

The Layman

Vol. 47, No. 4 / Fall 2014

RAISING THE STANDARD
A publication of the Presbyterian Lay Committee

www.layman.org

The PLC isn't going anywhere, they're going everywhere

The Layman

In these times of great change both in the denominational and journalistic environments, the Presbyterian Lay Committee remains committed to our mission of informing and equipping Christians to live faithfully and stand firm in a culture of accommodation. To that end, the PLC is in the midst of a strategic restructuring, which calls for the cessation of the publication of the print edition of *The Layman*.

As PLC President, Carmen Fowler LaBerge alluded to in the summer edition of paper, "we're not going anywhere, we're going everywhere." That means that although we cease production of *The Layman* in newspaper form, we will

Raising The Standard

continue to provide resources for Presbyterians and other Christians through an expansive approach that will include a myriad of digital offerings and opportunities to engage.

"Remarkable advances in publishing technology and the advent of social media have not only transformed the means by which ministries publish their material, but also the pace at which people expect to receive news and information," said LaBerge. "When you also take into account the shifting theological and denominational landscapes in which

the PLC operates, the board of directors determined that now is the time to make strategic plans for the future."

The Presbyterian Lay Committee began in 1965 when the founders saw the eroding effects of liberalism and launched *The Layman* as a means of sounding the alarm to other lay people in the church. Today, the alarm sounds from many quarters and the PLC is one voice among a choir of concerned conservatives collectively seeking to awaken the larger Church.

The strategic restructuring includes relocating the office to Franklin, Tenn., building a new staff team, and launching new ministry initiatives designed to build a platform for the unique voice of *The Layman* to be heard more broadly by more people.

NEW

Contact information:

Mailing address:
PO Box #682247
Franklin, TN 37068

Street address:
1220 W. Main Street
Franklin, TN 37064

Phone Number:
(615) 591-4388

Final Print Issue
of *The Layman*
visit www.layman.org
for news and resources

PLC intends to SAVOR: Taste and see that the Lord is good

The Layman

As part of its strategic move, the Presbyterian Lay Committee plans to be SAVOR-mission focused – drawing from a culinary metaphor that its mission will be packed with positive attitudes and action which lead people to "taste and see that the Lord is good" (Ps. 34:8).

"The Lord Himself is a feast," said PLC President Carmen Fowler LaBerge. "But Christ's disciples are also to be characterized as having savor: 'You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its savor, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet' (Matt. 5:13). And, 'We are unto God a sweet savor of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish' (2 Cor. 2:15). Accordingly, we want people to remember the PLC because of its SAVOR."

In terms of the PLC mission, the acronym SAVOR stands for:

S society
A apologetics
V vocatio
O orthodoxy
R remnant

In the pages that follow, the Biblical basis for SAVOR will be spelled out (page 6) and each of the ministry areas will be explained (pages 7-11).

These new strategic initiatives are intended to "expand our resources and reach outward to Christians in a diversity of denominations and congregations. Our denominational focus will be shifting away from the PCUSA, but our Gospel focus has never been more clear or resolute," said LaBerge.

The PLC: From 1965 until now

The Layman

The Presbyterian Lay Committee began in 1965 with elders who loved the Lord Jesus Christ. They loved the Presbyterian Church. They loved the Bible. They loved the Reformed heritage.

But in 1965 they were faced with one of the biggest issues ever confronted by Presbyterians in the United States: A new confession. There were noble reasons for the emerging declaration. The civil rights movement and the war in Vietnam were lessons that the Church must be involved in society and culture.

But many believed that the initial draft was seriously flawed. They feared that the theology of Augustine, Luther and Calvin was being eroded by a new social agenda, encapsulated in the new phraseology, "The Scriptures are nevertheless the words of men"

That phrase drew the battle line for the Presbyterian elders who first met in the office of George Champion, then president of Chase Manhattan Bank.

They were shocked that the Bible was being reduced to everyday literature. At a time when "God-is-dead" theology was campus and seminary chic, the elders feared that the new confession would have a debilitating effect on the Presbyterian Church.

The minutes from that January 29, 1965, meeting stated that "Governor Langlie acted as temporary chairman and called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. with prayer."

The following were elected to the Executive Committee: Roger Hull, Chairman, Paul Cupp, John Humphrey, Governor Arthur Langlie, Hugh McMillan,



One of the earliest photos of the PLC board. The photo was taken in the Sun Oil office in New York City.

Clarence McGuire and J. Howard Pew.

The name, Presbyterian Lay Committee was approved on May 12, 1965.

The first Lay Committee members were lay leaders of the church and leaders in corporate America. They believed that decency and fair play would help their cause. Thus, they respectfully requested that the denomination's leadership publicize their concern about the new confession. Their request was denied. They offered to buy space in denominational publications to

for a *Book of Confessions*.

The 1967 General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church rejected the Lay Committee's view and approved the Confession of '67. Many of the original members of the PLC would see the predicted results: Swift and massive loss of members, de-emphasis of evangelism and mission and invasive Biblical illiteracy.

But they did not take consolation in being prophetically correct. They would not stand by idly and watch the Presbyterian Church disintegrate. They believed God had required their faithfulness and commitment in whatever direction the denomination was heading.

The Layman

In 1968, the Lay Committee dug deeper and began paying for a bold new strategy. *The Layman* was born. At its peak, *The Layman* was mailed to 500,000 Presbyterians worldwide. Its voice was strong and consistent. Critics who would reshape the denomination to reflect cultural and social values rather than Biblical ethics were frequently lambasted. *The Layman's* cover

"The 1967 Confession does not ring true. It is so filled with ambiguities, undefined statements ... and obscure language that it becomes possible to rationalize almost any point of view the reader seeks to establish," their ad said. They even advertised a product to sell (as a loss leader): \$1

The PLC: From 1965 until now

God's Holy Spirit to transform sinners even today.

As congregations determined to leave the denomination that in so many ways has left them, the Lay Committee became aware that help was needed in the area of church property law. With the publication of *A Guide to Church Property Law* (now in its second edition) and a frequently-updated database of legal information at www.layman.org for churches seeking dismissal, the Lay Committee serves churches across the country who find themselves in conflict with the denomination that asserts a trust over all local church property.

To further assist those congregations the Lay Committee has partnered with highly qualified law firms across the country to file *amicus* briefs before the state supreme courts in California, Georgia, Indiana, Oregon, South Carolina and Texas.

Parker T. Williamson

The Rev. Parker T. Williamson was the editor of *The Layman* and Chief Executive Officer of the PLC for many years.

His disillusionment with the national denomination began in the 1980s.

Then a rising national leader and a member of the General Assembly Mission Board of the Presbyterian Church, U.S. (PCUS), a defining moment in Williamson's career came with a hail of gunfire.

During the racially intense civil war in Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), guerrillas shot down an unarmed plane. Christian missionaries were among the survivors murdered after the crash.

Williamson was a hunger action enabler for the PCUS mission board, which was the equivalent of the reunited denomination's Presbyterian Mission Board. Williamson traveled from church to church to raise money for the denomination's hunger program.

But unknown to Williamson during his fund-raising trips was that the mission board had politicized the hunger campaign. Besides giving the money he had raised for food and technical assistance, the board, through the World Council of Churches, was financing guerrilla warfare under the guise of "attacking hunger's root causes."



W. Robert Stover, speaks at the dedication of the PLC's office building, named in his honor in 1998.

The Rhodesian guerrillas who shot down the plane had been recipients of Presbyterian mission money. "When I found out, I went ballistic," Williamson said. "I felt I had betrayed Presbyterians by my participation in that program."

Williamson began exhorting Presbyterians to oppose the denomination's support of political movements that were bankrolled under the banner of liberation theology.

Two members of The Presbyterian Lay Committee heard Williamson speak at a conference on world hunger. One thing led to another. In 1989, Williamson was named editor. In 1997, he became executive editor of the newspaper and chief operating officer of the Lay Committee.

Williamson retired Dec. 31, 2005 and is now a consultant for the PLC and is Editor Emeritus of *The Layman*.

Carmen Fowler LaBerge

Carmen Fowler LaBerge heads the ministry of the Presbyterian Lay Committee as its President and Executive Editor of its publications, including *The Layman*. Her blogs, articles and commentaries are accessible at www.layman.org.

Ordained in the Presbyterian Church (USA) in 1993 and having served churches in Texas, Georgia, Florida and South Carolina, Fowler LaBerge set aside her ordination

in 2011 after the denomination began openly ordaining those who do not limit their sexual expression to fidelity in the context of marriage between a man and a woman or chastity in singleness. Asked about her rationale, she commented, "I could not in good conscience continue as an officer in a denomination that openly ordained those whose behavior so clearly fails to conform to God's revealed Word in the Scriptures. Ordination in the PCUSA is an act of the whole church. Knowing that if I were present, I could not participate in the laying on of hands of such an ordinand, I concluded that asking to be removed from the ordered ministry was the right step to take."

A widely known leader among Presbyterian Church (USA) renewal organizations, Fowler LaBerge served as executive director of the Presbyterian Coalition in 2002 and 2003 and moderator of the New Wineskins Association of Churches in 2008-2009. She has taught seminars and delivered keynote speeches in dozens of states, Israel and Malawi. Her pastoral experience spans the spectrum from the 5,600-member First Presbyterian Church in Orlando, Fla., to the 100- member Rabun Gap Presbyterian Church in the mountains of northeast Georgia. Fowler LaBerge earned a degree in business administration from the University of Florida ('90) and a master of divinity degree from Princeton Theological Seminary ('93). At Princeton she served the seminary and her fellow students as the student body president.

Fowler LaBerge resides in Kingston Springs, Tenn. with her husband, Jim. They wed in May 2011.

PLC history was compiled by Board Member Robert B. Fish and Layman articles.



The PLC Board of Directors in 1980.

Presbyterian Lay Committee

Chairman/CEO
Forrest A. Norman III*

Vice chairman
Lloyd J. Lunceford*

Secretary
Joshua A. Dobi*

Treasurer
Lee H. Gery*

Board of Directors

Stephen G. Brown
Constance K. Elliott*

Robert B. Fish*
Matthew A. Johnson*

Raymond A.M. Jones
Edward A. Kappus*

Susan Mattingly
Douglas W. Meiser

Pamela Metherell
Cindy M. Pirtle

Leslee E. Washer

**Members of the executive committee*

PLC staff

Carmen Fowler LaBerge
President and Executive Editor

W. Scott Lamb
PLC Executive Director and
President of Reformation Press

Jessica Lalley
Director of Media Relations

Paula R. Kincaid
Director of the Remnant Ministry

Susan Andrews
Director of Operations
and Development

A ministry's worth

A ministry is worth more than the paper it is printed on.

After nearly half a century of publishing newsletters and newspapers “on paper” *The Layman* is going to an all-digital format. For those of us who grew up in “two paper households” it is all too easy to view the quieting of the printing press in a maudlin manner, focusing on “the end of an era” aspect of this development, alone.

My family subscribed to both the morning and afternoon newspapers, and it was simply considered good citizenship to follow all the news available by reading what was offered by both papers. They balanced each other nicely, taking a slightly different editorial view of the news and politics of the day, and therefore reading both was a good way to be well rounded.

I was sad when the *Cleveland Press* ceased afternoon delivery, shutting down its presses, and leaving only one source of daily news in our city. And it was only recently that the other newspaper in our town, the *Plain Dealer*, began the inevitable march toward Memory Lane, eliminating daily home delivery, reducing to three days a week, while publishing and delivering daily “online.” This phenomenon is being seen all over the country, and is occurring for the very simple reason that people are obtaining their news in a different way than they did for the past several generations.

While broadcast TV took a big bite out of the newspaper business, and cable news TV an even bigger bite, the internet, smart-phones and tablets transformed it completely. The business of newspaper printing is no longer as economically viable because people obtain news quicker and cheaper “online.”

Now here is where it is important to understand several differences between newspapers and ministries in order to set aside a sense of loss for *The Layman*’s change in services-delivery. First, we need to recognize that people are not consuming less news – they are simply obtaining it in a different mode. For a newspaper “in the business of printing newspapers” that is bad news. You can’t sell someone something they no longer need.

For a ministry, the viability of the product remains. The “product” of the PLC is not the paper, but the content. People still need ministry, at every level. Presbyterians who care about their denominations need balanced and credible news content and commentary. There is still a need to be aware of denominational developments, particularly as we see Presbyterianism finding its expression in multiple denominations. Therefore, keeping abreast of what your denomination is doing, both good and bad, is as relevant as ever.

The PLC has never been “in the business” of printing papers. We have never charged for delivery of *The*

Layman. We have never sold advertising or subscriptions. We have always been about providing a voice for traditional Reformed Presbyterianism for free, and relying upon the benevolence of those whom stand with us in that ministry endeavor.

The *Layman Online* has received tremendous internet traffic, showing that Presbyterians gather news in a manner similar to the rest of society. We have Facebook friends and Twitter followers. Our stories provide an interactive “comments section” which allows people to participate in the development of commentary. This is all part of the new way of transmitting denominational news which never sees “hard-copy.”

We are in the midst of a new reformation: A denominational re-forming of Presbyterianism. We have seen the rise the Evangelical Presbyterian Church and the birth of ECO: A Covenant Order of Evangelical Presbyterians. This is exciting and newsworthy. We see alignment and re-alignment along the lines of Scriptural and theological viewpoints, with trans-denominational cooperation in ministry and mission occurring more along theological lines than polity lines. This is exciting and newsworthy. We are witnessing a cultural shift away from the influence of the church. This is concerning and newsworthy.

There is no less need for news or news services in the faith-based community.

As for the PLC and *The Layman* – the worth of the ministry is not in the printed word, or even in the electronic word, but rather in the value of encouraging other Christians to stand firm in the faith, holding fast to the essential tenets of our faith, upholding traditional Reformed principles of Christianity – God’s truth. Our ministry is in contending for the faith, calling out error where we see it, encouraging fidelity to the Word, and equipping our brothers and sisters in Christ to live and proclaim the faith in accordance with God’s Word. We are all in this ministry together, and we pray that you join us on-line, in the electronic public square, in this ever changing culture and ever-changing time.

May you stand firm on the truth that never changes – God’s Word.

Forrest A. Norman III is an elder at Hudson Presbyterian Church (EPC) in Hudson, Ohio. He is chairman of the Board of Directors and chief executive officer of the Presbyterian Lay Committee.



Commentary by
Forrest A. Norman III

We invite you to join us
in this redemptive
expression of God's
goodness and grace.

The end ... and its beginning

The Gospel is about beginning again, again.

In the beginning (the Beginning beginning) everything was as it should be. Everything was as God created it to be. Nothing was out of order. Nothing was broken. Everything worked perfectly. Nothing required charging, fueling, insuring, fixing or replacing. Nothing and no one was obsolete. Nothing was ever late or missing or lost. That was the beautiful, perfect reality before the realities of sin and death.

On this side of the Fall everything is broken, marred, subject to decay and death. Nothing is as God intended. All creation groans with eager longing for redemption and we see and experience the effects of that groaning in our bodies, in our relationships, in our culture and in ourselves. Things are not as they were meant to be. But God does not leave us nor does He forsake us! The good news of the Gospel is that God redeems – He provides us a way to begin again again.

The Gospel is the redemptive reality of God's righting what was wronged in the Fall and allowing us to begin again again.

As individuals, couples, families, churches, organizations, societies and cultures we all fall short of the glory of God. We all suffer the deep effects of sin and no part of who we are escapes the power of sin's depravity. We all need redeeming – we all need Jesus – we all need resurrection hope in both this life and the life to come.

The Presbyterian Lay Committee board of directors and staff recognize the periodic need to begin in min-

istry again. The culture and national climate in which this organization was formed (1965) no longer exists. Likewise, the Presbyterian family of denominations has multiplied even as the primary denomination we have traditionally served has dramatically constricted. The advent of social media and digital real-time reporting has made print journalism all but obsolete. And yet, the PLC continues to sense a powerful calling to speak the truth in love to Christians adrift in a culture of accommodation to relativism and pluralism.

We are not going anywhere, we are going everywhere.

We will continue to work for and with partners within the PCUSA through our Remnant ministry even as we reach out in new ways to new sectors of the Church and culture through other ministries. We will continue to publish at the Layman.org even as we launch new sites designed to speak to and with a larger constituency.

Indeed, we are beginning again again. And we invite you to join us in this redemptive expression of God's goodness and grace.

Yes, there is grief in the loss of what has been. But there is great joy in moving with great anticipation into the future filled with hope that God has planned. As we embark on this new beginning we welcome you to join us. Forgetting now what lies behind but pressing on to what lies ahead – taking hold of that for which Christ Jesus has taken hold of us – all for His glory.

Carmen

Presbyterian Lay Committee

Raising The Standard Since 1965

Presbyterian Lay Committee

Reformation Press®

PLC Publications®

1220 W. Main Street

PO Box #682247

Franklin, TN 37068

(615) 591-4388 • (800) 368-0110

E-mail: laymanletters@layman.org

Mission Statement

The mission of the Presbyterian Lay Committee is to inform and equip Christians to share the Biblical faith by proclaiming Jesus Christ alone as:

- The Way of salvation.
- The Truth of God's Word.
- The Life of discipleship.

Objectives

1. To provide reliable information and resources concerning significant issues confronting Presbyterians and the Church Universal, thereby equipping and empowering faithful congregations and leaders to fulfill the Great Commission in the 21st century.

2. To inform and equip Presbyterian congregations and leaders concerning the urgency for greater emphasis on the teaching of the Bible as the authoritative Word of God and regular Bible study and prayer.

3. To inform and equip Presbyterian congregations and leaders concerning the urgency of presenting Jesus Christ as the Lord and Savior through preaching, teaching and witnessing, with evangelical zeal, as the primary mission of the Church.

4. To inform and equip individual Christians in Presbyterian denominations to engage the ethical and moral issues in cultural, economic and political affairs as Christ's active disciples.

The PLC is a member – and affirms the respective statements on mission, ethics and accountability – of the Evangelical Council on Financial Accountability and the Evangelical Press Association. It also is a member of the Presbyterian Renewal Network and the Common Ground Christian Network.

EQUIPPING FOR MINISTRY IN THE 21ST CENTURY

The SAVOR of the Savior!

**Equipping study by
Carmen Fowler LaBerge
The Layman**

Psalm 34:8 is God's own express invitation to "taste and see that the Lord is good," and indeed, He is!

From the manna of the wilderness to the milk and honey of the Promised Land, to the bread of the presence and the bread of heaven, God provides Himself as a savory feast for those who hunger and thirst for righteousness. Indeed, according to God's promise, He Himself satisfies the gnawing hunger of every human heart for truth, beauty, love, holiness, meaning and glory.

This leads me to wonder:

1. Do we taste and see that the Lord is good – even in the midst of circumstances that seem to run afoul of what we know to be to God's perfect and pleasing will?
2. How do we, as Christ's body in the world today, invite others into the feast of God's good and perfect plan in Christ Jesus the Lord?

As we have this conversation about spiritual food that nourishes, sustains and mobilizes the people of God, we must not lose sight of the reality that hunger is a stark physical need for



many people today. This is a conversation that must be entered into with both seriousness and joy.

Jesus affirms in Matthew 5:13a that His disciples are the salt of the earth. That means that we are savory characters whose presence in the world is to serve as a preservative of all that is good and godly. It is hard for us to imagine that salt could lose its saltiness, but that is exactly what Jesus says. So, how salty are you? Not salty like a sailor but salty like Jesus – and what exactly does that mean?

As I think about how Jesus calls me to be salty as He is salty, I consider blood, sweat and tears.

- Blood: There is no sacrifice that God could ask us to make that compares to the sacrifice He has already made for us.
- Sweat: There is no labor that God could ask us to do that compares to the labor He has done, is doing and will do as He brings to completion the good work begun in and among us.
- Tears: There is no grief God could ask us to bear that compares to the grief He has born for us.

As Christ's agents of God's grace in the world



**For more equipping studies
by Carmen, visit
www.layman.org/equip**

today, disciples are to "spread everywhere the fragrance (savor) of the knowledge of Him. For we are to God the very aroma (savor) of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing" (II Corinthians 2:14-15).

The senses of smell and taste are intimately connected and if you cannot smell, you cannot taste. So the idea of savoring something includes the reality of its aroma. We may revel in the invitation to taste and see the Lord's goodness in a land flowing with milk and honey but do we equally embrace the call to carry the aroma of

Christ into the world?

That question leads me to ask, "What does Jesus smell like?" I heard a friend preach a sermon on this passage once where he kept talking about Jesus' stink. And indeed, Jesus stinks to many. What is a fragrance of heavenly hope to you is a pungent reminder of the stench of sin and the smell of death to others. Have you ever smelled death? I have. It's painful.

The Scriptures declare that while we are the aroma of Christ to God – living sacrifices, fragrant offerings – we are the aroma of death to those who are perishing. Think back to the idea that you are salt. Salt brings out the flavor and serves as a preservative – but salt in a wound or salt in your eyes stings and burns. The same holds true for the response to authentic Christian witness in the world today.

The PLC recognizes this reality and we are committed to be the SAVOR of the Savior in every time and place – pouring out our blood, sweat and tears for the world that God so loves. Our hope and prayer is that our salt remains salty and our sacrifice acceptable to the Lord whom alone we worship and serve.

Join us on the journey to SAVOR the Savior!

SAVOR SOCIETY

The PLC's focus on society will be for Christians and non-Christians alike – anyone who cares to hear the Biblical witness on a whole host of "hot button" moral issues of the day.



Speaking truth into the moral issues within society, the PLC will provide faithful and friendly counsel from the Scripture on a wide-range of issues – religious liberty, sexuality, marriage and family, sanctity of life. We will model speaking the Truth with civility.

The PLC will speak truth into pressing moral issues within society. Without duplicating the established Christian voices already doing this type of work, the PLC will provide faithful and friendly counsel from the Scripture.

On a variety of issues – religious liberty, sexuality, marriage and family, sanctity of life – Christians and non-Christians alike will hear God's wisdom from the ministry of the PLC.

This ties into the PLC's past. Back in the late 1960s and early 1970s – when the Presbyterian Lay Committee was birthed – it is amazing to consider just how many moral revolutions began to form and flower.

Certainly, the PLC joined in with Christians of all denominations in finding reason to be alarmed by the social/moral

upheavals which rocked U.S. culture during those days.

And yet, the church too often spoke without the benefit of seasoned reflection on the topics.

For example, initially after *Roe v. Wade*, even some conservatives had waffling opinions about whether abortion was wrong. An issue which seems so clear now, often gave Bible-believing Christians perplexity in terms of how to respond.

Today's moral conversations need leaders who can think and talk clearly on tough subjects – old topics and new ones alike.

Just like the PLC did in those early turbulent days, the PLC will be a voice of intelligent Reformed Christian conversation about important moral issues within society.

APOLOGETICS

The PLC will “do apologetics” – giving a “reasonable defense of our faith” (1 Peter 3:15) and equipping Christians to converse with others on matters of faith.

We will encourage Christians to exercise the freedom of religion guaranteed to them in all areas of public and private life.



The PLC intends to “do apologetics” – giving a “reasonable defense of our faith” (1 Peter 3:15). Apologetics benefits both evangelism and discipleship, so we will seize opportunities to do both.

Q: What’s an image that comes to mind when you think of the turbulent 1960s and 70s?

A: Young people searching for answers to metaphysical questions.

University students sought to discover whether the doctrines of their childhood church could hold up in the marketplace of world religions. Too often, they came to conclusions that excluded the claims of Christianity, not because those claims are false, but because those presenting the Christian claims did not “demolish every argument that sets itself up against the truth.”

Given the increasing religious pluralism of our day, apologetics are needed now more than ever before. Francis Schaeffer, a famous Presbyterian pastor who shepherded young people

seeking answers, described many of these types of conversations as “pre-evangelism” – theological/philosophical conversations you have to have before you have the Gospel conversations. The PLC will do, and train others to do, apologetics.



Former PLC Board Member Fred R. Esty with a young Billy Graham. Esty was one of the founding members of the PLC.

SAVOR VOCATIO

The PLC will become a leader in advancing and advocating “vocatio” wisdom among Christians of all generations. Vocation is more than a job, it’s a calling and most Christians go “pro” is something other than church-based preaching ministries. We want to see every Christian fully equipped for the good work God has prepared in advance for them to do.



The third mission – vocatio – might be the hardest to explain, even though it most directly ties into the history (and even the name) of the PLC. Indeed, over time, we expect this “V: Vocatio” element will be the main energy driving the new PLC.

Think about our name: Presbyterian Lay Committee. Or, consider the name of the paper: *The Layman*.

The word “lay” comes from the Greek word *laos*, meaning “people.” In an ecclesial context the word simply refers to the group of Christians who are not ordained for ministry – they are not members of the clergy. Therefore, by any accounting, over 95 percent of Christians are “laity” – people who are not vocational clergy.

We used that word “calling” intentionally, because that is the best way to understand the Latin word *vocatio*, from which we get our English word “vocation.” Vocation is more than a job. It

is a calling – applying learned craftsmanship and divinely given skills to one’s work – no matter what type of work that may be.

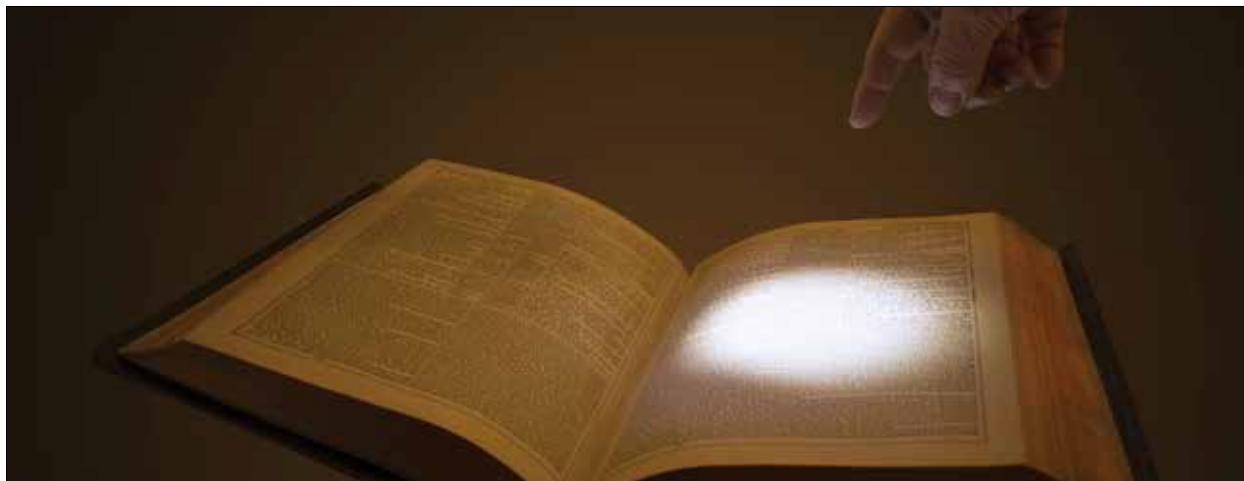
There is a huge potential for pioneering work to be done in this arena. Christianity – and the culture – as a whole can be strengthened if this one particular area of Christian thought and practice can be nurtured and developed.

A 19-year-old Christian who dreams of being a medical professional should not lack resources for thinking through how his/her vocational plans fit into their faith in Christ. Nor should they lack the opportunity to receive friendship and mentorship from a Christian who practiced medicine.

The Presbyterian Lay Committee will lead – in both church and culture – in the transmission of *vocatio* wisdom among Christians and across generational lines.

SAVOR ORTHODOXY

The PLC will defend orthodoxy – Biblical Christian belief and practice – within the larger evangelical Christian community recognizing that the challenges we have faced within the Presbyterian Church (USA) and the theological mission drift we have witnessed are not confined to a denomination. We are ready to help other evangelical Christians avoid similar trends and trajectories as they seek to remain faithful to Christ and uphold the Truth in a culture of compromise.



If averting Presbyterian apostasy formed a large chunk of the original PLC mission, then that work can continue within evangelicalism (as movement) and evangelicals (as individuals).

The pages of church history tell us that churches and denominations often turn toward liberalism and infidelity within one or two generations of having been vibrantly orthodox. A senior adult who spent her teens in a faithful congregation could live to see the sorrow of that same church embracing all forms of false teaching and perverted practice.

"Mission drift" within an organization or movement comes naturally and without effort – and the drift always moves away from orthodoxy. Unless due diligence and discernment is practiced, the original founder's vision, beliefs and action get twisted and overturned. The PCUSA is but one example, but evangelicalism as a whole could be another tragic illustration if "watchmen on the wall" don't sound the alarm when wolves come in after the sheep.

The answer to heterodox (heresy) teaching is orthodoxy. With-

in the context of Bible-believing Christian churches throughout North America, the PLC will engage in a ministry of "guarding the truth." Evangelicalism – both in its Reformed and Arminian streams – will need many different voices speaking to it in areas where "mission drift" threatens. Some might say, "Surely evangelicalism will never rot from within. Evangelicalism birthed Billy Graham (or perhaps, the opposite) – so, with origins like those, stop worrying!" But such a perspective only leads to an indifference to truth, and such apathy invites a full assault from heterodoxy.

So, let's ask the hard question – Is evangelicalism (though not a denomination) destined to rot away in her doctrine, the same way that mainline denominations did? Well sure, it could happen. But who better to help warn evangelicalism of doctrinal quicksand, than a group of people who watched their own denomination stride down that path?

The PLC can help undergird the orthodoxy of the evangelical movement and help people to develop "discernment radars" ...to "connect the dots."

SAVOR REMNANT

The Remnant is defined as those who will remain in the PCUSA and other mainline denominations long-term but who do not support the progressive agendas now being pursued. The PLC's Remnant ministry will connect believers who are living as exiles within the PCUSA and other mainline contexts for mutual encouragement

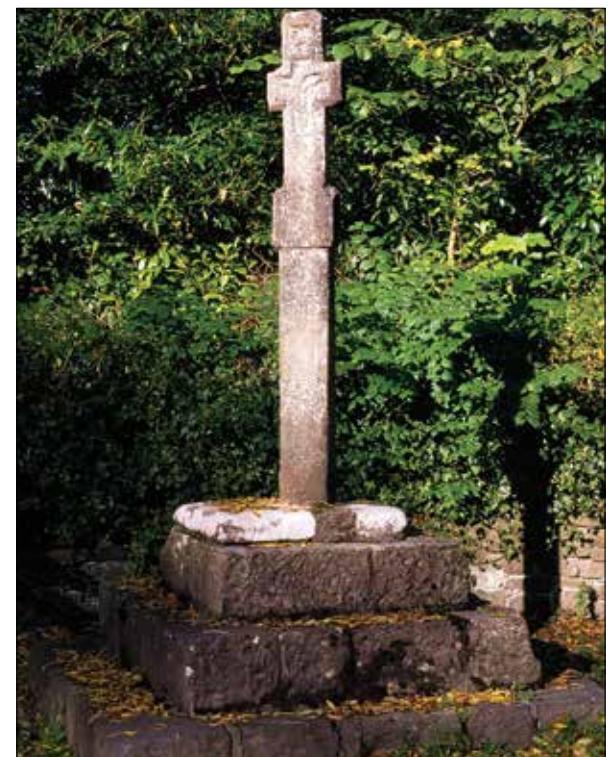
The PLC will shepherd, resource and encourage individual Presbyterians and congregations (the remnant) who require counsel and support in the continuously changing environment of the Presbyterian Church (USA).

The Remnant includes the shepherding of individual Presbyterians and congregations who require counsel and support in this post-GA221 season of their life.

Whether they decide to leave (refugee) or remain in the PCUSA (remnant), countless numbers of people will need support. Having walked with thousands of such people and congregations, the PLC has earned the trust of Presbyterians committed to Biblical authority. And with that trust brings the responsibility to shepherd – this ministry is a stewardship that cannot be jettisoned.

The audience here includes refugees from and remnants still within mainline denominations).

Although the PLC be primarily focused in the Remnant ministry on those in our traditional PCUSA context, there are fellow believers who are living as exiles in other denominations which have capitulated the Gospel with the world.



Home About the PLC Career Layman Print Edition Bookstore Donate RSS

The Layman *online*
Thursday, October 23rd, 2014

READ DONATE ARCHIVES CONTACT DISCERN 2014 GA EQUIP WATCH PRAY SUBSCRIBE

Presbyterian Lay Committee begins strategic restructuring

CHANGE AHEAD

DONATE TO THE PLC

Carrie Emmer Laffman

www.layman.org

The Remnant will be resourced by The Layman Online – www.layman.org.

News and resources for both the refugees and the remnants will be posted daily.

Meet the new PLC team



CARMEN FOWLER LABERGE

*President of the
Presbyterian Lay Committee*

Carmen of Kingston Springs, Tenn., was ordained in the Presbyterian Church (USA) in 1993 serving churches in Texas, Georgia, Florida and South Carolina. In 2011, she set aside her ordination after the denomination began openly ordaining those who do not limit their sexual expression to fidelity in the context of marriage between a man and a woman or chastity in singleness. Carmen also chairs the ecumenical leadership network, Common Ground Christian Network, co-convenes the LOVE2020 Apologetics group for

Mission America Coalition and serves on the Board of Directors of the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE). Carmen can be contacted at cfowler@layman.org

JESSICA LALLEY
Director of Media Relations

As Director of Media Relations, Jessica plans to increase the PLC's effectiveness in all areas of social media: Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, Pinterest, etc. Jessica, of Atlanta, Ga., has a client-focused bent to influence and promote, with an track record in creating and implementing strategies that maximize client exposure, impact, revenue, and value. She is expert at establishing media presence, producing memorable events and fundraising strategies, and representing organizations, authors/speakers, and sponsors.

Jessica can be contacted at jalley@layman.org



PAULA R. KINCAID

Director of the Remnant Ministry

Paula of Hudson, N.C. has been with the Presbyterian Lay Committee since March of 1998. She will lead in the continuation and transformation of Layman.org into its new manifestation by posting a variety of news, analysis, opinion pieces and other resources to The Layman Online. Paula will also "host" a Remnant group on a social media platform where folks can ask questions, connect with one another, share resources and get help "behind the scenes" and out of view.

Paula can be contacted at pkincaid@layman.org

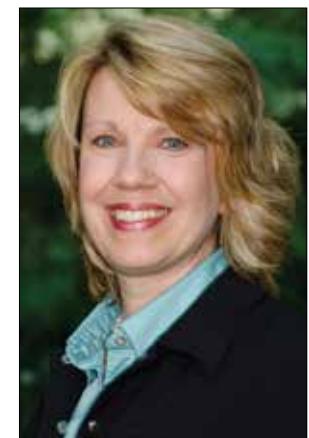


SCOTT LAMB

*PLC Executive Director and
President of Reformation Press*

Scott of Franklin, Tenn., has 16 years of pastoral ministry experience; 13 in the role of teaching pastor. He authored a bestselling biography titled *Pujols: More than the Game* (Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2011) and has written articles for numerous Christian periodicals. He will direct the creation and refinement of PLCs products: podcasts, website, radio, etc. He will utilize his experience within Christian publishing and his network of authors and people with book production skills in order to develop the full potential of Reformation Press. Scott can be contacted at slamb@layman.org

SUSAN ANDREWS
*Director of Development
and Operations*



Susan of Franklin, Tenn., directs the day to day operations of the PLC. She is a vibrant Christian and non-profit development professional. She knows "systems" and also knows Nashville/Franklin area. Susan will handle accounts, administration and operations. She will set up operational systems and protocols for new office environment and staff arrangement that promote a cohesive culture and team synergy. Susan will use her 15 year background as a major-gifts fundraising consultant and strategist to assist with development plans. Susan can be contacted at sandrews@layman.org

**If you would like Carmen
to speak at your church
or event, call Jessica Lalley
at (404) 273-4968
or email her at
jalley@layman.org**



The Presbyterian Lay Committee's Board of Directors

The Board of Directors for the Presbyterian Lay Committee recently held its fall meeting in Houston, Texas. Pictured are: front row, Lee H. Gery, Bonita Springs, Fla.; Lloyd J. Lunceford, Baton Rouge, La; Forrest A. Norman III, Hudson, Ohio; Raymond A.M. Jones, Wichita, Kan.; Back row, Edward Allen Kappus, Roanoke, Va.; Susan Mattingly, Grosse Pointe Woods, Mich.; Douglas W. Meiser, Overland Park, Kan.; Cindy M. Pirtle, Spring, Texas; Matthew A. Johnson, Chester, Va.; Leslee E. Washer, Whitefish, Mont. Not pictured Robert B. Fish of Parkerburg, W.Va.; and Constance K. Elliott of San Francisco, Calif.

LaBerge elected to NAE

The Layman

Carmen Fowler LaBerge, president of the Presbyterian Lay Committee, was recently elected to the board of the National Association of Evangelicals. The election took place during the fall meetings of the board, held in Washington D.C.

LaBerge was in attendance on Thursday, Oct. 16 when the board heard the recommendation and made the decision to appoint her.

"I feel honored to be invited to serve alongside such esteemed colleagues in the NAE," LaBerge said. "It is my hope that my participation can help bridge some of the divides that naturally exist among church and parachurch ministries, as well as historic divisions between former mainline Christians and the wider evangelical church."

L. Roy Taylor, NAE Board Chair and Stated Clerk of the Presbyterian Church in America, had this to say about the election of LaBerge: "Carmen Fowler LaBerge of the Presbyterian Lay Committee is a welcomed addition to the Board of Directors of the National Association of Evangelicals. She brings with her a wealth of experience, leadership, and expertise, along with a number of network connections with evangelical Presbyterians in several Presbyterian denominations and other evangelicals beyond the Presbyterian-Reformed family. We are delighted to have her join the NAE Board!"

The National Association of Evangelicals mission is to promote "cooperation without compromise." Its origins date back to 1942 and it currently represents more than 45,000 local churches from 40 different denominations. More information about the NAE can be found at their web site: www.nae.net.



LaBerge: Don't be on the wrong side of God

By Paula R. Kincaid

The Layman

"I am far less afraid of being on the wrong side of history, than being on the wrong side of a holy God," said Carmen Fowler LaBerge, president of the Presbyterian Lay Committee, as she participated in a panel discussion at the recent Ethics, Religion and Liberty Council (ERLC) National Conference – the Gospel, Homosexuality, and the Future of Marriage. (#ERLC2014)

Other participants in the discussion of the state of marriage in American churches included Kevin Ezell, president of the North American Mission Board, Dennis Rainey, president and CEO of FamilyLife, and Heath Lambert, executive director of the Association of Certified Biblical Counselors and as assistant professor of Biblical Counseling at Southern Seminary and Boyce College.

LaBerge was responding to a comment from the panel's Moderator Daniel Darling, who was questioning a statement that has been repeated over and over when debating the issues – that the church is on the wrong side of history in the marriage debate.

LaBerge gave a brief description of the PLC which started in 1965, "acknowledging that if you don't take the Bible seriously, and if you don't receive it as the Word of God, you will begin to erode the foundation of a denomination."

She encouraged those in the audience to be "more concerned with the audience of One," instead of worrying about "which way the wind is blowing today, public opinion, and frankly, what young people think ... do not let your institutional life as the people of God be governed by what adolescents currently think about sex."

When asked about why she continues to speak to the culture on marriage, LaBerge made it plain that the other side of this debate will not be silent. They are "not going to stop talking because this is their issue and they are going to continue to press it."

She explained that those advocating on the other side of the issue would "very much like us to exchange faithfulness to the first commandment for some kind of version of their kind of faithfulness of the second commandment," and that, she said, is going to be a temptation for everyone.

LaBerge was clear that the Church cannot stop fighting for the restoration of the nobility of marriage. "It is the Church's responsibility to clearly articulate to the culture what marriage is; what God's design is for human sexuality in the context of a lifelong marital relationship between a man and a woman."

The church has presented a broken vision of that, she continued. "We have to acknowledge that we need to talk about divorce and remarriage. We need to talk about singleness and what it looks like for people to live in purity in singleness."

"So we can't stop talking about these things, because the folks on the other side of these agendas are not going to stop talking and they win the debate with our kids because we're not participating in the debate at all," she said.



It seems to me ... after 47 years with the PLC

By John Jenks
PLC Director Emeritus

Having grown up with a father who was a Presbyterian elder as was his father before him and with an unbroken history of serious Presbyterian Church identification since childhood, it was not surprising that I too became a Presbyterian elder. And my Presbyterian Church involvements have extended in many directions, an adult bible teacher, local church leadership including the Chair of several pastor nominating committees, along with being a church representative to our Presbytery and at one time Chairman of a Presbytery standing committee and a Presbytery Vice Moderator.

I love the Presbyterian Church, its historic vision, theological commitments, form of government and opportunities for spiritual growth for me and my family which now includes six grandchildren and two great grandchildren.

As I retire from the PLC board

One of the important parts of my Presbyterian heritage and personal history now includes 47 years of being a member and at one time Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Presbyterian Lay Committee (PLC). This involvement and recent retirement from the PLC board, has given me cause to reflect on PCUSA history during my PLC tenure. Realistically I would have to conclude that the PLC's founding goal of returning the PCUSA to its historic Biblical foundations has not been achieved. In fact, we have seen what appears to be an irresistible departure of the PCUSA from historic faith commitments.

So did the PLC fail in its mission? Considering the approaching demise of the PCUSA, one could argue that it has. But one could also argue that in exposing the apostasy that has so mortally wounded this denomination, the PLC sounded an alarm, resulting in thousands of Presbyterians



John Jenks

taking action to form new denominations that are committed to the integrity of the gospel. So, although reform did not take the shape that we originally intended, doors were opened to a renewed and reinvigorated Presbyterian witness that will never die.

When offering the foregoing, it seems important to make the distinction between the PCUSA denomination and the vast numbers of individual Presbyterian Church members as well as individual churches such as my own who hold to and are committed to the Biblical faith, "once delivered to the Saints." Although PCUSA councils and political structures

may have abandoned Scripture, many faithful Presbyterians continued vigorously to proclaim God's Word.

In the mid-1960s, Presbyterian Church leaders moved to replace the Westminster Confession of Faith with a Book of Confessions. One of the new book's documents, the Confession of 1967, expressed a very different view of Scripture than those found in the denomination's historic confessional statements. "Scripture," said the new confession, "is the words of men."

That debate gave birth to the Presbyterian Lay Committee, a group of Presbyterian laypeople who treasured God's written Word and were unwilling to see its authority diminished by church councils. Among PLC's primary concerns was C-67's revised ordination vow, "Do you

accept the old and New Testaments to be the unique and authoritative witness of Jesus Christ in the Church Catholic, and *by the Holy Spirit, God's Word to you?* (italics for emphasis). The scriptures, by this affirmation, are no longer propositionally true, but are subservient to an individual's subjective *feeling* attributed to a "leading of the Spirit."

The Presbyterian Lay Committee's founders knew that the diminution of Scriptural authority would bring disastrous consequences to the church. Once that foundational bulwark – the essence of the Reformation – was removed, distortions were sure to follow. And, sadly, they have. From its forays into partisan politics to "re-imaging God," placing Jesus on par with the icons of other faiths, and bestowing the church's blessing on sexual perversions, a once great denomination has forfeited Biblical truth for what Scripture calls "a different gospel."

And now, we see a failing denomination departing further and further from Biblical imperatives of faith and practice. This can also be seen as setting aside the calling of the Church to be that God given agent working to transform society in favor now of accommodating to the culture of secular society. This change of witness of course is clothed in pious assertions of inclusiveness and loving concern.

What greater evidence could there be of this shift of Church mission based on Biblical imperatives than to now see the denomination flaunting more than 4,000 years of unbroken agreement within the community of faith and the unequivocal words of Scripture, that the eminently clear imperatives in respect to the sanctity of marriage between a man and a woman is no longer inviolate?

The PCUSA has now proclaimed that the Jesus they hold to blesses Biblically proclaimed sexual perversions, if done in the context of "love." They assert that "love" trumps the clear understandings of all of the Bible; proclaim a "new revelation" and a convoluted interpretation of Scripture which supports their exclusively acquired, "new revelation." And the basis for this revelation just so happens to be found in conformity with the popular (PC) culture of the day.



Parker T. Williamson, editor emeritus of The Layman, Robert H. Howard, former chair of the PLC board with Jenks

See IT SEEKS, page 15

It seems to me ... after 47 years with the PLC

continued from page 14

Thus it is implied that the writers of all of Scripture and the writer of Scripture Himself, the Holy Spirit as well as scholars and theologians, down through the centuries were all deprived of true understanding of the Bible. But, recently “true” understanding has been given to an exclusive few to correct those misunderstandings of the past .

This could be seen as an affront to the author of all of the scriptures Himself, God the Holy Spirit!

And the inescapable and heartbreaking conclusion is that much of the leadership of the PCUSA, the leadership which controls the agenda of the denomination now are in reality proclaiming “another Jesus” (one of many ways to the same god of all religions), a different spirit (one who enlightens many differing truths to many different individuals) and a “different gospel” (one of many equally valid religions containing new faiths and practices and different pathways to the same God) all as warned about in II Cor. 11 – how unthinkably SAD and heartbreaking this must be to God!

Historically, Presbyterians have held to the clear statement of Reformed Faith in saying, “We gratefully receive the Holy Scriptures, given by inspiration, to be the faithful record of God’s gracious revelations and the sure witness to Christ, as the *Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and life.*” But at the same time it is clear from Scripture itself, ultimately the role of the Holy Spirit is to bring about understanding of



John Jenks



PLC board meeting in November of 1997. Jenks is sitting at the head of the table.

God’s written word, but not to give license to pursuits that violate God’s written word.

This conclusion is to be especially seen through the testimony of the early Church and from Jesus Himself. Starting with Peter on the day of Pentecost asserted the truth of what he was proclaiming on the basis of the authoritative words from scripture, Joel and David proving that Jesus was the Messiah.

Then in Acts 7, Stephen when asked to defend his faith presented Jesus as the Messiah on the authority of the written word of the prophets, Philip referring to Isaiah speaking to the Ethiopian eunuch. From then on in the book of Acts, we see Paul basing his claim as to Jesus being the Messiah by recounting from the scriptures the truth of who Jesus is and was.

One experience in particular serves to demonstrate this point. When Paul went to Thessalonica, as was his custom he went to the synagogue and, “for three weeks he argued *from the scriptures* (italics for emphasis) explaining and proving that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead, and saying this Jesus whom I proclaim to you, is the Christ.”

The bottom line, as seen from the testimony of Paul and the Apostles throughout their ministries was their authority of witness was the scriptures as written.

A clear example of Paul’s unequivocal confidence in the primacy of the words of scripture, as written, can be seen in his statement in Acts 17:11, “But the people of Berea were more open minded than those in Thessalonica, and gladly listened to the message. They searched

the Scriptures day by day to check up on Paul and Silas’ statements to see if they were really so.” (LB).

Is this not a clear statement by the Apostle Paul himself, though he claimed that the Gospel which he preached had the authority of personal revelation (by the Spirit) (Gal. 1:11), he accepted the truth that whatever he felt was revealed to him, the final authority was the scripture as written.

This is also seen by the statement of Peter in II Peter 1:20, “First of all you must understand this, that no prophecy of scripture is a matter of one’s own interpretation ...” Of course Peter is not saying that understanding of scripture does not often require the study of any verse or portion of scripture within the context of all of scripture. But down through the centuries of church history, it is seen that a private, individual interpretation of scripture which contradicts the whole of Scripture is not to be done.

It seems to me, while it is heartbreaking to see the demise of the church of my childhood and my ancestors, I rejoice in the knowledge that Jesus is still on the throne and that in His timing, “at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father” (Phil. 2:11)

So as I retire from membership in the board of directors of the Presbyterian Lay Committee, I do so with both hope and confidence.

The outcomes of God’s plan and purposes will be fulfilled and whatever purposes that ministries of the Presbyterian Lay Committee and other renewal groups have performed during the past and will play in the future, I have every confidence that the purposes will be found as part of God’s ultimately redemptive plan to His eternal glory.

COME VISIT US IN NASHVILLE

Welcome to the new office of The Presbyterian Lay Committee

Street address:
1220 W. Main Street
Franklin, Tenn. 37064

Mailing address:
PO #682247
Franklin, Tenn. 37068

Phone numbers:
615-591-4388 • 800-368-0110

Contact information
for the Remnant office in Lenoir, N.C.
506 Wilkesboro Blvd • Suite 140
Lenoir, NC 28645.
828-758-8716



The PLC team: Susan, Scott, Carmen, Jessica and Paula.



***As the Presbyterian Lay Committee moves
into its exciting future, the 2015 officers will be***

Matthew A. Johnson of Chester, Va.Chair
Douglas W. Meiser of Overland Park, Kan. Vice-chair
Leslee Washer of Whitefish, Mont.Secretary
Lee H. Gery of Bonita Springs, Fla.Treasurer

**Keep up with all the latest information
on The Presbyterian Lay Committee's
SAVOR and other exciting news
at www.layman.org**



or visit the Layman's Facebook page or Twitter feed