

# Lehigh Presbytery

“Strengthening & Supporting Congregations”

## Who Knows?



While on my walk yesterday, I saw a huge flock of geese, not so unusual these days, their perfect formation, the telling and encouraging honks. But these geese were not flying above me, these were floating on the surface of a large pond. Most were quite placid, almost sleeping, but others were squawking, and others more obviously paddling furiously beneath the water. These were not such majestic creatures once you got up close to them, but they were somehow more real, for their breathing and twitching and ruffling.

Revelation was written with the big picture in mind, in the midst of adversity we could hardly imagine — but not hard to imagine because it isn't real, but because it just isn't so close. John the Seer writes in a time of tribulation and suffering and death, just as our brother Sam Moussa, member of the First Presbyterian Church of Allentown and the Presbytery Committee on Shared Gifts is witnessing now, asking us to pray for the many Christians in Damascus Syria, where he is now, who are, in his words, “suffering terribly from terrorists (al-Qaida, and much worse radical groups), that shout ‘leave or be slaughtered,’ and they have slaughtered many and kicked hundreds of thousands out of their homes, and burned their churches.” The big picture of Revelation, with its hard-to-decipher words and symbols can be hard for us to understand. Sam's email to me this morning is not. When you are in the thick of it, past and present are mirrors through which we look through darkly, one colored by our perceptions, the other by our uncertainties. All we know is the now.

The evangelical preacher John Rice Holt wrote:

“Presbyterian congregations are decreasing every year, and appear as if they would dwindle into nothing. The Baptists and Methodists are at a stand. A strange apathy has seized the people... The people feel about nothing but money. As to religion the very stillness of death reigns amongst us. I can find no resemblance to this part of the country but in Ezekiel's valley of the dry bones” (quoted in *The Jefferson Lies* by David Barton).

I should mention that these words were written in 1810, and that Holt helped his friend Thomas Jefferson found the University of Virginia. And he had no idea what lay ahead, that two hundred years later these words would be just as appropriate. But between bleakness then and now was a lengthy period in which the Presbyterian church grew to over 3 million members, building hospitals and colleges, sent missionaries

worldwide, and was tied intimately to its communities. We look through a glass darkly, because many of us were Presbyterians in the Presbyterian heyday — we don't know how bleak things were before that — and the future is, I don't have to tell you, just as murky as ever.

Holt's reference to Ezekiel's valley of the dry bones is apropos, but not as he intended. Yes, the prophet sees a valley full of dry bones — just as Holt seems to — but God asks, “**Mortal, can these bones live?**” Ezekiel then shares an ultimate truth: “**O Lord GOD, you know.**” And that is our reality: only the Lord God knows if any of these bones can live. Not those of us who see signs of hope. Not those of us who see the end of presbyteries or denominations. Only God knows. It feels good to know — or think we know — but only God knows.

Tillie has shared with you the Presbytery Lead Team's intention of learning from you from our congregations, what your sense of your future and the Presbytery's future is, and then for all of us to work together to discern what the Presbytery can be and do to best support you. And because only God knows, we have to be open to all things being put on the table. We have already received some thoughtful ideas, and expect others to emerge in the days ahead. We have to be mature enough and faithful enough to hear the word of God as we understand and obey it. And patient enough to measure twice before we cut once, because some cuts, once made, can't be unmade.

We need to look beyond how pretty the geese look from a distance, to see how real they are up close, beyond the presbytery as an idea or an institution to the presbytery as real people and real faith, the kind of faith that even in uncertain times can say among the nations “The LORD is king! The world is firmly established; it shall never be moved.”

The kind of faith that allows us to say this even when it is hard to believe it, to say it even when it will cost us.

It is not the past we are about, though we have much to celebrate. It is not the future we are here to secure, because the next minute, the next day, the next year, are beyond us. We are here to worship the Eternal Now, who sees both the big picture and the intimate detail, “the Alpha and the Omega”, the One who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.

In closing, I share with you a favorite quotation from Chuck Swindoll, “We are all faced with magnificent

**PRESBYTERY OFFICERS**

*Moderator*  
**Ruling Elder**  
**Janet Ney**

*Vice Moderator*  
**Ruling Elder**  
**David Boltz**

*Chair, Presbytery Lead Team*  
**Teaching Elder**  
**R. C. Smith**

*Stated Clerk*  
**Teaching Elder**  
**Steven H. Shussett**

*Treasurer*  
**David Boltz**

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 & Stated Clerk*  
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opportunities brilliantly disguised as impossible situations.”

Our situation here and now is not unique, even if up-close things can seem impossible. But in the distance of time we may see a great escape, a faithful decision to be made. No matter how impossible things can seem, the opportunity before us is magnificent, because the opportunity before us is to hear God’s word and with-

out undue haste or undue delay, do it.

I can’t tell you what the future holds, but I can tell you who holds the future. “Mortals, can these bones live?” “O Lord GOD, *you* know.”

Glory be to the God who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty. Amen.

*Steve Shussett*  
*Teaching Presbyter & Stated Clerk*

**Helping Hands Seeking Volunteers**

The Helping Hands Care Team of Lehigh Presbytery is looking for volunteers to take part in Mission work trips to two areas affected by flooding from Tropical Storm Lee and Hurricane Sandy. They will be working in the Johnson City, New York area as well as Point Pleasant Beach, New Jersey.

As we know from the news reports these areas were hard hit and recovery and rebuilding takes time. Infrastructures have to be in place to house volunteers and the work needs to be coordinated. This is a large task. As the year progresses the New Jersey shore area affected by Hurricane Sandy will be better equipped to handle the volunteers who would like to help. Watch our website and newsletters for more trips as they are planned.

Since these two sites are local areas and can be reached in a couple of hours, volunteers have the option of helping for a day or two or staying the week. Travel will be by personal vehicles and carpooling is encouraged. Cost is \$20.00 per person per day or \$120.00 per person for the week. Meals at the site are included in this fee.

<http://lehighpresbytery.org/our-faith-community/care-teams/helping-hands/>

**JOHNSON CITY, NEW YORK - APRIL 7-20, 2013**

This will be the Helping Hands Team’s second trip to **Johnson City, New York**. The people in Johnson City were so warm and welcoming and very appreciative of all the work that was accomplished during that trip. But there is more to be done, so if you are available for a day or week, **April 7-20, 2013**, contact the Lehigh Presbytery office for the registration forms or download them from the website above.

**POINT PLEASANT BEACH, NEW JERSEY - FEBRUARY 24 - MARCH 1, 2013**

This will be the first trip for the Helping Hands Team to Point Pleasant Beach, New Jersey. The team has worked hard to plan this trip as not all the infrastructure is in place on the Jersey shore and there are not enough places that can house volunteers. We are appreciative for their hard work in planning this trip for **February 24– March 1, 2013**.

If you are interested in volunteering for a day, two days, or a week, please contact the Lehigh Presbytery office for the registration forms or download them from the website above.

If you cannot participate but would like to help finance these work trips, your donations are always welcome. You can send your check to Lehigh Presbytery, marked for Helping Hands, 710 N. Cedar Crest Blvd., Allentown, PA 18104.

## Presbytery Meeting Highlights

The November 2012 meeting of Lehigh Presbytery was held at Faith Presbyterian Church in Emmaus on a day when weather concerns led to a smaller gathering and some unexpected changes. Vice-Moderator Janet Ney presided over the meeting, which included much gratitude expressed for the church and its leadership's willingness to host on short notice.



The November worship service included the annual reading of the necrology and the installation of new officers Janet Ney as Moderator and Dave Boltz as Vice-Moderator. Steve Shussett preached on Ezekiel 37:1-14 and host pastor Tim Dooner presided at the Lord's Table.



Among those introduced as a first-time visitor was the Rev. Suzanne Brooks-Cope, whose transfer from St. Augustine Presbytery was approved earlier in the month. Teaching Elder Brooks-Cope is currently serving at the St. Matthew's United Church of Christ. Those assembled also learned that the Rev. Philip Keevil's membership has been transferred to

Upper Ohio Valley Presbytery as he has received a call to West Virginia.

The Committee on Shared Gifts presented a slate of nominations for committees in the Presbytery and service in the Synod, and thanks were expressed to the many who have completed their terms of service. Special thanks to Teaching Elder Tillie Chase, who served as the chair of the Presbytery Lead Team (Council) for two consecutive years.

Several significant matters were voted upon at this meeting. An amendment was made to the second reading of the Presbytery's Dismissal Policy. This reading was highly focused, in anticipation of broader changes in 2013. The Presbytery voted to maintain a quorum of 20% present at a congregational meeting in order to accept terms of a dismissal agreement, and that two-thirds or greater of that quorum will be necessary to accept the terms.

A second decision concerned acceptance of the 2013 budgets for the Presbytery and Camp Brainerd. The Camp's benchmarks and budget were accepted by the Presbytery. After discussion, the Presbytery budget was amended so that rather than increasing Presbytery per capita as proposed, the amount will remain at \$18.06, meaning the total per capita (with General Assembly increases and Synod remaining stable) will be \$27.13 for 2013.



The next stated meeting will be held at the Community Presbyterian Church of Mt. Bethel-Portland, on Tuesday, February 26, 2013 at 1:00 p.m.

### UPCOMING PRESBYTERY MEETINGS:

<b>Tuesday, February 26, 2013</b>	<b>1:00 p.m. (no meal)</b>	<b>Community Presbyterian Church of Mt. Bethel-Portland</b>
<b>Tuesday, April 23, 2013</b>	<b>4:00 p.m. (meal)</b>	<b>First Presbyterian Church of Allentown</b>
<b>Tuesday, June 25, 2013</b>	<b>4:00 p.m. (meal)</b>	<b>Camp Brainerd</b>
<b>Tuesday, September 24, 2013</b>	<b>4:00 p.m. (meal)</b>	<b>First Presbyterian Church of Hazleton</b>
<b>Tuesday, November 26, 2013</b>	<b>1:00 p.m. (no meal)</b>	<b>College Hill Presbyterian Church of Easton</b>

## THANK YOU

Hello Friends and Members of Lehigh Presbytery,

The Session and congregation of First Presbyterian Church would like to extend their thanks and appreciation to Teaching Presbyter, Steve Shussett, the Committee on Ministry and the Rev. Dave Duquette for their assistance in the recent pastoral transition in our church.

Steve Shussett capably filled our pulpit and provided valuable guidance during a difficult period. The Committee on Ministry acted swiftly to confirm actions vital to our church. However, our deepest thanks are reserved for Rev. Dave Duquette who acted as our moderator, pastor, and friend through the most trying of times. Dave made himself available to us without hesitation and responded to any questions, problems and decisions with a promptness that impressed all of us. His skills in family systems helped us take necessary steps towards reconciliation and healing. His constant encouragement and

willingness to listen over and over again allowed us to move forward to a healthy new beginning for our church. For these past several months he has truly shepherded us through a dark valley toward greener pastures while reminding us constantly of our hope in Jesus Christ as the one true Shepherd, Redeemer and Lord of All.

Please accept our thanks and our commendation to this body for the Christ-like service you have given on behalf of First Presbyterian Church of Reading.

In His Name,

The Ruling Elders of First Presbyterian Church, Reading, PA:

Nancy Alley	Trudy Bush (Clerk of Session)
Tony Mikes	Jim Mutimer
Sue Mutimer	John Roland
Ron Scheese	Steve Weidman

*“To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.”*

1 Cor. 12:7



*Saturday, February 16, 2013*

*Group Dance Lesson 6-7 p. m*

*Dance 7-10 p.m.*

Proceeds from the dance go to Benefit Helping Hands of Lehigh Presbytery and their relief efforts to areas impacted by Hurricane Sandy and other natural disasters.

**Tickets \$15.00 per person**—includes dancing to the live band, soda, snacks and desserts.

**Where?: Fellowship Hall  
First Presbyterian Church  
2344 Center Street, Bethlehem, PA 18017**

You can purchase tickets either through the Lehigh Presbytery office (610-391-9020) or through the office at the First Presbyterian Church in Bethlehem (610-867-5865).

## Per Capita

Presbyterians have used per capita apportionment for over 150 years to mutually share the costs of coming together to discern the Spirit’s leading for the future.

- It is how Presbyterians are trained to become better elders and ministers.
- It is how Presbyterians discern God’s call in their lives.
- It is how Presbyterians participate in the life of the wider church by serving on GA, Synod or Presbytery committees and commissions.
- It is how Presbyterians participate in the life of the Church universal as we commit ourselves to work and live in fellowship with “all persons in every nation” (*Book of Order*, G-4.0101)

The Westminster Confession says, “all believers are, therefore, under obligation to sustain the ordinances of the Christian religion where they are already established, and to contribute by their prayers, gifts, and personal efforts to the extension of the Kingdom of God throughout the whole earth” (6.058).

Per capita dollars pay for the costs of holding a General Assembly — including paying for the travel, room and board of commissioners and advisory delegates, several of whom

would not be able to afford these expenses on their own.

Per capita makes it possible for Presbyterians to govern ourselves the way we do.

Per capita makes it possible for us to maintain our historical awareness.

Our historical heritage helps us make informed decisions for the future. The Presbyterian Historical Society is our national archives and historical research center. It collects, preserves and shares the history of the American Presbyterian and Reformed tradition.

For **2013** Lehigh Presbytery has set the per capita at **\$27.13** per member with the following breakdown:

<b>General Assembly</b>	<b>\$ 6.87</b>
<b>Synod of the Trinity</b>	<b>\$ 2.20</b>
<b>Lehigh Presbytery</b>	<b>\$18.06</b>
<b>Total (per member)</b>	<b>\$27.13</b>

learn more at

<http://oga.pcusa.org/section/departments/per-capita/>

## 2013 LEHIGH PRESBYTERY MINIMUM TERMS OF CALL & HONORARIA

At the September 25, 2012 meeting of Lehigh Presbytery, the 2013 Minimum Terms of Call and Honoraria were approved.

### MINIMUM TERMS OF CALL

Salary & Housing \$42,626

Full Medical & Pension \$14,067

(at Board of Pensions 33% of Salary & housing)

Reimbursement:

Travel @ IRS approved rate \$.565/mile

Continuing Education—two weeks plus \$750

(may accumulate up to 6 weeks and \$2,250)

Vacation—1 month

### HONORARIA

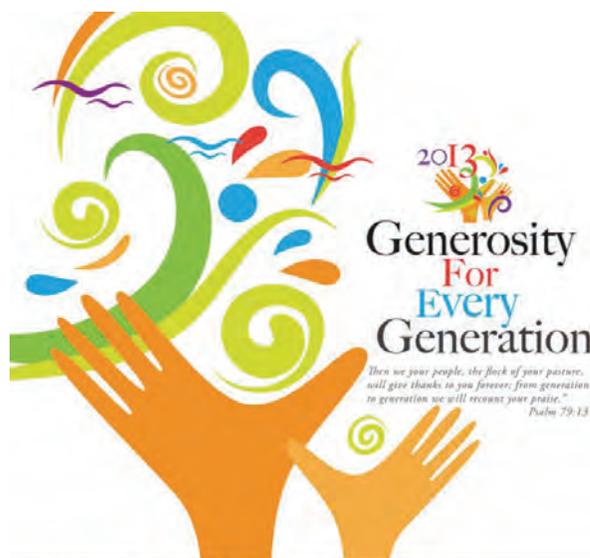
Moderate a Session Meeting or Congregational Meeting  
- \$75.00 plus travel expenses

Supply Preaching

One service \$150.00 plus travel exp.

Two services on same day—add \$50.00 to above

Mileage at IRS approved rate. \$.565/mile



March 11 - 13 | St. Louis, Missouri

Make stewardship a vibrant ministry with helpful resources that will help you teach, preach and develop a culture of generosity in your congregation. Workshops on a variety of topics related to stewardship offer you opportunities for dialogue with leaders and participants.

Deadline for early registration is February 18!

Register: [www.stewardshipkaleidoscope.org](http://www.stewardshipkaleidoscope.org)

## Is Your Congregation doing Innovative Ministry?

From 1980 until 1990, under the leadership of the Rev. Aubrey Brown, the second editor of the Presbyterian Outlook, four annual awards were presented to Richmond - area Presbyterian congregations for excellence in Christian education and outreach.

In 1991 the Presbyterian School of Christian Education began to administer these awards, which became open to all congregations in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Since then 93 churches in 28 states have received awards. The number of awards was expanded to five in 2006 with the addition of an award for ministries with the developmentally

disabled and in 2010 three older adult education ministry awards were added. Each of the awards carries a \$1,000 prize to support the congregation in its ministry.

For information and/or to apply for one of the Union Presbyterian Seminary Congregational Leadership Awards, you may download the [brochure and application](#) or request an application by sending an e-mail to April Swofford at [aswofford@upsem.edu](mailto:aswofford@upsem.edu) or call 1-800-229-2990, ext 231. The application and instructions are only available electronically.

The deadline for the 2013 Awards is FEBRUARY 15, 2013.

[http://www.upsem.edu/leadership\\_institute/congregational\\_leadership\\_awards/](http://www.upsem.edu/leadership_institute/congregational_leadership_awards/)

### Iona Community Retreat *We Are Family*

Rev. Kathleen Roney  
March 11-13, 2013

Come explore with me the dynamics of the Iona Family Group. The Family Group concept is one of the things that make Iona such a powerful community. In this workshop, we will look at the main components of the Family Group, which are peace and justice, eco-nomic responsibility, accountability and personal spiritual growth. We will be listening to our own voices as well as to experts on these subjects. There will be discussion groups and time to look inward during each discussion group. Join us for a time of personal growth and a chance to discuss the possibility of forming similar groups in the American setting.

Cost: \$345

For more information visit: [WWW.KIRKRIDGE.ORG](http://WWW.KIRKRIDGE.ORG)



**LOOKING FOR A WAY TO  
GIVE BACK AND MEET NEW PEOPLE?**

**Become a volunteer at  
Westminster Village Retirement Community  
(803 North Wahneta St. Allentown, PA).**

**For more information or to volunteer  
Contact Emily Whitmire at  
610 782-8333**

### Synod Grants

**Needing financial assistance** for education, networking, peacemaking, self-development or new initiatives?



Check out the Synod's 2013 Grants.

Go on-line at:

<http://www.syntrinity.org/143/Applications.html>

for info and to download an application. You can also call or stop in and pick one up at the Presbytery office. Please use the current application when applying.

### Holy Week 2013

Holy Week is not so far away: Sunday, March 24 to Saturday, March 30, 2013.

If you would like to schedule a Holy Week Seder that Christians will understand, contact Steve Shussett, who has led several in the Presbytery, at the Presbytery ([steve@lehighpresbytery.org](mailto:steve@lehighpresbytery.org) or 610/391-9020).

## BOARD OF PENSIONS—PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (U.S.A.)

### Church treasurers and business administrators can submit salary changes online through Benefits Connect.

Church treasurers and business administrators\* can use Benefits Connect to securely submit, confirm, and change their members' salary information. They can also submit service changes and terminations, review invoices from the past six months, and review their organization's contact information.

To register as an organization's authorized Web representative, church treasurers and business administrators must select that role in step 1 of the registration process and then complete the rest of the registration information, including establishing a user ID and password.

**Registration Process link:**

<https://benefitsconnect.pensions.org/portal/server.pt?open=514&objID=458&mode=2>

*\*Churches and employing organizations whose billing address is in the United States and are currently receiving a monthly invoice from the Board can have one authorized Web representative.*

[www.pensions.org](http://www.pensions.org)

### Updated Packet Available for Members Planning To Retire

The Board of Pensions has updated its retirement packet for active members who are planning to commence their pension benefit.

The retirement packet, which is mailed to members upon request, includes a Retirement Pension Application for Members, pertinent forms, and materials to help guide members as they plan for this important stage of life. It also includes a pension quote based on the member's expected date of retirement, birth date, and accrued pension credits.

Many of the materials in the updated retirement packet are also available on pensions.org, including

- [Planning To Retire](#), a publication that guides members through their benefit options at retirement;
- [Coverage and Benefits Options for Retired Plan Members](#), an at-a-glance chart to help members determine the coverage and benefit options they may be eligible for once they commence their pension benefit;
- [The Pension Plan Benefits Overview](#), which summarizes key aspects of the plan.

If you are an active member of the plan who is within four to six months of retirement, and you have not already received a retirement packet, call the Board of Pension at 800-773-7752 (800-PRESPLAN) and speak to a member service representative to request one.

### Campbell Lecture

**MARCH 12, 2013 ~ 4:00 PM AT DESALES UNIVERSITY**

All lay and clergy leaders are invited to the annual Campbell Lectures on Christian Unity, celebrating the church universal's march toward Jesus' prayer "that we may all be one" in Christ. Registration to start soon.

Speaker: Steven R. Harmon of Gardner-Webb University School of Divinity

Theme: The Pilgrim Church and the Ecumenical Future

Lecture 1: "The Dialogical Theology of a Pilgrim Church"

Lecture 2: "Toward a Narrative-Christological Ecclesiology"

**Lehigh County Conference of Churches**

[www.lehighchurches.org](http://www.lehighchurches.org) 610-433-6421

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**PRESBYTERIAN YOUTH TRIENNIUM**  
**July 16-20, 2013 • Purdue University**

[www.presbyterianyouthtriennium.org](http://www.presbyterianyouthtriennium.org)

It is time to register for the Presbyterian Youth Triennium which is being held at Purdue University in West Lafayette, Indiana from July 16-20, 2013.

The Presbyterian Youth Triennium is an event for high school youth (entering freshmen through graduating seniors). This program includes daily worship services, games, small groups, daily presentations and activities developed around the theme "I Am".

Cost per person is **approximately** \$850.00 and this includes housing, meals, conference t-shirt, registration fees, transportation and overnight lodging to and from the Triennium. Currently we are looking to travel by chartered bus with other presbyteries. We won't know the exact cost until closer to the deadline date.

Applications and information have been sent to the Lehigh Presbytery church offices. You can also contact the Presbytery office or download one from our website:

<http://lehighpresbytery.org/news-events/youth-triennium/>