

Convocation Report

While I'm not getting to you before the media, I did want to report to you the historic events at the New Wineskins Convocation in Orlando, Florida Thursday and Friday, February 8-9. Over 500 delegates from 130 of the 153 member churches of the New Wineskins Association attended the meeting, which was held at the First Presbyterian Church of Orlando.

In a God-pleasing way, you should be proud of the group that represented you and the EPC. Our team consisted of four moderators (Paul Heidebrecht, Bill Meyer, Bill Vogler and John Adamson), GA staff (Ed McCallum, Janet Bain, Jacky Gatliff, Jeff Chadwick, Marc Santom and myself), Long Range Planning Committee members Nate Atwood and Mike Moses, and Bob Garment and Woody Johnson of the Florida presbytery. After they departed late Friday afternoon, I was swarmed by New Wineskins people who wanted me to know how much they appreciated how friendly, caring, helpful and knowledgeable our team was to them.

The Convocation's main event took place late Friday afternoon. Delegates voted unanimously to approve their Strategy Team's report, which includes two "faithful options" for the future: 1) to remain in the PCUSA, and 2) to depart the PCUSA and seek admission in the EPC through the Transitional Presbytery we'll be voting on in June at our General Assembly. Of all the pastors I spoke with, only one said his church was "not prepared to depart anytime soon" (that is, within the next 18 months).

The end of the session at which the vote was taken was memorable: we sang "A Mighty Fortress" with an energy and fervor I have rarely experienced in my life.

I would like to clarify a couple of quotes that appeared in *Layman Online* articles that featured Paul Heidebrecht and myself. In "We have come to stand with you," Moderator of EPC tells delegates," Paul is quoted as saying, "We intend to create a provisional presbytery for up to five years." He used the term "transitional presbytery."

In "EPC interested in pursuing possible alignment with New Wineskins churches, Stated Clerk says," I am quoted as saying that my first priority as Stated Clerk is to "cast and mold a new vision that God has for the Evangelical Presbyterian Church in the 21st century - a church that is missional in outlook." I said that my first priority was to "help cast and promote the new vision we believe God has for the Evangelical Presbyterian Church in the 21st century - a church that is missional in nature."

I anticipate filing a fuller report with you in my next EPNews column.