunteer, please call our Manager, Summer Tissue. We look forward to hearing from you. 724-969-1000 Kitchen Volunteers Work: 8:30 am to 10:30 am Drivers Work 10:30 am to 1:00 pm (at the latest)

Strawberry Festival Volunteers- Many, many thanks to all the volunteers and cake bakers who made the Strawberry Festival a great success. We couldn't have done it without you!

Journey to Bethlehem - If we are to present Journey this year we need LOTS of help. This year we are in need of several new scene leaders. They are: Guides, Costumes, Make up, Reservations, Parking, Synagogue, Marketplace, Thieves.

If we are unable to fill these slots, then it will be impossible for us to have Journey this year. Please prayerfully consider helping. Sign up on the Friendship slip in the bulletin. Thank you.

YOUTH MINISTRY

DESTINATION UNKNOWN



Destination Unknown 2008

13 Youth and 4 adults set out on a road trip that would take them through the Allegheny National Forest, on to Canada, to the shore of Lake Erie and finishing up at a horse farm in Corry, Pa.

We spent the week traveling from destination to destination learning about the life of Jesus Christ and how we can become more like Him and improve our daily relationship with Him. One of the highlights of the trip was watching the youth interact with one another. For some this was their first retreat and for others their first time on a retreat with our group. As the week progressed we saw many new friendships form and barriers break down. We hear things like: "this is the best trip I've ever been on", "you guys are my second family and I know I can come to anyone of you when I have a problem."

On our first day we camped at Minister Creek along Route 666 in the Allegheny National Forest. We hiked 2 miles to the top of the mountain to the Minister Creek Lookout. The lookout sat upon a huge rock where we spent some time reading through God's Word Matthew 4:1-11. As we were talking about the tempting of Jesus we looked up into the sky and saw the clouds converging from two different directions. White clouds from one side and black and grey clouds from the other. I had never seen anything like this before and it totally drove home the point of good vs. evil. What a teaching moment that was.

Needless to say there were many other moments like this that occurred throughout the week. We could clearly see God at work through the trip and through the lives of the students and adults alike. We serve a great God who loves and cares for His children. Enjoy the pictures on this page and look for more as they are posted on the website.

MUSIC MINISTRY

Music & Worship Pastor Search Team Update

The Music and Worship Pastor Search Team is in the process of wrapping things up after receiving over 100 resumes and interviewing a number of qualified candidates. We truly appreciate your prayers and patience as we journeyed through the process. We hope to finalize the process by July 1st. We wish to extend a heartfelt thank you to Denise and Kurt for their hard work and dedication over the last year. Thank you for using and sharing your gifts with us. Please watch the bulletin and upcoming newsletter for more information and the announcement of our new Music and Worship Pastor.



COMING THIS FALL

**Peters Creek Church
Saturday Night Service
6:00 p.m.**

Welcome to
THE CREEK!

Peters Creek Church is a church that is committed to reaching out to the lost, building up the believer and serving those around us. The Creek Saturday night service is a place where authentic spirituality brings meaning to everyday life. The atmosphere is warm, inviting, and you'll experience a caring focus on people.

We have set aside Saturday night September 6th as the kick off for the Saturday night service. Please mark your calendars for this exciting moment in the life of our church. Start thinking now about who it is you would like to invite to church this fall. Below you will find our kick off message series.

**Saturday Night Service
Kick off Message Series
"The Perfect Storm"**

Week #1- Calm Down- Navigating Life's Storms

Can you be obedient to God and still face storms in life? The Bible teaches that everyone will experience storms in this life but if we trust him, God will carry us through the rough waters. We will take a look at the well-known story in The Gospels of Jesus calming the storm and rebuking his disciples for a lack of faith.

Week #2- Under Tow- Building a Foundation

"I'll huff and I'll puff and I'll blow your house down." The Big, Bad Wolf uttered these chilling words in the children's fairy tale "Little Red Riding Hood". But the Bible says that there really is a big, bad wolf on the prowl in our lives, and he is constantly seeking whom he may devour. From the parables of Christ, scripture warns us that the only way to guard against the onslaught of the evil one is to build our life's foundation on The Rock.

Week #3- Rainmaker- Listening to God

Noah was called a man of God. What made Noah stand head and shoulders above the rest was his faithful habit of listening to God. God spoke and Noah listened and obeyed. Together we'll learn that in extraordinary times, God uses ordinary people who are committed and submitted to him.

Week #4- Seasick- Running from God

The life of Jonah, the running man, shows us what happens when we take a journey away from God. From fear to rebellion to seasickness, Jonah epitomized the downward spiral of those who try to flee the Almighty. Through this message we'll learn that you can't hide from God—because wherever you go, you'll end up running right into him.

SATURDAY NIGHT SERVICE

GENERAL ASSEMBLY REPORT

REPORT FROM THE MEETING OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE EVANGELICAL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

JUNE 17-21, 2008

By Rus Howard

Bob Elmes, our Clerk of Session, and I were blessed by last week's meeting of the General Assembly of the EPC. It was a remarkable meeting which was focused on matters of faith and ministry and which was rooted in God's Word, worship, and prayer. Any anxieties, doubts, or concerns that I might have had about our move into the EPC have been erased. God has blessed us. In this report I have chronicled the daily events, reviewed the teachings, and commented on the spirit of the assembly. Please feel free to contact me for more information and to answer your questions.

Tuesday June 17

The New Wineskins Presbytery met today for 6 hours from 1-7 PM.

We began with inspirational worship that was focused on God and His Word. The worship service lasted 1 hour and 40 minutes, but it felt like a minute. The service was equally divided between singing praise, the ministry of the Word, and prayer. Bill Dudley, Pastor of the Signal Mountain Presbyterian Church in Chattanooga, TN, preached. He spoke about how God has moved him towards understanding that His call for him as a Pastor is to bear witness to the Second Coming and to invite others to accept Jesus as their Lord and Savior. He gave a moving testimony about his ministry to the "Otis" (from Andy Griffith Show) in his community and Otis' conversion on a rainy Sunday afternoon. We closed worship with an extensive and intensive season of prayer.

After worship we spent 1½ hour in conversation about building our ministry networks. Rick Wolling spoke about the strength of our ministry network in Pittsburgh. I am plugged into this network, but we need to become more involved in this network as Elders and a congregation.

We closed this meeting by receiving a pastor from the EPC Presbytery of the West and by examining 4 candidates seeking to be ordained in the EPC-NW Presbytery. The examination was extensive and covered theology, church ministry, the constitution, sacraments, preaching, and personal faith. This examine was in sharp contrast to the anemic and deceitful exams in the PCUSA. After 2½ hours, the presbytery voted overwhelmingly and with confidence to approve these candidates for ordination. One of the candidates, Nate Devlin, will be ordained at Beverly Heights as an Associate Pastor on September 7. It would be wonderful if we sent a strong contingent to this service.

In the evening Bob Elmes and I joined 8 individuals from Memorial Park PC for dinner and fellowship at a Chinese restaurant. We had a wonderful time. It was an exhausting day. Bob and I hit the sack early.

Wednesday June 18

The day began with worship, praise, and prayer. Today was an *equipping* day focused on helping all of us do a better job of reaching our contemporary pluralistic culture with the hope we find in Jesus Christ. Since our new mission statement at Peters Creek begins with a renewed emphasis on *reaching the lost in our community* today's seminars were a perfect primer for Bob Elmes and me.

We attended two plenary teaching seminars about the theologically and biblical mandate to engage our culture as a prelude to reaching the culture with the Gospel. Biblically we focused on Acts 17 (Paul's arrival in Thessalonica) and John 4 (Jesus' conversation with the Samaritan Woman at the Well).

Bob and I attended breakout seminars that expanded on this theme. We attended seminars about:

- Reaching youth in today's rapidly changing culture;
- Observing the culture through movies and music;
- Telling the story of Jesus to our community in the language of our culture.

After these seminars I attended I a meeting of the Coordinating Team on the New Wineskins Presbytery. I ended up on this team by a strange convergence of events. At our last meeting I signed up to be on the Judicial Team. I signed up for this team with the hope that we would never have to deal with a judicial case. Thus I fulfilled my responsibility to volunteer for service and yet, if all went well, I'd never have any work to do. Unfortunately, I was designated the Chair of the Judicial Team, since I was the only one who volunteered to serve on the team. As a Ministry Team chair, I earned a spot on the Coordinating Team that oversees all the work of the presbytery. Anyway, since this is a *new thing* we spent 1½ hours addressing organizational and policy matters.

This evening Bob and I spent our time in informal gatherings enjoying fellowship with new friends and some of my old acquaintances. I spent an hour with the lead attorney who is handling the legal cases in eastern PA. He told me that if we stayed in this process to the end we would win.

Thursday June 19

We began and ended today with worship at 8:30 AM and then at 7:30 PM. In between these two full (1½ hour) worship services Bob and I attended the opening business meetings and another equipping seminar.

All day I kept muttering to myself, “*We made the right decision to join the EPC!*” This was a day rooted in worship and the Word of God. It was a day filled with tears of joy and thanksgiving. It was a day which I wish all of you could have attended. When Bob and I returned to the hotel lobby at 10:30 PM, all of the New Wineskins Church pastors and elders were saying, “*We made the right decision!*”

The day began with powerful worship. The Pastor of 4th Presbyterian Church, Rob Norris (not the same one who was once at Westminster in Upper St. Clair) preached on 3 stories from Matthew’s Gospel: Jesus stilling the storm on the sea; Jesus casting out demons into a herd of pigs, and; Jesus forgiving the paralytic. Dr. Norris spoke about how these stories witness to who Jesus was and the people’s reactions to Jesus. Here’s the summary:

1. **Stilling the Storm** – Jesus revealed his power over the dark forces of the deep abyss. The disciples responded by saying, “*Whoa, who is this man?*” They were filled with astonishment and awe.

2. **Casting out Demons** – Jesus revealed his power over evil and his ability to destroy evil. The people responded by saying, “*Get out of here!*” Sinful people fear Jesus and reject Him;

Jesus Forgives the Paralytic – Jesus reveals His redemptive powers. The people responded by saying, “*I want that!*” This is the message that we have to preach and which draws people to Jesus.

After worship we had our first business meeting. Highlights included the introduction of 26 of our EPC missionaries, the election of the new Moderator, and the creation of the position of Commissioned Pastor, the equivalent of Doris Sawhill’s position as our CLP.

The election of the Moderator was wonderful. The new Moderator, Alan Rose, is an Elder from Huntersville NC. While he has been a successful businessman, he has been a more faithful elder. He is a very humble man. The one thing I appreciate about him is that his favorite job in the church is to serve as *Children’s Sunday School Greeter*. Each Sunday he and his wife greet all the children and their parents as they come to Sunday School. His pastor told us that this ministry draws many new members into the church.

After his election Moderator Rose spoke about the guiding principle for his life. He told us that every time he went somewhere, his Dad would say to him, “*Remember who you are, where you are, and why you are there!*” The answer to the three questions is:

1. **Who am I?** - A child of God.
2. **Where am I?** - In the presence of God.
3. **Why am I here?** - To give glory to God and to enjoy His love.

It was announced that since June 2007, the EPC has grown by 47 congregations and 11,400 members. All the Pastors and Elders from these congregations were welcomed and greeted with love. It made Bob and I feel at home. This is our family. This is our home. What a blessing!

After lunch Jeff Jeremiah, the Stated Clerk of the EPC, gave a moving testimony about how God has led him to see that the purpose for his ministry and for the church is to reach our community with the gospel of Jesus Christ, instead of simply building the church numerically. This has been an experience, which many of us clergy have had in recent years. God does not call us to maintain the institution of the church, but rather, we have been called by God to serve Him and to bring others to faith in Jesus.

The chair of the Long-range Planning Committee reported on their work and recommended that the EPC become a missional denomination filled with missional churches. Their recommendation was well received, but will not be officially voted on until Friday. The assembly’s working definition of a missional church and denomination is:

A missional church is a church ...

- ◆ That is grounded in the Scriptures and historic Christian orthodoxy and so committed to the primacy of the Great Commission
- ◆ That believes that the United States has become post-Christian and is now a mission field.
- ◆ That believes that it has been planted by God in its own community to effectively reach those around them with the Gospel of Jesus Christ.
- ◆ That is committed to reproducing a community of authentic disciples of Jesus Christ.
- ◆ That is continually in the process of equipping its members to be missionaries sent by God to live and proclaim the Kingdom of the Lord Jesus in their own world and to the ends of the earth.
- ◆ That is constantly re-examining itself as to whether it is merely doing maintenance of existing ministries and members, or whether or not it is effectively doing the mission of reaching its own community with the reign of God through the Gospel of the Lord Jesus.
- ◆ That perceives the essence of these fundamental attributes as the essence of its own existence.

Thursday June 19 continued

A missional denomination is a denomination ...

- ◆ That believes the location of ministry is the local church.
- ◆ That is made up of local congregations committed to be missional.
- ◆ That is constantly re-examining itself as to whether or not its polity, structures, and programs are serving or inhibiting a missional mindset.

Evening worship began at 7:30 PM. ***What a tremendous service!*** The service began with one of the most moving experiences I have ever had in worship. The Prelude was offered by a group of 12 special needs kids from the community. They played “*Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing*” on bells. I wept through the whole experience. We later learned that these kids had been recently received into the membership of the church by affirmation of faith. I still get tears thinking about this moment.

The sermon was preached by Sinclair Ferguson. I had never heard of him, but everyone kept telling me he was the best. He preached from the whole of John 17 about Jesus’ burden for us to be *The Church*. He spoke about whom we are, our ministry, and Jesus’ love and hopes for us. We were spellbound for 50 minutes. It is impossible for me to capture the essence of his message in these brief words. All I can say is, “*WOW, WOW, WOW!*”

Friday and Saturday, June 20 and 21

The 36 final hours of GA were just as wonderful as the first 72 hours, even though the assembly spent more time doing business.

Friday morning, outgoing Moderator, Bill Vogel preached for the Moderator’s Communion Worship Service. He preached an excellent sermon from 1 Chronicles 20. His text was, “***For we are powerless against this great horde that is coming against us. We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on God.***” In his sermon Bill reminded us to turn to God, rather than to seek solutions, when our backs are up against the wall. He suggested that during crisis we should use a telescope to look at God. A telescope magnifies our great God in heaven and brings Him closer to us. This serves to remind us that God is greater than our problems. After the sermon, we celebrated the Lord’s Supper, and then closed the service in an extended season of prayer (about 40 minutes, plus). I have been pleased to see that the GA does not rush through worship and prayer because of a business agenda.

After worship, the assembly addressed several items of business. The most significant being the item I mentioned yesterday about the recommendation of the Long-Range Planning Team that we be a missional church and denomination (see working definition above). While there was a full endorsement for being missional, there were a few concerns about the language of what it means to be missional.

I was prepared for the whole discussion to get off track, to become lost in parliamentary wrangling, and break the spirit of the assembly. I have seen this happen so often in the PCUSA. However, quite the opposite happened. After 20 minutes of discussion it became clear that there were some concerns about the language. Then in a matter of minutes, the assembly, out of respect for each other, amended and passed the motion before asking the Theology Committee to address the language concerns. Everyone was pleased, all were respected, and genuine concerns were addressed in a loving, fair, and faithful manner. Bob Elmes and I both looked at each to express our joyous surprise.

The remainder of the Friday and Saturday business sessions progressed well without incident or highlight. Friday evening we gathered again for worship. What a powerful and inspirational service. Dr. Sinclair Ferguson preached again. During this service he preached from Hebrews 2 and spoke about what Jesus does as the leader of our worship. His sermon was a primer in what Christian worship is all about. Dr. Sinclair pointed out that during worship, Jesus as the leader of our worship:

1. Gathers His family together;
2. Leads us in our praise of God;
3. Preaches His Word;
4. Meets our needs;

On one hand, you might think, “*I know that,*” however, Dr. Sinclair was emphatic that ***worship is directed by Jesus, is about Jesus, is for Jesus, and accomplishes His purposes.*** He made it abundantly clear that our consumer and ego driven *worship-wars* arguments about the style of worship, is a concept that is alien to Christian worship.

Concluding Reflections

Numerous individuals have asked me what made the General Assembly of the EPC a wonderful experience in contrast to those of the PCUSA. The primary factors for making this a glorious experience include:

1. ***Everyone shared a common faith*** in the inspiration and authority of scripture and in the singular saving Lordship of Jesus. We found peace and unity in the organic unity of our faith. The EPC does not need a PUP Report to force peace and unity because we already have it in Jesus Christ.
2. ***This was not an agenda driven assembly.*** This was a faith-centric meeting. The assembly’s primary business was about how we can do ministry better at the local church level.
3. ***The EPC understands it’s connectional nature*** and that the purpose of the national assembly is to help churches do ministry. We were not passing motions telling people what they had to do and there was no one *lording it over* others. Without a huge national office, without synods, and without presbytery staff, the EPC is a lean machine that is led by Ruling Elders and Teaching Elders rather than being led by bureaucrats from headquarters.

Concluding Reflections continued

Finally, this was not a business meeting. I attended 7 worship services (and heard powerful sermons at each one), 5 training and equipping seminars, spent countless hours in prayer, enjoyed rich fellowship, and, by the way, spent a few hours doing business, most of which was to receive reports about ministry in local churches and our EPC national and international mission fields.

Thank you for sending Bob Elmes and me to be your Commissioner Representatives to General Assembly. We were blessed to be there.

Sincerely, Rus Howard

LEGAL UPDATE

Over the last few months we have had little to report as we continued to move forward with the court proceedings. We are happy to share two very important events that took place over the last 10 days.

- 1) There were two issues before the court -
 - A. The minority, working with their lawyers, filed a motion to Intervene in the case and replace, US, our congregation as the Plaintiff. The judge denied this action. The Court ruled their interests were already represented by us (the majority) and by WP and thus had no right to intervene.
 - B. Secondly and even MORE importantly, The Washington Presbytery argued that the civil courts of Pennsylvania do not have jurisdiction over this case because it is an ecclesiastical matter. (This is essentially the basic and most critical element to their case.)

The judge denied this motion on June 19th, and ordered them to formally answer our complaint.

The Washington Presbytery now has 20 days to file their brief arguing against our suit to be granted our property.

The Judge / court will now decide the case based on the wording of property deeds and continues to follow previous Case Law precedents.

As we have summarized in our previous presentations, we feel that based on these previous cases / decisions we are in a very good position.

SO WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

We are not finished with this or out of the woods yet, however these two decisions are VERY good News!

So please continue to pray for God's will and for our congregation as we move forward with the ministry God has placed before us.

