



# The Interpreter

PEACE RIVER PRESBYTERY

APRIL 2009

## SPEAKING FROM THE HART

### Covenant, Christ Church, Lance Armstrong, and some Easter Good News

Many years ago, after I had gone through some tough personal times, having had the same kind of cancer as Lance Armstrong, and several surgeries later, someone gave me a plaque that I have to this day. On it was a picture of a sunrise with the words: *You never experience the miracle of a sunrise unless you have waited in the darkness.*

The rhythm of our Lenten-Easter journey reflects that movement from darkness to light. We prepare and take time to look within:

- recognizing the darkness within ourselves and in our world,
- confessing there but by the grace of God, go I,
- admitting that even though we often project all is well to those around us, God knows us inside and out, and all is not well.

That is why the Easter message and reality is so important for us. God is not finished.... God in Christ is breaking through tombs of all sizes and shapes. God is on the move, redeeming and transforming and restoring us and God's creation from inside out. That is as true for us as individuals, as it is for institutions. As a Presbytery, we rejoice that the Lenten-Easter theme is real and true in our churches.

It has been just one year since Covenant Presbyterian Church of Fort Myers went through its time of schism. Those who were committed to the Presbytery and the



PCUSA wondered if there would be light at the end of their tunnel, if there would be a sunrise. On Palm Sunday 2008, those who wanted to depart from the PCUSA left, leaving a faithful remnant, and on Easter, just one year

ago, Covenant began walking with the Risen Christ in a new way for a new day.

One year later, we rejoice that the strong and faithful remnant have worked hard and faithfully in rebuilding the church. We give thanks for the Administrative Commission, Board of Trustees, and the Committee on Ministry of Presbytery that walked alongside that congregation. We affirm:

- the wise and prayerful work of their Pastor Nominating Committee,

- the renewed commitment of the now 538 members of Covenant;
- and the good and faithful work of the newly constituted session and their pastor, Dan Hagmaier.

We rejoice that one year later, Covenant has re-emerged from its dark night.

On another good news Easter note, Christ Church of Longboat Key, that began as a chartered PCUSA congregation three years ago, has completed a capital campaign that to date has raised over \$1.6 million for their sanctuary and church building. (Note that this is after they raised money last year to buy property for their congregation.) We rejoice with them, their session, and Bruce Porter, their pastor, at this marker moment!

Easter is coming, the Risen Christ is at work, there is a miracle that happens every day in a sunrise, even as there are miracles happening all around us, and even in this Presbytery.

Thanks be to God.

Graham Hart, General Presbyter

### Please join us in prayer:

- April 05 - First, Bonita Springs
- April 12 - Braden River, Bradenton
- April 19 - First, Bradenton
- April 26 - Kirkwood, Bradenton



### One Great Hour of Sharing

Our gifts through One Great Hour of Sharing support ministries of disaster response, refugee assistance and resettlement, and community development that help people find safe refuge, start new lives, and work together to strengthen their families and communities.

We hope that your congregation will participate in this very worthwhile offering during the Easter season.

### Time to Register!

Gathering 2 for the **Acts 16:5** teams, led by Stan Ott and Hoyt Byrum, will be held on **Thursday, April 30, 2009** at Wintergarden Presbyterian Church, Port Charlotte. Registration forms have been e-mailed to the participating churches. Deadline to register is Thursday, April 23.



Stan Ott

## THE 2009 MAIN EVENT



On Saturday, March 7, 144 people gathered for The Main Event at Covenant Presbyterian Church, Fort Myers. They were not disappointed! The keynote speaker, Rev. Dr. Dale Patterson, was very well

received as he spoke on leadership and vision. The various workshops were given the ratings of 69 *Great!*, 63 *Very Good*, and 24 *Good*. Participants received fresh ideas, practical suggestions, and valuable information, making the time well spent!



Dale Patterson

Many thanks to:

- the Leadership and Congregational Development Committee, in cooperation with the Evangelism and Church Development Committee, for putting on such a wonderful event;
- all the workshop leaders: Dale Patterson, Clint Cottrell, Ray Angle, Mary Lee Mann, Graham Hart, Del Poling, Steve McConnell, representatives from the Key Ministry Foundation, Jay Mumper, Masqood Kamil, Kathy Broyard, and Jim Kirk;
- Covenant Presbyterian Church and their volunteers who did such a great job hosting.

### Presbytery Committee of the Month

As the Presbytery works to connect and support our 38 congregations as partners together to advance the mission of Jesus Christ both near and far, it is the mission of the **Leadership and Congregational Development Committee (L&CD)** to support and develop our leaders and our congregations in their work.



Chris Adams

Our 15 committee members, both clergy and lay leaders, are committed to the specific tasks we are called to by the presbytery. Among those are to offer high quality leadership events for both clergy and lay leaders, to provide active and life-changing youth ministry activities throughout our congregations, to develop effective children's ministry, as well as ministries with our young adults, senior adults and those in between. *L&CD* works with the Parish Nurses in our congregations, and also is responsible for coordinating church officer training. The Resource Center is under the charge of our work, and we are the main support and encouragement of church educators and youth ministers. As you can see, we are a very busy group of Presbyterians.

In 2009, some of our goals have already been established. Our youth ministry team is spending the year in reflection and discernment as we grapple with the constantly changing face of youth ministry. *L&CD* has been working to set up and train congregational connectors, known at this point as "care-actors," who will get to know vital ministries already being done in congregations and then encourage churches to work with each other in sharing programming. Finally, the ministry of the resource center is being evaluated for its continued effectiveness into the future.

Thanks to all who serve Peace River Presbytery through the *Leadership and Congregational Development Committee*. If you have suggestions or concerns about our work, please contact the Chair, The Reverend Chris Adams, [revchris@tampabay.rr.com](mailto:revchris@tampabay.rr.com).

### Mission Mosaic

The *Mission Mosaic* is a magazine published by Presbyterian Disaster Assistance. It is sent to all PC(USA) congregations and to individuals who have given their financial support or have requested to be included on their mailing list. The current issue, Fall 2008/Winter 2009, includes an article entitled "Care for Caregivers" (pages 16 and 18) that mentions Jim Kirk and Bruce Wismer who are members of Peace River Presbytery.

### Mission Stories

Does your church have a mission story that you would like to share with the rest of the churches in Peace River Presbytery? Please submit an article with approximately 250 words and a picture, if possible, by the 15<sup>th</sup> of the month to [joan@peacriverpresbytery.org](mailto:joan@peacriverpresbytery.org).



### Did you know?



The **Caring for Generations** offering is received on the second Sunday of May. The proceeds benefit residents of Florida Presbyterian Homes and Presbyterian Retirement Communities of Florida.

### Educators: Mark Your Calendars!

If you are serving in educational ministry, it's not too early to make plans to attend the annual Association of Presbyterian Church Educators (APCE) conference on January 27 through 30, 2010 in Nashville, Tennessee. For further information, contact the APCE Registrar at 866-338-7737 or [apcenet@aol.com](mailto:apcenet@aol.com).



**3 CENTS A MEAL MATTERS.....  
IT REALLY DOES!!  
TAKE A "CENTS-ABILITY" OFFERING**

**SMALL AMOUNTS FROM MANY ADD UP**

*Cents-ability* is a strategy for raising awareness – and funds – for the fight against hunger. It is an opportunity to invite every member – young and old – to contribute a few cents at every meal. This simple act is an expression of thanks for what we have each received. It is also a commitment to share our blessings with others. Collectively, it can make a difference.

Some churches promote this activity all year and collect monthly. Others take an annual collection. That is optional, but the reality of hunger needs is not. Your church's offering will help to feed the hungry. It is a simple activity, but many pennies, nickels and dollars add up and collectively help those in need.



The "2 Cents a Meal" concept was originated by Presbyterian women in 1976 and has continued under slightly different names, but the concept has been constant. The funds raised are in addition to "One Great Hour of Sharing" and other PCUSA

benevolences, and provide an opportunity for groups, families and individuals to participate and help consistently to lessen world hunger.

**Cents-ability collections are divided this way:**

¼ is kept by the local church for their local needs.

¼ goes to the Presbytery.

*The Mission and Justice Committee bi-annually chooses a charitable organization located within the bounds of Peace River Presbytery, with an inclusive program that helps people with hunger needs. This organization is subject to annual review but usually receives the funds for two years. Organization recipients are rotated around the Presbytery. This year the recipient is Misión Peniel in Immokalee.*

½ is sent to the Presbyterian Hunger Program.

*Peace River designates its portion of funds to the Guatemala Rights Action.*

In 2008, 17 churches contributed \$15,500.00 Just think of the results if all 38 churches would contribute. Encourage this simple giving by YOUR church. It is a simple way of sharing, but the results matter!

For more information and promotional suggestions, go to <http://www.pcusa.org/hunger/centsability.htm>.

*Article submitted by Gerri Westlund, advisory member of the Mission and Justice Committee.*

**OPPORTUNITIES FOR TIME AWAY!**

**Shepherds' Sabbath  
April 13-15, 2009  
A Sabbath Retreat**



Cedarkirk Camp and Conference Center has invited all church professionals and their families serving in Peace River or Tampa Bay Presbyteries to enjoy a time of Sabbath in the beauty of God's Creation.

Whether you can stay for the day or all three days, you won't want to miss this opportunity. Please contact Karin Dale at 813-685-4224 ext. 1 **ASAP** to make your reservations for this **free** event. Please visit [www.cedarkirk.com](http://www.cedarkirk.com) for more information.

**National Pastors' Sabbath**

The National Pastors' Sabbath is scheduled for April 17-20, 2009 and will be held at the Sawgrass Marriott Resort and Spa located in Ponte Vedra Beach near Jacksonville, FL. To see if there are still openings, please contact GA Meeting Service at 888-728-7228, ext. 2417.



**Looking for a place to go this year?**

**Montreat Conference Center** has much to offer!  
Go to [www.montreat.org](http://www.montreat.org) for more information.

**Casa del Sol** is the retreat center at Ghost Ranch in the high desert of New Mexico – a great place for go for retreat.  
Go to [www.ghostranch.org](http://www.ghostranch.org) for more information.



The Big Tent, a gathering of Presbyterians for ten national conferences and convocations under one roof, will take place in Atlanta, Georgia, from June 11-13.

Phyllis Maisel, member of Northminster Presbyterian Church and Presbytery's Mission & Justice Committee, is going and has volunteered to coordinate the transportation of the Peace River Presbytery participants. Please call her at 941-377-9379 if you plan on going. It would be great if a delegation from our Presbytery could attend.

To see a complete list of conferences and to register, go to <http://www.pcusa.org/bigtent/>.

**“Continued prayers for peace in uncertain economic times”**

**By Bruce Reyes-Chow, Moderator of the 218<sup>th</sup> General Assembly of the PCUSA  
March 9, 2009**



Picture by  
Danny Bolin,  
PCUSA

This morning I sent out a check-in note to the members of the [Moderator's Facebook group](#) asking for people to let me know how folks are doing and what's going on in their congregations and communities that will help inform what I say back to the church. I also asked us to keep praying with and for one another - *without condition* - in the hopes that we might taste the moments of Christ-centered community that prayer can bring.

Within minutes I receive multiple responses all of which had something to do with the economics of the day and the impact it is having on church, communities and individuals. Back in October Grady, Linda and I sent out a [Church-wide Letter on the Economic Crisis](#) and then later I posted [What are your churches doing to respond to the economic downturn?](#) I would encourage you to check out the letter for some useful denominational links and continue to leave links, stories and ideas on the response post. Today though, just as [the congregation I serve](#) lifts up issues of economics every week, I have again been reminded of the pain and struggle that is taking place in our churches, the United States and around the world. So let us gather in prayer today.

Pray with me . . .

God of the very breath we breathe

let your peace be known amidst the economic chaos of the day

be with those bound by worry and anxiety  
be with those facing loss of food and shelter  
be with those who are desperate and panic-filled

be with those who turn away from the stranger  
be with those who cling to apathy and comfort  
be with those leaning more on self than on You

be with us all as we strive to live lives worthy of Your grace  
be with all your children, Lord  
be with all your children

And let your peace be known, Lord  
let your peace be known..

Amen

Lord, hear our prayers.

**What do you get when you cross Presbyterian Youth with the Louisiana/Mississippi swamp?**



You get the opportunity for our youth to experience mission first-hand. This summer Presbyterian Disaster Assistance is offering five of these weeks based at one of the Volunteer Villages set up along the Gulf Coast.

- Week of June 14 – Family Week (New Orleans);*
- Week of June 21 – Father/Son Week (New Orleans);*
- Week of June 28 – Youth Week 1 (Houma, LA);*
- Week of July 5 – Youth Week 2 (Texas);*
- Week of July 12 – Youth Week 3 (Houma, LA).*

To learn more about these weeks or to register, go to [www.pcusa.org/pda](http://www.pcusa.org/pda) or call 800-872-3283.

**FROM YOUR RESOURCE CENTER**

The Resource Center of Peace River Presbytery exists to support the mission and ministry of the Presbytery and its member churches by offering theologically sound and faith-centered resources primarily from our Presbyterian and Reformed tradition.



Some of the new books in the Resource Center include:

- [Claiming the Beatitudes](#) by Anne Sutherland Howard,
- [When God Speaks Through Worship](#) by Craig A. Satterlee,
- [Five Practices of Fruitful Congregations](#) by Robert Schnase.

We have a variety of resources available for you to check out. You may come to the Presbytery office and browse through the Resource Center, or you may use our online [catalogue](#). Feel free to call or e-mail Lori Doyal, your contact person for the Resource Center. Lori is available Monday through Thursday, 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., 941-426-8421 or [lori@peacriverpresbytery.org](mailto:lori@peacriverpresbytery.org).

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

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