



# PEACE RIVER PRESBYTERY



Weekly Presbytery Letter – April 21, 2017

Rev. Dr. Kathleen Wiggins, Personnel Team Moderator

## ~ Following Jesus ~

Following Jesus can be a scary, unsettling business. Imagine the courage it took for the first followers of Jesus to take him at his word, risk the wrath or ridicule of friends and family to follow. One of the questions on my rather lengthy Heaven-bound list-of-questions is for the first followers. I'm curious. I want to know what it was about Jesus that made them do so.

It certainly wasn't his educational or occupational credentials. It wasn't his political connections or deep pocketbook. He didn't badger them into following or, in the words of Garrison Keillor, "play on their heartstrings like a cheap guitar". Why did they accept his invitation? Two qualities come to mind: first, the unexpected humility of a man who was obviously both brilliant and Godly, a rare mix. Second, the intimacy with which he spoke of God as "my father" ("my father and yours" in John 20:17).

During his earthly ministry Jesus made claims certain to shock some, intrigue or dismay others. The "I am sayings" with their allusion to the sacred name YHWH offer a perfect example:

I am the bread of life, *John 6: 35, 48*

I am the light of the world, *John 8: 12, 9:5*

Before Abraham was, I am, *John 8: 58*

I am the door, *John 10:9*

I am the good shepherd, *John 10:11*

I am the resurrection and the life, *John 11:25*

I am the way, the truth, and the life, *John 14:6*

I am the true vine, *John 15:1*

Were it not for the resurrection, I might be tempted to say that the "I ams" went too far – claiming more than any one person could claim. But the empty Tomb changes all that. Jesus' resurrection assures us that he can be trusted. In him *is* life, light, an open door and a protective shepherd. With him as *the* way, *the* truth and *the* life discipleship might still feel scary at times with its counter-cultural demands to love enemies, welcome strangers, and feed the hungry. But what a joy to know our God is with us and with the world God loves.

## ARTICLES of INTEREST

(selected by Graham Hart)

['The resurrection is not a fantasy,' Pope Francis insists on Easter Sunday](#)

**Crux:** Pope Francis once again broke with tradition on Easter Sunday, delivering a largely improvised homily centered on a phone call from the day before with a young engineer suffering from a serious illness.

### [The hard-edged hope of Wendell Berry](#)

Christianity Today: Why his vision of humble communities and humane economies is just what the world needs right now.

### [Church revival? More liberals are filling Protestant pews.](#)

The Christian Science Monitor: Since the rise of Donald Trump, liberal-leaning churches have reported surges in attendance and newfound energy in the pews. Will it prove a temporary 'Trump bump' or a lasting change after decades of decline in mainline Protestant churches?

### [Bethlehem is struggling to protect the Church of the Nativity](#)

Newsweek: Despite local support, and the Church of the Nativity's revered place in the heart of the world's most widely practiced religion, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has taken its toll on the church.

### [Princeton Theological Seminary's fiscal path forward may include selling real estate, fewer students](#)

Princeton (N.J.) Packet: Princeton Theological Seminary is considering selling or leasing some of its real estate, including its campus in West Windsor, and shrinking the student body as part of a proposal designed to chart a sustainable fiscal path forward for the 205-year-old school.

### [Rare \\$300K coin to fund new home for Indiana church](#)

Indianapolis Star: No matter how generous you think you were when the collection plate came your way on Easter Sunday, something a widow donated to her Valparaiso church earlier this year tops it. By a lot.

### [Seminary students and their professor benefit from the wisdom of a local pastor](#)

How does a seminary professor keep learning once he has left the parish? L. Roger Owens found a teacher in the Rev. Patrice L. Fowler-Searcy, who has worked to revitalize the East Liberty neighborhood of Pittsburgh.

[> Read more](#)

### [Victoria Atkinson White: Basketball, redemption and resurrection](#)

The UNC Tar Heels wanted to redeem their devastating 2016 NCAA men's basketball championship loss. In winning this year, they accomplished their goal, but they did not change history, writes a managing director at Leadership Education at Duke Divinity.

[> Read more](#)

### [Andrew Forrest: Every dying church in America has a community garden](#)

Struggling congregations tend to chase after popular strategies rather than do what Jesus commanded -- make disciples, says the United Methodist pastor of a replanted church in Dallas.

[> Read more](#)

## FAITH PLACE SAFETY WORKSHOP

To honor the policy that all ministers and ministerial inquirers and candidates shall be required to attend a seminar offered by the Presbytery **biennially** on the issues of sexual misconduct, a ***Faith Place Safety Workshop*** will be offered on **Tuesday, May 2<sup>nd</sup>** at First Presbyterian Church of Port Charlotte (2230 Harriet Street, Port Charlotte.)

### **Schedule:**

Registration - 8:30 a.m.

Workshop - 9:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m. (lunch included)

Cost - \$10.00 payable at Registration

**Who should attend?**

All Pastors, Staff, and Elders with roles in Christian Education and Personnel, Inquirers, and Candidates.

**Reservations are necessary.** Email: [alesia@peacriverpresbytery.org](mailto:alesia@peacriverpresbytery.org), call the Presbytery Office: 941-426-8421, or fax the Presbytery Office: 941-423-9412. Include the names and titles of those who will be attending.

If unable to participate in the Presbytery-offered training, the minister shall work with Presbytery to find a suitable alternative. Failure to comply may result in investigation and discipline.

We are fortunate that Patti Jung, Visiting Professor of Christian Ethics, St. Paul School of Theology, and author of "Professional Sexual Ethics", has agreed to facilitate the workshop. This year's offering will discuss: Child Protection to include such topics as mandatory reporting, confidentiality, two-deep adult leadership rule, screening of volunteers; background checks, and specific Florida law considerations.

**Note:** A notice and flyer for this important event were sent to all Churches, Members of Presbytery, Candidates, and Inquirers last month.

## CEDARKIRK CAMP & CONFERENCE CENTER

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

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

### **2017 Events:**

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| • Spring Bash - <i>This popular retreat gives kids a 24-hour taste of Cedarkirk fun.</i>           | April 21-22,<br>April 28-29<br>May 5-6 |
| • Open House - <i>The perfect way to spend an afternoon! Come and enjoy Cedarkirk!</i>             | May 13                                 |
| • Summer Camp - <i>Our traditional week-long residential camps for 1st-12th graders.</i>           | June 4-July 28                         |
| • Challenge to Change - <i>A unique mission-trip program designed for a variety of groups.</i>     | Year-round                             |
| • Family Retreat - <i>Our annual family retreat and reunion event! Come and reconnect!</i>         | Sept. 1-3                              |
| • Silent Retreat - <i>A new retreat designed for folks who are seeking space to listen to God.</i> | TBA                                    |
| • Falltastic - <i>A special fall event designed for our elementary friends.</i>                    | Sept. 29-30                            |
| • Senior Adults Retreat - <i>A day-event designed just for our senior friends.</i>                 | Oct. 11                                |
| • Fusion - <i>A Cedarkirk event for middle and high school youth!</i>                              | Nov. 10-12 & 17-19                     |
| • Christmas Retreat - <i>A little bit of summer camp at Christmas time!</i>                        | Dec. 22-23                             |

*Thank you for supporting Cedarkirk and holding this ministry in your prayers for the last 45 years.  
We look forward to witnessing God's handiwork here in the years to come!*

For additional information, please contact the camp office at (813) 685-4224 or visit [www.cedarkirk.org](http://www.cedarkirk.org).

## BETH-EL FARMWORKER MINISTRY, INC.

*A Ministry to the Farmworkers in Wimauma*

### **POSITION OPENING:**

Beth-El Farmworker Ministry supports farmworkers and our neighbors in need through Hunger Relief, Education, Health Care, and Spiritual Development. The mission currently has an immediate opening for a Youth Leader to oversee the youth programs at the mission. Responsibilities include leading Tuesday night youth group, occasional weekend field trips, and summer child and youth programs. Ideal candidate should have some theological training, work well, and enjoying working with, children and teens from various backgrounds. Average number of hours per week will vary from 20 to 35 hours per week. Candidate must have a clean driving record and submit to a background check. Please submit resume and three references to [info@beth-el.org](mailto:info@beth-el.org). No Phone Calls Please. Beth-El Farmworker Ministry is an Equal Opportunity Employer.



PO Box 860 | Wimauma, FL 33598  
Phone: 813-633-1548 ext. 223  
Web: [www.beth-el.org](http://www.beth-el.org)

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

## MISION PENIEL

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

Please be sure to contact us to schedule your next visit and reserve a date to volunteer at Mision Peniel! Thank you for your ongoing partnership with this mission!

### **UPDATE:**

We are planning an Open House at the new location very soon. In the meantime, please make note of the following updated contact and address information:

### **Staff Contacts:**

- Rev. Miguel Estrada, Pastor, P: 239-633-2181, E: [miguestrada@hotmail.com](mailto:miguestrada@hotmail.com)
- Ruth DeYoe, Mission Coordinator, P: 386-793-6151, E: [ruthdeyoe@gmail.com](mailto:ruthdeyoe@gmail.com)
- General Email: [misionpenielpeaceriver@gmail.com](mailto:misionpenielpeaceriver@gmail.com)

### **Addresses:**

- Facility Address: 208 Boston Ave., Immokalee, FL 34142 (not for mailing)
- Mailing Address: P.O. Box 1204, Immokalee, FL 34153
- Mailing Address for Contributions\*: Peace River Presbytery, 5600 Peace River Road, North Port, FL 34287

### **\*Contributions to Mision Peniel:**

- Mail to: Peace River Presbytery, 5600 Peace River Road, North Port, FL 34287
- Checks can be made payable to Peace River Presbytery or to Mision Peniel.
- Please note *Mision Peniel* in the memo section.
- Contributor information is provided to Mision Peniel each month.

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### **Other Information:**

- Collection Centers for Mision Peniel Supplies ([click for information](#))
- Critical Needs List ([click for information](#))

## **PRAYER NEEDS**

### **Please pray for:**

- Linda Hart (Graham's wife) – recovering from double knee surgery

### **Please continue to pray for:**

- Kathryn Pendergrass (wife of Rev. Dr. Daniel Pendergrass) - diagnosed with a rare form of lung cancer
- Robert Berger – Rev. Dr. Jim Berger's 96-year old father. Hospitalized in PA from an apparent stroke
- Jim & Becky Beckwith – health

- Rev. Dr. Clint Cottrell (Pastor of Cypress Lake P.C.) - health
- Nathan Hart (Graham's son) and his family – health
- Rev. Dr. Lou Thompson – continued recovery from extensive neck surgery
- Phil Kuehl (husband of Rev. Elizabeth Kuehl, Faith, Cape Coral) – continued recovery
- Rev. Dr. Paul Eckel - 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

**PRESBYTERY PRAYER GUIDE: APRIL 2017:**

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| April 2  | <u>Cedarkirk Camp &amp; Conference Center</u><br>Executive Director: Rev. John Reiter<br>Email: <a href="mailto:john@cedarkirk.com">john@cedarkirk.com</a>             |
| April 9  | <u>Buckingham Presbyterian Church, Fort Myers</u><br>Pastor: Rev. Dr. Randy Moody<br>Email: <a href="mailto:bpcpastor@comcast.net">bpcpastor@comcast.net</a>           |
| April 16 | <u>Covenant Presbyterian Church, Fort Myers</u><br>Pastor: Rev. Dr. Jeff DeYoe<br>Email: <a href="mailto:jdeyoe@covpcfm.com">jdeyoe@covpcfm.com</a>                    |
| April 23 | <u>Cypress Lake Presbyterian Church, Fort Myers</u><br>Pastor: Rev. Dr. Clinton Cottrell<br>Email: <a href="mailto:clint@clpc.us">clint@clpc.us</a>                    |
| April 30 | <u>Hope United Presbyterian Church, Fort Myers</u><br>Pastor: Rev. Kevin Morris<br>Email: <a href="mailto:pastor@hopeunitedchurch.net">pastor@hopeunitedchurch.net</a> |

**PRESBYTERY CALENDAR: APRIL-MAY 2017**

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

**Thursday, April 27**

Congregational Vitality Team at Babcock Ranch (12:30 p.m.)

**Monday, May 1**

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

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

**Tuesday, May 2**

Faith Place Safety Workshop at First Presbyterian Church of Port Charlotte

**Thursday, May 4**

Presbyterian Women Coordinating Team (10:00 a.m.)

**Tuesday, May 9**

Committee on Ministry (9:00 a.m.)

**Thursday, May 11**

Finance Team / Board of Trustees (9:30 a.m.)

**Thursday, May 18**

Stated Meeting of Presbytery at First Presbyterian Church of Arcadia

**Thursday, May 25**

Congregational Vitality Team (1:00 p.m.)

**Monday, May 29**

Memorial Day – Presbytery Offices Closed

**CHURCHES of PEACE RIVER PRESBYTERY**

Please visit our web site, [www.peaceriverpresbytery.org/churches](http://www.peaceriverpresbytery.org/churches)

Click on the city, then the church, to visit their web site.



