



PEACE RIVER PRESBYTERY



Weekly Presbytery Letter – December 1, 2015

Rev. Graham Hart, General Presbyter

Advent – Preachers, Politicians, Fear and Hope

Four candles... flickering in the dark. Each Sunday during Advent we light one more. This past Sunday we lit the candle of Hope. Then come the candles of Love, Joy and Peace. Finally on Christmas Eve, we light the Christ Candle. For a moment, as each of us lights the candle we hold in our hand, and lift it into the darkness, everything around us is transformed.



Every year I want to hold onto that image for, in an almost sacramental way, what we as Christians believe and proclaim, is visible, at least for a moment, in that space. “The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.” (John 1:5)

But Christmas Eve is four weeks away, and terrorists around the world continue to spread their message of violence and fear. In our own land crazed extremists with guns, whether in a church, military base, or women’s health clinic, spread their form of violence and fear. All of that makes it seem like the darkness is winning and transformation, if it is ever to come, is an eternity away. Maybe that is how it seemed to the disciples on Good Friday. And maybe that is why the first candle of advent is the candle of Hope.

Fredrick Beuchner writes this about hope, “For Christians, hope is ultimately hope in Christ. The hope that he really is what for centuries we have been claiming he is. The hope that despite the fact that sin and death still rule the world, he somehow conquered them. The hope that in him and through him all of us stand a chance of somehow conquering them too. The hope that at some unforeseeable time and in some unimaginable way he will return with healing in his wings.” (Wishful Thinking).

So one of our Advent challenges/choices is to decide if we are going to hold onto fear, or be held up by hope.

- Fear holds us back... hope sends us forward.
- Fear keeps us focused on ... ain’t it awful, or it may be awful; hope focuses on ... isn’t this great, what an opportunity we have been given.
- Fear keeps us focused on ... the sky is falling; hope opens us and others to possibilities.
- Fear leads to anger; hope opens us to the three remaining candles/themes of Advent: Love, Joy, and Peace.



HOPE
CHANGES EVERYTHING

All seems lost ... but “hope” says, “some day, all will be found”.

So as preachers, teachers, ruling elders and congregational members, in this year when Presidential candidates have come to believe that elections are won and lost by who can stir up the most fear, or create a fearful “won’t it be awful script” if the other person or other party is elected, I am grateful for:

the message of Christ,

the witness of the congregations in Peace River Presbytery,

the reality of what Christmas Eve symbolically reminds us,

and the message of hope that is proclaimed Sunday by Sunday by the pastors here in Peace River ... words of Hope, Love, Joy, and Peace, which more than the hype, hyperbole, and election “trash talk” can and will lead to a new future, and someday a new heaven and earth.

That is our hope ... Thanks be to God.

On the Advent Journey with you,
Graham

Graham Hart

General Presbyter - graham@peaceriverpresbytery.com

Articles of Interest:

[Francis: World close to suicide over climate change](#)

National Catholic Reporter: While Pope Francis has expressed hope that world leaders will find solutions to the problem of climate change, he has also said the inaction on the issue up to now is approaching global suicide.

[You know you're ready for young people if...](#)

United Methodist Reporter: Here's a 10-point checklist, with a bonus 11th point, to help you know if you are truly ready for young people. Or just wish you were.

America: [The Catholic millennial: 21 questions for Christopher J. Hale](#)

[Fear, faith and the rise of Ben Carson](#)

Washington Post: To some conservative evangelicals, Ben Carson is the only candidate who fully grasps what they see as the one reality that matters most -- that America has fallen away from God.

[What Donald Trump gets wrong about Christian theology](#)

Washington Post: Despite Donald Trump's insistence that conversion “doesn't happen that way,” in Christian history, it has often happened that way.

[You won't win a war against Isis if you don't know what the peace looks like](#)

The (London) Guardian: War can only be moral if it ultimately aims at some greater peaceful purpose. Without this, not a single innocent death can be justified, says Giles Fraser.

[How America's demographic revolution reached the church](#)

National Journal: Long the dominant group in American religious life, white Christians have fallen below a majority of the

U.S. population -- and they are moving to the right politically as they recede.

Religion News Service: [Bigotry? Hatred? Christians say they're tired of being made into the bad guys](#)

[St. Paul's Episcopal Church to remove images of Confederate flags](#)

Richmond (Va.) Times-Dispatch: The historic St. Paul's Episcopal Church known as the "Cathedral of the Confederacy" has begun removing all images of the Confederate flag from within its walls.

[Is Russia's Syria intervention a 'holy war'? Russian Orthodox Church: 'yes'](#)

Christian Science Monitor: For many in the West, the idea that a church would take an overtly hawkish stance in the conflict in Syria is an utterly foreign concept. But then, the Russian Orthodox Church is not of the West.

[Bread for the World puts price tag on hunger: \\$160 billion in health care](#)

Religion News Service: Hunger and food insecurity are so widespread in the United States they add \$160 billion to national health care spending, according to a Christian advocacy group.

NEXT STATED MEETING OF PRESBYTERY:

Thursday, January 28, 2016

at Buckingham Presbyterian Church, Fort Myers

Registration will begin at 8:00 a.m. / **Meeting** will begin at 9:30 a.m.

Finance Forum with the Presbytery's Board of Trustees at 9:00 a.m.

Mark your calendars ... it's coming up soon!

Additional details within a few weeks.



The Board of Pensions
of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

To all Pastors, Retired Pastors, Teaching Elders, and Treasurers and Business Managers:

Dear colleagues in ministry and service,

Greetings! I hope this message finds each of you doing well and in good spirits.

Board University – the educational program of the Board of Pensions – is pleased to partner with Peace River Presbytery to offer three of our education seminars at Pine Shores Presbyterian Church (Sarasota, FL) in mid-January 2016:

January 12-13: Growing Into Tomorrow...Today (pre-retirement planning for lay and clergy members)

January 14: Render Unto Caesar (terms of call and clergy tax issues for treasurers and administrators, and active clergy)

January 15: Post-Retirement Seminar (retirement living matters for lay and clergy retirees and surviving covered partners)

Registration for the seminars is open on our website. If you have any general questions or concerns about the seminars, please feel free to contact [Board University](#). For registration assistance, individuals may call the Board weekdays from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., ET, and speak with the first available service representative at 800-PRESPLAN ([800-773-7752](#)).

Blessings and peace,

Nadine L. Monn | Design Specialist

Organizational Training & Development

The Board of Pensions of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) | 2000 Market St., 4th Floor | Philadelphia, PA 19103-3298

P: [800-773-7752, ext. 7457](#) / [215-587-7457](#) | F: [215-587-7129](#) | [www.pensions.org](#)

BETH-EL FARMWORKER MINISTRY, INC.

A Ministry to the Farmworkers in Wimauma

Beth-El Food Pantry has an immediate need for canned goods, rice and pinto beans. Our regular deliveries have been down and the pantry is practically bare. If you can help, please call the mission at 813-633-1548 ext. 228.

www.beth-el.org
[November Newsletter](#)
[Adopt A Family 2015 Program](#)

CEDARKIRK CAMP & CONFERENCE CENTER

A place apart to build up the body of Christ in love.

www.cedarkirk.org

Employment Opportunities at Cedarkirk

Cedarkirk is currently seeking to fill a variety of positions (part-time kitchen and housekeeping roles and a full-time Capital Campaign Director). Please visit www.cedarkirk.org/who-we-are/employment/ for more information.

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](#))

Would your church like to have a "Buddy Break" Program?

Venice Presbyterian Church has been blessed through their ministry in a program they call "Buddy Break". The program gives caregivers of kids with special needs a break. It is a free kids' respite program where kids with special needs (VIP kids) make new friends, play fun games, enjoy crafts, therapy dogs, stories, music, activities and more! Siblings have fun too! Meanwhile their caregivers get a break from their ongoing care-giving responsibilities for three hours one Friday night or Saturday morning a month.

For information on starting a "Buddy Break" program, contact Venice Presbyterian at 941-488-2258. Ask for Dick Armstrong, Clerk of Session, or Andrea Lucy, Office Administrator.

UPCOMING EVENTS!

Saturday, January 23 ~ Church of the Palms
[The Soul of Caregivers: Nurturing and Reorienting Our Lives](#)
with Rev. Marjorie Thompson
~~~~~  
Thursday, January 28  
Stated Meeting of Presbytery

## **EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES**

The following are position openings in PRP churches.  
Click on the title for more information.

[Communications Coordinator](#) – Vanderbilt Presbyterian Church, Naples

## **FOR SALE**

26 Passenger Bus – [Click for Information](#)

### **PRAYER NEEDS:**

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

- Rev. Devon Ducheneau (Stated Supply Pastor, Wintergarden P.C.) and Family - through the loss of her father, Glenn Beisser, two weeks ago.
- Rev. Dr. Robert Cousar - health
- Jim Beckwith - health
- Rev. Dr. Kathleen Weller – healing of broken arm.
- Rev. Dr. Margaret Towner – recovery from hip revision surgery.
- Robert Dennis, Son of Rev. India Dennis – mental health issues.
- Anita Adkison, mother of Rev. Dr. Stephen Adkison, Pastor of Chapel By The Sea – undergoing treatment for breast cancer. Lives in Arkansas.
- Greg Beckwith (son of Jim and Becky Beckwith) – on kidney transplant list.
- 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: DECEMBER 2015:**

|             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|-------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| December 6  | <u>First Presbyterian Church, Arcadia</u><br>Pastor: Rev. Bill Teng<br>email: <a href="mailto:tengpresby@aol.com">tengpresby@aol.com</a>                                                                                                                                 |
| December 13 | <u>First Presbyterian Church, Bonita Springs</u><br>Pastor: Rev. Dr. Doug Pratt<br>email: <a href="mailto:dpratt@fpcbonita.org">dpratt@fpcbonita.org</a><br>Associate Pastor: Rev. Steven Grant<br>Email: <a href="mailto:sgrant@fpcbonita.org">sgrant@fpcbonita.org</a> |
| December 20 | <u>Braden River Presbyterian Church, Bradenton</u><br>Pastor: Rev. Glenn Buzbee, Jr.<br>Email: <a href="mailto:revglennb@gmail.com">revglennb@gmail.com</a>                                                                                                              |
| December 27 | <u>First Presbyterian Church, Bradenton</u><br>Pastor: Rev. Dino Rustin<br>email: <a href="mailto:dino@firstpresbradenton.com">dino@firstpresbradenton.com</a>                                                                                                           |

## **PRESBYTERY CALENDAR: DECEMBER 2015**

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

### **December 3**

Mision Peniel Task Force at Covenant Presbyterian, Ft. Myers (9:30 a.m.)  
Presbyterian Women at PRP Center, North Port (10:00 a.m.)

### **December 7**

Planning Team (1:00 p.m.)

### **December 8**

Committee On Ministry (9:00 a.m.)  
Overtures Committee (2:00 p.m.)

### **December 10**

Finance Team / Board of Trustees (9:30 a.m.)  
Steering Committee (1:30 p.m.)

### **December 20**

Ordination Service for Terri Jo Crego at First, Port Charlotte (3:00 p.m.)

### **December 21-25**

Presbytery Office Closed



## CHURCHES OF PEACE RIVER PRESBYTERY

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

|                                                                    |                                                                                                    |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <a href="#">Braden River Presbyterian Church,</a><br>Bradenton     | <a href="#">First Presbyterian Church,</a><br>Bradenton                                            |
| <a href="#">Kirkwood Presbyterian Church,</a><br>Bradenton         | <a href="#">Palma Sola Presbyterian Church,</a><br>Bradenton                                       |
| <a href="#">Westminster Presbyterian Church,</a><br>Bradenton      | Palmetto Presbyterian Church,<br>Palmetto – <a href="mailto:office@ppcfl.org">office@ppcfl.org</a> |
| <a href="#">Christ Church of Longboat Key</a><br>Longboat Key      | <a href="#">Peace Presbyterian Church,</a><br>Lakewood Ranch                                       |
| <a href="#">Bee Ridge Presbyterian Church,</a><br>Sarasota         | <a href="#">Church of the Palms,</a><br>Sarasota                                                   |
| <a href="#">First Presbyterian Church,</a><br>Sarasota             | <a href="#">Northminster Presbyterian Church,</a><br>Sarasota                                      |
| <a href="#">Pine Shores Presbyterian Church,</a><br>Sarasota       | <a href="#">Presbyterian Church of the<br/>Covenant,</a> Sarasota                                  |
| <a href="#">Whitfield Estates Presbyterian Church,</a><br>Sarasota | <a href="#">Siesta Key Chapel,</a><br>Sarasota                                                     |
| <a href="#">Trinity Presbyterian Church,</a><br>Venice             | <a href="#">Venice Presbyterian Church,</a><br>Venice                                              |
| <a href="#">Community Presbyterian Church,</a><br>Englewood        | <a href="#">First Presbyterian Church,</a><br>Arcadia                                              |
| <a href="#">St. Paul's Presbyterian Church,</a><br>North Port      | <a href="#">Burnt Store Presbyterian Church,</a><br>Punta Gorda                                    |
| Wintergarden Presbyterian Church,                                  | <a href="#">First Presbyterian Church,</a><br>Port Charlotte                                       |

|                                                                                                     |                                                                      |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>Port Charlotte<br/> <a href="mailto:devon.ducheneau@gmail.com">devon.ducheneau@gmail.com</a></p> |                                                                      |
| <p><a href="#">Holy Trinity Presbyterian Church,</a><br/> North Fort Myers</p>                      |                                                                      |
| <p><a href="#">Faith Presbyterian Church</a><br/> Cape Coral</p>                                    | <p><a href="#">First Presbyterian Church,</a><br/> Lehigh Acres</p>  |
| <p><a href="#">Buckingham Presbyterian Church,</a><br/> Fort Myers</p>                              | <p><a href="#">Covenant Presbyterian Church,</a><br/> Fort Myers</p> |
| <p><a href="#">Cypress Lake Presbyterian Church,</a><br/> Fort Myers</p>                            | <p><a href="#">First Presbyterian Church,</a><br/> Fort Myers</p>    |
| <p><a href="#">Hope United Church (PCUSA),</a><br/> Fort Myers</p>                                  | <p><a href="#">Chapel by the Sea,</a><br/> Fort Myers Beach</p>      |
| <p><a href="#">First Presbyterian Church,</a><br/> Bonita Springs</p>                               |                                                                      |
| <p><a href="#">First Presbyterian Church,</a><br/> Naples</p>                                       | <p><a href="#">Lely Presbyterian Church,</a><br/> Naples</p>         |
| <p><a href="#">Moorings Presbyterian Church,</a><br/> Naples</p>                                    | <p><a href="#">Vanderbilt Presbyterian Church,</a><br/> Naples</p>   |