



PEACE RIVER PRESBYTERY



Weekly Presbytery Letter – April 7, 2016
Rev. Graham Hart, General Presbyter

So where are we going? 2016 Focus Areas

It is the time of year when many of us are finalizing summer plans. Without planning and forethought, that special trip or family vacation won't happen. So, as a Presbytery, where are we going this summer and beyond (metaphorically speaking)? Without some forethought, prayer and conversation among us, we will do what is necessary, but may not address what is important and essential for the future, and may never get to that special place that God is inviting us to.



At the January Presbytery meeting, in Part 1 of the [General Presbyter's Annual Report \(click here\)](#), I shared some of the highlights of the past several years. In Part 2, fifteen initiatives/areas were named, in which the Presbytery has made some initial decisions, or said were important, or are still in very much in process, but not yet completed.

At the March meeting of the Steering Committee, members went through a brief discernment exercise to decide, of those 15 items, what is essential for the Steering Committee and Presbytery to address in the coming year. Nine of the items on the list are currently being addressed by a committee or task force, and the Steering Committee felt its job was to just encourage the folks working on that initiative/project. Three of the areas were put up on the shelf for a season. Of the remaining items, the Steering Committee lifted up the following three to **give priority focus, time, and energy**:

1. Explore the question of how we, as a Presbytery, come together, stay together, and serve together rather than being "every church for itself!" Also, address how we can increase the sense of collegiality among pastors and congregations, and focus on those areas which bring us together, help us stay together, and launch us out in mission together.

2. Lift up and explore the question of Church Growth, Church Transformation, and Congregational Re-development. Through the efforts of the Committee on Ministry, the Board of Trustees, the Missional Team, and other teams, the Steering Committee will look to find new ways to:
 - a. address issues of church re-development, congregational transformation, and new church development;
 - b. explore how to begin new worshipping communities;
 - c. deepen the support among the churches that have solo pastors;
 - d. explore how we can strengthen efforts in church re-vitalization (i.e. Can we form a cohort and hire a coach to work with pastors who are doing re-development/transformation work?);
 - e. encourage pastors to be of mutual support to each other;
 - f. learn, ask questions, and enter into conversations with a congregation to discern how the Presbytery – which is us together – can be of deeper support, encouragement and help before there is a crisis, a conflict, or it's too late;
 - g. encourage congregations to talk with each other and ask if there are emerging needs in our area, and how, as congregations, we can work together to address those needs;
 - h. learn how to reach baby-boomers, who, just because they are moving here in great numbers, may not come to our churches in great numbers;
 - i. begin doing some scenario planning (i.e. What do we envision for each of our congregations in the next 5 or 10 years? How do we plan for the possibility that some of our current 100-300 member churches in 2025 may not be able to afford full time pastoral leadership?)
3. Revisit our organizational structure to see how best to carry out the responsibilities of the Missional and Vision Team, which have not been able to function as hoped in our new design.

So, like planning a summer trip, we know where we want to go, but the question is how to get there. If you would like to suggest ideas or best practices on how to move forward in these areas, or something that another presbytery or organization has done, please send your suggestions to either [Kathleen Weller](#), Moderator, Steering Committee, or myself ([click here](#))

Glad to be on this journey with you.

Graham

Graham Hart
General Presbyter
Peace River Presbytery
graham@peacriverpresbytery.org

MEMORIAL SERVICE

for The Reverend R. Craig Countiss
Monday, April 11, 10:00 a.m.
First Presbyterian Church, Lehigh Acres

Honorably Retired, Craig served Peace River Presbytery over the years as Stated Supply Pastor of First Presbyterian Church, Lehigh Acres, Pastor of Holy Trinity Presbyterian Church, and Stated Clerk of Peace River Presbytery.

Craig died on Good Friday, March 25, 2016. Craig is survived by his wife, Liz, and his daughter, Terry.

STATED MEETING of PRESBYTERY

Thursday, April 28, 2016

Northminster Presbyterian Church, Sarasota

3131 61st Street / Sarasota / 34243
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Registration begins at 8:00 a.m.

Meeting begins at 9:30 a.m.

Finance Forum at 9:00-9:25 a.m., with the Treasurer and Board of Trustees,  
for everyone interested in learning more  
about the Presbytery's budget and the *Three Streams of Giving*.  
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**** Lunch reservations are required by Friday, April 22. ****

Lunch is \$10.00, payable at registration.

To make reservations, contact Lori at the Presbytery Office,

lori@peacriverpresbytery.org / 941-426-8421.

*Include your name and your church name.

Group reservations must include the names of all included.

(Please note: reservations are only required for lunch, not for the meeting.)
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The packet for the meeting will be posted on the  
Presbytery's web site on Thursday, April 21.

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

*A Ministry to the Farmworkers in Wimauma*

Summer will be here before you know it! Beth-El has numerous mission opportunities for adults and youth. From leading Vacation Bible School, to work groups helping out in our community, to scholarships for kids to go to camp at Cedarkirk, there are many ways your church can help support this valuable mission. Call Javier today at 813-633-1548 ext. 228, or email him at [Javier@beth-el.org](mailto:Javier@beth-el.org) to learn more.

### Open House:

April 17th 2-5pm

The mission of Beth-El is committed to supporting the farm working community and our neighbors in need through opportunities for hunger relief, education, healthcare, and spiritual growth.

During the open house, guests will have an opportunity to learn more about these initiatives as well as see many of the new renovations around our campus. There will also be bus tours of the local community so that visitors can gain a first hand glimpse of the challenges many of our farmworkers face. For more information, please call us at 813-633-1548.

### Summer Employment Opportunity:

Beth-El is looking for an older teen or adult to lead the summer youth activities.

The position will lead all youth activities; serve as a liaison with Cedarkirk for our scholarship program, and assist the operations manager in coordinating incoming mission teams. A valid driver's license is required. For more information, or to apply, please contact Beth-El at [info@beth-el.org](mailto:info@beth-el.org).

*Kathy*

Kathleen Dain  
Executive Director

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www.beth-el.org
[April Newsletter](#)

CEDARKIRK CAMP & CONFERENCE CENTER

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

www.cedarkirk.org

Summer is coming soon! It is hard to believe, but summer camp preparations are already underway. This summer's theme, FEARLESS FAITH, will help campers focus on how they become part of, gain support from, and build their own Christ-centered communities. By looking at leaders from the Bible who used communities given to them by God, campers will be empowered to draw courage from friends, family, and community, stand up to injustice and help change attitudes, forgive others, and connect to and welcome all people. Please help Cedarkirk by letting the children and youth of your church or community know about the unique opportunities available this summer. We are also looking for volunteer nurses and worship leaders for the week-long sessions.

If you have any questions, please contact the camp office at (813) 685-4224 or visit www.cedarkirk.org.

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](#))

RELIGION IN THE NEWS – ARTICLES THAT HAVE COME ACROSS MY DESK OR BEEN SENT TO ME (Graham):

[As United Methodist Church heads toward vote on gay marriage, one pastor stakes his claim](#)

The Washington Post: With less than 50 days to go in Rev. Mike Tupper's sleep-out, his end is in sight: the global conference at which the United Methodist Church will soon vote whether to change its stance on gay marriage.

[The Baptist-On-Baptist fight within Georgia's 'religious liberty' debate](#)

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution: Tucked within Gov. Nathan Deal's veto message on "religious liberty" legislation was a solid blow struck in the 35-year-old fight over what it means to be a Baptist in the South.

[Apocalyptic upbringing: how I recovered from my terrifying evangelical childhood](#)

The (London) Guardian: Raised under the dark bubble of religious fundamentalism, Josiah Hesse recalls a childhood filled with gloom, doom and preparing for the end of the world.

[Sympathy for the devils: I was a pastor to Trump supporters](#)

Religion Dispatches: The people who vote for America's Problem Child are the people let down by our society's failed promises, including religious promises, says Daniel Schultz.

[More than half of people living in Scotland have no religion](#)

The (Glasgow, Scotland) National: Affiliation with the Church of Scotland is in decline while levels of identification with other religions remain relatively unchanged.

[Elaine A. Heath: God's people, gathered, blessed and sent out](#)

Small missional communities, anchored to a local congregation, offer a different way of being church, one that offers hope for renewal and new life, says the evangelism scholar.

EVENTS AROUND THE PRESBYTERY

The following are hosted by Peace River churches and are open to all:

[Intensive Journal Workshop at Pine Shores Presbyterian](#)

April 8-11, 2016

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

The following are position openings in PRP churches.

Click on the title for more information.

[Part-Time Employment Positions](#) – Chapel By The Sea, Fort Myers Beach

[Part-Time Bookkeeper / Accounting Clerk](#) – Northminster Presbyterian Church, Sarasota

PRAYER NEEDS:

Please pray for:

- Rev. Dr. Doug and Jeanne Pratt – Jeanne's sister, Sue, passed away this week in Ohio. Doug and Jeanne have traveled to Ohio to be with family.
- Rev. Dr. Lou Thompson – will have surgery on his neck vertebrae on Friday, April 8.

Please continue to pray for:

- Mrs. Liz Countiss – Rev. Craig Countiss passed away on Good Friday, March 25 (see announcement earlier in this newsletter). Pray for comfort and peace for Liz.
- The family and other loved ones of Ruling Elder Phyllis Maisel, of Northminster P.C., who passed away on March 16. Phyllis was very active in the Presbytery.
- 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
- 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

CHURCH PRAYER GUIDE: APRIL 2016:

April 3	<u>Christ Church of Longboat Key</u> Stated Supply Pastor: Rev. Dr. Norman Pritchard Email: revnmp@comcast.net
April 10	<u>First Presbyterian Church, Naples</u> Pastor: Rev. Craig Goodrich Email: PJACgood@verizon.net
April 17	<u>Lely Presbyterian Church, Naples</u> Pastor: Rev. Dr. Jim Kirk email: jimkirk12122234@gmail.com
April 24	<u>Moorings Presbyterian Church, Naples</u> Pastor: Rev. Dr. Doug Learned email: jsullivan@mooringschurch.org Associate Pastor: Rev. Jaci Smith Patman email: jpatman@mooringschurch.org

PRESBYTERY CALENDAR: APRIL 2016

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

April 8-9

Cedarkirk Spring Bash

April 12

Committee on Ministry (9:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m.)

April 13

Committee on Preparation for Ministry (10:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.)

April 15-16

Cedarkirk Spring Bash

April 20

Mision Peniel Task Force @ Covenant P.C., Ft. Myers (9:30 -11:30 a.m.)

April 21

Personnel Team (10:00-11:30 a.m.)

Congregational Grants Task Force (11:45 a.m.-12:45 p.m.)

April 22-23

Cedarkirk Spring Bash

April 28

Stated Meeting of Presbytery at Northminster, Sarasota



CHURCHES OF PEACE RIVER PRESBYTERY

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

Braden River Presbyterian Church, Bradenton	First Presbyterian Church, Bradenton
Kirkwood Presbyterian Church, Bradenton	Palma Sola Presbyterian Church, Bradenton
Westminster Presbyterian Church, Bradenton	Palmetto Presbyterian Church, Palmetto – office@ppcfl.org
Christ Church of Longboat Key Longboat Key	Peace Presbyterian Church, Lakewood Ranch
Bee Ridge Presbyterian Church, Sarasota	Church of the Palms, Sarasota
First Presbyterian Church, Sarasota	Northminster Presbyterian Church, Sarasota
Pine Shores Presbyterian Church, Sarasota	Presbyterian Church of the Covenant, Sarasota

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

