



PEACE RIVER PRESBYTERY



Weekly Presbytery Letter – July 8, 2016 Rev. Graham P. Hart, General Presbyter

Speaking from the Hart - A July 4th Postscript The Unfinished Business of a Nation and a Church

The fireworks and family picnics are over, but that does not mean for Presbyterians that we stop asking what does it mean to be citizens of both the kingdom of God as well as citizens of a nation. In Philadelphia, a city founded as a Quaker Experiment, a place that was to be governed by brotherly love as much as it was by law, a bunch of Presbyterians, Congregationalists and Episcopalians gathered in 1776 to find a better way.

When our forebearers set out on an unknown and uncharted course, they declared: *We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. --That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed...*

As a nation, we can be thankful that they got much right; but as the tragedies in Minneapolis, Baton Rouge and Dallas have shown, there is much unfinished business. When Madison, Hamilton, Franklin, Washington and others got into the details of governing, and wrote the U.S. Constitution a decade later, it turned out that women and slaves were still left without all their inalienable rights.



So for the past 250 years each generation has worked at perfecting and preserving a more perfect union. In our time, as the events of the past week have so tragically shown, there is still much to be done. In 2016, as Presbyterians, what's our part in the healing of our nation?

It has been alleged that one of King George's aides referred to our American War of Independence as the Presbyterian Rebellion. The Scot and Scot-Irish Presbyterians, as well as the ministers of their churches, are often cited as creating the space that allowed the drive for independence to ferment and the principles of democracy to grow. ([click here for more information](#)).

The Presbyterian Church, from our earliest beginnings in America, has not turned away from engaging in the public conversation of forming a more perfect union. **240 years later, how can we collectively, as a denomination, presbytery, or group of congregations in the same town, create space for the kind of public conversations that needs to happen today?**

As this post July 4th week has shown, as Americans we need to talk ... we've got issues.

- Something is wrong when in one week 2 African-American men are tragically killed, and then 6 police officers are targeted and killed; and we have watched in horror the videos of all of this.
- Something is wrong when in a five-year period (2011-2015) 656 police officers are killed in the line of duty (and that does not include 2016); something is wrong, especially when we look to the country from whom we fought for our independence. In Great Britain, in that same time frame 6 officers have been killed in the line of duty.
- Something is wrong when somewhere between 930–1230 individuals (Bureau of Justice) a year are killed by police. In Great Britain in from 2011-2015 there were 6. (Note- although the Attorney General was instructed by Congress in 1994 to gather these statistics, that has not been done which is why there are variance in these numbers).
- Something is wrong when statistics kept by [The Guardian](#) newspaper which tracked U.S. killings by police and other law enforcement agencies in 2015, and counted 1140 killed, with rates per million of 2.92 for "white" people, 7.2 for "black", and 3.5 for "Hispanic/Latino", 1.34 for "Asian/Pacific Islander", and 3.4 for "Native American".
- Something is wrong...

My question is: If, in the 1720's- 1770's, while Presbyterians were engaged in a conversation that led to the forming of our nation, they created a safe space for what I am sure were some heated debates, how can we have the courage to begin this conversation on the topics of violence, guns, racism?

What does that look like?

- Praying for the healing of our nation is a must, as is praying for the grieving families of those killed in Dallas, Minneapolis, and Baton Rouge.
- Helping shape and creating space for this kind of conversation in our churches and communities is a part of who we are as Presbyterians ... it's in our history.
- Affirming, remembering and claiming again our Presbyterian values, beliefs and theology as spelled out in the newly adopted Confession of Belhar ([click here for link](#)) or the Great Ends of the Church (see Book of Order – F-1.0304), may help us find our way in such a time this. *The great ends of the church are:*

*The proclamation of the gospel for the salvation of humankind
The shelter, nurture, and spiritual fellowship of the children of God
The maintenance of divine worship
The preservation of the truth
The promotion of social righteousness
The exhibition of the Kingdom of Heaven to the world.*

The questions are: What do we want to do? What is God inviting us to do? What must we do?

Would love to hear your thoughts.

Praying for the healing of our nation and people,

Graham

Graham Hart

General Presbyter

graham@peacriverpresbytery.org

ARTICLES of INTEREST:

[AME Church continues 200-year journey toward racial justice](#)

Religion News Service: Just as their religious ancestors did exactly two centuries ago, members of the AME Church made a pilgrimage to Philadelphia on Wednesday for the opening of the denomination's General Conference.

[We keep spending our treasure on war](#)

National Catholic Reporter: As Will Rogers said, "You can't say that civilization don't advance, however, for in every war they kill you in a new way."

[Pope Francis urged mercy toward divorced Catholics. Now bishops are deciding what that really means.](#)

The Washington Post: Tiny clues are starting to come in the United States, where at least two bishops issued quite different reactions to the possibility of changed place for divorced and remarried Catholics.

[Eid al-Fitr 2016: understanding the differences among America's Muslims](#)

The Conversation: For a group that makes up maybe one percent of the country's population and hails from every corner of the Earth, American Muslims are equally burdened and blessed in their complexity.

Most Americans believe we should have gun regulation. Here is why those who don't are winning the debate.

Americans on each side of the gun control debate agree the threat from violence is real, but support different responses -- either regulate the sale of guns or make sure a gun is in the hand of every good guy, the Conversation reports. How could groups who hold these [disparate views ever agree?](#)

Registration Deadline approaching – This is a great conference in our backyard!



<https://pma.pcusa.org/ministries/evangelism-church-growth/go-disciple-live-be-light/>

The Go Disciple Live "Be the Light" Conference, formerly known as the Evangelism and Church Growth Conference, is a vibrant gathering of Presbyterians committed to disciple-making, which leads to authentic evangelism, effective church transformation, justice, and church planting through 1001 new worshipping communities. It will be held at the [Trade Winds Island Resorts](#) in St. Pete Beach, Florida.

The plenary speakers will engage us in some compelling talks and conversations: Casey Fitzgerald, biblical storytelling; Mike Breen, disciple making; and Ralph Watkins, authentic evangelism. We hope you will join us for a week of inspiration, nurture, and equipping. As we explore our theme of "Be the Light" (Matthew 5:14-16) through plenary speakers, workshops, affinity groups, and shared community, we pray we will experience the Holy Spirit strengthening us to follow Jesus into our neighborhoods and communities.

On-site check in will be open Monday, August 8, from 10:00 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. Welcome and orientation will begin at 5:30 p.m. The conference concludes with worship on Thursday, August 11, at 7:00 p.m.

[REGISTRATION](#)

[CONFERENCE HOTELS/TRAVEL](#)

[EXHIBITORS/SCHOLARSHIPS](#)

[PLENARY SPEAKERS](#)

[TUESDAY & THURSDAY WORKSHOPS](#)

[WEDNESDAY WORKSHOPS](#)

REGISTRATION ([CLICK HERE](#))

Persons staying at a conference hotel (includes three lunches and two dinners):

(last day to register - July 15): **\$350**

Persons not staying at a conference hotel:

Florida resident commuter with meals: **\$275**

Commuter without meals: **\$225**

Registration deadline: July 15, 2016

Register online at: pcusa.org/BetheLight

Education Advocates Needed for Faith Place Safety

The Committee on Ministry is creating an initiative for promoting safe worship places and spaces, healthy relationship boundaries, healing, hope and welcome through education awareness, prevention and resources.

Two members of COM are providing leadership to the effort but need to add specific skills to the work team. Those skills are:

- *someone who is involved with children or youth and has an interest in evaluating the educational/training resources available in this field
- *someone who is media savvy and could assist with videography, DVD production, or web site links

The time commitment will be limited to 90 days and primarily consisting of teleconference meetings, working/evaluating/planning in the convenience of your 'home' office.

If you feel called to serve, please contact Cynthia Brasher at cynthia.brasher@leememorial.org

FALL REGIONAL GATHERINGS

All are invited to attend any of the following gatherings. These are not Presbytery Stated Meetings, but rather a chance to gather with other PRP churches in your region and share, encourage, and be encouraged. More details to come.

The Fall Regional Gatherings held last year (2015) were well received and the attendees were excited and encouraged to have had the opportunity to gather with others from their area.

Thursday, September 1: South Region

Location: Hope United Presbyterian Church
7470 Hickory Rd SE, Fort Myers, 33912
Time: 8:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.
Reservation: Yes ... by Thursday, August 25. Contact church office at 239-267-3331.
Meal: Breakfast - \$5.00 per person

Wednesday, September 7: Central Region

Location: St. Paul's Presbyterian Church
5550 Sumter Blvd., North Port, 34287
Time: 8:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.
Reservation: Yes ... by Wednesday, August 31. Contact church office at 941-426-2552.
Meal: Breakfast - \$5.00 per person

Thursday, September 8: North Region

Location: Oak Pointe Church (*formerly Whitfield Estates Presbyterian Church*)
1215 Bayshore Gardens Pkwy., Bradenton, 34207
Time: 8:30 a.m.-1:00 p.m.
Reservation: Yes ... by Thursday, September 1. Contact church office at 941-355-0440.
Meals: Light morning refreshments & light lunch - \$10.00 per person

Mark your calendars and save the dates! Remember to call the church office with your reservation by the deadline listed for that location.

BETH-EL FARMWORKER MINISTRY, INC.

A Ministry to the Farmworkers in Wimauma

*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 to learn more.

*Beth-El Farmworker Ministry is planning its 40th anniversary celebration for the week of November 5th-6th. In preparation, we are seeking individuals willing to donate their air miles to help support national speakers who will be traveling to Beth-El to speak at the event. For more information, or to donate, please contact Kathy Dain at 813-633-1548.

Kathy

Kathleen Dain
Executive Director

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[www.beth-el.org](http://www.beth-el.org)  
[June Newsletter](#)

## CEDARKIRK CAMP & CONFERENCE CENTER

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

[www.cedarkirk.org](http://www.cedarkirk.org)

**Summer is here!** 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](http://www.cedarkirk.org).

## MISION PENIEL

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

The Mision Peniel Team 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](#))

## EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

- [Pastoral Intern – Overview](#) – [Position Description](#) – Siesta Key Chapel

## PRAYER NEEDS

### **Please pray for:**

- Phil Kuehl (husband of Rev. Elizabeth Kuehl, Faith, Cape Coral) – seriously injured when struck by a car while riding his bicycle.

**Please continue to pray for:**

- Rev. Dr. Paul Eckel - health
- Amy Dunn (daughter of Joyce Dunn, Administrator of St. Paul's Presbyterian) – 38 years old; in Hospice care in Port Charlotte with stage 4 cancer; 3 children. Please pray for Joyce and the family also.
- Joyce Geary (member of Committee on Ministry) – loss of her father on June 9.
- Jim & Becky Beckwith - health
- 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: JULY 2016:**

|         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|---------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| July 3  | <u>Northminster Presbyterian Church, Sarasota</u><br>Pastor: Rev. Dr. Christopher Carlson<br>email: <a href="mailto:pastorchris@npcsarasota.org">pastorchris@npcsarasota.org</a>                                                                                                       |
| July 10 | <u>Pine Shores Presbyterian Church, Sarasota</u><br>Co-Pastor: Rev. Dr. Bruce Wismer<br>email: <a href="mailto:bruce@pineshorespres.org">bruce@pineshorespres.org</a><br>Co-Pastor: Rev. Karen Wismer<br>email: <a href="mailto:karen@pineshorespres.org">karen@pineshorespres.org</a> |
| July 17 | <u>Presbyterian Church of the Covenant, Sarasota</u><br>Pastor: Rev. Michael Mansperger<br>email: <a href="mailto:covenant.presbyterian@comcast.net">covenant.presbyterian@comcast.net</a>                                                                                             |
| July 24 | <u>Siesta Key Chapel, Sarasota</u><br>Pastor: Rev. Dr. Kathleen (Kathi) Wiggins<br>email: <a href="mailto:pastork@comcast.net">pastork@comcast.net</a>                                                                                                                                 |

July 31

Oak Pointe Church (formerly Whitfield Estates), Bradenton  
Temporary Supply Pastor: Rev. Jane Jones-Norris  
email: [jjn7416@gmail.com](mailto:jjn7416@gmail.com)

## **PRESBYTERY CALENDAR: JULY 2016**

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

### **July 12**

Committee on Ministry (9:00 a.m.-12:30 p.m.)

### **July 14**

Finance Team/Board of Trustees (9:30 a.m.-1:00 p.m.)

### **July 18**

Nominations and Representation Committee (10:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.)

### **July 20**

Committee on Ministry Subcommittee (9:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m.)

Mision Peniel Team – Covenant Presbyterian, Ft. Myers (9:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.)

### **July 21**

Steering Committee (9:30 a.m.-12:00 p.m.)

Personnel Team (1:00-3:00 p.m.)



## **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> |

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|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <a href="#"><u>Christ Church of Longboat Key</u></a><br>Longboat Key                                                                   | <a href="#"><u>Peace Presbyterian Church,</u></a><br>Lakewood Ranch                            |
| <a href="#"><u>Bee Ridge Presbyterian Church,</u></a><br>Sarasota                                                                      | <a href="#"><u>Church of the Palms,</u></a><br>Sarasota                                        |
| <a href="#"><u>First Presbyterian Church,</u></a><br>Sarasota                                                                          | <a href="#"><u>Northminster Presbyterian Church,</u></a><br>Sarasota                           |
| <a href="#"><u>Pine Shores Presbyterian Church,</u></a><br>Sarasota                                                                    | <a href="#"><u>Presbyterian Church of the</u></a><br><a href="#"><u>Covenant,</u></a> Sarasota |
| <a href="#"><u>Whitfield Estates Presbyterian Church,</u></a><br>Sarasota                                                              | <a href="#"><u>Siesta Key Chapel,</u></a><br>Sarasota                                          |
| <a href="#"><u>Trinity Presbyterian Church,</u></a><br>Venice                                                                          | <a href="#"><u>Venice Presbyterian Church,</u></a><br>Venice                                   |
| <a href="#"><u>Community Presbyterian Church,</u></a><br>Englewood                                                                     | <a href="#"><u>First Presbyterian Church,</u></a><br>Arcadia                                   |
| <a href="#"><u>St. Paul's Presbyterian Church,</u></a><br>North Port                                                                   | <a href="#"><u>Burnt Store Presbyterian Church,</u></a><br>Punta Gorda                         |
| Wintergarden Presbyterian Church,<br>Port Charlotte<br><a href="mailto:devon.ducheneau@gmail.com"><u>devon.ducheneau@gmail.com</u></a> | <a href="#"><u>First Presbyterian Church,</u></a><br>Port Charlotte                            |
| <a href="#"><u>Holy Trinity Presbyterian Church,</u></a><br>North Fort Myers                                                           |                                                                                                |
| <a href="#"><u>Faith Presbyterian Church</u></a><br>Cape Coral                                                                         | <a href="#"><u>First Presbyterian Church,</u></a><br>Lehigh Acres                              |
| <a href="#"><u>Buckingham Presbyterian Church,</u></a><br>Fort Myers                                                                   | <a href="#"><u>Covenant Presbyterian Church,</u></a><br>Fort Myers                             |
| <a href="#"><u>Cypress Lake Presbyterian Church,</u></a><br>Fort Myers                                                                 |                                                                                                |
| <a href="#"><u>Hope United Church (PCUSA),</u></a><br>Fort Myers                                                                       | <a href="#"><u>Chapel by the Sea,</u></a><br>Fort Myers Beach                                  |
| <a href="#"><u>First Presbyterian Church,</u></a><br>Bonita Springs                                                                    |                                                                                                |

|                                                                |                                                                  |
|----------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <a href="#"><u>First Presbyterian Church,</u></a><br>Naples    | <a href="#"><u>Lely Presbyterian Church,</u></a><br>Naples       |
| <a href="#"><u>Moorings Presbyterian Church,</u></a><br>Naples | <a href="#"><u>Vanderbilt Presbyterian Church,</u></a><br>Naples |