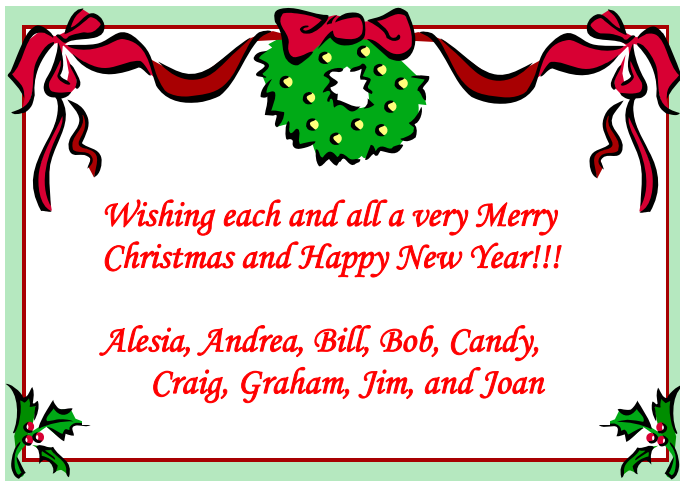




# The Interpreter

PEACE RIVER PRESBYTERY DECEMBER 2006

## CHRISTMAS GREETING FROM THE STAFF



## SPEAKING FROM THE HART

### Asking the Right Question: Learning from Mary

The church has Mary to thank for asking the right question. Her question, "How can this be?" in response to the angelic "instant message", allowed the angel to answer Mary's very practical concern, even as that question invites us into the mystery of the Incarnation and the reality of God with us.

The Advent Season is a time of preparation. One way to get ready is to figure out some Mary-type questions. What if at the beginning of worship everyone was asked to ponder and share: *how have you experienced the mystery of the Incarnation in your life this past week?* That could set a whole different tone to our worship experience. What if in our personal devotions we asked: *how have I experienced this new thing God is doing?* Or what if at the next Presbytery meeting we began by talking about: *how and where do I see God at work in my life, our world, and this Presbytery?*

Long ago I was taught that the questions you ask are almost as important as the answers you find. Most of our unchurched neighbors really don't care about all those questions we as Presbyterians have spent so much time discussing and arguing about in recent years; but they are yearning to hear our answer to the question of *how has Christ been born anew in us... how have we experienced the mystery and meaning of the Incarnation.*

Maybe we find again "the joy that has come to the world" by learning to ask Mary-type questions.

Wishing you a Merry Christmas,  
Graham Hart, General Presbyter

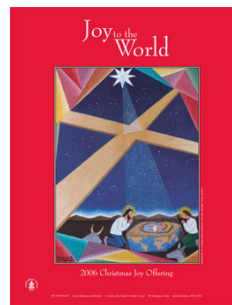
## Please Join Us in Prayer for the Following Churches:



New Church Developments  
First, Arcadia  
[First, Bonita Springs](#)  
Braden River, Bradenton  
[First, Bradenton](#)

December 3  
December 10  
December 17  
December 24  
December 31

## CHRISTMAS JOY OFFERING



Soon it will be Christmas, and that means another opportunity to receive the Christmas Joy Offering. A Presbyterian tradition for almost 70 years, this is one of the four special offerings designed to provide congregations direct ways of supporting specific causes that help those in need.

Fifty percent of the offering is distributed through the Board of Pensions for assistance programs that provide support to retired and active church workers and their spouses and families. The other fifty percent supports Presbyterian-related ethnic education. Resources were mailed to each congregation in early September that included free promotion material such as minutes for mission, coin boxes, posters, placemats, bulletin inserts, and offering envelopes. If you did not receive your packet, you can still receive information through PDS by calling 800.524.2612 or order online at <http://www.pcusa.org/cjoffering/>

## CHRISTMAS GIVING IDEAS

We frequently get calls at the Presbytery office wanting to know how a particular group (youth group, Sunday School class, PW Circle, Men of the Church, etc.) can help with mission projects, particularly in our emerging work in Immokalee through Beth-EI. Here are just a few ideas:

**Beth-EI – Immokalee** - Toiletry items, such as soap, toothpaste, toothbrush, combs, new socks, washing powder, small toys or stuffed animals are given out each Friday from the travel van where supper is served on Friday evenings. Bottled water is always welcome.

# ADVENT RESOURCES

Dave Moore, Director of Beth-El, is always looking for small groups to help cook and serve the evening meal on Fridays. This would be a great family project! For information about where and when, contact Dave at [dave@Beth-El.info](mailto:dave@Beth-El.info)

**Friendship House** – This interdenominational shelter for the homeless in Immokalee is always needing toiletry items, washcloths and towels, blankets, new socks or new underwear (small sizes), small stuffed animals to sooth an anxious child, and, of course, canned goods and bags of rice or beans.

**ECHO** – An interdenominational Christian ministry organization in North Fort Myers that seeks to find creative ways to end hunger, ECHO stands for Educational Concerns for Hunger Organization. This group sends out hundreds of missionaries to third world countries to teach the Word of Christ through hands-on help in growing and sustaining crops to feed the masses. A gift to this organization, perhaps in honor of someone who has everything, would also mean a gift for the Christ Child. For more information, please check their website at [www.echo.org](http://www.echo.org)



These are just a few of the many worthy causes and needs that are around 365 days a year. Most of us in the Peace River Presbytery family have more than we need. Perhaps this is the year to begin to focus on giving gifts to those who do not have enough to eat or do not have clothes to wear, or who are in the prison of hunger and despair.... Sort of like what Jesus was talking about in Matthew 25.

For more information, please contact your Program Coordinator for Mission and Justice, Candy Reid, at [candy@peacriverpresbytery.org](mailto:candy@peacriverpresbytery.org) or 941-426-8421.

## VBS OPEN HOUSE!

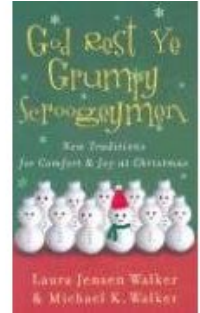
Yes! We know it is only the first of December but soon after Christmas, folks who work in Christian Education begin to think about summer opportunities. On Sunday afternoon **January 14, 2007** from 2:00 to 4:30 p.m. at the Presbytery office, we will hold an OPEN HOUSE where you can come by and preview Vacation Bible School kits from GROUP, COKESBURY, and AUGSBURG, plus information about the Gospel Light VBS program. In addition, we will have a “help sheet” of tried and true ideas from ‘seasoned’ education workers, as well as some new ideas to think about. Mark your calendars today and plan to stop by. We will even give you some refreshments!

Your *Peace River Presbytery Resource Center* has lots of advent, Christmas and Epiphany resources still available. Check out these interesting books:

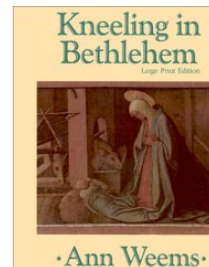
### “God Rest Ye Grumpy Scroogeysmen”

New Traditions for Comfort and Joy at Christmas by Laura Jensen Walker & Michael K. Walker

Whether you resemble Scrooge or one of the Magi from the East, this delightful Christmas book will inspire you to celebrate the season in fun, creative ways. Filled with humorous and poignant anecdotes, from a memorable Christmas dinner of potato chips and candy bars to a contagious delight in filling Christmas stockings, this book provides lots of food for thought.



### “Kneeling in Bethlehem” by Ann Weems

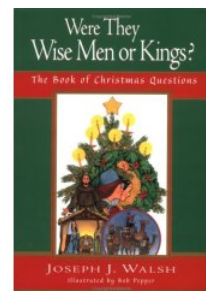


A time-honored classic, Ann leads the reader to think about the season in a creative and powerful way. Great insights, poems, and other material. This would be a great resource for Presbyterian Women Circle leaders, Sunday School teachers, and Pastors for sermon illustrations.

### “Were They Wise Men or Kings?”

The Book of Christmas Questions by Joseph Walsh

This book is filled with delightful information about our Christmas customs and the story behind many of our beloved Christmas traditions. GREAT information for Sunday School teachers, youth leaders, pastors, Bible study groups, and PW Circles.



# THE MAIN EVENT

**Saturday, February 10, 2007**

**[Pine Shores Presbyterian Church, Sarasota](#)**

A new kind of leadership training for officers in the Church, lay leaders, pastors, youth and youth leaders, and members of the Peace River Presbytery family.

You won't want to miss this event, so mark your calendars now!



## **KEYNOTE AND WORKSHOP LEADER:**

Rodger Nishioka, Professor of Christian Education, Youth and Young Adult Ministry at Columbia Seminary and one of leading experts on Emerging Youth and Young Adult Ministry.

With his quick wit and keen insight into the challenges local churches face in the areas of youth and ministry in general, Rodger will leave you with a new heart for ministry in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

**Look for the posters at your local Church detailing classes to be offered.** Brochures and registration forms will be mailed to all Churches the week after Christmas. Information will also be online at [www.peaceriverpresbytery.org](http://www.peaceriverpresbytery.org) on the Leader Development page.

## **EVANGELISM WORKSHOP**

**WHEN:** Saturday March 3, 2007 from 9:30 to 3:00

**WHERE:** [Church of the Palms, Sarasota](#)

**WHO:** Dr. Tom Long

**WHAT:** *TESTIMONY: "TALKING OURSELVES INTO BEING CHRISTIAN"*

**COST:** \$10 per person to cover the cost of snacks and lunch



**DEADLINE FOR REGISTRATION IS  
FEBRUARY 27, 2007**

To register, please contact Joan at 941-426-8421 or use the registration form on our website, <http://www.peaceriverpresbytery.org/Bulletinboard.htm>

## **Presbyterian Historical Society Announces 2007 Local Church History Seminar**

The Presbyterian Historical Society is pleased to announce the dates for the annual Local Church History Seminar. From **April 19 to 22, 2007**, the society will hold its 29th annual seminar at the William Black Lodge in Montreat, North Carolina. The event is designed for persons interested in the management and preservation of records, and writing congregation history. The seminar features workshops on Presbyterian history, oral history, researching and writing a church history, managing and preserving congregation records, disaster planning, exhibits, and anniversary celebrations. The society is pleased to offer three scholarships for participants from small churches: two granted by the society and another sponsored by the Board of Directors of the William Black Lodge. Each scholarship covers the seminar fee and the housing costs. The Lodge Scholarship is awarded only to congregations of the Synod of Mid-Atlantic. All scholarships are open to congregations that have no more than 250 members, have been in existence for at least 50 years, and demonstrate financial need. For additional information about the seminar, scholarships, housing at the William Black Lodge, and for a seminar registration form, visit the society's website at: <http://www.history.pcusa.org/cong/lchs/index.html>

Or contact them at:

Presbyterian Historical Society  
425 Lombard Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19147  
215-627-1852  
[refdesk@history.pcusa.org](mailto:refdesk@history.pcusa.org)

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[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  
[Andrea Yerger](#), Campaign Coordinator

This newsletter is available for viewing anytime at  
[www.peaceriverpresbytery.org](http://www.peaceriverpresbytery.org)  
(follow link to "Presbytery Publications")

**Highlights**  
**November 16, 2006 Stated Meeting of**  
**Peace River Presbytery**  
**First Presbyterian Church, Sarasota**

As Presbytery gathered to carry out its business, three “themes” emerged: Mission, Music, and the Magic of Stewardship. While commissioners and visitors gathered to worship, volunteers were hard at work preparing 250 meals which included homemade lollipops celebrating the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of [First, Sarasota](#).

The theme of mission began as Dennis Smith, a mission co-worker from Guatemala, led the presbytery in worship, presented a keynote address, and led one of the breakout groups. Dennis challenged the presbytery with his message and insights. The theme continued with a report and update on the Coalition for Immokalee Workers’ campaign to improve working conditions and increase their pay in the tomato fields. There was a breakout group for those interested in further information on the work of the Coalition, as well as a lunch gathering for those interested in Guatemala Sister Churches.

Duvall Presbyterian Home’s Men’s Chorus shared their gift of music with the Presbytery. [Duvall Presbyterian Home](#) has a long tradition of caring for individuals with developmental disabilities.



Duvall Men’s Chorus

In addition to a written update on new church development, the New Church Development Quartet made its debut and shared their hope and faith in song. Members of the quartet are: Jim Berger (Hope United, Fort Myers), Elizabeth Deibert (Peace, Lakewood Ranch), Silvana Franca (Naples Brazilian Fellowship), and Ed Gray (Crossroads, Naples).

Treasurer Jim Barnett, operating on the assumption that commissioners had read his report, introduced a “cake” recipe for meeting the budget. Ingredients included: High Priority, Enthusiasm, Prayer, Commitment, Grace of God, and the spark of imagination and determination. Jim lit all of the ingredients, and when the flames were extinguished, the money overflowed!



Jim Barnett

Robin Doyle indicated that the Joining Hearts & Hands Mission Campaign was entering a new phase, and that members of the campaign committee would be calling to make appointments to visit sessions.

The Board of Trustees recommended, and Presbytery approved:

- Transferring legal title of Wintergarden Presbyterian Church’s property from the Presbytery to the church.
- The sale of property bequeathed to Community Presbyterian, Englewood.

Tim Halverson presented three new ministers to the Presbytery for examination and reception into membership:

- The Reverend Dr. Taylor M. Hill, Interim Pastor, Community Presbyterian, Englewood
- The Reverend Dr. Jerald B. Landrey, Interim Pastor, Church of the Palms, Sarasota
- The Reverend Mark Tate Jernigan, Pastor, First Presbyterian, Bradenton.

Put these on your calendars:

- The Main Event, with Dr. Roger Nishioka, Saturday, February 10, 2007, 8:30 a.m. - 1:15 p.m., Pine Shores, Sarasota
- Evangelism Workshop with Dr. Tom Long, Saturday, March 3, 2007, 9:30 a.m. - 3:00 p.m., Church of the Palms, Sarasota