



Transforming Lives,
Communities, and
the World for
300 Years

Cold Spring Presbyterian Church
780 Seashore Rd. Cold Spring, NJ 08204
Near Historic Cold Spring Village
www.coldspringchurch.com
609-884-4065 office
hello@coldspringchurch.com



THE BRICKETTE

A community congregation of worship and mission of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). A National Historic Landmark Site.



A Message from the Pastor



The Presbyterian Women are happy to announce that the Annual Strawberry Festival realized a profit of over \$1,800 which will be used to finance their mission projects. Thank you to everyone who participated in this event.

Thank you also for your support of Church World Service Blanket Sunday. \$590 will buy a lot of blankets and will help many people.



Join us after worship on the front lawn for hospitality and light refreshments. Thank you to Dave and Eileen Word for their gift of four wonderful new benches to sit on while we enjoy the homemade goodies provided by congregation members. Let Dave or Eileen know if you'd like to host a table.

July Is For Growing By Sowing



"If you sow to the Spirit, you will reap eternal life from the Spirit. So let us not grow weary in doing what is right, for we will reap at harvest time, if we do not give up. So then, whenever

we have an opportunity, let us work for the good of all, and especially for those of the family of faith" (Gal. 6:8b-10, NRSV).

Hello friend,

On June 24, about sixty people participated in our **Focus Your Vision Day** in Price Hall that included worship, luncheon, and conversations about the future. It was an engaging and energizing milestone on our transformation journey. A summary of our focused vision includes: 1) Hold on to the best of the past, 2) Explore the new, 3) Plant spiritual seeds, 4) Serve everyone in the community, 5) Grow the ministry. The session will be leading us in the next few months as we put this vision into action.

We are grateful to everyone who participated, offered comments, shared ideas, concerns, and hopes, and affirmed their visions for the future. We expressed thanks to the Mission Study Team, especially to Lenore Bowne for organizing the delicious luncheon and making Price Hall welcoming for everyone, including many first-time and returning visitors and guests.

About forty-five remained after lunch to watch the *Focus Your Vision* video and table conversations led by Melissa and Pastor Kevin. We filled a dozen newsprint sheets with great ideas that included:

1. Celebrated our congregation's many strengths, staff, leadership, new members, 200 acres including our facilities, cemetery, and historic red brick church
2. Identified the best of what we do that we want to keep doing as we move into the future including our Reformed worship, events, tours, and dinners, a history of service to veterans, families, and the community at large
3. Proposed improvements to areas and facilities to make our ministry more welcoming, accessible, and able to serve youth, younger families, and older individuals
4. Listed priorities to guide us as we follow Jesus Christ into the future to ensure that we do what we agree is important as we grow

Focusing our vision is not just a one day event. Every day we listen to God's Spirit who is showing us where and how to become more engaged with our community through worship, witness, mission, and service. Our leadership team (Session), caring team (Deacons) and our many groups and committees will ensure that Cold Spring Presbyterian Church continues to learn and grow as we follow Jesus Christ.



Key Concept Three:
Hold On To The Best, Let The Rest Fall Away

- ※ Analyze the situation with intellect.
- ※ Engage intellect to help keep your vision with you everyday.
- ※ Determine what's really important and what's not.

Keeping the best of what we have was one of the seven key insights from the video. Blessings from God include tangible assets (people, location, property, buildings, and finances) and intangible assets such as our history, relationships, experiences, passions, hopes, talents, abilities, and our mental, physical, and spiritual gifts.

On June 17, the message *Feed the World, Plant More Seeds* considered the mustard seed. Though it is the smallest of seeds, it will grow into an incredibly large tree. The same is true of our faith. While we may think our faith is small compared to others, it is enough and it can grow. We are in the seed planting business. Not only in our ministry as a Farming Church, planting seeds and sharing the produce with the community at large, but we are planting spiritual seeds, as well. Whatever amount of

faith you have, it is sufficient for God to bless and use us in amazing ways! But we don't want to merely consume the spiritual fruit for ourselves. If we consume all our fruit, we not only will become overfed, but others are left hungry! We want God to produce fruit in abundance to feed us to feed others! So, how can we nurture our *community of faith* to have spiritual fruit to generously share with the *community at large*? One way is to accept the Thirty-Day Challenge.



The Thirty-Day Challenge I am passing on to you a gift given to me years ago by my mentor, the Rev. Chuck Reinhold, a Presbyterian minister and regional director for Young Life when I was on staff with that national youth ministry.

Like any gift, this gift comes free and is useless unless you use it. As Chuck said, this gift is also very expensive and actually cost Jesus Christ his life, which was his mission and his joy (Heb. 12:12). He died on the cross for our sins in order to bring us to God (John 3:16, John 1:12, 1 John 5:11–12). This gift comes alive to us when we accept the challenge every day.

We can know a lot about religion. We can recount historical facts about faith, the Bible, and might be able to tell wonderful stories about Cold Spring Presbyterian Church, but this gift is not to know more *about* Jesus Christ, it is to grow in our relationship *with* Jesus Christ. The gift is received when we accept this **Challenge**: decide to meet with God every day for thirty straight days by reading a portion of Scripture and asking the Lord for something specific to apply that day. That's it!

If we miss a day, then we start the thirty-days over again until we read and apply what we read for thirty straight days. If you already set aside time to read Scripture daily, make sure that you actively try to internalize and apply it to your day. The Thirty-Day Challenge should be challenging! And practical. When we do this, chances are we'll never quit, and the spiritual seeds planted in our life will continue to grow. What's more, this gift becomes a gift to others through you!

As you read a portion of Scripture ask yourself, "What does God want me to be, feel, or do today?" Then as you pray, write out a sentence about what you discovered so you will remember to put it into practice. Repeat daily.

As we gathered around the Lord's Table July 1, we recalled John 15:5 when Jesus said, "I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing." We are in the seed planting business at Cold Spring Presbyterian Church. Growing is what we do. Imagine the possibilities if each of us in our own way commit to the Thirty-Day Challenge. Remember, if you miss a day, there is no failure or judgement. Just renew your commitment the next day!

To bring our focused vision to life we need nourishment to grow. Let's plant spiritual seeds. Let's share God's abundance and grace with others. It sounds pretty simple, but many things most treasured in life are just that, simple. So start the Thirty-Day Challenge today to spend time with God and you will enjoy renewed energy, insight, sensitivity, and love for yourself and others, too. You might want to share your experience, too. As you keep the gift going you will be amazed how your life, our congregation, and community are being transformed!

Let's get growing!
Sincerely,

Cold Spring Presbyterian Church | *The Brickette* July 2018



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BE CONNECTED ONLINE! *The Brickette* goes digital only in September.

More and more of our community are reading ***The Brickette*** online as a PDF. And even more visit our website for updates, calendar events and inspiring information, sermons, and timely news. And in addition, every week at least 70 individuals read the emailed ***Connections*** newsletter (like you're reading right now!) Cold Spring Presbyterian Church is going digital in a big way!

There are many benefits to distributing information digitally that you can read on your computer, iPad, or other device. First, you get our news on the first of the month, every month, without waiting for the US Mail to deliver it. No more missed events, or feeling "out of the loop." You'll be in the know! Second, by reading online you will help us redirect all the resources consumed in printing, folding, and first-class postage, to other ministry activities.

The session, after reviewing our success with digital communication over the past year, has decided to **stop** the traditional mailing of ***The Brickette*** and instead, invites everyone to read it online! It will focus on upcoming events and designed to more of a complement to ***Connections***. Beginning with the **September 2018** issue, the ***The Brickette*** will *not* be delivered in the mail.

HOWEVER, **IF** you still prefer to get ***The Brickette*** via first-class mail, no problem! Maybe you don't like to read online, or just prefer paper! We would be pleased to add you to the *very limited* number of addresses on our new mailing list. Just *contact the office and ask to be added!* We believe that this extra step to improve our communication and invest our resources in other activities will improve our ministry and help us achieve our mission better together.

Thank you for support and being connected!

Remember: If you prefer to get the monthly Brickette delivered to your door, please contact Judy Lambert in the church office and tell her, "I'd like to be on the Brickette mailing list." Otherwise, enjoy reading each issue online!

Open Air Flea and Craft Markets

Cold Spring, NJ
 June 27, July 21, and September 8, 2018



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Open to the public!
 Corner of Seashore and Academy Roads
www.coldspringchurch.com
 Vendor space for crafts and goods- \$15!

Historic Ancestors Walk

—A Guided Walking Tour of the Cold Spring Church and Cemetery



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July Tours
 7/7 + 7/21



Volunteers With Wheels Wanted!

Are you looking for a way serve others in a very practical way? Do you have room in your car and enjoy company! Consider volunteering to be on our *God Is On The Move!* riding team. Let us know you want to help people get connected! “Holiness is best demonstrated by generosity” (Lk 11:41, LB).

"To Heal a Nation" by Rob Riehl

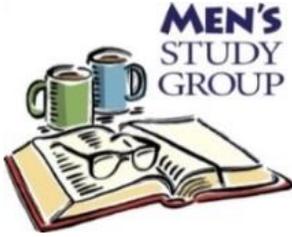
This month of July heralds our annual national celebration of Independence Day. Yet today we find ourselves in a nation deeply divided --even polarized on many foundational and social issues. The news and social media would have us believe that these divisions run strictly along party lines, but probing deeper into the divisive issues reveals a morass of relative truth, misleading perspectives, and fake news creating confusion and fomenting chaos within our social conversations. Even "identity politics" crosses party lines! Although the secular media would have us believe otherwise, it is fundamentally not about democrat or republican, liberal or conservative; it is not really about race or wealth. When all the posturing and rhetoric is said and done, the underlying core issue is about ruling authority. Who is the ultimate authority? To believing Christians, it is our Creator God --to Whom we are dependent and accountable. To the secular atheist, it is the belief in the supremacy of man --that man is his own authority. This is nothing new; it has been this way ever since the Fall of Man.

Who are we as Americans today? Civil debate is being suppressed and civil discourse has devolved into escalating anger and hate, resistance movements and calls for violence. I ask myself how did our national politics become so acrimonious. Where does this vociferous unrestrained anger come from? Allow me to share my perspective on this with you --and consider its plausibility. I have come to believe that this pain, anger, and outrage is ultimately rooted in what some theologians call "the hole in the heart", that is, our core being is missing an essential element: without God's love and presence in our soul we feel this gnawing emptiness. Consequently we continually seek to assuage this empty feeling with the "things of this world" -- *whatever* seems to satisfy this "hunger" for the moment. The atheistic secular worldview cannot "heal this hole", thus the pain and anguish continues -- and grows. The people of unbelief direct their resources toward building a utopian world through establishing a government of unrestrained freedom and unlimited entitlement. This is fundamentally their personal faith and national hope --their "religion"!

What can be done to ameliorate this hostility and reconcile these opposing political forces? Is there anyone who can "stand in the gap" to bring everyone to a mutual and beneficial resolution? As a Christian believer, my faith, hope, and trust is grounded in the biblical worldview: God's Word revealed in sacred scripture, manifested in the person of Jesus Christ, and guided by the power of the Holy Spirit. This revealed divine knowledge --accepted and transformative-- completes and satisfies my mind, heart, and soul. Yes, as a flawed and imperfect human being I have experienced that "empty feeling"; however, I know that His Word, Truth, and Life will overcome this human condition of mine. What about you? How can we restore the original intended vision and mission of America?

To heal our nation, let us look to God's Word on this matter. As God has done for ancient Israel, He can -- *and will*-- do for us in America, if we trust and obey His command. In the book of 2 Chronicles, the Lord God says, "If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and **heal their land**." (7:14) Is this not what we desire for ourselves and our nation? Let us envision such a dream as this-- so big in scope that it can scare us into retreat! But relying on the lovingkindness and mercy of God with the awesome power of the Holy Spirit to help us accomplish what we cannot do alone --absolutely nothing is impossible with God. We have the promise of His Word on that! It would not take a majority to accomplish this seemingly impossible task; many monumental transformative events have been brought about by a minority of committed, united, and vocal adherents. Call it algorithms, quantum physics, or "the ripple effect", *word-of-mouth* connections within our congregation can be networked into reaching friends and neighbors in our surrounding communities. These connections then intersect with like-minded "persons of influence" in our region, state, and national platforms. There are such transformational events in recorded history that have demonstrated what some might call "revolutionary". Can we at Cold Spring Church begin such a wave? How grand is your vision? How big is your God? We don't need to wait until we have assembled legions of supporters. Consider that Jesus Christ began changing "the lost world of mankind" with just twelve ordinary men!

ADULT CHRISTIAN EDUCATION



Men's Group Ministry:

"If your dream doesn't scare you, it's too small." *New York Times* best-selling author Mark Batterson delivers a bold message to everyone with a big dream. His new book **Chase the Lion** proposes a radically different approach to life. Our dreams should scare us! They should be so big that without God they would be impossible to achieve. It's only when we stop fearing failure that we can fully seize the opportunity for God to show up and show His power! Join us for the reading and discussion of this life-changing book on the first and third Wednesdays of each month. All men are welcome!



Christian Living:

An unfulfilled life is no way to exist. In his new book and DVD series "A ***Life Beyond Amazing***", Dr. David Jeremiah uncovers God's strategy for change and challenges you to make nine important decisions that will transform your heart, your life, and your world. Each of us has just one life to live. Our lives should matter and have purpose. Dr. Jeremiah urges us to reach out and grasp a life beyond our dreams. "A life beyond amazing can be lived right here on earth!" Join us for the viewing and discussion of this life-changing DVD series on the second and fourth Wednesdays of each month. Everyone is welcome! **All classes meet in the Taylor Room of Price Hall.**

JOIN OUR CARING TEAM!



Deacon Ministries
Caring for All

The mission of the Deacons is to show love, care, and compassion in the name of Jesus Christ. That's why we refer to it as our Caring Team! We are looking for a few more loving humanitarians to serve as deacons at Cold Spring Church. We are exhorted in God's word to have Faith, Hope, and Love. Of these three, love is the greatest. All of us can demonstrate a love of God and love for others. This is an amazing opportunity to serve and to help others in our community. If you are interested becoming a Deacon, please let the pastor or one of the deacons know.

Thank you! Neil Oberlin, Moderator of the Deacons.



Interested in performing a *hands-on* active ministry on behalf of our church within our local community? Deliver meals to home-bound persons in the North Cape May and Villas area on a weekday morning. You can set your own schedule, even if only one day a month! Volunteers for **Mobile Meals** are needed for this worthy cause. Fulfill the message of "feeding the hungry and giving drink to the thirsty"! (Matt. 25:35) Contact Rob Riehl (609-889-3538; robriehl@verizon.net) for additional information.



"Gift of the Heart"

The Presbyterian Women will be collecting the following items for Health Kits for Church World Service to give to victims of natural disasters.

Donations may be left in boxes in Price Hall or the Church marked Health Kits. Each kit will contain the following items.

(1) Hand towel (approx. 16 x 28) no bath or fingertip towels;
(1) wash cloth; (1) wide-tooth comb; (1) nail clipper (no metal files or emery boards), (1) bar of soap (bath size in paper wrapper); (1) toothbrush (in original pkg.); (6) Band-Aids or other adhesive bandage strips. Please do not add toothpaste. Toothpaste, which has an extended expiration date, will be added just prior to shipment. Items should be sealed in a one gallon plastic bag with zipper closure. If you wish to donate any of the items listed above separately they will be most welcome. Thank you in advance for your generosity.



Food Pantry
Donations Needed

FOOD CUPBOARD NEWS FOR JULY 2018

SPRING HAS SPRUNG! Warmer weather and sunny days are always welcomed. Many thanks go out to our wonderful Cold Spring Presbyterian Church people who participate in weekly food drive. The food cupboard is an area we can and are making a difference in our community. ***Last month we collected over 331 items for our two food banks (St. Barnabas and Church of the Nazarene).***

Through prayer and giving hearts we are responding to the need. I pray that we continue to meet the need and increase our sharing each month. Let's with God's help, make 2018 the best year ever as we open our hearts to others. The list below are items the food banks have given to us as a guideline of need. In addition we take almost any non-perishable food and personal items.

II Corinthians 9:7 NLT "For the Lord loves a person who gives cheerfully"

Acts 20:35 Remember the Words of Jesus "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

Deacon Collection for July:

- | | |
|---------|--|
| July 1 | Instant rice, canned soups, Ramen Noodles, crackers |
| July 8 | Toothpaste & brushes, soap (bars), toilet paper, pasta and sauce |
| July 15 | Peanut butter and grape jelly, fruit cups, canned vegetables |
| July 22 | Hot and cold tea, hot & cold cereals, powdered milk, canned meat |
| July 29 | Baby Food, Diapers, Pet Food |

Your donations can be dropped off at Price Hall, Monday through Friday 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. and on Sunday in the sanctuary narthex. ~ Neil Oberlin, Coordinator

Session Notes

These are the summary notes --or highlights-- of our most recent session meeting. For further details of these notes and additional session discussion matters, please refer to the next set of complete Session Minutes (upon session approval and publication).

Our Session approved the following agenda items on June 6, 2018:

1. Minutes of Session Meeting of May 2, 2018 and of Annual Session-Deacons' Meeting of May 9, 2018;
2. Report of Moderator for May 2018;
3. Open Air Flea Market events (3);
4. Purchase of new freezer (Price Hall kitchen);
5. Reception of new members (6).

The Session also discussed the following agenda items in progress:

1. Maintenance schedule for cemetery and church property;
2. Job description / salary range for prospective facilities supervisor;
3. Policy on announcements for worship services;
4. Uses of Presbytery monetary gift to fund new outreach ministries.

Complimentary copies of our approved Session Minutes are located on our information table in the church narthex; additional copies are available in the designated rack by the church office bulletin board in Price Hall. If you have any questions or concerns about any of the current meeting agenda items, kindly contact the pastor, a session member, or myself for clarification.

-- Rob Riehl, Clerk of Session



Stephen Ministers are members of local church congregations who receive special training to provide one-on-one Christian care to people in our congregation experiencing challenges in life - grief, loneliness, divorce, hospitalization, disability, job loss, and many other life difficulties. Add a "higher-calling" purpose to your life: provide confidential Christian care to someone in need of your help! To learn how to become a Stephen Minister or to receive care from one, contact Rob Riehl (609-889-3538; robriehl@verizon.net) for a confidential conversation.

SCHOOL



SUPPLIES

The Deacons are collecting book bags and school supplies to be donated to and distributed by St. Barnabas Church in the Villas to children in area schools. If you wish to participate, please drop it off in Price Hall - Monday thru Friday from 9 AM to 1 PM, or in the Narthex on Sunday at 10:30 a.m.

Thank you for your generosity.

Our Nominating Committee is seeking church members to lead and serve as elders and deacons. Some will be asked to serve a 2-year term, others to fill any vacancy left by a former leader's unexpired term. We need persons:



- Whose personal lives reflect a commitment as a disciple of Christ, to live a life reflecting God's love;

- Who are committed to the mission and ministry of Cold Spring Presbyterian Church;
- Who are members of Cold Spring Presbyterian Church;
- Who are willing and able to invest their gifts of time and energy working with others to prayerfully imagine, implement, and complete projects;
- Who are willing and able to listen to the Spirit, the congregation, and the community and provide effective leadership;

Please send or give your suggestions to one of our Nominating Committee members: Tom Imperato, Melissa Arnott, Charles Keister, and Marge Wetherill. Every name submitted will be prayerfully considered, choosing among them a slate of nominees to be elected by the congregation this Summer. If you feel God is calling you to lead and serve, or if you want to discuss the possibilities, speak with Pastor Kevin or Rob Riehl.

Deacons

The Deacons are our Caring team. The office of deacon as set forth in Scripture is one of sympathy, witness, and service after the example of Jesus Christ. Persons of spiritual character, honest repute, of exemplary lives, showing love, caring, and sound judgment should be chosen for this office. Our Deacons promote local mission, help people stay connected through calls, cards, visits, and keep everyone connected through our Prayer Ministry, sound system, and outreach projects to families and youth. It is the duty of deacons, first of all, to minister to those who are in need, to the sick, to the friendless, and to any who may be in distress both within and beyond the community of faith.

Elders

The Elders are members of the Session, our Leadership team. More than budgets and buildings, Elders are called to be spiritual leaders, strengthening and nurturing the faith and life of the congregation committed to their charge. In the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) elders are instructed to engage members in the mission of the church and to provide opportunities for evangelism, pastoral care, worship, education and stewardship (Book of Order, G-10.0100). The Elders are to be good listeners, both to the congregation and to the community at large, courageous decision makers, humble leaders, and participate in worship, education, mission, and service.



Now Hear This! Announcements are Welcomed in a New Way

A community of faith needs to be informed and connected to thrive and serve. Our website is the primary source for news, programs, and schedule of meetings and activities. Our monthly *Brickette* and weekly emailed Connections newsletters will keep you engaged!

You will discover opportunities to get involved, volunteer, learn, and even register for events, order flowers, or donate online, too.

Worship Announcements- We want to make our worship experience the best it can be. One way to do that is to limit the announcement time at the beginning of worship to essential reminders. Instead of inviting general announcements from the congregation as we have been doing ordinarily, we ask that you submit your announcement in writing to the liturgist prior to worship. You will find their name listed in the bulletin. Remember, only relevant and timely announcements will be accepted to keep our focus on community worship. Please contact the Clerk of Session or the pastor with any suggestions or questions. Thank you!

*How beautiful upon the mountains
are the feet of the messenger who announces peace,
who brings good news,
who announces salvation,
who says to Zion, "Your God reigns."*

(Isaiah 52:7).

Price Hall Clean-Up and Renovation Begins



Price Hall is the most used building on our 200-acre campus and has remained essentially unimproved since it was built more than 40 years ago! Hundreds of people use our facilities every month from congregational gatherings, dinners, and events, to community groups and services. All of our committees, teams, and groups use Price Hall. The

Session wants Price Hall to be even better in the future including improved appearance, access, lighting, sound, and comfort for everyone who uses the building and has begun a renovation project.

Here's what you can do right now to help: We know that a many groups store items in closets and behind the stage. In recent years, items have become damaged, things get misplaced, or we are just run out of space. If possible, temporarily remove your items offsite during renovation. Our staff can assist you. Clean up clutter and clear out unneeded items in July for a thorough cleaning as we implement better storage options. Items no longer needed could be sold or given away at our next Open Air Craft and Flea Market on June 21. Help make Price Hall a welcoming and enjoyable destination for everyone! Please see Kevin Beare for additional tips and other ways you can help!



RENEWING THE VISION:

Kindom building for the 21st century

by Leslie Scanlon, *Outlook* national reporter

The 223rd General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
St. Louis, Missouri - June 16-23, 2018

Presbyterians took to the streets at the 2018 General Assembly, with hundreds marching from the convention center to the City Justice Center with \$47,200 in donations - money the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) collected during opening worship, and which was used to bail out people incarcerated for minor offenses who could not afford to pay their fines or make bail.

It's a "passion for ministry and the love of Jesus that drives us out of the church and into the streets," J. Herbert Nelson, stated clerk of the PC(USA), said during a midweek rally.

This was a General Assembly that felt viscerally linked to the news of the day: climate change, immigrant parents being separated from their children at the borders, gun violence.

Over and over, this question came up: ***How to put faith into action?***

Floretta Barbee-Watkins, pastor of The Avenue Presbyterian Church in Charlotte, North Carolina, preached that it's easy to get discouraged, but Jesus, faith and love move people forward even when they are weary. The PC(USA) has "made some bad biscuits," Barbee-Watkins said, but confession and a willingness to "deal with the urgent needs of our siblings and the church" propel Christians to action. She challenged: "Beloved, rise up, let's make some new biscuits."

Climate change. The assembly voted 332-178 to continue corporate engagement with oil and natural gas companies, working through the denomination's Mission Responsibility Through Investment Committee, rather than to divest the PC(USA)'s holdings in fossil fuel companies. This was one of the hardest-fought issues at the assembly, with 40 presbyteries supporting an overture for fossil fuel divestment, saying the church has waited long enough to act to protect the earth, and with others contending it's better to stay at the table and use the investments as leverage to push for industry changes.

Family separation. The assembly voted 484-34 to approve a resolution calling for an immediate end to the government's policy of separating parents from children as migrants attempt to cross the U.S.-Mexico border. It calls for federal authorities to promptly reunite parents and children who have been separated, and to place families "under the care of the community," rather than in detention.



Per capita. The assembly approved a General Assembly per capita rate of \$8.95 per member for 2019 and \$8.95 for 2020 – up from \$7.73 per member in 2018. That was a source of constant tension during this assembly: How to meet urgent ministry needs, from drug addiction to mental health to ministry with small churches, while not raising per capita so high it raises resistance from mid councils and congregations?

The Way Forward. The assembly approved a report from the Way Forward Commission, which the 2016 General Assembly created to consider changes needed at the top levels of the denomination. The action will mean a new, more equitable governance structure for the PC(USA), A Corporation (a secular corporation used to conduct church business). Also part of that proposal: a financial sustainability study and a commitment to translate PC(USA) resources into languages other than English.

Leadership. Taking four ballots to do so, the assembly elected as its co-moderators Vilmarie Cintrón-Olivieri and Cindy Kohlmann, an educator and a mid council leader, a ruling elder and a minister, two “audacious, spirited, bold, unapologetic women,” as Cintrón-Olivieri put it. She is a native of Puerto Rico, for whom Spanish is her first language.

Race and inequality. From preaching to marching to overtures, the need to confront structural racism and systemic inequality echoed through this gathering. As a sign of that commitment, the assembly voted 352-160 to begin the long process of adding Martin Luther King Jr.’s “Letter from Birmingham Jail” to the PC(USA)’s Book of Confessions.

World concerns. The assembly spoke to concerns around the world — including in Yemen, Korea, South Sudan and Nicaragua. One tangible example: The assembly agreed to make the PC(USA) a partner with a Salvadoran church working to reduce gang-related violence in Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador — violence that’s causing people to flee for their safety.

#MeToo. The assembly voted 474-19 to have the PC(USA) confess its failure to listen to survivors of pastoral sexual misconduct; to report annually the number of sexual misconduct charges brought in the denomination; and to set up a task force of survivors of sexual abuse.

Social justice. This assembly felt pulled to public advocacy. It called for a moratorium on imposing the death penalty. It asked Presbyterians to pray for a movement of the Spirit to end gun violence. It voted to affirm the dignity and humanity of people of all sexual orientations. Time and again, the assembly acted to tell the world, “This is what Presbyterians stand for.”

Visit pres-outlook.org for more.