



Peace River Presbytery

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (U.S.A.)

5600 PEACE RIVER ROAD NORTH PORT, FLORIDA 34287

May 17, 2018

Dear Member and Friends of Peace River Presbytery,

It is with a full heart and deep sense of gratitude that I look back at the May 2001 meeting of the Presbytery at which time Peace River called me to become your General Presbyter. These past years have been filled with joy and hard work, with challenges that sometimes have come in the form of hurricanes, and with opportunities such as finding ways to respond to the needs of the migrant farm worker community in Immokalee or being able to put Christ at the center, even when we may not always agree. Over the past 17 years leaders and staff of this presbytery have faithfully served with energy, intelligence, imaginations, and love, and I am grateful.

While the finer issues of Presbyterian polity may not keep most of us up at night, it has been my belief that 300 years ago when Presbyterians gathered together to form the first presbytery (Philadelphia), which happened to be my home presbytery, at the heart of who they (and we) are is the belief that:

- pastors can be more faithful and effective in a covenant of accountability,
- congregations are stronger in a network of relationships, and
- our mission together can be more strategic when sharing resources.

It is that understanding and vision that has guided me in my role and work as your General Presbyter.

So, when you do the math, having served - over a 25-year period - as pastor/head of staff in 3 churches (New Jersey, Nevada and the western suburbs of Chicago), it adds up. I have reached retirement age.

When I look at the good and faithful work of the Strategic Review Task Force and their hopes and dreams of what can be, while I would love to enter the next chapter with you, I believe it is time for someone else to bring their gift to this special place and people called Peace River Presbytery.

When I realize that in the next 10 years 75% of our pastors will be of retirement age, I believe that at the beginning of that change cycle, having a new Presbytery leader to walk with you serves you better than waiting until you are well into that cycle.

When I think of 5 grandchildren in Chicago, and 1 here in Florida, and some of the exploration and travel that Linda and I want to do, and projects that have been on my to do list for years, I realize all over again that “for everything there is a season and a time.”

Using an image my spiritual director shared with me, “It is time I land the plane...” It is time for new leadership to walk with you... it is time to retire, which I will do next March 31, 2019.



Peace River Presbytery

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (U.S.A.)

5600 PEACE RIVER ROAD NORTH PORT, FLORIDA 34287

The reason I am announcing my plans now is that after I shared my thoughts on retirement with the Strategic Review and Planning Task Force, Personnel, and the Steering Committee, they are recommending that the Presbytery use an “adaptive model of transition.” An adaptive model allows the Peace River to begin their search for a new Presbytery leader while I am still with you. I will not be involved in that process, but I will continue to be working on projects and initiatives close to our hearts and will continue to support the work of the presbytery. I will continue to be in relationship with you and look forward to opportunities to celebrate and look forward to what God has in store for us all. (See the attached for actions the Presbytery took at the May 17, 2018 Stated Meeting related to this transition).

With gratitude and some sadness, as this part of our journey begins coming to an end, I share the lyrics to a favorite song – “Hymn of Promise” by Natalie A. Sleeth:

*In the bulb there is a flower; in the seed, an apple tree;
In cocoons, a hidden promise: butterflies will soon be free!
In the cold and snow of winter there's a spring that waits to be,
Unrevealed until its season, something God alone can see.*

*There's a song in every silence, seeking word and melody;
There's a dawn in every darkness, bringing hope to you and me.
From the past will come the future; what it holds, a mystery,
Unrevealed until its season, something God alone can see.*

*In our end is our beginning; in our time, infinity;
In our doubt there is believing; in our life, eternity,
In our death, a resurrection; at the last, a victory,
Unrevealed until its season, something God alone can see.*

With gratitude and hope,

Graham Hart
General Presbyter
Peace River Presbytery
graham@peaceriverpresbytery.org