



February 2010 LeaderPak

Engaging Community in Effective Ministry (based on RP Retreat)

For the past six months, seven congregations in Flint River Presbytery have been engaged in the Reformation Project, a sustained and intentional process of prayer, visioning, learning, and serving with the goal of nurturing a congregation that is



- *more faithfully and effectively proclaiming the Gospel,
- *actively making disciples of Jesus Christ,
- *and creatively engaging the community with vibrant ministry.

In January, these congregations gathered for a retreat in which they wrestled with questions of priorities and focus. In his book *Winning on Purpose*, John Edmund Kaiser asks congregations to start with this question: Why does our congregation exist?

So why does your congregation exist? This question is not about the existence of the Church in general but about your congregation in particular. In other words, if your church were to disappear, who would miss it? What would be lacking in the community because you are not there to provide it?

Kaiser suggests there are only three possible answers to this question. Congregations exist for:

1. Themselves - the people on the inside
2. Others - the people on the outside
3. Both

Most congregations want to answer #3. We want to serve those who attend our services, come to Sunday School, pledge....**and** we want to serve our communities - often with the hope of bringing many of them into our community. *It is possible to do both.*

However, Kaiser asks this important question, "Which group will we serve *first*?" Our attempts to balance the needs of our members with the call to go into the world to make disciples is a difficult one because it is those closest to us who receive the most attention from us. Our members will complain if we don't pay enough attention to their wants/needs/desires, but those who don't even know we exist certainly aren't going to come ask why we haven't responded to God's call in their neighborhoods!

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Quick Links

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[Confirmation Camp](#)

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Personals

Vance Dukes, a long time member of the Boston Church and our Commission on Education & Nurture (and "Father Christmas" to many of) us, died on February 2.

John Boyer (pastor, Morningside) is having surgery on his back on 2/11.

Gale Morgan (wife of former EP Harrison Morgan) is having hip replacement surgery on 2/10.

The next time your session and committees meet, ask yourself this one question as you make every decision and take every vote: *Who is served by this action/program/practice/policy?* Sometimes your answer should definitely be, "Our members are." But how many of your decisions affect only your membership? How much of your meeting time is given to planning for reaching out and reaching others? You will learn a lot about the priorities of your congregation by studying the answers to your question.

For more information about the Reformation Project or for strategies for engaging your community in new ways, contact Nikki Collins MacMillan by email at nikkimacmillan1@windstream.net

Christopher Gilstrap (son of Glenn & Katherine - Westminster Church) became an Eagle Scout in a ceremony at the church on 1/23.

Spiritual Formation Emphasis - Confirmation Camp/Sabbath retreats



"God's concern is not just for the regulating or modifying of our outward behavior; but for an ongoing change in our hearts." --from Celtic Daily Prayer

Life is complicated. And a life of faith, although rich and beautiful, is often demanding and difficult.

Because of the various demands which we all encounter, the Commission on Education and Nurture is deeply committed to providing opportunities for all our congregations, their members and friends, with meaningful opportunities to deepen spiritual lives.

Through our monthly School for Lay Renewal events, our upcoming Celebration of Faith, regular Sabbath retreats, and newly-created Confirmation Retreat, we can find both solace and strength as a body of believers, recognizing that that we are defined and directed by God's love and grace, rather than changing circumstances or situations.

Be sure to check out the quick links on this page!

- * Under the "Sabbath Retreat" link, you'll find an informative brochure which includes upcoming events and registration information and cost.
- * Under the "Confirmation Camp" link, you'll find a compelling synopsis which includes dates, schedule, and registration information and cost.

And don't forget about our presbytery's labyrinth, a portable resource that any congregation can use by simply calling June Denney and reserving specific dates.

We look forward to being your companions on the Way!

Pulpit Exchange by Hugh Ward

Itinerant preachers have always been a part of our Southern religious tradition. The spread of the Gospel across the stretches of the Blue Ridge, down the Piedmont and into the old growth Long Leaf Pine country happened because traveling preachers, saddled up their mounts, and took off with a Bible and a heart set on fire by the Holy Spirit.

Take note. Most of these mounted messengers were Methodist and Baptists. While these preachers were using tree stumps for platforms or proclaiming the Gospel in so-called brush arbors, we Presbyterians were back at Princeton and Yale getting divinity degrees. We Calvinists were well-heeled, well-educated but lagged behind the followers of Wesley and Williams, when it came to establishing churches in western reaches of America. We are still lagging behind.

My great grandfather was a wandering Wesleyan in the backwoods of Mississippi, carrying a Bible,

a change of clothing and a pair of pearled handled six guns in his saddlebags. I asked his granddaughter, my mother, "Why would he tote pistols as a preacher." She answered, "There were brigands in Sullivan's Hollow down in Smith County!" I knew that Black Diamond watermelons were grown in that place, but I had never heard of "brigands" coming out of those low hills and shady hollows.

On Sunday, the 24th of January, we Presbyterians became traveling evangelists, bearing the Word of the Lord to places some of us had never been. In place of gaited Morgan horses, we had our sleek Fords, Chevrolets, Mercs and Hondas. Where we went was not so important. We were going out as preachers to reaffirm that the church is where you find it.

We spiritual wayfarers enjoy the comfort of the familiar. Sameness on Sunday is like the comfort of an old family quilt. We are anesthetized by the predictable. But now we were to lead or be led in worship that had a rhythm different from the usual. We would affirm our belief in the Apostles' Creed and discover that some congregations "descend into hell" while others prefer not to go there. Some sang with pianos; others found hand-crafted pipe organs. Hymnals were maroon, blue and green. Many of those songbooks were dedicated to the memory of some deceased saint of the church.

But we all opened the Scriptures, the Bible. We all read the Text. We all said, "The Word of the Lord." The congregants responded, "Thanks be to God!" We preached Christ, the Savior of our lives and our world and Head of the Church; THE church.

In every town and village, we saw affirmed that where two or three are gathered there is Jesus in the midst of it all. Thanks be to God.

February 2010 Calendar

2	2:30 pm	Resource Center
2	6:00 pm	CEN
4	1:00 pm	CLP Ministry Team
6	10:00 am	School for Lay Renewal
7	5:30 pm	Nominating & Representation
9	12:00 noon	NW Clergy Cluster at The Abbey
10	12:00 noon	NE Clergy Cluster at Northminster
11	12:00 noon	BOP Retiree Luncheon at Covenant
13	12:00 noon	Reformatin Project at Warner Robins/First
13	12:30 pm	Youth Council
18	10:00 am	COM
19		STATISTICAL REPORTS ARE DUE
20	10:00 am	PW Co-ordinating Council
23	12:00 noon	South Clergy Cluster at First Thomasville
23	6:30 pm	COF
24	12:00 noon	Central Clergy Cluster
25	10:00 am	CPM Ministry Team
27	10:00 am	Presbytery Meeting, Edgewood, Columbus

All meetings are at the Presbytery Office unless otherwise noted

Resource Center Reviews

Looking for solid, relevant, and thought-provoking resources that are grounded in our Reformed tradition? Look no further!

More resources than you could possibly imagine are located within our presbytery office.

The Flint River Presbytery's Resource Center is filled with up-to-date DVDs, inspiring books, and new curriculum -- all designed to help you, the members of Flint River Presbytery, with the preparing and planning of every aspect of your yearly ministry.

For more information, go to www.flintriverpresbytery.org. You'll find a catalogue of our materials online as well as a monthly newsletter for parents of children, birth to 18 years and a link to our synod resource center, which has additional A/V materials available for our use.

Additional publicity in the form of magnets and/or bookmarks are available on request as well.

Contact June Denney at jdenney@flintriverpresbytery.org or Deb Bibler at debbibler@bellsouth.net for more details.

Parish Paper

[February 2010 - Parish Paper](#)

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