



The Interpreter

PEACE RIVER PRESBYTERY SEPTEMBER 2006

SPEAKING FROM THE HART

I was surprised and touched when at the August 26 Presbytery meeting, Bill Hull, on behalf of the Presbytery Council, spoke some very kind and affirming words, celebrating my 5 years of ministry as your General Presbyter, as well as noting the 30th anniversary of my ordination on August 6. Thank you.

The symbolism of having the Presbytery meeting at Chapel by the Sea at this time in the life of our denomination was an important and powerful reminder of who we are as Presbyterians. It was also a confirmation of what is good, right, and faithful about the Presbyterian Church, USA and Peace River Presbytery. At the heart of our polity is the belief that clergy can be more faithful, churches stronger, and mission more effective (strategic) when we participate in this web of relationships and partnerships that defines a Presbytery. Chapel by the Sea is a visible demonstration of the best of who we are in this network and covenantal partnership.

Two years ago, after Hurricane Charley, folks at Chapel wondered how to put their lives and church back together. With sand in pews, shards of glass in every corner, members' homes destroyed, and internal division that prior to Charley had divided and fractured the congregation, the shattered dolphin trinity window said it all. Yet through the dedicated work of members, the interventions of Committee on Ministry, the constant presence of the Hurricane Task Force, the calling of a dedicated designated pastor, and the help of the PCUSA through Presbyterian Disaster Assistance, Chapel by the Sea has been rebuilt inside and out.

Chapel gave me a small stained glass dolphin made from that shattered window as a token of appreciation. I have it hanging over my desk as a reminder of the difference that this network called Peace River Presbytery can and does make. When I sometimes wonder what the future holds, or how we will get through, I look at the dolphin.

With the many opportunities and challenges before us, that dolphin is a symbol that God is at work in Peace River Presbytery, even as God uses people like you and me to do his work.

Thanks be to God,
Graham



Please Join Us in Prayer for the Following Churches:



[First, Port Charlotte](#)
[Burnt Store, Punta Gorda](#)
[First, Punta Gorda](#)
[Bee Ridge, Sarasota](#)

September 3
September 10
September 17
September 24



IN MEMORIAM

Rev. Parker Lansdale - July 26, 2006

REFLECTIONS FROM GUATEMALA

By Candy Reid, Program Coordinator

Having just returned from a 5 day trip to our Sister Churches in Guatemala, I was once again struck by the faith of our Guatemalan sisters and brothers.



On Sunday we worshiped with the congregation of El Buen Pastor. The church was packed, and the singing was vibrant and echoed the story of Jesus Christ to folks who passed by. When it was time for the prayers of the congregation, people who had a special need came up to the front to kneel and elders from the church came up, stood behind them and prayed with them as the pastor prayed. When the elders turned to go back to the congregation, you could see that many were visibly moved. The sermon was 35 minutes long..... and I only understood about every 3rd or 4th word... but at the end I wanted more. You could feel the presence of Christ in that congregation.

Later over lunch, our small band of Americanos enjoyed a picnic at a park high up in the mountains with members of the congregation. I spoke with the pastor of El Buen Pastor, Miguel Estrada, and commented on how sincere the worship and congregation seemed to be. Miguel replied that in America, for many the Christian faith is something that they were born into, something that families just participate in on Sunday. For them, in Guatemala, it is all new. Jesus Christ has not always been a part of their lives and, because it is so new, there is a different kind of fervor and eagerness to listen to the gospel.

The small congregation of El Buen Pastor has two new church development sites, one of which is above the town where they are located in a struggling agricultural community where there is no school. The church there

is a simple cement block structure and they are working to add more space for a school and bathrooms. The other NCD is in the village of Balcones de Palin, a refugee resettlement village from Hurricane Mitch which struck Guatemala in 1998. Both new church developments are led by elders from the congregation of El Buen Pastor with Miguel presiding over communion, weddings and funerals. There is no budget; they simply do what they can with what they have.

We returned to our world on Monday, to the land where there is plenty, with a new sense of what it means to go into all the world and preach the gospel, changed by the passion and fervor for the Christian faith we witnessed, and wondering all the time how we could regain some of the passion that has been lost in too busy lives and full agendas. What we do know is that we will be going back.

Basic Officer Training Coming to a Location Near You!

The Leadership and Congregational Development Committee (LCD) of Peace River Presbytery is proud to announce Basic Officer Training events to be held on Sunday afternoons at three area locations. The events are designed to give a basic understanding of the roles and responsibilities for church officers as well as the spiritual challenges for leading a congregation. This is to be an introductory course for all officers, both present and those who might be called by the local congregation to serve. The local church can then do follow-up training in the areas specific to their local situation.

Sunday, October 8, 2006 from 2:30 to 4:30 pm
[First, Bradenton](#), taught by Graham Hart

Sunday, October 15, 2006 from 2:30 to 4:30 pm
[First, Punta Gorda](#), taught by Bob Rea

Sunday, November 5, 2006 from 2:30 to 4:30 pm
[Vanderbilt, Naples](#), taught by Graham Hart

The event is FREE, but registration is requested not later than the Monday prior to the event so adequate space and materials for everyone will be available. **Each participant is asked to bring a copy of the Book of Order.** You may register online at www.peacriverpresbytery.org, Leader Development, or call Joan Mock, 941-426-8421.

This newsletter is available for viewing anytime at
www.peacriverpresbytery.org
(follow link to "Presbytery Publications")

2006 Fall Stewardship Event

CULTIVATING GENEROSITY

Thursday, October 5, 2006

(Registration at 9:30am)
10am to 3pm

Location: St. Paul's in North Port
Cost: \$10 per person

Led by: Fred Milligan, Associate for Stewardship Education (PCUSA)

Registration brochures have been sent to the Stewardship Chair of each church. You may also go to www.peacriverpresbytery.org, Bulletin Board, for more information or call the Presbytery office, 941-426-8421.
REGISTRATION DEADLINE IS SEPTEMBER 28.

NEWS FROM OUR CHURCHES



Braden River Presbyterian Church Adds a New Program Center to Its Campus

**Want the seminary experience without leaving Southwest Florida?
Interested in quality continuing education?**

Pittsburgh Theological Seminary will be conducting a class via Internet broadcast this coming October. [Cypress Lake Presbyterian Church](#) in Fort Myers is hosting the event which will include a 2-way audio and video transmission between the seminary and 2 other churches. This non-credit course is titled *The Triune God: Confessing, Proclaiming and Praising the God of Jesus Christ* and will be taught by the Rev. Dr. Ronald Cole-Turner, Professor of Theology and Ethics. Classes will be held on Wednesdays, October 4, 11, 18, and 25 from 7:00 - 8:30 p.m. The cost for the course at Cypress Lake (Fort Myers) is only \$30.00 (not the usual fee of \$40.00 for on-campus programming). For more information, you may contact the Continuing Education office at the seminary via 412-441-3304 ext. 2196 or via e-mail at ConEd@PTS.edu.



Mission Speaker at St. Paul's

An ordained Presbyterian minister, the dynamic Rev. Dr. Ben Mathes is founder and president of Rivers of the World (ROW), an international exploration and development agency that targets remote river basins. At 7:00 p.m. on Wednesday, October 4, everyone is invited to hear and meet Ben at his presentation at **St. Paul's Presbyterian Church**, Sumter Blvd., across the street from the Presbytery office in North Port.

Since 1978, Ben has traveled the world on behalf of international health development, taking medicines and Jesus to the neglected people who live along the rivers of the world. ROW projects run the gamut of human, physical and spiritual needs.

If your Missions Chair or pastor needs a home in which to spend the night after the presentation, contact Karen Reynolds of St. Paul's at 941-240-5907.

To learn more about the mission and ministry at Rivers of the World, or how you can partner with ROW to provide hope to others a world away, visit www.row.org. And remember, whenever you cross a river, say a prayer for ROW.

Youth Ministry

Mark your calendars now for the following Youth Events provided by the PRP Youth Council and caring adults who work behind the scenes to make sure we have the best YOUTH MINISTRY in the state. Complete information, registration forms, and costs will be mailed to each church around mid-September.

MIDDLE SCHOOL RETREAT:
November 18-19 at Cedarkirk

Looking Ahead in 2007

- o Youth Connectional Jam for grades 6-12 at Siesta Key on Friday, February 9
- o SENIOR HIGH RETREAT: February 24-25 at Cedarkirk

Workshop Rotation Training Event

Linda Beckham, a leader in the Workshop Rotation method of teaching Sunday School for over 8 years and an Educator at Palma Ceia Presbyterian Church in Tampa, will lead a Workshop Rotation Training Event.

WHEN: Friday, September 22 from 10:00 am-2:00 pm

LOCATION: [Venice Presbyterian Church](#)

COST: The training event is being provided **free of charge** by the Leadership and Congregational Development Committee of Peace River Presbytery,

and is being co-sponsored by Peace River Presbytery and Venice Presbyterian Church.

REGISTRATION: Simply e-mail Joan Mock at joan@peacriverpresbytery.org NO LATER THAN September 15 to ensure your lunch reservation.



**For EDUCATORS
and PASTORS
who do Christian
Education**

- o APCE (Association of Presbyterian Church Educators) SOAP REGIONAL RETREAT at Palma Ceia Presbyterian Church in Tampa October 23-27 – SOAP stands for South Atlantic and Puerto Rico Region
- o APCE ANNUAL EVENT: January 31 – February 3, 2007 in Philadelphia

For complete information and registrations forms, go online to <http://www.apcenet.org>. You won't want to miss these great events

Your PRP Resource Center is.....

A place where you can find:

- o Curriculum resources
- o Adult short-term study ideas
- o Resources to help you plan for:
 - Officer Training
 - Advent/Christmas celebrations
 - Lent/Easter celebrations
 - Hunger and Peacemaking resources
 - Bible studies

In other words, we have resources to meet just about all of your needs AND if we don't have what you need we can often get it for you. Please give Candy Reid, our Program Coordinator, a call at 941-426-8421 or e-mail her at candy@peacriverpresbytery.org.

PEACE RIVER PRESBYTERY
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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

Highlights
August 26, 2006 Stated Meeting of
Peace River Presbytery
Chapel by the Sea, Fort Myers Beach, Florida

As the Presbytery gathered to begin its business, there was awareness that just two years ago Hurricane Charley had visited [Chapel by the Sea](#) and done major damage to its facilities. But it had not been able to diminish the spirit of the congregation. There was thanksgiving that the building had been repaired and the church was moving ahead in ministry.



Cynthia Rigby, Professor of Theology at Austin Seminary, brought intelligence, imagination, and boundless energy to both her sermon and keynote presentation. She enlightened and engaged the Presbytery with her thoughts on

“What does it mean to be a Reformed Christian?”

There was much to **celebrate** in the life of Peace River Presbytery:

- The youth mission trips were a huge success and the reports of our young people were filled with honesty and enthusiasm.

- There was excitement as Dave Moore indicated that [Beth-El Farmworker Ministry](#) was expanding into Immokalee. Instead of buying or leasing a building, they are on wheels, going where the people are.



- Presbytery approved the recommendation of its Trustees to empower Whitfield Estates Presbyterian Church to allow the development of some of its unused church property for residential use. The great news is that the developer will build them a new 500-seat sanctuary, cost-free, and will reconstruct the current building!!!

- Three inquirers took the next step toward ordination. Cassandra Graham, Libby Shannon, and Jean Sparks were approved as candidates.

- Upon the recommendation of the Committee on Ministry, the Presbytery approved:

- Clayton Thomas, as Associate Pastor, First Sarasota
- Mark Knowles, as Designated Pastor, First Port Charlotte
- Bruce Porter, as part-time Stated Supply, Christ Church of Longboat Key
- Russell Mase, as Stated Supply, First Naples

- Debbie Bronkema reported a hugely successful summer camp season at [Cedarkirk](#).

- The Council recognized and celebrated Graham Hart's 30th anniversary of his ordination and his five years of dedicated service to the Presbytery.

Among the celebrations, there were also **challenges**:

- Jim Barnett, Treasurer, indicated that we “need to step up” financially if we are to meet our budget. He put “faces on the dollars” by introducing folks involved with various ministries.

- Larry Graham-Johnson reminded us that there is still much to do in hurricane recovery efforts and that funds are running low.

- Robin Doyle indicated that the Hearts & Hands Campaign is underway, but indicated that the leaders of the Presbytery need to consider making their pledges.

- Two Investigative Commissions were appointed.

Commissioners Ray Angle, Tim Halverson, Gail Thornton, Kathi Wiggins, and Youth Advisory Delegate Joe Davis reported on their experiences at this year's General Assembly.

Chris Adams reported on the young adult ministry, sharing a video on Guatemala and announcing an upcoming mission trip there for young adults ages 19 to 28. Visit www.palmcorps.blogspot.com for more information.

Jim Kirk indicated that 24 churches have appointed a Director of Disaster Preparedness and completed the initial training. The Presbytery approved the recommendation that “The Peace River Disaster Preparedness and Response Plan” become part of the policy and protocol for Peace River Presbytery. It also approved the Presbytery's active participation in the Florida Presbyterian Disaster Network.

The Nominations Committee urged commissioners and visitors to fill out the “Volunteer Information” form and become involved in the ministry of the Presbytery.

Tim Halverson expressed, upon behalf of the Presbytery, thanks for the ministry of Paul Kirbas, both at First Bonita Springs and Church of the Palms, and his active participation in the life of the Presbytery.

Upcoming Events:

- **Stewardship Event** on October 5, 10 a.m. - 3 p.m. (registration at 9:30) at St. Paul's, North Port.

- **Basic Officer Training** at 3 different locations: October 8 at First Bradenton, October 15 at First Punta Gorda, and November 5 at Vanderbilt Naples.