



PEACE RIVER PRESBYTERY



Weekly Presbytery Letter ~ October 19, 2017

Rev. Elizabeth Deibert
~ Congregational Vitality ~

On October 29, we celebrate the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. I've been pondering what it was like to live through these immense shifts, which did not happen overnight. They were ushered in over the lifetime of strong and faithful leaders, whom we remember and honor – Luther, Calvin, Knox, and more. These leaders had courage to name unhealthy trends in the church, to utilize the new technology of their day (printing press), and to empower the congregations by equipping them with a more participatory faith, re-formed and always being reformed by the Word of God. They were not trying to divide the Church but to make it fruitful or vital, we might say, by correcting abuse of ecclesial power and mis-guided theology. You could say they were, in the words from Ephesians 4, “equipping the saints for the work of ministry.”

The Congregational Vitality Team of Peace River Presbytery hopes that we are building up the body of Christ when we gather for meetings. Next week we have our re-scheduled gatherings with churches of similar-size to consider with Robert Hay of the Presbyterian Foundation about what it means to be radically generous stewards of God's gifts. I hope you are on board with this re-scheduled date and that your congregation will be well-represented there.

On November 16, our focus will be Welcoming Relationships and Nurturing Discipleship, with Rodger Nishioka serving as keynote speaker for the day. Here is an outline of his plan:

- Name the key characteristics of a healthy group.
- Identify the steps it takes to form a healthy group.
- Understand how we are called by the Holy Spirit to offer hospitality.
- Explain the steps of growth as a disciple.
- Identify one way our congregation can be more hospitable and help persons of all ages grow in their faith in Jesus Christ.

As you gather in Session meetings over the next month, please consider this scripture in a translation less familiar, which may inspire your pondering, followed by Rodger's questions to our elders in active service on Session:

¹² His purpose was to equip God's people for the work of serving and building up the body of Christ ¹³ until we all reach the unity of faith and knowledge of God's Son. God's goal is for us to become mature adults--to be fully grown, measured by the standard of the fullness of Christ. ¹⁴ As a result, we aren't supposed to be infants any longer who can be tossed and blown around by every wind that comes from teaching with deceitful scheming and the tricks people play to deliberately mislead others. ¹⁵ Instead, by speaking the truth with love, let's grow in every way into Christ, ¹⁶ who is the head. The whole body grows from him, as it is

joined and held together by all the supporting ligaments. The body makes itself grow in that it builds itself up with love as each one does their part. (Ephesians 4 CEB)

- When venturing into a new situation, when did you feel particularly welcomed? When did you not feel welcomed?
- What does it mean to you to be a “welcoming congregation?”
- How have you grown in your faith in the past few years?
- What would you say are the key characteristics of a “mature Christian?”

Peace, growth, and grace,

Elizabeth M. Deibert
Congregational Vitality Team
Pastor, Peace Presbyterian, Lakewood Ranch

[THE NOMINATIONS and REPRESENTATION COMMITTEE’S GUIDELINES
for Selecting Commissioners to the General Assembly](#)

FALL GATHERINGS

Due to the unwelcomed visit of Hurricane Irma, the **2017 Fall Gatherings had to be rescheduled.**

The **NEW** dates are:

Tuesday, October 24, 2017

First Presbyterian Church of Port Charlotte

2230 Harriet Street | Port Charlotte, 33952

Gathering #1: 9:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m. for *Medium Sized Congregations*

Lunch: 12:00 -1:00 p.m. (Note: **NEW lunch reservations are required**)

Note: Representatives of the Large Size Congregations are welcome to join in for lunch.

Lunch Reservations to Tanga: Phone: 941- 625-5045 or Email: tanga@fpcpc.com

Gathering #2: 1:00-4:00 p.m. for *Large Sized Congregations*

AND ...

Wednesday, October 25, 2017

Wintergarden Presbyterian Church

18305 Wintergarden Avenue | Port Charlotte, 33948

Gathering #3: 9:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m. for *Small Sized Congregations*

Lunch: 12:00 -1:00 p.m. (Note: **NEW lunch reservations are required**)

Lunch Reservations to church office: Phone: 941- 743-5335 or Email: office@wintergardenpres.org

Beginning at 1:00 an Invitation for Conversation with Pastors and Elders concerning the unique challenges facing smaller congregations.

ATTENTION: CLERKS of SESSION

Records Review Workshops:

Completed - Saturday, October 14 – Covenant Presbyterian Church, Fort Myers
9:00-10:00 a.m. – Records Review

Saturday, October 21 – Northminster Presbyterian Church, Sarasota
9:00-10:00 a.m. – Clerk of Session Training with the Stated Clerk of Peace River Presbytery
10:00-11:00 a.m. – Records Review

POST HURRICANE IRMA DEBRIEFING & GATHERING

Thursday, November 2nd, 1:30-3:30 p.m.

at

Hope United Presbyterian Church, Fort Myers

7470 Hickory Road SE / Fort Myers, FL 33967

Several of our pastors suggested that it would be helpful if we gathered as pastors and congregational leaders for conversation, mutual support, sharing our experience, learnings and prayers. **On November 2, 2017 from 1:30 – 3:30 p.m. at Hope United Church in Fort Myers** we will gather with a facilitator provided by Presbyterian Disaster Assistance (PDA). [Click here for details.](#)

CONFERENCE: “CONFRONTING OUR RACISM”

[Click here](#) for a flier about Eckerd College’s upcoming conference, “Confronting Our Racism” with Paul Roberts, President of Johnson C. Smith Seminary on Monday, November 20th. Whether you are just thinking about this issue for the first time or have been doing this work all of your life, you are invited to join us for a day long conversation about opposing racism. This will be an opportunity for us to listen, learn, ask questions, and talk about next steps in dealing with racism in our own local communities.

The conference is made possible by funding from the John and Phyllis Ogden Fund of the Synod of the South Atlantic, so there is no cost to you (except for lunch and travel).

[WALK with the BIBLE TOUR of ISRAEL and JORDAN](#)

(click above for information on this 2018 trip)

BETH-EL FARMWORKER MINISTRY, INC.

A Ministry to the Farmworkers in Wimauma

www.beth-el.org

**** [Open House: November 12, 2017](#) ****

Beth-El
Farmworker Ministry, Inc.

PO Box 860 | Wimauma, FL 33598

Phone: 813-633-1548 ext. 223

Web: www.beth-el.org

[October Newsletter](#)

*Beth-El is looking for donations of furniture for its office and dental clinic.
Please contact their office if you have desks, tables, or bookcases.*

CEDARKIRK CAMP & CONFERENCE CENTER

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

2017 Events:

- Challenge to Change - *A unique mission-trip program designed for a variety of groups.* Year-round
- Silent Retreat – *A new retreat designed for folks who are seeking space to listen to God.* TBA
- 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.

MISION PENIEL

A Ministry of Peace River Presbytery to the Farmworkers in Immokalee

www.misionpeniel.com

Please be in prayer for the mission, which sustained considerable damage from Hurricane Irma. The mission office has damage from the roof falling in on the office area, and the farmworkers have a lot of damage to their residences, most of which are mobile homes.

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: misionpenielpeacriver@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](#))

ARTICLES

(selected by Graham Hart)

[More Americans think God is unnecessary for morality, Pew study shows](#)

Newsweek: More Americans think it's not necessary to believe in God to be moral, including both religious and non-religious people.

[The role of sports ministries in the NFL protests](#)

Religion & Politics: The surprising overlap between sports ministries and the recent NFL protests in terms of both strategy and personnel should prompt us to consider how faith is moving these athletes to action.

[Clicks instead of Communion: Church of England goes digital as attendance hits new low](#)

Christian Today: The Church of England's congregations are ditching Mass for Macbooks as regular attendance is being replaced with digital engagement.

[How Trump botches the politics of 'Merry Christmas'](#)

The Washington Post: In a way, the president is right: Christmas is political. But not in the way he thinks, says James K. A. Smith.

[Why I am ditching the label 'evangelical' in the Trump era](#)

The Washington Post: "Evangelical" or "mainline," "liberal" or "conservative," the adjectives we use to describe our faith have served to divide us more than they have defined us, says Amy Julia Becker.

[Denied admission because he's black, civil rights leader urges Duke Divinity to confront its past](#)

Religion News Service: Sixty years after he was denied admission on account of his race, the Rev. Gil Caldwell spoke at Duke Divinity School, urging it to confront its past.

[Methodist experience in closing congregations offers lessons to Catholics](#)

National Catholic Reporter: Massive consolidation of Catholic parishes has a familiar ring to mainstream Protestants who have been shedding congregations since the 1970s.

[Too few children in too many pews, latest C of E mission statistics warn](#)

Church Times: The average Church of England church has just three children attending, and the smallest 25 per cent have, on average, none at all.

PRAYER NEEDS

Please continue to pray for:

- The family and loved ones of Eva Horn, who passed away last week. Services were held at Faith Presbyterian, Cape Coral on Friday, October 13. Eve was a past president of the Presbyterian Women.
- The communities and responders affected by the fires in California
- The families and community of Las Vegas, NV
- All who are affected by Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria
- Beth-El Farmworker Ministry
- 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. Lou Thompson – health
- Phil Kuehl (husband of Rev. Elizabeth Kuehl, Faith, Cape Coral) – going through chemotherapy
- Robert Dennis, son of Rev. India Dennis – mental health issues
- Greg Beckwith (son of Jim and Becky Beckwith) – on kidney transplant list
- 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: OCTOBER 2017:

October 1	<p><u>First Presbyterian Church, Sarasota</u> Pastor: Rev. Dr. Glen Bell Email: gbell@firstpressarasota.org Associate Pastor: Rev. Kelly Fitzgerald Email: kfitzgerald@firstpressarasota.org</p>
October 8	<p><u>Burnt Store Presbyterian Church, Punta Gorda</u> Pastor: Rev. Dr. Tim Stewart Email: sunburn1320@mac.com</p>
October 15	<p><u>PRP Elected Staff</u> General Presbyter: Rev. Graham Hart Email: graham@peacriverpresbytery.org Stated Clerk: Rev. Dr. Randy Moody Email: statedclerk@peacriverpresbytery.org Treasurer: Elder Alan Penick Email: adpenick@comcast.net</p>
October 22	<p><u>PRP Support Staff</u> Office Manager: Alesia Sharpe Email: alesia@peacriverpresbytery.org Financial Secretary, Administrative Assistant, Web Site Mgr. Email: lori@peacriverpresbytery.org</p>
October 29	<p><u>Pine Shores Presbyterian Church, Sarasota</u> Co-Pastor: Rev. Dr. Bruce Wismer Email: bruce@pineshorespres.org Co-Pastor: Rev. Karen Wismer Email: karen@pineshorespres.org Associate Pastor: Rev. Cori Rigney Email: cori@pineshorespres.org</p>

CHURCH SUPPORT STAFF OPENINGS

[Administrative Assistant \(PT\) – First Presbyterian Church of Lehigh Acres](#)

[Financial Secretary \(PT\) – First Presbyterian Church of Lehigh Acres](#)

[Church Sexton – First Presbyterian Church of Sarasota](#)

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

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

UPCOMING RETIREMENT

Darlene Rayhart, Office Manager for First Presbyterian Church of Lehigh Acres,
will retire on October 26, 2017, after 22 years of service.

PRESBYTERY CALENDAR: OCTOBER 2017

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

All meetings are at the Presbytery Center location in North Port, unless otherwise posted.

Thursday, October 19

Steering Committee (9:30 a.m.)

Saturday, October 21

Clerks of Session Training Workshop with the Stated Clerk (9:00 a.m. at Northminster, Sarasota)

Records Review Workshop (10:00 a.m. at Northminster, Sarasota)

Monday, October 23

Nominations and Representation Committee (10:00 a.m.)

Tuesday, October 24

Fall Gatherings at First, Port Charlotte (Medium & Large Congregations)

Wednesday, October 25

Fall Gathering at Wintergarden, Port Charlotte (Small Congregations)

Thursday, October 26

Congregational Vitality Team (12:30 p.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.

