

The Presbytery of Coastal Carolina **CONNECTIONS** Newsletter



Vol. 20—
Winter Issue
Mar./Apr./May
2015

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www.presbycc.org

Proud to be a Presbyterian

by Bill Reinhold, General Presbyter

The theme text for this year across the Presbytery is Isaiah 65:17-25. As we have been reading it regularly in the Committee on Ministry and in Staff meetings I have been struck by the question "Why does God 'rejoice in Jerusalem and delight in its people'?" (Isaiah 65:19) This led me to ask "Why does God 'rejoice in the Presbyterian Church and delight in its people'?"

I was raised a Presbyterian – the child of Presbyterian missionaries no less! But I have rubbed shoulders with other Christian people throughout my life. Some of my best childhood friends were Mennonite children and their parents who worked with us in the Congo. In Seminary I interned in a Disciples of Christ church and served a Presbyterian-Episcopal parish as a graduate student. Yet still I am a devoted member of the PC(USA). What is it about us that makes my heart sing and (I trust) brings joy to God? In no particular order I offer these observations.

We in the Presbyterian Church are honest with ourselves about our **human nature**. Others may speak of the basic goodness of people or talk about free will, but we know just how broken we are and how it is only by the grace of God that we are saved. We joyfully baptize babies as if to say, "Of course we know that they cannot make a decision for themselves – that's the whole point!" Our belief in the total depravity of humankind leads us to acknowledge that even our best efforts are shot full of evil. At our best, it does not discourage us from action, but it does drive us to set limits on individual decision making – trusting that as we gather in prayer the Holy Spirit will guide us.

We in the Presbyterian Church emphasize the **sovereignty of God**. It is interesting to me that we who strive so hard to understand God both through spiritual devotion and deep theological reflection recognize that God is beyond our capacity to understand. Over the centuries that has led us to be humble about making sweeping statements about God and about our capacity to know the will of God in all things.

We in the Presbyterian Church honor the **unique authority of Scripture**. We are the only Christian tradition that insists that our pastors be able to read the Scriptures in their original languages because we know the truth about translations. The French have a proverb about translation that goes, "*Traduire egal trahir*" (*translation is treason* or to translate a text is to betray that text). If this is true about translation, what about interpretation? We expect our pastors and other teachers of scripture to use the very best tools for the interpretation of Scripture because we have learned that Scripture must be interpreted in every new context – as Scripture does itself not only in the Gospels, Acts, and the Epistles, but already in the Old Testament as well. Calvin's famous saying that we interpret Scripture through the lens of the Holy Spirit is as true today as it was in the 1500s. Knowing our capacity for self-delusion – due to our total depravity – we insist that interpretation take place in the community of God's people. A wonderful example of that has been the Holy Conversations between Jim Randall and Ernie Thompson this month in which each discussed their interpretation of Scripture by (as one of my math teachers insisted) "showing their work."

We in the Presbyterian Church are also open to **God's revelation in the world**. We believe that "all truth is God's truth" and that God does not lie to us. So, when Copernicus discovered that the earth and other planets revolved around the sun, we studied the science behind his discovery and recognized that the way the Bible talks about creation is as deeply rooted in its time and place as our understanding of the world is today. Fossil records and biological sciences today may point to a different timescale of creation than that which the writers of the Bible understood, but this does not change the meaning and intention of their portrayal of God's loving creativity.

We in the Presbyterian Church take our faith **into the world**. Long before the word "missional" crept into the language, we were engaged in the world. We do not believe that we should take ourselves and others "out of the world" but rather to work in and through the world as Christ did making "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." We have always cared about making that world a better place. From Calvin's concern with the sewer system in Geneva to our concern for the environment or for social stability today we are engaged both in demonstrating the Kingdom of God to the world and in promoting social righteousness. (*Book of Order*, F-1.0304)

Finally, we in the Presbyterian Church live **lives of gratitude**. Knowing how broken and sinful we are and how we depend totally on God's grace received through faith, our only proper response is to live in God's world and with one another in deep gratitude for what God has done for us. As we continue our conversations about difficult topics and as we recognize that our lives were made for praising God, may we each treasure those characteristics of our beloved Presbyterian Church and seek to strengthen its witness in southeastern North Carolina and around the world.

PC(USA) Moderator Heath Rada Visits Presbytery

Moderator Rada will deliver the sermon at Coastal Carolina's March 7 Presbytery meeting. A native of Richmond Virginia, Dr. Rada is a graduate of Virginia Commonwealth University, Union Presbyterian Seminary and NC State University. He has also studied at St. Andrews University and Harvard University.

As an active church member, Dr. Rada has served in numerous capacities on the local, presbytery and national levels of the Presbyterian Church. Currently he serves on the boards of the Presbyterian Mission Agency, the Montreat Conference Center, and the Presbyterian Homes of North Carolina. He recently rotated off the board of the National American Red Cross Retiree's Board.



Presbyterians Caring for Chaplains & Military Personnel

How I can help...

1) Pray! Pray for our chaplains and their work. Pray for their families who sacrifice so much. Prayer is the greatest gift you can give us.

2) Sign up for a copy of "Frontlines" which highlights what our chaplains are doing around the world. It comes free via email or post. Go to pccmp.org, click on "Connect," click on "What you can do," then click on item number 7.

3) Friend PCCMP on Facebook and ask your church to add a link to our website at pccmp.org.

4) Make a financial gift to the

PCCMP. You can give in one of three ways:

A) *Through your church*, as part of your church's mission.
B) *Directly by check*. Make your check out to PCCMP, then mail to PCCMP, 4125 Nebraska Ave NW, Washington DC 20016.

C) *Through Give Direct*. Go to pccmp.org, click on "Donate," then click on "Click here for our secure online contribution site."

For more information, contact Rev. Dr. Larry Greenslit, Director or Rev. Dr. Donald Wilson, Associate Director
Phone: 202-244-4177.



2015-16 PCUSA Planning Calendars—

Please reserve your order by contacting the Presbytery office by May 1, 2015. After the May 1 date, calendar availability cannot be guaranteed. You will be notified when the calendars arrive; usually around the end of May. Payment before delivery by cash, check, or credit card is required. Pick up your calendars at the June Presbytery meeting or at the Presbytery office. Phone: 800-277-7479 or email: dls67@presbycc.org.

PRESBYTERY YOUTH EVENTS—2015

Presbytery Middle School Retreat- Register NOW...www.presbycc.org. March 14-15, 2015 Our theme is the FROZEN CHOSEN! Rachel Whaley Doll, educator at Winter Park Presbyterian in Wilmington is going to be our keynote speaker. The retreat begins Saturday morning and ends after worship on Sunday. The cost per person is \$55.00. Registration is open until March 1 or until the retreat fills up! Forms and information are on the website.

Montreat Youth Conference July 26-Aug 1, 2015: Presbytery of Coastal Carolina will be taking a group of young people to the Montreat Youth conference this summer. This year's theme is "This is Our Story." This trip is open to all high school aged youth in our Presbytery. The cost per person is \$450.00. For more information please see the website, presbycc.org/2015/montreat-youth-conference-2015/ or contact Amy Hodges at 910-520-7934 or presbyccyouth@gmail.com



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

Mark your calendar for... the gathering of Presbyterians



July 30 – August 1, 2015
University of Tennessee Conference Center
Knoxville, TN

Let's carpool and go to the 4th PCUSA Big Tent Event TOGETHER!

Experience a wide variety of workshops at the national gathering of Presbyterians.

Contact Sue Lowery (919-346-0933) or Laura Lupton (910-818-9938 if you're interested).

Presbytery's CCRT Wants to Help YOU...

Contact Evan Harrison (pastor@sspchurch.org or 910-483-5758) on the **Committee for Church Revitalization and Transformation** if your congregation would like to interact with coaches to discover a renewed vision, unique to your church, or if you want money to fund ideas that will reach more people.

Learn more at www.presbycc.org search: "Thompsons" or "money" to read articles about coaching and Transformation grants.

The Presbyterian Women
of the Presbytery of Coastal Carolina
invite you to the

ANNUAL PW SPRING GATHERING
Saturday, APRIL 18, 2015

at Carolina Beach Presbyterian Church

Seek and peace pursue it. -Proverbs 34:14

The Mozell Howie 2015 Peacemaking Scholarship for High School Seniors

The Peacemaking Subcommittee of Coastal Carolina Presbytery will offer two \$1,000 scholarships to high school seniors enrolling in college by the fall of 2015. Seek and peace pursue it.

All essays must be received by **May 15, 2015**. Find more information posted at presbycc.org/2015/peacemaking-scholarship/ or email: revwhitney@cameronpresbyterian.org.

Report from Presbytery's Committee for Preparation for Ministry

The Committee on Preparation for Ministry met on Saturday, February 14, at the presbytery office to conduct annual consultations with applicants for the inquiry process, inquirers, and candidates. The committee welcomed new members Rev. Matt Henderson, Rev. Rick McDuffie, Elder Faye Etheridge, and Rev. Philip Gladden (chairperson).

Please pray for our Inquirers, Candidates, and those who have been Certified Ready to Receive a Call:

Inquirers

- Scott Cameron, Highland PC/Fayetteville (Duke Divinity School)
- Alex Fischer, Westminster PC/Fayetteville (Union Presbyterian Seminary/Richmond)
- Brett Johnson, First PC/Fayetteville (Union Presbyterian Seminary/Charlotte)
- Dayton Wilson, First PC/Lumberton (Union Presbyterian Seminary/Richmond)

Candidates

- Kelly Rex, Sherwood PC/Fayetteville (Union Presbyterian Seminary/Richmond)
- Luke Woodcock, Topsail PC/Hampstead (Union Presbyterian Seminary/Richmond/graduate)

Certified Ready to Receive a Call

- Jay Atkinson, First PC/Wilmington (Union Presbyterian Seminary/Richmond)
- Hank Bellomy, MacPherson PC/Fayetteville (University of Dubuque Theological Seminary)
- Joanna Hipp, Cameron PC/Cameron (Louisville Theological Seminary)
- Hannah Lyon, West End PC/West End (Union Theological Seminary in NY)
- Denise McLeod, Trinity PC/Laurinburg (Columbia Theological Seminary)
- Tommy Taylor, Ebenezer PC/Coats (Union Presbyterian Seminary/Richmond)



Help Presbytery recognize a FAITHFUL SAINT

in your congregation. The Presbytery hopes to honor an outstanding older adult submitted by your session. **Deadline for submissions is APRIL 1, 2015.**

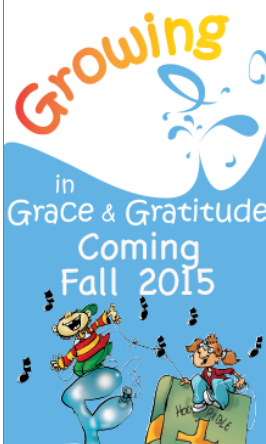
Details and forms are available at presbycc.org/2015/faithful-saints-2015/.



REGARDING RULING ELDERS:

A monthly Resource for serving faithfully. This monthly series seeks to lift up the specific responsibilities of ruling elders while also providing an opportunity to reflect upon how

they are lived out. pcusa.org/rulingelders



New PC(USA) Children's Curriculum

You are invited to sample the new PC(U.S.A.) denominational children's curriculum, *Growing in Grace & Gratitude*, set to launch this fall. Free samplers—complete with accompanying color resources, a story, and a page for children to use at home with their families—available to order. Each sampler includes

one session for each age group: Multiage (Ages 5–10), Ages 3–5, Ages 5–7, and Ages 8–10. Sample sessions may also be downloaded at growinggracegratitude.org or www.pcusastore.com/Products/11000S/growing-in-grace-gratitude-sampler.aspx

