

**PERSONNEL COMMITTEE REPORT**

**Bill Martin, Chair**

**July 29, 2014**

The Personnel Committee approved a request to create a new volunteer position with the job title Presbytery Parish Associate. The position will allow qualified volunteers to assist Presbytery staff working with churches in transition or crisis. This position will be unpaid but receive travel and business expense reimbursement as approved by the General Presbyter.

Robert Ayala was approved by the Personnel Committee to serve as Presbytery Parish Associate for Yancey County and specifically the Paint Gap Church. (FF Attachment 1)

# FF ATTACHMENT 1

## PERSONAL HISTORY/FAITH JOURNEY

Robert Ayala

As I thought about writing this personal history I found that I did not have any early childhood memories that did not include attending church. I was born in Brooklyn, NY and from infancy was part of Spanish Speaking Assembly of God congregations in Brooklyn; La Luz del Mundo (Light of the World) and Brentwood, NY, Primera Iglesia Pentecostal de Brentwood. (First Pentecostal Church of Brentwood)

My childhood and youth was centered on church worship and activities and I can recall attending church 5 days a week. On Sundays we attended Sunday school followed by a brief (1 hour) devotional service but the main worship service was held on Sunday Evenings. As a youth I could not understand how other Christians "got away" with only attending one service a week.

Both my mother and father were raised in the Pentecostal tradition and they met and later married at La Luz de Mundo. I have two uncles who are Pentecostal ministers, two cousins who are Pentecostal ministers; one is a Bishop with the Church of God. So at family reunions I am sort of a novelty, and there is a dear aunt who has serious concerns about my ultimate fate.

My wife Becky and I met at Oral Roberts University in 1970. I was a senior and she was a freshman. Becky was raised a Presbyterian and grew up in the Newdale Presbyterian Church which we now attend. After graduation in 1971 I served in the Army for three years and Becky and I married in 1975. From 1974-1980 I held several positions in the field of Corrections the last being that of Deputy Warden of the Joseph Harp Correctional Center in Lexington, Oklahoma. In 1977 I also completed a Master Degree in Criminal Justice.

Early in our married life Becky and I discussed what church we should attend. After much thought we agreed to "compromise" so "we" decided on the Presbyterian Church. My real Presbyterian journey began in 1978 when Becky and I became members of First United Presbyterian Church of Purcell Oklahoma.

I remember the pastor conducting two series of sermons that were pivotal in my appreciation of our Presbyterian Worship. The first series was on the Apostles' Creed and the second on the Lord's Prayer. I had grown up in a worship tradition that did not include either in regular worship. After hearing those sermons and participating in worship which included these elements they became part of my worship life. Sometimes as they are recited during worship I wonder if those around me are as thrilled with what they are saying as I am.

In 1979, the wonderful folks at First Presbyterian Church Purcell, Oklahoma honored me by electing me to serve as an ordained ruling elder. This is one of my most cherished memories and I have tried to take very seriously this life-long commitment of service. In 1980, Becky and I moved to North Carolina with our 18 month old daughter Ali, a year later our son Jonathan was born.

We attended North Hills Presbyterian Church in Salisbury where the Rev. Bill Adams was the Pastor. Bill loved to preach on the Pauline Epistles, and listening to his sermons made me love them too. On one

# FF ATTACHMENT 1

Sunday the sermon topic was the Grace of God. I found I was moved to tears finally beginning to comprehend how much God loves us and accepts us as we are. That was liberating and since then I have placed my trust and confidence in God to help and guide me into maturing faith. I understand my faith as in process and always reforming.

During my years in Salisbury (1980-1988) I worked as a community college instructor and was able to attend Southeastern Baptist Seminary as a part time student for a year and a half before having to drop out due to a change in work schedule. I remember that time of study as the most stimulating and rewarding educational experience of my life.

In the summer of 1988 I entered training at the N.C. State Bureau of Investigation Academy and was sworn in as a Special Agent in January 1989. The next fifteen years I served as the SBI Agent for Yancey and Mitchell Counties. For a number of years before my retirement from the North Carolina State Bureau of Investigation I became very interested in the School of the Laity Program of our Presbytery. I wanted very much to attend but knew that being on call for work on weekends would not permit attending regularly.

In 2004 I retired from the SBI and accepted a job with the North Carolina Medical Board as an Investigator and was assigned to the Wilmington, NC area and I lived in Southport, NC. While in Southport I became a member of the Southport Presbyterian Church. In 2006, I was reassigned to serve as the Medical Board's Investigator for Western NC and returned to the Burnsville, NC area and to Newdale Presbyterian Church.

In 2010 I completed the two year course of study of the School of the Laity, and I am presently on my second term three year as a member of the Presbytery Committee on Ministry. I hope to serve our Presbytery as an Associate and have the opportunity to work with some of our wonderful small churches and participating with them in discerning the work of the Holy Spirit among them.

# FF ATTACHMENT 1

## STATEMENT OF FAITH

ROBERT AYALA

I believe in God the Father Creator of all things and all beings. I believe God takes the initiative in calling us to him. He loves us and is continually working to draw us to him in a loving relationship. He called and chose an ancient people known as Hebrews to reveal himself. He demonstrated his steadfast love for them by his acts, his words and his law. At the appointed time, "in the fullness of time" he revealed himself in the person of Jesus. .

The Sovereign God Creator chose to be born into the world He created and lived among his creation as fully human and fully divine. He experienced life as any other human beings and as such he is our perfect High Priest. God in Jesus Christ the Son revealed his character and proclaimed a message of love, grace and reconciliation for all humankind. He called and continues to call others to follow him and empowers them by the Holy Spirit to proclaim this message.

Jesus was rejected by the religious and secular authorities of his day and suffered the pain of death at their hands. The power of death however could not defeat him and the man Jesus by the power of God the Holy Spirit rose from the dead. His resurrection now liberates and frees all who believe and trust in Him from the power of death and sin.

I recognize sin is a powerful reality in our world which permeates and influences our individual lives, our communities and our social, political and economic systems. Sin is the pervasive lie that we as human beings can be self-sufficient and bring about progress and change on our own. Sin is not acknowledging that we are part of God's creation and not creators. Sin is the failure to trust that the Creator is still and always has been involved with his creation and will fulfill his purposes. Sin most of all is the failure to trust in God's limitless love and trusting our lives to His care.

Through Christ we can by faith be reconciled to God the Creator making us children of His Kingdom. God calls us to live this life of faith in community as part of His church. As a community of faith we proclaim God's grace and forgiveness and the promise and hope of life eternal with God our Creator and loving Father. In response to God's love toward us we are called to love and serve others.

I believe that we are guided in our faith by the sacred scriptures of the Old and New Testament. I believe that they bear a true and faithful witness of God's faithfulness and steadfast love in reaching out to humankind. Scriptures serves as our "rule of faith and conduct." in living our lives faithfully, in humility and in service to God and others. I believe that scripture is transformed into the Word of God, by means of the Holy Spirit when read and understood by the Church through the lens of the life and message of Jesus Christ.

I believe that part of "working out our salvation with fear and trembling" requires engaging and understanding scripture first within its original historical, cultural and political context and prayerfully, carefully within the context of our faith community listen as the Spirit speaks and applies it to our time.