



PEACE RIVER PRESBYTERY



WEEKLY PRESBYTERY LETTER - MARCH 24, 2015 Rev. Graham Hart - General Presbyter

What Stirs Our Passions? – Palm Sunday 2015

[\(Click here to send in your responses\)](#)

And please check out the links.

This time of year, at the gym, many of the TV's on the workout equipment are tuned to one of the NCAA March Madness basketball games. As I was about to begin my workout, I glanced up at the TV screen on the exercise treadmill next to me. Without knowing who was playing, or where they were playing, I knew exactly what had just happened. It was the final seconds of the game and one team had just scored the game winning basket. What followed, which is what I saw, was a joyous, energetic, emotional celebration of that victory. There were high-fives, chest bumps, and an exuberant fist pumping run around the court.

Now I am not suggesting we actually do this, but this past week I have been wondering and imagining what might get us as Christians, Presbyterians in particular, to do our own fist pumping celebration? We have all seen the pictures and felt the emotions of sports figures or teams in their moment of victory. Even our Presidents, on occasion, have done some chest bumping to celebrate something important. So what gets us stirred?



On the first Palm Sunday, in the traditional Palm Sunday scripture reading (click here – [Luke 19:28-40](#)), Jesus said, in response to the religious folks in his day who had told him that the crowds were getting a little too impassioned and that he needed to settle them down, that even the stones would cry out in recognition of what was about to happen (i.e.

³⁹Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, “Teacher, order your disciples to stop.” ⁴⁰He answered, “I tell you, if these were silent, the stones would shout out).



The great sadness I sometimes feel (and maybe our Lord feels) is that when I look at the church today, we seem to be most passionate when we are fighting against each other. We seem to get more stirred about what a pastor did or didn't do; or what the Presbytery did or didn't allow us to do; or what the General Assembly decided or didn't get right.

There is a time and place for all of our intramural arguing. However, Jesus, knowing human nature, said that when it comes to relational issues that might divide us in the church, there is a way to deal with it ([see Matthew 18:15-20 – click here](#)). And when it comes to dealing with some of the fine points of theology, I believe if we acknowledge foundational beliefs, such as: “Jesus is Lord,” and if we find common agreement in what was expressed in the early churches' creedal documents that defined orthodoxy and orthopraxis, such as the Apostles' Creed, then we function at our best when we let God do the weeding, which is what I believe Jesus is suggesting in [Matthew 13:23-43 – click here](#)).

So what would get us excited as a congregation, or Presbytery, or denomination to do some fist pounding or be like the Michigan State Football Team when their coach and university President joined the team in a 4 minute celebration dance after winning the Rose Bowl ([click here for an entertaining video](#))?

- Would we do some fist pounding after hearing true stories of the difference Family Promise has made in the lives of those families who have been housed in some of our churches?
- Would we dance for joy when we had folks not just join our church, but with passion and commitment roll up their sleeves and become involved in ministries that were making a difference in people's lives?
- Would we lift up a corporate shout when we hear of the incredible work some of our mission Co-Workers like the Morgans ([click here for video](#)) and Turks ([click here for link](#)) are doing?
- How would we celebrate with a church that re-discovered its neighborhood, and now has a community Saturday night Bible study and meal that feeds up to 100 neighbors who never before entered the doors of the church, but are now attending?

Question:

- What would you like to share and celebrate that is happening in your congregation which is a demonstration of the transforming power of Jesus at work?
- What is your church now doing to which you would like to say a loud and joyous 'YES'?

As we approach this Palm Sunday, please e-mail me ([click here](#)) your thoughts, examples, responses and hopes. I pray that at some point, as a presbytery, we can acknowledge and celebrate those victories, work to see your yearnings become reality, and do our own version of a fist pump as to how God is at work in our hearts, lives, congregations, and Presbytery.

Grateful to God who continues to be the Wind in our Sails and the Rudder to Guide us in the Way,

Graham

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The articles below may be of interest to you ...

[Poll: Americans are disconnected from religion, but believe in God](#)

Associated Press: Americans are likelier than ever to not feel connected to any particular religion, but no less likely to believe in God.

[The 'African moment' in global Catholicism gathers steam](#)

Crux: It's already clear that one of the Catholic megatrends of our time is the coming of age of the Church in Africa, which gives three recent storylines special importance.

[Oregon's church for sex offenders](#)

The Daily Beast: The members of Light My Way are dedicated to God, community, and one another. And they're all registered sex offenders.

[College freshmen less religious than ever -- just like their parents](#)

Religion News Service: Over a quarter of college freshmen say that they have no religion. This makes them the least religious cohort in four decades of the surveys conducted by UCLA.

[Isis tries to destroy all traces of Christianity in Mosul by defacing church and replacing crosses with Islamic State flags](#)

The Independent: Isis militants have attacked a Christian church and cemetery in Iraq, vandalizing crosses and defacing religious artifacts in yet another assault on the country's rich cultural history.

[Why is The Lilly Endowment and the Henry Luce Foundation funding religion journalism?](#)

Inside Philanthropy: The short answer -- if you journalists out there can handle it -- is that some journalists just don't get it.

[Praying with icons](#)

Crux: Praying with icons is a practice on the rise in the West, as Catholics and other Christians explore long-neglected means of whispering their longings to God.

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

[Position Opening: Executive Director](#)

[Winter 2015 Newsletter](#)

[Fall 2014 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:

- 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: MARCH 2015:

March 1	<u>Trinity Presbyterian Church, Venice</u> Pastor: Rev. Dr. Chuck Wiggins email: cjw049@gmail.com
March 8	<u>Venice Presbyterian Church, Venice</u> Pastor: Rev. Chris Romig email: cromig@venicepresbyterian.org Associate Pastor: Rev. Lyn Olson email: lolson@venicepresbyterian.org Associate Pastor: Rev. Todd Reinschmidt email: treinschmidt@venicepresbyterian.org
March 15	<u>First Presbyterian Church, Arcadia</u> Temporary Supply Pastor: Rev. Dr. John Henry email: irrev.rev.316@gmail.com
March 22	<u>First Presbyterian Church, Bonita Springs</u> Pastor: Rev. Dr. Doug Pratt email: dpratt@fpcbonita.org Associate Pastor: Rev. Dr. Paul Fahnestock Email: pfahnestock@fpcbonita.org Associate Pastor: Rev. Steven Grant Email: sgrant@fpcbonita.org
March 29	<u>Braden River Presbyterian Church, Bradenton</u> Pastor: Rev. Glenn Buzbee, Jr. email: revglennb@gmail.com

PRESBYTERY CALENDAR: MARCH 2015

You may view the entire calendar on the Presbytery web site: www.peaceriverpresbytery.org

March 29

Palm Sunday