



PEACE RIVER PRESBYTERY



Weekly Presbytery Letter ~ May 12, 2017 Rev. Graham P. Hart, General Presbyter

Preview of the May 2017 Presbytery Meeting

(Adapted from the May 18th General Presbyter's Report to the Presbytery)

So... the leaders of the congregation, in a retreat setting, shared stories about when they thought their church's "turn around" began. It was a great conversation because it was so different from past conversations in this church.

Ten years ago, their focus was on conversations about: *isn't it awful, and everything that was wrong*. But now the conversations are focused on what God is doing in their community and church. They are responding to needs, near and far. They decided their congregation's re-vitalization was not just one thing, but a whole bunch of things.

"Turn around," however one defines that reality, is always a combination of many things. It is contextual. What is right in one place may not be the answer in another. But, in every case, "something" changed, then a whole bunch of things changed.

So where does a person, pastor or a congregation start? Maybe it is just to have the conversation. To ask questions. To listen and learn from each other.

A goal, hope and prayer of PRP's Steering Committee is that every pastor and session, either before or after every Presbytery meeting for the rest of 2017/18 will intentionally engage in some conversation around the theme for that meeting, which will be about some aspect of Congregational Vitality. Bill Teng, of the Planning Team, sent a letter to all pastors and Clerks of Session prior to this meeting, encouraging each Session to have some intentional conversation around the theme of the May 18th Presbytery meeting.

For those who are not on sessions, the reflection questions sent out prior to this meeting are:

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| 1. What makes worship inspiring and engaging for you and for a new person in your congregation? |
| 2. Think about the difference between living/vital traditions in our worship and dead traditionalism in our services. |
| 3. Think about the relational qualities of worship that affect our experience of it. |

Peace River Presbytery is in a 2-year emphasis on Congregational Vitality and Growth. The Steering Committee has adopted the following definition of a vital and growing church:

A vital and growing church is one that celebrates the Great Commandment through inspiring and life-transforming worship, nurturing discipleship, compassionate and inclusive outreach, and radical, grace-filled generosity.

At our February meeting, Ray Jones began our focus and conversation. He shared with us the Seven Signs of Congregational Vitality, which the PCUSA has identified as making a difference, and as key and critical for congregational vitality:

1. Lifelong Christian Formation
2. Healthy Systems
3. Intentional Evangelism
4. Outward Incarnational Focus
5. Empowering Servant Leadership
6. Inspiring Worship
7. Caring Relationships Happen

The Steering Committee, the Congregational Vitality Team and the Planning Team have adopted that list, so at each of our meetings for 2017/18 we will focus on one aspect of a vital and growing congregation. (see the Steering Committee's report for details.)

At next week's Presbytery meeting, Bill Teng, pastor of the Arcadia Church, followed by the panel of 4, will be leading us in conversation about ***Inspiring and Engaging Worship***. Winston Lawson, recently honorably retired, who served congregations in Atlanta before retiring, and is known for his strong worship leadership, will be preaching. We thank First Presbyterian Church, Arcadia for their hospitality.

As we move into this year, giving intentional focus on congregational vitality and growth, I wonder:

- How will just having a conversation at a session meeting begin to affect change?
- How will it change the Presbytery?
- What would happen if pastors in regions gathered to share thoughts and ideas about congregational vitality and growth; and to pray for one another?
- What exciting thing is God going to do next?
- What congregation will catch the vision to develop an outreach to the unchurched in their area and maybe begin a 1001 Worshipping Community to reach them?
- What might the relationship with Matanzas Presbytery in Cuba teach us about congregational vitality when times are tough?
- What new program or initiative will emerge in our presbytery and in a congregation, that our Blessing Grants Initiative for congregational growth and vitality will encourage?
- How will we respond to the challenges of this year, which always come as an opportunity to grow as well?

Additionally, as a Presbytery, I would encourage us to continue to pray for the Beth-El community as they grieve, pray, and seek healing because of the arrest of the Pastor for their Worshipping Community in Wimauma. I invite us to pray for Walter Chuquimia, who is a Pastor in Peace River Presbytery. Walter, as we have announced in the past 2 weeks, was arrested on 3 counts of sexual battery. There is much in life we don't understand, and we pray for healing for all who have been hurt and broken and are grieving. We pray that God would be at work in Walter's life and he would know something of the grace, mercy and love of God, even as he is accountable to the authorities and is responsible for his actions. The Presbytery's Sexual Misconduct Response Team has been following our protocol, and has been responsive to all affected and involved, and our Pastoral Care Team has also been involved as appropriate.

Finally, I invite all pastors and congregations to consider a partnership with one of the congregations in Matanzas Presbytery in Cuba, and our **September 28-October 2 (or 3) Pastor/Spouse retreat in Varadero, Cuba.**

*Grateful to our God...
Who is the Wind in our Sails...
and the Rudder to Guide us along the Way!*



Graham Hart
General Presbyter
Peace River Presbytery
graham@peacriverpresbytery.org

STATED MEETING of PRESBYTERY

Thursday, May 18

First Presbyterian Church of Arcadia
209 W. Hickory St. / Arcadia, FL 34266

8:00 a.m. – Registration Begins
9:00 a.m. – Q&A with the Presbytery Treasurer and Finance Team
9:00 a.m. – Q&A with the Blessing & Grants Task Force
9:30 a.m. – Meeting Begins

Lunch Reservations:

Reservations are required for lunch but not for the meeting.
The lunch reservation deadline was **Friday, May 12th **
Cost of lunch: \$10.00 (payable at Registration)

CEDARKIRK CAMP & CONFERENCE CENTER

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

www.cedarkirk.org

2017 Events:

- Open House - *The perfect way to spend an afternoon! Come and enjoy Cedarkirk!* May 13
- 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

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

www.beth-el.org

[April Newsletter](#)

MISION PENIEL

A Ministry of Peace River Presbytery to the Farmworkers in Immokalee

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: miguestrada@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.

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**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: MAY 2017:**

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| May 7  | <u>Beth-El Farmworker Ministry</u><br>Executive Director: Rev. Kathy Dain<br>Email: <a href="mailto:kathy@beth-el.org">kathy@beth-el.org</a> |
| May 14 | <u>Stated Meeting of Peace River Presbytery</u><br>at First Presbyterian Church of Arcadia                                                   |

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| <p>May 21</p> | <p><u>Chapel By The Sea, Fort Myers Beach</u><br/>         Pastor: Rev. Dr. Stephen Adkison<br/>         Email: <a href="mailto:skypilot_mdiv@hotmail.com">skypilot_mdiv@hotmail.com</a></p>                 |
| <p>May 28</p> | <p><u>Holy Trinity Presbyterian Church, North Fort Myers</u><br/>         Pastor: Rev. Dr. Valerie Bell<br/>         Email: <a href="mailto:pastorvaleriebell@gmail.com">pastorvaleriebell@gmail.com</a></p> |

**PRESBYTERY CALENDAR: MAY 2017**

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

**Thursday, May 18**

Stated Meeting of Presbytery at First Presbyterian Church of Arcadia

**Thursday, May 25**

Congregational Vitality Team (1:00 p.m.)

**Monday, May 29**

Memorial Day – Presbytery Offices Closed

**CHURCHES of PEACE RIVER PRESBYTERY**

Please visit our web site, [www.peaceriverpresbytery.org/churches](http://www.peaceriverpresbytery.org/churches)

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



