



**PEACE RIVER  
PRESBYTERY**



Dear Colleagues and Friends,

**Part 1 - Change:**

**Easter...**

**10A... nFOG... Presbytery structures... church programs...  
membership decline... you and me...**

**Pentecost**

It has been happening ever since the beginning.

*God said: Let there be light... and everything changed.*

*God said: it is not good for man to be alone... and everything changed.*

*God looked at all God had created and said: It is good... no, it is very good. Then...*

*God rested, but did that mean everything now stayed the same?*

Oh how I often wish the answer was yes, but the obvious and short answer is no. After all, you are not the same person you were years ago, because literally every cell in your body has been changed out. Just as the tires on our cars get changed every 40,000 miles, every 7 years or so all the cells in your body, except your brain, are replaced. And as I look at our children and grandchildren, and even myself, I know that, because of the intellectual, emotional, spiritual growth they and I have gone through, we are not the same people we were a year ago.

We humans spend a lifetime yearning for stability and some certainties and constants amidst everything that by its very nature changes. Family systems theory says human organizations and relationships, including the church, seek homeostasis, like a mobile that when pushed and pulled seeks to return to a constant unshaken state.

We often find ourselves yearning for simpler times and that which doesn't change. We are captivated by those things that remind us of life's constants, like family and weddings and the fairy tale that the prince and princess (and you and I) will live happily ever after. (This is why we get drawn into the story of Prince William's marriage to a commoner named Kate.) We also want everything in the church to be the same, even though we know that everything else around us is changing.

Change? We didn't ask for it, but it's here!

- The next generation is not going to church as past generations ([see book reviews for UnChristian](#)).
- The recently retired who come to southwest Florida are often not churched and they may not automatically seek a church when they move here.
- Not everyone is moved by the kind of worship music we grew up with and like and think is the only Presbyterian or Christian way to worship the Living God.
- In the last generation, faith may have been thin but it was wide because when you built a church in the 1950's people would show up in great numbers. But not today.

- Not everyone understands the Bible, interprets the Bible or uses the Bible in the same way we do. So the Reformation Project (if we could call it that), which was meant only to reform the church, has led to division and schism and has resulted in literally thousands of denominations, even though the one thing Jesus prayed for and asked of us is that the church may be one (John 17).

With so much change, we humans tend to want everything to be the same... but nothing ever is... except the God who we know in and through Jesus, who was incarnate, lived, died, and rose again for us and the world (John 3:16). **The question I have been wondering about and asking in response to things like 10A, nFOG, the General Assembly Special Commission on Middle Governing Bodies, The Fellowship, the decline in church attendance in all denominations nationally, and the differing taste as to worship styles and music is, how do we...**

- **experience change**
- **celebrate change**
- **avoid change**
- **embrace change**
- **and discern when change is good and when it's not.**

I would love to hear your thoughts on change and the Holy Spirit, life and church. Next week I will share some thoughts on how we tend to experience change.

I am thankful that for everything there is a season, but I would be remiss if I did not confess that I like some seasons better than others.

With gratitude for the gift of Easter... as we await Pentecost!  
Thanks be to God,

*Graham*

Graham Hart

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

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Click on the links below to see the [Pastoral Letter](#) that is the foundation for the articles on change: *What is God's Big Deal*.

... Click logo to go to The Presbytery web site:



... The PCUSA Mission Yearbook:



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*Please add these concerns to your personal prayer list.*

**Please pray for:**

Rev. Lou Thompson (HR) who will be having back surgery on May 3

Rev. Bob Rea

**Please continue to pray for:**

Rev. Bob Rea

Pastors and Educators in transition

Nations in crisis

**Please also keep in your prayers:**

Beth-El Farmworker Ministry

Misión Peniel

Cedarkirk Camp and Conference Center

**CONGREGATION OF THE WEEK:**

May 1	Bee Ridge Presbyterian Church, Sarasota Karl Kling, Pastor <a href="mailto:karlklingdmin@aol.com">karlklingdmin@aol.com</a>
May 8	Church of the Palms, Sarasota Steve McConnell, Pastor <a href="mailto:smcconnell@churchofthepalms.org">smcconnell@churchofthepalms.org</a> Bruce Hedgepeth, Associate Pastor <a href="mailto:bhedgepeth@churchofthepalms.org">bhedgepeth@churchofthepalms.org</a> Tim Reynolds, Associate Pastor <a href="mailto:treyolds@churchofthepalms.org">treyolds@churchofthepalms.org</a>
May 15	First Presbyterian Church, Sarasota Clay Thomas, Associate Pastor <a href="mailto:associatepastor@firstpressarasota.org">associatepastor@firstpressarasota.org</a>
May 22	Northminster Presbyterian Church, Sarasota Chris Carlson, Pastor <a href="mailto:pastorchris@npcsarasota.org">pastorchris@npcsarasota.org</a>
May 29	Pine Shores Presbyterian Church, Sarasota Bruce Wismer, Co-Pastor <a href="mailto:pastors@pineshorespres.org">pastors@pineshorespres.org</a> Karen Wismer, Co-Pastor <a href="mailto:Karen@pineshorespres.org">Karen@pineshorespres.org</a>

**The articles below may interest you. I have found some of them in my reading, and others have been passed on to me. Just click on the underlined phrases**

**Reflection: Future of Denominations**

David Briggs: Is religion in America in decline?

Americans remain remarkably religious in both belief and practice. However, recent

research shows that every indicator of traditional religiosity is either stable or declining -- with none on the rise -- suggesting that American religion has slowly but unmistakably declined in recent decades. [Read more »](#)

*Reflection: Reconciliation*

## Michael O. Emerson: Demographic revolution and the church

Demographic changes in the United States suggest that an increasing number of churches should move to the biblical model: congregations that are not racial niches but are multiracial and multiethnic. [Read more](#)

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### [Iraqi Christians mark a restrained Easter](#)

Christian Science Monitor: With violence still a threat, Iraqi Christians observed Easter from behind blast walls that have turned many churches into fortresses, or at home. Church officials urged them not to give up on the country.



### [Memorable events are the most valuable experiences](#)

Harvard Business Review, blog: Experiences are a distinct economic offering -- as distinct from services as services are from goods.

### [When the King saved God](#)

Vanity Fair: Christopher Hitchens, an unbeliever, argues that our language and culture are incomplete without a 400-year-old book -- the King James translation of the Bible.

### [Do Christianity & capitalism clash?](#)

Out of Ur blog: New survey finds white, wealthy evangelicals love the free market... most others don't.

There are vacancies left for the upcoming **Small Church Conference**. For more information and a registration form, click the link below to be directed to the Synod of South Atlantic's new website! (The definition of a small church is one that has a membership of 200 or less.)

<http://synodofsouthatlantic.org/events/2011/03/small-church-conference/>

**PRESBYTERY CALENDAR** (for more details, go to [www.peacriverpresbytery.org](http://www.peacriverpresbytery.org))

**APRIL, 2011**

28<sup>th</sup>  
Council

**MAY, 2011**

2<sup>nd</sup> – 4<sup>th</sup>  
PW Spring Retreat at DaySpring

3<sup>rd</sup>  
The Mission/Vision Guide Team

5<sup>th</sup>  
Records and Overtures

7<sup>th</sup>  
Cedarkirk Open House  
Benefit Concert for Cedarkirk: Denver & The Mile High Orchestra

10<sup>th</sup>  
Committee on Ministry  
PCCM Board Meeting at Cedarkirk

11<sup>th</sup>  
Committee on Preparation for Ministry

12<sup>th</sup>  
Board of Trustees  
Presbyterian Women  
Nominations conference call

14<sup>th</sup>  
Clerks' Training Retreat at Covenant, Fort Myers

15<sup>th</sup>  
Installation service for Rev. Carlson at Northminster, Sarasota

17<sup>th</sup>  
Evangelism and Church Development

19<sup>th</sup>  
Mission and Justice

21<sup>st</sup>  
Clerks' Training Retreat at Church of the Palms, Sarasota

26<sup>th</sup>  
Stated Meeting at Vanderbilt, Naples

30<sup>th</sup>

Office closed for Memorial Day