



PEACE RIVER PRESBYTERY



Presbytery Weekly E-Newsletter ~ May 1, 2020

From the General Presbyter

Dear Friends,

The church I served just before leaving to take this call, Crane Presbyterian, burned to the ground in December 2006 (before I served as pastor) from an electrical fire. All that was left standing were the three crosses on the back wall of the sanctuary.



They salvaged those three crosses and they are now the first thing seen when one walks in the front doors of the church. The morning after the fire a high school student was walking by the burned building and found a piece of the pew Bible. The verse on that page was Jeremiah 29:11 – “I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope.” That verse and those crosses sustained them through some difficult days. They did not allow this tragedy to define who they were nor keep them from answering God’s call. They met in the high school gym and then in another church until they had a new building, debt-free, dedicated in April 2009. Members there often



told me that the fire made them a better church. They did not believe God caused the fire to test them or to punish them or to change them. But they realized that God did change them for the better as God guided them into a new future.



This is such a time for us as well. Things have changed quickly and drastically, but people have responded with creativity, connection, and love. God has not caused this pandemic. God does accompany us in the way we must go to move through it. Churches have stretched and grown during this time of safer at home. In some ways more pastoral care, Bible study, devotional work, and creative worship has taken place as pastors, deacons, elders, Stephen Ministers, and others have connected in old and new ways. I encourage you to find ways to celebrate and evaluate what you have done in these days so that you can discern how you will be changed for the better in the new future God has for us.

As churches begin to discern when and how to restart in person worship, there will be many questions to answer and concerns to address. Please feel free to reach out to the Stated Clerk or to me if you would like guidance in the process. I continue to add resources to the [resource page](#) that might provide help. There is no easy answer to when to open, but there are ways to keep people safe.

All the churches and pastors continue to be in my prayers. Thank you for the work you are doing for the kingdom and for the ways you are connecting people with one another and with God.

Blessings,
Melana

Outreach and Nurture Team Report

The vision for the Outreach and Nurture Team is setting the foundation for the work of the Team in 2020: *Our vision is that every church in Peace River Presbytery would be healthy. A vital and growing church is one that celebrates the Great Commandment through inspiring and life-transforming worship, nurturing discipleship, compassionate and inclusive outreach, and radical, grace-filled generosity. It is recognized that the role of the Presbytery Nurture and Outreach Team is to support congregations in their work to reach out to the greater world.*

Who knew when we heard Tod Bolsinger (author of *Canoeing in the Mountains*) in February tell us it was time to put down our “canoes,” we would have to do it so fast, as things would be different? We knew the church needed to do ministry differently in *those times*. And then? And then, *those times* were clearly *these times*. COVID-19 came along, and we are suddenly aware of the new territory we were partly already in, and the new territory we entered created by the impact of this virus. We have all had to change how we “do” church and strengthen those ways we were already being the church that have nothing to do with our physical buildings. It has been amazing to see the creativity, the resilience, the connectivity of colleagues, churches, and ministry partners working together as hopeful Easter people.

Clearly, churches and their leadership are intensely focused on rising to lead worship with the integrity it deserves. Critical pastoral care during sensitive this time is taking place through the challenge of social distancing. Bible studies, fellowship, and other creative endeavors are emerging in this new territory and through new tools to many. And, while incredibly moving to see God empowering the church and its leaders, being the church right now takes extra focused energy. Therefore, Outreach and Nurture decided at its April meeting to extend **the Blessing Grant Application deadline to September 1, 2020 in hopes that churches that want to apply, perhaps envisioning and discovering a new ministry opportunity emerging in this time, would have the opportunity to do so.**

The *Blessing Grants* will continue to be awarded as intended, empowering congregations and presbytery entities to accomplish its objectives ([Link to Blessing Grant Packet](#)).

Applicants wanting to have their Blessing Grant applications reviewed for process completion (not content), need to submit them by **August 1, 2020**. Content will not be reviewed until after the **September 1st deadline**. This early review gives applicants the opportunity to make sure their applications are complete with all required information. Recipients of the 2020 Blessing Grants will be announced at the November Presbytery meeting.

Co-Moderators of the Outreach and Nurture Team: Pastor Terri Jo Crego and Pastor Kelly Fitzgerald.

Stated Meeting of Presbytery

Date Change To:

Saturday, September 12, 2020 *

Location: Venice Presbyterian Church

**Original date was Thursday, May 28, 2020.*

Tribute to Thirty Celebration for Pastor Tim Stewart

Plans have been postponed; date to be determined. More information to come shortly.

Cuba Partnership Task Force

The link below is from the Cuba Partners Network. It is the most recent update, offering us both insight into their reality as well as opportunity for joining them in prayer. Can you include this in your weekly email updates? Our partnership with the Matanzas Presbytery was formed in February of 2018. In addition to our presbytery partnership, our presbytery currently has five churches with local church partnerships as well. May we continue to grow in our awareness, understanding and solidarity with our brothers and sisters in Cuba.

With Partnership Hope,
Ruth DeYoe and Kevin Morris
Co-Moderators
Cuba Partnership Task Force
Peace River Presbytery

[Cuba Partners Network – April 2020](#)

The **Board of Pensions** is offering a deferment of dues to churches with fewer than 300 members and one pastor enrolled. Other churches may qualify too. For information go to <http://prpresources.weebly.com>, look under denominational resources and click on Board of Pensions Deferment Info. The information is also on the Peace River Presbytery Facebook page.

Presbytery Calendar: May 2020

You may view the entire calendar on the Presbytery web site: www.peaceriverpresbytery.org
Please email corrections or additions to lori@peaceriverpresbytery.org

Team, Committee, and other meetings are being conducted via video conferencing during this time of the stay-at-home guidelines. Please check the calendar regularly for additions or changes.

Monday, May 4

General Assembly Commissioners (1:00 pm – Zoom Conference Meeting)

Wednesday, May 6

Interim Pastors (9:00 am – GoToMeeting)

Thursday, May 7

Steering Committee Meeting (9:00 am – Zoom Conference Meeting)

Mision Peniel Team (11:00 am – Zoom Conference Meeting)

Tuesday, May 12

Committee on Ministry (9:00 am – Zoom Conference Meeting)

Wednesday, May 13

Cuba Partnership Task Force (3:00 pm – Conference Call Meeting)

Thursday, May 14

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

Are You Registered for Summer Camp Yet?

June and July may seem a long way off, but Cedarkirk's summer programs are filling quickly and you don't want to miss out! Sign up today for your week of games, songs, worships, cookouts, and time to hang out with your new best friends. Try exciting activities like canoeing, archery, campfires, zip lining, and kayaking. Deepen your connection to God and learn new things about yourself as you spend time in the woods away from your usual routine. Visit www.cedarkirk.org to register online. For more information or to request a confidential scholarship, please contact the camp office at 813.685.4224 x2 or camps@cedarkirk.org.

Misión Peniel: a Ministry of Peace River Presbytery

Web Site: www.misionpeniel.org

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
- Cedarkirk Camp and Conference Center: www.cedarkirk.org
- Presbyterian Homes & Housing Foundation of FL: www.phhf.com

Prayer Needs

Please pray for:

- Our nation and the other countries of the world
- Front Line Health Care Workers and other First Responders
- 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

Please visit our web site, www.peaceriverpresbytery.org/churches

Click on the city, then the church, to visit their web site.



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 or 941-426-8421, ext. 401.