



THE INTERPRETER

PEACE RIVER PRESBYTERY

MAY 2006

SPEAKING FROM THE HART

At the May 25 Presbytery meeting we will be celebrating several anniversaries, including our own. In 1706, seven clergy gathered to practice what they believed was at the core of both New Testament Christianity and Calvin's theology. We think a drive from Naples to Venice in air-conditioned cars is much. The original seven came on horseback to Philadelphia 300 years ago to encourage each other in faith, preach, and take responsibility for finding additional suitable shepherds (pastors) for the gathering flocks of Presbyterians in the colonies. They also gathered as a deliberative body (council – see Acts 15) making decisions effecting each other and the whole church. While there were other Calvinists in the colonies who were independent lone-ranger types inclined toward congregationalism, this initial group of seven believed that the church and its clergy could be stronger and more faithful if they joined in this partnership that became the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America. At the May Presbytery meeting, we will have a visit from the wife of one of those seven.

It took another 200 years in our church for women to be affirmed and recognized as having gifts for ministry. Even though Phoebe is named as a deacon in Romans 15, it was not until 1906 that woman were ordained as deacons in the Presbyterian Church. Women were first ordained as elders 75 years ago. Just 50 years ago, in 1956, Margaret Towner was the first woman ordained in our church as a minister of Word and Sacrament. We are pleased that Margaret, who is an active member of Peace River Presbytery, will be preaching at the May Presbytery meeting in Venice.

Also at our May 25 meeting, we will celebrate 15 years of ministry as a Presbytery, lift up what we have accomplished, and share a visioning process that will lead us into the next chapter of our life together.

Over the 300 years, there have been bumps in the road, but when you look back, this church of ours has planted well over 13,000 congregations, set out a form of government that was copied by the founders of our country, and launched mission in the name of Jesus Christ across the world. We have much to celebrate, but that is not the end of the story. Our 38 sessions and congregations, 2 active new church developments, 2 racial-ethnic ministries, and you are writing the next chapter. So with all that history and a God who is ever going before us, I am grateful for the opportunities that God has given us to be Presbyterian Christians in our time.

Thanks be to God!
Graham Hart

Please Join Us in Prayer for the Following Churches:

Community , Englewood	May 7
Buckingham , Fort Myers	May 14
Covenant , Fort Myers	May 21
Cypress Lake , Fort Myers	May 28

Also, please be in prayer for the upcoming [General Assembly](#) that meets from June 15 to June 22 in Birmingham, Alabama.



MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

- May 4 -** General Assembly Rehearsal for Tim Halverson at First, Bonita Springs, 10 am
- May 4 -** Disaster Plan Meeting at Moorings, 1 pm
- May 6 -** Mandatory Orientation for Summer Youth Trips at the Presbytery Office, 10 am
- May 11 -** General Assembly Rehearsal for Tim Halverson at Church of the Palms, 10 am
- May 25 -** STATED MEETING at Venice Presbyterian

Scholarship Appreciation Luncheon

Eckerd College held the Eleventh Annual Scholarship Appreciation Luncheon on March 1, 2006. After the event, Matthew Bisset, Vice President for Advancement, wrote a letter thanking Peace River Presbytery for helping make it possible for students to attend Eckerd College. Mr. Bisset enclosed with his letter a copy of the luncheon program and a photograph of Mary Mathias, who, along with Matt Lesperance, received a scholarship from Peace River Presbytery in the 2005-2006 school year.



NEWS FROM OUR CHURCHES

Congratulations to:

- o [Peace Presbyterian New Church Development](#) who had their official launch on Palm Sunday.
- o St. Paul's Presbyterian Church who celebrated their 35th anniversary on March 26.
- o [First Presbyterian, Sarasota](#), who are celebrating their 100th anniversary this year.

African Aid: A Run for the Children of South Africa



Covenant Presbyterian in Fort Myers is hosting a race on Saturday, May 6 with all proceeds being directed to the World Vision project that the church supports in Swaziland. For additional information, go to www.covpcfm.com or call 239-334-8937.

Mission Trip to New Orleans

On March 11, 2006, twelve Presbyterians from Peace River Presbytery representing [Kirkwood Presbyterian](#) and [Westminster Presbyterian](#) churches, both in Bradenton, traveled to Luling, LA to serve in missions with the people of New Orleans. The group stayed and worked under the auspices of Presbyterian Disaster Assistance which has established a camp hosting eighty-five people located on the campus of First Union Presbyterian Church in Luling. The camp contains three-person tents, a large community tent, several portable toilets, and both men's and women's shower facilities. PDA continues to improve the living conditions with each and every group, and the plan is to have the camp at Luling open for the next five years.

The mission team worked on three houses in the Gentilly and Lakeview neighborhoods of New Orleans, "mucking" out the houses of all furniture, appliances, fixtures, drywall, and insulation. When completed, the houses are down to the studs which then must be treated for mold before rebuilding can occur. After the work of the Bradenton group, two of the three homeowners were able to obtain building permits to rebuild. The third homeowner is still deciding whether or not to stay in the area or to relocate away from New Orleans. The work was difficult and the days were long.

In the end, though, the group was most affected by the scope of the damage and the continuing needs of the residents of New Orleans for hope and encouragement. Some residents are still not able to come back to face the losses they have endured. There is still much work that needs to be done; however through the efforts of PDA and volunteers like the team from Bradenton, the hope of Jesus Christ is being reflected into the hopelessness of this, the greatest natural disaster ever to affect our nation.



The mission team included: Erroll Eckford, Jane Ernst, Sharon and Ray Jock, Merrill Keen, Ed Reed, Charles Peck, Ray and Winnie Smouse, and Ashley Williams. The team was led by Diana

Shoemaker, DCE at Kirkwood Presbyterian Church, and Chris Adams, Associate Pastor at Westminster Presbyterian Church.

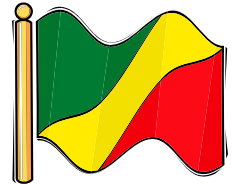
Eye Testing in Guatemala



A mission team sponsored by [Venice Presbyterian Church](#) recently conducted four days of eye testing in Guatemala, using an auto-refractor which will also be used in the Dominican Republic and Haiti in July. Over 250 people had their eyes tested and many had eyeglasses fitted. Eye testing clinics were held for two days in Venice Presbyterian's sister church, The Church of the Transfiguration in Guatemala City, and two days in Balcones de Palin. A medical clinic in Balcones de Palin uses space in the church where Moorings Presbyterian Church, Naples, has sent mission teams. They had the privilege of meeting several physicians who operate clinics in various parts of Guatemala and were inspired by stories of how the love of Christ is being shared through the Guatemalan churches.

Congo Choir Coming!

A **Choir from the Democratic Republic of the Congo** (DRC) is scheduled to perform at General Assembly, Birmingham, Alabama on June 18, 2006. The choir is sponsored by Congo Mission Network, Partnership in Mission, Worldwide Ministries Division, PC(USA).



Prior to General Assembly, the Congo Choir US Tour is to be launched at **Our Cultural Connections (OCC)** on June 17, 2006. OCC is a Sarasota multicultural festival June 16-18 with a goal of educating, understanding and celebrating our common humanity. For more information, please go to the following website: www.ourculturalconnections.org.

Sarasota Host Site needs your **help** and **suggestions to raise \$5000 seed money now** to pay our share of Choir travel to US. Please make checks payable to: **The Congo Choir Tour General Fund** and mail to: Presbyterian Church of the Covenant, 7950 S. Tamiami Trail, Sarasota, FL 34231. Attention: Mrs. Dorothy Kirkpatrick.

Muriel J. Maxwell, (941) 377-3588

USF Professors to Hold Workshop to Address Hurricane Stress on Older Adults



"The impact of Hurricanes on the Elderly", a workshop conducted by University of South Florida professors Lisa Brown, PhD, and John a. Schinka, PhD, will be hosted by [Burnt Store Presbyterian Church](#) from 10 a.m. to noon on Saturday, May 6. Brown, a faculty member at USF's

Louis de la Parte Florida Mental Health Institute, Department of Aging and Mental Health, and Schinka, a faculty member in the Department of Psychiatry at the James A. Haley VA hospital, will address issues on how the stress of impending natural disasters, such as hurricanes, accompanied by evacuations, power outages and other service disruptions, may impact older adults. In addition to discussing their research findings from the Florida Older Adult Hurricane Study, they will also present information about resilience building and preparing for hurricanes. The workshop is free and open to the public. Reservations are requested by contacting the church office at 941-639-0001 from 9 a.m. until 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday, or by e-mail: info83@earthlink.net.

Welcome New Educator

Allen Lincoln began his ministry at **Cypress Lake, Fort Myers**, this spring and has already hit the ground running with lots of new ideas and creative expertise. We welcome Allen to the Peace River family.

TWO OPPORTUNITIES TO ASK QUESTIONS ABOUT GENERAL ASSEMBLY AND HELP PREPARE TIM HALVERSON AS HE STANDS FOR MODERATOR OF THE 217TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY



Peace River Presbytery, composed of 38 churches from Palmetto to Naples, is one of 173 Presbyteries that make up the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Every two years commissioners from each Presbytery meet at a General Assembly to make decisions affecting the whole denomination. From June 15, 2006 until June 22, 2006, commissioners, church leaders, and observers will gather in Birmingham, Alabama for the 217th General Assembly.

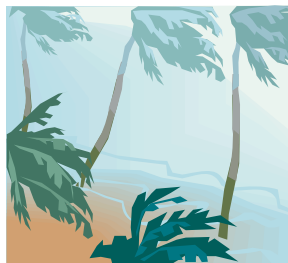
We have a special and exciting opportunity in Peace River Presbytery. Dr. Tim Halverson, pastor of Faith Presbyterian Church, Cape Coral, has been enthusiastically endorsed and nominated by Peace River Presbytery to become the Moderator of the 217th General Assembly. At this time there are three other candidates who have been endorsed by their presbyteries to also stand for Moderator. **Tim and an advisory team of elders and clergy helping him prepare for General Assembly request help from the ministers and laity of Peace River Presbytery.**

You are urged to attend one of two "rehearsal" meetings and present questions similar to those that will be directed to Tim by commissioners the day of election. The meetings are:

May 4, 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.
First Presbyterian Church, Bonita Springs

May 11, 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.
Church of the Palms, Sarasota.

Introduction to the Peace River Presbytery Disaster Preparedness and Response Plan



The hurricane season of '06 is upon us and it is certain that Florida will again be at risk. We do not have ability to control the frequency of hurricanes or our vulnerability to them, but we can increase our level of preparedness. Your Disaster Preparedness and Response Executive Committee has been working on a plan to increase the readiness of our churches. This plan was adopted by the Presbytery Council on March 23, 2006 and will be recommended to the Presbytery in May. Pending Presbytery approval, the Council has authorized presentations to be made to the churches. Make sure you have a representative at one of these meetings.

May 4 – 1:00 pm

Moorings Presbyterian Church, Naples

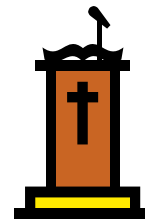
June 3 – 1:00 pm

Burnt Store Presbyterian Church, Punta Gorda

*For additional information,
call Gayle Morris at 941-575-6554.*

Stated Meeting

The May 25 Meeting of Presbytery at Venice Presbyterian Church will include the celebration of 15 years of ministry and mission together as Peace River Presbytery, 50 years of ordaining women as clergy, 75 years of ordaining women as elders, 100 years of ordaining women as deacons, and 300 years since the first Presbytery was organized. The Rev. Dr. Margaret Towner, member of Peace River Presbytery and the first woman ordained, will be preaching.



In addition, breakout groups will be offered by the Personnel Committee, the Stewardship Development Team, the Disaster Preparedness and Response Task Force, the Board of Trustees, and Dr. Les Morgan, a PCUSA medical mission co-worker from Bangladesh. (For more information, check with your Clerk of Session.)

If you are not a pastor or a commissioner to the meeting *but plan on attending*, please contact the Presbytery office by May 18 so we may plan for space and lunch.

Clergy and Educator Retreat

REMINDER: Those planning on attending the 2006 Clergy and Educator Retreat on Fort Myers Beach need to make their room reservations by calling 800-625-4111 by 5:00 p.m. on Friday, May 5. Registration forms and \$25 also need to be sent to the Presbytery office.

Educators Gathering

Join us for fellowship, looking at new resources, networking with other Workshop Rotation Churches, getting a sneak preview of our new leadership opportunities and a great lunch from 11:00 - 1:00 on Friday, May 12th. This will be our last meeting until the Fall so plan to be present.

Summer Youth Mission Trips



There is still time to sign up for the 2006 summer mission trips for youth. There is a mandatory orientation on Saturday, May 6. Complete information is available on our website www.peacriverpresbytery.org under the youth section.

Presbytery Youth Council

Peace River Presbytery is fortunate to have one of the most active Presbytery Youth Councils in the denomination. The Presbytery Youth Council is composed of Senior High youth from various churches in Peace River. Our Moderator, Dusty Mercado from the Wintergarden Church, will graduate this year, as will several others, so we are looking for some new members. If you have youth in your local congregation who have leadership potential or would simply like to know more about the PYC, please contact Candy Reid at candy@peacriverpresbytery.org who serves as staff advisor for this committee, or our dedicated and gifted leaders: Mary Brown at First Presbyterian, Sarasota, or Rev. Jay Mumper and Suzy Russell at First Presbyterian, Port Charlotte.

PW Gathering in Louisville

Plan now to attend the next triennial Churchwide Gathering of Presbyterian Women:



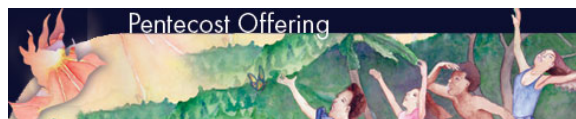
Creation! Celebration!

God's Word – Light for the Journey

Genesis 1:1a, 3, 31a and John 1:1, 3-4

July 7 – 11, 2006 in Louisville, Kentucky

For further information on this gathering, including a registration brochure and promotional materials, go to <http://www.pcusa.org/pwgathering/>.



Pentecost Offering

Pentecost Offering

For Children at Risk, Youth and Young Adults
Sunday, June 4, 2006

NOW is the time to...

- *Order free promotional materials by calling (800) 524-2616
- * Read the stories about the people the offering serves
- * Distribute coin boxes to your congregation's children
- * Publicize how your congregation's 40% will be used
- * Receive the *Pentecost Offering* on June 4

Visit www.pcusa.org/pentecost, or call (888) 728-7228, ext 5121 or 5689

NEW RESOURCES COMING TO PRP RESOURCE CENTER IN MAY



- "Bearing Truthful Witness about Our Muslim Neighbors" Abraham and Ibrahim – The Bible and the Qur'an to Children
- SPLASH – Birth to Three - Faith Formation Resources from Augsburg Fortress Press

Vacation Bible School

Many of our churches have told us when they are having Vacation Bible School this year and what curriculum they are using. We will make every effort to visit as many churches during VBS as possible.

If you haven't let us know when your VBS is, please e-mail our program coordinator Candy Reid at candy@peacriverpresbytery.org.

PEACE RIVER PRESBYTERY

5600 Peace River Road
North Port, FL 34287

941-426-8421 or 800-736-4488

www.peacriverpresbytery.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