



# The Interpreter

PEACE RIVER PRESBYTERY

NOVEMBER 2008

## Speaking from the Hart - When Gold is not Enough

Recently I preached a sermon on the story of the Golden Calf (Exodus 32) and Paul's admonition: "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice." (Philippians 4:4), which were the lectionary readings for that Sunday, and very timely given the state of the economy. These scripture passages give a helpful corrective to the growing anxiety this financial crisis has unleashed.

Many of us, as we looked at our retirement investments, have been feeling rather depressed, worried and asking: now what? However, as the children of Israel discovered in Exodus 32, gold isn't always the answer either. As a way to get perspective, I decided to do an assets inventory. This inventory had nothing to do with finances or money. The question I asked was: **What are my assets? Where are my treasures? What do I have regardless of what happens this week or next in the financial markets or with our investments?** It was a good exercise for me, and I encourage you to try it. Here are just a few items I listed:

### My assets – treasures:

- My wife... each of our children... our first grandchild who is on his/her way to arrive in March!!!
- The home and friends we have...
- This day... and the next... and the next...
- Faith in a God who made everything... who owns everything... and in the end, everything I am and have goes back to this God. Or as the Psalmist writes: *<sup>1</sup>God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. <sup>2</sup>Therefore we will not fear...* or as is affirmed in the Brief Statement of Faith: *in life and death we belong to God.*
- ... and the list went on.

Jesus said: *where your treasure is there your heart will be also.* So if I now see my life as half-empty, where is my treasure? What am I treasuring? And what might I be missing? Maybe, it is that which is most important!!!

I am not minimizing the gravity of what is going on, or saying our financial losses should not be a concern. This is just a reminder that we have other treasures that sometimes we forget, and in times like this, may take for granted. Paul is suggesting that one alternative we have is to be grateful (*Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice*).

*Simply put:* Open your eyes to what you have – see life as a half-full glass... *Rejoice in the Lord always.* So with thanksgiving and gratitude Paul, in prison, invites us to live our lives.

Concerned yet grateful,

Graham Hart – [graham@peaceriverpresbytery.org](mailto:graham@peaceriverpresbytery.org)

## Please join us in prayer:

November 2 Moorings, Naples  
November 9 Vanderbilt, Naples  
November 16 Holy Trinity, North Fort Myers  
November 23 St. Paul's, North Port  
November 30 Palmetto, Palmetto



## November 20, 2008 Stated Meeting

**Kenneth E. Bailey, Th.D.**, noted Bible scholar and lecturer in Middle Eastern New Testament Studies, will preach, give a keynote address, and lead a breakout group at the Stated Meeting on **Thursday, November 20, 2008** to be held at Moorings Presbyterian Church, Naples. The meeting begins at 9:00 a.m.



In light of the recent economic uncertainty, the Committee on Ministry is going to host a working lunch for those who want to listen to a panel presentation on issues of stewardship and budgeting in these uncertain times. Watch for more details.

## Growing Healthy Leaders and Congregations Workshops

**January 8-10, 2009**

First Presbyterian Church, Port Charlotte

Mark your calendars, and **register your church teams by December 1** to come to the Committee on Ministry sponsored **Healthy Leaders and Healthy Congregations Workshops January 8-10.**

Our workshop leader, Bob Williamson, and the Lombard Mennonite Peace Center have national reputations as premier presenters of family system theory as a way to understand how congregations function, how leaders can lead effectively, and how congregations restore and maintain their health, growth, and vitality.

For a brochure and registration form, go to [www.peaceriverpresbytery.org](http://www.peaceriverpresbytery.org), Bulletin Board or call the Presbytery office, 941-426-8421.

## Acts 16:5



Did you know that 21 of our congregations are involved in the two-year Acts 16:5 Initiative? On October 6 and 7 Stan Ott and Hoyt Byrum led a two-day seminar on designing a transformational ministry of worship, discipleship, and leadership.

**The following congregations are participating:**

Braden River Presbyterian Church, Bradenton  
 Burnt Store Presbyterian Church, Punta Gorda  
 Christ Church of Longboat Key  
 Church of the Palms, Sarasota  
 Community Presbyterian Church, Englewood  
 Covenant Presbyterian Church, Fort Myers  
 Cypress Lake Presbyterian Church, Fort Myers  
 First Presbyterian Church, Arcadia  
 First Presbyterian Church, Bonita Springs  
 First Presbyterian Church, Port Charlotte  
 First Presbyterian Church, Punta Gorda  
 First Presbyterian Church, Sarasota  
 Hope United Church, Fort Myers  
 Kirkwood Presbyterian Church, Bradenton  
 New Life Presbyterian Fellowship, Naples  
 Northminster Presbyterian Church, Sarasota  
 Peace Presbyterian NCD, Bradenton  
 Presbyterian Church of the Covenant, Sarasota  
 St. Paul's Presbyterian Church, North Port  
 Whitfield Estates Presbyterian Church, Sarasota  
 Wintergarden Presbyterian Church, Port Charlotte

**Reminder: Speaker Available!**

The Rev. Noelle Damico, representative for Campaign for Fair Food for our denomination, is currently in Peace River Presbytery until November 20. If you would like her to speak at your church, you may contact her at [Noelle.damico@pcusa.org](mailto:Noelle.damico@pcusa.org) or 631-371-9877 (cell).

**New Church Development News**

**New Life Presbyterian Fellowship**, after meeting in a variety of venues, from schools to restaurants, has moved into a permanent home, in their Ministry Center. They have completed a build out of a 2,000 square foot store front located in a retail plaza directly across the street from a high school and an elementary school. New Life now worships at the Ministry Center at 10:00 a.m., with a full children's Sunday School being offered. Children's Choir rehearsal and an adult Bible Study follow the service. Weekly "Coffee Hours", Youth Drop In, and other children's programs and events are part of their ministry. Come and see what God is doing!  
[www.newlifefellowship.org](http://www.newlifefellowship.org)

Ruth Farrell has been named coordinator for the **Presbyterian Hunger Program (PHP)**. A former PC(USA) mission worker in Congo and Peru with her husband, Hunter Farrell, since last August Ruth had been a missionary-in-residence in Louisville, working on fair trade issues.

**Dennis Smith**, PC(USA) mission worker in Guatemala, has been elected president of the World Association for Christian Communication (WACC).

You can find his Mission Connections profile at <http://www.pcusa.org/missionconnections/profiles/smithd.htm>

**SPECIAL OFFERINGS**

Peace River Presbytery has designated the Sunday before Thanksgiving to be a day to receive a special offering for **Thornwell Home for Children** (<http://www.thornwell.org/>).



The **Christmas Joy Offering** is received the Sunday before Christmas. 50% provides financial assistance to retired ministers/lay persons and their dependents and 50% supports racial/ethnic education.

**OTHER UPCOMING EVENTS**
**Middle School Retreat**

**November 22 and 23, 2008 at Cedarkirk**

*Packets were mailed to youth leaders in each church.*

*Information, including forms, is also available at [www.peacriverpresbytery.org](http://www.peacriverpresbytery.org), Youth page.*

*The cost is \$75 a person.*

**Please mail registrations and payment by November 7<sup>th</sup>!!!**

**Board of Pensions Retirement Planning Seminar**

**February 4, 2009 9:00 am to 5:00 pm AND**

**February 5, 2009 9:00 am to 5:00 pm**

St. Paul's Presbyterian Church, North Port

**The Main Event**

**March 7, 2009**

Covenant Presbyterian Church, Fort Myers

This is an annual event sponsored by the Leadership and Congregational Development Committee to train church officers and help congregations grow in many other areas. Watch for registration forms!

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