



## PEACE RIVER PRESBYTERY



Dear Colleagues and Friends,

### Advent II – Three stories and a fourth for you to write:

**Background** - It is not as well known as John 3:16, but in this coming Sunday's lectionary reading we will hear again the story of *"the man sent by God, whose name was John."*

What I love about this text from John 1 are the verses: <sup>7</sup>*He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him.* <sup>8</sup>*He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light.*

**Story One** - Last Sunday was Chris Adams' last Sunday as associate pastor at [Westminster, Bradenton](#). He will be deeply missed at Westminster as well as in the Presbytery. He has been the convener of the Mission, Vision, and Standing Rules Guide Team and has done a great job.

While at Westminster over the past several years, he has led the church through a planning process that brought a group of 12 folks together for prayer and reading scripture. But much more than just reading, there was a deep listening to scripture and asking what the Holy Spirit was inviting, calling and sending them to be and do as a people.

That process has helped refocus and redefine the ministry of Westminster in a threefold mission statement of "loving life, loving God, and loving the world". Like John, they understand that they are called as "witnesses to testify to the light". Thanks be to God.



**Story Two** – Two weeks ago the Committee on Ministry met with the session and vision team of [Kirkwood Presbyterian Church](#) for their triennial visit. As COM listened there was much to celebrate. Similar to Westminster, Kirkwood Presbyterian Church, also in Bradenton, followed a visioning process that their Pastor, Hope Lee, led them through. Part of what they have been doing is thinking about what it means for them to give "witness to the light", literally in their own backyard. That led them to adopt the teachers and students at Sugg Middle School which is in their neighborhood and in recent years has faced significant challenges. [Click here](#) to read a wonderful letter of appreciation and 'wonder' written by the school's principal



which appeared in the Bradenton newspaper.

**Story Three** – Finally, last week I attended a Presbytery committee meeting at [Pine Shores, Sarasota](#). As we made our way into Co-Pastor Bruce Wismer’s office, I wondered why all the backpacks were in his office and the hallways. I then heard the story of how the church fills them up with food for students at a local school every week. Those students are living in families who are below the poverty line or struggling to make ends meet. The backpacks of food are given to the students on Fridays, so that over the weekends, when in all probability those children would not have enough to eat, or the right food to eat, they will have a good meal.



**Story Four** – That is your story and mine. I do know that many churches are doing wonderful things. For me, in the window of 10 days, to see churches asking the question, “*How are we as a church called to bear witness to the light in our own backyards?*”, was wonderful. If you have a story you want to share, send it along. Until then, I look forward to your comments, even as we as a Presbytery “give witness to the light” by growing in our ability, as our mission/vision states, to:

- Affirm congregations
- Connect disciples in mission
- And to be the body of Christ together.

***Thanks be to God who continues to be the wind in our sails and helps us steer into the future!***

Peace,

**Graham**

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

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

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

**Please continue to pray for:**

Amy Cottrell, wife of our Stated Clerk, as she recovers from foot surgery

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 11**

**Vanderbilt Presbyterian Church, Naples**

Vanderbilt Presbyterian Church (PCUSA) is biblically centered, socially active, and grounded in Reformed theology. Called by God and empowered by the Holy Spirit it is our mission to live like Christ in a broken world: to proclaim the Gospel, to glorify God in worship and deed, to equip our congregation for ministry, and to serve others in Christ's name.

The church offers numerous opportunities for spiritual growth through worship, mission, education and fellowship. The congregation includes members with a wide range of interests, many of whom are leaders in the cultural, civic, and economic life of our region and nation. We are joined together in a warm, caring fellowship with common bonds of Christian faith and our Presbyterian heritage.

These are exciting days for us as we are in process of completing two new building additions, a large youth room and a large adult education and meeting facility, in order to continue expanding our mission and ministry to the community. In the gospel of John, when the disciples were asked about Jesus, they replied, "Come and see." We extend that same invitation to all: Come and see Christ at work in and through Vanderbilt Presbyterian Church.

PASTOR: Rev. Dr. Thomas Harp [tharp@vpcnaples.org](mailto:tharp@vpcnaples.org)

ASSOCIATE PASTOR: Rev. Edward Bellis [ebellis@vpcnaples.org](mailto:ebellis@vpcnaples.org)

For more information, please go to [www.vpcnaples.org](http://www.vpcnaples.org).

**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 <a href="mailto:jfoulkrod@tampabay.rr.com">jfoulkrod@tampabay.rr.com</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.***

[Forgiving makes you more important](#)

Harvard Business Review, blog: There is a natural pecking order in any group of people and it doesn't necessarily have to do with their position or title. It has to do with their attitude towards the other characters. Confusion around status is the source of many problems.

[Why strategic planning for churches wastes your time](#)

Ethics Daily: Without genuine spiritual discernment, planning becomes an exercise in stating the obvious/inevitable, and wastes a valuable opportunity to deeply consider the future God has in mind for

you.

[Profile of megachurches: Young, white, still growing](#)

Christian Post: If megachurches were a denomination, they'd be the second-largest Protestant group in the country, researchers say.

[A brief history of Advent](#)

Time: What started as a fasting holiday is now best known for its candy-filled calendars.

Washington Post: [Advent offers reprieve from difficult news cycle](#)

[Feeling lost? Maybe you need a soul coach](#)

Toronto Globe and Mail: When Laura Thompson needed a spiritual fix, she didn't turn to a priest or rabbi. She sought the guidance of a soul coach.

Sightings: [Braco's enchanting gaze](#)

[The Cathedral of Steve Jobs](#)

America: New York's most awesome shrine stands at Central Park South, across from the legendary Plaza Hotel, the cathedral of Steve Jobs.

[Christmas Carols](#)

Slate: Why do we keep singing them?

[Connecting with teens one digital mustard seed at a time](#)

New Media Project: Social networking sites can be remarkable places for Christian witness in the context of everyday life, says Elizabeth Drescher.

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

**DECEMBER, 2011**

8<sup>th</sup>

Board of Trustees

Leadership and Congregational Development (conference call)

Personnel

13<sup>th</sup>

Committee on Ministry

15<sup>th</sup>

Theology and Worship

21<sup>st</sup>

Committee on Preparation for Ministry, at First, Sarasota

23<sup>rd</sup>

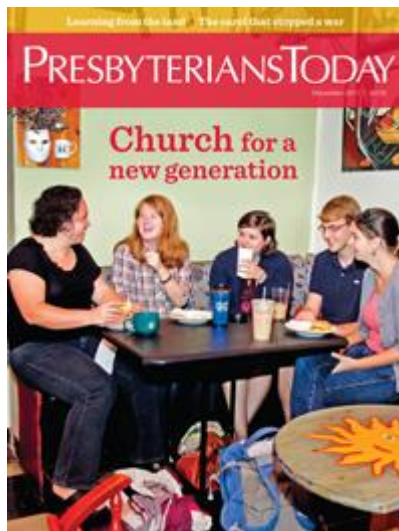
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26<sup>th</sup>

Presbytery office closed

# PRESBYTERIANS TODAY

## **Presbyterians Today: preview of the December 2011 issue**



### **'If this is church, bring it on'**

by Mark Ray

In many ways, today's young adults are looking for the same things as previous generations, including Spirit-filled worship, authentic community and meaningful service. But they aren't interested in doing church the way it's always been done.

Freelance writer Mark Ray explains why congregations must think and act differently to attract a new generation of Christians. [Read more](#) →

### **Learning from the land**

by Anitra Kitts

Through the Christmas Joy Offering, Presbyterians assist people in their hour of greatest promise and in their hour of greatest need. Freelance writer Anne Thomas tells stories that illustrate how this annual offering has enabled students to find their calling

at Presbyterian-related racial ethnic schools and has helped church workers meet unexpected financial needs. [Read more](#) →

### **Launching pad to mission**

by Pat Cole

An innovative program of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) pairs recent seminary graduates with congregations that have difficulty finding pastors—and after the first year, the results are encouraging. Emily Odom, an associate for mission communications for the PC(USA)'s General Assembly Mission Council (GAMC), talks with pastoral residents in the *For Such a Time as This* program about the challenges and blessings of serving small congregations in North and South Dakota, Missouri and Mississippi. [Read more](#) →



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