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Inside this issue:

May 21 Presbytery Meeting	2
“Stand By Me” Anti-Racism Team	4
Committee on Mission and Outreach (CMO)	5
Our connectional congregations	6
Committee on Nominations	7
Committee on Educational Resources	8
Caring for Creation	9
Save the Dates	10

The Panhandle Presbyterian

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From General Presbyter Roy Martin

As I write this article, two days have passed since 19 children and two teachers were killed by a lone 18 year-old gunman in Uvalde, Texas. That came ten days after 10 people were killed by a lone gunman at a Tops Supermarket in Buffalo, New York. Then there was the wounding and killing of Taiwanese Presbyterians in Laguna Woods, California.

According to *Education Week*, there have been 119 school shooting incidents this year alone. The Gun Violence Archive, an independent data collection organization, has counted 212 mass shootings in the United States so far this year.

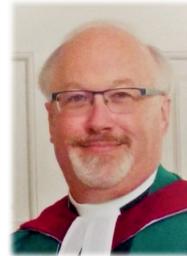
And, while these horrific acts occur, both our country and our country’s politicians are of very different minds as to how to fix the problem.

It seems that Christians are similarly divided.

And so, the best we seem to be able to muster up is, “thoughts and prayers.” We have had occasion to say that phrase a lot, not just this year but every year and for a very long time.

So, let me push you a little bit on that phrase. If you have ever said it on social media or in person, exactly what have all your thoughts led you to do? And what has God said you need to do in response to all your prayers?

I know the answers do not come easily for many. I know the phrase “thoughts and prayers” is all we think we have at our disposal at such times as these. But that isn’t true.



The Rev. Dr. Roy Martin

We have other words and phrases from scripture to guide us. Through the prophet Amos, God says to us, “let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.” To what does that phrase call us in times like these? Jesus tells us, “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God.” How does God call you to work for peace in these days?

But until we can come together, solutions will remain at a distance. Perhaps Proverbs 18:17 is a reminder of this. “The one who first states a case seems right, until the other comes and cross-examines.” We can bring workable solutions to gun violence, racism, poverty, and a whole host of acts against God and humanity when we step out of our walled silos and listen to one another.

Roy

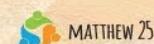


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Our gifts to the Pentecost Offering connect young people with one another and with caring communities, helping them shape a life and a future built in faith.

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WHEN WE ALL DO A LITTLE,
IT ADDS UP TO A LOT!
April 18 – June 5, 2022



1st, Crestview and Laurel Hill churches host May 21 meeting at Dogwood Acres

First, Crestview and Laurel Hill Presbyterian hosted the Presbytery's spring stated meeting, assisted by Gulf Beach, Panama City Beach, and individuals from other churches and Dogwood Acres staff Ben Powell and Eric Hearn. They ensured all aspects of the gathering, from setup and cleanup, to child care, registration, parking and refreshments, were prepared "decently and in order". Laurel Hill Elder Tracey Curenton coordinated preparation and serving of a delicious lunch of sliced ham and sides. Shown at right, from right, First Presbyterian Church of Crestview volunteer Celia Broadhead oversees registration, while Jim Gaylord and Carolyn Ward collect lunch money from Lafayette, Tallahassee Pastor Rev. Steve Graves.



Shown above, left, from left, Presbytery Moderator the Rev. Trinity Whitley leads the commissioning of Joanne Kublik (Red Bay Presbyterian) and Greg Seltzer (Northminster Presbyterian, Pensacola) as lay pastors to the congregations they serve.

Above right, from left, Moderator Trinity Whitley leads the commissioning of of Elder Jeannie Dixon and Rev. Brad Clayton, as well as Young Adult Advisory Delegate Ryan Obray in absentia, for service as delegates to the 225th General Assembly.



At right, First, Lynn Haven Pastor the Rev. Lisa Martin preaches a sermon on how we must "rekindle the gift – fan the flame," as Paul reminded Timothy (2 Timothy 1:1-14). At left, Gretna Presbytery Elder and Music Director Jon-Mark McKinley provides music for worship.

from **Lament to Hope**

JUNE 17 - JULY 9 2022



Above, at left, attendees have an opportunity to meet Dogwood Acres' new program director, Eric Hearn, and learn about this summer's camp opportunities.

Above, at right, from left, Presbytery Moderator and Faith, Tallahassee, Associate Pastor Rev. Trinity Whitley; First, Tallahassee Pastor Rev. Margaret Fox; Christ, Tallahassee Pastor Rev. Sheldon Steen; and Fellowship, Tallahassee, Pastor Rev. A. J. Mealar enjoy some hoops after lunch.

At right, in the afternoon's educational segment, Florida A & M Department of Social Work Assistant Professor Dr. Jacquelyn McMillan discusses working with individuals and families who experience opioid misuse within faith communities. Below, at left, participants gather in breakout groups to develop basic to advanced strategies for helping those dealing with opioid misuse within their congregations and communities. Group ideas range from providing a welcoming, compassionate environment to equipping staff and volunteers to administer overdose treatment.



Below, from left, Dr. McMillan listens to First Presbyterian of Marianna Elder and retired Jackson County, FL, Sheriff Lou Roberts' insights from having worked with families affected by opioid misuse.



From the “Stand by Me” Team (formerly the “I Stand With You” Anti-Racism Task Force)



By Susan Byram, Team members and 1st, Pensacola Elder

Anti-racism discussion group continues at 1st, Pensacola

At First Presbyterian, Pensacola, a group of members continue to study the impacts of racism on the Church. Our first book of 2022 was Dr. Robert P. Jones’ *White Too Long*. Dr. Jones is a white southern evangelical who now is the founder and director of the Public Religion Research Institute.

His book gives the history of race and the Church in this country, along with data from recent research on the correlation of being white and holding racist views. This hard-hitting book does offer glimmers of hope, especially in the stories of the two First Baptist Churches of Macon, GA, to whom the book is dedicated. The study guide for the book, published by Amplify Originals, gives a summary of key points in each chapter and then features some discussion starter questions.

The most challenging part of the guide is actually the appendix, which offers specific activities for assessment and action for white churches. These activities require a lot of research and digging into church history, as well as an evaluation of current practices. Our group plans to offer our church a report on what we



learn from these activities in the near future.

In the meantime, we are now studying Dr. Jemar Tisby’s book *The Color of Compromise*. Dr. Tisby is a black southern reformed seminarian who is also a historian. This book is somewhat similar to the Jones book, but gives a more linear overview of the history of race and the Church, with special emphasis on how the Church has been complicit in racism instead of having the courage to speak up for those on the margins and against the societal expectations of the day.

This book is very accessible, as it is offered in print or via audiobook, and it has a video study that parallels the book very closely. Finally, it offers a study guide written with Pastor Tyler Burns (from Pensacola!).

The guide offers not only the usual summary and discussion questions,

but opportunities to dig deeper into related scriptures. The focus on scripture reminds us that what we are doing is a matter of spiritual discipline as we strive to be more like our Lord, Christ Jesus, and leave fear behind as we practice courageous Christianity. By the way, our group now meets in a hybrid format, with those in person watching the video together, then those on Zoom joining in for our discussion. What a blessing to take full advantage of technology so more may participate and learn together.

We are also excited to be taking a day trip to Montgomery, AL, to visit the National Memorial for Peace and Justice, as well as the Legacy Museum. These are components of the Equal Justice Initiative founded by Bryan Stephenson. Our trip will be Saturday, June 4th, with a visit to the memorial in the morning and the museum in the afternoon. If you are interested in joining us or want more information, please email me at susansbyram@gmail.com.

The Stand by Me Team is grateful to announce new anti-racism resources on the Presbytery of Florida website. Visit <http://www.presbyteryofflorida.net/presbytery-committees/mission-outreach/stand-by-me-team/> to check them out!

Plan and prepare to mitigate severe weather's impacts

The first of June is a noteworthy day. It is International Children's Day, Oscar the Grouch Day, National Go Barefoot Day, and, of course, the beginning of the Atlantic Hurricane Season. The 2022 hurricane season is predicted to be another above-average year.

This is based the average number of storms per seasons over the last 30 years. Above average is nothing new; many of the past several years have been above-average seasons. If a storm does come our way, there is nothing we can do to stop it from impacting our lives. We can, however, be prepared, possibly mitigating the damage and lessening impact to our homes, churches and lives.

So how do we mitigate a storm's impact? **Have a plan.** If you already have one – great. Check to make sure it is up-to-date. If not, get started on one: <https://www.ready.gov> is a great resource for action plans, including information on preparing disaster kits.

Do you have a plan for your church? Now is the time to make sure all the church's contact information is current and your plan covers the essential information to prepare your facilities for an impending storm.



If you don't have a plan, go to <https://www.flapdan.org/sample-disaster-plans> to download a template to get you started.

If you are hit by a storm and survive with only minimal damage, consider helping those worse off than you. If your church facilities are in good order after a hurricane, consider supporting the community, contact local emergency management officials offering to have your church property serve as a point of distribution for relief supplies or operate as an informal shelter. Another option would be to offer the church facilities for volunteer housing, supporting those coming into the community to provide recovery assistance.

An important service administered by Florida Department of Health, Bureau of Preparedness and Response, is the Special Needs Shelter Program. This service is designed for persons in a community with special medical needs. Someone needing help with basic tasks or those using electronic medical devices with no other evacuation options should sign up for the

Florida Special Needs Registry at <https://snr.flhealthresponse.com/>.

If there are members of your congregation needing special support in time of disaster, they can register or, with their designated approval, someone in your church can register those in need into the system. This program provides important information for local emergency management officials about evacuation and sheltering options available and can be a life-saving solution during a disaster.

Finally, in the aftermath of a storm, if you find your insurance insufficient to rebuild your church facilities, funding may be available through the FEMA Public Assistance for Houses of Worship. While not a quick or easy process, funds are available. More information on this program can be found in the FEMA video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7xfzOEVHQ44>

Being prepared for the worst won't prevent a storm from impacting you or your church, but planning and preparation go a long way toward reducing the damage and chaos of any weather calamity. Pray for a calm hurricane season, but prepare for the worst, and, most of all, stay safe!

From the Committee on Mission and Outreach (CMO)



By
Tim Crawford,
CMO member and
1st, Crestview/
Elder

Our connectional congregations

Two churches celebrate Trinity United's origins

Trinity United and Faith Presbyterian Churches, of Tallahassee, recently shared in a special presentation of "The Story of Trinity United Presbyterian Church", about the origins of Tallahassee's only African-American Presbyterian Church (U. S. A.) congregation. Participants in the April 29th event at Faith viewed a video of the play written and performed by members of the Trinity congregation to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the church's founding.

Shown at right, from left, Trinity United Elder Robert Woolfork is recognized for his instrumental role in bringing the two church groups together. Faith member Ruth Reynolds gives the



Shown at left, Trinity members describe the vital part the church has had in their lives. *(Photo courtesy of Jeannie Dixon)* The evening also included fellowship over a spaghetti supper in Faith's Fellowship Hall.



Jump into Summer at Dogwood

Registration is Open Now!
dogwoodacres.org/summer-camp/



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Savannah, GA or online

Over 30 workshops spanning theology, practical stewardship planning, creative ventures, and legacy programming.



A.J. Jacobs
Author
The Year of Living Biblically

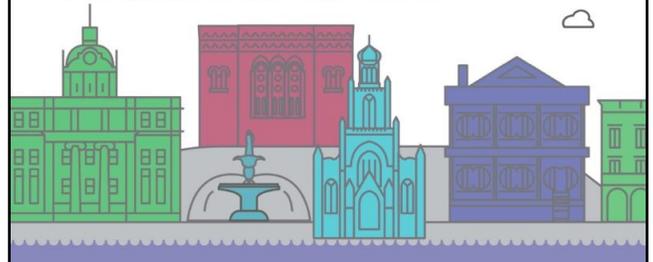


Rev. Dawn Hyde
Head Pastor
Downtown Church, Columbia, SC



Dr. Michael Bos
Pastor and Author
Marble Collegiate Church

Early-bird, group, and first-call discounts; scholarships available



Committee Corner profiles the Committee on Ministry

This month, we continue our series on presbytery committees by featuring the Committee on Ministry (COM). Rev. Joan Wooten, Parish Associate at First Presbyterian Church of Pensacola, is the chairperson of the COM.

The COM is the largest committee of the presbytery. In addition to the chair and vice chair, there are 13 members-at-large (½ are ministers, ½ are elders, divided evenly among the three districts – west, central, and east). These 15 members divide up

the three very important tasks of the committee: 1) Oversee pastoral relationships with congregations; 2) Provide for wellness and educational opportunities for commissioned lay pastors and Christian educators; and 3) Work with congregations in transition as they seek new pastoral leadership.

Currently, there are two vacancies on the committee. These vacancies reduce the overall effectiveness of the COM to manage pastoral relationships with congregations, a critical task of the COM. The COM is looking for

individuals with certain qualifications to fill these important vacancies.

“We’re looking for ruling elders and teaching elders who love our presbytery and who feel a commitment to helping congregations and pastoral leaders thrive. As with our other presbytery committees, we seek gender balance as well as geographical balance amongst the three districts,” says Rev. Wooten. “Our goal is to support pastors and congregations. Part of that support involves personal visits with sessions and pastors.”

If you are interested in serving on the Committee on Ministry, or on any other presbytery committee, please contact Glenn Hodges at ghodges37@comcast.net. Those who may be interested in serving on the Committee on Representation or on the Committee on Nominations must be vetted and presented to the presbytery by the Coordinating and Planning Commission.

Please share this article with your congregation and encourage your members to consider serving on a presbytery committee. Next month’s issue will highlight another committee. See you at “The Corner”!

From the Committee on Nominations (CN)



*By Ruth Bedell,
CN member and
Faith, Tallahassee,
elder*

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**From the
Committee on
Educational
Resources (CER)**



*By
Rev. Joyce Lieberman,
Executive/
Stated Clerk,
Synod of
South Atlantic*

Synod exec explains presbytery-synod relationship

The principles of Presbyterian Government include that Presbyterian ruling elders and teaching elders shall come together in councils (sessions, presbyteries, synods and the General Assembly) united by the nature of the church “to seek together and find and represent the will of Christ” for the church (See Book of Order F-30202 and F-3.0204). “The councils are distinct, but have such mutual relations that the act of one of them is the act of the whole church performed by it through the appropriate council. The larger part of the church...shall govern the smaller” (F-3.0203).

One of the most significant Synod responsibilities is its relationship with and between the presbyteries, similar to a presbytery’s responsibilities for its congregations. Presbyteries elect commissioners to Synod who can propose and direct the synod’s mission and ministry to address the common concerns of the presbyteries with a wider strategy that may be beyond a session or presbytery to enact.

In specific terms, the Synod of South Atlantic has responsibility for the 16 presbyteries that make up the Synod of South Atlantic. This includes Florida Presbytery, with

commissioners the Rev. Brad Clayton, who serves on the Synod Executive Administrative Commission and chairs the Committee on Representation, and Elder Don Mowat, who serves on the Budget and Finance Committee.

The Synod of South Atlantic is supported by the presbyteries through per capita (\$1.50 per member) and mission (\$1.00 per member) giving. This funding allows the Synod to:

- ▶ **support presbytery leaders** through gatherings once or twice a year, providing for three years of coaching for new presbytery leaders through the Presbytery Leader Formation program, and offer consultation on matters before a presbytery;

- ▶ **provide leadership development opportunities** for ruling and teaching elders through webinars, annual support of the Association of Smaller Congregations and our racial ethnic caucuses, and the awarding of grants for seminarians, educators, and others for education opportunities;

- ▶ **meet the constitutionally mandated work** of the Synod Permanent Judicial Commission, the annual review of presbytery minutes, and Synod meetings; and

- ▶ **call a Synod Executive and Stated Clerk** who oversees the mission and ministry of the Synod as listed above and to assist presbytery search committees seeking a new presbytery leader, provide training for presbytery committees and commissions, and share information to keep presbyteries informed and connected to one another, the Synod and the General Assembly.

The Synod of South Atlantic is responsible for the life and mission of the church throughout Florida, Georgia and South Carolina and supporting the ministry and mission of its presbyteries. Both councils, Florida Presbytery and the Synod of South Atlantic, serve together to provide that the Word of God may be truly preached and heard, provide that the Sacraments may be rightly administered and received, and nurture the covenant community of disciples of Christ (See G-3.03 and G-3.04).

“That Dog Won’t Hunt”: Final Words on Fossil Fuel Divestment before GA 225

Most everybody gets it now that the world is warming, people are suffering and dying, and it’s getting worse. We also know that our denomination is making money off investments in the fossil fuel industry that is causing the warming. At the General Assembly meeting this summer, we have a chance to eliminate ALL our investments in this industry.

What happens at General Assembly is in God’s hands, and the hands, hearts, and minds of commissioners from around the country. But if I could sit down and talk to commissioners, here is what I would say.

Things are getting worse a whole lot faster than scientists predicted. At least one year between now and 2026 has a [48% chance of exceeding 1.5 degrees Celsius of warming above pre-industrial levels](#) — a temperature increase seen as a threshold for extreme climate change impacts, according to the World Meteorological Organization.

It is getting “unlivable” hot. In April, [temperatures](#) from Iraq to India and Pakistan reached 113 degrees F in India and, in Pakistan, hit 122 degrees F. You can be sure that 2022 will be warmer than 2021.

And, dear commissioners, the fossil fuel industry has never listened to us at shareholder meetings. Quite the contrary. Verifiable, planned drilling projects across the United States’ lands and waters will release [140 billion metric tons](#) of planet-heating gases. Experts are calling it a “carbon bomb” because emissions from these drilling projects are four times larger than all of the planet-heating gases expelled globally each year, putting the world on track for disastrous climate change.

There could not be stronger evidence that the fossil fuel industry is NOT LISTENING to Presbyterians or any other shareholders. My grandfather would say, “that dog won’t hunt”.

And, while I am being boldly honest with you, you will hear PC(USA) Committee on Mission Responsibility Through Investment (MRTI) staff say that the “only way” to divest is to use “their” metric-based review process for each company (and there are a possible 200). That is the current process. It is slow and requires a company-by-company review, which is no match for the physics of climate change.

But, it is my understanding that you are not bound by previous

General Assembly decisions. You could call for categorical divestment from fossil fuels without further review or delay. You could support ENV-07, ON Fossil Fuel Divestment, with which the Florida Presbytery concurred, that calls for categorical divestment. See <https://www.pc-biz.org/#/committee/3000086/business>.

The question is, shall we continue to make money from the production of fossil fuels, and insist on our slow metric-based review process that is no match for how fast the climate crisis is escalating? Or shall we say, enough suffering and damage, and categorically divest now without further review or delay? It’s your choice.

Admittedly, this is a small step in the enormous challenge of responding to the climate crisis, but a step that the denomination can make and is consistent with our faith, our values and the reality of our situation. That is what I would love to say to all General Assembly commissioners.

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

Caring for Creation Notes



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

*There could not be
stronger evidence
that the
fossil fuel industry
is NOT LISTENING
to Presbyterians
or any other
shareholders.*

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

In June		Looking ahead	
Thursday, June 2 10 a.m. CDT/ 11 a.m. EDT	Committee on Mission and Outreach (CMO)	Friday, July 1— Saturday, July 9	225th General Assembly continues
Saturday, June 4 11 a.m.—3 p.m. CDT	Laurel Hill Arts & Heritage Festival, Laurel Hill Church yard	Monday, July 4	Independence Day— Presbytery office closed
Sunday, June 5	Pentecost	Thursday, July 7 10 a.m. CDT/ 11 a.m. EDT	Committee on Mission and Outreach (CMO)
Wednesday, June 8 11 a.m. CDT/ 12 p.m. EDT	Committee on Educational Resources (CER)	Saturday, July 9 10 a.m. CDT/ 11 a.m. EDT	Committee on Representation (CR)
Wednesday, June 8 1 p.m. CDT/ 2 p.m. EDT	Committee on Presbytery Administration (CPA)	Monday, July 11 10 a.m. CDT/ 11 a.m. EDT	Committee on Preparation for Ministry (CPM)
Saturday, June 11 10 a.m. CDT/ 11 a.m. EDT	Committee on Representation (CR)	Tuesday, July 12 9:30 a.m. CDT/ 10:30 a.m. EDT	Committee on Ministry
Tuesday, June 14 5 p.m. CDT/ 6 p.m. EDT	Committee on Nominations (CN)	Wednesday, July 13 11 a.m. CDT/ 12 p.m. EDT	Committee on Educational Resources (CER)
Saturday, June 18 – Saturday, July 9	225th General Assembly , Hybrid/Louisville, KY	Wednesday, July 13 1 p.m. CDT/ 2 p.m. EDT	Committee on Presbytery Administration (CPA)
Sunday, June 19	Father's Day	Saturday, July 16 Noon CDT	"Christmas in July" Scottish Tea, 1st, Chipley
Sunday, June 19	Juneteenth	Tuesday, July 19 10 a.m. CDT/ 11 a.m. EDT	Committee on Congregational Revitalization (CCR)
Sunday, June 19 – Friday, June 24 and Sunday, June 26 – Friday, July 1	Presbyterian Association of Musicians 2022 Worship and Music Conference , Montreat Conference Center	Thursday, July 21 9:30 a.m. CDT/ 10:30 a.m. EDT	Coordinating and Planning Commission (CPC)
Tuesday, June 21 10 a.m. CDT/ 11 a.m. EDT	Committee on Congregational Revitalization (CCR)	Tuesday, July 26 1 p.m. CDT/ 2 p.m. EDT	Committee on New Congregational Development (CNCD)
Sunday, June 26	DWA Summer Camp begins	Wednesday, July 27 10 a.m. CST/ 11 a.m. EST	"Stand by Me" Anti-Racism Team
Tuesday, June 28 1 p.m. CDT/ 2 p.m. EDT	Committee on New Congregational Development (CNCD)	Tuesday, August 23 9 a.m. CDT/ 10 a.m. EDT	Summer Stated Presbytery Meeting, Grace, Panama City
Wednesday, June 29 10 a.m. CST/ 11 a.m. EST	"Stand by Me" Anti-Racism Team	Registration starts one hour before	