



# The Interpreter

PEACE RIVER PRESBYTERY

AUGUST 2008

Please join us in prayer for:



|           |                        |
|-----------|------------------------|
| August 3  | Westminster, Bradenton |
| August 10 | Faith, Cape Coral      |
| August 17 | Community, Englewood   |
| August 24 | Buckingham, Fort Myers |
| August 31 | Covenant, Fort Myers   |

## Introduction to PCUSA's New Stated Clerk and the 218<sup>th</sup> General Assembly Moderator



Picture by Danny Bolin, PCUSA

### NEW PCUSA STATED CLERK:

The Rev. Gradye Parsons, a Tennessee native, served a number of pastorates and then Holston Presbytery as its executive presbyter and stated clerk before joining the Office of the General Assembly staff in 2000. He served pastorates in Bristol and Newport, Tennessee.

A graduate of the University of Tennessee and Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, Parsons has also studied at Columbia Theological Seminary, the Alban Institute, Princeton Theological Seminary and Union Theological Seminary-Presbyterian School of Christian Education in Richmond, Virginia. He is a member of the Association of Stated Clerks and the National Association of Parliamentarians.

As operations officer for the Office of the General Assembly, Parsons has provided major leadership to interpretation and building of partnerships with pastors, congregations and agencies related to the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and Presbyterian affinity and advocacy groups. He is also responsible for leading the OGA in articulating its vision, developing strategic directions, and achieving operational excellence in its ministries.

*Quotable quote: "The role of the Stated Clerk is to bring the best of our polity and tradition to the debate and struggle of difficult issues. That polity and tradition allow for the orderly exchange of views, with the will of the majority and the rights of the minority protected. The results of years of contentious discussions have left many Presbyterians feeling alienated and marginalized. The Stated Clerk is called to find ways to encourage dialogue that provide for careful listening and affirming the faith of the 'other.'"*



Picture by Danny Bolin, PCUSA

**NEW G.A. MODERATOR:** The Rev. Bruce Reyes-Chow, 38, is the pastor of San Francisco's Mission Bay Community Church and a leader in the "emergent church" movement.

An ordained Presbyterian minister since 1995, Reyes-Chow is a graduate of San Francisco State University and San Francisco Theological Seminary. He is the grandson of Chinese and Filipino immigrants and was raised in Sacramento and Stockton, California.

Reyes-Chow is the founding pastor of Mission Bay Community Church, a multi-cultural, multi-generational New Church Development of San Francisco Presbytery that makes extensive use of cyberspace to communicate and conduct its ministry. Reyes-Chow is a prolific writer and blogger, calling himself "pastor/geek/dad/follower of Christ." He is a highly sought-after speaker who has served the church at many different levels as well as in the ecumenical arena.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THE DECISIONS MADE AT THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY, GO TO <http://www.pcusa.org/qa218/>

## THANK YOU!

We are grateful to our 218<sup>th</sup> General Assembly Commissioners who gave their time and energy to serve as our representatives. They are:

Rev. Dr. Valerie Bell, Burnt Store, Punta Gorda  
 Rev. Clint Cottrell, Cypress Lake, Fort Myers  
 Rev. Dr. Russ Hickman, Holy Trinity, North Fort Myers  
 Elder Sally Kirby, Northminster, Sarasota  
 Elder Lee Martin, Palma Sola, Bradenton  
 Elder Julia Keys Williams, Bee Ridge, Sarasota  
 Youth Advisory Delegate Hannah Neeley, First, Arcadia

## Can You Help?

**Presbyterian Disaster Assistance Gulf Coast** is actively recruiting long-term volunteers for the fall of 2008! There are hundreds of one-week volunteers scheduled to come stay at 5 Volunteer Villages in October, November and December, but not enough long-term (2-6 month) volunteers to run those villages. For more information, go to [www.peaceriverpresbytery.org](http://www.peaceriverpresbytery.org) under *Hurricane Plan and Relief*.

## Peace River Presbytery Is Ready!

One of the ways to redeem an event is to learn from it. Since Hurricane Charley came our way in August of 2004 we have learned a great deal.

First as the Peace River Presbytery Hurricane Response Task Force and now as the Peace River Presbytery Disaster Preparedness and Response Task Force, a dedicated group within the Presbytery has been hard at work.

The Task Force organized the Presbytery's response to Hurricane Charley. They also organized the Presbytery's ongoing response to Hurricane Wilma in 2005.

The Task Force has also been hard at work organizing the Presbytery's preparedness. On May 31, 2008 they facilitated a meeting for all the churches within Peace River. The purpose was to have each church, new church development (N.C.D.) and the Presbytery office send at least one representative to form the Peace River Disaster Preparedness and Response Network. There were 40 participants representing 20 different churches. (In addition to those churches represented, Task Force member Gayle Morris continues to work with additional churches.) The keynote speaker for the event was Mr. Wayne Sallade. (see picture) Wayne is the Emergency Management Director for Charlotte County.



With a strong network in place, each of our churches, N.C.D.s and the Presbytery office will be better prepared when an event happens. With a strong network in place, we will be timelier in our response to an event within our Presbytery. With a strong network in place, we will be better equipped to respond to the physical and spiritual needs within the communities we serve.

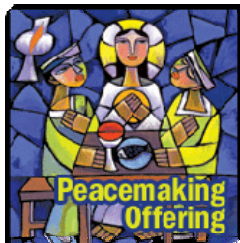
The reality of living in Southwest Florida is that stuff (like hurricanes) does happen. The reality within PRP is that we are better prepared to meet the challenges and better prepared to be ambassadors of grace.

*1 Peter 1:13 - "Therefore **prepare** your minds for action; discipline yourselves; set all your hope on the grace that Jesus Christ will bring you when he is revealed."*

The current Task Force members include: Gayle Morris (Burnt Store), Linda Fahnstock (FPC Bonita Springs), Jay Mumper (FPC Port Charlotte), Al Knox (Church of the Palms), Polly Land (FPC Arcadia) and Jim Kirk (Moorings). Graham Hart (General Presbyter) and Bruce Wismer (Pine Shores) serve as ex-officio members.

## Mission and Justice News

### Peacemaking Offering Highlights



The annual Peacemaking Offering will be received on World Communion Sunday, October 5, 2008. This offering provides Presbyterians a way to promote ministries of peace and justice throughout our denomination and here at home. The money is divided as follows: your local congregation retains 25%, the Presbytery receives 25%, and the General Assembly receives 50%.

Last year your offerings that remained in Peace River Presbytery were given to CIW - Coalition of Immokalee Workers - to provide much needed funds for their new community center. CIW is a grassroots organization working to end human slavery, ensure fair wages for farmworkers and lift up other justice issues.

Peace River Presbytery's Mission and Justice Committee is now receiving ideas for the 2008 Peacemaking Offering designation. A decision as to where the 2008 will be directed will be made at the August 14 meeting of this committee. If you would like to contribute your ideas, e-mail [inbox@peacriverpresbytery.org](mailto:inbox@peacriverpresbytery.org) or call 941-426-8421.

### Mission Connections

Attention all Mission Committee Chairpersons! Peace River Presbytery's Mission and Justice Committee is sending you a complete list of all Mission Committee chairpersons and a list of some of the mission work in which our churches are engaged. Our hope is to connect local churches in the area of mission.

### Project C.U.R.E. Helps Your PCUSA Missionaries

Project C.U.R.E. is an organization that works to secure donations of used medical equipment from hospitals, nursing facilities and doctors' offices, and sends them on to third world countries. Project C.U.R.E. supplies much of the medical equipment for MBF - Medical Benevolence Foundation.



Bill and Judy Kraut, Presbyterian Church of the Covenant, Sarasota, are the liaisons for Project C.U.R.E. in the state of Florida. They work tirelessly in their retirement years to secure medical equipment, store it and arrange for donated transportation to the headquarters in Nashville, Tennessee. If you would like to become involved in this worthy mission effort, please contact Judy Kraut at 941-484-0719.

## 2008 Mission Trip to Chinle

Jesus said, "Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest." (*Matthew 11:28*) The Navajo people of Trinity Presbyterian Church in Chinle, AZ now carry a heavy burden. On Monday, June 30, someone set their church on fire and nearly destroyed it. The grief over the loss is difficult and painful; a burden to be sure.



On Thursday, July 10, the love and concern of Peace River Presbytery showed up in twenty-three mission travelers from seven PRP churches. Our work was to be the renovation and restoration of the church

manse in expectation of a new pastor, partnering with our Navajo brothers and sisters in VBS, a youth program for area teens, and an adult Bible study in the evening. In the days immediately following the fire, we were not certain we would be able to answer the call. However, the relationship of trust and care established in years past provided the necessary way for us to be welcomed by the Trinity Church without buildings and in their grief and loss.

By Friday, July 18, it was clear that our work had been completed. The manse now is refreshed with new appliances, paint, a working hot water heater, and a new wood floor. Even new carpeting was installed after we departed. Children had enjoyed another great year of VBS, and the youth completed their week with an exciting hike into Canyon de Chelly. By all accounts, our week had been productive and fun for all involved.

More than anything, however, those of us who traveled to Chinle this year experienced the tragedy of loss and the healing of the presence of Jesus Christ. As we talked together with our friends from Chinle, cried together, worshipped together, and even talked about the future of the church together, our bond became clear. Whether we serve Christ in sunny Southwest Florida or in the red rocks of the Navajo Reservation, there is much work left to be done. The world is not as it should be. Yet the yoke of Christ is easy to bear, and the burden of Christ is made lighter as we shoulder it together. Thanks be to God for all those who traveled this year and from all of us, thanks be to God for the support we received from our churches and our presbytery. A list of those who offered monetary help is listed below:

- |                            |                  |
|----------------------------|------------------|
| 1. Pine Shores PC          | Tub/Shower       |
| 2. Candy Reid              | Undesignated     |
| 3. FPC-Sarasota            | Undesignated     |
| 4. Harold Brown            | Undesignated     |
| 5. Westminster PC          | Designated Grant |
| 6. Kirkwood PC             | VBS Expenses     |
| 7. Southwest FL Com/Found. | Undesignated     |

- |                              |                   |
|------------------------------|-------------------|
| 8. FPC-Bonita Springs        | Undesignated      |
| 9. Ed and Norma Reed         | Undesignated      |
| 10. PRP Offering             | Undesignated      |
| 11. PRP Nickels for Nails    | Undesignated      |
| 12. Buckingham PC            | Undesignated      |
| 13. PW/PC Church of Covenant | Undesignated      |
| 14. Palma Sola PC            | Manse Designation |
| 15. Kirkwood PC              | Appliances        |
| 16. Burnt Store PC           | Designated Youth  |
| 17. Venice PC                | Manse Designation |

---

### A Significant Gathering in Guatemala

By Dennis Smith, Guatemala

*Evangelicals, Pentecostals, Catholics discuss common concerns*

In May we had a conference in Antigua, Guatemala, that included representatives of 22 church-related development agencies from Europe, the United States, Canada, and 23 churches, parachurch agencies, and civil society groups from throughout Central America. This is the first time that international church agencies have sat down to discuss development issues with representatives of Roman Catholic and Evangelical churches, including Pentecostals, and with representatives of Mayan spirituality.

In our part of the world most Protestants don't consider Roman Catholics to be Christians, many Catholics dismiss Protestants as "separated siblings," and both suspect that Mayan spirituality might be in league with the Devil.

The second day of the conference we received a visit by Msr. Álvaro Ramazzini, Roman Catholic bishop of San Marcos, one of Guatemala's most populous and impoverished departments. For 40 minutes he shared with evangelistic passion his gospel vision of service to the poor in the name of Jesus. Something is wrong, he said, in a country where 95 percent of the population confess faith in Jesus Christ but are still shackled by violence, corruption, racism, chronic hunger, and extreme poverty.

In recent months Msr. Ramazzini has been receiving death threats. At the end of his testimony we formed a circle around him and expressed our solidarity with him by laying our hands on his shoulders and praying for him, led by Verónica Pérez, a Pentecostal minister.

*Dennis and Maribel Smith live and work in Guatemala City, Guatemala, as people in mission with the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Dennis has been under appointment by the PC (USA) since 1977. Maribel, a native of Guatemala, joined the PC(USA) in its mission as a community development worker in 1989 when she married Dennis. The Smiths have two sons, Lucas and Benjamin.*

## Reaching the World for Christ

12 new PCUSA International Mission Workers have prepared for service! Newly appointed mission workers have participated in orientation in Louisville and in an ecumenical program in Chicago. They will soon depart for service in Egypt, Ethiopia, Korea, Lithuania, Malawi, Pakistan, and Poland and at the Mexico–U.S. border.

## Stated Meeting

**Saturday, August 23, 2008**

The meeting begins at 9:00 a.m.  
at Burnt Store Presbyterian Church,  
Punta Gorda



## Two New PC(USA) Web Sites Launched

**Worship and the Arts** provides resources and inspiration for church leaders and members as they seek to respond to their creative calling. Whether looking for a bulletin cover, projection graphics, or seeking images and ideas to spark their creativity as they work on a sermon or plan the liturgy, web site visitors will find help. <http://www.pcusa.org/arts>

**Friendship Ministries** offers Christian formation materials designed for people with cognitive impairments. Information about the Friendship program and a large selection of resources, including Bible Studies and Life Studies, are available on the web site. <http://www.pcusa.org/friendship>

## Education News

### Are You Planning to Attend? THE MAIN EVENT

March 7, 2009

Hosted by Covenant Presbyterian Church, Fort Myers



This is a prime leadership opportunity presented by Peace River Presbytery for lay leaders, educators, youth ministers, Presbyterian Women leaders, men's group leaders, ministers, deacons, elders, those interested in mission, and more.

### Check out more great opportunities for training!

- The Association of Presbyterian Church Educators (APCE)'s annual event will be held in San Antonio, Texas, on January 28-31, 2009. A group will be attending from Peace River Presbytery. For complete information and registration forms, go to [www.apcenet.org](http://www.apcenet.org).

- The Association of Presbyterian Church Educators Regional SOAP (South Atlantic and Puerto Rico) event will be held October 21-24, 2008 in Charleston, South Carolina. Learn about "Confessing Your Faith with Your Heart, Your Head and Your Hands." Top notch leadership will be provided from around the Southeast. For complete information, go to [www.apcesoap.org](http://www.apcesoap.org).

## For Youth!

### FAITH IN 3-D: DARE, DISCOVER, DREAM

#### FAST FACTS:

**WHAT:** A tri-denominational event sponsored by the PCUSA, the Episcopal Church, and Cooperative Baptist Church. This ecumenical event will give students the opportunity to:

- DARE to live and act faithfully in the world;
- DISCOVER the depth and richness of an authentic faith in Jesus the Christ; and
- DREAM ways in which their faith can make a difference in their lives.



**DATES:** January 16-19, 2009,  
Martin Luther King, Jr. Day Weekend

**PLACE:** Walt Disney World Resort

**HOTEL:** Coronado Springs Resort & Convention Center

**COST:** \$320.00 per person (based on four to a room occupancy)

**INCLUDED:** 4 to a room, conference fees, 3 meals and a dessert, T-shirt, and a 3-day park hopper ticket.

For complete information, go to [www.faithin3d.org](http://www.faithin3d.org).

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

PEACE RIVER PRESBYTERY  
5600 Peace River Road  
North Port, FL 34287

941-426-8421 or 800-736-4488  
[www.peacriverpresbytery.org](http://www.peacriverpresbytery.org)