



# PEACE RIVER PRESBYTERY



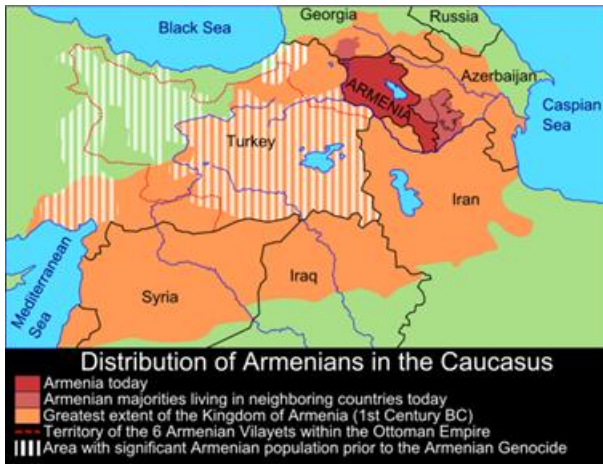
WEEKLY PRESBYTERY LETTER - APRIL 27, 2015

Rev. Graham Hart, General Presbyter

**So... who is my neighbor? – Remembering the Armenian Genocide and an update on Leonel**  
**[\(Click here if you missed last week's letter\)](#)**

One hundred years ago the unthinkable happened to the Armenian population. From 1915 to 1923, 1.5 million Armenians died, and a half-million more survived death marches, torture, concentration camps, starvation and eventually escaped Asia Minor. The Ottoman Empire systematically wiped out the Armenian population from their historic motherland which, for 3000 years, centered on Noah's Mt. Ararat. Armenian was the first nation to officially become Christian, around 300AD. [\(Click here for History of Armenia\)](#).

In the past year Armenian genocide survivors, who built new lives in Syria, have come under attack from ISIS, who just destroyed the Holy Martyrs Armenian Church and Memorial in Syria. On this 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary we remember, even though modern day Turkey would want us all to forget. [\(See controversy related to the Pope comments on the Armenian genocide\)](#).



Last year May, during my sabbatical, when no one could go in or out of Jerusalem because of Pope Francis' visit, we were locked into the Old City - where our hotel was. Our group's plans for the day were cancelled. I decided to walk the old city, and came upon St. James Church and the Armenian Patriarch of Jerusalem's residents, as well the Armenian Seminary. A 26 year old student, Vachogan Dokholyan, saw me trying to get into the church, which was closed. He came over to ask if I needed help. We ended up having a fascinating conversation, and I learned about the life of a pastor/priest for the Orthodox Church in Armenia.

Since I was traveling with a Seminary group, he asked if I would like to meet the Dean of the Armenian Seminary, Father Theodorus ([click here for link to the Seminary](#)). For an hour I was privileged to hear the testimony of Father Theodorus, a former science teacher from Armenia, who grew up an atheist under communist rule, and his journey to faith. So, on this free afternoon, when the Pope's visit shut down the city, I found myself opened up to the story of faith, and the testimony of the Armenian peoples who have suffered incredible loss and pain, and still have faith. *Note: The pictures are of Vachogan, and a recently erected memorial remembering 7 towns and the people in them that were killed in Armenia. With a twinkle in his eye he told me that the Jerusalem authorities had not given a permit to erect the memorial outside the seminary, but miraculously one night the memorial appeared.*

"Presbyterians have participated in relief to Armenians throughout WWI, and have been serving this struggling community in the Middle East faithfully since 1966 through the [Jinshian Memorial Program](#) (JMP). The impact of that gift continues today.

Christine Chakoian, Pastor, First Presbyterian Church of Lake Forest, IL, whose own family suffered deep loss in the genocide, preached a sermon at the Immanuel Armenian Congregational Church, in Downey, CA this past February. Here is an excerpt (for the whole sermon – [click here to find link](#)).

*In April, our generation is mourning the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the cruel genocide; we are grieving again the 1.5 million who died, and the half-million more who were deported and exiled. It is a bitter sorrow, remembering the brutal treatment they received. Millions of hearts broken and bodies abused. Millions of pieces of property taken, millions of memories dismantled, millions of dreams destroyed.*

*All of us have stories, don't we? I was five when my grandmother told me how her male relatives in Sivas were lined up, forced to kneel, and shot at point-blank range....*

*...But if we only grieved their suffering and loss, we would miss this sacred opportunity: we would miss the chance to examine our inheritance of their remarkable faith....*

*"So what have we received from them?*

*The first treasure we have received from the martyrs is this: a heart to feel the suffering of others ... eyes to see those whom the world would render invisible ... and hands to help those who are persecuted. We have all at one time or another wondered what might have happened if the world had listened to Ambassador Morgenthau's warnings about the persecutions. How many could have been saved if the West had reached out more boldly. How much suffering could have been averted – the starvation, the cruelty, the evil – if someone had had the will to see, really see what was going on.*

*Through the suffering of our parents and grandparents, we have inherited this gift: the deep knowledge that our lives can make a profound difference in alleviating others' pain. Honoring this gift requires a commitment on our part to move from self-absorption to compassion, to move from obsession with our happiness to love for the neighbor and even the stranger, a commitment to see those who still suffer even – and especially – when the forces of evil would render them invisible. The Christian minorities in Syria and Iraq; the Coptic Christians murdered by ISIS in Libya; the Christian victims of Boko Haram in Nigeria; and even people of other faiths in our own land who are persecuted for their beliefs. If we are to honor the inheritance of suffering that we have received, we must commit ourselves to see – really see – those whose suffering the forces of evil would make invisible to the world, and do what we can in the name of Christ to offer a cup of cold water to those who are thirsting for righteousness.*

As a Presbytery, and as individual congregations, pastors, and members, the temptation is for us to live in paradise, and enjoy this paradise we call southwest Florida, and not want to remember. Remembering is painful and hard, so the temptation is to forget. But in remembering, as Christine has suggested, we are better able to see and offer a cup of water to that person or group who, ever since Jesus taught us that parable we know as the Good Samaritan, in some way is our neighbor. The tragedy of the Armenian Genocide, as it true for the Jewish Holocaust, as is true for the Palestinians today, and as is true for \_\_\_\_\_, is we didn't or couldn't figure out how to be a neighbor.

Thanks to all who last week noticed Leonel, our neighbor in Immokalee, and responded. We received enough financial support for him to have surgery and he is doing well, for which he extends his deep gratitude. Remember what Mr. Rogers said? ([Click here for the answer](#)).

Thank you!

*Graham*

Graham Hart

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**The following articles may be of interest:**

[What's the role of the church in troubled times? Pastors disagree.](#)

Baltimore Sun: In Baltimore, pastors agree that the city's African-American churches have a special role to play in the search for social justice.

[Francis: Priests should never refuse baptism to one who asks](#)

National Catholic Reporter: In words that may be interpreted to rebut Catholic priests who refuse to baptize children of same-sex couples, Pope Francis has said that priests should not refuse baptism to anyone who asks for the sacrament.

[3 important church trends in the next 10 years](#)

Christianity Today: Christianity in the United States may look very different in 10 years.

The New York Times: [It's not gay marriage vs. the church anymore](#)

[Same-sex marriage, in the Justices' words](#)

NPR: To say that there's been a revolution in the law when it comes to gay rights is an understatement.

[Catholic bishop of Kansas City convicted of failure to report child abuse resigns](#)

Crux: In what is likely to be hailed as major step toward accountability for Catholic bishops who mishandle sexual abuse allegations, the Vatican has announced the resignation of Bishop Robert Finn of Kansas City-St. Joseph.

National Catholic Reporter: [The resignation of Bishop Finn](#)

[Christianity's potential to bring about real, radical belonging](#)

National Catholic Reporter: Can you really love people you don't trust? What about people your own religion has demonized and encouraged you to fear?



### CHURCHES OF PEACE RIVER PRESBYTERY

(click on church name to link to its web site)

<a href="#">Braden River Presbyterian Church,</a> Bradenton	<a href="#">First Presbyterian Church,</a> Bradenton
<a href="#">Kirkwood Presbyterian Church,</a> Bradenton	<a href="#">Palma Sola Presbyterian Church,</a> Bradenton
<a href="#">Westminster Presbyterian Church,</a> Bradenton	Palmetto Presbyterian Church, Palmetto - <a href="mailto:kcooper@ppcfl.org">kcooper@ppcfl.org</a>
<a href="#">Christ Church of Longboat Key</a> Longboat Key	<a href="#">Peace Presbyterian Church,</a> Lakewood Ranch
<a href="#">Bee Ridge Presbyterian Church,</a> Sarasota	<a href="#">Church of the Palms,</a> Sarasota
<a href="#">First Presbyterian Church,</a> Sarasota	<a href="#">Northminster Presbyterian Church,</a> Sarasota
<a href="#">Pine Shores Presbyterian Church,</a> Sarasota	<a href="#">Presbyterian Church of the Covenant, Sarasota</a>

<a href="#"><u>Whitfield Estates Presbyterian Church,</u></a> Sarasota	<a href="#"><u>Siesta Key Chapel,</u></a> Sarasota
<a href="#"><u>Trinity Presbyterian Church,</u></a> Venice	<a href="#"><u>Venice Presbyterian Church,</u></a> Venice
<a href="#"><u>Community Presbyterian Church,</u></a> Englewood	<a href="#"><u>First Presbyterian Church,</u></a> Arcadia
<a href="#"><u>St. Paul's Presbyterian Church,</u></a> North Port	<a href="#"><u>Burnt Store Presbyterian Church,</u></a> Punta Gorda
Wintergarden Presbyterian Church, Port Charlotte <a href="mailto:devon.ducheneau@gmail.com"><u>devon.ducheneau@gmail.com</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>First Presbyterian Church,</u></a> Port Charlotte
<a href="#"><u>Holy Trinity Presbyterian Church,</u></a> North Fort Myers	
<a href="#"><u>Faith Presbyterian Church</u></a> Cape Coral	<a href="#"><u>First Presbyterian Church,</u></a> Lehigh Acres
<a href="#"><u>Buckingham Presbyterian Church,</u></a> Fort Myers	<a href="#"><u>Covenant Presbyterian Church,</u></a> Fort Myers
<a href="#"><u>Cypress Lake Presbyterian Church,</u></a> Fort Myers	<a href="#"><u>First Presbyterian Church,</u></a> Fort Myers
<a href="#"><u>Hope United Church (PCUSA),</u></a> Fort Myers	<a href="#"><u>Chapel by the Sea,</u></a> Fort Myers Beach
<a href="#"><u>First Presbyterian Church,</u></a> Bonita Springs	
<a href="#"><u>First Presbyterian Church,</u></a> Naples	<a href="#"><u>Lely Presbyterian Church,</u></a> Naples
<a href="#"><u>Moorings Presbyterian Church,</u></a> Naples	<a href="#"><u>Vanderbilt Presbyterian Church,</u></a> Naples

## **MISION PENIEL**

*A Ministry of Peace River Presbytery to the Farmworkers in Immokalee*

The Mision Peniel Task Force continues to meet and build the support and structure for continuing this vital ministry. If you want to make a donation to support this recovery effort you may send the check (marked Mision Peniel) to Peace River Presbytery | 5600 Peace River Rd. | North Port, FL. 34287.

- Collection Centers for Mision Peniel Supplies ([click for information](#))
  - Critical Needs List ([click for information](#))

## **BETH-EL FARMWORKER MINISTRY, INC.**

*A Ministry to the Farmworkers in Wimauma*

[Winter 2015 Newsletter](#)

## **EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES**

The following are position openings in PRP churches.

Click on the title for more information.

[Part-Time Choir Director](#) – Palma Sola Presbyterian Church, Bradenton

[Interim Choir Director](#) – Trinity Presbyterian Church, Venice

[Organist / Pianist / Accompanist](#) – Palma Sola Presbyterian Church, Bradenton

## **PRAYER NEEDS:**

### **Please continue to pray for:**

- Rev. Norman Hutchinson – recovery from quadruple bypass surgery; also has congestive heart failure. If you'd like to send notes or cards, his address is: 822 South Pelham Road | Welland, ON L3C3E1
- Anita Adkison, mother of Rev. Dr. Stephen Adkison, Pastor of Chapel By The Sea – recovery from breast cancer surgery and treatment to follow. Lives in Arkansas.
- Rev. Susan Rice, Associate Pastor of Faith, Cape Coral – health
- Greg Beckwith (son of Jim and Becky Beckwith) – kidney failure – is undergoing dialysis and is on a kidney transplant list. Greg is also diabetic and underwent quadruple bypass heart surgery in June 2013.
- Glenn Beisser (father of Rev. Devon Beisser Ducheneau, Stated Supply Pastor for Wintergarden P.C.) – lung cancer and heart issues
- Hmingi Browne's (A.P. of Church of the Palms) sister, Nutei – health
- Grandson of Tim and Martha Halverson - suffering from a rare autoimmune disease.
- Beth-El Farmworker Ministry

- Misión Peniel
- Cedarkirk Camp and Conference Center
- Dan and Elizabeth Turk, PCUSA Mission Co-Workers in Madagascar
- Les and Cindy Morgan, PCUSA Mission Co-Workers in Bangladesh
- Pastors and Educators in transition
- Nations in crisis

**CHURCH PRAYER GUIDE: MAY 2015:**

May 3	<a href="#">Faith Presbyterian Church, Cape Coral</a> Pastor: Rev. Dr. Tim Halverson email: <a href="mailto:tim@faithcapecoral.org">tim@faithcapecoral.org</a> Associate Pastor: Rev. Susan Rice email: <a href="mailto:susan@fpcf.org">susan@fpcf.org</a>
May 10	<a href="#">Community Presbyterian Church, Englewood</a> Pastor: Rev. Dawn Mayes email: <a href="mailto:revdawnmayes@gmail.com">revdawnmayes@gmail.com</a>
May 17	<a href="#">Buckingham Presbyterian Church, Fort Myers</a> Pastor: Rev. Dr. Randy Moody email: <a href="mailto:bpcpastor@comcast.net">bpcpastor@comcast.net</a>
May 24	<a href="#">Covenant Presbyterian Church, Fort Myers</a> Pastor: Rev. Dr. Jeffrey DeYoe email: <a href="mailto:jdeyoe@covpcfm.com">jdeyoe@covpcfm.com</a>
May 31	<a href="#">Cypress Lake Presbyterian Church, Fort Myers</a> Pastor: Rev. Dr. Clinton Cottrell Email: <a href="mailto:clint@clpc.us">clint@clpc.us</a>

**PRESBYTERY CALENDAR: APRIL - MAY 2015**

You may view the entire calendar on the Presbytery web site: [www.peaceriverpresbytery.org](http://www.peaceriverpresbytery.org)

**April 29**

Committee On Preparation For Ministry (#2)

**May 4**

Planning Team

**May 6**

Steering Committee Retreat @ Pine Shores P.C.

**May 7**

Presbyterian Women

**May 14**

Finance Team

Nominations and Representation Committee

Finishing Strong & Ending Well

**May 20**

Mision Peniel Task Force @ Covenant Presbyterian, Fort Myers

**May 21**

Steering Committee

**May 25**

Memorial Day – PRP Office Closed

**May 28**

Stated Meeting of PRP @ First, Port Charlotte