



PEACE RIVER PRESBYTERY



Dear Colleagues and Friends,

Reflections III: Where are we putting our focus and energy?

"Where your focus is, there your energy will stop." (Unknown source, maybe from my dreams.)

What we are most interested in, focused on, and consumed by is where most of our energy will be directed. If we are concerned about our job and keeping it, or our finances and having enough, or our health and some test results that are troubling, that is often where our time, effort, emotion, and energy will go. Whether all our energy is consumed by a particular focus is probably a matter of our own spiritual grounding and emotional health or the size of the problem before us, or both.

That is true in the life of the church as well. If our focus is on finances and survival, or 10-A, or the pastor, or some looming problem, or an on-going conflict, that is what will consume the energy and conversation within that congregation.

In C.S. Lewis' *The Screwtape Letters*, an imaginary conversation takes place between Wormwood (an apprentice) and Screwtape, one of the evil one's assistants. Screwtape writes to Wormwood (paraphrased): *the best way to interrupt the work of the church is to get the church all tied up and focused on itself.*

If the church and her members are focused just on themselves, no matter how righteous and valid the cause, Screwtape knows the real work of the church will not go forward. Why? The church (us) will be distracted from the main thing. We will spend energy on lesser things, and Screwtape and the evil one will win.

Jesus said it slightly differently: "...where your treasure is there will be your heart as well..". Where our checkbooks and passions and spending and dreams and safeguards are is also where we will also focus our hearts and minds.

So, with all the talk of change and all the uncertainty in front of us (see the past 2 pastoral letters – [September 7](#) and [September 14](#)), if our focus is primarily on some new structure or possible eventuality, the danger is that our energy might stop there.

So... as 39 churches, the question is, where is our focus? Is it wrapped up in fulfilling the Great Commandment and fulfilling the Great Commission? If so, that is where our energy will be. As Peace River Presbytery, our focus is to figure out how to live out our Mission/Vision to...

Affirm congregations

***Connect disciples in mission
And be the body of Christ together***

If we maintain that focus, that is where our energy will flow. If we do not, we very well may be distracted from the main thing.

So the question I have is: when faced with so many changes and challenges, how do we keep focused on the main thing? How do we address concerns without letting those concerns, issues, worries, and fears steal our hearts, capture our attention, use up our energy, divide and deplete us, And if we can't do that, the only one smiling will be Screwtape!

So as we continue to live, at this time and place, into this adventure with our Risen and Living Lord, I would love to hear your reflections.

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

Peace,

Graham

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General Presbyter
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PS.

Starting with this Pastoral Letter, we are attaching *The Parish Paper* on a monthly basis. Previously, this was sent only to church offices for distribution. The attached August issue is on the subject of change. A timely one for us all.

PLEASE READ THE IMPORTANT INFORMATION BELOW.

Peace River Presbytery's purchase of a subscription to *The Parish Paper* INCLUDES

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Evangelism: A Way of Life

[Click here](#) to discover what “your greatest joy should be as a Christian” and why mission is not limited to overseas.

BETH-EL FARMWORKER MINISTRY, INC.

OPEN HOUSE

Sunday October 16th

2:00-5:00 pm

18240 Hwy 301 S

Wimauma, FL 33598

Come join us for campus tours...
Updates on our Extension Ministry locations...
Showcasing our expanded Sanctuary...
Yummy food and snacks all afternoon!

Come one, come all...bring a friend!!

See your mission \$\$\$\$ at work helping the “least of these” as we are commanded.

Turn on 301 north at Ellenton and follow for 14 miles, we are on the right!

Please add these concerns to your personal prayer list.

Please continue to pray for:

Rev. Dr. David Uhl, HR, as he deals with health problems

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

CONGREGATION OF THE WEEK:

September 4	Community Presbyterian Church, Englewood Scott Wilson, Pastor swwilson3@hotmail.com
September 11	Buckingham Presbyterian Church, Fort Myers Randy Moody, Pastor bpcpastor@comcast.net

September 18	Covenant Presbyterian Church, Fort Myers Taylor Hill, Interim Pastor tayhil@gmail.com
September 25	Cypress Lake Presbyterian Church, Fort Myers Clint Cottrell, Pastor clint@clpc.us

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.*

[The truth about evangelicals](#)

USA Today: Religion reporter Mark I. Pinsky says sensational, misleading reporting on evangelicals has got to stop.

[Atheism is cool, says Archbishop Rowan Williams](#)

The (London) Telegraph: Archbishop of Canterbury says that Christian witness is the strongest argument the Church has to rebut the claims of atheists.

[More couples pick friends to preside at weddings](#)

Washington Post: Shift toward nontraditional officiants seems to be further evidence of another, broader trend: the movement of Americans away from organized religion.

[Extremists, abuse scandals among reasons cited for changing attitudes toward religion](#)

The (Canada) National Post: It's no secret fewer Canadians attend church today than 20 years ago, but what may be surprising is almost half of Canadians believe religion does more harm than good.

[Religion and inequality go hand-in-hand](#)

Christianity Today: Why some countries are more religious than others -- and why, assumptions to the contrary, the U.S. is not unusually religious.

[Where religion and business do mix](#)

Wall Street Journal: Talking about religion is often seen as taboo in business. But not for some financial advisers.

BBC: [Christianity and capitalism: Investing in the Lord](#)

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

SEPTEMBER, 2011

22nd
Council

27th
Leadership and Congregational Development - Conference Call

29th

Sexual Misconduct Prevention Workshop at Pine Shores, Sarasota