



Friends,

The Training Team of the POTE is back with another Newsletter aimed at encouraging content for you and your ministry. We exist to serve, equip, educate, and encourage you where the Lord has called you. We hope to accomplish this by passing along articles, reviews, resources, and other items that you might find helpful.

Send us links to articles, brief reviews of relevant books, information about websites and training activities, and schedules and brief summaries of training you have found helpful in your ministry. All items for the Newsletter should be sent to PastorJT@BellevueEPC.org.

See you at Ashland EPC!

Upcoming Equipitry + Speaker Bio

At our upcoming Presbytery of the East, January 25-26, at Ashland EPC, Megan Lietz will be delivering our afternoon Equipitry session. Her topic for the session will be **“Understanding Racial Division Today: How Good People Can Contribute to the Problem Without Awareness or Intent.”** Please pray for Megan as she prepares her message for our edification. Soli Deo Gloria!

Who is Megan Lietz? Our own TE Bonnie Gatchell sat down with her so that we might get to know her better:

"Over the past few years I have had the privilege of working beside Megan Lietz. While we work in very different departments, the heart of our ministries are both based in the hope and gospel of Christ. It is with this unity that I am pleased to introduce my colleague and friend to the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, a denomination that has come to be my tribe.

Megan Lietz grew up in Shutesbury, MA. A rural, white town with a population of 800. Yes, you know everyone because everyone knows your grandparents. In 2005, she left home to North Shore to attend Gordon College and study ministry. During her time at Gordon she developed a heart for urban communities. As you can imagine, this came as a bit of a surprise.

It began when Megan started attending East Coast International Church in Lynn, MA. She connected to the church because she recognized the pastor at a church fair as someone who used to serve at a camp she attended. Though drawn to the pastor's familiar face, his church was different from anything she had experienced. On any given Sunday the congregation might include women in prostitution, the homeless and gang members. A fairly different scene than

Sunday mornings in Shutesbury. Though this environment challenged Megan, she stayed and volunteered with the youth ministry because she saw God working there.

“It was this experience that opened my eyes to God's working in the city. my stereotypes were replaced with love for others and an excitement to explore the complex, messy and beautiful reality of the city. ”

It was through this experience that Megan felt called to urban ministry. Thereafter, she participated in Gordon's urban immersion program where she had an internship at Abundant Life, a Black congregation in Cambridge, MA. Eventually, Megan joined the staff at Abundant Life and served there for 5 years as the Church Administrator. It was in this context that she came to wrestle with issues related to race and culture and better understand God's heart for racial healing. These experiences, along with her studies at Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary (Boston campus) and Boston University, contributed to her to being called to cross-racial ministry and starting a ministry focused on racial reconciliation.

Before serving in a racially diverse, urban context, Megan did not understand why racial reconciliation was so important. She readily agreed that we were all created equal, but didn't get why people made race such a big deal. In time, she came to see how racial reconciliation is a part of God's good news and kingdom work.

Currently, Megan is the founder and director of the Race and Christian Community Initiative (RCCI) at the Emmanuel Gospel Center in Boston. Megan focuses her work on walking alongside White evangelicals in ways that help them continue Christ's reconciling work in the area of race relations more effectively.

When asked, “What can we expect from the seminar on Jan 10th, Race and the Gospel: A Theological Framework for Racial Reconciliation?” She replied:

White evangelicals are often hesitant to engage in racial reconciliation because it’s associated with liberal politics and theology. First and foremost, racial reconciliation isn’t a liberal issue, it’s a biblical issue. In this webinar, I’ll discuss how racial reconciliation is a part of God’s larger work of restoration and is rooted in Jesus’ work on the cross. By placing racial reconciliation in a biblical framework, I aim to show how all Christians are called to racial reconciliation as an outworking of the Gospel and an action that points people to the power and person of Christ.”



Author: Rev. Bonnie J. Gatchell, OOB Route One Ministry

Upcoming Pre-POTE Seminars

Megan Lietz will be offering the POTE two online video conference seminars to coincide with her Equipty at the POTE meeting.

On January 10, 2019 at 2pm, she will host us on the topic of “Race and the Gospel: A Theological Framework for Racial Reconciliation.” It's not too late to sign up! Email office@argylepresbyterian.org if you would like a link.

Then after our POTE meeting, Megan will host another seminar on February 7, 2019 at 2pm on the topic of “Living Into Racial Reconciliation: Practical Steps for a Christ-Like Response.”

We sincerely hope you will take advantage of the content and work we are trying to put together for our POTE's edification.

Articles

A Podcast Recommendation

TE Bill Cliff

Over the past year and a half, my general assumption that racism and inequality are issues of the past has been challenged, disrupted, and has consequently been changing. I can look back and see that those assumptions were naïve, and only allowed to exist because I didn't have to live with the consequences of that reality. I am in the process of learning, unlearning, and relearning the implications of race, particularly in the church, and would like to share a resource that has helped: Pass the Mic.

Pass the Mic is a weekly podcast hosted by Jemar Tisby and Tyler Burn. Jemar is a historian, author, and speaker. Tyler is an assistant pastor from Pensacola, FL. Together they founded The Witness (www.thewitnessbcc.com), a black

Christian collective that engages issues of religion, race, justice, and culture from a Biblical perspective. Some of the most enlightening episodes on the podcast have been: Defining Systemic Racism, Defining White Privilege, Defining Implicit Bias, Interview of Colin Hansen, Black Lives Matter and The Christian Response, and A Quiet Exodus: A New Path for Black Christians. Jemar's new book, "The Color of Compromise" comes out in January and tells the truth about the American church's complicity in racism. Another book that has been instructive for me is "Woke Church: An Urgent Call for Christians in America to Confront Racism and Injustice" by Eric Mason, Senior Pastor of Epiphany Fellowship in Philadelphia. I hope that these resources are helpful in your spiritual formation and cultural engagement as a follower of Jesus Christ.

An Overview of the 38th GA

By RE Phil Fanara (with thanks to my wife Vicki who also attended and helped edit this report)

The theme for the 38th General Assembly was FORWARD! Engage, Empower, Embrace. The central verse was Philippians 3:13-14: "³ Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, ¹⁴ I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus." We are called to move forward to reach the neglected in our cities and around the globe reaching all whom need to be engaged with the gospel of Jesus Christ, be empowered by the Holy Spirit, and be embraced with God's and our love.

This year the GA was held at Hope Church in Cardova just outside of Memphis, Tennessee, and shortly after the 50th Anniversary of Martin Luther King Jr.'s assassination. A key theme of FORWARD! is reconciliation with all racial and

ethnic groups; this was clearly reflected in a powerful way in Hope Church, and all of the GA meetings.

On Tuesday at a nearby church four sessions were held on the topic of "Planting Multi-Ethnic Churches." There were several speakers led by Leonce B. Crump Jr., and if you were not able to make it, I would highly recommend your reading Leonce's book, "Renovate: Changing who you are by loving where you are."

Among all the meetings one could choose during the week there were 8 General sessions that one could attend, 10 leadership institutes, 32 networking luncheons, 2 women events, and 5 business sessions. In addition several dinners, and an optional bus tour of Memphis were offered. Also, there were Youth Activities and child care for children of all age groups, including nursery care for infants. Due to the plethora of choices, this review can only cover a portion of them.

In between the sessions every day there were multiple opportunities to meet speak and have fellowship with other commissioners and their families. This was certainly one of the highlights.

Moreover, between sessions and meetings there were about 40 tables with different groups, such as Gordon Conwell, World Reformed Fellowship, The Reformed Presbyterian Theological Seminary, EPC World Outreach.Org, Westminster Society, Presbyterians Protecting Life (PPL), The EPC Foundation, EduNations (A Non-Profit 501(c) (3), ministering to children in Sierra Leone), etc.

On Tuesday afternoon I attended two excellent leadership sessions by the Westminster Society. The focus of the talks was on the Means of Grace. The

main speakers on the first day were Zachary Hopkins who spoke on “The Beauty of Reformed Worship Toward a Covenantal and Dialogical Principle of Worship”. In the second session, Mike Glodo spoke on “One Baptism-‘NIB’”, (I will leave NIB for the reader to decipher.), Finally, our own J.T. Holderman spoke on “The Scriptures Proclaimed as a Means of Grace.” All of the talks reflected each of the speakers’ articles published in The Westminster Society Journal, Means of Grace, Volume II 2018 which is available online from Amazon.com. However, the live presentations were all superb. Indeed, they were all excellent and enticed me to attend their subsequent Westminster Society sessions, and luncheons on the Lord’s Supper, Hosted by Eric Tonjes and the Westminster Society, The First Christian Sermon Series by Rev. Dr. Aaron White, and The Preaching Ministry of Jonathan Edwards by Rev. Dr. Mathew Everhard. Again all excellent presentations.

The World Outreach dinner was held on Tuesday evening. My wife and I sat with our missions director at 4th Presbyterian, Church Melody Istrati, and with several missionaries which 4th Church and the POTE support. There was much love, sharing, and conversation at each table. The evening was hosted by the EPC World Outreach Director Phil Linton. Much of the evening focused on a Tolkien quote shared by our speaker, Bob Blincoe, President of Frontiers, “Victory is impossible, death is certain, what are we waiting for?”. Bob reminded us that God compels us, the fires of hell confront us, the Holy Spirit empowers us, the promise of God assures us, and the witness of martyrs look down on us. The evening honored all of our missionaries in World Outreach, but particularly focused on Greg and Sally Livingstone, lifelong missionaries to Muslims. We were all given a precious copy of Greg Livingston’s most recent book, “You’ve Got Libya: A life serving the Muslim World,” an autobiography describing how God used Greg and Sally in launching Frontiers - a mission agency which focuses on planting churches in Muslim communities. Bob

Blincoe reminded us that today there are 200 Frontiers Teams in 41 nations around the world. The evening closed with powerful prayers for all of our missionaries around the world. The love and sharing continued as we exited Hope church into the parking lot.

Wednesday morning, June 20, began with the plenary session 1 speaker, Immaculee Ilibagiza, a survivor of the Rwandan genocide. She mesmerized us as she told her story of faith, hope, and most of all, forgiveness. It was powerful listening to how Immaculee discovered God amidst the horror of the genocide. For those who did not get the opportunity to hear her, she has written a detailed account of her experience in her book, Left to Tell.

Following Immaculee's moving talk Plenary 2 began with an address by Greg Thompson former pastor at Trinity PCA church in Charlottesville, VA entitled "Inhabiting a Common Story," He currently is a mentor for repentance of racism. He embraced Martin Luther King Jr.'s "Choosing of Hope." His focus was on healing the central trauma of American society - "White Supremacy." Greg shared the experience of the trauma in his own life when an African American grade school friend of his was severely punished in school; and how observing this caused wounding in Greg's life for a yearning to be healed; which led to his yearning for a healing of this central trauma in American culture, and a calling to recognize that we don't fully know our true history on this matter, how we excluded African Americans, and how we have taken control - "White Supremacy." Now we must take public action to correct our ignorance of this Trauma, second we must make social impact investments to correct the Extraction of people, and finally we must let other voices be heard. Educate, Invest, and let other voices be heard.

After a Luncheon Break, the next general session was by Jennifer Ross. She

gave an excellent talk on “Holding a Banquet and Welcoming all God’s Children.” She emphasized welcoming and ministering to families with disabilities, and highlighted Mathew’s Ministry which ministers to over 250 special needs children. Her talk began with music by the Sunflower Ringers - comprised of children with disabilities, performing with the choir, both in bell ringing and singing as well. Many of these children sang in the choir throughout the GA. Their performance was superb, and the love of Christ radiated in their faces and voices. Jennifer helped us see the many ways those with special needs and disabilities can serve in God’s Church, for example, as acolytes, greeters, ushers and music ministry. We at Fourth Presbyterian Church have seen the power of God working through these families and children and recognize that our church family would be incomplete without them.

In the brief worship service that followed. Eli Morris, Senior Associate pastor spoke on the needs of the city. He started Hope Presbyterian Church in Cardova thirty years ago. His goal was to be a church for unchurched people in the city and neighborhood. He reminded us of Philippians 2: 1-10; “If there is any encouragement, make my joy by being the same mind, love, spirit. Regard one another as more important.” And he asked all of us: Do we have the humility? Not the strength, Not the theology. Can we serve our town? Can we help the senior center? Can we clean the ball fields? Love our neighbor? Serve the poor, strangers, schools, community center, police and fire department?

Bonnie Gatchell, TE in our POTE updated us on her ministry to women working in strip clubs and other victims of sex trafficking. Her work focuses on showering these women with small gift baskets and gradually building relationships with them so that they can begin to understand they are valued and indeed, a treasure themselves. They can then begin to understand God’s

love and ultimately respond to his gospel of grace. We were presented with sobering statistics revealing the magnitude of the sex trafficking problem and challenges fighting it. But we also were blessed to hear from Tricia, a colleague and friend of Bonnie's, who was delivered from it and now ministers to other victims. This issue is one that churches should not ignore; it is a great field waiting to be harvested.

This was followed by Business Session I where there were 724 commissioners in attendance 422 teaching elders and 302 ruling elders. The constituting prayer was given by TE Juan Rivera, Westminster-Bayamon, Puerto Rico. The Election of the recording clerks, and of the minutes committees were undertaken. There was much prayer by many speakers. TE Dean Weaver the outgoing moderator of the GA opened the business meeting and made outgoing remarks and was given a presentation by Jeff Jeremiah. RE Tom Ressor gave a partial report of the nominating committee-and TE Case Thorp introduced the Moderator-Elect Tom Werner, there was a seconding speech by TE Tom Ricks, Tom Werner was elected, and joined by his wife Susan and, gave some brief remarks and was invested as the moderator. Tom Ricks prayed for the moderator. And the closing prayer was given by teaching elder Shawn Stewart of the EPC WO Mobilization team who poured out prayer for our Puerto Rico churches and Puerto Rico in general.

After dinner we took a break from the serious issues of the day and were treated to fun and laughter by the talented comedian Michael Junior. While this show was scheduled to end at 8:30 p.m., it went an hour and one-half longer; with no complaints from audience. The sanctuary holds roughly 6,000 people the main level of which was remarkably full- as church members, people from other churches and the Memphis area were invited. Michael Jr. is a comedian who has been on the Tonight Show, Oprah Winfrey Show, and also was in the

film War Room. He is a frequent keynote performer at Fortune 500 Companies and colleges events. He is also the author of a children's book, "The Parts We Play." He brought delightful stand- up comedy to the audience, yet it was comedy with a biblical purpose. The show was actually being filmed for a movie "More Than Funny: Everyone Has a Punchline." We were the live audience that will be seen in the movie which has recently been shown in theaters on October 18th. The main reason it went over time was that a number of retakes had to be done. More than just comedy, the significant thing about the movie was that it contained a few short clips of Michael Jr. assisting families in need. The message of the movie is that we all have a punchline, and we all have something to offer those in need.

On Thursday morning the Mayor of Memphis came and gave us some wonderful words of welcome. At Thursday morning's worship service, Senior Pastor of Hope Church, Rufus Smith, delivered a message focused on the question, "How Does Jesus See Your City?" Using Matthew 9:35-38, pastor Smith encouraged us to go FORWARD! Because the harvest is plentiful. He related a story of when, as a child, he was strongly impacted when Christians knocked on his family's door and came in just to pray with them. He reminded us of how Jesus did ministry: He went into the cities, He saw the needs, He responded, He taught and sent out his disciples. We therefore, are called to go FORWARD! As Jesus did.

Moderator Tom Werner Convened the Business Session 2. TE Colley Cooper, of Hope City Church in Caldwell TN opened with prayer. The Docket was approved. TE Mark Ingles introduced Chaplains (Helen Franssell, and John Torres from POTE) and prayed for the 75 chaplains and 25 churches. The Report of the Interim Committee on Ministerial education (TE Fred Lian & TE Michael Flake) reminded us that we now have 40 commissioned pastors in the

EPC. The church planting team (TE Tom Ricks) reported that we have 42 Church Plants.

A special highlight of the business session was hearing from pastor Andrew Brunson's daughter, Jacqueline Brunson Furnari. This articulate young woman recounted the events of her father being arrested and imprisoned. She also reported that his faith remains strong. In fact, he wrote a hymn, "Worthy of My All," telling his family, "Every time I sing my song, it is a victory." God is answering our prayers – Andrew was recently released from prison but remains under house arrest. His next trial date is August 24. Continue to pray for him. (Since then Andrew has been released and we praise God and continue to pray for Andrew and Norine as they readjust to life in the U.S. after over 20 years of ministry in Turkey.). We were all blessed as the choir led us in singing Andrew's hymn.

Following this was a session titled, "LGBTQ: Caring for the people behind the letters." Scott Kingry, who works with a ministry call, Where Grace Abounds, did a wonderful job explaining the struggles of sexual identity issues and corrected misconceptions some might have regarding those in the LGBTQ community. The session focused on how pastors and churches can and should care for those struggling with sexual identity issues. A memorable take away was the point that God loves them just as they are but does not want to leave them there. He alone has the power to bring wholeness to them. Mr. Kingry urged us to engage with this community with much love, patience, grace and truth, focusing on the conflict of those who are conflicted.

The opening prayer was by TE Evelio Vilches Faith Presbyterian Church at Pembroke Pines FL. And TE Eddie Spencer, New Hope, Fort Meyers FL. They also thank the GA for the disaster assistance given after the hurricane. Tom

Werner gave greetings to a Fraternal Guest Rev. Jennifer Holtz of First Presbyterian Church, Colorado Springs, CO. and Moderator of ECO, The Evangelical Covenant Order of Presbyterians. Rob Norris Associate Pastor of 4th Presbyterian Church, in Bethesda MD. and Chair of World Reformed Fellowship was acknowledged.

Standing Committee Meetings 3:15 -5:00

Church Planting and Revitalization Standing Committee-

As a member of the National Leadership Team I was a resource for this meeting. Where we discussed the future of church planting and Revitalization. And voted on an omnibus motion that was subsequently passed by the GA. Bonnie Gatchell served as the clerk of this committee. A few other reports were given. This session closed with prayer by TE Jose Figueroa, Christ Church, East Bay, CA.

On Thursday evening, we were blessed as several church choirs in the Memphis area joined together to lead us in worship. Phil Linton then led the commissioning of nine new missionary families and individuals. One thing that continues to resonate with me is the ninth question that the new missionaries had to affirm: "...will you accept the consequences of suffering and martyrdom?" Our speaker, Ligon Duncan III, Chancellor of RTS, focused on the theme for the evening, the global mission of the church. He reminded us that, based on the 7-fold promise God made to Abraham, the foundation of Christian global mission is to actively practice love, care, and concern for all the people on earth. A story of faith related by Dr. Duncan was powerfully memorable when a young Muslim woman came to Christ though hearing sermons by an American pastor, her family threw her out and her uncle beat her. This pastor heard of it and asked her what she was thinking as she was being beaten. She replied, "This man has a religion he will kill for, but I have a God I will die for." Question nine immediately came back to my mind.

Reverend Dr. Dean Weaver, former member of the POTE and outgoing moderator of the GA, was the speaker at the Friday morning moderators service of communion and prayer. His sermon appropriately looked FORWARD! As he spoke on, "The Great End-Time Army of God." Expounding on verses from Revelation, we were encouraged first to remember the "Things that must soon take place," which include persecution and martyrdom, but also God's ultimate victorious kingdom filled with the multitudes from every nation. For the present, our tools are love, forgiveness, reconciliation, justice for the marginalized. Our work is transcultural, intergenerational, multi-linguistic, inclusive of all. All of our speakers at this year's GA were powerfully used by God to teach and inspire us to better understand how to use this tool in the work of building God's kingdom. The service ended with the former moderators being called to different parts of the sanctuary, and to lay hands on all who asked for special prayer.

In sum, every day we were brought to the mountain top and were powerfully blessed. Every day was about reaching the unreached, people of all creeds and colors, Muslims, millennials, exploited and trafficked women, and those in crisis with unplanned pregnancies, autistic children, people with disabilities, the conflicted, and college students.

The next 39thGA in 2019 will be held at Cherry Creek Church, in Denver, Colorado, Lord willing I look forward to seeing you there.