



# The Interpreter

PEACE RIVER PRESBYTERY

MAY 2011

## SPEAKING FROM THE HART

### What the headlines may say about 10A

It appears likely that within the next several weeks Amendment 10A dealing with ordination standards will pass with a majority of the 173 Presbyteries voting for its approval. The current tally is 82 in favor and 59 opposed with 87 votes needed for passage. On pages 2 and 3 is a letter that the Stated Clerk and I sent to all pastors and clerks of session on April 12 related to what 10A's passage will mean and what it will not mean.

In addition to what we said in that letter, I want to alert members of the Presbytery that the news media may have headlines related to this Amendment that could be misleading.

Every governing body, including the session for the ordination of elders, must apply biblical and confessional standards as the letter from the Stated Clerk and me explains. Historically, every congregation, with the concurrence and approval of the presbytery, calls ministers of word and sacrament to serve as pastors. Congregations now and in the future - by our historic polity - cannot be told who they can call. Unlike Methodists and Catholics, we have a call system, not an appointment, so congregations will continue to exercise that right and responsibility. Every presbytery must examine, as we do now, every candidate for ordination. It is the responsibility of that governing body to determine if this candidate meets the biblical and confessional standards, and is fit in belief and behavior to be called and ordained to the office of elder, deacon or minister of word and sacrament.

Both Clint Cottrell and I are available if you have questions related to this issue.

Living in the joy of Easter,

*Graham*

Graham Hart

General Presbyter

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

### Cynthia Rigby – Keynote Speaker for May 26 Presbytery meeting

Professor Cynthia Rigby joined the faculty of Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary in 1995. In an article in the *Dallas Morning News*, on March 28, 2006, Rigby was cited as one of the great theologians of our time. In his article, William McKenzie wrote about twelve contemporary theologians who can “span the gap

between church and society. Attention to theology, politics and sociology allows these thinkers to shape the world, not just follow in its wake.” An energetic scholar, Rigby is the author of more than thirty articles and book chapters. She is the author of *The Promotion of Social Righteousness* (Witherspoon Press, 2010) and she is currently completing a book titled *Shaping our Faith: A Christian Feminist Theology* (Baker Academic, forthcoming). She is the co-editor (with Beverly Gaventa) of *Blessed One: Protestant Perspectives on Mary* (Westminster John Knox Press, 2002) and editor of *Power, Powerlessness, and the Divine: New Inquiries in Bible and Theology* (Scholars Press, 1997). Rigby is also working on two additional projects, one focused on the doctrines of “sin and salvation” and the other on developing a systematic theology especially for pastors.



Professor Rigby is a sought-after speaker who enjoys lecturing and teaching for academic, church, and denominational events both domestically and internationally. In her keynote address, she will be inviting us into the Reformed legacy of commitment to ongoing *critical thinking*, with the goal being to discern, ever anew, the shape of God's Word. She will relate our unity in Christ to this common commitment to critical thinking/discernment - even when we don't agree.

The May Stated Meeting will be held on **Thursday, May 26, 2011 at Vanderbilt Presbyterian Church, 1225 Piper Blvd, Naples.**

Commissioners will be voting on the Proposed Amendments to the Constitution – Part 3 of 3: Amendments to the *Book of Order*. All commissioners are asked to bring their copy to the meeting. A limited number of copies will be available.



### Please pray for the church of the week:

- May 1 Bee Ridge, Sarasota
- May 8 Church of the Palms, Sarasota
- May 15 First, Sarasota
- May 22 Northminster, Sarasota
- May 29 Pine Shores, Sarasota

### CHURCH TRIUMPHANT

**Rev. Jon Nyberg – April 6, 2011**

**LETTER ON ORDINATION STANDARDS  
AMENDMENT 10-A  
(BOOK OF ORDER G-6.0106B)**

FROM: GRAHAM HART - GENERAL PRESBYTER,  
PEACE RIVER PRESBYTERY  
CLINT COTTRELL - STATED CLERK, PEACE RIVER  
PRESBYTERY

TO: CLERGY, SESSIONS, ELDERS AND EDUCATORS IN  
PEACE RIVER  
APRIL 12, 2011

We have recently received a number of questions about what will occur should the proposed amendment to the church's ordination standards in G-6.0106b receive sufficient positive votes to become part of the *Book of Order* (effective July 12, 2011). Currently, sixty-five presbyteries have voted in favor of the amendment, and forty-three have voted against it. A minimum of eighty-seven positive votes are needed for the amendment to be adopted. We do not know what the final outcome will be but wanted to make sure that each pastor, elder and educator was clear as to what may change and what will not change.

The potential adoption of changes to G-6.0106b has raised some important questions. We hope to offer some insight on what it may mean.

***What will be changed if this amendment passes?***

The current text of G-6.0106b reads:

Those who are called to office in the church are to lead a life of obedience to Scripture and in conformity to the historic confessional standards of the church. Among these standards is the requirement to live either in fidelity within the covenant of marriage between a man and a woman (W-4.9001), or chastity in singleness. Persons refusing to repent of any self-acknowledged practice which the confessions call sin shall not be ordained and/or installed as deacons, elders, or ministers of the Word and Sacrament.

The text proposed to replace this paragraph reads:

Standards for ordained service reflect the church's desire to submit joyfully to the Lordship of Christ in all aspects of life (G-1.0000). The governing body responsible for ordination and/or installation (G-14.0240; 14.0450) shall examine each candidate's calling, gifts, preparation, and suitability for

the responsibilities of office. The examination shall include, but not be limited to, a determination of the candidate's ability and commitment to fulfill all requirements as expressed in the constitutional questions for ordination and installation (W-4.4003). Governing bodies shall be guided by Scripture and the confessions in applying standards to individual candidates.

***What precisely does the proposed language say?***

1. It affirms that ordained service in the church reflects a desire to submit one's self joyfully to the authority and Lordship of Jesus Christ.
2. The proposed language eliminates reference to sexual behavior as an explicit standard for ordained office in the church. In essence, the Book of Order would be silent on this issue, as it was before 1997.
3. This change, if it is adopted, does not mean ordination is a right for all, but it will be up to a governing body to determine the suitability of individual candidates applying biblical and confessional standards as that body interprets and understands them. The responsibility for examining a candidate for ordained ministry rests with the session (for elders and deacons) or presbytery (for ministers of the Word and Sacrament). This invokes the language of the Adopting Act of 1729, perhaps the oldest statement of reconciliation in Presbyterian history in this country. Used to reconcile deep and painful differences in the church about standards and expectations of ministers, it enabled Presbyterians to come together beyond their disagreements and find a way forward in common ministry on the burgeoning American frontier.
4. The implication of this is that a session or presbytery must determine what it understands Scripture and the Confessions to say with regard to the commitments being required in the ordination questions. In a similar way, ordaining bodies in past generations have wrestled with other issues, such as what Jesus said about divorce and how we understand, interpret, and apply those Scriptures. On the basis of that understanding, the session or presbytery can then assess whether the candidate can

commit and is committed to live out those requirements.

5. If this proposed change in the Book of Order occurs, there is no obligation of a presbytery or session to ordain anyone and everyone who desires to be ordained or to be received into membership in a presbytery if the ordaining body's sense of faithfulness does not commend it.

### Summary

The proposed new language of G-6.0106b places squarely on the shoulders of the session or presbytery the burden of conducting thorough and insightful examinations of those elected to the church's ordered ministries. On the subject to which G-6.0106b spoke, the Book of Order will be silent, but the guidance of Scripture and the Confessions is mandated.

We have been in contact with Gradye Parsons, Stated Clerk to the General Assembly, and have been advised that, should it become apparent that this amendment will pass, additional information, guidance and resources will immediately be made available to all of our congregations. In fact, the goal is to have information available for your use prior to the Sunday following the final vote.

As always, we are ready and eager to support the work of our sessions as they assess their examination practices. Please feel free to call either of us and let us know how we may be of help.



Graham Hart, General Presbyter



Clint Cottrell, Stated Clerk

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## CEDARKIRK NEWS

### QUICK REMINDER:

On **Saturday, May 7**, from 1:00-5:00 pm, all are invited to attend an **Open House** at Cedarkirk. For more information, contact the camp office at [camps@cedarkirk.org](mailto:camps@cedarkirk.org) or call 813-685-4224.



Tickets are still available for their Benefit Concert! May 7th at 7 p.m., *Denver & the Mile High Orchestra* will play a concert for friends of Cedarkirk at the Newsome High School Auditorium (located minutes from camp property). This horn-driven band, based in Nashville, Tennessee, has had the honor of playing at two Olympic ceremonies, has performed at the Gospel Music Association Awards, and were finalists on the hit Fox television show, *The Next Great American Band*. Tickets are \$12 in advance or \$15 at the door. All proceeds will benefit the ministry of Cedarkirk. To purchase tickets, please call the camp office at 813-685-4224 ext. 1 or visit [www.cedarkirk.org](http://www.cedarkirk.org). Doors will open at 6:30 p.m. and the concert will begin at 7 p.m.

### Connections: A Voice in the Noise

Connections is a retreat designed for YOUNG ADULTS in their 20's and 30's – married or single – with a special focus on connecting one's faith with everyday life.

The retreat will feature time for fellowship, sharing, worship, and keynote experiences. Our speaker for this, our second annual young adult retreat, is Rev. Loli Reiter, pastor of Seffner Presbyterian Church. She has been the guest preacher at several national conferences as well as here at Cedarkirk. We are excited to have her leading us as we delve into both hearing God's voice and being God's voice in the noise.

The retreat will begin at 6:00 pm on Friday and conclude at 11:00 am on Sunday morning. The cost of the event is \$110 and includes all meals, lodging, and activities.

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### MISSION AND JUSTICE COMMITTEE HOST PC(USA) MISSIONARY DAN TURK FROM MADAGASCAR

At their April meeting, Peace River Presbytery's Mission and Justice Committee hosted Dan Turk, a **PC(USA) missionary** home on interpretation assignment. Dan and his wife Elizabeth with their two children serve in partnership with the PC(USA) and the Church of Jesus Christ in Madagascar (FJKM) in development of health, environment, agriculture and safe drinking water.



The PC(USA)/FJKM Environment Program is a partnership between the Presbyterian Church (USA) and the FJKM church in Madagascar. The program focuses primarily on promoting fruit trees as a means to help farmers get out of poverty. To do this, the program has assembled the largest collection of fruit tree varieties in Madagascar (over 250 species/varieties). The program propagates quality fruit trees in a dozen tree nurseries,

evaluates the trees in demonstration orchards, and gets the trees to the needy via comprehensive extension programs with farmers and student pastors. The program also promotes growing native Malagasy trees for beautification and environmental education. Reforestation with fast-growing trees for fuel wood completes the program.

In May 2010 there was a military upheaval against the Madagascar government, and the Madagascar president was forced to leave Madagascar. We ask that you pray for the people of Madagascar, that reconciliation and justice will return. We pray that a just solution to the political crisis will be found. We pray that the churches will be faithful to God in their actions to bring peace and reconciliation in Madagascar.

For more information, please contact PC(USA) mission co-worker Dan Turk at [daniellturk@hotmail.com](mailto:daniellturk@hotmail.com) or 404 373 3733.

## World Mission Matters at Big Tent

**We're not just holding a conference.  
Together, we're starting a movement.**

Register now for [Big Tent](#), where nine conferences — including World Mission Matters — will meet and worship together under one roof. Join with hundreds of Presbyterians who share a passion for world mission as together we work to address root causes



of poverty, strengthen the global church's capacity to witness to the love of God in Christ, and work for reconciliation in cultures plagued by violence.

[See a complete list of plenary sessions, workshops and other World Mission Matters events](#)

**Reserve your place at Big Tent 2011, but delay travel reservations**



Indiana's legislature is considering an immigration bill that could cause the PC(USA) to [move Big Tent to another location](#). **The denomination will decide May 2** on whether and where to move, so until then,

please register for the conference, but delay making your travel arrangements.

## Thornwell Board of Trustees Elects 9th President of Thornwell Home for Children

On Friday, March 11, 2011, the Board of Trustees for Thornwell Home for Children announced the call of the **Rev. Elliot M. Smith** as the 9th president of Thornwell.

He was recruited as Thornwell Home for Children's first development officer for Florida and Georgia in 1996 and while in that position, Smith achieved a 50% increase in annual giving among his constituents, and was the first to close a six-figure gift annuity for Thornwell.



Smith will assume his duties as president on June 1, 2011. In his first address to Thornwell staff members, he said, "I am honored and humbled by this opportunity to walk along side you all as colleagues and ministers together. God is in charge of this ministry; and just as Dr. Jacobs did all those years ago, we will address every issue in prayer and make decisions together that will move this ministry forward as God intends."

Visit [Thornwell](#) for more information.

## Synod's new web site

Peace River Presbytery is part of the Synod of South Atlantic. Please check out their new web site at: [www.synodofsouthatlantic.org](http://www.synodofsouthatlantic.org)!



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[Graham Hart](#), General Presbyter  
[Clint Cottrell](#), Stated Clerk  
[Adam Martin](#), Treasurer  
[Alesia Sharpe](#), Office Manager  
[Bill Setchel](#), Financial Secretary  
[Joan Mock](#), Part-Time Administrative Assistant  
[Lori Doyal](#), Part-Time Administrative Assistant