



# The Interpreter

PEACE RIVER PRESBYTERY

DECEMBER 2010

## SPEAKING FROM THE HART

### Reflections on the Incarnation... What's our Big Deal

The unwise and ill-willed attempted Koran-burning in a Gainesville church on 9/11 not only stirred the passions of the Muslim community around the world, but also got us thinking as a nation about:

- the nature of Islam,
- how to live together as people of faith,
- What's the big deal about a book (e.g., the Koran)?

Since then I have been thinking about **what is our (i.e. the church's) big deal?** What is it we hold unique, central and at the core of everything we believe. **In a word: Jesus.**

For the Muslim community, as I understand their beliefs, in a sense the Koran is as close as they get to understanding God's will. Islam, like Judaism of old, is a religion of moral law. The reason Islamic countries have these huge debates as to what is permissible and should be the law of the land is that some Muslims believe that correct belief and behavior must be enforced. The problem is some mullahs and ayatollahs never seem to ask whose interpretation is correct, so even in the Islamic faith there is the equivalent of our denominations with differing understandings. The problem is radical zealots never seem to acknowledge that. In our country, the Amish community would never insist that their dress code, which are practices that come out of their interpretations of scripture, become the law of the land, but the Ayatollahs in Iran, for instance, determine and enforce what women can and can't wear in public. Like the law in the Old Testament, the Islamic world seeks to live up to a common and enforceable standard as to behavior and belief. So their book, the Koran, is a big deal because for them it reveals the will of God by which they must abide, and to disobey and dishonor this book in some way puts one's eternal condition in peril.

The scandal of Christianity to the Jewish and Islamic world is our belief that God has come to us as one of us. We don't just have a book, we have as the early church fathers wrote in the Nicene Creed God's very self.

**We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,  
the only Son of God,  
eternally begotten of the Father,  
God from God, light from light,  
true God from true God,  
begotten, not made,  
of one Being with the Father;  
through him all things were made.  
For us and for our salvation**

**he came down from heaven,  
was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary  
and became truly human.**

C S Lewis' has wonderful insight into the incarnation, and why for us this is such a big deal, in his book, *Miracles*:

*"In the Christian story God descends to re-ascend. He comes down; down from the heights of absolute being into time and space, down into humanity, down further still, if embryologists are right, to recapitulate in the womb ancient and pre-human phases of life; down to the very roots and sea-bed of the Nature he had created. But He goes down to come up again and bring the whole ruined world up with Him. One has the picture of a strong man stooping lower and lower to get himself underneath some great complicated burden. He must stoop in order to lift, he must almost disappear under the load before he incredibly straightens his back and marches off with the whole mass swaying on his shoulders. Or one may think of a diver, first reducing himself to nakedness, then glancing in mid-air, then gone with a splash, vanished, rushing down through green and warm water into black and cold water, down through increasing pressure into the deathlike region of ooze and slime and old decay; then up again, back to color and light, his lungs almost bursting, till suddenly he breaks surface again, holding in his hand the dripping, precious thing that he went down to recover. He and it are both colored now that they have come up into the light: down below, where it lay colorless in the dark, he lost his color too."*

In the pastoral letters that are sent out weekly I plan to continue to share some musings on why the incarnation is such a big deal. [If you would like to get the pastoral letter, please e-mail me or the Presbytery staff.](#)

Part of my own story and coming back into faith and belief involves what I rediscovered and heard, as if for the first time, many years ago on a Christmas Eve. So I pray that as leaders and congregational members of this Presbytery we will in our own way re-discover again and again, God with us, God for us, God pitching his tent among us. Thanks be to God!

Wishing you each a joyous and deeply meaningful Christmas,

*Graham*

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

PS – If you want to read what the early church fathers wrote on this mystery called the Incarnation, the classic is by [Athanasius which can be accessed by this link.](#)



May you have a blessed Christmas as  
you celebrate the birth of our  
Lord and Savior.  
The staff of Peace River Presbytery

Please pray for the church of the week:  
its congregation, mission, pastors, educators, and  
support staff.

December 5 Community, Englewood  
December 12 Buckingham, Fort Myers  
December 19 Covenant, Fort Myers  
December 26 Cypress Lake, Fort Myers



### JOINED THE CHURCH TRIUMPHANT

Rev. Daniel DeArment, HR on July 10, 2009  
Rev. Dr. William Grosvenor, HR on November 13, 2010

### DISCUSSIONS ON THE PROPOSED AMENDMENTS



Theology and Worship Committee will be having a series of "Talking Group Meetings" within the Presbytery beginning in January. These group meetings will be to discuss the remaining proposed amendments to the Constitution, approved by the 219<sup>th</sup> General Assembly (2010) and recommended to the presbyteries for their vote:

- Part 1 of 3 – Foundations of Presbyterian Polity and Form of Government, to be voted on at the February 24, 2011 Stated Meeting.
- Part 3 of 3 – Amendments to the *Book of Order*, to be voted on at the May 26, 2011 Stated Meeting.

The schedule for discussion is as follows:

1. **Thursday, January 27, 2011**  
7:00 p.m.  
First Presbyterian Church, Bonita Springs
2. **Monday, January 31, 2011**  
7:00 pm.  
Northminster Presbyterian Church, Sarasota
3. **Saturday, February 5, 2011**  
9:30 a.m.  
Presbytery office, North Port

These meetings are open to all interested persons, but are particularly designed for ELDERS who will be serving as commissioners to the February 2011 and/or May 2011 stated meetings of Presbytery.

If you have any questions, please contact Rev. John Cairns, Chair of the Theology and Worship Committee, 941-953-6181.

## WARSHIP IN THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY

- ❖ How can we have a truce over our worship wars?
- ❖ How can we mix contemporary with traditional...*is it even possible?*
- ❖ How can we retain reformed traditions yet, introduce more present-day styles?

### The Answer: attend *The Main Event*\*

Dr. Constance Cherry will speak to us about:

- The Five Myths of Worship Style (*things people have thought about worship style that are not true*)
- Convergent Worship versus Blended Worship: *What's the difference?*
- Passive Worship or Participatory Worship (*how to move congregations toward more engagement*)

*"When the worship arts professors at Judson University contemplated who should be the inaugural speaker for our worship arts lecture series, Dr. Constance Cherry was our first choice. Few speak of worship with such truth and grace, such theoretical knowledge and practical insight, such exhortation and encouragement. Dr. Cherry addressed two completely different audiences (in both number and socio-spiritual make up) while she was with us, and both messages ministered in profound ways. I recommend her highly."*

Warren Anderson, D.W.S.  
Dean of the Chapel  
Lecturer in Worship Arts and Communication Arts  
Judson University  
[wanderson@judsonu.edu](mailto:wanderson@judsonu.edu)

**\*The Main Event**  
**Saturday, March 12, 2011**  
First Presbyterian Church  
Port Charlotte

November 18, 2010  
Peace River Presbytery  
Stated Meeting Highlights



The autumn meeting of Peace River Presbytery was graciously hosted by members and staff of **First Presbyterian Church**, Port Charlotte.

The Presbytery thanked **Craig Countiss** for 20 years of service as the Presbytery's only Stated Clerk since he will be retiring at the end of this year. The celebration included a beautiful cake, gifts, and a "roast" by friends and colleagues Ted Land and Dan Hagmaier. Craig's wife Elizabeth was present for the occasion.

Jim Barnett was also thanked and given a gift of appreciation for his 7 years of service as Presbytery treasurer.

The **Vision Task Force** led the clergy and elder commissioners in a discussion on the following: *"Imagine a presbytery committed to the proposed Mission Statement that lived its life affirming congregations, connecting disciples and living as the Body of Christ together. What stories about being the Body of Christ together with our sister churches would we celebrate as we gathered? What story about belonging together would your congregation especially celebrate?"*

The commissioners voted on the first of three proposed amendments to the Constitution, approved by the 219<sup>th</sup> General Assembly and recommended to the presbyteries for their vote. Peace River Presbytery voted **not to approve** adding the **Confession of Belhar** to *The Book of Confessions* by a vote of 67 to 62.

**Rev. Noelle Damico**, Presbyterian Hunger Program, gave the sermon and led a breakout group, and **Doug Molloy**, Chief U.S. Attorney for Southwest Florida, gave the keynote address and also led a breakout group.

**The other breakout sessions** were "A Conversation about the Belhar Confession" and one led by Presbyterian Women.

The following were approved to serve on the **2011 Nominating Committee**: Chair Rev. Ted Land (First, Arcadia), Vice Chair Don Muenzmay (Pine Shores, Sarasota), and Jo Ann Leasure (Covenant, Fort Myers) They join those currently serving: Rev. Russ Hickman (Holy Trinity, North Fort Myers), Reid Richmond (Vanderbilt, Naples), Judy Kraut (Presbyterian Church of the Covenant, Sarasota), Faith Battan (Kirkwood, Bradenton) and Rev. Ruffin Stepp (Venice, Venice).

The Presbytery elected its **new Stated Clerk, Rev. Dr. Clinton (Clint) Cottrell** (Cypress Lake, Fort Myers) and a **new Treasurer, Mr. Adam Martin** (First, Sarasota) to begin service on January 1, 2011.

**Elected as Peace River Presbytery officers for 2011:** Elder Mary Lee Mann (First, Fort Myers) as Chair of Council and Elder Don Cady (Chapel by the Sea, Fort Myers Beach) as Moderator. Additionally, the Nominations Committee submitted the names of many people ready to share their spiritual gifts with the greater church community as they serve on the various Presbytery committees.

The Presbytery approved a motion by the **Committee on Preparation for Ministry** that Terri Jo Crego, Pine Shores Presbyterian Church, Sarasota, be received as an Inquirer.

**Presbytery approved the following:**

- The honorable retirement of Rev. Ruth Schaaff and the Rev. David King
- Rev. Raphael (Ray) Quiles as Designated Pastor of St. Paul's Presbyterian Church, North Port
- Daniel Oedy to be ordained and installed as Associate Pastor at First Presbyterian Church, Bonita Springs if the way be clear.

**Other information from Committee on Ministry:**

- Approved the transfer of Rev. Curtis Miller to the Presbytery of Mid-Kentucky
- Approved the transfer of Rev. Wayne Chaplin to the Presbytery of Indian Nations
- Approved the transfer of Rev. Dr. Charles Cary to the Presbytery of Long Island.
- Approved the transfer of Rev. Daniel Hagmaier to the Presbytery of the Pacific.

Attendees were reminded of **The Main Event** to be held on March 12, 2011. *Worship in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: A Convergence Worship Seminar* will be led by Dr. Constance Cherry.

In preparation for voting on the two remaining **General Assembly proposed amendments**, Theology and Worship Committee will lead "Talking Group Meetings". These meetings are open to all interested persons, but are particularly designed for ELDERS who will be serving as commissioners to the February 2011 and/or May 2011 Stated Meetings of Presbytery.

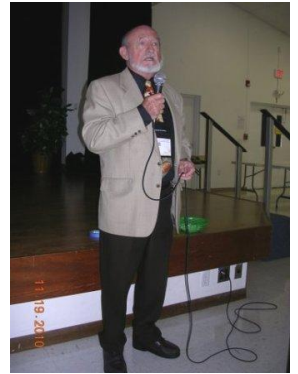
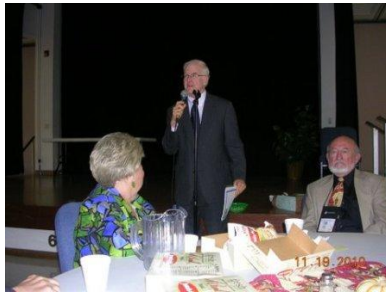
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**The next Presbytery meeting will be held at Cedarkirk Camp & Conference Center in Lithia on Thursday, February 24, 2011. The Foundations of Presbyterian Polity and Form of Government will be voted on at this meeting.** There is an optional retreat the day before with check in available beginning at 1:00 pm. Please register through Cedarkirk by February 15.

# PICTURES FROM THE NOVEMBER 18, 2010 STATED MEETING

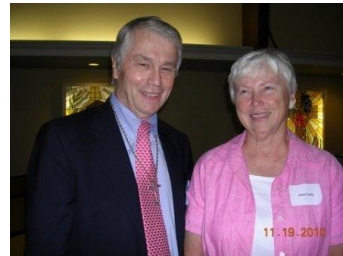
Celebration of Craig Countiss' retirement  
as Stated Clerk after 20 years of service



Thank you to  
Tim Halverson, 2010 Moderator and  
Jim Barnett, Treasurer



Installing and introducing the  
2011 Moderator Don Cady and his wife Joan



Pictures taken by Polly Land