

Peace River Presbytery
Special Meeting Minutes
July 31, 2025

First Presbyterian Church
Port Charlotte

Attendance

Teaching Elder Members Present

Scott Andrews	Edward Dunn	Lynne Moffett
Genevieve Beauchamp	Alex Evangelista	Randy Moody
Tim Boggess	Silvana Ferreira	Jay Mumper
K. Edward Brandt	Darryl Goldman	Julia Piermont
Rex Childs	Aimee Goldmeyer	Brad Rogers
Terri Jo Crego	Jonas Hayes	Melana Scruggs
Elizabeth Deibert	Russell Hickman	William Sitterley
Richard Deibert	Winston Lawson	Chuck Wiggins
Karla Diaz	Robert Marrow	
Courtney Ducharme	Chuck Moffett	

Temporary Members Present

Silvio Esteves

Ruling Elder Commissioners

Janice Croley (Vice-Moderator)	Absent (Estero community Church)
Bill Kraft (COM)	Absent (First Lehigh)
Absent (1 st Arcadia)	Absent (First Naples)
Tim Cordes (1 st Bonita Springs)	Dinah Bampoe (Lely)
Connie Duquin (1 st Bonita Springs)	Lisa Saba (First Sarasota)
Dave Nichols (1 st Bonita Springs)	Sally Kirby (Northminster)
Absent (Kirkwood)	Sandra Stiles (Northminster)
Absent (Community/Englewood)	Claudia George (Pine Shores)
Barbara Harrell (Palmetto)	Absent (PC of the Covenant)
Dave Harrell (Palmetto)	Absent (Siesta Key Chapel)
Linda Ferguson (Faith)	Chris Snow (Peace)
Excused (Faith)	Jonathan Befe (Peace)
Absent (Braden River)	Bill McClure (Christ Church)
Sherri Kramer (United)	Dennis Piermont (Christ Church)
Roy Williams (United)	Absent (St. Paul's)
Linda Frizzell (Bee Ridge)	Present (Moorings)
Sandy Oswalt (Bee Ridge)	Lindsey Price (Vanderbilt)
Linda Getzen (Church of the Palms)	Jack Tanner (Vanderbilt)
Excused (Buckingham)	Absent (Trinity)
Johan Anderson (Covenant/Fort Myers)	Absent (Venice)
Mary Lee Mann (Covenant/Fort Myers)	Kathy Tardy (Burnt Store)
Marietta Meacham (Cypress Lake)	Lois Gorman (Burnt Store)
Bill Stevens (Cypress Lake)	Ambrose E. Woods (First Port Charlotte)
Janet Daly (Holy Trinity)	Elaine Woods (First Port Charlotte)
Vera Day (Holy Trinity)	Bert Simmons (Wintergarden)

Corresponding Members Present

Charmaine Ponkratz (Treasurer)	Matt Shapton (Florida-Bahamas Synod)
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Candidates for Ministry Present

Carson Brown (Granted Voice as a former Moderator of PRP)

Teaching Elders Excused

Steven Aguzzi
Miguel Estrada
Jody McKewen
Mike Mansperger

Kevin Morris
Chris Romig
Dino Rustin
Becky Schwandt

Ruth Smalt
Sarah Soboleski
Tim Stewart

Voting Teaching Elders Present: 29

Voting Ruling Elders Present: 38

Voting Members Present: 67

Corresponding Members Present: 2

Visitors Present: 11

Total Attendance: 81

Total Excuses Approved: 12

Special Meeting Minutes July 31, 2025

The Special Meeting was called to order in the Sanctuary of First Presbyterian Church, Port Charlotte by Moderator TE Ed Brandt at 10:30 am.

Host Pastor Syl Esteves provided a word of welcome.

TE Elizabeth Deibert lead worship which was a service adapted from Thursday Morning Prayer in the Book of Common Worship.

Moderator Brandt recognized Stated Clerk TE Randy Moody who certified the call for the Special Meeting of Peace River Presbytery was in order according to Standing Rule 4.3.

Motion by Stated Clerk: The docket limited by the call of the special meeting be approved. Adopted.

Motion by Stated Clerk: All requests for excused absence be granted. Adopted.

Motion by Stated Clerk: The following individuals be seated as Corresponding Members with voice:

RE Charmaine Ponkratz, PRP Treasurer

Rev. Matt Shapton, Florida-Bahamas Synod (ELCA)

Adopted

Motion by TE Brad Rogers: Former PRP Moderator RE Carson Brown be seated with voice. Adopted.

Motion by Stated Clerk: Presbytery authorize the Moderator and Stated Clerk to read and approve the minutes of this meeting. Adopted.

TE Jay Mumper presented an update on the progress of the Special Committee on Small Church Sustainability Fund and New Church Development and Revitalization Fund grants.

Moderator Brandt recognized TE Julia Piermont to present the Communication, Connection and Community Committee Report who requested Karen Boyce, a member of The Community Church, Babcock Ranch, be allowed to speak during the presentation.

Motion: Karen Boyce be allowed to speak. Adopted.

Motion from CCC Committee: That Peace River Presbytery charter The Community Church, Babcock Ranch, FL as a union congregation of Peace River Presbytery (PCUSA) and Florida-Bahamas Synod (ELCA) and to empower the Stated Clerk of the Presbytery, the Rev. Dr. Randy Moody, with the authority to represent the presbytery in finalizing the agreement between the Synod of Florida-Bahamas (ELCA) and Peace River Presbytery. The Stated Clerk is also granted the authority to appoint any persons from Peace River Presbytery to assist him in this task. Adopted.

Motion from CCC Committee: That Peace River Presbytery grant \$750,000 to The Community Church, Babcock Ranch, FL, for capital needs from the Church Development fund and proceeds from the sale of the presbytery office. Adopted.

TE Julia Piermont presented Rev. Matt Shapton a copy of The Book of Confessions for use at The Community Church, Babcock Ranch, FL. TE Elizabeth Deibert led the body in prayer.

The purpose of the Special Meeting was completed. Moderator Ed Brandt adjourned the meeting at 12:02 pm and offered the closing prayer.

Randy Moody
Stated Clerk

Minutes approved 1 Aug 2025



**PEACE RIVER PRESBYTERY
SPECIAL MEETING DOCKET
FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
PORT CHARLOTTE
JULY 31, 2025**



10:30 am	Opening Prayer	Moderator, Ed Brandt
	Greetings from Host Pastor	Syl Esteves
	Morning Prayer Service with Homily	Elizabeth Deibert
	Report of the Stated Clerk	Randy Moody
	Special Committee on Insurance and Small Church Sustainability Fund and Ministry of Church Development and Revitalization Fund	Jay Mumper
	Communication, Connection, Community Committee	Julia Piermont
	Closing Prayer	Moderator, Ed Brandt
	Lunch for those who registered	

Peace River Presbytery Special Meeting, July 31, 2025
Stated Clerk's Report

1. Confirmation of Special Meeting Call (see below)
2. Approval of Docket
3. Members of Presbytery who requested to be excused:
 - Steven Aguzzi
 - Miguel Estrada
 - Jody McKewen
 - Mike Mansperger
 - Kevin Morris
 - Chris Romig
 - Dino Rustin
 - Becky Schwandt
 - Ruth Smalt
 - Sarah Soboleski
 - Tim Stewart
4. Seating of Corresponding Members
5. Motion: Presbytery authorize the Moderator and Stated Clerk to read and approve the minutes of this meeting.

June 24, 2025

Moderator Ed Brandt calls a Special Meeting of Peace River Presbytery on July 31, 2025, 10:30 am at First Presbyterian Church, Port Charlotte for the purpose of acting on a request to charter a congregation from the Communication, Connection and Community Committee and recommendations from the special committee to develop policies and procedures to implement the new Insurance and Small Church Sustainability Fund and to develop policies and procedures to implement the new Ministry of Church Development and Revitalization Fund. This Special Meeting is requested by:

Ruling Elders

Jim O'Harrow, Community PC, Englewood
Dennis Piermont, Christ Church

Teaching Elders

Jody McKewen
Alex Regets
Ruth Smalt

I hereby certify this Special Meeting is called in accordance with the Standing Rules of Peace River Presbytery.
Randy Moody, Stated Clerk

PEACE RIVER PRESBYTERY SPECIAL MEETING
31 July 2025
Special Committee on the:
SMALL CHURCH SUSTAINABILITY FUND
NEW CHURCH DEVELOPMENT and REVITALIZATION FUND

The newly appointed committee by the Presbytery to develop policies and procedures to implement for the Small Church Sustainability Fund and the New Church Development and Revitalization Ministry met via Zoom on Tuesday, July 8 at 10:00am. Our purpose was to discuss the elements of funding and revitalizing the church in need with available funds from the insurances of Chapel by the Sea.

After scripture and prayer many heart-felt thoughts and ideas were brought forth with passion. Without bringing you into the minutia of the various topics, ideas of this inaugural meeting there was an overall conclusion that funding a church is for the ‘sustainability’ of that particular congregation. A warning floated to the surface to not put ‘band-aids’ of financial sustenance upon a wound without a plan of revitalization for complete healing.

Since that meeting two scriptures came to mind,

“They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles.

All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need.” *(Acts 2:42-45 ESV)*

“I waited patiently for the Lord; And **He reached down to me and heard my cry.**
He brought me up out of the pit of destruction, out of the mud;
And He set my feet on a rock, making my footsteps firm.
He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God;
Many will see and fear and will trust in the Lord.” *(Psalm 40: 1-3 NASB)*

Hence: The marriage of **funding** from CBTS and **hands-on connections** from you, the members of Peace River Presbytery, will be able to accomplish the goal of helping to establish stability and vitality within any size church of need.

Our Team: Elaine Woods, Mary Lynn Myers, Janice Croley, Melana Scruggs, Rusty Shunk and Jay Mumper will present a completed proposal for the October Presbytery Meeting.

Rev. Jay Mumper
Moderator

Peace River Presbytery
Communications, Connection & Community Committee
July 31, 2025 Special Meeting

Motions:

WHEREAS Peace River Presbytery undertakes congregational development as one of the ways we pursue all six of the Great Ends of the Church;

WHEREAS two decades have gone by since Peace River Presbytery's youngest congregations (Peace P.C. of Lakewood Ranch and Christ Church of Longboat Key) were chartered;

WHEREAS in 2016 representatives of Peace River Presbytery began seeking God's leading regarding the possibility of congregational development in Babcock Ranch, a new planned community near Ft. Myers;

WHEREAS in 2018 representatives of Peace River Presbytery began meeting with representatives of the ELCA Florida-Bahamas Synod to seek God's leading regarding the possibility of an innovative approach to joint congregational ministry at Babcock Ranch.

WHEREAS Babcock Ranch is a particularly inviting location for church development because "the field is ripe and laborers are few" -- The development plan for Babcock Ranch made no provision for houses of worship or religious community, leaving new residents in strong need for community and spiritual services;

WHEREAS Babcock Ranch is a particularly inviting location for an innovative approach to church development because, as the first fully solar-powered community in the U.S, the community identity is rooted in innovation;

WHEREAS Babcock Ranch is a particularly inviting location for 21st century church development because the community identity places high value on respect for the earth, with accolades such as having 50% of its land devoted to greenways, parks, and lakes; and being surrounded by a 73,000 acre nature preserve;

WHEREAS in 2020, the ELCA Florida-Bahamas Synod placed (and financed) Pastor Matt Shapton, an ELCA pastor specifically trained for mission development, who began an innovative Christian mission and ministry in Babcock Ranch, keeping a simple focus on serving others, worshiping Christ, and giving witness to unity in Christ;

WHEREAS this mission development became known as The Community Church, with a stress on unity visible in its logo;

WHEREAS by the grace of God, The Community Church has flourished in worship and mission, with a congregation of all ages now averaging 150 in worship (meeting at a local school);

WHEREAS The Community Church chartered as an ELCA congregation in the summer of 2024, the stress remained upon developing Christian discipleship and witness, i.e. becoming Christians, not becoming Lutherans;

WHEREAS by the grace of God, The Community Church has gained approval from the developer to build a church, has purchased land, and is ready to break ground on what will be the first church—the first house of worship—in Babcock Ranch;

WHEREAS Pastor Shapton and ELCA representatives, even as The Community Church grew, have nevertheless persevered in the hope for a joint congregational ministry with the PCUSA, as an innovative approach to congregational development in a community where innovation energizes participation;

WHEREAS we now have a model agreement for an ELCA-PCUSA union congregation, Living Faith Church (approved in April 2025 by the Presbytery of Tropical Florida and Florida-Bahamas Synod of the ELCA) to guide the formation of a joint ministry at Babcock Ranch;

WHEREAS we have received from the congregation's board a request to be chartered as a PC(USA) congregation and enrolled as a member of Peace River Presbytery, in order to fulfill its mission to demonstrate the unity of Christ via a clear ecumenical identity:

“Siblings in Christ at Peace River Presbytery, The Leadership Board of The Community Church, Babcock Ranch, FL, requests Peace River Presbytery to charter The Community Church, Babcock Ranch, FL, as a union congregation of the Presbyterian Church U.S.A. (PCUSA) and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). We acknowledge that the ELCA and the PCUSA are in full communion and fully embrace the mutual recognition of baptism and orderly exchange of ministers. We covenant to actively engage with Peace River Presbytery of the PCUSA and Florida-Bahamas Synod of the ELCA. We enthusiastically seek this joint ministry to share the love of Christ as a vital witness in our community.

Signed by Linda Andrews, The Community Church Leadership Board President; Rev. Matthew Shapton, The Community Church, Lead/Founding Pastor; Rev. Melana Scruggs, Peace River Presbytery, General Presbyter; Rev. Dr. Randy Moody, Peace River Presbytery, Stated Clerk.”

THEREFORE the CCC Committee makes the following motions:

1. That Peace River Presbytery charter The Community Church, Babcock Ranch, FL as a union congregation of Peace River Presbytery (PCUSA) and Florida-Bahamas Synod (ELCA) and to empower the Stated Clerk of the Presbytery, the Rev. Dr. Randy Moody, with the authority to represent the presbytery in finalizing the agreement between the Synod of Florida-Bahamas (ELCA) and Peace River Presbytery. The Stated Clerk is also granted the authority to appoint any persons from Peace River Presbytery to assist him in this task.

2. That Peace River Presbytery grant \$750,000 to The Community Church, Babcock Ranch, FL, for capital needs from the Church Development fund and proceeds from the sale of the presbytery office.

Information Only:

Please join us for lunch and fellowship! The committee is pleased to welcome everyone to a time of lunch and fellowship at the conclusion of the meeting. The meal will be catered by “Fork in the Road” and will be a pasta bar with vegetarian and gluten-free options. This meal is our treat and is offered in pursuit of our committee’s responsibility to offer relational gatherings for the presbytery. We hope you can stay and enjoy some midsummer fellowship! **We need your reservation for the meal no later than July 25** at <https://peaceriverpresbytery.org/register-for-presbytery-meeting/>

More Information about Babcock Ranch and The Community Church:

To learn more about Babcock Ranch and about The Community Church:

<https://tccintheranch.org/>

<https://babcockranch.com/>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Babcock_Ranch,_Florida

To see Pastor Matt Shapton in a brief video conversation with Pastor Jaco Bester (Burnt Store P.C.):

[https://peaceriverpresbytery.us8.list-](https://peaceriverpresbytery.us8.list-manage.com/track/click?u=1b44f95683c4b45f310b7d696&id=17905fcddf&e=c35d1a0856)

[manage.com/track/click?u=1b44f95683c4b45f310b7d696&id=17905fcddf&e=c35d1a0856](https://peaceriverpresbytery.us8.list-manage.com/track/click?u=1b44f95683c4b45f310b7d696&id=17905fcddf&e=c35d1a0856)

Respectfully submitted,

Julia Wharff Piermont, TE, Chairperson, Communications, Connection & Community Committee
(937-305-8348 or Julia@ChristChurchofLBK.org)