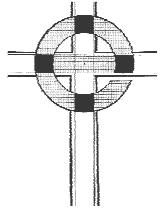




# The Presbyterian

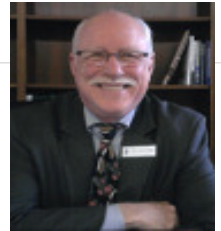
## of The Presbytery of Elizabeth



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### Message from Greg:



In my last article, I named the top five congregations from four points of view. In this one, I invite you to look at Elizabeth Presbytery from “the balcony.” In other words, who and what’s going on “down there”?

First, let’s consider size. How big is Elizabeth Presbytery? The answer is, as of 2008, we have 49 congregations with a total of 13,849 members. This is 3,282 fewer than ten years ago. Unfortunately, the greatest loss of members for any of those years was last year – 3.1%.

Second, let’s consider congregational size. How many of them are small (100 members or less)? Answer: 14 (29%). How many are medium-size (101 to 300 members)? Answer: 21 (42%). How many are large (301 or more members)? Answer: 14 (29%).

Third, what is our racial-ethnic makeup? Answer: 3.7% are Asian, 3.7% are African-American, 1.8% are Hispanic, 90.2% are white, and the rest are “other.” It is notable that the presbytery is slowly becoming more multi-racial/ethnic. In 1999, it was 93.1% white.

Finally, and of most concern to me, is the percentage of members who attend worship on any given Sunday. Did you know that only 39% of our members attend worship each Sunday? That’s the lowest percentage in a decade. In fact, the percentage has been as high as 46% (2002). My question, and I hope yours as well, is why are we losing not only members but worshippers? What can we do to change these trends, especially the worship trend?

If ever, we need to pray: *Lord, you alone are worthy of our worship and praise. Yet we are failing to draw most of our church members, much less non-members, into your presence on Sunday morning. Please show us what we need to do to change this and the courage to make that change. This we pray in your name. Amen.*

The Rev. Greg Albert  
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### Presbyterian Health, Education & Welfare Association (PHEWA) awards

Great ministries and faithful people were celebrated Monday evening at the 219th General Assembly as members of the Presbyterian Health, Education and Welfare Association gathered to honor programs related to six of its 10 networks.

One of these ministries awarded is in our midst. The Presbyterian AIDS Network awarded the Faith in Action Award to the Red Ribbon Fellowship, a ministry of First Presbyterian Church, Elizabeth, N.J.

The church first became concerned about AIDS in the mid-1980s, starting a support group for the community. The group later began focusing more on spirituality and God, which led to the formation of the Red Ribbon Fellowship in 1994. The group provides community service, hosts worship and acts as a support system to fight stigmas.

“The fear, stigma and discrimination still live among us strongly and silently today,” said Rafael Rodriguez, coordinator of the program.

**“You don’t have to be HIV Positive to Participate– Just be LOVING”**

*(Taken from the Red Ribbon Fellowship brochure)*

**Leadership****Insist on Leadership Training****Training**

Few enterprises allow people to become leaders without determining first that they have the necessary skills and personal characteristics for the specific assignment.

Teachers must know how to teach. Lawyers must know the law. An engineer building a bridge can't just doodle on scrap paper. Buying a computer and actually using a computer to run a business are entirely different animals.

We know this. Why, then, do we allow men and women to assume leadership positions in churches without adequate skills, training and character? Being a successful business person hardly qualifies a person to lead a church. Earning a large paycheck or being a nice person or waiting patiently for one's turn in office -- none of those constitutes preparation for making decisions about allocation of church resources, choosing which missions to pursue, dealing with systemic challenges, coping with difficult people, calling clergy, transforming lives, taking risks for justice, or nurturing faith.

Church leaders often assume their secular skills are transferable to the church setting. It certainly is easier that way. Get elected, show up for church council meetings, make decisions, go home. That easy course rarely succeeds.

Instead, church leaders must be recruited and trained. Here are some primary skills that they need:

Basic Bible knowledge. It's impossible to lead a faith community without knowing the stories shaping our faith.

Principles of servant-leadership. Faith leaders must bring out the best in others.

Church Organization issues. Where is the faith enterprise in 2010? What factors shape our lives? Remembering golden days of yore is meaningless.

Family systems theory, especially the difference between a functional family and a dysfunctional family.

Addictive systems theory. Statistical reality: one in two leaders has first-hand experience of living in an addictive system.

Life cycles, and how healthy systems handle life cycles.

Dysfunctional churches, such as those impacted by sexual misconduct, financial misconduct, leadership conflict.

Conflict management. Conflict is guaranteed in any human system.

Each of these skill sets is learnable and necessary. If training isn't offered, the issues will still arise, but leaders won't be capable of dealing with them, except by falling back on workplace skills that aren't germane.

All top-level leaders need training, not just the clergy. If anything, churches put too much energy into "fixing" clergy and trimming their sails, and not enough into training laity to be effective leaders in the church context.

One result: too much people-pleasing, not enough risk-taking. Church leaders need to be entrepreneurs, not managers.

Where do you get this training? You pay for it. You hire trainers.

*(The above article was written by the Rev. Tom Ehrich, founder of the Church Wellness Project.)*

**Bell Ringer Needed!**

The Bell Choir at the First Presbyterian Church of Woodbridge needs another bell ringer.

Anyone who is interested can call the church office at 732-634-1024.

Rehearsals will resume on 8:00 P.M. on Monday Sept. 13.

There are no age restrictions, but a bell ringer has to be tall enough to reach the bells and see the music. Ability to read music is not a requirement. They will teach you how to ring and how to follow the written notes.

