



PEACE RIVER PRESBYTERY



Weekly Presbytery Letter ~ August 31, 2017

Presbyterian Disaster Assistance

Please support Presbyterian Disaster Assistance's emergency response and long-term recovery work in the areas affected by Hurricane Harvey. Scroll through this newsletter for an article from PDA.

Contributions may be sent to the Peace River Presbytery Office or directly to the Presbyterian Mission Agency.

If you give directly to the Presbytery Office, please make your check payable to Peace River Presbytery, and include "PDA for Harvey" in the memo section or by attached letter.

*Mail to: Peace River Presbytery | 5600 Peace River Road | North Port, FL 34287.

100% of the contributions received by the Presbytery office will be forwarded to the Presbyterian Mission Agency.

If you give directly to the Presbyterian Mission Agency, following are the options:

*Mail to: Presbyterian Mission Agency | 100 Witherspoon Street | Louisville, KY 40202-1396

Designate gifts to DR000169-Harvey.

*You can also give with a credit card by visiting presbyterianmission.org/GIVE-HARVEY or by phone at 800-872-3283.

Dr. Doug Pratt, Peace River Presbytery Moderator

"Acquiring and Releasing"

Many of our recreational fishermen and women of Southwest Florida, as they cruise the shallow waters of the rivers and bays, practice a form of their sport called "Catch and Release". Considered in a broader context, I believe that phrase can sum up two dimensions of life.

Since catching a fish is at least partially a matter of luck or random chance (even for the most experienced with rod and reel), I will substitute the term "acquire" for "catch". To acquire something implies a deliberate effort and plan, not accident. For much of our personal lives we are focuses on acquiring. By studying hard in school we acquire good grades; by coaching and practice we acquire athletic and musical and artistic skills; we acquire letters of acceptance to college, and then degrees; we acquire spouses and children, jobs and bank accounts, cars and homes (and lots and lots of stuff to fill those homes).

But the steady distant drumbeat can be heard, even in our most relentless pursuits of acquisitions, reminding us that there will come days when we have to stop acquiring and begin releasing. We may have our first serious experience of releasing when children leave our homes to college or the military, or when a grandparent or parent comes to the end of their life. Tragedies and heartbreaks of unexpected death or divorce bring the end of a relationship. Moving to a new home (even in a near-paradise like Southwest Florida) requires that we release people and places and things that had been precious to us. Deciding to go through the dread "downsizing" from a larger to smaller residence can be painful—choosing what to keep and what to give away. When we make our wills and estate plans, we acknowledge that we won't be able to take the things and assets we have acquired with us. And the ultimate final chapter for each of us requires that we release everything and trust ourselves completely into the waiting arms of our Savior. An important part of a pastor's ministry to his or her congregation is to assist in the various forms of the grieving process, as we must learn how to let go.

Churches go through the "acquire and release" process, just as individuals and families do. We acquire members and programs and traditions. We build facilities and furnish and fill them. The acquiring actions are exciting. But nothing in this world is permanent. Even while churches are in a growth phase, they inevitably

experience losses. People die or move away, or decide that they want to connect with a different church. Programs that once were vital and met a need can dwindle in effectiveness—and sometimes they need to be canceled or “released”. There are even times when entire congregations come to the end of their lifecycle and need to be closed. It’s harder emotionally to release than it is to acquire. But wise leaders understand that both are part of life, and they provide the grace and support to help their people through.

The biblical perspective reminds us that all tangible things, including our church buildings, our organizations and our human bodies, are just temporary. We look to the things that last, that are eternal, that “moths and rust cannot consume, and thieves cannot steal”. Trusting in the Lord to hold securely that which is eternal, we can learn to hold lightly everything else.

My prayer is that, in my remaining days, I might not only acquire wisely but also learn to release graciously and generously. “Catch and release” is not only a strategy for enjoying the sport of fishing while protecting our nautical wildlife; it’s also a good strategy to adopt for our personal and church lives.

Yours in Christ,
Dr. Doug Pratt
Peace River Presbytery Moderator
Senior Pastor of First Presbyterian Bonita Springs



Presbyterian Mission

Connect:



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Please add "info@info.pcusa.org" to your contact list to ensure email messages are delivered to your inbox.



**PRESBYTERIAN
DISASTER ASSISTANCE**

OUT OF CHAOS, HOPE



A Texas National Guardsman carries a resident from her flooded home following Hurricane Harvey in Houston.

Many waters cannot quench love, neither can floods drown it. — Song of Solomon 8:7

Hurricane Harvey struck the Texas coast late Friday, bringing lashing rain and sustained winds of 130 miles per hour. Even as its force has waned, Harvey has brought historic flooding, forcing rivers and streams from their banks, submerging homes, churches, businesses and roads, stranding thousands of people. Your gifts are urgently needed now to support the communities devastated by this historic storm and those throughout the Gulf region who are still in the path of Harvey's torrential rains. [Donate Now](#).

You can join in the response and encourage those in need by standing in the "GAP" — Give. Act. Pray.

GIVE:

Support Presbyterian Disaster Assistance's emergency response and long-term recovery work in the areas affected by Hurricane Harvey. Designate gifts to [DR000169-Harvey](#). You can also give with a credit card by visiting presbyterianmission.org/GIVE-HARVEY or by phone at 800-872-3283.

ACT:

- Put together Gift of the Heart kits for survivors in the affected areas — hygiene kits and cleanup buckets are especially needed. For more information, go to pda.pcusa.org/page/kits/.
- Contact the PDA Call Center to be notified of volunteer opportunities. Call 866-732-6121 or email pda.callcenter@pcusa.org.
- Learn how your congregation can help families who have lost everything in the devastation. Stay informed and [like](#) us on Facebook, [download resources](#), including a [bulletin insert](#), and share updates with your congregation.

PRAY:

God, our Shelter,

Be a strong presence in the lives of neighbors who, having survived the winds and rains of Harvey, now face grief, uncertainty and weary days. May our generosity in prayer and in tangible signs of support overflow more than floodwaters, to sustain your work of healing and rebuilding and to bring comfort and strength to those who suffer. *Amen*.

For more information, visit pda.pcusa.org.

ARTICLES of INTEREST

(selected by Graham Hart)

[Can reason make room for religion in public life?](#)

Aeon: Friedrich Schleiermacher offers up some worthwhile lessons about how reason and feeling can coexist in the public sphere, and provides us with a rich picture of what makes life meaningful.

[Are money and religion more similar than we realize?](#)

How Stuff Works: What is money if not a "superhuman controlling power"?

[Study: Katharine Hayhoe is successfully convincing doubtful evangelicals about climate change](#)

The (London) Guardian: A new study finds that a lecture from evangelical climate scientist Katharine Hayhoe successfully educates evangelical college students, validating the "trusted sources" approach.

[The Joel Osteen fiasco says a lot about American Christianity](#)

BuzzFeed News: The backlash against Lakewood Church's response to Tropical Storm Harvey speaks to a larger powder keg of resentment directed at evangelical Christianity in the United States right now.

Religion Dispatches: [Searching for moral high ground while Houston drowns: a perspective on the Lakewood Church controversy](#)

[Take a deep breath. The Nashville Statement won't change anything.](#)

Religion News Service: A casual reader of the Nashville Statement can quickly spot its problems, regardless of their theological convictions.

Religion News Service: [Evangelical leaders try to hold the line on gender](#)

[Evensong sees a surge even as British church attendance declines](#)

Religion News Service: In Britain, where churchgoing is mostly in decline, what has drawn the crowd on a late afternoon in August is evensong, the hymn-heavy evening service taken from the Book of Common Prayer.

[African spirituality is unique in its commitment to community](#)

US Catholic: God is in the ties that bind all of creation together, says Father Stan Chu Ilo.

[Political party identities stronger than race or religion](#)

Phys.org: Americans' strongest attachment -- stronger than race, religion or ethnicity -- is political party, and it's amplifying political polarization, researchers say.

**[THE NOMINATIONS and REPRESENTATION COMMITTEE'S GUIDELINES
for Selecting Commissioners to the General Assembly](#)**

FALL GATHERINGS

TOPIC: Radical Generosity

PRESENTER: Robert Hay, Ministry Relations Officer for the Presbyterian Foundation

Tuesday, September 12 - Wintergarden Presbyterian Church

1:00-4:00 p.m.

Smaller Sized Congregations

(Wintergarden Address: 18305 Wintergarden Avenue / Port Charlotte, 33948)

(Lunch Reservations by Wednesday, Sept. 6 to Beckie: 941-743-5335)

Wednesday, September 13 – First Presbyterian Church of Port Charlotte

9:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.

Medium Sized Congregations

and

1:00-4:00 p.m.

Larger Sized Congregations

(First, Port Charlotte Address: 2230 Harriet Street / Port Charlotte, 33962)

(Lunch Reservations by Wednesday, Sept. 6 to Tanga: 941-625-5045)

Lunch is scheduled for 12:00-1:00 p.m. each day. Lunch Cost: \$10.00.

Reservations: Required by Wednesday, September 6. Call the Church Office, not the Presbytery Office.

Letters with additional information, including suggested gathering dates and times for each church, were mailed to all Clerks of Session and Pastors at the end of June. Please check with those individuals for the details.

Churches are welcome to attend any and all sessions.

CUBA PARTNERSHIP MISSION GATHERINGS

Monday, September 18th

For the past 18 months, our Cuba Partnership Task Force has been in conversation with members of Matanzas Presbytery. We have been blessed to have different members of Peace River travel to Matanzas. This has been a deeply enriching and learning experience for those of us who have gone. We are thrilled that Ary, Beidy, and Alison (see below) will be with us.

- Ary Fernandez – Moderator of the Synod of Iglesia Presbiteriana-Reformada en Cuba (their General Assembly), professor at the Evangelical Seminary at Matanzas, and pastor of Central Presbyterian Church of Matanzas
- Beidy Casas Aragón - Associate Pastor of Matanzas Presbyterian Church and pastor of several mission congregations
- Alison Alison Infante Zamora – Moderator of Matanzas Presbytery and pastor of the Juan Hall Presbyterian Church in Juan G. Hall Presbyterian Church in Cardenas.

Two gatherings will be held on September 18th. You are welcome to attend either.

9:30 – 11:00 a.m.

Faith Presbyterian Church, Cape Coral

Reservations by Wednesday, Sept. 13 to: Phone 239-542-2858

2:00 to 4:00 p.m.

Pine Shores Presbyterian Church, Sarasota

Reservations by Wednesday, Sept. 13 to: Phone 941-922-1597

Our time together will allow us to hear about the mission and ministry of the Presbyterian Church in Cuba, some of the exciting new work being done, the current political situation, future hopes they have for the church and people of Cuba, as well as hopes they have in developing a partnership with Peace River Presbytery and our congregations. There will be ample time for questions and answers as well as fellowship. There are several congregations that have asked about developing a partnership relationship with one of the churches in Matanzas; so, this will be an opportunity for you to begin a conversation.

With the Love of Christ,

The Cuba Partnership Task Force: Kevin Morris, Ruth DeYoe, Clint Cottrell, Ofilia Uribe, Winston Lawson, Graham Hart

CEDARKIRK CAMP & CONFERENCE CENTER

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

www.cedarkirk.org

2017 Events:

- Challenge to Change - *A unique mission-trip program designed for a variety of groups.* Year-round
- Family Retreat - *Our annual family retreat and reunion event! Come and reconnect!* Sept. 1-3
- Silent Retreat – *A new retreat designed for folks who are seeking space to listen to God.* TBA
- Falltastic - *A special fall event designed for our elementary friends.* Sept. 29-30
- Senior Adults Retreat - *A day-event designed just for our senior friends.* Oct. 11

- Fusion - A Cedarkirk event for middle and high school youth!
- Christmas Retreat – A little bit of summer camp at Christmas time!

Nov. 10-12 & 17-19
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.

BETH-EL FARMWORKER MINISTRY, INC.

A Ministry to the Farmworkers in Wimauma

www.beth-el.org



PO Box 860 | Wimauma, FL 33598

Phone: 813-633-1548 ext. 223

Web: www.beth-el.org

[August Newsletter](#)



MISION PENIEL

A Ministry of Peace River Presbytery to the Farmworkers in Immokalee

www.misionpeniel.com

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

Staff Contacts:

- Rev. Miguel Estrada, Pastor, P: 239-633-2181, E: miguestrada@hotmail.com
- Ruth DeYoe, Mission Coordinator, P: 386-793-6151, E: ruthdeyoe@gmail.com
- General Email: misionpenielpeacriver@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 Misión 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 Misión Peniel.
- Please note *Misión Peniel* in the memo section.
- Contributor information is provided to Misión Peniel each month.

Other Information:

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

PRAYER NEEDS

Please continue to pray for:

- All who are affected by Hurricane Harvey
- Liz Countiss (Rev. Craig Countiss' widow) – in Hospice Care
- Beth-El Farmworker Ministry
- Kathryn Pendergrass (wife of Rev. Dr. Daniel Pendergrass) - diagnosed with a rare form of lung cancer; awaiting insurance approval for a new drug that is the most likely to help her type of 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 – health
- Phil Kuehl (husband of Rev. Elizabeth Kuehl, Faith, Cape Coral) – going through chemotherapy
- 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
- 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: SEPTEMBER 2017:

September 3	<u>Upcoming Fall Gatherings</u>
September 10	<u>Burnt Store Presbyterian Church, Punta Gorda</u> Pastor: Rev. Dr. Tim Stewart Email: sunburn1320@mac.com

September 17	<u>Bee Ridge Presbyterian Church, Sarasota</u> Interim Pastor: Rev. Penny Pitts Email: pennypitts6@gmail.com
September 24	<u>Church of the Palms, Sarasota</u> Senior Pastor: Rev. Dr. Stephen McConnell Email: smcconnell@churchofthepalms.org Associate Pastor: Rev. Dr. Hmingi Browne Email: hbrowne@churchofthepalms.org

CHURCH SUPPORT STAFF OPENINGS

[Church Sexton – First Presbyterian Church of Sarasota](#)

[Director of Christian Education – Cypress Lake Presbyterian Church, Fort Myers](#)

[Administrative Secretary \(Part Time\) – Holy Trinity Presbyterian Church, N. Fort Myers](#)

UPCOMING RETIREMENT

Darlene Rayhart, Office Manager for First Presbyterian Church of Lehigh Acres,
will retire on October 26, 2017, after 22 years of service.

PRESBYTERY CALENDAR: SEPTEMBER 2017

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

All meetings are at the Presbytery Center location in North Port, unless otherwise posted.

Monday, September 4

Labor Day – Presbytery Offices Closed

Wednesday, September 6

Mision Peniel Team (9:30 a.m. in Immokalee)

Thursday, September 7

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

Monday, September 11

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

Planning Team (1:00 p.m.)

Tuesday, September 12

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

Fall Gathering at Wintergarden, Port Charlotte (1:00-4:00 p.m.)

Records Review Workshop at Wintergarden, Port Charlotte (4:00 p.m.)

Wednesday, September 13

Fall Gatherings at First, Port Charlotte (9:00 a.m.-12:00 n. & 1:00-4:00 p.m.)

Records Review Workshop at First, Port Charlotte (12:00-1:00 p.m.)

Thursday, September 14

Finance Team (9:30 a.m.)

Monday, September 18

Cuba Partnership Gatherings with Cuban Pastors (Faith, Cape Coral & Pine Shores, Sarasota)

Thursday, September 21

Steering Committee (9:30 a.m.)

Monday-Wednesday, September 25-27

Stewardship Kaleidoscope (St. Pete Beach)

Thursday, September 28

Congregational Vitality Team (12:30 p.m.)

CHURCHES of PEACE RIVER PRESBYTERY

Please visit our web site, www.peaceriverpresbytery.org/churches

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

