

WEEKLY PASTORAL LETTER – JULY 27, 2011



PEACE RIVER
PRESBYTERY



Dear Friends of Peace River Presbytery:

How would you respond if a new member of your congregation asked if the Presbyterian Church (USA) was a connectional church? Your short answer would likely be, “Yes, of course.” But what would your response be if they wanted to know more? At this point you just might give them the “Google answer” (i.e., shared form of government, governed by elected Elders, part of a Presbytery, Synod and national church). But what if they wanted to know what this connectionalism means to them, to their church, or to their community? Now that is a question worth answering, but where do you begin?

I have the opportunity to write this because we are a connectional church and you are likely reading it because we are a connectional church. We have One Great Hour of Sharing because we are a connectional church. We send delegates to quarterly Presbytery Meetings because we are a connectional church. A member of the Committee on Ministry worked with your church when you called your pastor, and he or she was accepted as a member of the Presbytery by vote at a Presbytery Meeting, all functions of a connectional church. Our Book of Order sets forth the rules governing a connectional church, albeit the rules will be less specific as we implement the new Form of Government.

But, I suggest, none of these *really* tells us what connectionalism means to us individually, to our churches, and to our communities. Let me explain how God has been at work in my life.

In January of 1978, my wife Joan and I were living and raising our family in Marietta, Georgia when a PCUSA mission team canvassing our neighborhood came knocking on our door. Within the year, I was baptized, became a Christian by confession of faith, and joined the Presbyterian Church (USA). I will never forget that first Sunday service when our new mission church held its first service in a local school building. The room was absolutely chock full of people, all of whom I assumed were there to become members of “our” new church. The next Sunday our numbers dwindled to 15 to 20 people as the others in attendance the previous Sunday returned to worship in their home churches throughout the Presbytery. Those canvassing teams and worshippers who attended that first service were my first exposure to the connectional church.

We moved to Ft. Myers Beach in 1999, joined Chapel by the Sea, and soon thereafter I accepted God’s call to become an Elder. Unfortunately, the Chapel eventually became a conflicted church and desperately needed help in order to become a healthy congregation. In response to our need, the Presbytery provided a team to work with both our Session and our Pastor. They spent many hours with us. Again, the connectional church was at work in my church and in my life.

And then Hurricane Charley hit! Although our sanctuary was left standing, the hurricane force winds had blown out our dolphin window, allowing wind and rain to penetrate the building. As soon as they were allowed across the bridge, church members from throughout the Presbytery

showed up with shovels in hand to help dig sand out of our parking lot. A work crew from Presbyterian Disaster Assistance soon showed up and the Presbytery provided a full time recovery coordinator to work with us during our reconstruction. All our pews were lost, our building required new sanctuary chairs, a new rug, a new roof, mold remediation, and the list went on and on. The costs were well over \$500,000, which were only partially and reluctantly covered by insurance. We received over \$20,000 from Presbyterian Disaster Assistance in hurricane relief grants, as well as other gifts from individual Presbyterian churches throughout the United States (from as far away as Rhode Island and California). Again, I was witnessing the connectional church at work in my church and in my life.

Within the Presbytery, I have had the opportunity to serve on the Board of Trustees and on commissions working with individual churches. I must admit that at times I have felt I have received far more than I have given, as I have witnessed so often the connectional church at work in the Presbytery.

Within Peace River Presbytery we are now asking ourselves how we will fulfill our new mission statement "to affirm congregations, to connect disciples in mission and to be the body of Christ together." At first I sensed this was a pretty daunting task, until I realized that it really was pretty simple. After all, over the years I have been a witness to the connectional church at work, affirming congregations, connecting disciples in mission and being the body of Christ together. Now I need to do my part with shovel in hand even if a hurricane does not show up.

Don Cady
Moderator



Click logo to go to The Presbytery web site:

Click on logo below for the PCUSA Mission Yearbook of Prayer and Daily Office scripture reading:



Please add these concerns to your personal prayer list.

Please pray for:

Trudy Cooke, member of Committee on Ministry, as she recovers from surgery

Rev. Hal Simones on the loss of his wife Marsha

Please continue to pray for:

Rev. Graham Hart, who is on sabbatical

Becky Beckwith (wife of C.O.M. Chair Jim Beckwith) as she continues to receive treatment for

cancer

Rev. Bob Rea

Pastors and Educators in transition

Those affected by natural disasters in the United States

Nations in crisis

Please also keep in your prayers:

Beth-El Farmworker Ministry

Misión Peniel

Cedarkirk Camp and Conference Center

CONGREGATION OF THE WEEK:

July 31	First Presbyterian Church, Bradenton Mark Jernigan, Pastor ephe619@gmail.com Wayne Blaser, Associate Pastor wcbblaser@yahoo.com
August 7	Kirkwood Presbyterian Church, Bradenton Hope Lee, Pastor hope@kpcbradenton.org
August 14	Palma Sola Presbyterian Church, Bradenton Paul Eckel, Interim Pastor
August 21	Westminster Presbyterian Church, Bradenton Chris Adams, Associate Pastor revchris@tampabay.rr.com
August 28	Faith Presbyterian Church, Cape Coral Tim Halverson, Pastor tim@faithcapecoral.org

The articles below may interest you. *Just click on the underlined phrases.*

[To rebuild church, stop looking for quick fixes](#)

UM Portal: Turnaround churches knew what they needed to do before they did it. It isn't ignorance that fosters decline; it is apathy.

Siblings joined forces to help their parents celebrate life and plan for death

Talking with your parents about aging and death is one of the hardest things we will ever do, Adolf Gundersen writes in the Washington Post. But it is better to make decisions calmly and deliberately than to do so in the middle of an emergency -- or its aftermath. Talking and planning are the best tools we limited humans have to manage our mortality. [The bagpipes, of course, are optional.](#)

[Imagine: "The streak"](#)

What a father-daughter reading streak reveals about the presence of wonder in the ordinary.

[Why Reinhold Niebuhr matters now](#)

The (London) Guardian: The American pastor's blend of Calvinist spirituality and social awareness has regained popularity in these uncertain times.

[Fair trade, not just free trade - Presbyterians join protest of Colombia Free Trade Agreement](#)

WASHINGTON (Special to the Presbyterian News Service) On July 11, more than 150 U.S. citizens from faith-based, environmental and human rights organizations gathered in front...

Ginna Irby, Special to Presbyterian News Service - Friday, 22 July 2011

[Christian agencies continue work in Somalia despite security issues](#)

Nairobi, Kenya (ENI) Christian relief agencies providing aid to millions of people facing drought in Somalia face security issues in the war-torn country, where humanitarian officials say...

Fredrick Nzwili - Friday, 22 July 2011

PRESBYTERY CALENDAR (for more details, go to www.peaceriverpresbytery.org)

JULY, 2011

28th
Council

AUGUST, 2011

2nd
Mission/Vision Guide Team

4th
Records and Overtures

8th
Representation

9th
Committee On Ministry

11th
Board of Trustees
Nominations

16th

Evangelism and Church Development (*location to be confirmed*)

18th

Theology and Worship

27th

Stated Meeting at Chapel by the Sea, Fort Myers Beach