



The Interpreter

PEACE RIVER PRESBYTERY

DECEMBER 2009

SPEAKING FROM THE HART

Asking the Right Questions: Learning from Mary

Long ago I was taught that the questions you ask are almost as important as the answers you find. The church has Mary to thank for being bold enough to ask the right question in response to her angelic encounter. Shocked, she asked: "How can this be?" And she got an angelic matter-of-fact answer that she amazingly accepted. I think the reason she was able to respond in those profound and simple words, *Let it be...*, was she had a deep and abiding faith, and at some point in her young life as a teen-age girl, she had found the answer to these five basic questions:

1. *Whose am I?*
2. *Where am I?*
3. *What is God doing?*
4. *How is God calling me?*
5. *How is God sending me?*

The Advent Season is a time of preparation. What if as elders, or pastors, or a whole congregation, or even as a Presbytery, one of the ways we prepare for Christ's birth anew in our hearts is to ask ourselves those five foundational questions that for Mary changed everything? I believe they will change us as well.

What if at the beginning of our annual meeting those five question are asked, and elders are asked to share some thoughts on how as a congregation we are answering those questions?. What if at the beginning of every session meeting, instead of the treasurer's report being the first item of business, a Mary's Report is first? *How this month have we answered these foundation questions that get at our very reason for being a congregation?*

1. *Whose are we?*
2. *Where are we?*
3. *What is God doing?*
4. *How is God calling us?*
5. *How is God sending us?*

The questions we ask are almost as important as the answers we find. Most of our unchurched neighbors really don't care about all those questions we as Presbyterians have spent so much time discussing in recent years, but they are yearning to hear our answer to the question of *how has Christ been born anew in us... how have we experienced the mystery and meaning of the Incarnation?* How do we answer those five questions in what we do as faithful disciples of Jesus?

May we find again "the joy that has come to the world" by learning to ask Mary-type questions.

Wishing you a Merry Christmas,
Graham Hart, General Presbyter



May you have a blessed Christmas as you celebrate the birth of our Lord and Savior.

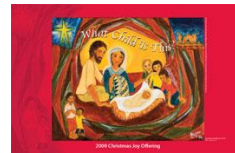
The staff of Peace River Presbytery

Please join us in prayer for these churches:

December 6 – Trinity, Venice
December 13 – Venice, Venice
December 20 – New Life NCD, Naples
December 27 – Peace, Lakewood Ranch



What Is the Christmas Joy Offering?



A Presbyterian tradition for almost 70 years, the Christmas Joy Offering is one of the four special offerings designated by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to

provide congregations direct ways of supporting specific causes that help those in need.

50 percent of the receipts to the Christmas Joy Offering are distributed to the [Board of Pensions](#) for assistance programs that provide support to retired and active church workers and their spouses and families. The other fifty percent supports [Presbyterian-related racial ethnic education](#) through the General Assembly Council.

Committee Highlight of the Month

**Peace River Presbytery
Theology and Worship**

By John Cairns, Chair

The Theology and Worship Committee has undergone a major reorganization during 2009. Our intention is to be responsive to the whole of our title.



In the past the committee's work has been focused on the planning of the worship service at each presbytery meeting. That task has been expanded this year with the committee's recommendation, and approved by the presbytery, to celebrate the Lord's Supper each time we gather. Our hope is to use a variety of liturgies throughout the year and thus to give those who plan worship in our

congregations ideas which they may be able to use in their local settings.

In addition, the committee has increased its focus on the "theology" portion of its assignment. The intention is to offer a breakout group on some theological issue or topic at 3 or 4 meetings each year. Our hope is to provide a growing edge opportunity appropriate for each presbyter at some point during the year. You are invited to watch the breakouts listed for each meeting with an eye to finding the ones that will stretch you in your service to Christ.

Theology and Worship is also looking at times and topics around which to gather smaller groups of pastors and elders throughout the year. These events will take the form of seminars or workshops geared to those with interest in a particular subject.

The members of the Theology and Worship Committee are: Sally Bull; John Cairns, chair; Rachel Carrier; Richard Deibert, vice chair; Mark Jernigan; Earlene Joslin; Randy Moody; Jim Smith, and Gerri Westlund.

FROM OUR CHURCHES

"I was in prison and you visited me"

The women of **Venice Presbyterian Church** are collecting 3,052 Christmas cards to be used by the women inmates of Gadsden Correctional Facility (Gadsden, FL). Each woman will receive 2 cards to send to friends or family. In addition to the cards, VPC women are sending holiday motif pencils.

The church's Mission Committee is also sponsoring the printing of a devotional booklet that begins December 15 and takes the inmates through the holidays to January 5. That's the toughest time to bear in prison.

We urge other churches to seek projects to do for prisons.

Submitted by Diane Penick, Member of Venice Presbyterian Church

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Project C.U.R.E. Alive and Well

Five years ago the Mission Committee of **Presbyterian Church of the Covenant, Sarasota**, chose to align themselves with **Project C.U.R.E.**, one of the largest medical suppliers of donated supplies and equipment in the world. To date we have sent 17 fifty-three foot trailers to Nashville, our closest shipping depot. We are the collection center for S.W. Florida and arrange transport for the state. We ship everything from M.R.I.'s to Band-Aids to 127 countries around the world. C.U.R.E is the delivery arm of the Medical Benevolence Foundation (in partnership with the PCUSA) sending requested supplies to the missionaries that you support. We never go to any country unless we are invited and we never send supplies unless we have assessed the facility where



they are going. This way we are serving the specific needs of the facility. If you are interested in joining us or learning more about C.U.R.E., call Presbyterian Church of the Covenant in Sarasota 941-922-5509 or Judy Kraut 941-484-0789. Come join us and make a difference!

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Save the date!

Dr. Tom Long, well known in Peace River Presbytery as an outstanding Christian lecturer, will be at **Vanderbilt Church in Naples** on February 27 and 28 presenting a "Celebrate the Faith" workshop. Watch for more details in the January issue of *The Interpreter*.

MAIN EVENT

Saturday, March 13, 2010

9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Faith, Cape Coral



KEYNOTE: Dr. Henry Simmons

THEME: Aging as a Spiritual Journey

Workshops being considered:

- Key Spiritual Practices for Times of Transition
- Web Resources for Best Congregational Practices
- Retreats for Seniors
- Music for Aging Gracefully
- Elder Abuse
- Pastoral Care - Laypersons
- Deacon and Elder Training
- 21st Century Communications

Watch for more details!

Please Note

**The Presbytery Office will be closed on
December 24 and 25.**

PEACE RIVER PRESBYTERY

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(Follow link to "Presbytery Publications")

Peace River Presbytery
Stated Meeting
Thursday, November 19, 2009
Venice Presbyterian Church, Venice

Many thanks go to Venice Presbyterian Church who welcomed the Stated Meeting with gracious and warm hospitality.

Rick Ufford-Chase, Moderator of the 216th General Assembly, Executive Director of Presbyterian Peace Fellowship, and co-director with his wife of Stony Point Center, gave the sermon and the keynote address.



Breakout sessions were:

- Rick Ufford-Chase
- "Understanding Communion"
- "Helping Congregations prepare for and respond to the H1N1 Virus"
- "Avoiding Burnout"
- Developing Good Personnel Committees for Congregations"
- Conversations and Questions about the Board of Pensions

During the first **Good News Break** Tom Harp, member of the Board of Trustees, talked about the "Consecration of Pledges" that took place during the worship service as churches brought forward their 2010 Pledge to support the mission of the Presbytery and the larger church. For the second **Good News Break**, the choir from Peace Presbyterian Church sang "O Happy Day" in celebration of their recent organization as Peace River Presbytery's 39th congregation.

The Mission and Vision Task Force Chair Kathleen Weller talked about their purpose and goals. **Covenant Partners Emergency Funding Task Force Chair Clay Thomas** happily reminded the attendees that the goal for the Special Appeal was surpassed. During his report, Dave Moore, Executive Director of Beth-El Farmworker Ministry, shared that the Beth-El Board of Directors unanimously voted to continue Misi3n Peniel through 2010.

Ted Land announced that a task force has been formed from Council to plan the **20th anniversary of Peace River Presbytery in 2010**. Each stated meeting next year will have a time of celebration.

Council made a motion for Elder Judy Kraut (Presbyterian Church of the Covenant, Sarasota) and Rev. Kathleen Weller (Validated Ministry) to serve on the **Nominations Committee, Class of 2012**. A male elder will be nominated at the next meeting.

The Committee on Preparation for Ministry shared that they have completed the final assessment for Jay Mumper and have certified him ready for examination for ordination, pending a call.

Elected as Peace River Presbytery officers for 2010 were Elder Mary Lee Mann (First, Fort Myers) as Chair of Council, Rev. Tim Halverson (Faith, Cape Coral) as Moderator, Elder Don Cady (Chapel by the Sea, Fort Myers Beach) as Moderator-in-Nomination and James Barnett as Treasurer. Additionally, the Nominations Committee moved and Presbytery elected people ready to share their spiritual gifts with the greater church community as they serve on the various Presbytery committees.

The Nominations Committee also submitted the following who were then elected as **Commissioners, Alternates, and Young Adult Advisory Delegate and Alternate to the 219th General Assembly to be held July 3-19, 2010 in Minneapolis, Minnesota:**

Clergy Commissioners: Rev. Elizabeth Deibert (Peace, Lakewood Ranch), Rev. Dr. Karl Kling (Bee Ridge, Sarasota), and Rev. Christopher Romig (Venice, Venice)

Elder Commissioners: Ms. Christine Larson (Buckingham, Fort Myers), Ms. Cindy May (Kirkwood, Bradenton), and Mr. James Pratt (Presbyterian Church of the Covenant, Sarasota)

Young Adult Advisory Delegate: Mr. Nicholas Monette (Moorings, Naples)

Alternate Clergy Commissioners: Rev. Graham Hart, (General Presbyter), Rev. Daniel Hagmaier (Covenant, Fort Myers), Rev. Stephen Mock (First, Punta Gorda)

Alternate Elder Commissioners: Ms. Linda Mansperger (Presbyterian Church of the Covenant, Sarasota), Mr. Bruce Owens (Faith, Cape Coral), and one more to be nominated at another meeting

Alternate Young Adult Advisory Delegate: Mr. Rex Childs (Vanderbilt, Naples)

Committee on Ministry moved and the Presbytery approved the validated ministry called The Peace River Spirituality Center with the Rev. Dr. Kathleen Weller.

Some of the actions by C.O.M. under authority granted:

- Transferred Rev. Deva McQueen to the Presbytery of Alaska, effective October 13, 2009
- Approved Rev. Dr. Silvana Ferriera (formerly Franca) to labor outside the bounds in Brazil.
- Approved the request of Lely Presbyterian Church, Naples, to renew their contract with Rev. Steve Nagy as Stated Supply for one year.
- Approved the dissolution of the call between St. Paul's Presbyterian Church, North Port, and Rev. Wayne Chaplin, effective December 27, 2009.

The next Presbytery meeting will be held on Thursday, February 25, 2009 at Presbyterian Church of the Covenant, Sarasota.