

March 20, 2024 | Waynesboro, Virginia | *a newsletter supplement*

The quest for a new confession

The 2022 General Assembly commissioned a committee to consider a new confession.

What has the group been up to?

By Erin Dunagin

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has always been a denomination that values theological reflection and the development of confessional statements that guide its members in matters of faith and ethics. The 225th General Assembly initiated a process asking that a new confession be considered based on a confession generated by the Synod of the Northeast.

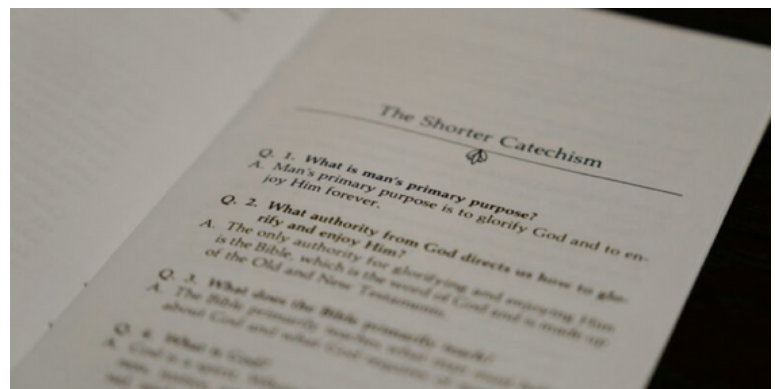


Photo by Skyler Gerald on *Unsplash*

Jack Haberer, a former Presbyterian Outlook editor and member of the committee, shared some insights on the process surrounding the potential for a new confession within the PC(USA).

The slow start of the special committee

“The title of the committee, ‘The Special Committee to Consider a New Confession,’ is strikingly ambiguous,” Haberer said. It reflects their desire for the assembly to examine and refine the confession’s language, intending to create a confession that reflects their intention and spirit after what will likely be a seven- to eight-year process. Even the process of forming the committee has been a slow one. It’s taken 15 months after the 2022 General Assembly (GA) for the committee to even come together. Currently, they have had one in-person gathering, and they are meeting online for their regular discussions. For 2024, the committee will meet monthly.

Haberer praises the confession generated by the Synod of the Northeast, which has been offered to the GA as a comprehensive package. He describes the language as brilliant, emphasizing its focus on justice and its call to address and repent for issues such as racism, White supremacy, sexism and ableism. He admires the careful choice of words that make the confession well-worded and compelling. “I see it as a very strong statement about the ethics and life of the church,” he said. However, Haberer notes that the confession does lean more toward being a statement of Christian ethics and justice rather than a core statement of Christian theology or soteriology.

Continued on p.3

OUR WORSHIP CHANNELS

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Music Notes for Sunday 24 March

This week, we celebrate Jesus' entrance into Jerusalem, his pathway strewn with palms. On Palm Sunday, the opening and closing hymns will be some of the most familiar for this holy day: *All Glory, Laud and Honor* (Valet will ich der geben) and *Hosanna, Loud Hosanna* (Ellacombe). Two more settings of the Hosanna text will be sung for the Introit and Anthem. The Hosanna introit is part of the *Missa Brevis* by William Mathias (1934-1994), composed in 1973 for the 80th Patronal Festival of St. Matthew's Northampton, England. The Hosanna anthem was written by Christian Gregor (1723-1801). It is one of over 300 hymns penned by the Moravian composer and bishop, known as the "Father of Moravian Music."



Mathias.

227th General Assembly, continued

Unlike many of the PC(USA)'s existing confessions, which delve deeply into theological matters, this one seems to emphasize ethical considerations.

Is this a confessional moment?

“The task for the committee is really to ask, ‘Is this a confessional moment in the life of the church?’” said Haberer. “We establish confessions and declarations when it just has to be said, when we have to go on the record about something that is so monumental either in the development of our theology, like the Nicene Creed, or in the life of the church as it was in Barman for Nazi Germany and Belhar for Apartheid,” he continued. These were moments when the church deemed it necessary to express its convictions in a confessional form.

However, he also points out that there have been instances in the denomination's history when declarations were made without resulting in a formal confession. One such moment was in declaring slavery to be heresy in the 1850s, which split the church North and South but did not actually lead to a new confession being written. The key question, according to Haberer, is whether this current situation merits a full-fledged confession or a declaration to guide the church's stance on pressing issues.

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“This is an important question for the committee to consider and I don't know what the right answer is, but I am all ears to my colleagues,” he said.

The challenge of evolving language

Haberer acknowledges the challenge posed by the rapid evolution of language, particularly in the era of the internet and artificial intelligence. He cites the difficulty of determining which pronouns to use in inclusive language and warns against painting the church into a corner with a confession that may become outdated due to linguistic shifts.

He commends the Synod of the Northeast statement for handling this matter effectively, not restricting future discussions and adaptations. It highlights the importance of carefully selecting words in an era of language evolution.

Regardless of the committee's decision about the new confession, the GA's willingness to contemplate its adoption reflects a commitment to addressing contemporary social and ethical issues amidst the challenges and important questions raised as the church moves forward in its journey of faith and social justice.



Erin Dunigan is an ordained evangelist and teaching elder in the PC(USA). She is a graduate of Princeton Theological Seminary, and she serves as a photographer, writer and communications consultant.

Maundy Thursday



at FPC

Join us for a simple meal
and Communion, March 28, noon.

Palm Sunday Worship:

Psalm 118: 19-29

Mark 14: 1-11

Sermon: *A God among us.*

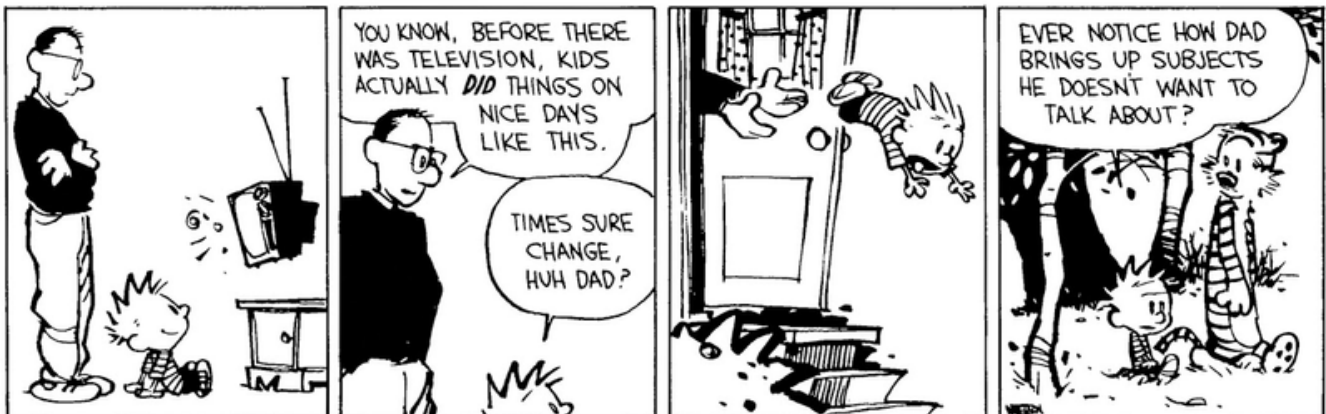
Better Together Bible Study

Monday, March 25, 2024
Finley Memorial Presbyterian Church
1:00 - 2:00 p.m.

Join John Tindall in exploring
the great stories and themes
of the Bible

This week's topic:
Judges

calvin and Hobbes



This Week in History.



The Kingdom of Italy is proclaimed.
March 17, 1861



The Congress of the Confederate States adjourns for the last time.
March 18, 1865



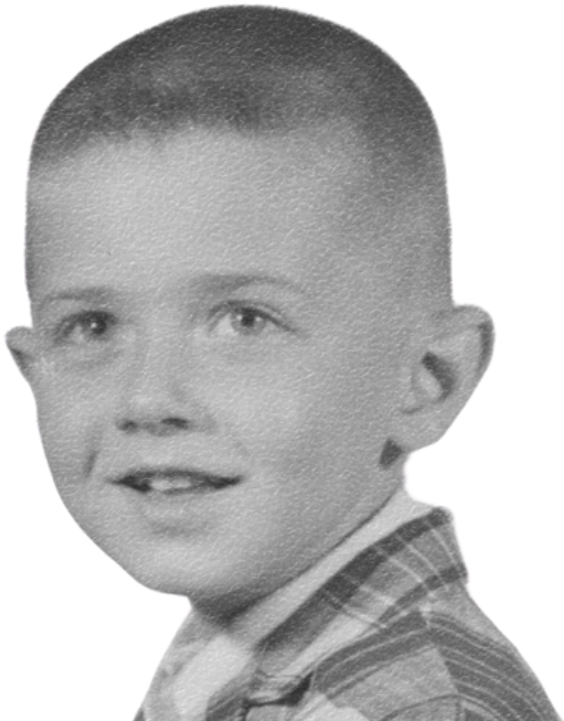
Governor Fred B. Balzar signs Assembly Bill 98, legalizing gambling in Nevada.
March 19, 1931



The Fleet Collier *USS Jupiter* is recommissioned as *USS Langley (CV-1)*, the first United States Navy aircraft carrier.
March 20, 1922

MOONDOG CORONATION BALL
CLEVELAND ARENA
 3717 EUCLID AVENUE - CLEVELAND, OHIO
FRIDAY NITE, MAR. 21
 10 P.M. to 2 A.M.
 IN PERSON FEATURING THESE SENSATIONAL STARS IN PERSON
PAUL WILLIAMS ★ **TINY GRIMES**
 HUCKLEBUCKERS ROCKIN' HIGHLANDERS
THE DOMINOES ★ **DANNY COBB**
 MANY OTHERS! ★ VARETTA DILLARD ★ MANY OTHERS!
 THE MOST TERRIBLE BALL OF THEM ALL! **THE MOONDOG RADIO SHOW** WITH ALAN FREED IN PERSON BROADCAST OVER WJW DIRECT FROM THE BALL THE MOST TERRIBLE BALL OF THEM ALL!
 Adv. Sale Tickets \$1.50 including All Taxes Adm. at Door \$1.75
 TICKETS NOW ON SALE IN CLEVELAND AT RECORD RENDEZVOUS, 308 PROSPECT AND AT RICHMAN'S AND THE ARENA BOX OFFICE
 ALSO AT MANY LEADING RECORD SHOPS IN OTHER NORTHERN OHIO CITIES
SMITH & BETHCO - CLEVELAND, OHIO

Cleveland, OH Disc Jockey Alan Freed presents the Moondog Coronation Ball, often called the first rock and roll concert.
March 21, 1952



Patrick Pettit is born in Pittsburgh, PA.
March 22, 1963



Tsar Paul I of Russia is struck with a sword, then strangled, and finally trampled to death inside his bedroom at St. Michael's Castle. Unsurprisingly, he died.
March 23, 1801