



PEACE RIVER PRESBYTERY



My Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ:

In preparation for moderating our Presbytery meetings during 2012, I've been attending the Presbytery Council meetings and the Mission/Vision Guide Team meetings. From them I learned that the proposed theme for Peace River Presbytery for 2012 is "Being the Body of Christ Together." So I've been pondering what this means for you, for me and for all of the individuals in the church congregations which are PRP.

I began by thinking about "What *is* the body of Christ?" Is it like an association or a governmental body – or more like a body of knowledge? Is it a functioning, physical body that can act – in ways both good and bad – and like our own physical bodies grow, develop and change? Is it merely a manner of speaking about the connectional nature of our church? Or, is it the essence of Christ – a distillation or concentration of Christ's message and Spirit, the real meaning of our Creator's anointed Son who is the head of the church?

My contemplation then went on to "What does it mean for all of us – the entire Presbytery – to be the body of Christ together?" How will the way we answer the first question ("What *is* the body of Christ?") contribute to our understanding of being that body together? And will it make a difference in how we meet, how we treat one another, and how we present ourselves beyond this Presbytery and even beyond this denomination?

As part of my thinking process, I read "Body Language," an article by Joseph Small, longtime director of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)'s Office of Theology, Worship, and Education. In his commentary Small cites several New Testament Pauline texts concerning the Body of Christ. One specific idea Small says Paul's writing insists on is that the Church is not *like* the body of Christ, rather it *is* the body of Christ. Does that interpretation make a difference in how we approach the 2012 theme in our planning, in our meetings, or in our congregations?

The Pauline texts cited by Small are shown below. My hope is that you will each read these selections aloud – if only to yourself – and engage in your own thoughtful contemplation of the meaning. You may even wish to generate a discussion of these passages among those with whom you serve. I pray that each will hear what the Spirit is saying to us – and to the entire church – through these texts.

As you read them, you may wish to consider the same questions the Council dealt with when this was used as the devotion to open the June meeting: *What does each passage say to you about the body of Christ – and what does it say about being the body of Christ together? What is this passage NOT saying? Does it cause you to rethink your own beliefs or does it confirm them? What activities would you encourage in your congregation to demonstrate being the body of Christ together? How might your congregation work with others in PRP to demonstrate the connectional nature of our denomination?*

How do you answer these two questions now? "What is the body of Christ?" and "What does it mean to be the body of Christ together?"

Peace,
Sally Bull
Moderator-in-Nomination

1 Corinthians 12:12, 27

¹²For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ.

²⁷Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.

Romans 12:4-5

⁴For as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function, ⁵so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another.

Ephesians 1:22-23

²²And he has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the church, ²³which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

Ephesians 4:4-6, 15-16

⁴There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, ⁵one Lord, one faith, one baptism, ⁶one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.

¹⁵But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, ¹⁶from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body's growth in building itself up in love.

Col. 1:17-18, 24

¹⁷He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together. ¹⁸He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything. ²⁴I am now rejoicing in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am completing what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church.



Click logo to go to The Presbytery web site:

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



Please add these concerns to your personal prayer list.

Please pray for:

Mike Mansperger (pastor of Presbyterian Church of the Covenant in Sarasota), who is on sabbatical from August 1 to October 30 thanks to a grant from the Lilly Foundation

Please continue to pray for:

Trudy Cooke, member of Committee on Ministry, as she recovers from surgery

Rev. Graham Hart, who is on sabbatical

Becky Beckwith (wife of C.O.M. Chair Jim Beckwith) as she continues to receive treatment for cancer

Rev. 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@kpcbrenton.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

The articles below may interest you. *Just click on the underlined phrases.*

[Short on cash, people, small churches consider closing](#)

The (Nashville) Tennessean: The combination of less money for building maintenance and fewer people to volunteer is causing more congregations to consider closing down.

[My favorite book in the Bible](#)

New York Review of Books, blog: It may seem frivolous to speak of a favorite book in the Bible,

says Harold Bloom, but his is "Jonah, by far."

[Doubts over authenticity of 'ancient Christian' books](#)

BBC: The search for truth in the Holy Land has long been littered with fakes and forgeries and when great claims are made for a new discovery, the burden of proof lies with the finders.

[Poll: 52 percent approve of God's job performance](#)

CNN: If you think voters are in cranky mood over politics, a new poll suggests that some of the dissatisfaction may run deeper.

[Carol Howard Merritt: The ties that bind churches and seminaries](#)

How can we strengthen the relationship of pastors and churches with seminaries?

[As candidates run for office, some run from their church](#)

Religion News Service: Carrying the baggage of a Christian denomination could also make it difficult to build political alliances across religious lines, says Gordon College's Michael Lindsay.

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

AUGUST, 2011

4th

Records and Overtures

8th

Representation

9th

Committee On Ministry

11th

Board of Trustees

Nominations via conference call

16th

Evangelism and Church Development (*location to be confirmed*)

17th

Committee On Ministry Training

18th

Theology and Worship

27th

Stated Meeting at Chapel by the Sea, Fort Myers Beach

