



# PEACE RIVER PRESBYTERY



## Presbytery Weekly E-Newsletter ~ February 26, 2021

### From the General Presbyter

Dear Friends,

Thank you to all who participated in the presbytery meeting this week. We look forward to the day when we can all gather in person for fellowship and worship together, but in the meantime, thank you for being the church via Zoom. We can accomplish more together.

As you heard from Outreach and Nurture, our application for the Vital Congregations cohort has been sent. We expect to hear something by early April. This would be an exciting initiative for our presbytery and churches. As you read these articles about the 7 Marks, I encourage you to consider whether your session and congregation would like to engage in this work in the coming years.

The third mark of a Vital Congregation is Outward Incarnational Focus. As we have learned during the pandemic, the church is not the building. We are the church wherever we are sharing the good news of Christ in our relationships. We are specifically called to be at work in the communities where we live and worship and play. Gone are the days when people will come to church out of loyalty to a denomination or duty. The church must go out into our communities and show the love and justice of Christ to people who don't know God's love. Christ is already at work there and calls the church to join in mission, justice-seeking, and caring for the marginalized. This is exciting work to which we are called. This is how we make a difference for God in the world.

Please share with me some ways that your church is practicing outward incarnational focus. I would love to share with others the amazing work that is happening around Peace River Presbytery.

*Note: I continue to work mostly from home. If you want to contact me, please call my cell number rather than the office, or email me. Thank you. Cell number 417-489-0024*

Blessings,  
Melana

### Good News from Congregations

#### The Peaceful Path

Having escaped a troubling situation at home, a woman found herself searching for peace and found it on a path in the woods. Here, the people of a congregation named Peace have developed beautiful “forest art” in a place set aside for connection with God and neighbor via the natural world.

Another family came to the Peaceful Path for temporary relief from the dread of chemotherapy for their preschool child with a malignant brain tumor. They rejoiced in discovering painted rocks along the path with messages of hope, peace, and kindness.



It all began when a Presbyterian congregation chartered in 2009 was by the providence of God uniquely blessed with 24 acres. Half of the site was a natural wooded forest, adjacent to protected wetland area. With an extra blessing grant from Peace River Presbytery, the church lived into their vision for a meditation pathway to benefit the surrounding community, as well as the congregation. In part, this fulfilled the church’s overall mission “to make God known by growing as disciples of Jesus Christ, building a community of peace, and caring for the needs of others.”

When COVID isolation leave members feeling stir-crazy at home, they take advantage of mild Florida temperatures to get outside and create beautiful things in the path with God’s help. Cut palmetto branches with red berries become a Christmas tree. Dried palm tree sheaths form into circular flower shapes. Inner layers of dead tree trunks take on human appearance, gathered in circles as if at a campfire. Pieces of dead tree limbs and trunks together create a sense of mutual support and direction. Staghorn ferns, air plants, rustic pottery, huge wreaths of woven vines, and colorfully bright bromeliads add inspiration!



*Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice; let the sea roar, and all that fills it;  
12 let the field exult, and everything in it. Then shall all the trees of the forest sing for joy  
13 before the LORD; for he is coming, for he is coming to judge the earth.  
He will judge the world with righteousness, and the peoples with his truth.” Psalm 96:11-13*



Children, and those who love children as Jesus did, add painted rocks that are secretly placed in a variety of locations along the path. These rocks are joyfully claimed as pets or messengers of hope with their fruit of the Spirit words on the back of painted gnomes, hearts, flowers, and woodland creatures. *O come, let us sing to the LORD; let us make a joyful noise to the **rock** of our salvation!* (Psalm 95)

Word gets out in the community, with the help of the local newspaper, and soon there are many guests on the Peaceful Path. A grandmother, new to the area and grieving the loss of two sons, comes to walk with her young grandchildren for whom she is now mother. The whole family stumbles upon the Peace congregation having an outdoor dance in the parking lot and connects with the church — a peaceful pathway to significant involvement. Others simply pick up a meditation page to have a quiet time in the woods.

In this year’s Ash Wednesday Service, palm branches burn to ashes in an old clay pot, and most of the service is recorded along the path as a symbol of the Lenten journey of life in Christ. Years-old protruding palmetto roots sending up shoots in search of light serve as a reminder that even in the darkness of a pandemic, Christ is our light.



Some afternoons, as the sun goes down, the resident deer family appears along with a pair of hooting owls, as if to say with their presence what the PCUSA Study Catechism states with words,

*“God not only preserves the world, but also continually attends to it, ruling and sustaining it with wise and benevolent care. God is concerned for every creature: “The eyes of all look to you, and you give them their food in due season. You open your hand, you satisfy the desire of every living thing” (Ps. 145:15). In particular, God provides for the world by bringing good out of evil, so that nothing evil is permitted to occur that*

*God does not bend finally to the good.”*

Along the Peaceful path, old vines and dead branches, frustrations and grief are bent and twisted into good forms of art. They heal us with “the peace that passes all understanding” (Phil. 4:7) and reminding us that “in life and in death we belong to God” (A Brief Statement of Faith, PCUSA)



### From the Finance Team

Churches, if you have not submitted your *2021 Estimate of Giving Form*, please do so as soon as possible.

You may email it to Lori Doyal, [lori@peaceriverpresbytery.org](mailto:lori@peaceriverpresbytery.org) or mail it to the Presbytery Office, Attn. Lori Doyal, Finance Administrator.

The form and other related materials were emailed to Church Pastors and Clerks of Session last November. It is not available on the web site as it is specific to each church.

If you did not receive this packet, or have questions, please contact Lori.

**Beth-El: Share our Stories**  
**A Virtual Evening of Storytelling**  
**March 4, 2021, 7:00 p.m.**  
A Zoom Event  
[Click for more information.](#)

We will hear the stories of farmworkers and their families and how, together, we can alleviate hunger, provide access to education, health, and spiritual growth.

**Association of Smaller Congregations**  
**Online Conference: March 19 & 20, 2021**

Conference registration is \$80 per person.  
Register online at [www.presbyacs.org](http://www.presbyacs.org). Contact registrar at (706) 373-9480 or email at [registrarasc@bellsouth.net](mailto:registrarasc@bellsouth.net) for further information. Keynoter is Maryanne McKibbon.

Please use this link to get to the special registration form:  
[Products – Association of Smaller Congregations \(presbyasc.org\)](https://www.presbyasc.org/shop/)

<https://www.presbyasc.org/shop/>

**Save the Date: April 27, 2021**

**Leading the Church into the Post Covid World**

Presenter: Rev. Tod Bolsinger  
Sponsored by the Synod of South Atlantic

**Misión Peniel: a Ministry of Peace River Presbytery**

Web Site: [www.misionpeniel.org](http://www.misionpeniel.org)

As a mission of the Presbytery, we rely on the churches of Peace River Presbytery for 100% of our budget. Thank you for your faithful support of this presbytery ministry.

For the latest updates, visit us on Facebook (Mision Peniel), Instagram (misionpenielimmokalee) and subscribe to our quarterly newsletter via our website.

**Contacts:**

Rev. Miguel Estrada, Pastor – [miguel@peacriverpresbytery.org](mailto:miguel@peacriverpresbytery.org)  
Ruth DeYoe, Mission Coordinator – [ruth@peacriverpresbytery.org](mailto:ruth@peacriverpresbytery.org)

**Job Opportunity**

Northminster Presbyterian Church in Sarasota is seeking a part-time, full-charge Bookkeeper (approximately 16 hours a week) with knowledge of fund accounting.

For more information, please call 941-355-4729 or email [office@npcsarasota.org](mailto:office@npcsarasota.org).

**Presbytery Calendar: March 2021**

*You may view the entire calendar on the Presbytery web site: [www.peacriverpresbytery.org](http://www.peacriverpresbytery.org)  
Please email corrections or additions to [lori@peacriverpresbytery.org](mailto:lori@peacriverpresbytery.org)*



**Thursday, March 4**

Mision Peniel Team (10:30 am by Zoom Conference)

**Tuesday, March 9**

Committee on Ministry (9:00 am by Zoom Conference)

CCC Team (2:00 pm by Zoom Conference)

**Wednesday, March 10**

Stewardship Work Group (2:00 pm by Zoom Conference)

**Thursday, March 11**

Finance Team/Board of Trustees (9:30 am by Zoom Conference)

**Monday, March 15**

Outreach and Nurture Team (10:00 am by Zoom Conference)

Team, Committee, and other meetings are being conducted via Zoom Video Conference until further notice.  
Please check the web site calendar regularly for additions or changes.

**Covenant Partners of Peace River Presbytery**

Click on the links to visit each ministry's web site:

- Beth-El Farmworker Ministry – Wimauma: [www.beth-el.org](http://www.beth-el.org)
- Cedarkirk Camp and Conference Center: [www.cedarkirk.org](http://www.cedarkirk.org)
- Presbyterian Homes & Housing Foundation of FL: [www.phhf.com](http://www.phhf.com)

**Prayer Needs**

**Please pray for:**

- Rev. Dr. Kathi Wiggins and Family – loss of her younger brother
- Becky Beckwith and Family – loss of husband, Jim Beckwith (past Moderator of Presbytery and Committee on Ministry member)
- The Congregations and Pastors of Peace River Presbytery
- Our Nation
- The Congregations and Pastors of Peace River Presbytery
- 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

## Churches of Peace River Presbytery

Go to [Peace River Presbytery Churches](#)  
to visit each of the church's web sites.



The Presbytery Newsletter is a weekly publication of Peace River Presbytery.  
If you wish to be unsubscribed from the distribution, or if you know someone who would like  
to receive the newsletter, please contact Lori Doyal at the Presbytery Office:  
[lori@peacriverpresbytery.org](mailto:lori@peacriverpresbytery.org) or 941-426-8421, ext. 401.