



PEACE RIVER PRESBYTERY



Weekly Presbytery Letter ~ June 1, 2017

Rev. Dr. Doug Pratt, 2017 Presbytery Moderator

Dear Ministers, Elders and Churches of Peace River,

I have now nearly reached the halfway mark of my year serving as your Moderator. Thank you for the privilege you've given me of serving in this way—it is a first for me, although I've been an ordained PCUSA pastor for 38 years. I am proud of our Presbytery. It is a body marked by strong collegiality and mutual respect, committed to living out our values and enabling the leadership of our congregations to pursue excellence in our service to the Lord and our communities.

I have begun my 14th year as one of the pastors in Bonita Springs. (How time flies when you're having fun and living in such a near-paradise!) I believe that my primary service to Peace River is in trying to effectively lead one of our congregations. There is no question that church ministry in Southwest Florida is unique. We face some unusual challenges, but we also have some unusual opportunities.

The conventional wisdom within the American church for many years has been that the first two decades of life are our great window of opportunity to reach people and bring them to personal faith. And if that faith is not firmly rooted in young people by the time they move into their early 20's, our chance of molding them into faithful followers of Christ diminishes dramatically.

I have become convinced from my ministry experiences here in Florida that the conventional wisdom is being altered before our eyes. I believe that a second great window of opportunity to reach many people for Christ is emerging in their final two or three decades of life. I have been privileged to witness and participate in many people in our community coming to the Lord, or returning to the Lord. We are seeing a significant harvest. Some were raised in a church environment, and some were not. But at this time in their lives there is an enhanced openness to spiritual things.

Why is this new window of opportunity opening? (1) Partly it is due to our enhanced longevity and health. When Social Security was established during the Depression (and the average age of retirement was set at 65), most people only had a few years to live. Today, through advancements in medicine and nutrition and healthy lifestyles, our final decades of post-retirement life are much longer and fuller. (2) With the empty-nest and retirement seasons in life, people discover that they have more time and opportunity to engage in spiritual things (and in volunteer activities) than they had when their schedules were dominated by family responsibilities. (3) Those who have the freedom to relocate to a place like Florida (either seasonally or full-time) are typically open to forming new relationships and embracing new opportunities. If a neighbor or friend invites them to come to church, there is a greater possibility that they will try it.

I have many friends and church members who would acknowledge that they put God and spiritual concerns "on the shelf" for a while, as they focused on raising their families and building their careers. But now they have the time and the opportunity to address those neglected aspects of who they are (as made in the image of God and with the "God-shaped vacuum" that lies inside each of us). There is a deep hunger among many: to learn the Bible (perhaps reading it for the first time); to give back in meaningful service; to learn how to pray; and to build friendships with other adults based not on a common work environment or children's school activities but on common interests, beliefs and values.

We are in an exciting time and place to be serving the Lord and leading His church here in Southwest Florida. As Baby Boomers transition to new chapters in their lives and relocate to our area, truly “the fields are white for the harvest.”

May this summer be a refreshing and renewing time for each of you and your congregations.

Yours in Christ,
Doug Pratt

ARTICLES of INTEREST

(selected by Graham Hart)

[Cloistered nuns on Facebook: What's not to like?](#)

Religion News Service: With their own website, Facebook page and even a cellphone, the 10 remaining nuns in a convent in Oristano, Sardinia, are embracing the internet and social media and raising their profile as part of an effort to ensure the order's survival.

[The disappearance of virtue from American politics](#)

The Atlantic: Sen. Ben Sasse has written a new book, "The Vanishing American Adult." It advances a thesis that's at once out of place at this political moment and almost too on-the-nose for the Trump years: He believes Americans have lost their sense of personal integrity and discipline.

[Teen on Portland train: 'They lost their lives because of me and my friend'](#)

CNN: As tears streamed down her cheeks, Destinee Mangum, 16, thanked the three strangers who intervened on a Portland light-rail train after a man hurled anti-Muslim slurs at her and her friend who was wearing a hijab.
Washington Post: [Portland mayor asks feds to bar free-speech and anti-sharia rallies after stabbings](#)

[Mourning in Manchester, religious and secular traditions meet and meld](#)

Religion News Service: On Monday, old Manchester met the new when the Christian tradition of the Whit Walk, commemorating the Feast of Whitsun -- or Holy Trinity - combined with the secular rituals that have come to define public mourning since this increasingly irreligious nation said goodbye to Princess Diana 20 years ago.

[Gunmen attack coptic Christian convoy in Egypt, killing at least 26](#)

New York Times: Gunmen opened fire on vehicles carrying Coptic Christians in southern Egypt early Friday, killing at least 26 people, according to a church official, in the latest deadly assault on the country's embattled religious minority.

[What we can learn from the Dutch on Memorial Day](#)

Religion News Service: Dutch Remembrance Day, which they call *Herdenkingsdag*, focused on local memories of World War II. The memories can be about good things, but often the communal sense is reinforced in a special way by sharing painful memories, writes Richard Mouw.

[Young Nebraska priests' chants become best-selling album](#)

Associated Press: Members of the Priestly Fraternity of St. Peter, a Catholic order formed in 1988 that focuses on pre-Vatican II liturgy and sung prayers, have the best-selling classical album on Amazon and one of the top classical albums on iTunes.

CEDARKIRK CAMP & CONFERENCE CENTER

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

www.cedarkirk.org

2017 Events:

- Summer Camp - *Our traditional week-long residential camps for 1st-12th graders.* June 4-July 28

- 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!* Nov. 10-12 & 17-19
- Christmas Retreat – *A little bit of summer camp at Christmas time!* 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

The worshipping community of Beth-El would like to add Christian banners to its worship space. If your church or congregation has a banner, vestments or other worship supplies that you would like to donate, please contact Kathy@beth-el.org. Gracias!

POSITION OPENING:

Beth-El Farmworker Ministry is a non-profit mission supporting farmworkers and our neighbors in need through hunger relief, education, health initiatives and spiritual care. The mission is currently seeking a director of children and youth ministries for the mission's worship communities, 20 to 35 hours per week. Candidate will be responsible for coordination of all children and youth activities including summer VBS, Christian Education curriculum, teen youth group and Sunday school. Ideal candidate must be fluent in both Spanish and English with background in education (Christian education preferred). Valid driver's license, background check and drug screening are required. 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

[May 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!

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: migustrada@hotmail.com
- Ruth DeYoe, Mission Coordinator, P: 386-793-6151, E: ruthdeyoe@gmail.com
- General Email: 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.

Other Information:

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

PRAYER NEEDS

Please continue to pray for:

- Beth-El Farmworker Ministry – Please continue praying for the Ministry ... for the Beth-El Staff and the Worshipping Community, as well as continued prayer for Walter and his family. ~ *Graham*
- Pete Rodino – recovery from detached retina surgery
- Rev. Silvana Ferreira – recovery from eye surgery
- Linda Hart (Graham's wife) – recovering from double knee surgery
- 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
- 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: JUNE 2017:

June 4	<u>Peace Presbyterian Church, Lakewood Ranch</u> Pastor: Rev. Elizabeth Deibert Email: edeibert@mindspring.com
June 11	<u>First Presbyterian Church, Lehigh Acres</u> Supply Pastor: Rev. Dr. Jim Berger Email: dowberger@comcast.net
June 18	<u>Christ Church of Longboat Key</u> Stated Supply Pastor: Rev. Dr. Norman Pritchard Email: revnmp@comcast.net
June 25	<u>First Presbyterian Church, Naples</u> Pastor: Rev. Craig Goodrich Email: PJACgood@verizon.net

CHURCH SUPPORT STAFF OPENINGS

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

PRESBYTERY CALENDAR: MAY 2017

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

Thursday, June 1

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

Monday, June 5

Nominations / Representation Committee – Conference Call (10:00 a.m.)

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

Thursday, June 8

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

Tuesday, June 13

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

Wednesday, June 14

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

Thursday, June 15

Steering Committee (9:30 a.m.)

Thursday, June 22

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

Tuesday, June 27

COM Records Review Team (10:30 a.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.

