



PEACE RIVER PRESBYTERY



WEEKLY PRESBYTERY LETTER – JANUARY 7, 2015

Rev. Graham Hart, General Presbyter

TODAY – Breathe – This is the Day that the Lord has made

Christmas is over, Epiphany was Tuesday, and New Year, with all its possibilities and unknowns, is before us; which leaves us with today. As one who by nature is always thinking ahead and developing multiple future scenarios, or revisiting the past, living fully in this moment sometimes has been a challenge. Yet, today is what, by God's grace, we have. As the Psalmist (118:24) said: *This is the day that the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.*



So how do we do that? How do we deal with our tendencies to day-dream about “what if,” or focus on “if only,” rather than be aware and mindful and fully present in this moment.

There is a parable told ([see article in Psychology Today](#)) about a telephone booth placed in the middle of a folk festival. The sign on the booth says: Phone line to God. A woman steps into the booth and asks God: "How can I live more in the moment?" For her, “life” was being drowned out by anxiety, fear, inner negative self-talk, self-doubt, and the noise of the world around her.

"Breathe," came the reply.

One of the exercises in Mindfulness Training ([click here for video](#)) is to learn to pay attention to one's breath; for in doing that we can be more fully present and aware, and not reactive and distracted. Many of us have been taught that when angry, count to 10 before we say a word and regret what we say. In short, breathe. When we remember to do that we have a chance to not get swept away in the emotionality of the moment.

So as we begin this year, as individuals, as well as corporately as a Presbytery, I invite us to breathe.

Why? There is so much change happening within our culture, there are so many uncertainties as we look to the future, there is so much fear when we think about all the what ifs, there is so much anger when we listen to our politicians and their talk radio cheer-leaders we are left to wonder: is there any hope?

Watching the latest episode of Downton Abbey, I was struck by the huge shift in culture, values, etiquette, manners, class distinctions, social status, and economic realities that were going on in English Society in the first four decades of the 20th century. We think we are the only ones who are going through times of transition and rapid change. So what can get us through in the Year of our Lord – 2015?

In scripture, the root word for breath and spirit are the same. In the beginning the spirit (breath) of God hovered over the place of the deep (i.e. darkness and chaos), and brought light and life and order. In the beginning God breathed the breath of life into humankind. So what might God be telling us in this time? Breathe... pay attention to the breath of life... make space for the Spirit of God to be present and work... figure out how to be in the moment with God in that moment. Breathe.

So as we face significant shifts in cultural norms and values, breathe.

As we face a drop in church membership and the next generation of retirees moving to Florida and NOT automatically coming to church, as has been the habit of past generations, breathe, don't panic, but do something. Keep your calendar marked for the presentation of [Amy Hanson](#), Baby-Boomer and Beyond ([click here for more info](#)) on February 26, and the regional workshops on Friday, February 27.

When we wonder what is God up to in the world, is the global church in trouble?... breathe...God is at work as God has been for a long time. Mark your calendars for a Saturday morning, February 28th, presentation by Hunter Ferrell, director of Global Mission for the PCUSA ([click here for video](#)).

Breathe is not an excuse to do nothing, but it is a way for us to live into the admonishment of scripture to FEAR NOT.



Note that the phrases "don't be afraid, do not fear, or "fear not," which was the word the angel brought to a young girl named Mary, occur several hundred times in the Bible. Why? When we let fear dominate, we cannot be present in the moment and we will miss what God is doing in our world and lives.

So as we begin this year, we can rejoice that when we focus on that life giving breath, the cool air coming in and warm out breathed out, just pausing to do that may:

- clear our minds and hearts enough to help us see what God is up to,
- help us not be so anxious,
- enable us see what - in our pre-occupation with the future or rehearsing the past - we missed.

This is the day the Lord has given Peace River Presbytery, let us be glad and rejoice in it. As always, I would love to hear your thoughts.

Thanks be to God who continues to be our rudder to guide us in the way, and wind (breath) that sends us on our journey!

Graham

Graham Hart

The articles below may interest you. Click on the underlined phrases.

[The new cardinals](#)

National Catholic Reporter: This pope of surprises is using his surprises to upset the sense of predictability that the conferral of red hats once entailed.

[Tax breaks for churches: favoring believers over nonbelievers?](#)

Orange County (Calif.) Register: Religious organizations are largely exempt from taxes, but as fewer people align themselves with organized religions, they may be less willing to give believers tax breaks.

[Taming Christian rage](#)

The Atlantic: On issues like gay marriage and birth control, cultural warriors haven't changed their minds -- they just want to be left alone.

[College presidents get their own guide to social media](#)

Chronicle of Higher Education: As social media redefine how we communicate, college presidents have to ponder a few questions.

[From pulpit to politics: a pastor takes her work to the wider world](#)

NPR: After 30 years as a UMC pastor, Faith Whitmore now takes her Christian values into the world and fulfills her vocation as a congressional staffer.

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.

- Volunteer Position Opening: Publications Coordinator ([click for information](#))
- Meal Serving Schedule ([click for information](#))
- 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

[Fall 2014 Newsletter](#)

PRAYER NEEDS:

Please pray for:

- Pat Woody and family, in the loss of Rev. Dr. Ray Woody, Pastor Emeritus of Siesta Key Chapel.
From Pat Woody: The Rev. Dr. H. Ray Woody peacefully left this world on Jan. 1, 2015 at 1 a.m. Celebration of Life service at First Presbyterian Church, 2050 Oak St., Sarasota, FL will be held at 11 a.m. on January 9, 2015. Thank you for your prayers during his illness. Shalom, Pat Woody

Please continue to pray for:

- 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 – undergoing strong chemotherapy and radiation treatments for breast cancer.
- 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 – long recovery continues after being hit by a bus several months ago. Lives in Myanmar.
- Donna Blaser (wife of Wayne Blaser) – undergoing difficult treatment (Chemotherapy infusions) for Non-Hodgkins Lymphoma
- Dr. Stephen A. Hayner, President of Columbia Seminary – cancer
- 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: JANUARY 2015:

January 4	<u>Bee Ridge Presbyterian Church, Sarasota</u> Pastor: Rev. Dr. Karl Kling email: KarlKlingdmin@gmail.com
January 11	<u>Church of the Palms, Sarasota</u> Pastor: Rev. Dr. Stephen McConnell email: smcconnell@churchofthepalms.org Associate Pastor: Rev. Dr. Hmingi Browne email: hbrowne@churchofthepalms.org Exec. Assoc. Pastor: Rev. Bruce Hedgepeth email: bhedgepeth@churchofthepalms.org
January 18	<u>First Presbyterian Church, Sarasota</u> Pastor: Rev. Dr. Glen Bell email: gbell@FirstPresSarasota.org Associate Pastor: Rev. Melanie Kim

email: mkim@FirstPresSarasota.org

January 25

Northminster Presbyterian Church, Sarasota
Pastor: Rev. Dr. Christopher Carlson
email: pastorchrisc@npcsarasota.org

PRESBYTERY CALENDAR: JANUARY 2015

January 13

Committee On Ministry

January 15

Steering Committee

January 18

Installation Service for Rev. Dr. Jack Haberer at Vanderbilt Presbyterian

January 19

Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day – PRP Office Closed

January 22

Mision Peniel Task Force at Vanderbilt Presbyterian

January 25

Installation Service for Rev. Dr. Stephen Adkison at Chapel By The Sea