



# PEACE RIVER PRESBYTERY



Weekly Presbytery Letter ~ June 9, 2017

Rev. Graham P. Hart, General Presbyter

## Connections ... Connecting ... Connectional is Who We Are (plus some coming events and important links)

What is distinctive about our Presbyterian theology and polity is that we intentionally seek to connect with one another. Our decisions are not made in isolation, nor are they made by singular individuals, (i.e. pastors for a congregation or bishops for a presbytery), but always in a context of a council, whether the council be a session, presbytery, Synod or General Assembly.

**Why?** In the words of Jesus: And when two or three of you are together because of me, you can be sure that I'll be there." (Matthew 18:20 – the Message).

**Why?** We are an ecclesiastical version of the classic spiritual:

*...Back bone connected to the shoulder bone  
Shoulder bone connected to the neck bone  
Neck bone connected to the head bone  
Now hear the word of the Lord.*

As the Body of Christ, Presbyterians - since the days of John Calvin in Geneva and the early Presbyterians who gathered in Philadelphia for the first Presbytery meeting in the early 1700's - know our "better selves" emerge when we connect with one another. However, making, maintaining and nurturing connections is not always easy nor do we always get it right; never-the-less we keep at it. So how and when are we making those connections in Peace River?

**Connections are made formally, as in a presbytery meeting.**

And we thank First Arcadia for hosting our recent meeting on May 18<sup>th</sup>. I was interested in reading a column that one of the elder commissioners to the Presbytery wrote for the summer newsletter of Trinity Presbyterian Church of Venice:

### What in The World Is Presbytery & What's So Great About It?

Peace River Presbytery (PRP) is our local, regional group of Presbyterian Church (USA) congregations in SW Florida. PRP starts up in Palmetto and reaches down to Naples. In our "connectional" system they meet quarterly to act on matters vital important to the various churches.

Most recently, PRP met on May 18th in Arcadia. They did some serious business, like welcoming three new pastors, and forming an Administrative Commission to come along side (and support) a ... pastor and congregation. PRP shared in Bible Study with an extended tutorial on the biblical principles regarding REFORMED worship.

Here are the reviews of Trinity attendees:

Bob Speier: "The time spent in Bible Study and Worship. I found very meaningful."

Bob Elliot: "Different from other presbyteries I've been to and it may sound strange...but it was FUN."

Chuck Wiggins: "My favorite part was lunch...the unlimited BBQ ribs and chicken." (Spoken by a truly spiritual pastor).



**Connections happen informally through gatherings** of pastors or congregations working together in their community. This spring and summer, members of the Presbytery's Congregational Vitality Team are hosting five regional gathering for pastors just to talk, be of support to one another, and share how God is at work in each of their lives as well as in the churches they serve.

**Connections happen through the sharing of resources.** A hope and goal of the Blessing Grants, approved at the May 18<sup>th</sup> meeting, is that these grants will spark the imaginations of every session to engage in some new ministry or at least begin thinking about doing ministry in some new ways.

**Summary of the Blessing Grants** - Peace River Presbytery will establish a permanent invested corpus, the earnings from which will be given as grants to congregations and presbytery entities who propose to:

Support church development, redevelopment, and/or transformation:

- By initiating, altering or expanding outreach ministries in their local communities or;
- By creating PCUSA new church developments or worshipping communities.

This fund will be replenished using earnings from the invested corpus and any gifts designated for this purpose from organizations or individuals.

### Connections happen with the larger church.

The Synod of the South Atlantic has just called a new Synod Leader, the Rev. Joyce Liberman, formerly the Associate Stated Clerk for the Office of General Assembly. Joyce will be a great addition to the Synod and a support to the 17 presbyteries of which Peace River is one. [Click here to read Joyce's biography.](#)



**Connections occur through learning opportunities and being a learning community, which is one of the core values of Peace River Presbytery.** Two of these learning opportunities involve Stewardship. Our traditional September regional gatherings for 2017, will still be in September, but are being designed a bit differently than past years.

**Connections happen by being a learning community, which is one of our Presbytery's core values.** To help congregations of similar size have the best opportunity to learn from each other, as well as hear some best practices and theory unique to their culture and size, on September 12 and 13, we will continue with our late summer presbytery gatherings.

- On September 12 at Wintergarden Presbyterian Church, our smaller membership churches will gather with Robert Hay of the Presbyterian Foundation to look at stewardship practices best suited for the smaller church.
- On September 13 at First, Port Charlotte, medium and larger churches will gather for conversation, mutual learning, as Robert shares best practices and ideas suited for these churches. More details to follow, but mark your calendars.

Also, **September 25-27**, one of the best nationally recognized Stewardship Workshops called [Stewardship Kaleidoscope](#) ([click here](#)) will be in our back yard. Some of the best practices on stewardship, developing cultures of generosity, fantastic speakers, great worships, and helpful ideas are shared at this annual event. [Click here for the link.](#)



**Stewardship Kaleidoscope**  
Real Tools for Real Ministry

**Save The Date**  
September 25 - 27, 2017  
St. Pete Beach, FL • TradeWinds Island Grand Resort

**Keynote**  
Cynthia Rigby  
The W.C. Brown  
Professor of Theology  
at Austin Seminary

**Keynote**  
Adam Copeland  
Director of the Center for  
Stewardship Leadership  
at Luther Seminary

**Worship Leader**  
Shannon Kerstner  
Pastor of Fourth  
Presbyterian Church  
in Chicago

Plus over 30 workshops covering topics such as annual stewardship, planned giving, theology of giving, current trends in stewardship, capital campaigns, and generosity

To register and for more information visit:  
[www.stewardshipkaleidoscope.org](http://www.stewardshipkaleidoscope.org)

**And we connect with the General Assembly in many ways**, one of which is sharing in the support of mission co-workers like [Dan and Elizabeth Turk \(click here\)](#) in Madagascar and [Drs. Cindy and Les Morgan \(click here\)](#) in Bangladesh. Also, the Presbyterian Cuba Partnership Network and mission co-worker [Jo Ella Holman \(click here\)](#), mission co-worker for the Caribbean and Cuba, has been supporting us as a presbytery as we develop the relationship with Matanzas Presbytery.

Just as the knee bone is connected the thigh bone, and the thigh bone is connected to the hip bone ... so a session is connected to a presbytery, and presbytery connected to a synod and a General Assembly. For better and for worse we are connectional church. No Presbyterian pastor can be a lone ranger, nor do congregations exist in isolation and independent from the other congregations within a given region/presbytery.

Can we do better? Always! Are we connecting in some meaningful and important ways? I believe so.

As always would love to hear your thoughts, and I encourage sessions to have a conversation about what it means for your congregation to be part of this connectional "Body" called Peace River Presbytery.

*Thanks be to God for the ties that bind...*

*the sinew that connects...*

*the common missions shared...*

*and the mutual support and accountability that is at the heart of who we are as Presbyterians.*

*Graham*

Graham Hart

General Presbyter

Peace River Presbytery

[graham@peacriverpresbytery.org](mailto:graham@peacriverpresbytery.org)

**Prayer Concern Update:** We are thrilled that last week our son Nathan, for whom we have been praying, had his first 6-month comprehensive medical checkup with scans, and the great good news is that there are no signs of cancer. He will continue to have quarterly check-ups and 6month scans. Thanks for your continued prayers.

## ARTICLES of INTEREST

(selected by Graham Hart)

### [How the Six-Day War transformed religion](#)

The Atlantic: Fifty years ago this week, the Six-Day War dramatically altered geographic borders and political fortunes in the Middle East. The Atlantic asked six writers to share their perspectives on how the 1967 Arab-Israeli conflict changed Islam, Judaism, Christianity and Mormonism.

The Forward: [Should we celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Six Day War -- or despair?](#)

Literary Hub: [Silence is an occupation all its own](#)

### [Religiously affiliated hospitals win Supreme Court pension case](#)

National Catholic Reporter: In a decision that has religiously affiliated hospitals cheering, the Supreme Court ruled that federal pension rules don't apply to religiously affiliated hospitals. The 8-0 ruling reverses lower court decisions that sided with hospital workers.

### [The renewed importance of Pope Francis' encyclical on climate change](#)

The New Yorker: A blistering indictment of the human failure to care for Earth, it is also a poignant description of the momentous choice now confronting every government, corporation, and person on the planet. "Laudato Si' " is a manifesto. If you read it two years ago, read it again now, writes James Carroll.

[Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby: London attack link to Islam as Christians killing Muslims is linked to Christianity](#)

The Independent: Faith leaders must take responsibility for countering the religious justification for atrocities committed in their name, the Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby said in the aftermath of the terrorist attack in London.

Huffington Post: ['Terrorism has no religion:' Muslims across the UK slam London attackers](#)

[Manchester uplifted by Ariana Grande's colossal empathy](#)

The Guardian: Some of the victims' families had bristled at Grande hosting a fundraising concert so soon after the suicide bombing that killed 22 people at one of her concerts last month. But her earnestness and emotional acuity meant that for thousands of people, this was an event that soothed and uplifted.

[Majority in US still say religion can answer most problems](#)

Gallup: A slim majority of Americans (55%) say religion can answer all or most of today's problems, according to a new poll. In 1957, 82% of Americans said that religion could answer all or most of the day's problems. As recently as 2002, 66% of U.S. adults expressed the same sentiment. But the measure has declined since then, reaching 51% -- the all-time low -- in May 2015.

## **CEDARKIRK CAMP & CONFERENCE CENTER**

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

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

## **BETH-EL FARMWORKER MINISTRY, INC.**

*A Ministry to the Farmworkers in Wimauma*

[www.beth-el.org](http://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](mailto: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](http://www.beth-el.org)

[June Newsletter](#)

## **MISION PENIEL**

*A Ministry of Peace River Presbytery to the Farmworkers in Immokalee*

[www.misionpeniel.com](http://www.misionpeniel.com)

Please be sure to contact us to schedule your next visit and reserve a date to volunteer at Misi3n 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](mailto:migustrada@hotmail.com)
- Ruth DeYoe, Mission Coordinator, P: 386-793-6151, E: [ruthdeyoe@gmail.com](mailto:ruthdeyoe@gmail.com)
- General Email: [misionpenielpeaceriver@gmail.com](mailto: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: <a href="mailto:edeibert@mindspring.com">edeibert@mindspring.com</a>
June 11	<u>First Presbyterian Church, Lehigh Acres</u> Supply Pastor: Rev. Dr. Jim Berger Email: <a href="mailto:dowberger@comcast.net">dowberger@comcast.net</a>
June 18	<u>Christ Church of Longboat Key</u> Stated Supply Pastor: Rev. Dr. Norman Pritchard Email: <a href="mailto:revnmp@comcast.net">revnmp@comcast.net</a>
June 25	<u>First Presbyterian Church, Naples</u> Pastor: Rev. Craig Goodrich Email: <a href="mailto:PJACgood@verizon.net">PJACgood@verizon.net</a>

## CHURCH SUPPORT STAFF OPENINGS

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

[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.peacriverpresbytery.org](http://www.peacriverpresbytery.org)

### **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.peacriverpresbytery.org/churches](http://www.peacriverpresbytery.org/churches)

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





