WEEKLY PASTORAL LETTER – AUGUST 24, 2011

PEACE RIVER PRESBYTERY

Dear Colleagues and Friends,

THANKS! I had a wonderful 6 weeks away… for me it was a time to be able to get up on the balcony and get a different perspective. I am grateful for the Personnel Committee's encouragement to complete the last month of my sabbatical that was interrupted several years ago. With the permission of the Personnel Committee, I added one week of study leave and one week vacation to this time away.

The goals for this sabbatical time and what I did, which I worked out with the Personnel Committee and Presbytery Council, included:

1. Seeking to be open to the Holy Spirit and renewed in my personal spirit (the faith, hope and love factor);
2. Reading, writing , and exercising; some of the books included: Belief and Doubt, [written by a friend from college], Community: the Structure of Belonging, Networks that Work, The Leader's Journey, Truman];
3. Thinking about what God is nudging me to look at and/or learn about in this time in the life of Peace River Presbytery. To get at that before I left for my sabbatical time, I developed a 12-question survey to give to other General Presbyters and EPs, and then arranged one-hour interviews/conversations with those folks during my time away. There were some wonderful, insightful, and rich conversations. Here is a sample of the kind of questions I asked:
    - When in your work as an EP/GP have you sensed and known that you have really answered the call God has for you? Or tell a story of how you encounter God in your work.
    - What brings you joy and gratitude in this work?
    - What metaphors do you use or have come up with that iconically represent what a presbytery is and does?
    - What are the questions that could energize you, as a presbytery leader, and capture the imagination of the presbytery you serve related to deepening clergy members', sessions', and congregations' accountability and commitment to fulfilling the presbytery's mission and purpose?
    - If you were doing a research project on leadership in presbyteries during times of change, transition, and diminishing resources in the context of a theology of God's abundance, what would you want to know?
4. Attending workshops and formal learning experiences including:
    - attending the Big Tent,

- having a day-long conversation with Darrell Guder [Princeton Seminary faculty] on Missional Ecclesiology and its implications for a Presbytery,
- going to a workshop on leadership and transitional times,
- attending the EP Learning Community with 12 other colleagues who meet yearly and make presentations to each other about some aspect of our work. (I shared with that group some aspect of my sabbatical learnings).

5. Spending time in prayer, reflection and journaling, as well as spending some time with 2 long-standing friends;
6. Seeing each of our 3 children and 2 grandchildren at some point during my time away,
7. And the final weekend of this time away, getting to help Katie, our youngest daughter, move from Atlanta (where she was working) to Gainesville (on the hottest day of the year) to go back to school and begin a Master's program at the University of Florida. The fun side of that was getting to see one day of the PGA Championship before driving the U-Haul to UF dropping off some of her stuff and then driving the rest back to Sarasota to unload in our garage. Sound familiar to some of you?

In the one week since coming back, I have been spending time:

- catching up,
- working with COM in some important conversations in several of our churches,
- working with the Trustees as we look at how we seek to support and fund our work together as a Presbytery,
- listening to the conversations related to nFog as well as the passing of 10A,
- getting ready for our Presbytery meeting,
- planning to go to Minneapolis for the Fellowship Gathering to learn of the range of ideas and conversations that are occurring in the PCUSA at this time in the life of our denomination,
- and praying for you and this Presbytery.

Again, I am grateful to the committee chairs and Presbytery staff (Alesia, Bill, Joan, and Lori, and Clint Cottrell, Stated Clerk), who conspired to make sure this time away did not get interrupted. Thank you each and all for this time to take a deep breath.

I am grateful to Peace River, and working alongside each of you as we pray and wonder what exciting thing God will do next, even as we face the challenges and opportunities and work of being a Presbytery together seeking to follow Jesus.

Peace,

Graham

Graham Hart
General Presbyter

p.s. ~ On Saturday our Presbytery meets at Chapel by the Sea. This is our second Presbytery meeting to be held at Chapel by the Sea since Hurricane Charley devastated the Chapel and so much of our Presbytery in 2004. The story of Chapel, since Charley, is the story of the resilience of a congregation, the dedication of some very wise, mature, and committed members, and our Presbyterian way of doing things at its best.

This meeting's theme is **Living Reformed: Serving Graciously**. Because of the unique way that Chapel by the Sea in her life has embodied that theme, the Council asked members of Chapel to speak, during the keynote section of our meeting, about how they are serving those who live in "this neighborhood" and sharing good news and hope here.

As is a tradition, Chapel is serving shrimp for lunch. We thank them for their hospitality and look forward to this meeting.

Solar Panel Program: There is a government program for non-profits and hospitals for the installation of solar panels. The deadline for the application is September 6th. The system is installed at no cost to the host agency, and it is maintained for the first 5 years. At the end of the term, the host agency takes over maintenance and ownership. Any excess power is sold back to FPL The agent is looking for more churches to sign up before the deadline. If interested, the contact person for the solar power grants is:

E. Keith Hoffman, Allied Energy Global

24345 Dietz Drive | Bonita Springs, FL | 34135

Ph: 239-645-1901

keith.aeg@comcast.net

Click logo to go to The Presbytery web site: Peace River Presbytery

Click on logo below for the PCUSA Mission Yearbook of Prayer and Daily Office scripture reading:

MISSION YEARBOOK Online

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.*

PCUSA Resources for planning 9-11Services of remembrances -

How do we live and honor each other despite our differences? Being Blog: A recent program with Richard Mouw prompted Krista Tippett to wonder: How might political life be different if Christians modeled a practical love of enemies? *[note- Richard Mouw is the keynote presenter at the*

Fellowship Gathering]

Who is going to church? Not who you think, study finds
MSNBC: Contrary to popular perception, college educated white Americans more likely to practice religion than the working class.
The Milwaukee Journal: September 1, 1959; Loss is cited in Christianity

Duke professor: American's religious faith waning
Associated Press: Despite the prominence of religion, U.S. has shrinking congregations, growing dissatisfaction with religious leaders and rising numbers of people who do not think about faith.

9/11 traced new spiritual lines
USA Today: For millions of Americans, the immediate response to 9/11 was prayer, but a decade later, the soulful response seems fleeting.
USA Today: After Sept. 11, 'religion can no longer be ignored'

Conservative Presbyterian summit nears
Louisville Courier-Journal: Minneapolis conference will be first major gathering of Presbyterian conservatives since PC(USA) allowed ordination of gays and lesbians.

Ecumenical vs. evangelical
Inside Higher Ed: Historian's paper traces the "Protestant dialectic" between ecumenical and evangelic strands of the faith since roughly the end of World War II.

Pope demands greater ethics in economic policy
Associated Press: Pope warns at the start of a visit to Spain that Europe must realize that economic policy cannot be guided by a profit-driven mentality alone.
US Catholic: World Youth Day brings out the worst in people

Please add these concerns to your personal prayer list.

Thank you for your prayers for Becky Beckwith (wife of C.O.M. Chair Jim Beckwith). She is now in remission!

Please pray for:

Joan Mock, Presbytery Staff Member, and her family as they tend to her ailing mother

Please continue to pray for:

Rev. Dr. David Uhl, HR, as he deals with health problems

Rev. Dr. Jim Berger, Pastor at Hope United, as he recovers from surgery

Rev. Dr. Bob Rea

Pastors and Educators in transition

Those affected by natural disasters in the United States

Nations in crisis

Please also keep in your prayers:

Beth-El Farmworker Ministry

Misión Peniel

Cedarkirk Camp and Conference Center

CONGREGATION OF THE WEEK:

August 7	**Kirkwood Presbyterian Church, Bradenton** Hope Lee, Pastor hope@kpcbradenton.org
August 14	**Palma Sola Presbyterian Church, Bradenton** Paul Eckel, Interim Pastor pspcpastor@verizon.net
August 21	**Westminster Presbyterian Church, Bradenton** Chris Adams, Associate Pastor revchris@tampabay.rr.com
August 28	**Faith Presbyterian Church, Cape Coral** Tim Halverson, Pastor tim@faithcapecoral.org

General Assembly Mission Council

August 2011

To all who minister in the name of Jesus Christ in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.):

There are events that define a generation, like Pearl Harbor, Martin Luther King Jr.'s speech during the march on Washington, or the death of John F. Kennedy.

We remember where we were when we first heard the news of September 11, 2001, news that just kept coming with first one plane crashing into the World Trade Center, then another, then another into the Pentagon, then another in a field in Pennsylvania. The shock of these events has seared that day in memory. The subsequent wars that have resulted in the loss of more lives have shaped our realities in ways that have defined a generation and contributed to the difficulties we face today.

Through it all, the church has stood as a witness to the resurrection hope of Jesus Christ. You have offered solace in ministries of comfort to the traumatized. You have intoned hope in prayer and

worship, even in the midst of lament. And you have questioned social policies that unjustly demonize a group of people because of the violence of a few radicals. In short, you have been good and faithful servants.

All over the country plans are being made now to commemorate the tenth anniversary of September 11, which will occur on a Sunday. We encourage you to plan your own way of remembering. Use this time to reflect theologically on what has happened and why. Where is God? This is what people most desperately want to know, and they expect to hear it from us: Where is God? Then ask the question that is also ever before us: How can we be where Christ is redeeming the brokenness with both forgiveness and a call for justice? This is our task as ministers of the gospel, both ordained and non-ordained—standing as witnesses for Christ in our time.

We encourage you to remember, not to dwell in the past, but to remember in the way in which we look into a rear-view mirror in our car even as we move forward confidently. To that end, you may find resources on the web helpful at www.pcusa.org/september11. Even as you remember, though, remember, too, that "our God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power, love, and discerning self-control" (2 Timothy 1:7).

You continue in our prayers, and we ask yours. May the same Spirit that was in Christ Jesus be in and among you now and forevermore.

In Christ's peace,

Cynthia Bolbach
Moderator of the 219th General Assembly (2010)

Gradye Parsons
Stated Clerk of the General Assembly

Linda Valentine
Executive Director, General Assembly Mission Council

PRESBYTERY CALENDAR (for more details, go to www.peaceriverpresbytery.org)

AUGUST, 2011

27th
Stated Meeting at Chapel by the Sea, Fort Myers Beach

SEPTEMBER, 2011

1st
Records and Overtures
Presbyterian Women Coordinating Team