



# PEACE RIVER PRESBYTERY



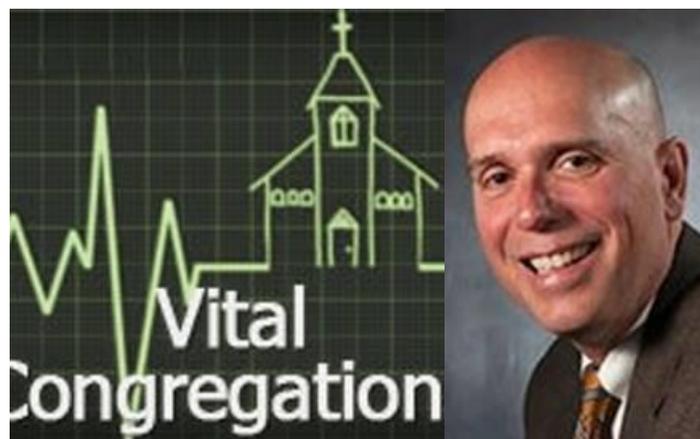
Weekly Presbytery Letter – January 26, 2017  
Rev. Elizabeth Deibert, Moderator, Congregational Vitality & Growth Task Force

## VITAL CONGREGATIONS

The Planning Team and the Congregational Vitality Task Force are very excited to be introducing a new season of learning together – Vital Congregations. Vital congregations are marked by the following characteristics, which are our subsequent themes for the meetings of Presbytery through May of 2018:

- **Inspiring & Engaging Worship,**
- **Radical Generosity,**
- **Welcoming Relationships & Nurturing Discipleship,**
- **Organizational Health,**
- **and Compassionate & Inclusive Outreach.**

We hope you can be part of the kick-off, as we welcome Rev. Ray Jones, Associate Director of Evangelism for the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), who will help us to consider the Vital Signs of a Healthy Congregation. Through Ray's guidance, The Presbyterian Mission Agency is producing curriculum to encourage and equip churches to help people live into their stories of faith, grow as followers of Christ, and see themselves as missionaries to their communities. Ray believes that renewal in the church begins with God's radical, unconditional love revealed in Jesus. Ray has served growing congregations of multiple sizes, so he is able to relate to your context.



Before coming to the Stated Meeting of Presbytery on February 23, we hope all Sessions will have a discussion about the following. The Session of Peace Church, Lakewood Ranch, where I serve as pastor, just considered these questions, and found them to be helpful as we set goals for 2017 and beyond. If you are on Session or Moderator of Session, please see that this makes it to the agenda:



*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?*

There will be opportunities in north and south areas, in the days prior to the meeting, to sit at the table with Ray and presbytery colleagues to have informal conversations about the challenges of vitality. The dates, times, and locations of those two opportunities are:

**North Region:**

**Monday, February 20, 6:00 p.m.**

Location: Carmel Kitchen in Sarasota (address: 8433 Cooper Creek Blvd., Sarasota, 34201)

Contact: Elizabeth Deibert for reservations, P: 941-779-4900

**Central & South Region:**

**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

<sup>15</sup> I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, and for this reason <sup>16</sup> I do not cease to give thanks for you as I remember you in my prayers. <sup>17</sup> I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him, <sup>18</sup> so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints, <sup>19</sup> and what is the **immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe**, according to the working of his great power. (Ephesians 1:15-19 NRS)

Grace, peace, and immeasurable greatness,  
Elizabeth M. Deibert, Leader for Congregational Vitality Task Force

**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.-2:30 p.m. ~ Stated Meeting

Lunch Details will be published soon.

**\*\* Lunch Reservations are required no later than Thursday, February 16. \*\***

Contact Lori Doyal at the Presbytery Office to make lunch reservations:

E: [lori@peacriverpresbytery.org](mailto:lori@peacriverpresbytery.org) or P: 941-426-8421

Include name, church, and contact information.

(Reservations are not required to attend the meeting.)

## EXCITING TIMES!

**Congratulations to Oak Pointe Church** (formerly Whitfield Estates Presbyterian Church) on their move into their new location in Bradenton!! Pastor Jane Jones-Norris and the entire congregation are very excited and have been working hard to remodel the church and move in.

Please join them in celebrating this joyous new beginning at their ...

**Dedication Service on Sunday, February 5<sup>th</sup> at 10:30 a.m.**

Address of Oak Pointe Church: 1215 Bayshore Gardens Parkway, Bradenton.

## ARTICLES OF INTEREST

*(selected by Graham Hart)*

["Integrated into a burning house?": a pre-inauguration conversation with Rev. Cecil Murray](#)

Religion Dispatches: An interview with the retired pastor of First AME Church of Los Angeles about how the black church's past might inform its future in this new era.

[God's work unfolds at a Charleston laundromat](#)

Started by a young woman wanting simply to live out the gospel, loving her neighbor as herself, Laundry Matters is a vibrant community center and more. It's church-as-laundromat, laundromat-as-church.

[> Read more](#)

[Angie Thurston: How can secular organizations connect to institutional religion?](#)

Secular organizations are increasingly filling a religious role in the lives of millennials. What can the church learn from them? asks the co-author of two reports on secular and sacred organizations.

[> Read more](#)

[Should Christians fear Trump's God?](#)

Commonweal: Trump's God, as read through the inaugural is an extension -- even a projection -- of the American military and law enforcement, says Fordham theology professor.

[Native Americans condemn Trump's executive action on pipeline](#)

Religion News Service: President Trump's executive orders advancing the construction of pipelines are drawing condemnation from the Native American and religious groups that have opposed them.

[Trump expected to order temporary ban on refugees](#)

Reuters: U.S. President Donald Trump is expected to sign executive orders starting today that include a temporary ban on most refugees and a suspension of visas for citizens of Syria and six other Middle Eastern and African countries.

### [Bearing witness at the Women's March on Washington](#)

Religion & Politics: The fight will require forming bipartisan coalitions among those who deeply disagree in good faith about major issues, but who can agree that truth and justice must prevail.

Baptist News Global: [Why my faith propelled me to the Women's March](#)

First Things: [An open letter to my liberal friends](#)

### [The papal obsession with getting close and concrete](#)

Crux: The Pope's "El Pais" interview was about many things yet mainly about one: the need for the Church to be close to people, and concrete.

### [The changing nature of America's irreligious explained](#)

The Conversation: Americans are increasingly choosing not to identify with any religious tradition. But this group of irreligious people is a complex one -- with different relationships to religion.

### [Followers don't see their leaders as real people](#)

Harvard Business Review: Great leaders, especially in large organizations, aren't really people. They're mental images. Here are four rules governing how people create and respond to the imaginary leaders that live in their minds.

## 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 week.

## BETH-EL FARMWORKER MINISTRY, INC.

*A Ministry to the Farmworkers in Wimauma*

**Beth-El Celebrated its 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary on November 5<sup>th</sup>!**

\*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](mailto:Javier@beth-el.org) to learn more.



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)  
[January Newsletter](#)

## **CEDARKIRK CAMP & CONFERENCE CENTER**

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

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

## **PRAYER NEEDS**

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

- 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
- Jim 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

**PRESBYTERY PRAYER GUIDE: JANUARY 2017:**

January 1	<u>Peace River Presbytery</u> 37 Congregations / 131 Ministers Moderator: Rev. Dr. Doug Pratt Vice Moderator: Ms. Charmaine Ponkratz
January 8	<u>First Presbyterian Church, Arcadia</u> Pastor: Rev. William (Bill) Teng email: <a href="mailto:pastor@FirstPC.church">pastor@FirstPC.church</a>
January 15	<u>First Presbyterian Church, Bonita Springs</u> Senior Pastor: Rev. Dr. Douglas (Doug) Pratt email: <a href="mailto:dpratt@fpcbonita.org">dpratt@fpcbonita.org</a> Associate Pastor: Rev. Steven Grant Email: <a href="mailto:sgrant@fpcbonita.org">sgrant@fpcbonita.org</a> Associate Pastor: Rev. Bradley Rogers Email: <a href="mailto:brogers@fpcbonita.org">brogers@fpcbonita.org</a>
January 22	<u>Braden River Presbyterian Church, Bradenton</u> Pastor: Rev. Glenn Buzbee, Jr. email: <a href="mailto:revglennb@gmail.com">revglennb@gmail.com</a>
January 29	<u>Mision Peniel – Ministry of Peace River Presbytery</u> Pastor: Rev. Miguel Estrada email: <a href="mailto:miguestrada@hotmail.com">miguestrada@hotmail.com</a>

**PRESBYTERY CALENDAR: JANUARY 2017**

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

**Thursday, January 26**

Congregational Vitality & Growth Task Force (12:30 p.m.) – *change of time*

Personnel Team (2:30 p.m.) – *Change of date from 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday*



## CHURCHES of PEACE RIVER PRESBYTERY

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

<a href="#">Braden River Presbyterian Church,</a> Bradenton	<a href="#">First Presbyterian Church,</a> Bradenton
<a href="#">Kirkwood Presbyterian Church,</a> Bradenton	<a href="#">Palma Sola Presbyterian Church,</a> Bradenton
<a href="#">Westminster Presbyterian Church,</a> Bradenton	Palmetto Presbyterian Church, Palmetto – <a href="mailto:office@ppcfl.org">office@ppcfl.org</a>
<a href="#">Christ Church of Longboat Key</a> Longboat Key	<a href="#">Peace Presbyterian Church,</a> Lakewood Ranch
<a href="#">Bee Ridge Presbyterian Church,</a> Sarasota	<a href="#">Church of the Palms,</a> Sarasota
<a href="#">First Presbyterian Church,</a> Sarasota	<a href="#">Northminster Presbyterian Church,</a> Sarasota
<a href="#">Pine Shores Presbyterian Church,</a> Sarasota	<a href="#">Presbyterian Church of the Covenant,</a> Sarasota
<a href="#">Whitfield Estates Presbyterian Church,</a> Sarasota	<a href="#">Siesta Key Chapel,</a> Sarasota
<a href="#">Trinity Presbyterian Church,</a> Venice	<a href="#">Venice Presbyterian Church,</a> Venice
<a href="#">Community Presbyterian Church,</a> Englewood	<a href="#">First Presbyterian Church,</a> Arcadia

<a href="#">St. Paul's Presbyterian Church,</a> North Port	<a href="#">Burnt Store Presbyterian Church,</a> Punta Gorda
Wintergarden Presbyterian Church, Port Charlotte <a href="mailto:devon.ducheneau@gmail.com">devon.ducheneau@gmail.com</a>	<a href="#">First Presbyterian Church,</a> Port Charlotte
<a href="#">Holy Trinity Presbyterian Church,</a> North Fort Myers	
<a href="#">Faith Presbyterian Church</a> Cape Coral	<a href="#">First Presbyterian Church,</a> Lehigh Acres
<a href="#">Buckingham Presbyterian Church,</a> Fort Myers	<a href="#">Covenant Presbyterian Church,</a> Fort Myers
<a href="#">Cypress Lake Presbyterian Church,</a> Fort Myers	
<a href="#">Hope United Church (PCUSA),</a> Fort Myers	<a href="#">Chapel by the Sea,</a> Fort Myers Beach
<a href="#">First Presbyterian Church,</a> Bonita Springs	
<a href="#">First Presbyterian Church,</a> Naples	<a href="#">Lely Presbyterian Church,</a> Naples
<a href="#">Moorings Presbyterian Church,</a> Naples	<a href="#">Vanderbilt Presbyterian Church,</a> Naples