



PEACE RIVER PRESBYTERY



Weekly Presbytery Letter ~ October 5, 2018

Breaking News - Partnership Visits to 7 Congregations in Matanzas (Cuba)

Background: In 2015, Peace River was invited to begin a dialogue with Presbyterian Church leadership in Cuba. In 2016, two exploratory trips occurred. In September 2017, 18 pastors and spouses from PRP joined the pastors and families of Matanzas for a retreat at Varadero, then traveled to the homes of the Cuban pastors, preaching in their churches on Sunday. This year Peace River approved a “Partnership Agreement” with Matanzas Presbytery which led to 27 members of 8 congregations in Peace River going to Cuba for 6 days to visit with 7 congregations in Matanzas Presbytery. You will be hearing much more, but all who went came back touched and transformed, and each of the congregations who went is looking to go to the next steps to form congregation to congregation partnerships. The article below is from the perspective of one of the participants who visited the Juan G. Hall Presbyterian Church in Cardenas. There is more to come.



With anticipation,
Kevin Morris, Ruth DeYoe, Winston Lawson, Wally Johnson, Graham Hart
(The Cuba Partnership Task Force)



Peace River Presbytery - A Visit to Cuba

In 4:7-8 A Samaritan woman, came to draw water and Jesus said to her, “Give me a drink.”

Water, water, everywhere, and all the boards did shrink; Water, water, everywhere, Not any drop to drink. – Coleridge



Cuba, surrounded by the waters of the azure Caribbean, is as you may imagine it, lush and tropical. You may imagine a place where the people live simple lives and are sustained by bountiful natural fruits and vegetables. When twenty-seven members of the Peace River Presbytery traveled to Cuba to visit the Presbyterian Churches and the Seminary at Matanzas at the end of September, we were thrilled and surprised by what we found there.

The island is lush, and small homes are sometimes surrounded by banana trees and other edible vegetables and fruits thriving in the tropical sun. But, food is rationed on the island, we were told.

Yet, the people of the Presbyterian Churches that we visited in the Matanzas Presbytery found ways to share more food than any of us could consume. But, this part of Cuba is filled with structures that may soon collapse.

At the Seminary, we heard from the Rev. Dr. Ary Fernandez, who serves as the Head of the Synod, co-pastor of one of the churches in Matanzas and professor at the seminary. Ary was the guest speaker at Peace River Presbytery's meeting at First Sarasota in February of 2018. Together with other clergy, we learned about the programs that the seminary offers to prepare people to serve in ministry in the ways that (all) churches need. Their programs allow the future servants of God and the Church to learn and work in tandem. The seminary at Matanzas is related to the seminary founded in the late 1940's in Havana (by Justo Gonzalez and others).



Ary and his wife Beidy, serve a Presbyterian Church in Matanzas, where there are currently 11 other



churches and include a number of mission churches with the presbytery. The Presbyterian churches face many difficulties starting with very limited financial resources, and resultant very low pastoral salaries. But the churches have taken up the challenges in proclaiming the love and reign of God and in recognizing the diversity of the people of Cuba. This effort to re-connect with the people of the United States actually began with a conversation in 1985. There are now more than 90 PCUSA churches sharing in partnerships with other Presbyterian churches throughout Cuba!

Clergy in photo above: (L-R) Armando Hernández, Beidy Casas Aragón, Liz Capó Lima, Yamilka González Fernandez, Zorky Crespo Orozco, Ary Fernandez Alban.

Over the weekend, the PRP group was divided up to allow us to visit seven different churches in the Presbytery. The delegation from First, Sarasota spent two days in the city of Cárdenas visiting the Juan G. Hall Church where Alison Infante Zamora and his wife Sarai serve as pastors. They live in a comfortable apartment in the church with their 2 young children. We met with Presbyterian Women, who offered crafts for sale for missions (I bought several of these and could barely close my suitcase for the return trip!). We also met with a group of medical professionals to hear their concerns about their ability to offer the care that is needed by the population.



Both groups were wonderful to meet and to learn about their ministries. But the most enlightening experience was to meet with the youth. Youth in Cuba include pre-schoolers (3 or 4 years old) to age 30! The young adults care for and include the youngest children in the activities that are planned for the youth of the Church. They include the youngest children in appropriate activities, supplying advice and patient love in abundance with the youngest member of the group. The youth offered a Beatles concert for the whole Juan G. Hall congregation on Saturday evening following supper. Pastor Alison's two-year-old son clearly desired to be amongst those who participated in the watching, singing, and dancing of the iconic Beatles music.

We saw how fragile the buildings in Cuba are in Cárdenas at the Juan G. Hall Presbyterian-Reformed Church on Sunday, September 30. A carefully planned and executed worship service was in process when a rainstorm suddenly began. Shortly, the foyer of the church was filling with water. The members told us that recent rains had actually flooded the very sanctuary where we were sitting. But, on the Sunday we were there, everyone quickly worked to soak up the rain and dry the floor.

After church, we toured the city of Cárdenas. We rode in the ubiquitous horse-drawn carriage, through a section of the town to the edge of it where there is an industrial park that once was inhabited by the plants that produced such iconic Cuban products as Bacardi Rum. Now the industrial area stands as a dusty silent marker of the way things once were.

I leave you with this thought, as the woman at the well moved on from serving water to Jesus, to serving God's people through Jesus, we too can offer the word, and serve **with** our Cuban Presbyterian brothers and sisters in this new Presbytery Partnership.

Jean Luker, Elder
First Presbyterian, Sarasota, FL



Update from the General Presbyter Nominating Committee:

We were grateful for the draft of the Ministry Information Form that was provided to us, carefully considered the feedback the Presbytery provided when the full body had the opportunity to comment on the draft, strengthened the narrative answers and submitted the revisions to Steering Committee for approval. We appreciate their approval on September 20. As you read this it will have already been posted on the Church Leadership Connection and the match will be in process.

Linda Getzen and Sung Lee, co-moderators.

Serving on the team are Carson Brown, Gene George, Charmaine Ponkratz, Terri Jo Crego, Jeff DeYoe, Kelly Fitzgerald and Doug Pratt.

Please keep praying as we enter this next phase of the process. Respectfully submitted, Charmaine Ponkratz, scribe.

CEDARKIRK CAMP & CONFERENCE CENTER

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

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.

BETH-EL FARMWORKER MINISTRY, INC.

A Ministry to the Farmworkers in Wimauma



PO Box 860 | Wimauma, FL 33598

Phone: 813-633-1548 ext. 223

Web: www.beth-el.org

[September Newsletter](#)

MISIÓN PENIEL

A Ministry of Peace River Presbytery to the Farmworker Community in Immokalee

208 Boston Ave., PO Box 1204, Immokalee, FL 34143

www.misionpeniel.com

Facebook: "Misión Peniel"

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

Contributions to Misión Peniel (checks or online):

- Mail to: Peace River Presbytery, 5600 Peace River Road, North Port, FL 34287
- Checks can be made payable to Peace River Presbytery or to Misión Peniel.
- Please note *Misión Peniel* in the memo section.
- Click on the "Donate" button on the Misión Peniel web site.
- Contributor information is provided to Misión Peniel each month.

PRAYER NEEDS

Please continue to pray for:

- Rev. Dr. Daniel Pendergrass – recovery from a badly broken leg
- Jim and Becky Beckwith - health

- Rev. Miguel Estrada's Father-In-Law, Mr. Castillo Fernandez - health
- The Rev. Daniel Herlein - health
- Robert Dennis (son of Rev. India Dennis) – mental health issues
- Beth-El Farmworker Ministry (in Wimauma)
- Misión Peniel Farmworker Ministry (in Immokalee)
- 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 2018

October 7	<u>PRP Elected Staff:</u> Graham Hart (General Presbyter), Randy Moody (Stated Clerk), Alan Penick (Treasurer)
October 14	<u>PRP Support Staff:</u> Alesia Sharpe (Office Manager) & Lori Doyal (Financial Secretary and Administrative Assistant)
October 21	<u>Pine Shores Presbyterian Church, Sarasota</u> Co- Pastors: Rev. Dr. Bruce Wismer and Rev. Karen Wismer Email: bruce@pineshorespres.org / karen@pineshorespres.org
October 28	<u>Presbyterian Church of the Covenant, Sarasota</u> Pastor: Rev. Michael Mansperger Email: covenant.presbyteian@comcast.net

SAVE THE DATE!

Sunday, March 3, 2019

Peace Presbyterian Church Dedication Service

CHURCH SUPPORT STAFF OPENINGS

Hope United Presbyterian Church, Fort Myers/Estero
[Church Administrative Assistant / Office Administrator](#)

~~~~~

Braden River Presbyterian Church, Bradenton  
[Part Time Administrative Assistant](#)

~~~~~

St. Paul's Presbyterian Church, North Port
[Music Director for the Traditional Service](#)

PRESBYTERY CALENDAR: OCTOBER 2018

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

Please email corrections or additions to lori@peaceriverpresbytery.org

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

Saturday, October 6

Records Review Workshop (9:00 a.m. - Northminster Presbyterian Church, Sarasota)

Monday, October 8

Planning Team (12:30 p.m.)

Tuesday, October 9

Committee on Ministry (9:30 a.m.)

Wednesday, October 10

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

Thursday, October 11

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

Monday, October 15

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

Thursday, October 18

Steering Committee (9:30 a.m.)

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

Thursday, October 25

Misión Peniel Team (10:00 a.m. in Immokalee)

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.



