



June 2004

Dear Commissioner or Advisory Delegate to the 216th General Assembly:

One of the items of business before this year's assembly is the election of the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly. The Stated Clerk Review and Nomination Committee, which was elected by the 215th General Assembly (2003), has been diligent in its work and careful to follow the process detailed in the Standing Rules of the *Manual of the General Assembly*. After reviewing the current Stated Clerk's work over the last four years, and after the Stated Clerk's declaring his intention to be renominated to another term, the committee has nominated the Reverend Clifton Kirkpatrick for another four-year term.

Three additional individuals have declared their intention to stand for the office. They are the Reverend Bob Davis, the Reverend Rus Howard, and Elder Alex Metherell.

The *Manual of the General Assembly* (Standing Rule G.1.) provides for the election of the Stated Clerk. The following is an excerpt of Standing Rule G.1. (see page 43 of the *Manual* for complete text):

(f) The review/nomination committee, once established, shall be responsible for conducting the end-of-term evaluation of the Stated Clerk.

(1) The Stated Clerk shall declare his or her intention to be renominated no later than one hundred and eighty days before the beginning of the opening of the General Assembly.

(2) The review/nomination committee shall declare its intention to nominate or to not nominate the incumbent Stated Clerk no later than one hundred and fifty days before the opening of the General Assembly.

(3) The committee will receive other applications for the position of Stated Clerk.

(g) In the event that the Stated Clerk chooses not to be nominated for another term, or the committee chooses not to nominate the incumbent Stated Clerk for reelection, then the committee shall proceed with the responsibility to conduct a search, including the recruiting, receiving applications, screening, interviewing, and selecting a candidate for Stated Clerk to nominate to the next assembly.

(h) Each applicant will provide the committee, no later than one hundred and twenty days before the opening of the General Assembly, with a completed application form (a form designed in advance by the Search Committee for a Stated Clerk) and letters of reference or recommendation. Additional written material may be requested by the committee. No one may be nominated to serve as Stated Clerk who has not provided an application to the committee.

(i) The committee shall declare its nominee no later than sixty days before the opening of the General Assembly.

(j) Any of the applicants for the position of Stated Clerk, including the incumbent Stated Clerk if not the nominee of the committee, who wish to be placed in nomination against the nominee of the committee shall declare their intention to the committee to do so no later than forty-five days before the opening of the General Assembly.

(k) At the convening of the General Assembly, the Office of the General Assembly shall distribute to commissioners and advisory delegates an information packet containing the following material regarding each candidate for Stated Clerk who wishes to be included:

- A photograph, a biographical sketch, a personal statement by the candidate, including a statement regarding the candidate's sense of call to the office,
- The responses of the candidate to a questionnaire developed by the committee based upon issues that will be before the church as presented in business to be considered by the General Assembly.

The material submitted shall be typewritten on paper 8-1/2 x 11 inches in size. The layouts for the presentation under this standing rule (as outlined above) may be chosen by the candidates, but the copy submitted for each presentation shall be provided in one color on one side of one sheet. The material shall be submitted to the Office of the General Assembly no less than thirty days before the convening of the General Assembly for reproduction and distribution and shall be accompanied by a statement indicating the willingness of the candidate to serve as Stated Clerk, if elected.

(2) The election of the Stated Clerk will take place in the following manner:

(a) Within forty-eight hours of the convening of the assembly, the Stated Clerk Review/Nomination Committee shall place in nomination a single nominee.

(b) The Moderator shall then invite nominations from the floor. Only one speech, not to exceed five minutes in length, shall be made to nominate each nominee. There shall be no speech seconding any nomination. Each person nominated from the floor shall reaffirm a willingness to serve as Stated Clerk, if elected.

(d) In the event there are nominations from the floor, the election shall proceed as follows:

(i) The election of the Stated Clerk shall take place as the first order of business on the next to last day of the assembly's session.

(ii) Each nominee shall be given an opportunity to address the assembly for a time not to exceed five minutes, expressing the nominee's views regarding the functions and work of the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly. The nominees shall speak in the same order as the presentation of nominating speeches.

(iii) The Moderator shall inquire of commissioners whether there are questions to be asked of the nominees for Stated Clerk. The first question shall be addressed to the nominee who was nominated first and the same question shall then be put to the other nominees in the same order in which they were nominated. The second question shall be directed to the second nominee in this order and then to each of the other nominees in sequence. Each nominee shall be afforded an opportunity to answer each question. This process shall continue for a period not to exceed the number of nominees times fifteen minutes, or for one hour, whichever is shorter, unless terminated earlier by vote of the General Assembly.

As specified in SR G.1c(1)(k), the Stated Clerk Review/Nominating Committee prepared the questions listed on the following page and sent them to each candidate. The material received from each candidate according to SR G. 1c(1)(k), including the answers to these questions, has been reproduced for your convenience, beginning with the committee's nominee, followed by the other candidates in alphabetical order.

Cordially yours,

Sandy Peirce  
Moderator  
Stated Clerk Review and Nomination Committee

Each candidate for Stated Clerk was asked to respond to the following five questions:

1. What do you see as the most important issues facing the church and General assembly and why?
2. What is your vision of the church for the future, and what specifically would you do as Stated Clerk to assist in accomplishing that vision?
3. The General Assembly Standing Rules as “As an officer of the General Assembly, the Stated clerk shall preserve and defend the *Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)*, and support the decisions, actions, and programs of the General Assembly. Describe your understanding of the Stated Clerk’s role in carrying out this constitutional function.
4. What do you see as the role of the Stated Clerk in addressing contentious or controversial issues?
5. Comment on an item of business before this General Assembly that you are excited about and that you believe will help the church be faithful to its mission to proclaim the Good News.

## The Reverend Dr. Clifton Kirkpatrick



### **Professional Ministry Experience**

#### **Stated Clerk of the General Assembly, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.): 1996 to present**

Chief executive officer of the Office of the General Assembly, responsible for interpreting the *Constitution*, promoting the unity of the church, conducting sessions of the General Assembly, and preserving the historical record of the church. Communicates actions of the assembly, represents that body within and beyond the church, and gives overall leadership for the spiritual well being of the church.

#### **Director of the agencies for world mission, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.): 1981 to 1996**

Leader and interpreter of the PC(USA)'s ministries in the U.S. and over 80 nations in evangelism, education, health, world service, and development. Pastor and administrator for over 1000 missionaries. Leader for the PC(USA) in church partnerships in 80 nations and in ecumenical and interfaith relations.

#### **Executive Director, Houston Metropolitan Ministries: 1972 to 1981**

Executive director for the major interfaith agency in Houston, TX, with ministries in aging, hunger, institutional chaplaincy, youth services, community development, prison ministry, refugee resettlement, and ecumenical relations.

#### **Additional service to the Fort Worth and Greater Dallas Councils of Churches: 1968 to 1972**

### **Formal Education**

B.A., Davidson College, 1966  
M.Div., Yale University, 1968  
Merrill Fellow, Harvard University, 1975  
D.Min., McCormick Theological Seminary, 1981

### **Honorary Degrees**

D.Div., Westminster College, 1990  
D.Lit., Hannam University (Korea), 1995  
D.Hum., Silliman University (Philippines), 2001

### **Service to the Wider Church**

#### **Minister Member, Mid-Kentucky Presbytery**

Active participant in the life and ministry of Springdale Presbyterian Church, Louisville, KY

**Other memberships:** Association of Stated Clerks; Council of Presidents, United States Chapter of the World Conference on Religion and Peace; life member and past president, National Association of Ecumenical Staff

**General Assembly Leadership:** Commissioner to the 1978 General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, U.S.; corresponding member to all General Assemblies from 1981–2004; secretary, General Assembly Council; secretary, Board of Trustees, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Foundation; member, General Assembly Committee on Ecumenical Relations; ex-officio member, Advisory Committee on the Constitution and Committee on the Presbyterian Historical Society; convener, Chairs and Executives of General Assembly Agencies

**Ecumenical Leadership:** Member of Central and Executive Committees, World Council of Churches; member, Executive Committee, World Alliance of Reformed Churches; member, General Assembly and Executive Board, National Council of Churches; member, Joint Committees on Cooperation with the Korean Presbyterian Church in America and with the Cumberland Presbyterian Church and the Cumberland Presbyterian Church in America

### **Personal and Civic**

Married to Diane Worthington Kirkpatrick; two children, one grandchild  
Co-author with William Hopper of *What Unites Presbyterians: Common Ground for Troubled Times*  
Member, Advisory Committee, Americans United for Humanitarian Trade with Cuba  
Chair, Successful School Age Youth Community Investment Team; Cabinet, United Way of Metro Louisville

## Personal Statement by Clifton Kirkpatrick

To Commissioners and Advisory Delegates to the 216th General Assembly (2004)  
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

Dear Friends in Christ,

I owe a tremendous debt of gratitude to the Presbyterian Church. This church brought me to faith in Jesus Christ, continues to nurture me in the gospel ministry, and gives me wonderful opportunities to see the Holy Spirit at work in the lives of countless women, men, and children. It has done the same for my wife Diane, for my children Elizabeth (who is a Presbyterian pastor) and David, and for my wonderful grandchild Katherine—whom I hope you will get to meet at the General Assembly!

I am grateful not only for what the Presbyterian Church has done for my family and me, but also for what it has done for countless others. Not too long ago, I visited with people in war torn Sudan. Our Sudanese brothers and sisters in Christ literally have life—and the gospel—because the Presbyterian Church cares. I have visited in 100 presbyteries and fifteen synods over the last three years and I give thanks to God for the signs I have seen of the Holy Spirit at work in our congregations.

A significant part of my gratitude to this church is for the call it has given to me to serve as Stated Clerk of the General Assembly. I have never had a position in ministry in which I have felt a greater sense of confirmation for my call. Given some of the dynamics in our church, there have been days when I have wondered why God called me to this position “for such a time as this,” but I have never doubted that this is where God intends for me to be.

Serving as Stated Clerk has given me the opportunity to share my gifts for the things I treasure most:

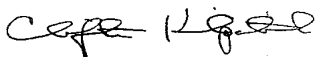
- building up our church as the body of Christ, in faithfulness to Scripture and our *Constitution*;
- reshaping of General Assemblies into spiritual gatherings to discern the mind of Christ;
- promoting the unity of the church, both within the PC(USA) and with the church ecumenical;
- communicating the witness of our denomination for Jesus Christ and for peace and justice.

I am grateful to God—and to the people of this church—for the call to serve as your Stated Clerk.

This past summer, I took a brief sabbatical to read, to pray, and to seek to discern if God was calling me to serve for a third term as your Stated Clerk. I came away from that experience with a sense of peace and assurance that, pending the call of the church, God was indeed calling me to continue in this ministry. I have been much encouraged by the unanimous affirmation of that sense of call by the two elected bodies that the assembly has named to review my ministry—the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly and the Stated Clerk Review and Nomination Committee.

Therefore, I declare my intent to stand as a candidate for Stated Clerk of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and, if elected, I will serve.

Grace and peace,



Clifton Kirkpatrick  
Stated Clerk of the General Assembly

## **Response to Questions of Those Standing for Stated Clerk Clifton Kirkpatrick**

### **1. What do you see as the most important issues facing the church and the General Assembly and why?**

I believe the most important issue facing the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) today is that of reconciliation. Two years ago we celebrated the thirty-fifth anniversary of the Confession of 1967. As we focused on that confession across the church, I came to a renewed conviction that this confession, written in the turbulent decade of the 1960s, centered on the primary issue before the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) in our time—how the church can give faithful expression to the good news of Scripture that “God was in Christ reconciling the world...and giving to us the ministry of reconciliation” (2 Cor. 5:19).

We live in a world that, on all sides, is hungry for reconciliation. It is a world where:

- warfare, poverty, and violence seem to be getting out of control,
- people desperately need the reconciling love of God in Jesus Christ,
- religious communities are in deep discord and threatening to produce a “conflict of civilizations.”

We also are part of a church that is hungry for reconciliation—reconciliation with Christ and with one another so that we might be Christ’s agents of reconciliation in a divided world. I have sought in my ministry as Stated Clerk to be about those things that can bring Presbyterians together around the deeper reconciliation that we find in Christ and to be about this ministry of reconciliation in the world.

Our *Book of Order* makes the bold claim that “the Church of Jesus Christ is a living demonstration of what God intends for all humanity” (G-3.0200). Since God’s ultimate purpose in human history is to reconcile the world, as we find so clearly stated in Scripture and in the Confession of 1967, no task could be more urgent for the church than to model the reconciling love that God intends for us in the body of Christ, not as an end in itself, but as a living demonstration of what God intends for the whole human family. May it be true for the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A) in our time!

### **2. What is your vision of the church for the future, and what specifically would you do as Stated Clerk to assist in accomplishing that vision?**

My vision is that the PC(USA) will become a church that is a living expression of the vision of the church found in the first four chapters of our Form of Government. It is a church:

- with a renewed commitment to the living Christ, who is “Head of the Church,” to the Great Ends of the Church, and to the historic principles of church order and church government (chapter 1);
- devoted to Scripture and grounded in the theological vision described in *The Book of Confessions* (chapter 2);
- alive in mission as “Christ’s faithful evangelist” (chapter 3);
- that seeks unity and honors diversity, both within the PC(USA) and with the broader Christian community, and that seeks to order its life in accord with the principles of Presbyterian government (chapter 4).

As Stated Clerk, I will continue to lift up this vision by:

- promoting what unites us as Presbyterians,
- lifting up to the church the great strengths of our *Constitution*,
- upholding the Great Ends of the Church,

- calling us all to rediscover glimpses of a New Testament church in a new century,
- supporting and seeing through to a successful conclusion the work of the Theological Task Force on the Peace, Unity, and Purity of the Church,
- sponsoring Common Faith, Common Mission consultations that focus on the core values of our *Constitution* for the renewal of the church,
- reshaping our polity to enable the PC(USA) to be a truly evangelical and multicultural church in the 21<sup>st</sup> century,
- serving as our church's chief ecumenical officer and representing us in major leadership positions in the ecumenical movement and the global Christian community,
- leading us in ecumenical breakthroughs such as Lutheran-Reformed Full Communion, concurrent General Assemblies with the Cumberland Presbyterians, and strengthened relationships with the Vatican and with Churches Uniting in Christ,
- reshaping our General Assemblies from “political conventions” into biennial spiritual gatherings that seek to discern the mind of Christ for the church,
- providing leadership to the Presbyterian Historical Society, which is the repository of the lived experience of these values in American Presbyterianism,
- renewing and strengthening the relationships among our governing bodies,
- bringing a spirit of cooperation among agencies of the General Assembly in service to our congregations.

**3. The General Assembly Standing Rules state, “As an officer of the General Assembly, the Stated Clerk shall preserve and defend the *Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)*, and support the decisions, actions, and programs of the General Assembly.” Describe your understanding of the Stated Clerk’s role in carrying out this constitutional function.**

I have a unique claim to understanding the vision behind the call upon the Stated Clerk to “preserve and defend” our *Constitution*. This provision originated in the former Presbyterian Church in the United States (PCUS) in 1974 when it was added to that denomination’s Standing Rules for the General Assembly. If you read the minutes of the PCUS, you will find that Clifton Kirkpatrick was the person chairing the meeting of the Committee on Assembly Operations (their version of what we now term the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly) when this provision was proposed.

This is not an indication that I was shaping the constitutional policy of our church in 1974 as a newly ordained minister! Rather, it was my father who was moderating that meeting as a faithful elder with a deep commitment to our *Constitution*—one that he shared often with me. This commitment to “preserve and defend” the *Constitution* is deeply rooted in my family and is a responsibility that I am called and privileged to undertake as Stated Clerk.

The first task of the Stated Clerk is to uphold the *Constitution* (both *The Book of Confessions* and the *Book of Order*). The *Constitution* proclaims our faith to the world and to the church, orders our church life, shapes our worship, and prescribes our procedures for discipline. Without such there can be no Presbyterian Church. The *Constitution* is the foundation on which the other duties assigned to the Stated Clerk are to be carried out. The Stated Clerk is called to uphold the *Constitution* first and foremost by publishing and distributing the *Constitution* (in an increasing number of languages) and by upholding its vision and proclaiming its theology to the church. The Stated Clerk makes clear to the church the process of constitutional revision and reminds the church that while the honoring of dissent is a deeply held Presbyterian value, defying the *Constitution* is not. Such defiance, if left unchecked, will clearly damage our covenant community.

The Stated Clerk should make the *Constitution* accessible to the church as a living document. The Clerk should support colleague stated clerks in synods and presbyteries and clerks of sessions in congregations in upholding the *Constitution*. He or she should also offer advisory opinions on the meaning of the *Constitution*, provide constitutional advice to those who seek to faithfully follow its precepts, and enable the church to adapt the *Constitution* to new realities in line with its foundational principles and authoritative interpretations. The Clerk should manage those processes and institutions, such as the Advisory Committee on the *Constitution* and the Permanent Judicial Commission, that enable the *Constitution* to find expression in the church's life, and provide conferences, educational materials, and resources (like our new Common Faith, Common Mission curriculum for church officers) to the church.

These are exactly the steps that my colleagues in the Office of the General Assembly and I have taken to “preserve and defend” our *Constitution*. What we also must do—and have done—is to respect the separation of powers that our *Constitution* provides to different governing bodies, commissions, and governing body officers. For a Stated Clerk to attempt to assume the power assigned to a governing body to carry out a judicial order or to countermand the decision of a judicial commission will truly lead to constitutional disorder. Upholding the *Constitution* is a shared task among governing bodies. As Stated Clerk, I have sought to faithfully carry out the responsibilities assigned to me and to respect the role of other partners in this process.

#### **4. What do you see as the role of the Stated Clerk in addressing contentious or confrontational issues?**

The apostle Paul admonished the Ephesians “to speak the truth in love.” As I have been called upon to intervene in contentious issues to further the witness of the General Assembly, I have sought diligently to follow that admonition.

Two major contexts exist in which the Clerk is called upon to address contentious issues—those within the church where the Clerk is charged to uphold our constitutional standards, and those in relation to the world where the Clerk is called upon to share the witness of our General Assembly for God's justice and reconciliation.

Within the church, actions are always taken in partnership with the various governing bodies that together are charged to uphold our Constitution. A clear example of this is in relation to the controversy surrounding ordination standards, especially G-6.0106b in the Book of Order. The Clerk's role is to make clear to the whole church that the provisions of G-6.0106b are “the law of the church,” and unless they are changed through our constitutional processes, they should be upheld by all governing bodies. I have done this through direct communications with all of our governing bodies and through issuing an advisory opinion on G-6.0106b. I have also issued advisory opinions distinguishing between constitutionally protected dissent and forbidden defiance, laying out clear parameters and processes for upholding ordination standards and carefully defining the roles of stated clerks in judicial process. Since presbyteries have primary responsibility for upholding ordination standards, I have provided training and resources to assist them in this responsibility. Because administrative review is the normative Presbyterian way of correcting error, I have also assisted governing bodies, including the General Assembly, in developing careful review processes to deal with potential defiance. At the same time, I have reminded the church of the admonition in the first chapter of the Rules of Discipline, namely, that our purpose in taking these actions is not punishment or retribution, but rather restoration and reconciliation.

As the person charged with communicating the actions of the General Assembly to the world, the Clerk should share our witness in a manner that is pastoral, that works in partnership with other faith communities, and that explains particular actions in terms of their biblical and theological imperatives. Two examples might be in order. Because the General Assembly adopted the Taco Bell boycott and

instructed me to further its aims, I spent time with the farmworkers in the fields (I came to be known as “gringo grande!”) to express our church’s deep pastoral concern for them. I also set up meetings between the Coalition of Immokolee Workers and the leadership of YUM Brands (the parent company of Taco Bell) to facilitate face-to-face negotiations for a just solution. I invited other denominations to join us in this endeavor, and they have! And I have sought, along with the able staff of the Presbyterian Hunger Program, to share with Presbyterians the biblical call for justice for “the least of our brothers and sisters.”

I have taken a similar approach on global issues, such as the Middle East. In seeking to further the General Assembly’s witness related to that region, I have spent time visiting pastorally with the churches there, working closely with the World and National Councils of Churches, meeting with presidents of nations seeking peace, and communicating clearly that political action by the church is based on profound Christian values and the furtherance of Christian mission in that part of the world.

**5. Comment on an item of business before this General Assembly that you are excited about and that you believe will help the church be faithful to its mission to proclaim the Good News.**

I believe the most substantive item of business before the 216th General Assembly is the preliminary report and recommendation of the Theological Task Force on Peace, Unity, and Purity of the Church. At the 213th General Assembly in 2001, Moderator Syngman Rhee and I called for the General Assembly to create the Theological Task Force as “a more excellent way” for the church to address how we might uphold our commitment to the peace, unity, and purity of the church at a time of deep disagreements among Presbyterians. This model of bringing together Presbyterian leaders with divergent convictions to seek the mind of Christ and to lead the whole church in seeking the peace, unity, and purity of the church is one that has worked before in our history and is one that I believe God will use again to renew us as a church. The Office of the General Assembly has staffed this task force, and I have a great deal of hope for its ministry among us.

In their preliminary report to this assembly, the task force shares with us its journey, as this diverse group of Presbyterians has studied in depth such issues as Christology, biblical interpretation, ordination standards, and power. The task force has come, in the process, to a common assumption that we as Presbyterians do share “one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all” (Eph. 4:5-6). They report on the excellent videos and resources they have developed for presbyteries and congregations. Most importantly, they share with us their affirmation that the church does indeed long for peace, unity, and purity, and that the basis for all three of these cherished values is Jesus Christ himself.

The task force recommends that every presbytery and session bring together intentional gatherings of Presbyterians with diverse theological views to covenant together to discuss this affirmation and, utilizing the resources of the task force, to seek ways to further the peace, unity, and purity of the church.

To me, the most important issue facing the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) today is reconciliation. At the heart of the task force’s report is, indeed, the urgent call for us to be reconciled to one another and to God, so that we may, in turn, be God’s agents of reconciliation in the world. The work of this task force is one filled with hope that, in the midst of our differences, we may indeed find our peace, unity, and purity in Christ and move forward together as the body of Christ. I hope that this preliminary report and recommendation will not only be adopted by the 216th General Assembly, but will be lived out with great enthusiasm and deep commitment in our presbyteries and congregations for many years to come.



## **A Biographical Sketch The Rev. Robert Davis**

My name is Bob Davis. I am seeking election as the Stated Clerk of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) at the 216<sup>th</sup> General Assembly (2004). I live in Escondido, California (San Diego Presbytery, Synod of Southern California and Hawaii). I am married to Jennifer. We have three girls, Kaley (15), Brooke (13), and Abigail (5). I am 39 years old.

### **Formal Education:**

My formal education includes a B.A. in American Studies from Dickinson College, Carlisle, Pennsylvania in 1986 and a J.D. degree from Indiana University School of Law -- Indianapolis in 1989. I made Law Review and served as the Business Manager for Volume 22 of the Indiana School of Law -- Indianapolis Law Review.

### **Presbyterian Church History and Involvement**

I am a lifelong Presbyterian. I grew up in Westminster Presbyterian Church in West Chester, Pennsylvania (Donegal Presbytery, Synod of the Trinity). There I was confirmed and professed Jesus Christ to be Lord and Savior as part of 9<sup>th</sup> grade confirmation class. I was part of the Donegal Presbytery delegation to the first Youth Triennium in Bloomington, Indiana. When I moved to Indiana for law school, my membership was transferred to Second Presbyterian Church in Indianapolis (Whitewater Valley Presbytery, Synod of Lincoln Trails). At Second Presbyterian, I was ordained as a Deacon. It was during my time at Second Presbyterian that I discerned a call to pursue ordination as a Minister of Word and Sacrament.

I attended Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California. During my time at Fuller, I served as intern and assistant to the pastor at La Crescenta Presbyterian Church from 1996 to 2000 (La Crescenta, California, San Fernando Presbytery, Synod of Southern California and Hawaii). In 1996 and 1997 I was a staff member of the Genevans, an organization within the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) dedicated to helping commissioners to General Assembly understand the process.

Since 1997, I have served as the Executive Director of the Presbyterian Forum, a renewal organization within the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). The Forum has worked for reformation and renewal by providing regular updates with information, training, updates and analyses of the events taking place within the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). I also serve as an associate pastor of Westminster Presbyterian Church in Escondido, California, where I was ordained as a Minister of Word and Sacrament in 2001.

Within San Diego Presbytery, I am Moderator of the Ecclesiastical Committee and am a member of the Presbytery's Permanent Judicial Commission. After the wildfires in October, 2003, I was asked to moderate San Diego Presbytery's Disaster Assistance Relief Team.

### **Other Relevant Employment:**

From 1989 to 1995 I was an attorney in Indianapolis. I served as an attorney for the Indiana Department of Insurance under (then-Governor) Evan Bayh before entering private practice as a trial lawyer focusing on plaintiff's medical negligence law.

## Personal Statement

Understanding God's call in my life has involved times of nudging, prayer, wrestling, and discernment. This call to seek election as Stated Clerk was a long process. For several years, friends around the country have dropped hints. My phone rings whenever there are questions about process. People have talked about "God will use the things you learned as an attorney..." Well, that is nice to hear, but it was my sense that God *is* using the things I learned as an attorney.

Then, last year, I began talking with people regarding the Stated Clerk election. It is an important job. The Stated Clerk plays a major role in maintaining the health of the denomination and the current trends within the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) are not encouraging. For example, we lost 40,000 members last year; there is a widening gap among factions within the church and with denominational officials; and the covenant among us has weakened. We've lost our identity and the Stated Clerk is a major player in establishing what that identity is. Though I was seeking other names, people kept telling me that I was their first choice.

That's where prayer comes into play. Prayer is not like buying a book on-line. It's not like you simply click to [www.God.com](http://www.God.com), search for "answers to prayers", and view your results. Seeking God often takes time. I pondered whether this was something God wanted me to do. So, last spring and summer, I went to God asking, "Is this something you want me to do?" We talked about it as a family. I was relieved that I did not sense God answering, "yes." OK. Case closed. Or, so I thought.

I went to the Presbyterian Coalition's Gathering in Portland last fall to speak and to see friends. I was surprised by how many people -- unconnected to each other and at various times -- urged me to seek election. At first, I answered that I had prayerfully considered it and had not discerned God calling me. When the conversations continued to come up, I offered to re-commit the matter to prayer. I also asked the others to pray for me.

I came home and went to God asking, "Is this something you want me to do?" My family and I still did not discern God answering, "yes." This time, however, there was a sense God might call me to seek election at some time, but not right now. OK. Case closed, again. Or, so I thought.

Then, fires hit Southern California in late October. I thought, "This is one of the reasons why God doesn't want me to throw my hat in the ring." After Thanksgiving, my focus was on preparing for Christmas. God's focus was in putting this decision squarely before me. I could not shake it. I prayed, "God, you said, 'not now.'" (For what it's worth, I've found that trying to pin God down on things like this rarely works.) It occurred to me that "not now" may not have been a multi-year instruction. Perhaps I'm not the first guy to make eternal something God intended for a limited time only.

I went back to the people I asked to pray for me. They all confirmed that they discerned I have the gifts to do the job well. As for timing, none could answer if "now" was the time. As a family, we went back and forth through the Christmas time. We reflected on how much we love it here. That's when the convicting question came to me:

*"Would you be willing to give all this up for my sake?"* It wasn't a question for me any longer.

There has been a tremendous outpouring of affirmation and offers of help. Winning is not an issue for me; that is God's business. My walk of obedience is to give my all to the task God has set before me.

Finally, discerning God's will isn't over now. It remains a day-to-day vocation of joy. Certainly, July 2 will be a 21<sup>st</sup> century version of a blinding light experience – the electronic screens will show the results of the votes made by commissioners. I recognize that's rare. It may be the only time in my life when God's will to be expressed with instant clarity. Regardless of the outcome, I can say with confidence, "God is good, all the time."

## 1. What do you see as the most important issues facing the church and General Assembly and why?

The most important issues facing the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and General Assembly are: the Stated Clerk election, the Mission Work Plan, and ordination standards. All three have to do with accountability and integrity.

A. **The Stated Clerk's race** is important because the next Stated Clerk will be responsible for helping to lead the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) through a major transition. Executive Director John Detterick has correctly described it as a move "... away from a corporate, hierarchical model into one that's more networked and relationship-based." The Stated Clerk will need to provide a clarity of process, must have an ability to equip and resource people through a time of major transition, and must be able to communicate broadly with brothers and sisters beyond the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to see where and how we can work together to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ. Simply doing things the way they have always been done will yield only the results we currently see.

B. **The Mission Work Plan** is not specifically related to the Stated Clerk race, but is clearly one of the most significant decisions that commissioners will be asked to approve. Prioritizing the use of diminishing resources is an exercise in discipline and accountability. It is the institutional recognition that times are changing and that the expectations of national offices is different than it was a generation ago. The decrease in unrestricted giving with the increase in restricted giving means that presbyteries and congregations are re-asserting their right and responsibility to be good stewards of the gifts they have been given. The connection among the national offices and presbyteries will be strengthened as those changes are made. The national offices cannot do those things that must be done at the local level; the proclamation of the gospel cannot be hired out so that someone else, somewhere else, does something to be the church for us. It has been a hard transition and it is vital that we are good stewards of the people who are experiencing loss, but it is an important and necessary step towards positioning for growth in the future.

C. **Ordination standards** reflect our willingness to have integrity. Questions arise in the current context: do we mean what we say? Do our words have any significance? If defiance is acceptable in this matter, is defiance acceptable in other matters as well? Are we willing to listen to our brothers and sisters in Christ outside the PC(USA) or do we simply want them to listen to what we have to say?

Our external witness and proclamation to the world – including efforts to seek social justice and pursue of peacemaking – are undercut when there is no sense of internal accountability and integrity. Thus, these three are the most important issues facing the church and General Assembly.

## 2. What is your vision of the church for the future, and what specifically would you do as Stated Clerk to assist in accomplishing that vision?

There is no question that a new Reformation is taking place – whether it is called post-modernism or post-denominationalism or anything else. The way the church is now is different than the way the church will be. There is no such thing as status quo.

Presbyterians are uniquely positioned to lead in this new Reformation precisely *because* we are Presbyterian. We are a confessional church. Connections based upon professions of faith are the foundation for growing networks of believers. Presbyterians have the opportunity to lead and model for others what it means to be connected by confession with one another – that is, connected beyond the walls of local congregations.

These opportunities exist where the people of the church are equipped and empowered to do the work of the church. The vision and gifts I will bring to the role of the Stated Clerk will help position the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to lead in the growth of this new Reformation.

First, I will bring to the denominational structure a different understanding of the role of higher governing bodies. It is my belief that the national church is designed to build up the covenant life among those on the front lines of ministry -- the local congregation and presbyteries. It is designed to serve, not to be served. It is designed to equip the people of the church to do the work of the church – not to do church for them.

Second, I will be involved restoring ordinary discipline within our covenant life together. I believe that the Book of Confessions is an integral part of our Constitution. Decisions about the course and life of the church need to include an understanding of how the Church historic has confessed its faith before us. I believe that Presbyterians desire clarity in the processes that facilitate our covenant life together. The administrative and judicial processes must enhance the ability to effect ordinary discipline, not thwart it.

Third, I will be establishing network relationships with other Christian bodies in a much more broadly ecumenical manner. Developing confessional connections lead to opportunities for new and growing ecumenical relationships; relationships in which we join with brothers and sisters in Christ for worship and joint mission within and beyond local communities.

It is important to be involved in the institutional ecumenical efforts such as the World Council of Churches, National Council of Churches, and World Alliance of Reformed Churches; but it is not sufficient to be involved only in those efforts. The new Reformation is occurring by local congregations and presbyteries interacting with Christians in their own area to be a blessing in the name of Jesus Christ in their own community. The beauty of this kind of ecumenism is that it encourages the people of the church to “be the church where they are.” Further, the distinctive gifts of each tradition are maintained while the collective witness is enhanced. The Stated Clerk can help lead by emphasizing the importance of these kinds of efforts and by equipping people with ideas about how to get involved.

**3. The General Assembly Standing Rules say, “As an officer of the General Assembly, the Stated Clerk shall preserve and defend the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), and support the decisions, actions, and programs of the General Assembly. Describe your understanding of the Stated Clerk’s role in carrying out this constitutional function.**

This portion of the Standing Rules includes two parts: first, preserving and defending the Constitution; and, second, supporting the decisions, actions, and programs of the General Assembly.

***Preserving and defending*** has to do with taking steps to strengthen and enhance the covenant among Presbyterians expressed in the Constitution. There is no question that the process in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) currently is being used to thwart, rather than facilitate, our covenantal life. Efforts to uphold the Constitution have been frustrated ***on procedural grounds***. Because the specific issue of “defiance” has been addressed with Authoritative Interpretations of the Constitution, the Stated Clerk must make clear the *administrative* processes by which the integrity of our covenant life together may be maintained. Failure to do so leads to schism.

And, unfortunately, schism is occurring. We are suffering schism because defiance of the Constitution is being tolerated.

Defiance is not, and has never been, an appropriate form of dissent within the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). It is not a liberal/conservative issue. Defiance – by definition – means that the individual refuses to recognize the

church's authority; thus, the individual is breaking the promises made at ordination. Taking a clear, strong stand on the process for responding to defiance does not limit, hinder or discourage appropriate dissent in any way.

Although the Stated Clerk does not and should not have the authority to unilaterally impose process on presbyteries, the Stated Clerk does have the authority to publicly urge, exhort, implore and develop efforts to preserve the integrity of the Constitution when its integrity is being attacked via defiance.

**Supporting** the decisions, actions, and programs of the General Assembly involves communicating with the denomination about what the General Assembly has done and interpreting those actions to those outside the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

The Clerk is the CEO of the Office of General Assembly, which publishes the Constitution and the Minutes of the General Assembly. It also is charged with creating materials designed to help equip the people of the church in their understanding of them. Further, when questions arise about the meaning or interpretation of General Assembly actions, the Clerk is responsible for providing clarity.

One example occurred recently when questions were raised about statements made by the Washington Office regarding the denomination's understanding of same-sex marriages. Although the Clerk released a response citing relevant actions of the General Assembly, he failed to specifically clarify how the statements issued by the Washington Office were erroneous and failed to adequately convey the Church's position. Supporting actions decisions, and programs of the General Assembly includes this responsibility.

#### **4. What do you see as the role of the Stated Clerk in addressing contentious and controversial issues?**

The Stated Clerk's role in addressing contentious and controversial issues is four-fold. First, it is to help equip the people of the church with the tools and discipline with which to be able to discuss theological issues **before** issues become contentious and controversial. Like athletes and musicians, it is important to practice talking theologically with others in order to prepare for the time when real issues are confronted.

Second, the Stated Clerk is responsible for giving "advisory opinions concerning the meaning of the provisions of the *Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)*, and shall give advisory opinions on the meaning of the actions of the General Assembly." Clarity minimizes contentiousness. The Clerk must make the meaning of the Constitution and General Assembly actions clear. The Clerk is not an advocate or a mediator. Advisory opinions should not try to balance interpretations in order to avoid controversy; that only confuses matters and ends up heightening the controversy. The Clerk's advisory opinions should simply state the matters clearly.

Third, the Stated Clerk must make the process clear for all involved. If the advisory opinions are clear, then the issues are clear, and the processes for supporting an opinion or seeking change are clear. The Stated Clerk can help this process by laying out the steps to achieve a result. "If this is the result you are pursuing," should be the Clerk's opening line, "then, here are the steps necessary to achieve that end." Further, the Clerk should be able to describe the ways that those who disagree will challenge and work to prevent those goals.

Finally, the Stated Clerk must make sure that the decisions of the governing bodies are respected. Dissent is appropriate. Defiance is not, and the Stated Clerk must make clear how governing bodies are to exercise their administrative responsibilities.

**5. Comment on an item of business before this General Assembly that you are excited about and that you believe will help the church be faithful to its mission to proclaim the Good News.**

Although the obvious answer here is, “the Stated Clerk’s election,” let me suggest that the Mission Work Plan is an incredibly important item of business as it seeks to move us to a new way of “doing church.” The discussion moves the focus of national offices from doing ministry for the church to an understanding that they are to equip and support the people of the church in pursuing the ministries they have been called to undertake.

Why is this exciting? Budget discussions tend to be interesting only when your own funds are at stake and -- for many commissioners -- the budgets of the national offices are numbers without meaning. The excitement comes in realizing that the proposal opens the door to change; commissioners are not locked into funding projects simply because we have always funded those projects. Instead, a prioritized budget looks at each item to see how it fits with the mission vision for the church. It offers the flexibility to be able to change to meet new challenges and opportunities.

By prioritizing the activities of the national offices, the Mission Work Plan takes an important first step in restoring a perception of accountability. This will be the foundation for building bridges of trust with the congregations and presbyteries to the benefit of the entire Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

I declare my intent to stand as a candidate for Stated Clerk of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and, if elected, I will serve.



Robert B. Davis

### **Biographical Sketch**

The Rev Linn W. Rus Howard, D Min

Family:       Wife: RoriAnn  
                   Sons: Jeff (20) and Matthew (15)

Pastorates:

1997 - Today Peters Creek Presbyterian Church, Venetia, PA  
 1991 - 1996 Hamilton Presbyterian Church, Bethel Park, PA  
 1986 - 1990 Vandalia Presbyterian Church, Greensboro, NC  
 1981 - 1986 First Presbyterian Church, Ponca City, OK



Education:

Doctorate of Ministry - Trinity Evangelical Divinity School - May 2004  
 Masters of Divinity - Princeton Theological Seminary - June 1981  
 BA Religion -The University of North Carolina - May 1976

Service to Christ's Church (current or within past 10 years)

Board of Trustees – Washington Presbytery  
 Presbytery Council – Washington Presbytery  
 Confessing Church Movement Leadership Team  
 Board of Directors of The Outreach Foundation  
 Mission Trips to Malawi, Brazil, and China  
 Speaker on Missions, Stewardship, & Church Leadership  
 Co-host of *Howard and Kopp with Real People* (Cable TV)  
 Columnist for the *Washington Observer-Reporter* (Washington PA)  
 Board of Directors of South Hills Interfaith Ministries (Bethel Park PA)  
 Stewardship and Missions Chair – Pittsburgh Presbytery

### **My Sense of Call to Serve as Stated Clerk of the PCUSA**

In April 2001, while serving on the Board of Directors of the Outreach Foundation, I became aware that the continuing drift of the PCUSA away from our Reformed faith was causing our international mission partners to question the faith and direction of the denomination. This was when I finally realized that politically-correct fence-sitting, which I had mastered early in my ministry, was not a faithful witness for Jesus.

Working with others on the Board of Directors of the Outreach Foundation, I participated in writing a confessional statement to clarify our unwavering faith. I believe:

- Jesus Christ is God's only Son, our Lord and Savior;
- The Bible is the inspired, authoritative, and infallible Word of God;
- God calls us into a loving and saving relationship with Jesus;
- God expects us to live holy lives in obedience to His Word.

When the ensuing General Assembly was unable to speak unequivocally and passionately about Jesus as God's only Son and our only Lord and Savior, the Session and congregation of Peters Creek Presbyterian Church joined the Confessing Church Movement by composing and approving our own confessional statement.

Since then, we have witnessed the growing failure of our leadership, governing bodies, and judicial commissions to reverse the continued defiance of our Constitution and a movement away from our Christ-centered and Biblically-rooted Reformed faith. Furthermore, our "loss of members" is accelerating, rather than declining.

Currently, the far left, a small but powerful minority within the church, is dominating the PCUSA. Furthermore, they are corrupting our Biblical faith and leading us astray.

In June 2003, at the Venetia Consultation, a group of church leaders met to discuss what we could do to reverse our spiritual and numeric decline. Through worship, prayer, and discussion, we came to realize that one way to reverse the decline of the PCUSA was to replace our current leadership in Louisville.

We need leaders who are not ashamed of the Gospel (Romans 1:16-17) and who are willing to lead with a God-given spirit of power, love, and self-discipline (2 Tim 1:7-8). For a long time I was sure there was someone "out there" who could and would lead us. I was certain that I was not the person.

Last Fall while researching and writing my doctoral thesis on *Building Faith in Church Leaders based on the Model of Joshua*, I began to sense God was calling me to run for Stated Clerk. In November, I mentioned to several close friends my sense of call. They were thrilled; but I was not. God was at work at Peters Creek Presbyterian Church in a powerful way and I did not want to leave Peters Creek to serve as Stated Clerk. Thus, I backed-off from running for Stated Clerk.

In January 2004, the congregation of Peters Creek Church began a 12-week study of Henry Blackaby's *Experiencing God*. As our study progressed, God was at work within me; calling me to run for Stated Clerk. I kept resisting. My friends kept pushing. Finally, in early February, God directed me to Ezekiel 22:30: "*I looked for a man among them who would build up the wall and stand before me in the gap on behalf of the land so I would not have to destroy it, but I found none.*" At this point, I realized I had to run for Stated Clerk, if I was to be faithful to God's call.

I kept resisting God's call. My love for the ministry God has given to me at Peters Creek Presbyterian Church is deep. I did not and do not desire to leave this ministry.

However, in the end, I have to accept and obey God's call to run for Stated Clerk. This is my sense of call. As Luther said so well, "Here I stand!"

**What do I see as the most pressing issue facing the church  
and General Assembly and why?**

The most pressing issue facing the PCUSA and this year's General Assembly is to elect a Moderator and Stated Clerk who believes the Bible is the Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice.

If renewal and restoration is going to come to the PCUSA, we need leaders who, in their service to God and the Church, will be faithful to God's call to Joshua:

*Be strong and . . . very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go. Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go.*  
(Joshua 1:6-9, NIV)

Our current leaders (particularly our current Stated Clerk and Moderator) have failed to lead us in this manner. As we face the increasing determination of individuals, congregations, and political groups within the PCUSA to defy our constitution and to lead us away from Jesus and the truth of God's Word, we need strong and courageous leaders who will "*lead us in paths of righteousness for His name's sake*" (Psalm 23:3).

The PCUSA needs leaders who are not ashamed of the Gospel; who affirm the essential tenets of the Reformed faith as expressed in TULIP; and who will "stand up, speak up, and act up" for Jesus. We can no longer afford to have a "politically correct" leadership that accommodates our theology to popular secular opinion.

While some in the church claim that the Stated Clerk has neither the responsibility nor the power to change the direction of the church (this has been Clifton Kirkpatrick's defense) I contend and believe that the Bible proclaims the exact opposite.

Leaders make a difference! Strong and courageous leaders will set the thermostat for an organization. Effective Christian leaders change institutions; not through power and control, but through passionate, Biblical, and Spirit-led leadership.

Throughout history God has reformed His church through leaders who are unswerving and uncompromising in their loyalty to Him, in their love for Jesus, in their willingness to follow as directed by the Holy Spirit, and in their faithful obedience to His Word.

At this critical juncture in our history, the PCUSA desperately needs strong and courageous leaders; who believe the Bible is the Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice; and who affirm the essential tenets of the Reformed faith as expressed in our confessions.

**What is my vision of the church for the future, and what specifically would I do as Stated Clerk to assist in accomplishing this vision?**

My vision for the PCUSA is that we return to worshipping and serving Jesus as God's only Son and our only Savior in full obedience to the Bible as God's inspired, infallible, and authoritative Word.

When we do this we will witness a Spirit-led renewal of the Presbyterian Church. Our sanctuaries will be filled for worship. Our members will experience the power of God working in their lives. Our gracious and truth-filled witness to the love of Jesus will transform our neighborhoods. Finally, PCUSA missionaries and congregations will fulfill The Great Commission given by Jesus in Matthew 28:18-20.

As Stated Clerk, I will be a strong and courageous leader who will:

- Serve as a spiritual and theological leader to the PCUSA by:
  1. Passionately and unequivocally proclaiming that the Bible is the Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice;
  2. Preaching, teaching, and speaking from God's Word and according to the essential tenets of the Reformed faith in order to equip all the saints with sound Biblical faith so that they can do the work of ministry with confidence.
- Build strong ecumenical relationships with Christian bodies faithful to God's Word, while withdrawing support from those organizations which are not obedient to God's Word.
- Speak-up when individuals, sessions, and other governing bodies within the PCUSA disobey the Bible and defy our Constitution. I will give guidance to the Church about how to address defiance and how to restore those who are intent on disobeying God's Word and our Constitution.
- Advocate these specific changes to the Book of Order:
  1. To replace G-14.0207b and G-14.0405b (2) with: *“Do you believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament to be the Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice?”*
  2. To add at the end of G-14.0402: *“Furthermore, believing that the essential tenets of the Reformed faith are best expressed in TULIP, the presbytery shall examine candidates for the Ministry of Word and Sacrament in their understanding of and adherence to these tenets.”*
  3. To add as G-13.0103y: *“to insure that all materials published and endorsed by the church shall teach and shall support the essential tenets of the Reformed faith as expressed in TULIP.”*

**How do I understand the Stated Clerk’s role . . . “As an officer of the General Assembly, the Stated Clerk shall preserve and defend the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (USA), and support the decisions, actions, and programs of the General Assembly”?**

The Stated Clerk is called to take a *pro-active* role in preserving and defending the Constitution of the PCUSA and supporting the decisions, actions, and programs of the General Assembly.

As Stated Clerk, I will speak up when individuals and governing bodies disobey the Bible and defy our Constitution. From the moment I become aware of the defiance, I will provide public guidance to the Church, and to the appropriate governing bodies, about the best way to restore those who are in defiance.

As Stated Clerk, I will provide *accurate* guidance to all parties who seek advice about how to interpret correctly our Constitution. When providing this guidance I will quote Scripture, our Confessions, and our polity. My guidance will be based on the Truth of God’s Word, the Reformed theology of our Confessions, and our polity.

As Stated Clerk, I will continue to remind, privately and publicly, denominational employees that they shall faithfully serve the church by adhering to the decisions of the church in their daily work and public pronouncements as church employees. I will encourage and seek the removal of any employee who does not support the decisions, actions, and programs of the General Assembly.

**What do I see as the role of the Stated Clerk in addressing contentious and controversial issues?**

The role of the Stated Clerk in addressing contentious and controversial issues is to fulfil the instructions given to us in Ephesians 4:11-16.

In specific instances, I will follow the words of Jesus given in Matthew 18:15-17. I will be faithful to the spirit of love and grace which Jesus embodied in John 4:7-26 when he confronted the woman at the well and in John 8:1-11 when he confronted the Teachers of the Law and the woman caught in adultery.

In the public square, I will not be ashamed of standing up for the Truth of God’s Word as I speak about controversial and contentious issues facing the church and society. As I speak on these issues I will be faithful to the Bible, our Confessions, our polity, and the decisions of the Church.

**Comment on an item of business before this General Assembly  
that you are excited about and that you believe will help  
the church be faithful to its mission to proclaim the Good News**

This year's General Assembly will have the opportunity to reaffirm our ordination standards, particularly as expressed in G-6.0106b. To remove or to weaken this section of the Book of Order will be to deny that the Bible is God's Word, the only infallible rule of faith and practice.

If we are to bring renewal and hope to God's people and if we are to equip the saints for the ministry God has given us, this year's General Assembly must base all of their decisions on the truth of God's Word and our Reformed theology

This year's General Assembly can radically change the direction of the PCUSA by resisting the pressure to conform to the ways of the world. The Christian Church has been, is, and will always be under pressure from society to accommodate our theology and faith to the opinions of secular culture. The Apostle Paul writes about this battle in Ephesians 6:10-18. This is an epic battle that must be fought by the Church and by individual Christians until God redeems the world a final time when Christ returns.

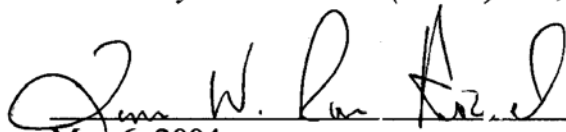
It will be exciting to see the commissioners at this year's assembly:

*Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power, to put on the full armor of God . . . to stand firm . . . with the belt of truth buckled around their waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place . . . with their feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. To take up the shield of faith, to wear the helmet of salvation . . . to carry the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God . . . and to pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. (Ephesians 6:10-18, edited)*

By standing firm for the Truth of God's Word, this year's assembly will serve God as a shining light and powerful witness. Nothing else excites me more, than to anticipate the faithful stance of this year's commissioners.

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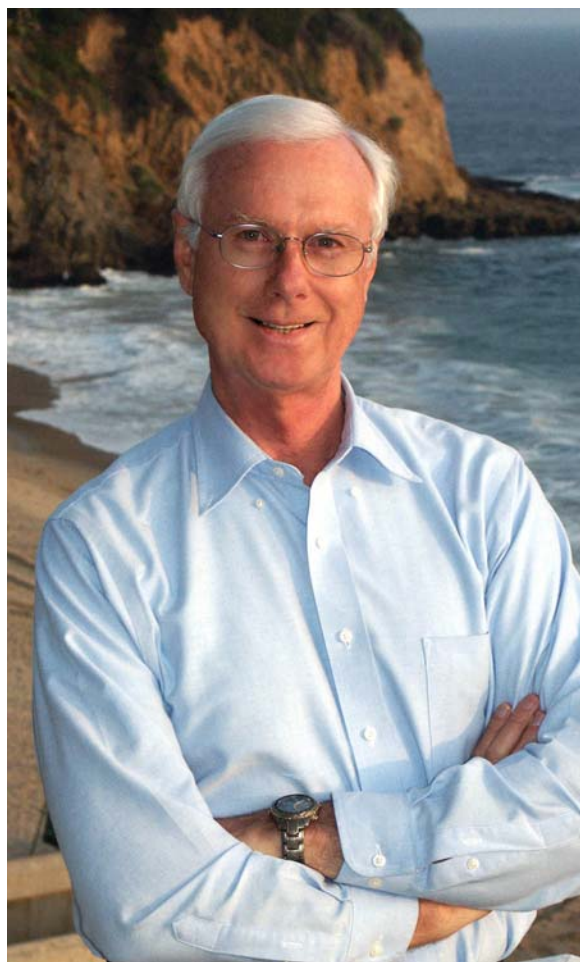
*I declare my intent to stand as a candidate for Stated Clerk of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and, if elected, I will serve.*



May 6, 2004

(Linn W. Rus Howard)

**Elder Alex F. Metherell, M.D., Ph.D.**  
**Candidate for the office of Stated Clerk of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)**



Dr. Metherell committed his life to Christ 34 years ago in the Presbyterian Church he still attends. He is passionately committed to the constitutional structure of the government of the church and its judicial system. As a student of our Constitution he has argued cases before the General Assembly Permanent Judicial Commission. Being the lead member of the Committee of Counsel of each of these cases he undertook extensive research in the Constitution and prior case law.

Eighteen years ago he was ordained an elder and has served on several committees and as a commissioner to his Presbytery that elected him as Elder Commissioner to the 214<sup>th</sup> General Assembly. He has served more than fourteen years as an appointed representative of the Los Ranchos Presbytery on the Presbyterian Membership Association at the Hoag Memorial Presbyterian Hospital in Newport Beach which is responsible for giving spiritual leadership in the hospital and electing one third of the hospital trustee board members.

He has served on the Board of Directors of three independent Christian non-profit organizations. One of these, Reasons To Believe, shows how recent scientific discoveries confirm the existence of the God of the Bible.

Alex Metherell taught Bible studies and has become known as an authority on the medical and physical aspects of the Crucifixion and Resurrection. His

commentaries have been published and televised worldwide. He contributed to a chapter on the subject in the multi-million-copy best seller, "The Case for Christ" by Lee Strobel.

Born in the Far East, Alex grew up in Australia and England. After graduating from college, Alex received his PhD in Engineering three years later from Bristol University in England. Two days later he married his Scottish wife Pamela (whom he met 2 years earlier while flying in the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve during his doctoral program) and a week after that immigrated to the United States.

After doing extensive published work in engineering at the University of Minnesota and McDonnell Douglas where he rose to Division Director, he went to medical school at the University of Miami, Florida, where he earned his MD degree in only two years. He is Board Certified in Radiology and helped pioneer the clinical use of MRI imaging in Southern California. He co-founded a medical transcription company, which after several mergers now serves over 200,000 physicians and numerous hospitals throughout the U.S. and Canada. Over the years he has held various professorships at UCLA and UCI. He is currently on the research faculty at the University of California Irvine where he is doing research in theoretical modeling of molecular motor mechanisms that are responsible for muscle movement.

Alex's wife, Pam, has served two terms as Elder on the session at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church and is now a Deacon. She was elected Elder Commissioner to the 212<sup>th</sup> General Assembly in Long Beach. She now serves

on the Board of Directors of the Presbyterian Lay Committee and is a substitute Teaching Leader in a 300 women Bible Study Fellowship group that meets weekly in South Laguna.

Alex and Pam have a son Mark, who graduated from Wheaton College with a double major in 1992 and then served in the US navy SEALs for eight years. For the past three years Alex and Mark have collaborated on the development of a Force Protection system to protect naval vessels and harbors from terrorist attacks. They have US and foreign patent granted and pending. Mark's wife Sarah worked in international financial services in Chile and Argentina and is in real estate development in the United States. They both have served on the Board of First Fruit, a Christian family foundation. They currently serve on the mission committee of their church in Laguna Beach.

Alex and Pam's older daughter Alison has recently finished her Residency at USC and is in private practice as a board certified Pediatrician in Encino, when she is not teaching medical students at the USC Medical School. She is married to Travis Mann, an entertainment lawyer and movie producer in Hollywood. They both currently serve as deacons at Bel Air Presbyterian Church.

Alex and Pam's younger daughter, Caroline, has just completed her service as one of the youngest elders to serve on the session of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Newport Beach and Los Ranchos Presbytery commissioner. She is in her fourth year in the Newport-Costa Mesa School District where she has taught kindergarten and 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade. She is married to Jonathan Campbell, a NASCAR driver.

### **Personal Statement and Sense of Call**

Along with many others in the denomination, I am convinced that it is time for the General Assembly to elect a new Stated Clerk. I came to this decision to offer myself as a candidate for the Office of Stated Clerk after much prayer and discussion with associates across the denomination. My sense of call to this position grows stronger each day as I look at the state of the church and the problems the new Stated Clerk will be facing. My sense of call and motives have been affirmed (1) by knowing they are biblical; (2) that they are confirmed by my Christian brothers and sisters and (3), by my wife and family.

There are two other excellent candidates challenging the nomination of the incumbent, the Rev. Clifton Kirkpatrick. Why then, should I add my name to the field of candidates?

As an elder/physician/engineer/businessman, I believe that I can bring a much needed perspective to the race, and to the office if elected. Because of who I am and what I do, I am very much a rational, objective thinker. I will bring the following talents and abilities to the Office of the Stated Clerk:

- The *perspective of an elder* – much like Elder John Detterick does as GAC Executive Director.
- The *compassion* of a physician.
- The *objectivity* and *rational thinking* that comes with earned two doctorates in Engineering and Medicine.
- The *innovation* and *problem solving* ability of one with numerous scientific publications and patented inventions.
- The *business* background that comes from running a large successful medical practice.
- The *experience* of being a co-founder of and first medical director of Edix (now called Spheris) the largest medical transcription company with over 3,500 employees and serving over 200,000 physicians in hospitals and clinics throughout the US and Canada.

### **The Most Important Issues Facing the Church and General Assembly:**

Without question, the single most important issue facing the denomination at this Assembly is the election of the Stated Clerk. There will not be another opportunity to elect another stated clerk until 2008.

If the incumbent, The Rev. Clifton Kirkpatrick, is reelected there will be no change of direction for our church. We will continue accommodating to the unbiblical and unholy beliefs and practices of our culture as we ignore the standards upon which our denomination was founded.

I predict that by the next election in 2008 (if not by 2006) we will see the ordination standard (G-6.0106b), which says "... the requirement to live either in fidelity within the covenant of marriage between a man and a woman (W-4.9001), or chastity in singleness. ..." will have been amended changing the phrase "a man and a woman" to "two persons" indicating that same sex "marriages" will be recognized as being as valid as the marriage between a man and a woman and therefore practicing homosexual persons will be eligible for ordination.

Furthermore, the GAPJC has ruled in [Benton et al v. Presbytery of Hudson River](#) that same-sex union ceremonies are permitted. This is tantamount to playing word games with the Constitution. I agree with The Rev. Janie Spahr who said at the 212<sup>th</sup> GA that same-sex union ceremonies were the same thing as marriages. "Let's call them what they are – marriages" she said. Given the dissemblance that has infected our constitutional system, she is right.

On April 30, 2004 the Synod of the Covenant PJC ruled that the Presbytery of Cincinnati's court "erred by interpreting Section W-4.9001 of the *Book of Order* to prohibit same-sex marriages." Thus I also predict that, absent that election of a new Stated Clerk at this General Assembly, the *Book of Order* will be amended to require all ministers to participate in all "marriage" ceremonies regardless of whether the couples are "a man and a woman" or two persons of the same gender.

All ministers of the Word and Sacrament will then be compelled to participate in these ordination and marriage ceremonies or they will be forced to renounce the jurisdiction of the Presbyterian Church (USA). That is why it is essential that Clifton Kirkpatrick be replaced at this General Assembly.

The underlying issue that has led to this sad state of affairs is the almost complete abandonment of both the *Word of God* and the *Book of Confessions* as authoritative in the life of the church. The judicial courts of the church in recent history have never, to my knowledge, relied on either of these documents for their decisions. How else can one explain the GAPJC's decision in the *Benton* case, or the Synod of the Covenant PJC's decision on April 30 in the Presbytery of Cincinnati case when the *Word of God* and the *Confessions* clearly and unequivocally state that homosexual practice is a violation of the seventh commandment – adultery (4.087, 7.249)? Are we now going to ordain and marry practicing unrepentant practicing adulterers? The answer, I predict, is yes!!

If I were to pick one issue that is the most important to the future of the church and General Assembly it would have to be the restoration of respect for the WHOLE of the *Constitution* of the Presbyterian Church (USA).

The *Book of Confessions* "... declares to its members and to the world who and what it is, what it believes, (and) what it resolves to do" (G-2.0100a.) This tells us who we are and what we believe. The *Book of Order* defines the Form of Government, the Directory of Worship and the Rules of Discipline (G-1.0502.) This is essentially a handbook, or organization manual for how we do things. Both the *Book of Order* and the *Book of Confessions* acknowledge that Holy Scripture is the ultimate authority.

Thus, the constitutional order of priority of authority is, first the *Word of God*, second the *Confessions* and third the *Book of Order*. This is confirmed by the fact that the *Word of God* cannot be amended; an amendment to the *Book of Confessions* requires approval of the General Assembly and two thirds of the presbyteries (G-18.0201); and an amendment to the *Book of Order* requires approval of the General Assembly and a simple majority of the Presbyteries.

General Assembly Permanent Judicial Commission Decisions, policies and actions of the General Assembly and General Assembly Council are all subordinate in their authority.

The practice of ignoring the *Word of God* and the *Confessions* has resulted in our denomination becoming pseudo-Presbyterian. The once great characteristics that have defined us as Presbyterian has always been our Constitution as described above. The distinction that we have as Presbyterians is also our connectionalism. We are bound and connected together by what we believe (the *Confessions* and the *Word of God*). The *Book of Order* merely tells us how we do things. By diminishing the authority of Scripture and the *Confessions* we are drifting towards being Congregationalist or Baptist.

By any objective analysis, our denomination is at a crossroads. Who can deny that the policies of our denomination, which have been consistent since 1967, have resulted in the loss of vast numbers of our members? No impartial observer of our franchise would conclude other than that in our divisiveness we have whipped ourselves up into two warring camps, each intent upon victory, and each utterly irreconcilable with the other. From Angela Davis to abortion to ReImagining to our present constitutional crisis, we Presbyterians have been very successful at self-destruction.

Each side believes itself to represent the true church, but both cannot be right. Then there are those who deny we are divided, or who foolishly proffer the false aphorism that there is “strength and unity in diversity.” In fact, this has been a frequent theme expressed by our current Stated Clerk. Exactly the opposite is the case. The idea of diversity started well when it was directed to being inclusive of race, gender, and socio-economic status; but when it extended to diverse theological views that deny the fundamental biblical teaching on who God is, who Jesus Christ is, the virgin birth, the miracles, the resurrection, redefining sin and an obsession for including all manner of perverse sexual behavior as normative – this is “inclusiveness” gone MAD. This is destroying the church. The hallmark of the early 1<sup>st</sup> century church was that they were “of one mind.” How then can we agree on anything if we all do “what is right in our own minds.”

As a result of this, there is great moral and theological confusion throughout the denomination. It seems that the more bizarre and novel the moral and theological idea, the more we want to embrace it in the name of inclusiveness. We have lost our moral and theological compass. But – here is the good news – we haven’t in fact lost it. Our moral and theological compass has always been there. It is the *Word of God* and our *Confessions* to which we have been paying scant attention.

These two foundational constitutional documents are our plumb-line. Everything we do and believe must be measured against them. Incessant fiddling with the *Book of Order* to try and get its wording to comply with the latest whim and fancy is a waste of time. This is especially true when we try to redefine the ordination standard.

I have no doubt that if we continue on the way we are going, we will eventually codify an ordination standard that will require that we not discriminate between a person’s sexual orientation and practice; will not discriminate between a person’s views of theology and their embracing of pagan ideas, and which will require all ordained officers to participate in same sex union ceremonies whether or not they are called marriages. When any of these things get codified in the *Book of Order* they will trigger a constitutional crisis between the *Book of Confessions* and the *Book of Order* because they will then plainly contradict each other.

What then?

The answer is simple. The *Book of Confessions* trumps the *Book of Order* because the *Confessions* define WHO WE ARE and what we BELIEVE while the *Book of Order* tells us how we DO things. We cannot try to change what we believe by amending the *Book of Order* which is what is being attempted by proposed amendments to the ordination standards.

While our present Stated Clerk blithely denies the existence of any present crisis, he has labored long and craftily at furthering the cause of one of our two camps. While our current Stated Clerk fiddles, our denomination burns. We have now come to the point where congregations are declaring themselves “out of communion” with governing bodies who refuse to honor the constitutional priority of our governing documents: *Word of God* first; *The Book of Confessions* second; the *Book of Order* third.

But we elected this Stated Clerk twice. We elected this Moderator, and her predecessors, who make no attempt to conceal their contempt for constitutional and scriptural integrity. Previous General Assemblies have set upon us this hugely bloated denominational bureaucracy which sends more than 400 staff to GA at a cost of millions of dollars, all to the end of preserving the political status quo.

The most important issue facing our church and this General Assembly is whether the PC(USA) will continue on its present path of certain destruction, or instead return to her historical faith as infallibly proclaimed by our Lord in Scripture and articulated by our forebears in the Confessions. This issue is personified in the election of the Stated Clerk, which for the first time in our entire history has drawn three challengers to an incumbent (unanimously endorsed by the nominating committee) each of whom denounce the performance of the incumbent. On the one side stands the incumbent. He subverted the call of a sufficient number of

Commissioners to a prior General Assembly to recall that assembly into session to deal with the crisis. He has spent the time and treasure of our church pursuing anti-American and leftist secular political agendas. He has countenanced the efforts of the Washington Office to lobby Congress for extremist positions not approved by any General Assembly. He has done nothing to prevent Wicca ceremonies on Presbyterian territory. He has dispatched his subordinates throughout the land to counsel presbyteries on how to avoid enforcing the Constitution. He has utterly failed to uphold the Constitution in any meaningful way. He has, at every opportunity, encouraged those whose actions have brought us to the verge of schism. He has exhausted his travel budget going to presbyteries to proclaim what a good job he is doing and the absence of any real crisis—when exactly the opposite is the case. When challenged “any where, any time” to debate his performance so that he might answer his challengers, he refused. The Q & A session at the time of the election is inadequate to fully answer for you whether these charges are true: let him even now relent, and agree to a debate so that all may see and hear him acquit himself of all of the charges his three challengers make of him! Whether he continues to refuse, or he comes before you with his challengers in the crucible of debate, your vote for Stated Clerk will, more than any other action you take at this Assembly, determine the future of our denomination.

“But if serving the Lord seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your forefathers served beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord.” Joshua 24:15.

### **My Vision of the Church of the Future and what I would do as Stated Clerk:**

My vision of the PC (USA) in the future is one of faith and integrity to the inerrancy of Scripture, the divinity and bodily resurrection of Jesus, the truth of His miracles and the virgin birth. My vision is for a denomination whose ordained ministers profess their beliefs in these tenants so clearly articulated in Scripture and the *Book of Confessions*. My vision is for every pulpit to ring with the sound of preaching that Jesus is THE way, THE truth and THE life, and that except by Him, no man comes to the Father. My vision for our future is a church where every minister accords equal sincerity to his ordination vow to be governed by the polity of our church. I see a church where our seminaries only employ professors who proclaim the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ, and where no paid staff worship a false god they have “reimagined”, whether called “Sophia” or any other name. My vision is for a church whose headquarters is thought by none to be a “Whited Sepulcher”.

I yearn for a church where Scripture is the first answer to any question; where there is no possible argument that homosexuality is other than an abomination, and that abortion is other than murder. I yearn for our denomination to return to its Calvinist heritage where we live by our professed belief in total depravity, unconditional election, limited atonement, irresistible grace, and the perseverance of the saints.

I long for a church that doesn't risk losing its tax deductible status by employing lobbyists to urge Congress to adopt un-Christian policies, where the Stated Clerk boycotts paganism instead of capitalism, where the GA Moderator only picks speakers and committee chairmen who share our common profession in *the Book of Confessions*. I long for our Stated Clerk to attend a meeting of the National Council of Churches to announce the PC (USA)'s determination to win souls for Christ and to get out of America-bashing. I long for a Stated Clerk to denounce a president's perjury instead of a president's acting to preserve our national security and to free a key nation from enslavement under a brutal tyrant. I long for a church where the Stated Clerk will demand that every employee adhere to the Scripture, our *Confessions* and our *Book of Order* - in that order - and will call for the dismissal of every employee who does not, even those employees not directly under his supervision (for the Stated Clerk sets the tone for all staff). I long for a church whose priorities, visible in its budget, are governed by the Great Commission not Das Kapital and Wicca. I long for a church where the Stated Clerk thinks he must obey the church's Constitution, not subvert it. I long for a church that is unified not in diversity, but in common faith, for as our Lord taught, “Any kingdom divided against itself will be ruined, and a house divided against itself will fall”. (Luke 11:17)

I envision a Presbyterian Church far different than what we have today. I envision a Presbyterian Church that GAINS members, instead of losing members at a breakneck pace. I envision a Presbyterian Church (USA) that does not witness other Presbyterian churches breaking fellowship with us because they view us as apostate. I envision a Presbyterian Church where discipline is enforced when ministers deny the bodily resurrection of our Savior, and where the Stated Clerk is the first, and not the last, to condemn such misconduct. I envision a Presbyterian Church where the Stated Clerk dispatches his associates throughout the land to enforce, not tear

down, the Constitution. I envision a Presbyterian Church where it is inconceivable that a Synod PJC could ever rule that homosexual marriages are not precluded by Scripture. I envision a Presbyterian church where sin is called “sin” and not sacred. I envision a Presbyterian Church where everyone does what is right in God’s eyes, instead of a Presbyterian Church where ministers claim the right to do what is right in their own eyes. I envision a denominational headquarters that is a fig tree that bears fruit, instead of one that bears no fruit and is in the process of being cut down. (Luke 13: 6-9)

As Stated Clerk, I would take every action consistent with this vision, including, specifically, prohibiting pagan ceremonies, calling for obedience to the Constitution and discipline for those who trash their ordination vows. I will prohibit GA staff from lobbying commissioners at GA, and will work to slash the number of staff attending GA. I will refuse to sign any letter to secular leaders denouncing America or the policies of her president, except as are undeniably contrary to Scripture and our Confessions. I will call for a return to prayer in schools, starting with VMI. I will strictly interpret the *Book of Order* consistently with Scripture and the *Book of Confessions*. I will call for the denomination to have its books and financial records open to all, and that they be kept in conformity to the standards of the ECFA. I will work to regain the trust that has been lost of the people in the pews as reflected by the continuous decrease in undesignated giving to the GA and withholding of GA per capita.

**My understanding of the Stated Clerk’s Role in Carrying out his Constitutional Duty to Preserve and Defend the *Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (USA)*, and support the decisions, actions, and programs of the General Assembly:**

Who could disagree that the Stated Clerk’s every loyalty is to Jesus Christ as Head of the Church? Who could argue that the Stated Clerk must express that loyalty through obedience to Scripture, the *Book of Confessions* and the *Book of Order*? Constitutionally, the Standing Rules are not on par with those three sources, and to the extent they conflict with our Constitution, they must fall. I will support the decisions, actions and programs of the General Assembly in so far as they are constitutional. We know that governing bodies err (G-1.0307) and where they may conflict with the Constitution I will work to correct those errors through our polity.

On the other hand, our present Stated Clerk has abandoned his duty to defend the Constitution. When this duty called, he was not merely absent, he was actively giving aid and comfort to those who would subvert it. The Stated Clerk must use his “bully pulpit” to hold accountable those who defy our Constitution. He must never countenance actions to destroy our faith, our confessions or our polity. His role is to lead the denomination in pious dedication to Scripture, our *Book of Confessions* and our *Book of Order*.

**The One Item of Business before this General Assembly which will most help the Church be Faithful to its Mission to Proclaim the Good News:**

The most important item of business before this Assembly is the election of the Stated Clerk. It presents our denomination with a clear choice to either continue down our present path, where we have sustained a net membership loss of some 220,000 members (nearly 9%) during the incumbent’s 8-year tenure. It is time to elect a new Stated Clerk.

When we proclaim the Good News of salvation through the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ alone, we tell the world that we have reversed course and returned to the true path of righteousness. The proclamation of the true gospel of Scriptural purity and the integrity of our *Confessions*, we will be rewarded with a reversal of our death-spiral. I pray for the day when those who view the witness of the Presbyterian Church (USA) will declare “... Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come and his bride has made herself ready. Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear.” (Revelation 19:6-8).

*I declare my intent to stand as a candidate for Stated Clerk of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and, if elected, I will serve.*