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The Panhandle Presbyterian

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From General Presbyter Roy Martin

I had the honor of preaching at our Winter Stated Meeting of the presbytery. Given its proximity to the Transfiguration of the Lord Sunday, I used the lectionary passage from Luke's gospel about that event to explore what implications we might draw from it for our faith journey individually, as congregations, and as the Presbytery of Florida. I was encouraged to print out the sermon for distribution here but I am more inclined to provide a synopsis.

In the sermon, I talked about change and how we tend to avoid it. Yet change is inevitable. I suggested we often tend to look to the Church and, more specifically, to Christ to provide for us a sense of stability and constancy in the midst of all the change that occurs around us. The familiar order of worship with the familiar hymns and familiar prayers all serve to make us feel safe and comfortable.

But, in the Lukan account of the transfiguration event, we experience Christ himself changing! And I wonder if

we aren't a lot like those three disciples who were with him who seem caught off guard by the whole

experience. They don't seem to know what to do with what they see. They don't see that what was happening would forever change their lives. In fact, they fall asleep! They didn't understand that loyalty to Christ would mean supreme commitment and sacrifice on their part, a complete reordering of their priorities.

I wonder if we fully understand the transformation that is called for in our lives as followers of Christ. I wonder if we truly understand what that old hymn says about how Christ "transfigures you and me."

And so I asked in that sermon, what is God calling you to do in the name of Christ that would certainly require deeper dedication and commitment? How might



**The Rev. Dr.
Roy Martin**

your church move from, "We've always done it that way" to "Let's step out in faith that God is doing a new thing in our midst?" And, in our presbytery, what new things might God be showing us in the coming years? Shall we start a new worshipping community? Will we engage in effective responses to poverty and racism and hunger? In short, will we follow Christ's lead to move beyond the comfortable and move toward the meaningful?

I ended the sermon by encouraging all of us never to be content with our witness to Christ's glory and to let the whole world see and experience the changes Christ has wrought in you. May God bless you in your endeavors to deepen your commitment to Jesus Christ.

Roy

Spring-like weather, Faith hospitality highlight Feb. 22 Presbytery meeting



Before last Tuesday's meeting at Faith Presbyterian, Tallahassee, commenced, attendees enjoyed fellowship and refreshments, including coffee provided by UKirk Tallahassee's Calvin's Coffee House (*shown at left*). The morning's worship featured a sermon by General Presbyter Rev. Dr. Roy Martin, entitled "And Now for Something Completely Different" (*shown below; photo courtesy of Jeannie Dixon*). The Rev. Gad Mpoyo, organizing pastor of Shalom International ministries, spoke about 1001 New Worshipping Communities during the meeting's educational time (*shown bottom left*). The meeting concluded with the Rev. Trinity Whitley's installation as presbytery moderator, after which she presented outgoing moderator The Rev. Michael Askew with a silver PC(USA) cross pendant (*shown bottom right*).



After 75 years of faithful mission and ministry, the **Lafayette Presbyterian** (Tallahassee) family will gather on the church's grounds at [4220 Mahan Drive, Tallahassee](#), on Sunday, March 27, at 10:30 am EDT to remember and celebrate their past while looking boldly to the future. The pastors, elders, deacons, and members of Florida Presbytery are invited to join in worship, fellowship, music, and "lunch-on-the-grounds" as, prayerfully, thanks are given for the Lord's leading, direction, and guiding hand throughout the decades.

PDA and FLAPDAN continue support long after storms

The Presbyterian Church (U. S. A.) being a connectional church is demonstrated in so many ways. One of those connections is through disaster relief. Living in the Florida Panhandle, hurricanes, tornados, flooding, or other calamities have all affected us at one time or another. Two organizations – Presbyterian Disaster Assistance (PDA) and Florida Presbyterian Disaster Assistance Network (FLAPDAN) – are there to help us.

PDA (<https://pda.pcusa.org/>), whose motto is: “Out of Chaos, Hope,” is the emergency disaster response and refugee program of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A). The mission statement of FLAPDAN (<https://www.flapdan.org/>) is “To support Florida communities through disaster preparedness, response and recovery working in partnership with community, government and faith-based organizations.” In this work, FLAPDAN provides a communication link between the six Florida presbyteries, the Synod of South Atlantic, PDA and other local organizations.

PDA and FLAPDAN continue making an impact in our communities long after the news organizations go



on to other stories. While our area was mostly spared from the 2021 hurricane season, previous years’ storms continue to affect lives in those areas hardest hit. Ongoing support from PDA and FLAPDAN keep working to meet those needs.

From 2019 through 2021, multiple grants for more than \$350,000 have been awarded to help recovery efforts for hurricanes Michael and Sally. This funding was used for essential goods and services in the recovery of more than 90 households. This gave those affected communities the ability to create a structure for long-term resilience, as well as assisting those on their personal journeys in disaster recovery.

If you are interested in getting involved in the FLAPDAN/PDA mission, there are a number of ways you can help. To be available to assist neighboring areas in recovery operations, register as a FLAPDAN Commuter Volunteer at

<https://www.flapdan.org/commuter-volunteers>. This is a quick and easy process and lets the presbytery know you can be available to support nearby communities following a disaster. The commuter volunteer process coordinates with and sends small, self-sufficient work teams into areas where help is needed, all within a daily commuting distance.

Another method is to financially support FLAPDAN through AmazonSmile. Log in to your Amazon account with <https://smile.amazon.com> and select Florida Presbyterian Disaster Assistance Network as your charity. The AmazonSmile Foundation donates 0.5% of your purchase price to FLAPDAN at no cost to you. You can also donate funds directly from the FLAPDAN website.

One Great Hour of Sharing, one of four PC (USA) special offerings received annually during Lent, is one of the primary funding sources for PDA allowing the organization to reach countless people in need. To learn more about PDA and ways to support them, visit <https://pda.pcusa.org/page/give/>

Let’s hope and pray the 2022 hurricane season is a quiet one. But, if a hurricane or other event does come our way, know that FLAPDAN, PDA, and our presbytery will be there to help.

From the Committee on Mission and Outreach (CMO)



By
Tim Crawford,
*CMO member/
Presbytery FLAPDAN
volunteer coordinator
and 1st, Crestview
elder*

From the Committee on Educational Resources



*By Don Winslett,
CER member,
Director of the
Center for Clergy Care
and Education
in Pensacola, FL
and
1st, Pensacola elder*

Lent about more than fasting and giving up vices

Having been born, raised, educated, trained, and ordained in a conservative, Protestant, non-liturgical faith group, it was much later in life when I even heard the term “Lent,” much less understood its meaning. Educated in the public school system of Atlanta, Georgia, I do remember (with some jealousy) the Roman Catholic students getting peanut butter and honey sandwiches for lunch rather than spaghetti during a certain time of the year.

Having lived and trained in New Orleans for five years I was exposed to the excesses of the carnival season and the traditional 40 day period of abstinence. Pledges were made to give up everything from chocolate to alcohol to gossip. Even this, while not satisfying, was somewhat of an improvement over a non-existent understanding of this 40 day period.

What is now more clearly understood is that Lent is a time of repentance, fasting, and preparation for the coming of Easter. It is a time of self-examination and reflection. (In the early

church, Lent was a time to baptize new converts.)

The number 40 is significant in biblical literature. Based on your own biblical knowledge, take a moment and consider all the references to “40” in biblical literature. For us now in Lent, 40 days denotes a process which requires daily discipline and reflection. Lent will not be an overly meaningful season if your intentions are practiced erratically or haphazardly. Perhaps the powerful mantra from Alcoholics Anonymous is helpful – one day at a time.

Lent is not about giving up chocolate and going on our merry way, focusing on nothing else. Lent is about more than the fast. It is also connected to repentance, self-

examination, and reflection. It may be a time of focusing on a passage of scripture and how that scripture is being lived out in our lives (e.g. “do not return evil for evil,” or “weep with those who weep and rejoice with those who rejoice”).

Choose the difficult passage, not the easy one. It may be a reflection related to our spiritual gifts and how they are being used in the context of our faith group. It may be about paying close attention to “who is our neighbor?”

Go ahead and give up your chocolate or alcohol or nail biting. However, starting and stopping here is not participating in Lent. Participating in Lent will compel us to move to a more honest reflection of who we are and whose we are.

YOU SHALL BE CALLED
REPAIRERS
of the BREACH

— ISAIAH 58



ONE GREAT HOUR OF SHARING
SPECIAL OFFERINGS
HUNGER • DISASTER • DEVELOPMENT

03.02.22-
04.17.22

Presbytery of Florida Disciplefest 2022

**Create in me a pure heart, O God,
and renew a steadfast spirit
within me. – Psalm 51:10**

Disciplefest 2022 will feature 11 workshops, worship and fellowship, all amid the beauty of God's creation at Dogwood Acres Retreat Center and Summer Camp, Vernon, Florida.

Event schedule:

9 am CT/10 am ET – Registration/Refreshments
9:45 am CT/10:45 am ET – Morning Worship
10:45 am CT/11:45 am ET – Workshop Session A
12 pm CT/1 pm ET – Lunch
1 pm CT/2 pm ET – Workshop Session B
2:15 pm CT/3:15 pm ET – Workshop Session C
3:30 pm CT/4:30 pm ET – Closing Celebration

**Find detailed descriptions of workshops,
workshop leader bios and other info at**
[http://www.presbyteryofflorida.net/presbytery-
-committees/educational-resources/](http://www.presbyteryofflorida.net/presbytery-committees/educational-resources/)

Stay at Dogwood Acres Friday night!
Contact Dogwood Acres Director Ben Powell
for information and reservations
(ben@dogwoodacres.org or 850-528-3575).

March 2022

12th

Register NOW!
\$20 per person
includes lunch

Register at
[https://](https://forms.gle/31cXRvdGFwbC81Eu8)
[forms.gle/31cXRvd](https://forms.gle/31cXRvdGFwbC81Eu8)
[GFwbC81Eu8](https://forms.gle/31cXRvdGFwbC81Eu8)

Deadline:
March 7

From the Committee on Dogwood Acres



*By Ben Powell,
DWA Director
and 1st, Quincy
Ruling Elder*

DWA offers an array of immediate and ongoing opportunities

It's good to be able to report things are looking up at Dogwood! Retreat season is underway, and we are having a very successful late winter and spring season. Seven retreats have been scheduled before Summer Camp. One church used DWA as the site for church officer training for the day.

Disciplefest takes place in just over a week, and we are looking forward to hosting the event again. We will open DWA to everyone the Friday evening before Disciplefest, and if enough want to stay overnight, we will serve dinner and breakfast the next morning. We hope to design it after the very successful gathering the night before the presbytery meeting we hosted, so who knows – Maybe [CDWA Chair] Bill Lamont might entertain us with a little pickin' and singing?

One of the things the CDWA had planned at the end of last summer was to hire a full-time program director. The search has started, led by CDWA member Brant Copeland, so I am very optimistic they will find someone before Summer Camp starts in June.

In the meantime, remember – DWA is a volunteer-driven

ministry and needs a little help.

1) First, we are hoping to hire 10 mature, energetic, and faith-filled summer camp counselors. Please put the word out in your churches and have anyone interested in serving this summer contact me as soon as possible.

(ben@dogwoodacres.org)
2) We are looking for someone to help with updating our webpage concerning all things Summer Camp 2022.

3) We are looking for someone skilled in graphic design who can design promotional material and the camp-themed T-shirts.

4) The committee is also forming a Summer Camp task force to help make decisions and implement the plan for Summer Camp 2022!

5) The committee has formed another task force that will help vision what DWA would and should be three to years years out. Also included in what they will do, and probably the most important aspect of their responsibility, is to make a business plan that supports the vision.

The task force currently has two members, but needs five. This group is not limited to those with “visioning

talent.” I am sure there are at least a couple of people with strong business backgrounds that can help us with the business model.

If you, or someone you know, is interested in serving in any of these Dogwood functions, please call, text or email me at your earliest convenience (ben@dogwoodacres.org or 850-528-3575).

Maybe you are interested in a little more hands-on work at DWA? We have two immediate needs there too.

1) Our cook shed was destroyed a couple of months ago, as trees continue to come down when there are strong winds as a result of Hurricane Michael. We are going to replace it with a small pole barn kit, and we need help in putting that up.

2) Also, the old floating dock at the Lake has finally served its last days and is no longer repairable. It is a very important part of Summer Camp. We are going to construct a new floating dock before camp starts and would love for a few volunteers to help with that.

Remembering the “Lord God” Bird

Wondering if any of you Panhandle natives who wandered in the deep swampy old growth forests ever saw or heard “The Lord God Bird”. It’s not likely, and I am pretty sure that none of us will ever hear from this bird again, for the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service declared it extinct in late 2021, along with dozens of other species.

If you did see or hear this bird, consider yourself blessed by God himself. It was a spectacularly large, noisy bird with a flaming crest and ivory bill for which it was named the Ivory-billed Woodpecker. When people saw this incredible bird, they shouted out “Lord, God, what a bird!”

It ate beetle larvae that lived in bald cypress trees in Florida and hardwood trees in the Mississippi River Delta. Historically, it lived in Florida from the Keys to the Panhandle. The last reported sightings of the bird were in 2004 in Arkansas and in 2005 along the Choctawhatchee River in northwest Florida; however, the last confirmed sighting was in 1944.

It disappeared because we cut down the trees that it depended on for food and habitat. It’s hard to imagine extirpating a species from one end of the state to the other, but we did.

In September 2021, scientists identified 23



extinct species, including the Ivory-billed Woodpecker, along with mussels, fish, lizards, orchids and others. Gone forever. Each one a creation of God. Each one owned and loved by God. Each one a part of the web of creation that all life depends on.

As a youthful birder, I dreamed of seeing or hearing the Ivory-billed. In 2004, Tim Gallagher, editor of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology’s quarterly, *Living Bird* claimed to have positively identified an Ivory-billed Woodpecker in Arkansas. Unfortunately, he wasn’t able to film the bird.

Upon seeing it, he sobbed, and so did I when I heard the news. It seemed like a blessing from God. A message that he was giving us a second chance to care for his creation. Now, 16 years later, it most likely is extinct.

The point of sharing the controversy of the Ivory-billed Woodpecker’s existence is that it is a charismatic species that people care about, but what about all the other species? How great is our loss?

It reminds me of the lyrics in Bob Dylan’s song, “Blowing in the Wind”: How many years must a man have before he can hear people cry, or hear the cry of creation? How many deaths must it take, before we decide that too many of God’s creation have gone extinct?

The answer isn’t blowing in the wind. It is in our hands. God calls us to respond to the cry of creation and to engage in protecting and restoring his creation. In 1990, more than 30 years ago, the 202nd General Assembly report, *Restoring Creation for Ecology and Justice*, asked us to respond to our endangered planet.

We have responded very little, so perhaps Dylan is right, the answer is blowing in the wind.

As always, if you have any comments or questions, please contact me at at pammcvety@hotmail.com.

Caring for Creation Notes



By
Pam McVety,
*Presbytery
Stewardship
of Creation
Enabler*
(pammcvety@hotmail.com)

How many deaths must it take before we decide that too many of God’s creations have gone extinct?

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Save the date (or visit <http://www.presbyteryofflorida.net/events-calendars/>)

In March		Looking ahead	
Tuesday, March 1 10 a.m. CST/ 11 a.m. EST	Committee on Mission and Outreach (CMO)	Tuesday, April 5 10 a.m. CDT/ 11 a.m. EDT	Committee on Mission and Outreach (CMO)
Wednesday, March 2	Ash Wednesday	Sunday, April 10	Palm Sunday
Tuesday, March 8 9:30 a.m. CST/ 10:30 a.m. EST	Committee on Ministry (COM)	Wednesday, April 11 11 a.m. CDT/ 12 p.m. EDT	Committee on Educational Resources (CER)
Wednesday, March 9 11 a.m. CST/ 12 p.m. EST	Committee on Educational Resources (CER)	Wednesday, April 11 1 p.m. CDT/ 2 p.m. EDT	Committee on Presbytery Administration (CPA)
Wednesday, March 9 1 p.m. CST/ 2 p.m. EST	Committee on Presbytery Administration (CPA)	Sunday, April 19	Easter Sunday
Saturday, March 12 9 a.m.—3:30 p.m. CST/ 10 a.m.— 4:30 p.m. EST	Disciplefest at Dogwood Acres Retreat Center and Summer Camp	Tuesday, April 19 10 a.m. CDT/ 11 a.m. EDT	Committee on Congregational Revitalization (CCR)
Sunday, March 13	Daylight Saving Time Begins	Tuesday, April 26 1 p.m. CDT/ 2 p.m. EDT	Committee on New Congregational Development (CNCD)
Tuesday, March 15 10 a.m. CDT/ 11 a.m. EDT	Committee on Congregational Revitalization (CCR)	Wednesday, April 27 10 a.m. CST/ 11 a.m. EST	"I Stand with You" Task Force
Sunday, March 27 10:30 a.m. EDT	Lafayette, Tallahassee, 75th Anniversary Celebration		
Tuesday, March 29 1 p.m. CDT/ 2 p.m. EDT	Committee on New Congregational Development (CNCD)		
Tuesday, March 29 12 p.m. CDT/ 1 p.m. EDT and 3 p.m. CDT/ 4 p.m. EDT	Presbyterian Foundation "Day of Learning"		
Wednesday, March 30 10 a.m. CDT/ 11 a.m. EDT	"I Stand with You" Task Force		
Wednesday, March 30 6—7:30 p.m. CDT/ 7—8:30 p.m. EDT	PC(USA) Leader Formation webinar: "Good Stewards of God's Grace" Registration deadline: March 23		

Make the most of the beautiful day
and tune in for a special episode of
Being Matthew 25 as we celebrate
the life and ministry of Mr. Rogers.

March 17 1:00 p.m. EDT
PC(USA) Facebook Page
or YouTube Channel



MATTHEW 25