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From General Presbyter Roy Martin

Tis the season of Thanksgiving! A special time to pause and think of the many benefits God has bestowed upon us during the year. We usually thank God for our bounteous harvest of food and shelter. And we thank God for family and friends so dear to us. If we work at it a little, we can usually come up with quite a list of things to be thankful for.

But what about those times in the lives of each of us when there seems to be little, if anything, for which to be thankful? An untimely death; personal suffering and pain; loneliness, fear, or anxiety; an overwhelming sense that the world is out to destroy us. At those times, how is it possible to come to God with grateful hearts?

When I think on this question, I cannot help but think of Martin Rinkart, whose paean of praise, "Now Thank We All Our God," is sung in thousands of churches. He penned this hymn during an epidemic in which the number of the dead was so great that

they had to be buried in trenches. His own wife was taken; he lost his property and was driven to desperate extremes in finding food and clothes for his children. Yet, somehow, he could write these words for his hymn:



The Rev. Dr. Roy Martin

"Now thank we all our God with heart and hands and voices,

Who wondrous things hath done, in whom the world rejoices;

Who, from our mothers' arms, hath blessed us on our way

With countless gifts of love, and still is ours today.

O may this bounteous God through all our life be

near us,

With ever joyful hearts and blessed peace to cheer us;

And keep us in His grace, and guide us when perplexed,

And free us from all ills in this world and the next.

Rinkart knew that even in the depths of sorrow and despair, God is present ready to give us strength and courage in times of unbearable anguish. If we, too, will open ourselves to God's presence and care for us, then thanksgiving does indeed become possible at those times when there seems little to be thankful for because, if nothing else, we can and should be thankful for God's gift of God's self in our lives. Thanks be to God!

Roy

**From the
Committee on
Ministry**



*By Rev. Mark
Broadhead, Chair,
and 1st, Crestview/
Laurel Hill Pastor*

Presbytery welcomes three new minister members

Board of Pensions News: The Board of Pensions continues to work hard to protect our pastors, educators, and congregations in the midst of skyrocketing health care coverage. The good news is pastors who are retired or serving in less than 20 hours per week callings can now pick and choose what kinds of healthcare coverage would best fit their needs. Be sure to go to Pensions.org and “click around.”

Also, in the same vein, Commissioned Lay Pastors may now also negotiate with congregations to which they are commissioned for certain levels of coverage. Look for details at the Board of Pensions’ website – Pensions.org.

Please note the following changes in the amounts due starting January 1, 2021: Medical Coverage will increase to 27.5% of the effective salary. Pension and disability will be reduced to 9.5%. There is no change to the total percentage of what is required from the Board of Pensions. It remains at 37%.

It is our joy and privilege to welcome three new members to the Presbytery of Florida family:

Rev. (Margaret) Greta Reed (Honorably Retired) lives in Tallahassee and attends worship most frequently at First–Tallahassee. Greta comes to us by transfer from Greater Atlanta Presbytery and has already jumped into the work of the Presbytery. Most recently, she participated with the Racism Taskforce.

Greta served churches in South Florida and developed a nonprofit AIDS ministry before retiring in 2005 to the Atlanta area to write *Sacred Enticement: A Skeptic’s Journey to Faith*, a story she hoped would help other’s struggling with intellectual stumbling blocks to faith.



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During her time in Atlanta she served on the Committee on Ministry's Pastor-to-pastor team, providing pastoral care to pastors.

Since moving to Tallahassee, she has worked with residents at Westminster Oaks living with dementia. She started a ministry called, Sparklers which is dedicated to recruiting, training, placing, and resourcing resident volunteers who would become a buddy to someone living with dementia.

Rev. Margaret O. Fox has accepted the call from First Presbyterian Church of Tallahassee as of November 1. She earned a Juris Doctor and Master of Divinity from Yale Law School/Yale Divinity School in 2015. Transferring from Maumee Valley Presbytery in Ohio where she served First Presbyterian Church of Perrysburg, she looks forward to serving the congregation in Tallahassee.

Margaret is looking forward to opening the scripture with a community of people – complex, nuanced, beautiful, and broken people – and ask, who is God and what is God calling us to do?



Rev. Mathew B. Frease accepted the call to be the Presbyterian Campus Minister at Florida State University Ukirk in Tallahassee. We had the privilege of hearing Matt preach at the October meeting of Presbytery.

Matt has said his sense of call has been dynamic and evolving; moving from a call to youth ministry as a youth director to perusing theological education at Columbia Theological Seminary (MDiv) to pursue ordained ministry. After doing work in Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) he was led back to the academy at the Candler School of Theology at Emory University (ThM) and later Columbia Theological Seminary (currently a ThD candidate) to peruse deeper training and education in Pastoral Theology. He understands this evolving sense of call to be the Spirit's

mischievousness moving him to where his gifts and talents can be used to meet the needs people at unique and specific times in their lives.

We welcome all three of you and look forward to sharing in ministry with you!

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From the Committee on Educational Resources



*By Rev. John Kuper,
Chair, and
1st, Pensacola
Associate Pastor*

CER recommends ... DiscipleFest 2020!

DiscipleFest is the Presbytery of Florida's coming-together of all congregation for worship and workshops as we celebrate our oneness in Christ. Workshop topics include subjects such as congregational revitalization, Christian education, politics, prayer, and so much more. You get to pick three workshops to attend.

Our worship leader will be Rev. Ray Jones, Director of Theology, Formation, and Evangelism for the Presbyterian Mission Agency. Please take a minute to look over the brochure (link below). This year's DiscipleFest will be entirely on Zoom!



You **must register** to participate. To register for this FREE event: <https://bit.ly/disciplefest2020>

For a brochure to see workshops and to print: <https://bit.ly/disciplefestbrochure>



The Presbytery's Committee on Educational Resources (CER) is developing a network of Presbyterians who can offer advice and share their experience to help congregations with their ministry and mission. As a first step in this process, we are trying to identify the needs in our congregations.

Could you please discuss the following questions with your church's session, leaders, and/or pastor(s)? Responses can be emailed to office@presbyteryofflorida.com or mailed to Presbytery of Florida, P. O. Box 7, Chipecy, FL 32428. CER will reach out in the near future regarding these responses.

For what areas of ministry might your church like guidance?

Below are some examples. Would any of these be of interest to your congregation?

- Use of technology in worship ● New ideas for Sunday school
- How to do online Sunday school
- How to run a soup kitchen/food pantry ● Ecumenical outreach ● Financial record keeping
- How to keep those who can't attend church connected to ministry and mission

Are there other ministry opportunities in which you would like to engage but feel unprepared for?

Are there any areas of ministry for which you think you or a member of your congregation could serve as a resource for others?

Thank you for your timely response. — CER

Extraordinary blessings in a time of great suffering

This is the time of the year when we give thanks for our blessings. But giving thanks, this year, will be especially tough as so many are suffering and dying from the deadly COVID-19 pandemic. Perhaps for that reason, though, it is more important than ever to count our blessings.

Like many, I find our local church a blessing and a refuge from the dysfunction and turmoil of the world. It's a place of renewal that gives us strength and courage to engage the world's problems. Its members are family. Their children are our children.

The children of First Presbyterian in Tallahassee have given us a blessing that is extra special. Seven of our young people are pursuing careers protecting the environment. At a time when so many of our youth are turning away from their faith, I find it extraordinary that our church has raised seven people who have embraced the "caring for creation" mission.

Jordan

Luebkmann has led the way with a law degree from the University of North Carolina School of Law. He is an attorney for Earth Justice, a nonprofit public interest environmental law organization.

Allie Snyder is an active member of First Presbyterian who has a degree in Biological Science from Florida State University and is working on a master's degree in biology. She is focusing on how fire affects native bee communities.

Claire Hodges

graduated *magna cum laude* from the University of Florida with a double-major in International Studies and Sustainability. She worked as an intern for 1000 Friends of Florida, tracking environmental legislation and researching climate communications. She is planning to study environmental policy in graduate school.

Matthew

Morse graduated from University of Florida in 2018 with a degree in Environmental Engineering and is working as an engineer intern at Jones Edmunds in Gainesville, FL.

Christopher Witmer is graduating from Rochester Institute of Technology with a degree in mechanical engineering and is interning at Tesla working on alternative energy sources. He hopes to be hired permanently to continue his work on alternative energy.

Molly Kennedy is an undergraduate at the University of Florida pursuing a degree in biology as a pathway to environmental studies.

Kelly Ann Kennedy, Molly's older sister, also attended the University of Florida earning a degree in Forest Resource Conservation. She is currently in law school pursuing environmental law. She hopes to work for a non-profit organization or for government to advocate for the conservation and preservation of Florida's natural resources.

In answering my questions, she said, "I hope to use my law degree to protect the natural wonders that are God's creation and to do so in a way that is fair and equitable to my neighbors, the public, my brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ."

Amen!

Look what God has blessed us with – seven smart young people who give me hope that we can change our destructive ways and learn to live in harmony with all of God's creation.

If you have young people in your church who are pursuing careers in environmental science, PLEASE let me know. pammcvety@hotmail.com

Caring for Creation Notes



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

"Look what God has blessed us with – seven smart young people who give me hope that we can change our destructive ways and learn to live in harmony with all of God's creation."

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Officer Training Course via Zoom

Instructor:

The Rev. Dr.
Roy A. Martin,
General Presbyter,
Presbytery of
Florida



Purpose: To prepare new and continuing elders, deacons, and trustees for their ministry in the Presbyterian Church (USA)

through study of the Foundations of Presbyterian Polity and the Form of Government in the PCUSA Book of Order.

Course Schedule: Every Sunday afternoon at 2 p.m. CT/3 p.m. ET Nov. 8 through Dec 6. All participants must register at

<https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZUrcOqprTMoEtLvSYvz5jz4ZojtaK-bhr1H>.

All lessons will be recorded should anyone have to miss a lesson.

Course Materials: All participants will need the most recent copy of the Book of Order. A free, downloadable PDF is available on the PC(USA) Store website at <https://www.pcusastore.com/Products/OGA19010/book-of-order-20192021-download.aspx>. Other materials will be recommended but not required during the course.

The course is offered at no cost to participants.

Lessons:

Nov. 8 Presbyterian understanding of its mission, the role of the confessions, and principals of church government

Nov. 15 Presbyterian understanding of the congregation

Nov. 22 Presbyterian understanding of ordered ministry (clergy, ruling elders, deacons, etc.)

Nov. 29 Presbyterian understanding of the roles of church councils (sessions, presbyteries, Synods, and General Assembly)

Dec. 6 Presbyterian understanding of the Church's relationship with civil authority, ecumenicity, and how to interpret and amend the