



The Interpreter

PEACE RIVER PRESBYTERY MAY 2007

SPEAKING FROM THE HART

"We have lift-off..." "Eagle, this is Mission Control..."

Those are familiar words to anyone who lived in the 60's. As a nation we were on a mission to the moon. That mission shaped a whole generation, and in 1969 the mission was accomplished.

As a Presbytery we adopted a new vision statement that includes the word "missional". God is on a mission (see John 3:16, Matthew 25 and 28). A missional church seeks to discern and align itself to God's mission in the world. *To be missional is to orient all of the programs and activities of a congregation (and Presbytery) around God's mission.*

The move **from membership focus to missional focus** is hard work for any congregation, but in a post-Christian world it is essential. In the 1950's and 1960's, mainline churches, including Presbyterian churches, grew because the culture encouraged folks to come. New churches in the suburbs were established, and if we built it, they did come. One reason our denomination and most churches continue to lose members is that congregations, sessions, and members have not changed their thinking from a fellowship/membership model to a discipleship or missional model. Our 21st century culture no longer supports the way we as Presbyterians have done things.

There is a reason Jesus invited us to be fishers of people. The Great Commission is at the center of who we are as Jesus' disciples. Unless members of a local congregation are making a case for Jesus Christ in their community and world, giving witness to the life-transforming power of the gospel, that congregation is not likely to grow. **Unless the Great Commandment is lived out in the life of a congregation, the temptation will be for that congregation to become a members-only club that wants only enough new members, just like us, to maintain what we have.**

Stan Ott will be our keynote speaker at the May 24 Presbytery meeting (Church of the Palms, Sarasota) helping us focus on this new, but really old, way of thinking called **Missional**. Please come. He is an outstanding presenter!

Also, I thank you for the gift of a sabbatical in May and June! Part of the time I will be focusing on what being a missional Presbytery may look like. I ask your prayers as I take this time apart.

With deep gratitude for Sabbath, and thanks that God is on a Mission!

Graham
graham@peacriverpresbytery.org

Please Join Us in Prayer for:



Church of the Week

- May 6 [Vanderbilt Presbyterian Church](#), Naples
- May 13 Holy Trinity Presbyterian Church, North Fort Myers
- May 20 St. Paul's Presbyterian Church, North Port
- May 27 Palmetto Presbyterian Church, Palmetto

STATED MEETING
Thursday, May 24, 2007
[Church of the Palms](#)
3224 Bee Ridge Road
Sarasota, FL 34239

SABBATICAL

Graham Hart, our General Presbyter, will be on Sabbatical during the months of May and June. Bob Rea, Designated Associate General Presbyter, will be acting General Presbyter and Head of Staff in Graham's absence.

PICTURES FOR HANDBOOK

REMINDER: Our 2008 Informational Handbook will include pictures of all pastors. Pictures will also be taken of educators currently serving in Peace River Presbytery churches. Simple black and white photos will be taken at the May 24 meeting of Presbytery with a make-up session to follow at the August 25 meeting. Watch for details.



2007 SUMMER MISSION TRIP REMINDER

All those registered for the Middle School Urban Camp, the Senior High West Virginia Mission Trip, and Triennium are asked to attend the **mandatory** orientation meeting at 10:00 a.m. on Saturday, May 5 at the Presbytery office.



2007 INTERNATIONAL PEACEMAKERS AVAILABLE

Through the Presbyterian Peacemaking Program, International Peacemakers are available to our Presbytery to come and speak. For more information and a form to submit your request, please contact Candy Reid, Program Coordinator. Requests must be submitted by June 15, 2007 and confirmation will be received by July 30th.

MIGUEL ARRIVES!



On April 11 Rev. Miguel Estrada arrived in Florida from Guatemala to begin his ministry in Immokalee. On April 12, Miguel (with Dave Moore, Director of Beth-El Farmworker Ministry)

visited the Peace River Presbyterian Center and was warmly welcomed. (Picture: Miguel is fifth from the left in the front row.)

Currently, Miguel is staying in Wimauma Sunday through Thursday with the Beth-El folks, and then traveling in *Espiritu* to Immokalee to work on Friday and Saturday. Last week Dave, Miguel and helpers fed over 220 people as they came in from a day of labor in the fields. They also served bread and coffee to the workers at 4:30 a.m. as they gathered, hoping to find work.

Currently Miguel is here without his wife and child. Miguel will return to Guatemala sometime in May to finish up some Synod business in Guatemala and to bring his wife and child back here with him. Please pray for the Estrada family as they make this transition. At a later date we will let each congregation know how they can be a part of a giant welcoming celebration for this new ministry opportunity that the Lord has provided.

It is our hope that each congregation can provide some gift cards for the Estrada family, perhaps through the work of the Presbyterian Women, to help them get settled in their new home. They will be coming with only a few suitcases each. Gift cards to Wal-Mart or Target would give them the opportunity to select items that fit their needs. Watch for an update and specific times when we will officially welcome the Estrada family, but for now please keep them in your prayers.

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

MESSAGE FROM JOAN GRAY



Since being elected moderator last June, I have been seeking an effective way that suits who I am in which to communicate with the wider church. What I have finally come up with is the idea to send out weekly (at least I'm trying for weekly) messages via email to anyone who wants to subscribe. These messages will be something like what a pastor might write to her congregation in the weekly newsletter, only in this case, the denomination is the congregation. In these communications I will reflect on my experience of being moderator as well as on what I am thinking, reading, meditating on in scripture, experiencing in mission throughout the church, etc. I will also pass on things I have come across that I think are worth us chewing on together. I look forward to communicating with you, and if you would like to respond to what I've written you can email me at gamoderator@ctr.pcusa.org. Please know that as much as I appreciate your communications I will generally not be able to respond due to everything else I've got on my plate.

Grace and peace,
Joan S. Gray
Moderator, 217th General Assembly

To subscribe to weekly messages:
<http://www.pcusa.org/gamoderator/lists.htm>

ARTICLES REQUESTED

Is a group in your church going on a mission trip this summer? We would love to publish in an upcoming issue of *The Interpreter* a brief article (approximately 150-200 words) sharing highlights from the trip.

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