



Speaking From the Hart

As a Presbytery, we have made a commitment to begin new churches, as well as to help transform each congregation from the inside out through the work of our Evangelism and Church Development Committee and Acts 16:5.

Statistics tell us that the number of Protestants is half of what it was in 1960. Martha Grace Reese, in the book *Unbinding the Gospel*, says: "One hundred years ago you would have had to search hard to find someone who didn't know the Christmas story. Today all we have to do is walk into the local high school." The challenge, she says, is: "People who have grown up in the church think of Christianity like breathing. You just do it. This is the downside of growing up nurtured by the church. It's hard to have perspective on what a life without faith would look like." **So how do we learn to share what is so deep?**

As I look around and listen, I am encouraged. I was recently meeting with a pastor for lunch, and as naturally and easily as ordering food, he shared his faith and an invitation to church with the waitress. During a coffee meeting with a pastor the following day, that pastor seized the opportunity to share concrete hope to a recently evicted homeless person. At the recent Presbytery meeting Elizabeth Deibert preached a wonderful [sermon](#) on *Passing on the Torch of the Faith* to the next generation. Also, Dan Oedy, chaplain at Florida Gulf Coast University, in his keynote address helped us understand how to communicate with the next generation and the importance of investing resources in the generation the church has often forgotten (college age and young adult).

I would love to hear stories of how your congregation is giving witness to the life-changing, hope-restoring message of Christ, and how each of us is learning to breathe faith, hope and love in word and deed.

Graham Hart

Please join us in prayer:



September 7 Cypress Lake, Fort Myers
September 14 First, Fort Myers
September 21 Hope United, Fort Myers
September 28 Chapel by the Sea, Fort Myers Beach

Presbytery Adopts an Interim Staff Design

We wish Bob Rea, Designated Associate General Presbyter, and Candy Reid, Program Coordinator, our best as they move into retirement and thank them for their faithful service to Peace River.

The Personnel Committee, over the past 6 months, designed a process to reevaluate the current and near-term future needs of the Presbytery. The interim design (fall 2008 - spring 2010) was approved at the August Presbytery meeting. The following is the summary rationale, based on feedback from the Presbytery, for the interim design:

- We need to have staff that can do the functions that only the Presbytery can do (i.e., maintain the essential requirements of the Book of Order).
- We need to provide staff support for the work of Presbytery committees.
- We need to improve communications through modern technology.
- We need to nurture relational connections throughout the Presbytery.
- We need to continue to support our church growth and transformational efforts as a Presbytery.
- We need to continue to be guided by our 2006 Mission, Vision, and Core Values Statements.
- The Trustees asked Personnel to reduce the staff budget 5-10% to achieve a balanced budget.
- At this time in our life as a Presbytery, we need to have maximum flexibility in the staff design due to budgetary issues, and hiring and calling staff for an interim period allows for such flexibility.

Full-time staff (4) - General Presbyter, Office Manager, Financial Secretary, Administrative Assistant

Part-time and Consultant Staff (7) - Stated Clerk, part-time Administrative Assistant*, Interim Associate for Church Transformation*, Mission and Justice/Hunger Action Enabler*, Consultants for Leadership and Congregational Development,* Youth Ministry*; and Communications and Technology*

Volunteer (5) - Treasurer, Resource Center Administrator*, Resource Center Volunteers* (2), Consultant for Mission and Justice*
(new positions*)

Watch for the new part-time and consultant job descriptions on the Presbytery website.

The Personnel Committee

Speaker Available!



The Rev. Noelle Damico, representative for Campaign for Fair Food for our denomination, will be in Peace River Presbytery from October 28 to November 20. If your congregation needs resources or would like Noelle to speak at an event during that time period, you may contact her at Noelle.damico@pcusa.org, 631-751-7076 (office), or 631-371-9877 (cell).

**First Presbyterian, Sarasota, Celebrating
World Communion Sunday:
Peaceful Pursuits in Israel/Palestine**

In a special gathering on World Communion Sunday (Oct. 5), the Rev. Dr. Fahed Abu-Akel, Moderator of the 214th General Assembly, will speak in Sarasota on his commitments to justice and peace in Israel and Palestine. Born an Arab Christian in Palestine, he attended seminary in the United States and has served the Presbyterian Church since 1978. Recipient of numerous awards for interfaith leadership and peacemaking, he will address the Sarasota community on our denomination’s support for efforts to end the occupation and violence in the Israel and Palestine and create viable and secure states. Dr. Abu-Akel is an inspirational spokesperson for raising Western consciousness of the plight of Christian Palestinians.

This summer the 218th General Assembly continued the PC(USA)'s prophetic witness for peace in Israel/Palestine. Overture 11-01 endorses the “Amman Call” regarding Arab-Israeli peace, issued by the World Council of Churches’ conference, “Churches Together for Peace and Justice in the Middle East,” at Amman, Jordan, June 18-20, 2007, including its affirmation of the UN resolutions that are the basis of a projected “two-state” solution, a shared Jerusalem, and the human rights of refugees and occupied peoples, its call to resist extremism and push for reconciliation, and its commitment to imperatives of ecumenical solidarity in action for Just Peace.

PC(USA) congregations are invited to work for peace in Israel/Palestine through prayer, dialogue, study, and direct action. Please join us for an afternoon of peacemaking on World Communion Sunday, Oct. 5, 2008. The keynote address is entitled "Four Options for Peace" from 3:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m., October 5, 2008. You're invited to attend! For more information on Dr. Abu-Akel and the events of October 5, please visit www.FirstPresSarasota.org.

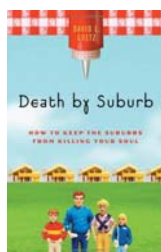
Dear Presbyterian Sisters and Brothers in Christ:

Our beloved Reformed faith understands theology to be, first and foremost, a disciplined, life-giving, communal act of praise by the church. Our communion – our spiritual fellowship – with the saints here on earth and in heaven, Calvin maintained, joyfully functions “to keep us in the fellowship of God” (Institutes, IV.1.3). Think about that! Our coming together literally *holds us in fellowship with the Trinity*.

How is it, then, that theology for most Presbyterians is more about ideology than doxology? How is it that the “fruit” of our communion so often leaves us with a taste of separation rather than of our joyous union with the Holy Trinity? What will it be like to stand before our Redeemer Judge, Who will painfully wonder with us why the Gospel of God’s love for all people in Jesus Christ was not a more joyous endeavor?

We don’t have to let that happen! Let’s come together and “do” theology as an act of adoration. Let’s join our hearts and heads in a way that binds us to the Holy Trinity. Let’s set a new standard for the unifying role of theology in the life of a presbytery.

On Thursday afternoon, **October 23**, we invite *you* to join us for the joy of theology. We’re calling this the “**Fellowship for Theological Dialogue**” and we hope to do this on a regular basis. We’ll gather from 1:00 to 4:00 in the presbytery conference room to praise the Holy Trinity with theological conversation. Imagine! Several pastor-theologians – Richard Deibert, Tim Halverson, Tom Harp, Doug Pratt, and hopefully, a woman pastor-theologian or two – will present brief papers related to issues raised by a selected book, followed by group discussion. There will be refreshments for the body, too. Could life here on earth get any better?



We’ve chosen a book that’s intended to help us be more faithful in pastoral ministry here in southwest Florida: *Death by Suburb: How to Keep the Suburbs from Killing Your Soul* by David L. Goetz (2006). We’re intentionally avoiding General Assembly issues and keeping our conversation centered in the glorious calling of pastoral ministry.

Mark this date, get a copy of the book, pray for the presbytery, and let’s dare to do theology in the key of joy. Let’s dare to draw one another into the eternal life of our Triune God.

Grace and peace,
Your Theology and Worship Committee

Highlights
August 23, 2008
Stated Meeting of Peace River Presbytery
Burnt Store Presbyterian Church, Punta Gorda



Many thanks go to the members and staff of Burnt Store Presbyterian Church, Punta Gorda, for their warm welcome and wonderful preparations for this Stated Meeting.

During the worship service, nine high school youth (from Cypress Lake Presbyterian Church and Faith Presbyterian Church) shared their experiences from this summer's mission trip to Cabell County, West Virginia. Elizabeth Deibert, organizing pastor of Peace New Church Development, gave the sermon "[Passing the Torch of the Faith](#)" based on Deuteronomy 6:1-9.

Dan Oedy, Campus Minister for Florida Gulf Coast University and Director of Family Ministries at First, Bonita Springs, gave the keynote address. The topic was "Ministry in the Face of Change: Youth, College Age, and Young Adult Ministry Today."

The breakout groups for this meeting were presented by:

- the 218th General Assembly Commissioners who represented Peace River Presbytery;
- Jo Ann Leasure, Chair of Committee on Preparation for Ministry;
- Dave Moore of Beth-El Farmworker Ministry who shared about Misi3n Peniel; and
- Dan Oedy, the keynote speaker.

We welcomed the following special guests:

- Jordan Buckley, Interfaith Action, and Eusebio Rodriguez, a member of the Coalition for Immokalee Workers,
- Noelle Damico from Campaign for Fair Food, and
- Dale Melton, Associate Vice President for Louisville Seminary Relations.

The **Theology and Worship Committee** will be providing an opportunity for "Fellowship for Theological Dialogue" on Thursday, October 23 from 1:00 to 4:00 pm on the book "Death by Suburb". The gathering will take place at the Presbytery office in North Port.

Clerks of Session were reminded that the annual reading of the Minutes and Record Books will take place October 18 and 25 at various locations.

Beth-El Farmworker Ministry, Misi3n Peniel, and Beth-El in Arcadia all need our continued prayers and support in these difficult financial times.

The **Board of Trustees** report included the following:

- The preliminary 2009 budget for Peace River Presbytery was presented. The budget will be

voted on at the November 20, 2008 stated meeting.

- The Presbytery voted to approve the purchase of land for Peace Presbyterian New Church Development in Lakewood Ranch.
- Tom Harp explained a new stewardship program where pastors will be visiting pastors to discuss support of the Presbytery. Then churches are to present their Estimate of Giving during worship at the November 20, 2008 Stated Meeting. The amounts pledged will be tallied and reported before the end of the meeting.

The Presbytery passed the following motion:

The Personnel Committee moves that the Presbytery concurs with the "Interim Staff Design and Rationale" that the Presbytery Council has approved.

The Presbytery approved the motion from the **Committee on Preparation for Ministry (CPM)** that Ms. Cynthia Franklin of Covenant Presbyterian Church, Fort Myers, become a Candidate to become a Minister of the Word and Sacrament in the Presbyterian Church (USA). She is currently attending Fuller Theological Seminary. CPM also presented "A Covenant Journey: The Process of Discernment for Ministry of Word and Sacrament" as a first reading, to be voted on at the November Stated Meeting.

A recognition of retirement was conducted for Certified Christian Educator Candy Reid, Program Coordinator for Peace River Presbytery. Jay Mumper and Mary Brown shared words of appreciation for Candy's ministry and heart for mission.

The Presbytery approved the following recommendations from the **Committee on Ministry**:

- **Rev. Daniel Hagmaier** as Designated Pastor of Covenant Presbyterian Church, effective August 11, 2008.
- **Rev. Mark Knowles** as Pastor for First Presbyterian Church, Port Charlotte, effective June 2, 2008. (Mark was originally called as the Designated Pastor on August 1, 2006.)
- **Tricia Dillon Thomas** was examined and approved for ordination to become an Evangelist for Youth and Children's Ministry at Peace New Church Development. She will be ordained by Trinity Presbytery.
- **Rev. Thomas Beech**, HR, was approved for membership upon transfer from the Presbytery of Tampa Bay.
- The Guidelines for Compensation for 2009 were approved.

The next Stated Meeting will be Thursday, November 20, 2008 at Moorings Presbyterian Church in Naples.



Many, many thanks for the wonderful retirement celebration on Saturday, August 23 at the Presbytery meeting. It's been great to work with so many wonderful, caring folks. Know that you all will continue to be in my prayers as you strive to be the people of God known as Peace River Presbytery.

Candy Reid

Are You Planning to Attend?

THE MAIN EVENT

March 7, 2009

Location: Covenant Presbyterian Church, Fort Myers



Keynote Speaker:

Rev. Dr. Dale W. Patterson

Theme:

"With New Eyes: Taking Christ into the World in the 21st Century"

Dale Patterson graduated from Purdue University and Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary, and earned his Doctor of Ministry degree at Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary. He is organizing pastor and called pastor of Hackberry Creek Church (PCUSA) in Irving, Texas. Dale is also a consultant for Vital Churches Institute. His personal vision is as follows:

"Christ has called me along with thousands of others to be the vessels he will use to bring new vitality into the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, and to bring the message of refreshment and the invigorating hope of Christ-centered living to the many in our communities who are disenfranchised from the church. This will best be accomplished as we build Christ-centered, Bible-believing, Spirit-filled churches with a growing commitment to the Triune God, a growing commitment to the Body of Christ, the church, and a growing commitment to the work of Christ in the world."

In addition to Dale's presentations, classes will be offered on many topics. We hope you mark your calendars and plan to attend!

Attention Acts 16:5 churches!

We hope you have marked your calendars to attend Seminar 2 on **October 6 and 7, 2008** at First Presbyterian, Church, Port Charlotte! This event is for pastors and their teams who are part of the Acts 16:5 Initiative in Peace River Presbytery. Registration information is being sent to the pastor of each participating church.

**UPCOMING EVENTS
SPONSORED BY COMMITTEE ON MINISTRY**

October 30, 2008

9:00 a.m. to Noon at First, Bonita Springs

Annual Sexual Misconduct Prevention Workshop for those clergy and educators who were unable to attend this workshop in April.

January 8-10, 2009

Growing Healthy Leaders and Congregations Workshops
Location to be determined

February 5-6, 2009

Board of Pensions Retirement Planning Seminar
Location to be determined

For Youth!

Middle School Retreat

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

Watch for more information coming to the youth leaders of Peace River Presbytery!

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Faith in 3-D: Dare, Discover, Dream

A tri-denominational event sponsored by the PCUSA, the Episcopal Church, and Cooperative Baptist Church, this ecumenical event will take place on January 16-19, 2009, at Walt Disney World Resort. For complete information, go to www.faithin3d.org.

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

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- [Graham Hart](#), General Presbyter
- [Bob Rea](#), Designated Associate General Presbyter
- [Craig Countiss](#), Stated Clerk
- [Jim Barnett](#), Treasurer
- [Alesia Sharpe](#), Office Manager
- [Bill Setchel](#), Financial Secretary
- [Joan Mock](#), Administrative Assistant