



The Presbyterian of The Presbytery of Elizabeth



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Presbyterian Camps Events

[Johnsonburg Summer Camp Registration Now Open for 2011 Pre-Summer Open House at Johnsonburg, Sat. May 14 10 am - 3pm](#)

[Mother Daughter Retreat at Johnsonburg May 7 9am to May 8 noon](#)

[May 31-Jul 28 at Stony Point Farm the Land, Grow the Spirit](#)

[Seeking Justice, Partnering for Peace, Cultivating Community Sunday, June 12 \(4pm\)](#)

Be Not Conformed

In Romans 12:2, Paul admonishes his readers to “not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds.” This passage can be applied to the way many view our Presbytery’s financial situation. The thinking goes like this: the federal, state, (in many cases) local government, and some churches are in debt and/or cannot pay their bills. So, the same must be true of the Presbytery of Elizabeth. The remedy, therefore, should be the same as that being used by governments - raise taxes and slash administrative expenses.

The problem with this worldly thinking is that the Presbytery is not in debt and is paying its bills. Indeed, we ended 2010 with a surplus of \$51,000 which will be used for various mission causes including New Hope Initiatives grants. In addition, because of the careful financial management of past and present Presbytery leaders, there is a considerable amount of money in savings. In short, the Presbytery is not in the same boat as the government and, perhaps, your church. Which begs the question, “Why have ‘they’ raised our Per Capita so much two years in a row?” Good question.

The answer is NOT that the Presbytery is in debt or even that operating costs have spiked. The answer is that the current leadership has adopted a **new accounting method**. Instead of considering some operating expenses as mission-related, ALL operating expenses are considered Per Capita-related. For example, in the past, part of a staff member’s compensation might have been paid from Unified Mission giving because he/she was devoting part of his/her time to mission. Now all of every staff member’s compensation is being paid from Per Capita, regardless how they spend their time. In short, with no “subsidy” coming from Unified Mission, Per Capita had to go up. Which begs the question, “Why don’t ‘they’ cut some staff.” Glad you asked.

The reason staff should not be cut willy-nilly is because much of their time is spent doing mission, and always has been. For instance, the effectiveness of the Evangelism & Church Vitality, Education and Discipleship, and Outreach and Social Concern Units is greatly enhanced by the support of two staff members. Not only do they make life easier for Unit leaders, they also contribute ideas, technological know-how, encouragement and fiscal guidance to the Units. In addition, staff have an important coordinating role between Units/Committees.

Please do not misunderstand. I’m not saying that operating expenses and Per Capita should be left alone. I’m only saying, let’s not be conformed to the way the world thinks about such matters because the Presbytery of Elizabeth is not in the same boat. God bless you this Presbytery.

The Rev. Greg Albert, Interim Executive Presbyter
Presbytery of Elizabeth / 908-755-3776

PS – if your congregation needs help with Stewardship, please contact me about the New Consecration Sunday program. Thanks to your Per Capita support, I can help you.

Committee On Representation: “COR Corner”

“We are Motivated by Gospel, Not by Law!”

“The Committee on Representation of the Presbyterian Church (USA) is called to seek representation for everyone equally in God’s image. The Presbyterian Church (USA) is committed to giving full expression to the rich diversity within its membership and to provide means to assure a greater inclusiveness leading to wholeness in its emerging life.” Sunday Morning Worship is focal point of our Presbyterian tradition. We all love the unique ways that our individual congregations celebrate our love and faith in our Lord, Jesus Christ. For many of our members and those that visit us, there are many challenges that they must overcome, not only to get to worship services, but also to enjoy the music, the prayers and the message that mean so much to all of us.

“Are We Meeting Their Needs”

There are a number of questions we all must ask ourselves – First- Is Your Sanctuary Handicap Accessible? Are the Ushers and Greeters able to assist when necessary? Second – Are hearing devices available for those who need assistance in enjoying the beauty of the worship experience? – Third –

– Wed. June 15 (1pm)

Presbyterian Seminaries Events

Princeton Theological
Seminary

Leadership and Spirituality

Summit: Becoming a
Spiritually Intentional
Leader Sunday, May 15
4:30 pm – Monday May
16 4:30 pm

The Alban Institute Newsletters

- [Determining Ideal Board Size](#)
- [A Resurrection Story](#)

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[Bruce Pereyra](#) Ext. 5
Bookkeeper

[Sara Burke](#) Ext. 6
Administrative Assistant

[Elizabeth Quintero](#) Ext. 1
Administrative Assistant

Resource Center Ext. 9

Many churches have designated areas set aside for members and friends who worship in wheelchairs – Fourth – Are there ample Handicap Accessible parking spaces available close to your building and do you provide a “valet parking” service for those that may need such assistance?

Please take time to discuss in your Session, Deacon and Trustee Boards how we all can become more aware of the needs of those in our Congregations that need our special loving care to enjoy the richness of worship that we all love.

Elder Skip Winter, COR Member

Relationships, Relationships

People connect with churches for many reasons, but the most common by far have to do with relationships. They want more people in their lives – friends, romantic prospects, interest-sharers, need-sharers, neighbors, business leads – and they want those people to share some orientation to faith. People will put up with much if those relational needs are being met. But the relational needs are primary. If relationships don't happen, the rest of what a church can do will become irrelevant, even burdensome. Thus, if I have at least a few friends around me, I will sit in a pew and receive what worship providers want to provide. I'll even endure poor performance values. But I won't sit there alone Sunday after Sunday. A handshake during the Peace doesn't count. Coffee hour is for insiders. Same with the Wednesday supper. If I bring my child to Wednesday supper and, week after week, no other children play with him, I will find a church that does enable children to connect. You can see the futility of pouring more and more energy into perfecting Sunday worship. The "show" can't possibly be good enough to overcome an absence of relationships. Congregational leaders, therefore, need to zero in on relational factors, especially as they apply to visitors, prospects, and those who haven't yet committed. It takes effort and humility to assess relational factors, because some people are always getting their needs met, and they just assume everyone else is, too. The two most effective ways to nurture relationships are these:

Small groups

You've heard it so often that it probably sounds like a dentist saying, "Floss your teeth." But "form small groups" is wise counsel. Every growing church I know is built on a foundation of small relational groups: face-to-face communities that are small enough to provide airtime and intimacy and large enough to feel compelling even when some are absent. Groups take many forms – from purely social to deeply spiritual to task-oriented – but their common element is enabling people to connect at a level deep enough for them to feel a sense of belonging. A healthy church will have a roster of small groups serving different purposes, and constantly will be forming new small groups to engage newcomers as they arrive. Many congregations think they are too small to have small groups. They need to get over that dim assessment, or they will die. Even if a congregation can manage only one or two small groups now, the relational benefits are still enormous.

Participatory mission projects

Many congregations are trying to let their facilities do mission. Plus their budgets. The main benefits of mission work, however, come from people helping people, from constituents bonding in service of others, from people connecting with people whose faith and innate goodness are shown in their mission work, and from people feeling part of a whole that is trying to make a difference in the world. Those are relational benefits. That's why soup kitchens are so popular, because working alongside ten other people is satisfying. Writing a check to Habitat is nowhere near as meaningful as hammering nails with five friends. Look at growing churches. They are deeply engaged in their surrounding communities, and they are putting people to work. That engagement becomes a magnet for others, and that work changes lives. Relational ministries aren't costly. Volunteers can get them started. By the time you need staff to handle small-group formations and leader training, you will have enough people participating in small groups to provide budgetary support. Same with mission projects. The key is to get started. Some congregations think they are too elderly for such things. But what I see is that active elderly are eager for such transformational and relational experiences. So are young adults.

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

What's Happening around the Presbytery

We send a list of events happening in our congregations. For the complete list please visit our website: www.elizabethpresbytery.org