



The Interpreter

PEACE RIVER PRESBYTERY

APRIL 2008

Speaking from the Hart

I was moved by a sermon I heard whose title captured the essence of Easter: *God is on the loose...* The angel said at the tomb: "He is not here... he is risen and has gone before you..." In short, God is on the loose in our lives and in our world. The biblical narrative is the story about what God is up to. It's about God's mission to seek and save the lost, restore a sinful and fallen world, redeem broken relationships, restore the heavens and earth, and introduce us to the reality that life is not primarily about us, but is entirely about God's mission and the reign and kingdom of God.

The recent emergence of what has been called missional ecclesiology is an attempt to realign the church with God's mission. For many, "missional" is a buzz word, but I believe at its center missional theology represents a paradigm shift of how we do church.

For several generations, we have thought of church as a place to go rather than a way to be God's people in the world. We have seen church as a building where members come, rather than a sending agency where disciples are equipped and sent forth on a mission. For too long we have focused on our internal church debates and not the world to which we are sent.

The [Gospel and Our Culture Network](#) says: "A missional church focuses all of its activities around its participation in God's mission to the world. It trains people for discipleship and witness; it worships and practices mutual support before the watching world." They have identified 8 characteristics and beliefs that get at the essence of a missional approach to church:

- Missional Vocation
- Biblical Formation and Discipleship.
- Taking Risks as a Contrast Community
- Practices that Demonstrate God's Intent for the World
- Worship as Public Witness
- Dependence on the Holy Spirit
- Pointing toward the Reign of God
- Missional Authority

Many pastors and congregations in Peace River are beginning to think about church in a new way. The Acts 16:5 initiative is an attempt to link churches together to have this conversation. I would love to talk with you if you too are thinking that God is calling us to recover our identity as God's people and explore how we can do that here. Why? God is on the loose in Peace River!

Easter Blessings,
Graham Hart – graham@peacriverpresbytery.org

Please join us in prayer for:



April 6 [First, Sarasota](#)
 April 13 Northminster, Sarasota
 April 20 [Pine Shores, Sarasota](#)
 April 27 Presbyterian Church of the Covenant, Sarasota

- Faith Graves whose husband, Rev. Ellis Graves (HR) went home to the Lord on March 25, 2008
- The upcoming [218th General Assembly](#) to be held June 21 through June 28, 2008 in San Jose, California
- General Assembly Commissioners from Peace River Presbytery: Rev. Valerie Bell, Rev. Clint Cottrell, Rev. Russ Hickman, Elder Sally Kirby, Elder Lee Martin, Elder Julia Williams, Youth Advisory Delegate Hannah Neeley

IMPORTANT DATES FOR ACTS 16:5

April 17, 2008

Pastor Cluster Gathering at PRP office
(please register by April 15)

May 1, 2008

Gathering 1 for Dream Teams at First, Sarasota
(please register by April 24)

October 6 & 7, 2008

Seminar 2 for Dream Teams

Spring 2009

Gathering 2 for Dream Teams (One Day)

Fall 2009

Gathering 3 for Dream Teams (One Day)

MISSION AND JUSTICE NEWS

Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW)

CIW has launched a national petition drive to pressure Burger King and other food industry leaders to pay a penny a pound more for tomatoes, and put a stop to "exploitation" and "modern-day slavery" in Florida fields.



This campaign is a grass roots effort by the CIW in cooperation with faith groups around the country. The petition states that signatories are “prepared to stop patronizing Burger King now and other food industry leaders in the future” if the Coalition’s request is not met. Leaders in our own denomination have signed the petition: Stated Clerk Rev. Cliff Kirkpatrick, Linda Valentine (executive director of the PCUSA General Assembly Council and recent keynote speaker at the February meeting of Presbytery) and the Rev. Noelle Damico (Associate for Fair Food, Presbyterian Hunger Program).

For more information about how you can help, go to the www.ciw-online.org.

Interested in learning about hunger and the root causes? *Just Neighbors* is a dynamic interactive curriculum designed to help you understand what it feels like to be poor in the midst of plenty. Youth and adults are invited to take a look at poverty from the inside out and learn how to help. The program includes nine multi-media sessions with leader’s guide and reproducible handouts, and is great for summer Sunday School, retreats, or small groups.

Mission Packets Coming to Your Church

Members of our Mission and Justice Committee are visiting each church or Mission Committee Chairperson to deliver our mission packets of information for 2008. The packets are designed to inform churches about the current mission supported by Peace River Presbytery.

Where in the World are We Involved in Missions?



We want to hear from you! A large world map has been posted in the large Conference Room at the Presbytery office to track where the churches of Peace River Presbytery are involved in missions to spread the love of Jesus Christ. Now we know that every church is involved in local missions but we don’t have any idea where all our churches are involved in supporting missions around the world. SO...we are asking each church to let us know where they send \$\$\$ to support missions, where they send missionaries OR where they travel to share the love of Jesus Christ.....and we will place a marker with the church’s name on the map. E-mail Candy, candy@peacriverpresbytery.org, with information from your church. Or when you come to the Presbytery office you can highlight the work of your church on the map yourself. It should be interesting to see how many places we are active.

What Can 3 Cents a Meal Do?

ANSWER: A lot to help fight hunger in our own Presbytery! Do the math: 3 cents a meal x 3 = 9 cents x 365 = 32.85 per person per year x a 100 people = 3,285.00 in one year. Currently your offering through the 3-cents-a-meal program helps feed farmworkers in Immokalee as they return from the fields on Friday afternoons and also fights the abuse of women and children in Guatemala through the Rights Action work of the PCUSA.

For information or help in starting a 3-cents-a-meal program, contact your program coordinator, Candy Reid, candy@peacriverpresbytery.org, or go online to www.pcusa.org/hunger.

QUESTION: But I thought it was 2-cents-a-meal?

ANSWER: Yes, it has been 2 cents since 1976 when this project began, but your Mission and Justice Committee felt that it was time to raise it to 3 cents a meal. Many Presbyteries now support 3 or 5 cents a meal or even 10 cents a meal. The need is great and the committee felt that a penny increase was needed.

P.S. Of course if you prefer, your local church can keep it at 2 cents a meal.

Fair Trade and You!



Did you know that you can buy Fair Trade coffee, tea and snacks plus out of this world chocolate – dark chocolate, the healthy kind – at the Peace River Presbytery office and at all Presbytery meetings? At the same time you can promote justice for farmers AND promote good stewardship of the earth’s resources! So...when you come to a stated meeting of Presbytery or to the Presbytery office in North Port, bring some extra \$\$.

BUY FAIR TRADE!

PROMOTE JUSTICE!

Congratulations to [Burnt Store Presbyterian Church](#), Punta Gorda, on the 25th anniversary of their chartering on March 20!



LEADERSHIP AND CONGREGATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Senior Superlatives Awards

The Older Adult Committee in Peace River Presbytery is sponsoring our first annual SENIOR SUPERLATIVES AWARDS to be held May 9 at Vanderbilt Presbyterian Church, Naples (South) and May 16 at Pine Shores Presbyterian Church, Sarasota (North and Central).

A fax has been sent to the church offices for each Pastor and Clerk of Session asking the Sessions to nominate an outstanding 65+ Senior Adult. We recognize that all of our seniors could be ranked in the superlative category, BUT in each congregation there is that one person who goes above and beyond in their work and ministry for Christ.

So put on your thinking caps at a Session meeting and **let Candy Reid know your nominee no later than the end of April.** You may choose between the two locations, Naples or Sarasota.

The Pastor and one nominee from each church, as well as family and friends, are invited to attend this special luncheon in their honor. They will be recognized with a certificate, provided with a great lunch and entertainment, and there will be a special write-up about each individual at the May meeting of Presbytery and in the June issue of the Interpreter. This is to be a catered lunch and we are asking each church to contribute \$10.00 per person towards the cost (sorry – but the budget is tight as you well know). **PLEASE SUBMIT THE NAME OF EVERY PERSON PLANNING TO ATTEND TO THE PRESBYTERY OFFICE BY APRIL 30.**



2008 - A Summer to Remember



Make the summer of 2008 a time to remember by participating in one of 3 mission experiences being offered:

“Challenge to Change”

Middle School Urban Mission Experience at Cedarkirk
June 15-20

“Love Works” Senior High Annual Mission Trip
to the hills of West Virginia

June 14-22

NOTE: There is a \$25.00 per person discount if registered by April 28.

Intergenerational Mission Trip to Chinle, Arizona
July 12-19

Great family experience or time for some friends to make a difference in a chaotic world.

For information and registration forms, go to www.peaceriverpresbytery.org and click on Youth in the left-hand column.



Looking Ahead in Youth Ministry

MIDDLE SCHOOL RETREAT at Cedarkirk
November 22-23, 2008

FAITH IN 3D HIGH SCHOOL EVENT at Disney World
January 16-19, 2009
For more information, you can go to www.faitin3d.org.

PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN'S ANNUAL SPRING RETREAT

Sponsored by Presbyterian Women
in Peace River and Tampa Bay Presbyteries

“Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and said to them, ‘Peace to you.’” Luke 24:36



April 28-30, 2008
DaySpring Conference Center, Ellenton, FL

The Theme: “Clowning Around”

Purpose:

- To encourage unity, inclusion and acceptance in PW membership, leadership and ministries
- To look beyond our differences and find a way to walk together

Registration Deadline: April 14

For more information, you may go to the Presbytery web site, www.peaceriverpresbytery.org, and click on the Presbyterian Women link.

RESOURCE CENTER

By Candy Reid

FROM JOAN GRAY

INTRODUCING: THE THOUGHTFUL CHRISTIAN FOR TEENS



New studies have been developed specifically for high school youth as an online resource from the folks who do the adult material at *The Thoughtful Christian*. Similar to the adult lesson plans, these lessons vary from one to four sessions and include a leader's guide and participant handout.

Topics include: Bullying in the Classroom, Cheating, Being a Friend, and Handling Pressure. More are being developed weekly.

For subscription information or to purchase individual studies, go to www.TheThoughtfulChristian.com.

OFFICER TRAINING or NEW MEMBER RESOURCE

*General Assembly Council Overview:
Offering the World a Visible Witness of Jesus Christ.*

This 19-minute program features stories from the seven ministry areas of the General Assembly Council. Viewers will learn how the PCUSA is involved in evangelism and church growth, leadership training, vocation discernment, world mission, racial ethnic ministries, peace and justice, relief and development, and theology, worship and education. Great resource to point out what is right with the PCUSA. Available in your Presbytery resource center.



NOOMA? What a funny word!

I'm often asked for resources for young adult classes and I almost always answer, "Have you tried the NOOMA series?" NOOMA is a series of short films in DVD format promoting spiritual perspectives on individual life experiences. This series features popular storyteller, Rob Bell. The name NOOMA comes from a phonetic spelling of the Greek word *pneuma*, meaning "wind" "Spirit" or "breath". Your Presbytery resource center has copies of everything that has been released to date and we continue to update our resources as they become available. This series is for older youth and adults, and would make a great study for the summer months when the pace is not as hectic around the church.

Hi friends!

One thing I hate to hear coming out of the mouth of a Presbyterian is "I'm *just* (read *only*) an elder." Hearing this statement makes my blood pressure go up. I have been known to scold the unfortunate person who said "I'm just an elder" for not appreciating their high office and launch into an exposition of the unique role of the elder in the Reformed tradition. If we are going to fulfill our potential as a denomination in the years ahead, we must redeem the role of elder as spiritual leader and invest more in the training and support of our elders. Our system of church government is arranged so that elders always outnumber pastors in the governing body of the local congregation, therefore no church will rise above the level of its elders.

If properly trained, encouraged, and supported, elders can do great things. In Africa where the church is growing faster than they can train pastors, many congregations are led by the elders. One pastor may oversee ten or more congregations and the day to day life of the congregation is in the hands of the elders. Though we are blessed with more pastors than the African churches, we still need to mine the leadership gifts of our elders to rise to the challenges before us. To be a Presbyterian elder is a unique and high calling, and there's no "just" about it!

Peace!

Joan S. Gray
Moderator, 217th General Assembly

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

PEACE RIVER PRESBYTERY

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