



PEACE RIVER PRESBYTERY



Weekly Presbytery Letter – February 21, 2017
Rev. Ray G. Jones III, Associate Director of Evangelism
Presbyterian Mission Agency

From Ray Jones
Associate Director of Evangelism



I am looking forward to being with you at your next presbytery meeting on February 23. The topic of conversation will be “Vital Congregations”. One of the definitions for the word “vital” is necessary. I believe each local church is necessary to God’s mission.

We have formed a new Office of Vital Congregations in the Presbyterian Mission Agency out of the old offices of Evangelism and Church Transformation. As we have worked on this new office, and taken the best of evangelism and transformation, we are discovering that we are on the right path in partnering with mid councils to help our local churches become the healthiest churches possible where they have been placed.



We are moving away from talking about church growth. Even though church growth is a good thing, it should never be the end result of our ministry. Far too many churches have the burden placed on them that a healthy church is a large church. In Western culture “large” is often seen as better than “small.” Numerical growth is not the purpose of our ministries; the purpose is to bear fruit.

Therefore, you are invited into a conversation on vital congregations and bearing fruit where God has placed us. This conversation is for all churches because we have much to learn from one another. During our time together we will explore the following vital signs: lifelong Christian formation, healthy systems, intentional evangelism, outward incarnational focus, empowering servant leadership, inspiring worship, and caring relationships. We will explore where our churches have strengths and weaknesses in these areas and next steps for our ministries and helping each other.

Once again, I look forward to our time together. I pray that this time will help us become the people and churches we have been called to be.

Grace,
Ray G. Jones III
Associate Director
Evangelism
Presbyterian Mission Agency
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Louisville, KY 40202
[502-569-5280](tel:502-569-5280)



Pre-Presbytery Reflection Questions

Vital Congregations is a new ministry dedicated to helping churches become the healthiest churches possible. Numerical growth is not always possible because of the context of a church's ministry, but every church can bear fruit. Therefore, we begin with Jesus' words in John 15:5: "*I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.*"

As we bear fruit, we share our faith with people without hope, we do justice, we practice hospitality, and we are agents of healing. In other words, we are the body of Christ. If the context permits, there will be numerical growth. But no matter the numbers, there will always be spiritual, emotional, and personal growth. When lives change, communities always change.

In this gathering of Peace River Presbytery, we will examine the vitality that comes from abiding in Christ. Before attending this meeting of presbytery, ask the following questions in your faith community:

- What are the practices that help us abide (remain connected to the vine)?
- What sort of fruit are we bearing?
- What fruit is the community noticing in us?

STATED MEETING OF PRESBYTERY

Thursday, February 23, 2017
Faith Presbyterian Church, Cape Coral
4544 Coronado Parkway | Cape Coral, 33904

8:00 a.m. ~ Registration Begins
9:00 a.m. ~ Financial Forum with Board of Trustees
9:30 a.m.-3:00 p.m. ~ Stated Meeting

The Meeting Packet is posted on the Presbytery web site.

EVENING GATHERING WITH RAY JONES

If you would like to jump start your thinking, and have some informal conversation on the challenges of congregational vitality and growth, there is one more* opportunity to do so in the Central/South Region of the Presbytery. Join us on Wednesday, February 22nd, to sit at the table with Ray Jones, our Stated Meeting Keynote Speaker at the location below:

Wednesday, February 22, 6:00 p.m.

Location: El Gaucho Inca in Fort Myers (address: 4383 Colonial Blvd., Fort Myers, 33966)

Contact: Devon Beisser Andrews for reservations, P: 941-525-6671

*There was a gathering Monday night in Sarasota.

ARTICLES OF INTEREST (chosen by Graham Hart)

[The political rabbi's survival guide](#)

Forward: When the political converges on the moral -- that is where clergy find the sweet spot. Anything that is moral is rightly our purview, Jeffrey Salkin says.

[Church response to domestic violence focus of study](#)

Baptist Press: When it comes to domestic violence, Protestant pastors want to be helpful but often don't know where to start, a new study shows.

[Vandals have attacked a Jewish cemetery in Missouri, toppling scores of tombstones](#)

Time: More than 100 headstones were reportedly damaged or toppled in a historic Jewish cemetery on Monday, in what local media says was likely an act of vandalism carried out by an organized group.

[10 things that demonstrate the world you grew up in no longer exists](#)

Christian Week: What changes do church leaders need to know?

[Thou shalt not speak alternative facts: religion and lying](#)

Religion News Service: What do the Abrahamic religious traditions say? Is lying always wrong? What are the moral and spiritual consequences of telling a lie?

[News flash: When the pope speaks, it isn't always about the U.S.](#)

Crux: Popes make generalized statements about politics or ethics all the time, and most cultures are mature enough to recognize it's not always about them.

America: [Pope Francis to activists: Stand with migrants, do not deny climate science, there is no such thing as 'Islamic terrorism'](#)

[Washington State Supreme Court rules against florist who turned away gay couple](#)

The Washington Post: In a victory for gay rights advocates, Washington's Supreme Court on Thursday ruled against a Christian florist who was fined by the state for refusing to provide flowers for a same-sex wedding.

[Black, white, and blue: how Christians rate the police](#)

Christianity Today: Race influences views of US law enforcement more than religious tradition -- except locally.

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 2nd** 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, 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 two weeks ago.

BETH-EL FARMWORKER MINISTRY, INC.

A Ministry to the Farmworkers in Wimauma



PO Box 860 | Wimauma, FL 33598

Phone: 813-633-1548 ext. 223

Web: www.beth-el.org

www.beth-el.org

[February Newsletter](#)

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.

EXCITING NEWS FROM MISION PENIEL!

A Ministry of Peace River Presbytery to the Farmworkers in Immokalee

The Misión Peniel Team is grateful to be able to announce that Ruth DeYoe, member of Covenant Presbyterian Church, Fort Myers, has been hired to serve as the Mission Coordinator for Misión Peniel beginning at the end of February. Ruth will be working with Pastor Miguel Estrada, Director of Misión Peniel, to help with the volunteers, advance the mission's visibility through social media and other communications and provide support to Miguel and the mission. This is a part time position.

Ruth is no stranger to the PCUSA. Her father was a Presbyterian minister and mother a church educator in the Presbyterian church. Ruth has an undergraduate degree in Family Life Studies from Montana State University and a Masters in Christian Education from Princeton Theological Seminary. While at Princeton, Ruth met her husband, Jeff DeYoe, who is the pastor at Covenant Presbyterian Church. They have two adult children, Tina, in New Mexico, and Aaron, in Minnesota.

Work experience includes:

- 27 years as Director of Christian Education in Presbyterian churches in Kansas, Minnesota, Florida and Ohio;
- 8 1/2 years as Service Team Director for an Ohio based mission to children affected by HIV/AIDS in Honduras.

With a heart for mission, the immigrant community and desire to work with peoples of different economic and cultural back grounds, Ruth is excited to begin her work with Misión Peniel!

Also, Misión Peniel has moved! The new location of the mission facility will be 208 Boston Avenue, Immokalee, beginning February 15. They are excited to have more space and more visibility to the farmworker community!



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](#))

PRAYER NEEDS

Please continue to pray for:

- The family and friends of Rev. Stephan Nagy, former Pastor of Lely Presbyterian Church, Naples, who passed away last week.
- Jim Beckwith – recovering in rehab
- Rev. Dr. Clint Cottrell (Pastor of Cypress Lake P.C.) - recovery and health
- Walter Chuquimia (Pastor of Beth-El) - health
- Nathan Hart (Graham’s son) and his family – health
- Rev. Dr. Lou Thompson – continued recovery
- 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: FEBRUARY 2017:

February 5	<u>First Presbyterian Church, Bradenton</u> Senior Pastor: Rev. Dino Rustin Email: dino@firstpresbradenton.com Associate Pastor: Mary Beth McSwain Email: marybeth@firstpresbradenton.com
February 12	<u>Kirkwood Presbyterian Church, Bradenton</u> Pastor: Rev. Dr. Hope Lee email: hope@kpcbradenton.org

February 19	<u>Oak Pointe Church, Bradenton</u> Pastor: Rev. Jane Jones-Norris email: jjn7416@gmail.com
February 26	<u>Stated Meeting of Peace River Presbytery</u> at Faith Presbyterian Church, Cape Coral Keynote Speaker: Ray Jones, PCUSA Director of Evangelism and Congregational Vitality

PRESBYTERY CALENDAR: FEBRUARY 2017

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

Wednesday, February 22

Dinner Gathering with Ray Jones – 6:00 p.m. at El Gaucho Inca, Fort Myers
(reservations to Devon Andrews, P: 941-525-6671)

Thursday, February 23

Stated Meeting of Presbytery at Faith Presbyterian, Cape Coral



CHURCHES of PEACE RIVER PRESBYTERY

(click on church name to link to its web site)

Braden River Presbyterian Church, Bradenton	First Presbyterian Church, Bradenton
Kirkwood Presbyterian Church, Bradenton	Palma Sola Presbyterian Church, Bradenton
Westminster Presbyterian Church, Bradenton	Palmetto Presbyterian Church, Palmetto – office@ppcfl.org
Christ Church of Longboat Key Longboat Key	Peace Presbyterian Church, Lakewood Ranch

<u>Bee Ridge Presbyterian Church,</u> Sarasota	<u>Church of the Palms,</u> Sarasota
<u>First Presbyterian Church,</u> Sarasota	<u>Northminster Presbyterian Church,</u> Sarasota
<u>Pine Shores Presbyterian Church,</u> Sarasota	<u>Presbyterian Church of the</u> <u>Covenant,</u> Sarasota
<u>Whitfield Estates Presbyterian Church,</u> Sarasota	<u>Siesta Key Chapel,</u> Sarasota
<u>Trinity Presbyterian Church,</u> Venice	<u>Venice Presbyterian Church,</u> Venice
<u>Community Presbyterian Church,</u> Englewood	<u>First Presbyterian Church,</u> Arcadia
<u>St. Paul's Presbyterian Church,</u> North Port	<u>Burnt Store Presbyterian Church,</u> Punta Gorda
Wintergarden Presbyterian Church, Port Charlotte <u>devon.ducheneau@gmail.com</u>	<u>First Presbyterian Church,</u> Port Charlotte
<u>Holy Trinity Presbyterian Church,</u> North Fort Myers	
<u>Faith Presbyterian Church</u> Cape Coral	<u>First Presbyterian Church,</u> Lehigh Acres
<u>Buckingham Presbyterian Church,</u> Fort Myers	<u>Covenant Presbyterian Church,</u> Fort Myers
<u>Cypress Lake Presbyterian Church,</u> Fort Myers	
<u>Hope United Church (PCUSA),</u> Fort Myers	<u>Chapel by the Sea,</u> Fort Myers Beach
<u>First Presbyterian Church,</u> Bonita Springs	
<u>First Presbyterian Church,</u> Naples	<u>Lely Presbyterian Church,</u> Naples

[Moorings Presbyterian Church,](#)

Naples

[Vanderbilt Presbyterian Church,](#)

Naples