



PEACE RIVER PRESBYTERY



Dear Colleagues and Friends,

After occupying the time and attention of the Vision Task Force for 18 months, involving the Presbytery and our various committees in conversations for 12 months, and being given time at each of our Presbytery meetings for the past 9 months, the new Mission/Vision Statement -- which expresses our purpose (raison d'etre) and sense of call --- invites us to focus our energy, intelligence, imagination and love in these three areas:

- *To affirm congregations*
- *To connect disciples in mission*
- *To be the Body of Christ together.*

The question after a visioning exercise is -- so now what? Or, more to the point, so what? At last week's Presbytery Council meeting, considerable time was spent looking at some specific next steps. They included:

- Meeting with and dismissing the Vision Task Force and offering our deepest thanks;
- Encouraging every committee to begin every meeting with the mission/vision statement, and seeking to make sure that what committees do is in alignment with our mission;
- Referring the three suggestions that the Vision Task force made at the Presbytery meeting to the appropriate Presbytery committees;
- Establishing a task force to be called a "Guide Team" whose job will be to shepherd our conversation related to our mission/vision over the next year. More details will follow on this.

Additionally, it was the hope that every session, pastor, and elder would begin thinking, talking and sharing with the Council or staff ways you believe we can live into our mission/vision statement. This mission/vision was intentionally meant to encourage the bubbling up of ideas and connections between us, not impose them on us.

In that spirit, there are two magazine articles that merit our attention related to this conversation. The Vision Task Force was intentional in lifting up a need to get beyond a silo mentality as to how congregations relate to one another and a need to address how pastors can be in community in significant and helpful ways.

David Lewicki writes in the Christian Century that: "*Christianity does not--it cannot--exist apart from the structural vessels that hold it. Denominations are flawed human creations... but without them and without the ways they allow us to be people of faith together, we have no access to a God any larger than the God of our self.*" He also bluntly states, "*Denominations are small-minded, culturally-limited, and completely necessary.*" To continue reading, go to [Denominations](#)

The other article, in the Alban Newsletter, related to the importance and values of pastors being in a

supportive peer group. [Continue reading at "Overcoming Loneliness in Ministry"](#)

As announced last week, there will be a reformed family gathering March 31-April 3 in Immokalee and Naples when representatives of the World Communion of Reformed Churches gather for a regional planning meeting (see below for more info). Remember that we are invited to join them Thursday night March 31:

- 5:00 p.m. - A **Witness for Justice in Florida's Fields** at Publix on the corner of Immokalee Rd. and Collier Blvd, Naples (all are invited).
- 7:00p.m. - A forum on the **"The Role of the Church in Working for Economic Justice"** at Vanderbilt Presbyterian Church, 1225 Piper Blvd., Naples (again, all are invited).

So for all the richness, challenge, history and mission we do in this part of God's family I say...

Thanks be to God,

Graham

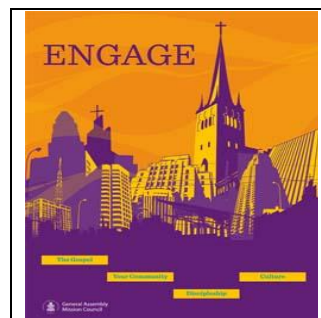
Graham Hart

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Give, act and pray for Japan

Presbyterian Disaster Assistance stands ready to respond to needs from the 8.9 magnitude earthquake that struck Japan and the ensuing tsunamis across the Pacific rim. [Read the latest updates on the disaster and join the response](#)



The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Office of Evangelism is hosting the **Engage 2011 Conference**, August 8-11, 2011, at the [Don Cesar Hotel](#) in St. Pete Beach, Florida. The **Engage 2011 Conference** will walk participants through the [new "Engage" evangelism resource](#) and train them how to use it in a congregational setting. As participants engage their own stories of personal transformation as well as God's story of redemption in scripture, churches will learn how to re-connect with their communities.

There are exactly 28 spots available for anyone in the Synod of South Atlantic who would like to attend this conference. **Each scholarship is \$350 and if registered no later than April 1 - it will go to pay for your**

registration and first night stay at the host hotel. *To know where to apply for the scholarship, please e-mail kerrinichols@synodofsouthatlantic.org when you have registered for the conference (see attached brochure.)*



Here is a very brief description of how WCRC works and where the Immokalee/Naples consultation fits in, from the executive director, Setri Nyomi:

The WCRC is owned by its member churches, the 230 denominations spread in 108 countries throughout the world. They express their directions for the WCRC in the once every seven years General Councils. The last one (actually first for the WCRC as a united body) was the Uniting General Council in Grand Rapids in June 2010. In between General Councils the Executive Committee which meets every year oversees policies. The General Secretary leads a professional staff team in Geneva to carry out the programs and commitments of the WCRC as well as facilitate relationships among the member churches. This is further enhanced by the regional Councils of the WCRC. The Regional Council which is relevant to you is CANAAC - the Caribbean and North America Area Council.

Theological reflections, consultations, workshops, immersion programs, dialogue opportunities, publications, visits to member churches, working with ecumenical partners, etc., are some of the specific ways in which the WCRC carries out its programs. Task forces are also set up whenever necessary to carry out a particular project which will stimulate reflections and actions for the whole body or a region of the body.

Program development after each General Council begins with a process of strategic planning. We are actually in that period right now. Because of the WCRC's commitment to justice, we have singled out justice as a focus on which we need a special consultation to understand how the General Council in Grand Rapids informs us on the next steps in our justice commitments. This is what will be worked on during this gathering. For more information on WCRC's commitment to justice, please see <http://wrc.ch/node/35>.

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.

Denominations

Christian Century Blogs Network: Denominations are small-minded, culturally-limited, and completely necessary, writes David Lewicki.

Tiny church finds original King James Bible

CNN Belief blog: A little English village church discovers that the ornate old Bible that has sat forever on a table near the last row of pews is an original KJV.

Suspensions force bishops to reassess rule changes

The New York Times: America's Roman Catholic bishops scramble to contain damage from growing crisis in Philadelphia that has challenged the credibility of their safeguards.

Philadelphia Inquirer: [Four current and former Catholic priests ordered to trial on sex abuse charges](#)

Philadelphia Inquirer: [Two Catholic mothers conspiring for justice](#)

Religious groups operate as business entities in India: Study

Christian Today: Religious groups in India work same as business entities to maintain the loyalty of their followers and attract new devotees, according to Cambridge study.

In key American Muslim enclave, alienation is growing

CNN, Belief blog: In metro Detroit, members of Muslim community see growing evidence that some Americans are being radicalized against Islam.

Miami Herald: [Here's reason for us to fear fear itself](#)

Visualize failure

Harvard Business Review, blogs: Failure isn't just an annoying step on the way to success, it's as much a part of life as success. Best to get used to it.

The Annunciation: a 'hail Mary'

Washington Post: Even if you're not Catholic, you've probably heard the words "Hail Mary." But where do those words originate?

When a "Christian America" meant something else

Patheos: Today's American evangelicals might be surprised to learn what their spiritual ancestors thought was essential to maintaining a Christian nation.

Libyan intervention: A 'just war' or just a war?

Toronto Star: Ambivalence among Christian leaders perhaps stems in part from the ambiguity and complexity of the just war theory itself.

Overcoming Loneliness in Ministry [from the Alban Newsletter]

by Barbara J. Blodgett

While there may be something to the idea that as ministers we should always feel like we are "in over our head" (or else we may not be taking our calling seriously enough), there is no point in drowning! Joining with our peers to figure out what makes ministry so hard can help us keep our heads above water.

Continue reading, "[Overcoming Loneliness in Ministry](#)"

Please add these concerns to your personal prayer list.

Please pray for:

Becky Beckwith who has health concerns. (She is the wife of Jim Beckwith, Vice Chair of Committee on Ministry.)

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:

April 3	First Presbyterian Church, Port Charlotte Mark Knowles, Pastor mknowles@fpcpc.com
April 10	Wintergarden Presbyterian Church, Port Charlotte Ruth Schaaff, Temporary Supply revruth2@yahoo.com
April 17	Burnt Store Presbyterian Church, Punta Gorda Tim Stewart, Pastor sunburn1320@mac.com Valerie Bell, Associate Pastor pastorval@embarqmail.com
April 24	First Presbyterian Church, Punta Gorda Steve Mock, Pastor revmock@fpcpunta.org

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

APRIL, 2011

4th
Representation

7th
Records and Overtures

12th
Committee on Ministry
Disaster Preparedness and Response Team

13th

Committee on Preparation for Ministry

14th

Board of Trustees

Mission and Justice

Theology and Worship

Nominations – conference call

19th

Evangelism and Church Development – conference call

22nd

GOOD FRIDAY – Office closed

24th

EASTER

26th

Leadership and Congregational Development

28th

Council