



PEACE RIVER PRESBYTERY



Dear Colleagues and Friends,

Since our Stated Clerk, Clint Cottrell, sent out a letter last week indicating that Amendment 10-A has been passed by a majority of Presbyteries (87), I know that some in Peace River are disappointed and pained, and others may feel this was the right way to go. For some, from a Biblical and polity perspective, this will be the continuation of a difficult discussion and the wrong course of action, and others may believe that this restores our historic pattern of allowing Presbyteries and sessions to make determinations regarding both interpreting and applying Biblical and Confessional standards.

I also know that a vote of the majority of Presbyteries will not end this conversation, but it does open us up to some new ones. One conversation will be next week when we, along with the 25 plus Presbyteries who have yet to vote on this amendment, will debate, listen, discern, pray and vote. At our Presbytery meeting, we will have the opportunity to hear from each other, as well as from several colleagues who have been asked to share their perspective on this issue from both a polity and scriptural perspective. I am grateful that we are in a Presbytery that has colleagues who respect each other and can engage each other in a serious conversation and help us think again on these things.

Another conversation we will have is on the nature of church when we don't agree. Even though on this issue I have remained silent and focused on our process, in accordance with the conversations I had with the search committee and Presbytery when I came here about how I would function in this role, I would be the first to say that I have not always agreed with the actions of General Assembly, a Presbytery, or even a church where I moderated the session. The question is when do I have **it** right and others have **it** wrong? And then what do I do?

The essence of what I have been thinking was captured by the Apostle Paul 2000 years ago and by a poet 500 years ago. George Herbert (1593-1633) wrote these lines:

*Lord, how can man preach thy eternall word?
He is a brittle crazie glasse,
Yet in thy temple thou dost him afford
This glorious and transcendent place
To be a window, through thy grace.*

Or in the words of the Apostle Paul (in response to some debates in the church at Corinth over who had it right, what is most important, and how we live together as the Body of Christ (I Cor. 13:10-13),

...when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known. And now abideth faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love. (King James)

Or, in a more modern version...

We know only a portion of the truth, and what we say about God is always incomplete. But when the complete arrives, our incompletes will be canceled. When I was an infant at my mother's breast, I gurgled and cooed like any infant. When I grew up, I left those infant ways for good. We don't yet see things clearly. We're squinting in a fog, peering through a mist. But it won't be long before the weather clears and the sun shines bright! We'll see it all then, see it all as clearly as God sees us, knowing him directly just as he knows us! But for right now, until that completeness, we have three things to do to lead us toward that consummation: Trust steadily in God, hope unswervingly, love extravagantly. And the best of the three is love. (The Message)

I for one know that I am (and, I think, we are) "brittle crazie glasse". We break easily, we often see through a glass darkly, we don't always get it right, we don't always agree; yet in everything, as George Herbert wrote long ago, I am grateful that you and I, our congregations in Peace River, even the larger church, when all is said and done, are called and sent into the world to be "windows of grace".

Thanks be to God.

Graham

Graham Hart

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P.S. As always, I invite your comments and observations, and I will continue the series on change in future weeks.

... Click logo to go to The Presbytery web site:



... The PCUSA Mission Yearbook:



Please add these concerns to your personal prayer list.

Please continue to pray for:

Becky Beckwith (wife of Committee on Ministry Chair Jim Beckwith) as she continues to receive treatment for cancer

The family and friends of Michael Couden, former Personnel Chair for Peace River Presbytery, who went home to the Lord this month

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:

May 1	Bee Ridge Presbyterian Church, Sarasota Karl Kling, Pastor karlklingdmin@aol.com
May 8	Church of the Palms, Sarasota Steve McConnell, Pastor smcconnell@churchofthepalms.org Bruce Hedgepeth, Associate Pastor bhedgepeth@churchofthepalms.org Tim Reynolds, Associate Pastor treynolds@churchofthepalms.org
May 15	First Presbyterian Church, Sarasota Clay Thomas, Associate Pastor associatepastor@firstpressarasota.org
May 22	Northminster Presbyterian Church, Sarasota Chris Carlson, Pastor pastorchrisc@npcsarasota.org
May 29	Pine Shores Presbyterian Church, Sarasota Bruce Wismer, Co-Pastor pastors@pineshorespres.org Karen Wismer, Co-Pastor Karen@pineshorespres.org

To read about the work of Presbyterian Disaster Assistance, [click here](#).



'Good News to the Poor'

Scripture calls us to live out God's vision of a world in which no one is poor or hungry. Ruth Farrell tells how an experience in the Congo opened her eyes to what the Bible has to say about poverty and injustice.

[Read the cover](#) story from the April 2011 issue of *Presbyterians Today*.



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June 30-July 2, 2011 (Deadline to register: Friday, May 27, 2011)
Indianapolis, Indiana

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Learn how PC(USA) camps can change your life

Learn how congregations are [being transformed](#) through your PC(USA) camp and conference ministries. [Find out more](#) →

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.*

[Report spreads blame for Catholic sex abuse](#)

Religion News Service: Upending popular misconceptions, report on clergy sex abuse will likely unsettle both liberal and conservative critics, as well as victims' advocates.

The New York Times: [Church report cites social tumult in priest scandals](#)

America: [John Jay Report: On not blaming homosexual priests](#)

[What Stephen Hawking doesn't understand about heaven](#)

Washington Post, On Faith blog: N. T. Wright explains why Stephen Hawking's opinion about heaven is worth about the same as Wright's on nuclear physics, i.e. not much.

[Franklin Graham is embarrassing his father](#)

CNN Belief blog: If you want to see how American evangelicalism has lost its way, you need look no farther

than Billy Graham and his son Franklin, says Stephen Prothero.

[Pastor urges return to urban ministry](#)

Memphis Commercial-Appeal: Tim Keller urges a largely white, evangelical audience to return to urban ministry, not to save the city but to serve it.

[More churches choose to settle issues at local level](#)

The (Nashville) Tennessean: Regardless of denomination, local churches increasingly want freedom to make their own decisions.

Louisville (Ky.) Courier-Journal: [Gay ordination decision arrived sooner than many expected](#)

[The fight over Billy Graham's legacy](#)

Newsweek: With the great evangelist in his twilight, his children jostle over his image and the family name.

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

MAY, 2011

19th

Theology and Worship

21st

Clerks' Training Retreat at Church of the Palms, Sarasota

26th

Stated Meeting at Vanderbilt, Naples

30th

Office closed for Memorial Day