



# THE INTERPRETER

PEACE RIVER PRESBYTERY

DECEMBER 2005

## SPEAKING FROM THE HART

### What do you see?

There is a wonderful story of two old men in a nursing home. They shared a room. The man in the bed by the door was blind and paralyzed. The man by the window could see, but had crippling arthritis. Each day for years the man by the window narrated the world outside to his roommate in the bed by the door. He would describe the changing of the seasons, the wave of the bus driver, the lovers who walked in the park, hand in hand, the falling of the leaves, and the bursting forth of new life in the creation in the spring. Then one day the man by the window died. A week later a new man took the bed by the window. The blind man inquired, "Would you mind telling me what you see outside our window today?" After a few moments the new roommate by the window replied, "I would like to very much. But all that is outside our window is a brick wall; there is nothing else."

Periodically I am asked, from my vantage point, *what do I see when I travel around Peace River Presbytery*. It is not a brick wall!

I see incredible talent. When I visit churches I am often touched and inspired by word and song, sermon and sacrament, incredible choirs and moving worship.

Each day when I arrive at the Presbytery Center I see a dedicated and competent staff in Bob, Craig, Candy, Jim, Alesia, Bill, Larry, Karin, Gary, Andrea, and Joan serving you.

I see incredible resources in our midst. God has blessed us. We have much to share.

I see that our collective voices are needed in the areas of mission and justice, whether in Guatemala or in our own back yard in Immokalee. In the area of New Church Development, I see unlimited possibility in the ministry we can do.

I see a Presbytery (meaning 37 – soon to be 38 - congregations, 23,000 members, and 148 clergy) with an opportunity to join hearts and hands and together move forward with clear vision, core values, and defined priorities. I see opportunities all around us... great lay and clergy leaders among us... and a God who is before us and behind us, and, as we celebrate this Advent/Christmas Season in Christ, always with us. Thanks be to God.

Wishing you a joyous Christmas,  
Graham Hart

## A NEW CHURCH FOR PEACE RIVER PRESBYTERY



For the past year the Evangelism and New Church Development and Congregational Transformation Committee of Peace River Presbytery has been in conversation with Christ's Church of Longboat Key (Manatee County) which is an independent church. This group of about 120 dedicated Christians was open to exploring membership in a major denomination that could offer stability and order, a mission beyond themselves, and above all a focus on Jesus Christ as Lord.

They examined a handful of denominations and decided to focus on the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). After careful study, they invited Peace River Presbytery to bring teams of Presbyterians from neighboring churches to meet with them. In the first meeting members of Presbyterian churches in Bradenton and Sarasota shared written material and talked about the things they liked about being a Presbyterian. The second meeting consisted of a panel of Presbyterians being asked questions generated from the audience about the role of session, structure, missions, evangelical efforts, and support that could be expected from the denomination. The team also showed the presbytery's DVD "Imagine What We Can Do If We Do It Together."

The vote to become a Presbyterian (U.S.A.) congregation was 72 to 35. The Presbytery at its November 17<sup>th</sup> meeting appointed an administrative commission of Stated Clerk Craig Countiss, Susan DeWyngaert, Jeannie Oliver, Steve Smith, and Bob Kimbrough. This team will assist the church in the chartering process, which could be completed as early as the February meeting of Peace River Presbytery. We look forward to this exciting new partnership in carrying out Christ's ministry.



### Please Join Us in Prayer for the Following Churches:

Palmetto, Palmetto  
First, Port Charlotte  
Burnt Store, Punta Gorda  
First, Punta Gorda

December 4  
December 11  
December 18  
December 25

## Highlights Peace River Presbytery Stated Meeting Thursday, November 17, 2005

Peace River Presbytery gathered for its stated meeting at Burnt Store Presbyterian Church, Punta Gorda. Commissioners and visitors were welcomed and made to feel "at home" by the careful preparations and hospitality awaiting them.

The Reverend Dr. Peter Steinke, Lutheran pastor and well known author, was the keynote speaker. He led the presbytery in a conversation about "Healthy Leaders, Healthy Congregations, and Healthy Presbyteries." During the breakout groups, Steinke led a question and answer session on his presentation. He also led an afternoon workshop for church leaders on how to promote and insure the health of congregations.



Other breakout groups were:

- "Representation – EQUALITY?" led by Sue Maxwell
- "Coalition of Immokalee Workers" led by Sarah Osmer, Tom Livengood, and Becky Lipsie
- "Leadership and Congregational Development" led by Debby Wendell, Mary Brown, and Jay Mumper
- "Parish Nurses (Scoring a Touchdown for Healthy Congregations)" led by Debbie Carney

The presbytery welcomed into its membership:

- William A. Stephens III, pastor/head of staff, Covenant Presbyterian, Fort Myers
- Paul McQueen, HR

Rev. Stephan Nagy was approved as Stated Supply for Lely Presbyterian Church, Naples.

Upon the recommendation of Records and Overtures Committee, the presbytery voted to inform the General Assembly that it concurs with the Presbytery of Mississippi's Overture Regarding Divestment and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

[Click here for complete language.](http://www.peaceriverpresbytery.org/Interpreter/MississippiOverture.pdf) (or go to <http://www.peaceriverpresbytery.org/Interpreter/MississippiOverture.pdf>)

Presbytery was brought up-to-date on the Hearts and Hands Capital Campaign. It was with regret that the Trustees reported the resignation of Grover Wrenn as co-moderator of the campaign. But, with gratitude, it approved Robert (Robin) Doyle to serve in that position, completing the team with Mary Lee Mann and Bruce Porter. Gary A. Miller, also joins the team as its Director.

Among his reasons for accepting this position was "we can touch and change lives for Christ.....have the privilege to enable the broader mission of ministry around the world as part of the national campaign." Andrea Yerger was introduced as the Administrative Assistant.

Upon the recommendation of Evangelism and New Church Development and Congregational Transformation Committee, the Presbytery established an Administrative Commission to charter Christ's Church of Longboat Key as a Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) congregation.

There was exciting news from our ministry with the farm workers: 1) a grant for Beth-El to call a Hispanic pastor to minister in Immokalee was approved by the Synod of South Atlantic and the General Assembly; 2) thanks was expressed to the Presbytery for its support of the Taco Bell boycott; 3) and the Coalition of Immokalee Workers is in the process of raising funds to develop a community center.

Upcoming events announced were:

- "Officers' Institute 2006" with Dr. Leonard Sweet, keynote speaker, Saturday, February 11, 2006, Church of the Palms, Sarasota
- "From the Crusade to the Coffee Shop: Fresh Images of Evangelism from a Lifelong Evangelist" led by Dr. Leighton Ford, Saturday, March 4, 2006, at Church of the Palms, Sarasota.
- Youth Mission Opportunities:
  - Middle School Urban Mission Experience, June 11-16, 2006
  - Senior High West Virginia Mission Trip, June 17-25, 2006

Peace River Presbytery approved the following:

- Endorsed The Rev. Dr. Timothy Halverson to stand as a Candidate for Moderator of the 218<sup>th</sup> General Assembly
- Ms. Elaine Barnett, Elder at First Presbyterian Church, Sarasota, as Peace River Presbytery 2006 Moderator
- Rev. Debbie Bronkema, Co-Director of Cedarkirk, as Peace River Presbytery Moderator-in-Nomination
- Rev. Bill Hull, Kirkwood Presbyterian Church, as Chair of Council for 2006

The Presbytery expressed its gratitude to outgoing Moderator Bill Oehler for his faithful and enthusiastic service.



## Intern with Interfaith Action and the Coalition of Immokalee Workers: Spring or Summer 2006!

[Interfaith Action](#) is looking for interns to live and work in Immokalee, Florida alongside farmworkers and allies who are organizing the Coalition of Immokalee Workers' national Campaign for Fair Food. Housing and a small stipend are provided. For more detailed information or if you have any questions, contact [info@interfaithact.org](mailto:info@interfaithact.org) or call (239) 986-0688 for more information.

### Experiences and Areas of Work:

- \* Work side-by-side with farmworker leaders on a daily basis, learning first-hand about sweatshop conditions, modern-day slavery, and the struggles;
- \* Shape and develop the growing Alliance for Fair Food network, which includes religious institutions, community organizations, human rights NGOs, youth, celebrities, and others who support the CIW's work.
- \* Create strategy for the Campaign for Fair Food with a team of farmworkers, students, youth, and faith-based organizers;
- \* Help make the CIW's dream of a Community Center for the Immokalee farmworker community into a reality
- \* Develop a range of organizing skills such as coalition building, campaigning, media work, planning mobilizations, and fundraising;

### Intern responsibilities:

- \* Provide logistical and technical support;
- \* Respect the leadership of the CIW farmworkers and work in a team with Interfaith Action, Student Farmworker Alliance, and CIW staff;
- \* Assist in the Capital Campaign for the CIW Community Center and in developing the Center itself;
- \* Assist with outreach, data compiling, fundraising and more for the Alliance for Fair Food project;
- \* Help produce and distribute Campaign for Fair Food materials to allies across the country.

### Ideal candidate possesses

- \* Bilingual in Spanish or Creole;
- \* Willingness to work long hours, including some late nights and weekends;
- \* Basic computer proficiency
- \* Prior organizing experience;
- \* Experience living or working outside the US;
- \* Strong commitment to social justice, taking responsibility, and working in a team.

### How to apply

Contact [info@interfaithact.org](mailto:info@interfaithact.org) for the application, which should also be accompanied by:

- \* A resume and cover letter
- \* A writing sample
- \* Two letters of recommendation

## CIW Wins Two Awards



On Nov 2, 2005, at a gala awards ceremony in San Francisco, Gerardo Reyes Chavez of the CIW accepted the **International Business Ethics Network's 2005 "Benny" Award**. The Benny Award was given to recognize the Taco Bell Campaign's "spectacular achievements in the advancements of business ethics."

Visit [www.ciw-online.org](http://www.ciw-online.org) or [www.businessethicsnetwork.org](http://www.businessethicsnetwork.org) for more.

Just two weeks earlier, the CIW received more good news and accepted the **Institute for Food and Development Policy's 2005 Economic & Social Human Rights Award** for its work on the national level! Visit [www.foodfirst.org/node/1330](http://www.foodfirst.org/node/1330) for more details.

## DISASTERS AND PDA

A few years ago most of us had not heard the term PDA very often, if at all. In the days since Hurricanes Charley, Frances, Ivan, Jeanne, the tsunami in the Far East, Hurricanes Katrina, Rita, Wilma, hurricanes in Guatemala and Haiti, earthquakes in Pakistan, [PRESBYTERIAN DISASTER ASSISTANCE](#) has been present with financial help, 'people help' and prayers. With so many disasters, their funds are stretched thin and their people resources are weary. They need our prayers and our financial donations.

Our own Peace River Presbytery would not be as far along in the recovery process had it not been for financial and 'people' help from PDA. While the current rounds of storms have devastated areas of the gulf coast and the need is great, there is still much to be done here also for folks who have been waiting a long time for promised help.

**There is currently a need in Immokalee** for food (especially beans and rice, canned meats, baby food) and diapers as well as household cleaning items. The middle school youth of Peace River Presbytery collected food items at their recent retreat. Pine Shores collected over 5,000 diapers and another couple of hundred dollars in toiletry items to take with the canned foods collected by the youth.



If your church would like to help, please call Candy at 941-426-8421 and she will give you the names of contact folks in Immokalee for your church to work with. Currently they do not need clothes.

## NEWS FROM OUR CHURCHES

- The Mission Team of [First Presbyterian Church of Punta Gorda](#) distributed Thanksgiving Certificates to 50 families (175 persons).

The church would also like to thank Burnt Store Presbyterian Church for allowing us to use their fellowship hall for our Sunday Worship, as well as for other studies, while we wait our return to our own location.

- [Venice Presbyterian Church](#) is having a Celebrate Missions morning on Sunday, February 12, 2006 between services.
- The Advisory Board Members of Sunday School Teacher Appreciation Day, sponsored by Gospel Light, has chosen [Ruth Baron from Covenant Presbyterian Church, Fort Myers](#), as 2005 Sunday School Teacher of the Year. Congratulations!



### Keyboard Excursions

*An afternoon of music with  
Joel Raney, pianist & Jane  
Holstein, organist*

Sunday, February 19th, 2006  
3:00 P.M.

[First Presbyterian Church](#)  
1402 Manatee Ave. W.  
Bradenton, FL 34221  
941-746-6141

Tickets sold in advance and at the door.  
Cost: \$8.00 each for adults and children  
Doors will open at 2:00 P.M.  
Reception to follow

### \$100 to Pastors Over 50 years old

The board of Pensions (BOP) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has announced that it will give \$100 to every installed PC (USA) pastor age 50 or older who submits to a preventive health examination and appropriate medical tests and screenings before December 31, 2006. The pilot program, "Preventive Incentive," is meant to emphasize the importance of personal health stewardship.

A list of the recommended exams and screenings is available online at:  
[www.pensions.org/preventiveincentive](http://www.pensions.org/preventiveincentive).

## 2005 CHRISTMAS JOY OFFERING

Once again we have the opportunity to make a difference in the lives of our retired ministers, missionaries and lay employees who do not have enough retirement income to care for themselves in their later years. Your offerings enable our retired servants to live out the remainder of their lives with dignity. Fifty percent of the offering goes to help retired personnel and the other fifty percent goes to help our Presbyterian Racial Ethnic schools.

The offering is ordinarily received on the Sunday before Christmas. To order materials you may call 800-524-2612.



## UPCOMING EVENTS

### A Different Kind of Officers' Institute is Coming!

**Saturday, February 11, 2006**  
[Church of the Palms](#), Sarasota  
**KEYNOTE SPEAKER: [Dr. Leonard Sweet](#)**

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### Upcoming Evangelism Event: "From the Crusade to the Coffee Shop"

**Saturday, March 4, 2006**  
[Church of the Palms](#), Sarasota  
**KEYNOTE SPEAKER: [Dr. Leighton Ford](#)**

PEACE RIVER PRESBYTERY  
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941-426-8421 or 800-736-4488  
[www.peaceriverpresbytery.org](http://www.peaceriverpresbytery.org)

[Graham Hart](#), General Presbyter  
[Bob Rea](#), Designated Associate Presbyter  
[Candy Reid](#), Program Coordinator  
[Craig Countiss](#), Stated Clerk  
[Jim Barnett](#), Treasurer  
[Alesia Sharpe](#), Office Manager  
[Bill Setchel](#), Financial Secretary  
[Joan Mock](#), Administrative Assistant  
[Gary Miller](#), Capital Campaign Director  
[Andrea Yerger](#), Administrative Assistant to CC Director  
[Larry Graham-Johnson](#), Rebuilding Coordinator  
[Karin Stewart](#), Assistant to Rebuilding Coordinator