



PEACE RIVER  
PRESBYTERY



Dear Colleagues and Friends,

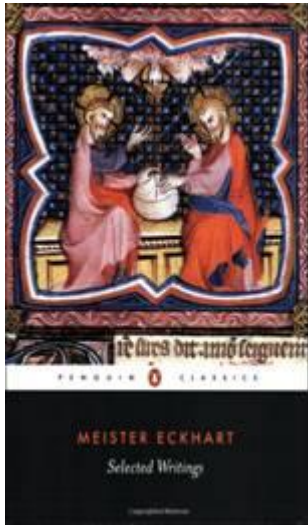
Advent IV – Almost Christmas...

When does Christmas happen?

Was it long ago in a manger bed when, with oxen and sheep nearby, Christ was born of Mary?

Or does it happen when neatly wrapped gifts, lying not in a manger but under a tree, are shared with love and joy on Christmas morn?

Or does Christmas occur when, like Mary, we in our lives give birth to Jesus?



I think the words of Meister Eckhart, the 14<sup>th</sup> century Dominican monk from Germany, are words for us today.

*What good is it to me if this eternal birth of the divine Son takes place unceasingly but does not take place within my soul? And what good is it to me if Mary is full of grace if I am not also full of grace? What good is it to me for the Creator to give birth to his Son if I also do not give birth to him in my time and my culture? This, then, is the fullness of time. When the Son of God is begotten in us.*

Saying *I believe in Jesus Christ... born of the Virgin Mary* with sheep and cattle and shepherds and Wisemen makes a romantic kind of story, but

- giving birth in our lives to the Christ...
- building communities of faith, hope and love...

- being people of grace and truth ...
- offering a cup of water to one in need....
- working as Jesus did for what is right and just...
- praying and working and working and praying with Martha and Mary, Peter, James and John, and all the saints down through the ages that *thy kingdom come and thy will be done* is the womb from which Christ is born.

Wishing you a joyous Christmas, even as I wonder and wait and watch how this day and this year Christ will be born in you and in me...in our congregations... in our Presbytery... in our witness... and in our world.

Peace,

*Graham*

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

[Pastors and Churches in the News – please send a link if your church is in the news.](#)

## About stewardship: In the Service of Christ

### Laugh a little

First Presbyterian Church, DeLand, Fla., used humorous videos to make a point a few years back. [Watch a sample.](#) **Bruce Hedgepeth, now executive pastor at Church of the Palms,** and pastor in DeLand at the time the videos were used, had this to say about using humor:



“Giving either went up or stayed the same each year (remember, the ‘Great Recession’ hit). I think using the videos took some of the ‘heaviness’ out of the stewardship message.

“We were able to laugh at ourselves and, at the same time, get the message across about being faithful in our giving, grateful in our response to what God has done for us, and obedient to what the Scriptures teach about generosity.

“Believe it or not, folks looked forward to stewardship to see what crazy stuff we’d come up with this year.”

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

**Please continue to pray for:**

Rev. Rosemary Gremban

Rev. Dr. Ted Land

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

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**PLEASE PRAY FOR THE CONGREGATION OF THE WEEK – December 25**

**Palmetto Presbyterian Church, Palmetto**

At Palmetto Presbyterian we are a people committed to becoming a vibrant, active, life impacting church. We take the discipleship process of Coming to Christ, Growing in Christ and Going with Christ seriously and are beginning to grow both in membership and worship attendance. We are seeking to discern and align our ministries with what God is doing in the Palmetto, Ellenton and Parrish communities.

We have nearly completed a varied and extensive refurbishing effort which included such things as upgrading the electrical system, expanding the chancel area, repainting the inside of the church building, replacing the church roof, re-carpeting the sanctuary, creating a fellowship/seminar area, upgrading exterior landscaping and more. We have most recently purchased a quality pre-owned organ. There is a growing spirit of enthusiasm, confidence and anticipation in our congregation.

Perhaps the most exciting experience in our family of faith has been our involvement with Tillman Elementary School, here in Palmetto. Tillman is the poorest school in Manatee County. In August we donated much needed school supplies. In beginning of Advent we learned that almost 50 % of the 500 students at Tillman had no winter coats. On December 4<sup>th</sup> our congregation embraced a challenge to make sure every student at Tillman would have a winter coat. To date we have delivered over 257 new coats to the school and can say with great joy that every child at Tillman now has a winter coat. We will be using any remaining funds to purchase more school supplies. We look forward with excitement and anticipation to the new ways our relationship with Tillman can grow and develop.

We welcome your prayers as we continue to seek to obediently live out our calling to the Great Commandment and Great Commission.

Pastor: Rev. John Foulkrod [jfoulkrod@tampabay.rr.com](mailto:jfoulkrod@tampabay.rr.com)

For more information, call the church office at 941-722-3513.

**LIST FOR THE MONTH OF DECEMBER:**

December 4	Moorings Presbyterian Church, Naples Richard Hill, Interim Pastor <a href="mailto:rhill@moorings-presby.org">rhill@moorings-presby.org</a> Jim Kirk, Associate Pastor <a href="mailto:jkirk@moorings-presby.org">jkirk@moorings-presby.org</a>
December 11	Vanderbilt Presbyterian Church, Naples Tom Harp, Pastor <a href="mailto:tharp@vpcnaples.org">tharp@vpcnaples.org</a> Ed Bellis, Associate Pastor <a href="mailto:ebellis@vpcnaples.org">ebellis@vpcnaples.org</a>
December 18	St. Paul's Presbyterian Church, North Port Ray Quiles, Designated Pastor <a href="mailto:chaprafi@gmail.com">chaprafi@gmail.com</a>
December 25	Palmetto Presbyterian Church, Palmetto John Foulkrod, Pastor

**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.***

[Christianity 2.0](#)

Religion News Service: What will a fresh Christianity look like in America?

Episcopal Café: [Evangelicals in the 21st century](#)

[Jason Byassee: With Appalachian pride](#)

What Christian leaders can learn from a small university in the North Carolina mountains.

[Have a very messy Christmas, says Archbishop of Canterbury](#)

The (London) Telegraph: It is not worth worrying about trying to have a perfect Christmas, according to the Archbishop of Canterbury, as even the events of the nativity story were unplanned.

[Five social media trends that are reshaping religion](#)

Religion Dispatches: Over the past couple years, religionistas of all sorts have attempted to navigate a new media landscape in which old constructions of religious authority, identity and practice are changing almost by the minute.

["I'm a leader, not a manager!"](#)

Harvard Business Review, blog: Both leadership and management are crucial, and it doesn't help those responsible for the work of others to romanticize one and devalue the other.

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

**DECEMBER, 2011**

21<sup>st</sup>  
Committee on Preparation for Ministry, at First, Sarasota

23<sup>rd</sup>  
Presbytery office closed

26<sup>th</sup>  
Presbytery office closed

30<sup>th</sup>  
Presbytery office closes at NOON.



**Sharing Christmas Joy**

Watch the impact one congregation had by "[Sharing Christmas](#)" with their neighbors through partnerships within the community. Then learn how to [equip yourself and your congregation](#) to do the same.



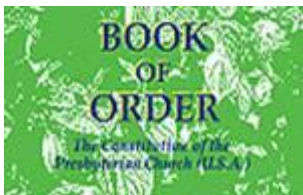
### Presbyterian mission in Northern Ireland

[Meet Doug and Elaine Baker](#)—mission co-workers with a focus on peacemaking, reconciliation and [Young Adult Volunteers](#)—and read why they say they’re in it “for the long haul.”



### Connect with mission every day!

In 2012 make a commitment to learn what Presbyterians are doing to engage in mission around the world. Order your [2012 Presbyterian Mission Yearbook for Prayer & Study](#).



### “Sanctify Them in the Truth”

The passage of Amendment 10A changes the language of our ordination standards. The Office of Theology and Worship produced [this resource](#) and [this video](#) which consider the theological and ecclesial issues raised by this new constitutional language, on the gifts, and requirements for ordained service.



### Igniting the church through Cross Cultural Ministries

The challenge to all Presbyterians is learning how to share the gospel in an increasingly diverse culture. Visit our [new website](#) and find resources to train and equip leaders at all levels of the church in developing cross cultural ministries.