



PEACE RIVER
PRESBYTERY



Dear Colleagues and Friends,

Buildings Making a Difference:

Northminster Presbyterian Church,

The Community Center of the Coalition of Immokalee Workers,

Our Homes

And even Publix and Trader Joe's if we invite them to use their buildings to make a difference too!

Buildings, they're all over the place. We drive by them, work and worship in them, study in them, live in them, and are forever paying for them. But it is not the building per se that is important, but how that building creates the space where something wonderful can occur. There are two buildings I want to lift up because in them something wonderful is happening.

For over 30 years, some members wanted to do something to improve a tired old church building, present a new face to the north Sarasota community, and invite others to share with them what they had found, week by week, in a place called [Northminster Presbyterian Church](#), but for 30 years it was not to be. Then, former pastor Tom Atkins led them in a visioning process, and the session lay leadership worked hard at dreaming what could be. Interim pastor Paul Eckel continued the vision, raising support and beginning Phase 1 while he served there. Last week I met with Chris Carlson, their current installed pastor of Northminster Presbyterian Church, and Jack Tibbetts, a ruling elder, to see their progress. For us and them, it is amazing to see the dream becoming a reality.

Does a new building guarantee that something wonderful will occur? No, but the members of Northminster, like the members of [Christ Church of Longboat Key](#) who in January dedicated their new building, already have something good and wonderful happening. The building just creates the space for it to continue.

Pray for Chris and the folks at Northminster who hope to be in their new sanctuary by the end of April. And also pray for the youngest church in our Presbytery, [Peace Presbyterian Church in Lakewood Ranch](#). Peace has experienced significant growth this year, and is about to engage an architect to begin dreaming of what their first permanent sanctuary and building might look like, and more importantly what it might allow them to do.



Now another story, another building, and something wonderful and good because of that building,

In 2004, Peace River Presbytery, through gifts from some individual donors along with the offering that was received at that year's General Assembly opening worship, gave enough money so that the [Coalition of Immokalee Workers \(CIW\)](#) could build a headquarters. Seven years later, CIW, working out of that building, has done something wonderful and amazing for the farm worker community. Thousands of lives have been changed with the Fair Food effort, the human trafficking cases that have been prosecuted, the penny a pound campaign that has helped raise the standard of living for farm workers, the abuses in the fields that have been addressed, and the lives of farm workers that have been impacted.



Another wonderful thing happens in that building because one of the most listened to talk show hosts at the CIW Immokalee radio station is our own Miguel Estrada. The seed money given has created space for something wonderful to occur.

But their work, and ours, in the [Fair Food Campaign](#) continues. See the article below on a new effort focusing in Naples [this coming Sunday](#) to invite Trader Joe's to do what is right, and pray that Mitch Heeger, vice president of that company, will do the good and right thing by joining in the Fair Food Campaign when CIW meets with him this weekend. Publix and Trader Joe's are among the hundreds of building we drive by every day, but with your prayer, advocacy and support, along with that of thousands of others, they can join with YUM! Brands and McDonalds and the dozens of other companies who have pledged to work to improve conditions in the field. They pay 1 penny more a pound for tomatoes, so that those who do their grocery shopping in those buildings will be part of a broad effort to lift people up.

They are just buildings, but as our youngest daughter, Katie, after a weekend at home from graduate school (go Gators), said to Linda and I as she was leaving, she loves coming home, not to a house per se, but to a place where she is loved and knows she is loved, and a place where over the years for her something good has occurred. Well, needless to say, that brought with it some tears and a deep joy.

May we all find ways to make our homes be sanctuaries, and make the buildings where we work and even the buildings where we shop be places where something good and of God occurs!

Thanks be to God who continues to be the wind in our sails and helps us steer into the future!

Peace,

Graham

Graham Hart
General Presbyter
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Trader Joe's will open its first-ever Florida store in Naples and you can remind them to do what is good and right on Sunday afternoon

Nearly twenty years ago, men and women picking in the Florida tomato fields began meeting together to discuss how they could end violence in the fields and address their sub-poverty wages. From these discussions the Coalition of Immokalee Workers was born. From the earliest days, the Peace River Presbytery and, more broadly, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) have supported the CIW and its efforts to bring change. This partnership has resulted in historic advancements for addressing farmworker poverty as well ensuring respect for their human rights.

Presbyterians have also played a vital role in aiding the CIW to open its dynamic Community Center in Immokalee. The Center -- a cultural hub for the farmworker community -- houses CIW's offices, including a private office for meeting with victims of slavery, a food co-op, their low-powered FM radio station, and internet and computer access for farmworkers. In 2004, half of the moderator's offering at the 216th General Assembly was designated for the down payment on their building, an amount generously matched in 2004 by Peace River member congregations. Financial gifts, including from PC(USA)'s Self Development of People Award and Peace River Presbytery's 2008 Peacemaking offering, as well as a low-interest loan from the Presbyterian Foundation, helped the CIW to open their Community Center debt-free.

This season, after decades of indignities in the fields including repeated slavery convictions, 90% of our state's tomato industry has at last agreed to enact the CIW's Fair Food Program, which lifts workers' poverty-level pay and enacts a code of conduct to protect them from abuse; some 30,000 farmworkers benefit!

These historic gains are due to fast-food and food-service industry leaders -- like Taco Bell, McDonald's and Whole Foods -- responding to calls from consumers of conscience to create more humane conditions in their supply chains. These retailers agree 1) to buy only from farms that comply with the CIW's Fair Food code of conduct and 2) to voluntarily pay a small premium for tomatoes so as to increase farmworkers' income a penny/lb. Unfortunately, the supermarket industry -- led by [Florida's grocery giant Publix](#) and [popular California-based supermarket Trader Joe's](#) -- has so far refused to back these landmark advancements.

Next weekend, Trader Joe's will open its first-ever Florida store in Naples. Tomato pickers from Immokalee will ride bikes 35 miles to the ribbon-cutting ceremony to ask to meet with Trader Joe's vice president, who will be in town for the occasion, to urge his company to take part in the historic Fair Food accords.

While Trader Joe's has acknowledged the abuses and poverty prevalent in Florida's tomato industry, and [claimed to make changes](#) to address them, they have yet to join other retailers in authentically partnering together with the CIW. Please consider calling Trader Joe's officials today -- VP Mitch Heeger, (626) 599 3794 -- or send them a message [here](#) to ask them to do so. Also, you can accompany farmworkers and their families for a peaceful picket on Sunday, February 12th at 2 PM at the new Trader

Joe's (10600 Tamiami Trl) -- or, if our advocacy is successful and Trader Joe's signs a Fair Food accord, at the GreenWise Publix just one mile south at 41 & Vanderbilt Rd.

Submitted by Jordan Buckley , Interfaith Action of Southwest Florida

Churches in the News – please send a LINK if your church is in the news.

[A comedy event to fund a Habitat for Humanity Family Mission Trip](#) - Kirkwood Presbyterian

Please add these concerns to your personal prayer list.

Please pray for:

Rev. David King, as he recovers from heart by-pass surgery

Please continue to pray for:

Rev. Dr. David Uhl

Rev. Rosemary Gremban

Rev. Dr. Ted Land

Rev. Dr. 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

PLEASE PRAY FOR THE CONGREGATION OF THE WEEK – February 12

First Presbyterian Church, Sarasota

WHAT WE BELIEVE:

Mission

We believe we are called to faithfully serve the Lord Jesus Christ, giving glory to God.

Vision

We desire to be a leading, faithful, witnessing, diverse, and growing community of God's people.

Core Values

- **Leading:** We have an ongoing tradition of leadership in our community. We are committed to meeting the ever-changing spiritual and physical needs of our community.
- **Faithful:** Our life together centers on vibrant worship and praise as we glorify God. We are a dynamic community of faith – Reformed and always reforming. We strive to be faithful managers of the gifts that God has provided for

us.

- Witnessing: Through compassionate service and working for justice, we share the hope we have in Jesus Christ seeking to become spiritual partners with our neighbors.
- Diverse: As a community of Jesus Christ, we unconditionally welcome all people in the manner of our Lord and Savior.
- Growing: We seek spiritual growth for children and adults through prayer, the teaching and study of Scripture, and the sharing of our faith's journey.

John Ross, Interim Pastor jross@firstpressarasota.org

Clay Thomas, Associate Pastor associatepastor@firstpressarasota.org

For more information, visit www.firstpressarasota.org

LIST FOR THE MONTH OF FEBRUARY:

February 5	Church of the Palms, Sarasota Steve McConnell, Pastor smcconnell@churchofthepalms.org Bruce Hedgepeth, Associate Pastor bhedgepeth@churchofthepalms.org
February 12	First Presbyterian Church, Sarasota John Ross, Interim Pastor jross@firstpressarasota.org Clay Thomas, Associate Pastor associatepastor@firstpressarasota.org
February 19	Northminster Presbyterian Church, Sarasota Chris Carlson, Pastor pastorchris@npcsarasota.org
February 26	Pine Shores Presbyterian Church, Sarasota Bruce Wismer, Co-Pastor pastors@pineshorespres.org Karen Wismer, Co-Pastor Karen@pineshorespres.org

1,001 in 10

Presbyterians rally around the call to grow the church deep and wide.

[See how](#) the numbers reflect our bold new vision.

The outward-facing church

Demographics and other tools can help congregations rediscover their call to care for those around them. [Learn more](#).

[Read more articles and subscribe to *Presbyterians Today*.](#)



Satisfying the hunger

[Check out the new blog](#) written by the ministry staff of Evangelism and Church Growth.

The articles below may interest you. I have found some of them in my reading, and others have been passed on to me. Just click on the underlined phrases.

[How to fight the man](#)

The New York Times: Authorities and institutions don't repress the passions of the heart, but give them focus and a means to turn passion into change, David Brooks says.

['Roger Williams and the Creation of the American Soul,' by John M. Barry](#)

Washington Post: New book is not so much a biography as a discourse on the clash among ideas as they played out during a period when the American "soul" was being formed.

[Rethinking the soul as the 'Net becomes more lifelike](#)

Washington Post: Lisa Miller asks, 'Does the Internet have a soul?'

[Pastor Rick Warren born again to healthier living](#)

USA Today: Pastor Rick Warren has always seemed larger than life. But now he's a smaller, healthier size.

[Show and tell: Six ways to teach your children the faith](#)

U.S. Catholic: Handing on the faith to one's children is a learn-as-you-go thing.

[Power, prayer and money](#)

Sojourners, God's Politics blog: For those at the National Prayer Breakfast, money is power. And it's the power of money in politics today that must be confronted -- by people of faith -- as a moral issue.

[How can skeptics make convincing religious art?](#)

Wall Street Journal: An artist need not be an orthodox believer -- or, indeed, any kind of believer -- to be inspired by the eloquence of scripture and the transforming power of faith.

[Strength in weakness: The Bible, disability, and the church](#)

Christianity Today: People with disabilities are central to the mission of the church.

[Back to \(a theology of\) work we go...](#)

Out of Ur blog: Why the church must talk about "vocation" and not just "mission" if it hopes to engage young adults.

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

FEBRUARY, 2012

9th

Board of Trustees
Leadership and Congregational Development
Nominations via conference call

14th

Committee on Ministry

16th

Theology and Worship

21st

Evangelism and Church Development

23rd

Stated Meeting at Palma Sola Presbyterian Church, Bradenton