



FORMER MODERATOR'S SERVICE CELEBRATED WITH AWARD

Former Synod Moderator Alice Olson was given the Distinguished Leadership Award by the [New Jersey Council of Churches](#) as part of the program of the Council's 65th annual meeting dinner, held in Hazlet, NJ on May 21, 2009.



Alice became a member of the New Jersey Council of Churches Board of Directors nearly 30 years ago. She has served as secretary and treasurer; but her most consistent service has been through the Public Policy Working Group. Alice, who is an elder at the First Presbyterian Church of Ewing, NJ (New Brunswick Presbytery), was accompanied to the dinner by her husband Ray, who himself is a

former Moderator of the Northeast.

The Rev. Michael Kinnamon, General Secretary of the National Council of Churches, was the keynote speaker at the annual meeting. [Click here](#) for a summary of his Twelve Ecumenical Challenges.

GOD IN CALAMITY: MADAGASCAR IN CRISIS

“God help us as we watch our friends and their families begin to go hungry.” That was the last sentence from a detailed update on the situation in Madagascar sent on May 21 by PC (USA) Mission worker Dan Turk, two months after a coup d'état drove leaders of the former government, and some leaders of the Church of Jesus Christ in Madagascar, into hiding. In fact, the Synod of the Northeast (an international partner with the Church of Jesus Christ [FJKM] in Madagascar), assisted church President Lala Rasendrasasina and his family to take temporary refuge in the United States earlier this spring.

The Synod's Madagascar Partnership Team has been in touch with the Office of the General Assembly and the Presbyterian United Nations Office towards coordinating a response by which several issues might be addressed, in-



cluding 1) a focus on human rights abuses by the take-over regime; 2) the restoration of legitimate government and democracy; 3) the symbiotic nature of church-state life in Madagascar, and how difficult it becomes for a church not clearly differentiated from the government to speak with a prophetic voice; 4) the ways in which both people's freedoms and options become increasingly limited in poor countries whose wealth comes principally through a particularly commodity, rather than through the productivity and creativity of the people (read Friedman's *Hot, Flat and Crowded* for more on this). Recently oil was discovered in Madagascar. 5) Infrastructure fragility and degradation that creates increased human suffering. Madagascar, already poor, risks spiraling more deeply into poverty while the pockets of the powerful are lined.

Read the advisory on Madagascar published by the [PC\(USA\) Office of the General Assembly](#) and [Dan Turk's recent observations](#) about fear and repression, and the hope that still springs from the ministry of the church.

Prayer requests from Dan and Elizabeth Turk: 1) for the church that seeks to be light and salt in such a difficult time, finding a way to speak up in the face of injustice while not being divided over politics; 2) for those who are going hungry now and in the future; 3) that people will not turn to lawlessness in their despair; 3) for children, the most innocent; 4) that people will be able to express their differences without violence; 5) for meetings being held to determine the future of the country – for inclusiveness of all parties rather than for the good of a few in the country, or among those in the international community; 6) wisdom for PC (USA) Missionaries including Dan and Elizabeth, who are in charge of programs where the needs are exceeding the resources; that those who are able to give will be generous.

As part of the Synod's partnership with the FJKM, if you would like to make a donation, make your check out to the Synod of the Northeast, earmark it for Madagascar Poverty Ministry; the synod will make sure it gets to people in need.

FROM GUTTENBURG TO GOOGLE

E **M** **I** From Guttenburg to Google -- this is one way to conceptualize the challenges of the twenty-first century, for the church and its leaders, that Leonard Sweet, the keynote speaker to Early Ministry Institute (EMI), opened up for people relatively new to ministry in the Synod of the Northeast as they gathered

at the Stony Point Center the first week in May. This year's theme, *Engaging the Other: Pentecost Spirit for a Changing World*, challenged participants to reflect on their lives and ministries in relation to a changing world, to consider how to engage those changes as ambassadors and disciples to Christ. Prior to the Institute, each participant received a copy of Sweet's *The Gospel According to Star-*

bucks as food for thought.

Thirty-Seven pastors from fourteen presbyteries participated in the three year program designed to encourage, equip and support persons in their first call to parish ministry.

[Click here](#) to read more details.

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THE PROPHETIC VOICE OF ADVOCATES: SPEAKING TRUTH TO POWER A REPORT BY REV. JAMES POINSETT

As Christians we are called to speak truth to the powers and principalities: not only do we have the right to speak out on legislative issues, but it is also part of baptismal calling.

This Spring, the New York State Council of Churches' (NYSCC) Collegium had its annual meeting with the Governor and state legislative leaders in Albany, and our annual meeting with the New York congressional delegation in Washington, DC.

In March, we met with Gov. Paterson and the



legislative leadership to discuss the budget, prison,

immigration issues, advocating for funding for food banks and other services for the poor; the repeal of Rockefeller drug laws; funding for prison higher education programs; and inclusion of migrant farm workers in the State's Workers' Compensation program.

In April, the NYSCC met with members of New York's congressional delegation to discuss a variety of issues including the budget and poverty, immigration, and healthcare. We lobbied for passage of the President's budget resolution and for an updated process to measure poverty; urged a comprehensive immigration reform bill that provides a humane earned pathway to legal status; and advocated an affordable accessible quality healthcare system for all.

It is important to our witness that we bring our involvement in ministries of social jus-

tice to the attention of our lawmakers. Every time that I mentioned one of our presbytery's involvement in specific ministries, the Governor and legislative leaders took notice. Members of Congress had their interest piqued whenever they heard that congregations whose members they represent were addressing some of these issues.

All of our congregations and presbyteries work to make concrete connections between the message of the Gospel and the ministries of justice. All of these ministries are impacted or assisted, directly or indirectly, by what happens in state capitols and in Washington. Councils of Churches are among the groups that help congregations and denominations connect our ministries to the government policies and decisions that shape our world.

To read Jim's entire report, [click here](#).

BLOOMFIELD GRADUATES PRAISE THE COLLEGE

It was stunning to listen to the dozen students who told their stories of hope, dreams and achievement as they approached graduation from Bloomfield College, the only Presbyterian-related college within the bounds of the Synod of the Northeast. They told their stories of triumph, often through hardship, at the annual President's Dinner on the evening prior to graduation. For instance, two young women each spoke of their having no hope of being able to afford a college education, but being welcomed by college staff, given hope and a scholarship that bore fruit. Another student spoke of the high quality demanded by a professor, whom she thanked for his care and critical eye. "When he praises something you do, then you know it means something," she said. More than one woman with children spoke of the chal-

lenge of going to school and raising a family. Several students took five or six year to graduate because of the need to balance their education and personal circumstances; all spoke of the support they received and the utter inability to fail with such support behind them. These were moving tributes, whether students were graduating in the nursing education program, from the graphics arts program, or with a concentration in finance. Hearing their stories made one proud that Bloomfield is affiliated with the Presbyterian Church, and that the school honors the values associated with being a member institution of the Association of Presbyterian Colleges and Universities <http://www.presbyteriancolleges.org/aboutpresbycolleges.htm>.

Through a total of \$40,000 from general mission, the Synod of the Northeast contributes to the spiritual leadership and nurture on campus through its chaplaincy program.

To read President Richard Levao's address to the graduates, [click here](#).



AUBURN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY ELECTS KATHARINE RHODES HENDERSON TO SUCCEED BARBARA WHEELER AS PRESIDENT

On February 19th, [Auburn Theological Seminary's](#) Board of Trustees elected Katharine Rhodes Henderson President of the school. She will begin as President on July 1st, succeeding Barbara G. Wheeler, who has been President for 30 years and is the first woman elected President of a theological institution. She will become the full-time director of the Center for Study of



staff, she was the parish associate at the First

Theological Education at Auburn.

Katharine began at Auburn in 1994 as Executive Vice President. Before joining the Auburn

Presbyterian Church in New York.

As Vice President, she launched Auburn Media and Face to Face/Faith to Faith along with several other educational programs

Katherine is the author of *God's Troublemakers: How Women of Faith are Changing the World*.

[Click here](#) to read Auburn's press release.