



PEACE RIVER PRESBYTERY



Weekly Presbytery Letter – July 14, 2016
Rev. Dr. Kathleen Weller, Moderator, Steering Committee

A CALL TO CONFESSION AND HOPE in the Summer of 2016

I come to this opportunity to write to you this week with the shots of this past month still ringing in my ears and yet with hope. Not the pie in the sky hope...but hope based in faith and truth-telling. Hope that borrows from the field of medicine...the assurance that surgery is going to make things right. But first there is that traumatic surgery to face.

I also come to this opportunity keenly aware my own history and background. Whether we heretofore believed those things matter or not, now more than ever we are needing to examine our shadow side, and the experiences that have shaped us. So let me begin with naming some of those lenses through which I've seen and heard the events in Orlando, Louisiana, Minnesota and Dallas. Because my lenses (our lenses) do dramatically filter, tint and color what we've experienced and how it has impacted us.

My lenses include being reared in Chicago...and by a Chicago Policeman. They include seeing a gun in my home every day of my formative years. My lenses include watching my dad leave for work in SWAT gear (when I was about 12 years old) and with not only his side-arm but a rifle during the days of the Democratic National Convention and when Dr. Martin Luther King was assassinated. Whew...that's a lot to look through.

On Social Media this week I've taken exception to language that seems to support one group of people over another (and have gently responded to the onslaught of people who disagree with me). With the additional lenses of woman and Minister, I am experiencing this time as a 'confessional' moment for the nation, our culture and society, but especially and certainly for the Church. And I mean Confessional in its purest sense. "We have done those things we ought not have done...and have not done those things we ought to have done..." Like our "Prayer of Confession" on Sunday mornings...I am aware I am putting some words in our mouths that aren't going to taste good. But here is what I see:

When the society around calls Sunday morning the most segregated time of any week...we've got some confessing to do. When we do not hold all life as sacred, as precious—especially when it's not convenient...we've got some confessing to do. When we've spent a lifetime of overlooking racial slurs, jokes or small acts of prejudice...a lifetime of avoiding people who don't look like us...a lifetime of not stepping outside our comfort zone...of not speaking up on behalf of someone being treated unfairly...of being too tolerant of slights toward whole people groups ...we have some confessing to do. All of this contributed to the events of the past few weeks.

While pundits gladly call this a racial crisis and it is--more deeply it's a heart crisis...a faith crisis. The Church has not led the way to unity which Christ called us to; and in our disunity, we have muzzled ourselves. Since we use theology even to divide sisters and brothers... our theology is useless to mend the divides of race. We have made ourselves mute. Sadly, but beyond all this many of us are arrogantly hard-pressed to see our complicity. Our lenses are darkened by a long history not of 'turning the other cheek' but 'turning our backs' on the ways we participate in the dis-ease of racism because it didn't affect us.

It is such unflinching self-examination and confession which is the necessary surgery for the Church, but where is the hope? In President Obama's speech at the Memorial Service in Dallas, he began by saying: "Scripture tells us that in our sufferings there is glory, because we know that suffering produces perseverance;

perseverance, character; and character, hope." I wish he would have finished the thought... "and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us."

My sense is that the Church (although it may be just me) is being called to suffer the truth of her own Confession... of "what we've done that we ought not to have done and what we've left undone that we ought to have done" It shall perhaps come to pass in the painful examination of ourselves, that we will gain the perseverance and character that leads to hope. But even this will not be of ourselves; God's Spirit will lead where God's love already is at work.

God is never without a champion.

In the days, weeks, months ahead, for *this crisis of our time* may God's champion of love be you and me.

In the peace of the Lamb,
Kathleen

ARTICLES of INTEREST:

[Dallas pastor T.D. Jakes says fatal police shootings have left nation frustrated, fatigued](#)

The Washington Post: "We have not seen the weeping of black women like this since the days of Emmett Till," says Dallas pastor.

The Los Angeles Times: [After a wrenching week, a Dallas church stops to reflect](#)

[Midnight in Dallas: What's going on?](#)

Patheos: Maria Dixon Hall was a little girl when she first heard the song by Marvin Gaye. She was a 50-year-old woman when she first wept over it late into the midnight hour.

[Empowering youth to speak when racism, discrimination loom](#)

Baptist News Global: Dallas pastor Mark Wingfield was at his church's annual youth camp, when his cell phone started vibrating with the first news of the police officer shootings in Dallas.

[How to wreck your faith: a theologian teaches "Outlaw Christianity"](#)

Religion Dispatches: Author applauds those who are willing to ask the hard questions of our faith and to challenge mainstream religion's acceptance of "God under the usual laws of dishonesty, silence, intimidation and fear."

[Q&A: What will happen now that white Christians are no longer a majority group?](#)

Deseret News National: A new book, "The End of White Christian America," released July 12, explores how this demographic shift is shaking up American politics and culture.

[Is America willing to be freed from its demons?](#)

Religion Dispatches: The simple question we face at this moment in the United States, Willie James Jennings says, is can we be freed from our demons?

[In our moment of division, who will lead?](#)

The Washington Post: While waiting for leaders, perhaps the most practical and hopeful path is to become them, Michael Gerson says.

['The End of White Christian America' is meaningless](#)

Religion News Service: If new book's bold claim doesn't seem right, it's because it isn't,

says Tobin Grant. Better title would be "The End of Non-Hispanic White Christian Protestant America."

[Pokemon Go: Getting people to Church since...Thursday](#)

Catholic News Agency: Pokemon Go phenomenon has some pastors and youth ministers wondering how they can

harness the popularity of the game for the good of the Gospel.

The (London) Guardian: [If Pokémon Go feels like a religion, that's because it kind of is](#)

[Which U.S. religious groups are oldest and youngest?](#)

Pew Research: Some key demographic factors -- particularly age -- can provide a clue as to how things might unfold in the coming decades.

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

SEPTEMBER REGIONAL GATHERINGS

THEME: DISCIPLESHIP

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.

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 continue to pray for:**

- Phil Kuehl (husband of Rev. Elizabeth Kuehl, Faith, Cape Coral) – seriously injured when struck by a car while riding his bicycle. Phil has had surgery on both hips and more, and is recovering.
- 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:**

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|---------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 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>                                                                                             |

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| 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 | <u>Oak Pointe Church (formerly Whitfield Estates), Bradenton</u><br>Temporary Supply Pastor: Rev. Jane Jones-Norris<br>email: <a href="mailto:jjn7416@gmail.com">jjn7416@gmail.com</a> |

**PRESBYTERY CALENDAR: JULY 2016**

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

**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="#"><u>Westminster Presbyterian Church,</u></a><br>Bradenton                                                            | Palmetto Presbyterian Church,<br>Palmetto – <a href="mailto:office@ppcfl.org">office@ppcfl.org</a> |
| <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">devon.ducheneau@gmail.com</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                                      |

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|---------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <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 |