



PEACE RIVER PRESBYTERY



Weekly Presbytery Letter ~ December 20 and 27, 2017

A Christmas Thank You Graham Hart – General Presbyter

Yesterday in the mail, I, along with every active and retired minister, received a specially designed pin from the Board of Pensions.



In the letter accompanying the pin, Frank Spencer said:

“In celebration of the 300th anniversary of the Board of Pensions and in appreciation of those who have served and continue to serve the Presbyterian Church, (USA) we have commissioned a special lapel pin. The pin features the symbol of the Church and 1717, the year Presbyterians in the American Colonies established the Fund for Pious Jesus to care for pastors and their families...

The health and vitality of the Presbyterian church depends on the dedicated service of those such as you who have answered God’s call. We hope you will wear the one as a reminder of the church’s

appreciation and ongoing care. We are so grateful for your gifted dedication to the ministry and mission of the Church; it has been and continues to be a blessing to others.

Over the years we sometimes find ourselves focusing on what is wrong with the denomination, or what we want to change. Through my work in Peace River, as a pastor, and in my season of leadership with the association of Mid-Council Leaders (formerly known as AEPS), I have sought to affect change. I (and I am sure like you) have sometimes been frustrated by systems that - no matter how many conversations are had over, or committees that study, an issue - never change. Yet ... there is that pin ... and I was reminded of the many things that are good. And yes, I, and maybe you, sometimes forget to acknowledge that.

While many other denominations have struggled with keeping their clergy pension funds solvent or a medical benefit plan available, the PCUSA continues to provide coverage for all pastors and church workers (yes – it is costly as is all medical plans today, but we have one). In Frank’s letter he says:

Our Reformed understanding of vocation affirms that all who serve in congregations, mid councils, agencies, or any of the hundreds of Presbyterian affiliated institutions are called by the Holy Spirit. How we treat those who respond to God’s call to ministry, whether ordained as ministers or not, is a witness to the Lordship of Christ Jesus and often stands in contrast to the norms of the marketplace.

I want to share my gratitude for being part of a denomination that for 300 years has been caring for those of us who serve the Church. [Click here for the Christmas Card](#) from the Board of Pensions. If you want to support the Board of

Pensions in its annual Christmas Joy Offering [click here for details](#), or use the envelop at your church designated for that purpose, or send your gift to [Peace River Presbytery](#) ear-marked for that purpose.

Finally, if you want to know what is on my heart this Christmas, it is best captured in a Christmas song by Amy Grant entitled "My Grown-Up Christmas Wish" ([click here to listen to a music video](#)). If you want to join with me in Peace River in finding ways to give expression to 'my grown-up Christmas wish, I would love to hear from you ([click here to send me your thoughts](#)).

Again, I am grateful to serve here in Peace River these past 16 years. For the challenges we have faced, the ministry done, lives changed, for the pastors who have come and gone, and the work yet for us to do ... I offer my gratitude, and share my Christmas joy.

So, this Christmas season I want to share my Christmas greetings and good wishes to every pastor, retired minister, ruling elder and member of the churches in Peace River!

Wishing you a Joyous Christmas and Happy New Year,

Graham

Graham Hart
General Presbyter
graham@peacriverpresbytery.org

ARTICLES of INTEREST *(selected by Graham Hart)*

[Americans say religious aspects of Christmas are declining in public life](#)

Pew Forum: New survey finds that most U.S. adults believe the religious aspects of Christmas are emphasized less now than in the past -- even as relatively few Americans are bothered by this trend.

[The black women who voted in Alabama deserve more than your gratitude.](#)

America: Black women are the real "values voters," but they cannot be expected to continue to save white people from the poor choices they make, Anthea Butler says.

[After Trump and Moore, some evangelicals are finding their own label too toxic to use](#)

The Washington Post: On Fuller Seminary's campus, as in other major evangelical institutions, debate over the term has bubbled to the forefront, especially among younger members of the faith.

[Jerusalem -- for Christians, Jews and Muslims -- is both a city and an idea](#)

The (London) Guardian: It's the object of overwhelming projection, a place of dreams and longing. There can be no political peace there until Jerusalem the golden is understood, Giles Fraser says.

[Some new nonprofits take off, others flop -- and nobody knows why](#)

The Conversation: To learn why some new nonprofits prosper when others do not requires dealing with the fact that everyone has trouble remembering things the way they happened.

[Alabama fallout: Does character count?](#)

Religion News Service: If anything decisive can be said about the Alabama race, it's that African-American Christians, who also very often consider themselves evangelical, turned out in force.

Quartz: [Two maps explain the racial history behind Alabama's senate vote](#)

The New York Times: [After Alabama vote, soul-searching among some evangelicals](#)

[The Luther legend](#)

The New Republic: The idea that one man brought about the Protestant Reformation obscures a much longer history of dissent, Marilynne Robinson says.

[Nobody is laughing at the Religious Left in 2017](#)

Think Progress: Trump and the Religious Right have made the Religious Left unavoidable.

[Is the new way to give a better way to give?](#)

The Atlantic: Donor-advised funds are gaining popularity, but charities may be losing out.

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

[November Newsletter](#)

*Beth-El is looking for donations of furniture for its office and dental clinic.
Please contact their office if you have desks, tables, or bookcases.*

CEDARKIRK CAMP & CONFERENCE CENTER

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

www.cedarkirk.org

*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.

MISION PENIEL

A Ministry of Peace River Presbytery to the Farmworkers in Immokalee

www.misionpeniel.com

Please be in prayer for the mission, which sustained considerable damage from Hurricane Irma. The mission office has damage from the roof falling in on the office area, and the farmworkers have a lot of damage to their residences, most of which are mobile homes.

Staff Contacts:

- Rev. Miguel Estrada, Pastor, P: 239-633-2181, E: migustrada@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 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.

Other Information:

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

PRAYER NEEDS

Please continue to pray for:

- Rev. Dr. Bruce Porter and Family, in the sudden loss of his sister
- Rev. Dr. Daniel Pendergrass and Family, in the loss of his wife, Kathy
- The communities and responders affected by the fires in California
- All who are still recovering from the hurricanes
- Beth-El Farmworker Ministry
- Robert Berger – Rev. Dr. Jim Berger’s 96-year old father
- Jim & Becky Beckwith – health
- Rev. Dr. Lou Thompson – health
- Phil Kuehl (husband of Rev. Elizabeth Kuehl, Faith, Cape Coral) – 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: DECEMBER 2017:

December 3	<u>PRP’s Seminary Students (Candidates & Inquirers)</u> Candidates: Rex Childs, Cynthia Franklin, Jordan Goodwin, Debra Graves, Laurie Haas, Lynne Peter, Susan Wills, Carolyn Wilson / Inquirer: Christian Faux
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December 10	<u>Mision Peniel</u> A Ministry of PRP
December 17	<u>Trinity Presbyterian Church, Venice</u> Pastor: Rev. Dr. Chuck Wiggins Email: cjw049@gmail.com
December 24	<u>Venice Presbyterian Church, Venice</u> Pastor: Rev. Chris Romig Email: cromig@venicepresbyterian.org
December 31	<u>Presbyterian Women</u> A Covenant Partner of PRP

PRESBYTERY CALENDAR: DECEMBER 2017~JANUARY 2018

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.

Friday, December 22

Presbytery Offices Closed

Monday, December 25

Merry Christmas!
Presbytery Offices Closed

Tuesday, December 26

Presbytery Offices Closed

Monday, January 1

Happy New Year!
Presbytery Offices Closed

Thursday, January 4

Mision Peniel Team (10:00 a.m. in Immokalee)
Presbyterian Women Coordinating Team (10:00 a.m.)

Monday, January 8

Nominations and Representation Committee (10:00 a.m.)
Planning Team (12:00-4:00 p.m., beginning with lunch)

Tuesday, January 9

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

Wednesday, January 10

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

Thursday, January 11

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

Monday, January 15

Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Day
Presbytery Offices Closed

Thursday, January 18

Steering Committee (9:30 a.m.)

Thursday, January 25

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.

