



# The Interpreter

PEACE RIVER PRESBYTERY

JUNE/JULY 2010

## SPEAKING FROM THE HART

### The 219<sup>th</sup> General Assembly – A Sound of Summer

When I was a child, one of the persistent sounds of summer in Eastern Pennsylvania was the song of the locusts. I loved listening to their day-long chorus. For Presbyterians, one of the sounds of summer, now every other year, is General Assembly.

Since 1789, the PCUSA and our several predecessor denominations have come together for this family reunion, mission conference, worship-fest and national stakeholders meeting to which every Presbytery sends duly elected commissioners to be open to the guidance of the Holy Spirit and make decisions on behalf of the whole church.

Some will ask why we get involved in what seem like complicated and maybe even partisan political issues, but others would say that the gospel mandates we address such issues. (Why was the Revolutionary War called the “Presbyterian Rebellion” in the English Parliament, and why did so many Presbyterians enter the debate over slavery at the time of the Civil War?) So today - is immigration an issue that should only be addressed in political conversations, or are there moral and spiritual issues involved? What does the Bible say about welcoming the stranger, the alien, in our midst? Is that relevant to this conversation? Or why do we weigh in on the complex issues of the Middle East? In part we do so because two generations ago our brother and sister Christians were 30% of the Palestinian population, but are now only 2%. In part we do so because a church in Florida did a mission trip to Palestine and Israel and came back deeply concerned by what they saw. They wrote an overture to their Presbytery (St. Augustine) which was endorsed by that Presbytery and the 217<sup>th</sup> General Assembly.

However, some think that asking 700 plus commissioners elected by 173 Presbyteries to deal with these issues in a very packed 8 day time frame is asking the impossible, and there must be a better way. Others love the fact that we have an open system from the local congregation to the General Assembly in which elders and clergy (it's 50-50) come together to think through and discern what it means to be church at this time and place in history. Some think that meeting every other year is not enough and others think we would be better served to meet as a legislative body on behalf of the whole church every 4 years as do our Methodist friends.

Some ask if it is wise, prudent and necessary that the Assembly deal with all the overtures (this year over 150)

that come from the 173 Presbyteries in those 8 days, as well as review the work of the whole church as it is accomplished through Synods, Presbyteries, and the six on-going agencies of the General Assembly. Are we asking for the impossible when we ask commissioners to stay up into the wee hours in order to finish their assigned tasks?

Some wonder about a General Assembly making a decision by a 51% to 49% vote. Does that mean we have a consensus as a church and the ability to move forward on an issue? Some ask how it is that an assembly decides one way one year, but, because it is not yet a settled issue in everyone's minds, the next Assembly takes it up again because a Presbytery has sent an overture asking it to do so. In case you are wondering – it's all in our polity - our system is designed to be responsive to the grass roots, and so we keep talking and voting.

As one who did not grow up Presbyterian, I honor and am grateful for this polity that has its roots in the way the early church came together to make decisions. I am one that doesn't want to stop the conversation, but I also think we would do well to find some better ways.

This year amidst the many “content” overtures that are related to changing the Book of Order or addressing some spiritual, programmatic, moral or social concern there are several overtures looking at **how we are church together?** They are looking not at issues or topics per se, but at the “processes” in how we deal with these issues. For me that is a hopeful and welcome sign.

219<sup>TH</sup>  
GENERAL ASSEMBLY (2010) ✠



So all of this is a way of saying I am glad it is summer and that it is again time for us to come together in this family reunion and conversation that has elders and clergy together praying and listening and leading us forward as a church.

If you want to follow more closely the actions of this GA go to: <http://www.pcusa.org/ga219>. Please pray for all the commissioners, the decisions to be made, and the spirit with which all concerned approach their important tasks.

Grateful for the sounds of summer and praying for our church,

**Graham Hart** [graham@peacriverpresbytery.org](mailto:graham@peacriverpresbytery.org)

## MORE ON THE UPCOMING GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Please pray for the 219<sup>th</sup> General Assembly to be held July 3 through July 10, 2010 in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Commissioners from Peace River Presbytery are:

Rev. Elizabeth Deibert

Rev. Karl Kling

Alternate Clergy Commissioner\*

Elder Christine Larson

Elder Cindy May

Elder James Pratt

Young Adult Advisory Delegate (YAAD) Nicholas Monette

\*One of the clergy commissioners is unable to attend. The Nominations Committee has been notified and the third Clergy Commissioner will be determined from the list of Alternates previously elected.

The election of a new Moderator will take place the first day of the Assembly. The candidates are:

- o Rev. James Belle, Presbytery of Philadelphia
- o Elder Cynthia Bolbach, National Capital Presbytery
- o Rev. Jin S. Kim, Presbytery of the Twin Cities Area
- o Rev. Eric Nielsen, Northern Waters Presbytery
- o Rev. Maggie Lauterer, Presbytery of Western North Carolina
- o Rev. Julia Leith, Presbytery of Santa Barbara

### Hopes for the 219th General Assembly (2010)

The Stated Clerk of the General Assembly has released his greatest hopes for the 219th General Assembly (2010) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)



1. **Prayerful decision-making:**  
The spirit in which decisions are made at the assembly will be a prayerful and careful witness of decision-making for the entire church.
2. **Deeper awareness of the whole PC(USA):**  
Commissioners and advisory delegates will gain a deeper awareness of the length and breadth of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), realizing they are part of something much larger than themselves.
3. **Issues facing congregations:** Commissioners and advisory delegates will discern with the whole church the issues and challenges facing congregations.
4. **Common calling to a changing church:** A clear, common calling will emerge to actively and hopefully engage with the reality of a church in change.
5. **Attention beyond ourselves:** Attention will move beyond ourselves to a world in great need, committing ourselves to gospel work: making

disciples, feeding the hungry, welcoming the outcast, encouraging the fainthearted, working for peace – all in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

6. **Enthusiastic sharing of the faith:** Those who are part of the assembly will be the first in line of Presbyterians to talk about their faith with a contagious enthusiasm.
7. **Furthering the mission of Christ:** At the end of the assembly, commissioners and advisory delegates will have a deep sense that what they did will further the mission of Christ in the world.

*The Reverend Gradye Parsons is Stated Clerk of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).*



### 40 Days of Prayer

The Association of Executive Presbyters (of which Graham Hart is a member) has written a devotion and prayer for the each of the 40 days before General Assembly meets, believing that it is paramount to surround the commissioners with prayer as they seek to discern God's direction in all they do. Below is the devotion for Day 7. (If you want to be e-mailed the 40 days of prayer, send Graham your e-mail address.)

#### **"AS THE FATHER SENT ME, SO I SEND YOU"**

##### **John 20: 19-22:**

*When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you."*

*After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord.*

*Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you."*

*When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit."*

Many of us approach the General Assembly, wishing that we could stay behind locked doors. "What will this General Assembly mean for our churches? Who will be unhappy?" Probably everyone? There is no way we can agree on everything that the General Assembly does. But, our theology says that the Holy Spirit will work through our Assembly. We are people called not to be behind locked doors for fear of the outside. Jesus came and stood among the disciples. I believe he is present and standing among us.

After he shows them his hands and side, then the disciples could believe. We are those who have believed and not seen. Jesus also comes to us, saying "Peace be with you," "My peace I give you."

Jesus then says, "As the Father has sent me, so I send you." Earlier in the gospel of John, Jesus said, "As the Father has loved me so I love you" and "Love one another, as I have loved you." Being sent as Jesus was sent is an awesome responsibility.

When Jesus sent the disciples, Jesus gave the disciples the Holy Spirit. He gives us the Holy Spirit. It is with confidence that Jesus sends us with the Holy Spirit that we can believe the Holy Spirit is already at work in each of us, this General Assembly and our denomination. Moreover, we can trust the promise that God will be at work in us after the GA, at work in our lives, the churches, our denomination and the world.

**Prayer:** Creator and Creating Lord, open our eyes to see you at work in our lives, in those who are at General Assembly, in our churches and in this denomination. Open our ears to hear your word and guidance. Give us the peace, joy and grace we need to serve you and your people, with the energy, intelligence, imagination, and love that you have given us. Send us with your Spirit. In the name of Jesus Christ, who loves us and sends us.

*Bobbi White*  
General Presbyterian, Presbytery of Western North Carolina

## New mission co-worker commissioning

"World Mission new co-workers and long term volunteers appointed in 2009 and 2010 will be acknowledged at a commissioning service **that will take place during the General Assembly meeting in Minneapolis on July 8th,**" stated Nancy Cavalcante, Mission Services Recruitment Coordinator.

The General Assembly voted to increase the number of mission co-workers in 2008. Total personnel engaged in World Mission currently exceeds 200 serving in approximately 50 countries.

"We estimate that, given adequate funding, we would seek to recruit 70 new mission co-workers in response to the requests of global partners and in fulfillment of our strategic plan," stated Hunter Farrell, Director of Presbyterian World Mission. "At any given time, we have more than 100 people "in process" applying for mission service. We receive 300-400 information requests a year from Presbyterians about mission service through World Mission."



Hunter Farrell

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## CHURCHES TO PRAY FOR

June 6 Vanderbilt, Naples  
June 13 Holy Trinity, N. Fort Myers  
June 20 St. Paul's, North Port  
June 27 Palmetto, Palmetto  
July 4 First, Port Charlotte  
July 11 Wintergarden, Port Charlotte  
July 18 Burnt Store, Punta Gorda  
July 25 First, Punta Gorda



## Great Opportunity on June 17!



Do you have questions about how Presbyterians are faring while in the turmoil of the Middle East region? The Mission and Justice Committee of Peace River Presbytery has extended an invitation to anyone interested to come to the Presbytery office on **Thursday, June 17, 2010** to meet with and hear **Rev. Dr. Nuhad Tomeh, PC(USA) Regional Liaison for Syria,**

**Lebanon, Iraq and the Gulf,** from 11:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. (lunch not included).

Dr. Tomeh also currently oversees the Iraq relief and rehabilitation program for the Middle East Council of Churches.

If you plan on attending, please contact the Presbytery office at 941-426-8421 and ask for Joan.

## "Creating a Culture of Generosity"

Kevin Garvey, Chief Development Officer of The Board of Pensions PCUSA, has been invited to the **August 28, 2010 Stated Meeting** to talk about a year round, spiritually based culture of generosity program. Be prepared to be challenged about how things have been done in the past and walk away with a new excitement about generosity.

Building on the presentation from the Presbytery meeting, Mr. Garvey will lead a **one day interactive seminar on generosity on Wednesday, September 22, 2010** which will include small group breakouts developing a generosity/stewardship program you can take back and implement in your church. You and the leadership from your church who attend will walk away with materials and ideas on how to increase the spiritual life of your church and members as it relates to generosity and stewardship.

Kevin Garvey began his work with The Board of Pensions PCUSA in 2008 as the Chief Development Officer working with The Assistance Program. Mr. Garvey brings over 27 years of fundraising and marketing experience to the Presbyterian Church. He presently serves as an Elder of Zionsville Presbyterian Church, Indiana.

Peace River Presbytery  
Stated Meeting  
HIGHLIGHTS

Thursday, May 27, 2010

St. Paul's Presbyterian Church, North Port



The hospitality of St. Paul's Presbyterian Church was appreciated as they hosted the second of the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Stated Meetings.

The special guest at this meeting was the **Rev. Philip Lotspeich, Coordinator of Church Growth Ministries for the General Assembly Mission Council**. Rev. Lotspeich preached, gave a keynote address, and led an extended breakout group for those interested in hearing more about church growth.

**A second breakout group** was led by the Theology and Worship Committee on the topic: "The Role of the Holy Spirit in General Assembly."

During the **Good News Break**, the Evangelism and Church Development Committee talked about the mission posts that have been planted within the bounds of Peace River Presbytery since 1990.

As part of the **20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Task Force** report, a slide show of pictures of all the churches of Peace River Presbytery was shown with "The Church's One Foundation" as background music.

**Leadership and Congregational Development** is planning for the next Main Event, scheduled for March 12, 2011. Please mark your calendars!

Under the **Mission and Justice** report, Dixie Gilbert-Holt, gave an overview of The Duvall Home's ministry. Also, Clay Thomas shared about a Peacemaking Pilgrimage to the Holy Land taken by members of First, Sarasota.

Mark Orendorf shared information on what is happening at **Cedarkirk** and Rev. Jim Berger, current President of **Beth-El Farmworker Ministry** Board, gave an update on the ministry to and needs of the farmworkers.

**A commissioning service** was held for 219<sup>th</sup> General Assembly Peace River Presbytery Commissioners. Please continue to pray for them.

**Council** presented the following motions which were approved: 1) Revisions in the Standing Rules as recommended by the Evangelism and Church Development Committee and 2) Faith Battan from Kirkwood Presbyterian and Rev. Ruffin Stepp from Venice Presbyterian to both serve in the Class of 2012 on the Nominations Committee.

Kathleen Weller, Moderator of the **Vision Force** (a task force formed by Council) invited the Presbytery to fill out a questionnaire to help them in their deliberations.

**Evangelism and Church Development** asked for prayers for Rev. Ed Gray and his family. The funding for New Life Presbyterian Fellowship was voted to be discontinued as of June 30, 2010 with the understanding that the time between July 1, 2010 and December 31, 2010 will be a severance period for Rev. Ed Gray.

**Preparation for Ministry** recommended, and the Presbytery approved, Kim Adams (Peace Presbyterian Church) to be enrolled as an inquirer, Deborah Linville (Burnt Store Presbyterian Church) to be enrolled as an inquirer, and John Scott (Siesta Key Chapel) to be received as a Candidate-Under-Care.

**The Nominations Committee** submitted the following who were elected to serve:

- Paul deJong, First, Fort Myers, Class of 2012-1 on Camps and Conferences
- Betty Kelly, First, Bonita Springs, Class of 2010-1 on Camps and Conferences
- Ruth Smith, Venice, Venice, Class of 2012-1 on Committee on Ministry
- James Craig, Vanderbilt, Naples, Class of 2011-1 on Evangelism and Church Development.
- Samantha Keller, Cypress Lake, Fort Myers, as Chair of Leadership and Congregational Development for the remainder of 2010.

It was also shared that our Stated Clerk, Craig Countiss, will not be seeking another term at the close of this year. His ministry and service of 20 years as Stated Clerk will be celebrated at the November Stated Meeting.

Under the **Committee on Ministry** report, the Presbytery approved:

- the retirement of Rev. Dr. Gerald Wise and granted him the status of Honorably Retired, effective April 30, 2010
- the call of Rev. John Foulkrod to Palmetto Presbyterian Church, Palmetto (part-time) as a PCUSA minister of the Word and Sacrament and he was welcomed into membership of Peace River Presbytery

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

- Approved Rev. Helen Heffington's ministry with the Guadalupe Center in Immokalee as a validated ministry
- Approved the dissolution of the pastoral relationship effective September 30, 2010 between Moorings Presbyterian Church, Naples, and Rev. Dr. Charles Cary.
- Approved the rescinding of transfer of Rev. Deva McQueen from Peace River Presbytery to the Presbytery of Alaska.

**The next Presbytery meeting will be held on Saturday, August 28, 2010 at Faith Presbyterian Church, Cape Coral.**