

**Ruling Elder Commissioner
Judi Johnson
First Presbyterian Church Hollister**

Applicant for appointment to GA as Ruling Elder

As an active member of First Presbyterian Church, Hollister for the past 15 years, I've also become been active in San Jose Presbytery for the past four years (much of which has been with CPM). Truth is: my family moved a great deal and our involvement with churches is checkered; American Baptist, Methodist, and Presbyterian (in Sacramento). I've served FPC Hollister as a Deacon (Moderator, too!), Chair of Buildings, member of almost every committee at FPC Hollister (currently Missions Chair), serve as (very opinionated) Clerk, Elder, and presenter of the overheads weekly – which hopefully enhance the service. I am an active ringer with the Tone Chime and Hand bell Choirs. As a side note: most of my active 4-H project participants are members of FPC Hollister. I serve Presbytery as a member and Secretary of the Nominating Committee, and am current Chair of CPM (Committee on Preparation for Ministry). And I have a grand time at Presbytery, and rarely miss a meeting of that august group.

Personal hopes and desires for the Church ~~ Working with others at GA and the Presbytery, and my local Church, I want to be instrumental in:

- > building community and relationships (*it is not the difference between people that's the problem -- it's the indifference*)
- > creating unity over separation
- > enhancing outreach and evangelism
- > creating stewardship programs that count

Significant issues facing the Church:

- ◇ the need to refocus on loving one another as Jesus loves us
- ◇ the need to promote Christianity in secular culture (influence of Christianity in individual lives is largely invisible);
- ◇ correcting communication which has resulted in:
 - lack of connection between generations
 - the threat of creating a church that is filled with people that are 'just like me'
 - ambiguity of emphasis on the truth of the Word

I am totally willing and able to be a vocal and active resource for GA, and would like to help bring relief to a system where Christians are becoming more ingrown and less outreach-oriented. I have a special passion for helping Church workers understand the need for learning to budget time, money, and resources. I'm exceedingly interested in helping congregations 'advertise' successes of partnership in communities.

Ruling Elder Commissioner
Rhonda Lakatos
Stone Church of Willow Glen, San Jose

When General Assembly was in San Jose in 2008 I volunteered at the Information Desk every day. Attending worship daily & twice on Sunday, singing in the massed choir and sitting in on plenary sessions and a variety of committee meetings was an enlightening experience. Watching as decisions were made, I heard amazing testimonies that reflected the commissioners' discernment as they worked through significant issues for the Church's future. The hard work that commissioners completed and the dedication they had to the Church, and to their personal consciences, demonstrated the kind of work that can make our denomination faithful our history and committed to the future. Observing the thoughtfulness and votes of the Youth Delegates gave a glimpse of what the Church will look like in 20 years. I would like to be a part of this and wish to serve as a commissioner at the 2012 General Assembly.

Background in the Presbyterian Church

Having been a Presbyterian since 1983 and ordained as an elder in 1984, I served on a number of Session committees before moving to San Jose. I became a member of Stone Church of Willow Glen in 1989, participating on a number of Session committees and on a Mission Study Team. I have been moderator of the Board of Deacons and I currently moderate Stone Church's Presbyterian Women. I've taught classes about *Mental Illness and the Church* for adults and youth at several churches. Under my leadership, Stone Church became a Bay Area Green Business, enacted a congregational education program that encouraged families to green their homes and work places, and assisted other congregations to do the same. As a member of the Tri-Presbytery Self Development of People Committee since 2008, I've conducted site visits with other committee members and served as contact and mentor to several projects that we have provided with grants.

Hopes and Desires for the Church

I want our Church to move even closer toward being Christ's hands and feet, presenting a witness for truth and justice in our community and in the world. I value the connectional church, and although the Church is facing issues of whether staying united is possible when opinions differ, I believe that the Presbyterian Church (USA) can survive to be a church of a broad spectrum of people, who are working to implement God's heaven on this earth.

Several Significant Issues Facing the Church

These are complicated times in the Presbyterian Church (USA) with many challenges to our call to see the face of Jesus in each other. Inclusion of all, implementation of graceful dismissal policies, survival of small churches, and the place of the Presbyterian Church (USA) in the world in the future are a few of the areas where God's guidance and human energy are particularly needed.

San Jose Presbytery Resource

If selected I look forward to being a resource on General Assembly for the Presbytery in the year following my service as commissioner. Since many good and useful documents come out of each General Assembly, I would like to arrange ways for groups and congregations to learn more about the materials available to them following the Assembly.

**Ruling Elder Commissioner
Pat Plant
First Presbyterian Church of San Jose**

January 10, 2012

I have been a Presbyterian for the past 30 years. My service to the church has included:

- Lay Ministry Director for the Sunnyvale Church
- Hunger Action Advocate
- Presbytery Staff
- Steering Committee for General Assembly 2008

Personal Hopes and Desires for the Church

The theme of this year's General Assembly, "Walking, Running, Soaring in Hope" and the Isaiah 40:31 Old Testament quote about "hoping, soaring, and running and not growing weary and faint," is key to the future of our denomination. In these difficult times (both in the world, and in the church,) our denomination must stay vigorous and focused on its best and highest purpose.

- I hope that the tensions of the dissenting groups don't derail our efforts to stay positive and future-focused. I hope we continue to work on helping our churches attract youth and the minorities in their communities. As we get to be an older church (both locally and nationally,) we must involve youth and the people in our communities or at one point become irrelevant. PC USA must do more to help churches with either ideas or funding so that they can grow and prosper.
- I hope we continue to put Mission (all forms including local mission as well as over-seas mission, and the work done by the Presbyterian Hunger Program, Self Development of People, and Disaster Assistance) as a high priority of our denomination. I believe Jesus calls to the margins to those in need. We need to guard against focusing on inner-church issues to the point of sacrificing the needs of the world. I also think that the more we focus on Mission the more young people will be drawn to our churches.
- I hope our denomination will be a voice of reason, hope, and peace in the world. The more we appear to be a place of dissension, the less people will be attracted to us.

Several Significant Issues Facing the Church

1. **The dissension in the church which mirrors the left vs. right conflict in our country.** I know it's not just our church that is waging these battles, but it seems like we should be about to surmount our differences and stay together. But these differences seem so divisive that some churches talk of leaving the denomination. Locally, I have found this difficult, as some of our churches are disinterested or disagreeable about the denomination, and, by association, with the Presbytery
2. **A related issue is the lack of financial support to some denominational programs and/churches by disgruntled members, which means that, as an example, there is less funding is going to successful programs like the ones funded by the One Great Hour of Sharing offering** and thereby causing the programs that OGHS funds – Presbyterian Hunger Program, Self Development of People and Presbytery Disaster Assistance - to reduce their capabilities to help people in need.

Statement of Intent to Serve and Be a Resource for Others

If elected Commissioner, I intend to serve to the best of my ability in all the ways expected (and perhaps some unexpected ways!) Not only will I be available to verbally report on my experience at GA and report on what I learned, but I could do an entertaining blog for interested people while at GA to help interested people learn about what I experienced as a Commissioner... and about the importance of General Assembly to church members.