

The Presbytery of Coastal Carolina **CONNECTIONS** Newsletter



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www.presbycc.org

Advent Stirrings by Bill Reinhold

General Presbyter/Stated Clerk

Is there something stirring in our midst? The Advent Season is full of possibilities for new life not only for us, but for the whole world. Jesus' coming into the world was certainly a universe-changing event, full of unexpected implications as Elizabeth and Zechariah and, most especially, John's preaching make clear. But, for those with eyes to see, there were hints to these changes all across the pages of the Old Testament.

The Strategic Planning and Organizational Review Committee (better known as SPOR) has been trying to read the signs of what God is doing in our midst this Advent Season. Thanks to the participation of over 130 congregations over the summer and early fall and the hard work of commissioners to the October meeting of the Presbytery at Galatia Church, SPOR has begun to identify some ways to strengthen the bonds among us that support the ministry and mission of all of our congregations. I am pleased to share some of the trends they have discerned and to invite your contribution to the discussions.

Dealing with Our Large Geographical Area – While some presbyteries in the Western United States are larger in terms of distance, we are unique in terms of both distances and in the number of congregations. Several years ago the Presbytery adopted a three community-based model for the Committee on Ministry (COM) and for staffing (the three mission coordinators). The results of this experiment have been widely appreciated and SPOR is studying how to create an even greater sense of identity and mission within the three communities of the Presbytery.

Deeper Connections Among Congregations – Related to the question of size and distance is a desire for deeper connections among congregations and pastors within a geographic area. SPOR's efforts to strengthen our three communities is an effort to address this concern by creating more ways for congregations and pastors to engage in mission, education, and fellowship within a reasonable distance from one another.

Creative Ways for Congregations to Do Mission Together – This speaks to both our desire to get to know each other and to our desire to engage our neighbors in significant ways beyond that which we can do alone. SPOR feels that this can be another way to strengthen the bonds that connect us in mission and fellowship in more regional configurations.

As you reflect on the changes that the coming of Jesus into the world has made in our lives, please take a moment to reflect on how we can join with the risen Christ to make his gospel more fully known in our area and around the world. I would love to read your reflections on the three themes addressed above as well as any other suggestions you might have as SPOR continues to seek the will of Christ in all we do together.



ENGAGING EVANGELISM RETREAT FEBRUARY 6 & 7, 2015

What is your church's process for creating disciples of Jesus Christ?
What part does EVANGELISM play in DISCIPLESHIP?
What resources are available for helping your youth and adults claim and share their faith?

Presbytery's Committees for Church Revitalization & Transformation and Christian Education invite you to join [Ray Jones](#), Associate for Evangelism (PCUSA), for stimulating conversations about how Presbyterian congregations can reclaim and engage our primary commission from Christ! We'll be introduced to the new Engage curriculum.

On Saturday, we'll hear stories & tips from the pastor and educator at First Presbyterian, Whiteville, who adapted the [Engage](#) curriculum for use with youth and all ages.

Come to what you can! This retreat was designed to also be rewarding for people whose schedules only allow them to attend certain sessions! Find details at <http://presbycc.org/2014/engaging-evangelism-retreat/>.
Registration deadline is January 9, 2015.
Scholarships available.



Sign up for the
**Souper Bowl of Caring—
February 1, 2015.**
www.souperbowl.org

Presbytery Plans for Holy Conversations Around Difficult Topics

Pastors, churches, and our Presbytery all face important decisions about how we will respond to the General Assembly's actions regarding Gay Marriage. Before we debate and vote on the proposed amendments, our Presbytery wants to encourage a time of discernment through "holy conversations" - conversations which intentionally make room for the Holy Spirit.

Two pastors, Jim Randall and Ernie Thompson have been asked to share their perspectives on gay marriage and the church and engage in such a holy conversation. There will also be a time for questions and small group discussion. You are invited to join any of the three gatherings on the following three Sundays:

February 8—3:00 p.m. at Community PC, Pinehurst
February 15—in the Central Community
February 22— 3:00pm at Wallace Presbyterian Church.

PRESBYTERY YOUTH EVENTS—2015

Presbytery's Youth Council chose the theme **"The Kingdom"** for the coming year. In previous years, our events have been inspired by a number of cultural influences. We have been inspired to find what God can say to us through a variety of works. Some of your older youth might remember events based on everything from *The Wizard of Oz* to *Willie Wonka and the Chocolate Factory*.

Along with being inspired by scripture, our youth events this year will draw from Disney movies. Our youth council is excited to explore the theological side of such movies as *Sky High*, *Wall-E*, and of course, *Frozen*. If you have met me, you know that in addition to being a big fan of God, I am fond of Disney movies. I can honestly say this theme came straight from our young people with no influence from me!

We look forward to learning and growing together this year! If you have any questions, please contact me (Amy Hodges) at presbyccyouth@gmail.com or on my mobile phone 910-520-7934.

**Mark your calendar for the Middle School Retreat—
March 14-15, 2015.**



Congregational Ministries Publishing (CMP) and Presbyterian Publishing Corporation (PPC) are now collaborating to provide joint distribution of all resources. **A new e-commerce website, pcusastore.com was launched November 1, 2014. The new phone number is 800-533-4371.**

The PW of the Presbytery of Coastal Carolina Offer Higher Education Scholarships

Each year Presbyterian Women in the Presbytery of Coastal Carolina offer scholarships through the **Lorena Clark Piner fund**. Any deserving full time student from the Presbytery of Coastal Carolina who is a member of a Presbyterian Church (USA) of proven scholastic ability, who needs financial assistance to further his/her education will be considered. Preference will be given to students attending Presbyterian colleges.

The application form, school transcript(s), SAT or ACT scores, class rank, GPA, autobiography, and letters of recommendation must be received by the Scholarship Committee Chair by February 13, 2015 to be considered for a scholarship for the following school year. Find applications and more information at <http://presbycc.org/2014/pwinfo/> or contact Hilda Miller at 910-289-2315.

Presbyterian FOUNDATION THE PRESBYTERIAN FOUNDATION'S ONLINE GIVING GROWS

The Presbyterian Mission Exchange is both easy to implement and easy to use for congregations and their supporters alike. There are no set-up or monthly fees, and a ministry can be up and running in the system usually within one business day.

Recurring gifts have been a favorite feature, with donors setting up gifts to recur on a weekly or monthly basis. This provides smooth and predictable income for the ministry, even on weeks when the donor is not able to be in church to drop a gift in the offering plate. [To visit the Presbyterian Mission Exchange, Click here.](#)

UPDATE FROM OUR NEW CHURCH DEVELOPMENT - The Bridge Presbyterian Church



The Bridge located in Leland, NC continues to grow and develop by God's grace! On Nov. 16, we had 108 in worship.

We have too many mission projects to count.

Our outreach to the community remains creative and generous.

Two weeks ago, our children sang in worship for the first time!

Our band has grown to nine participants and our giving continues to trend upward.

In early January we will begin the charter member process and, hopefully, petition for chartering in the Spring of 2015. That's what's happening at the bridge.

Rev. Doug Cushing - <http://www.thebridgepres.org/>

Listening, Learning, Dreaming...Together

Report from Committee for Strategic Planning and Organizational Review

The Presbytery of Coastal Carolina is composed of the largest number of congregations of any presbytery in the US. Bordered on the west by the oldest mountain chain in the US (the Uwharries), and on the east by the Atlantic Ocean, PCC has a wide diversity of members and needs.

In an effort to address these needs, the Strategic Planning and Organizational Review Committee (SPOR), Presbytery Staff, and numerous volunteers have been working this year to ascertain those needs by conducting meetings with the individual churches, capped by an enormously successful activity at the October Presbytery meeting at Galatia church in Fayetteville. With the professional guidance of Revs. George and Beverly Thompson, the **"Listening, Learning, Dreaming...Together"** program was implemented with the help of trained facilitators. Out of all this work, the following major elements to address were formed and discussed in small groups at the October Presbytery meeting:

We wish for our Presbytery:

- ◆ communication tools and processes that tie us even closer together;
- ◆ expanded experiences of serving others, especially through congregational partnerships;
- ◆ a wide variety of compelling human and material resources for strengthening fellowship, equipping shared ministry, and developing leaders;
- ◆ a wide number of ways to celebrate our heritage and Reformed tradition as resources for embracing change;
- ◆ a fundamental commitment to spiritual imagination and congregational vitality.

SPOR and Presbytery Staff met on November 20th and will meet twice more to form "provocative proposals" to present to the March Presbytery meeting.

I would personally like to thank all who have participated in the process so far, and look forward to what is to come.

Bill Ingle, Chair SPOR

Committee for Church Revitalization & Transformation Provides GRANTS -

Education Grant—The Education Grant helps people from our Presbytery attend a conference (they might otherwise have difficulty attending) and then apply something they learned to help transform their congregation in a positive way. Learn more by downloading the application at this link below: <http://revitalization.weebly.com/> or contact Rev. Evan Harrison— pastor@sspchurch.org ; 910-483-5758.

New Resources for Ruling Elders

New officer training resources from *Being Reformed* will inspire transformational leaders for your church!

Ruling Elders: Formation and *Ruling Elders: Transformation* can be used as a self-guided studies, group studies, or a ready reference for session reflections.

Order from PDS—800-533-4371 or contact Presbytery's Resource Center—800-277-7479 to borrow a copy.



