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# The Panhandle Presbyterian

*A monthly publication of the Presbytery of Florida*



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## From General Presbyter Roy Martin

I find myself watching a lot of Rick Steves' travel shows on PBS this summer. My interest in his shows no doubt stems from not being able to travel. I can travel vicariously through good ol' Rick!

Being a good Lutheran, Rick Steves always makes a point of visiting church buildings on his adventures, and I am mesmerized by their beautiful architecture, both inside and out. They are almost always grand cathedrals with spires that reach to the heavens and ceilings that take the shape of an inverted ship. Many have active congregations and many have become more like museums and, as I watch

and listen to Rick talk about them, I wonder how it happens that some congregations thrive and some don't.

Of course, there are numerous books on the market that address that question but, at the end of the day, I think it boils down to two things: how inviting the congregation is to the community it serves, and how responsive it is to the needs of that same community. In other words, does the church exist for itself or for mission and ministry to the world?

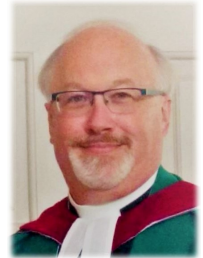
It really doesn't matter what size your congregation is or whether your church building is a grand cathedral or a lovely

little chapel. What matters is service to others in the name of Jesus Christ.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, it is certainly more challenging to accomplish such service but it is not impossible. It just requires more creativity. I would love to hear about what your congregation is doing in mission and ministry even in these days while we are all trying to stay safe.

May God bless you as you seek to be faithful!

Roy



**The Rev. Dr. Roy Martin**

**Currents of Faith**  
*The Stewardship of change in community, technology, and across generations.*

September 22 & 29  
& October 6

**Stewardship Kaleidoscope**  
Real Tools for Real Ministry  
StewardshipKaleidoscope.org

**Three day virtual event!**  
11:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m. on each Tuesday

## From the Committee on Mission and Outreach



*By Becky Rose,  
CMO member and  
Freeport Elder*



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

## International missions opportunity available

**W**e are looking for people across the Presbytery who are on fire for international missions! Come be a part of the groundbreaking team to discern God's will for our Presbytery as we take the first steps toward developing a mission partnership.

We are literally starting at the beginning. Is there enough interest in the Presbytery? Where do we want to go? How do we develop a partnership?



There's a lot of groundwork to do. During COVID 19, we will be meeting through Zoom videoconferencing.

You can find out more about the mission development process at [www.presbyterianmission.org](http://www.presbyterianmission.org). You can download the International Partnership Manual for free at [www.presbyterianmission.org/resource/called-as-partners/](http://www.presbyterianmission.org/resource/called-as-partners/), and you can watch a couple of short videos to learn more about developing a partnership. If you are interested, please notify Becky Rose at [rosebj1@gmail.com](mailto:rosebj1@gmail.com) or 850-635-2436.

## Commuter Volunteer Team members needed


**W**ith COVID-19 limiting how we are able to interact with one another, Presbyterian Disaster Assistance (PDA) and Florida Presbyterian Disaster Assistance Network (FLAPDAN) are implementing a new process to address basic needs immediately after a disaster. Given the challenges of the virus, it is no longer possible to send long-term deployable teams into disaster areas.

To overcome this problem, PDA and FLAPDAN, working with the presbyteries in Florida, are assembling Commuter Volunteer Teams. Small groups of volunteers would travel to disaster areas, one to two hours from their homes, bringing all the supplies, tools, personal protective

equipment, food, and water needed for the day, complete assigned tasks, then return home. Typical work would include muck/gut, debris removal and temporary repairs to stop additional home damage.

For the Commuter Volunteer Team to be successful, a list of


presbytery volunteers is essential. If you are interested in more information or would like to register as a volunteer, please contact Tim Crawford at (850) 651-8029, or [tcrawford@cox.net](mailto:tcrawford@cox.net) or the presbytery office at (850) 535-2334 or [office@presbyteryofflora.com](mailto:office@presbyteryofflora.com).



# BUILDING RESILIENCE

Presbyterian Disaster Assistance presents *Building Resilience*, a webinar designed in response to COVID-19 to increase participants' understanding of their own signs of stress and to teach in-the-moment tools to engage the relaxation response in body and mind. The Webinar is pre-recorded and ready to view at your convenience.

[bit.ly/PDAESCwebinar](http://bit.ly/PDAESCwebinar)



## WANTED: Presbytery of Florida Commuter Volunteer Team Members

Presbyterian Disaster Assistance (PDA) has a long and robust history of supporting volunteers engaged in long-term recovery. Most recently, PDA has collaborated with response volunteer teams, some coming from neighboring states, to address basic needs immediately after a disaster.



On March 11, 2020 the World Health Organization characterized the COVID-19 outbreak as a pandemic. Overnight, COVID-19 changed the world fundamentally and universally, including how disaster preparedness, response, and recovery are carried out. That is why PDA and Florida Presbyterian Disaster Assistance Network (FLAPDAN) are testing a model for disaster volunteers for COVID-19 that may also be adapted for future pandemics.

Stay at home orders, social distancing protocols, personal protective equipment (PPE), prohibitions to inter-state travel, and other mandates require disaster response and recovery organizations to adapt. Until a vaccine is discovered and administered, it is no longer possible to send deployed personnel into a disaster area because they will need overnight lodging and meals.

One adaptation organizations are implementing is using “commuter volunteers”. These volunteers would travel by car/van and bring all they need for a day’s work (food, water, PPE, tools) without the need for lodging.

PDA and FLAPDAN are working with Presbyteries to develop a Commuter Volunteer model in states with a history of high disaster incidences. Because Florida is such a state, and because PDA and FLAPDAN have a long history of partnership, the model is proposed to be developed and tested with the six Presbyteries in Florida, FLAPDAN and PDA.

After a disaster, a team of Presbytery commuter volunteers will provide their own transportation to the work site and return home the same day. Overnight lodging will not be provided. The typical work includes muck/gut, debris removal, and temporary repairs to stop additional home damage. If you are interested in more information or would like to register as a presbytery volunteer, please contact:

Tim Crawford, (850)651-8029, [tcrawford@cox.net](mailto:tcrawford@cox.net)



## From the Committee on Congregational Revitalization



*By Rev. Lisa Martin,  
Chair,  
and 1st, Lynn Haven  
Pastor*

## CCR reaching out to congregations to encourage, assist

The Committee on Congregational Revitalization met via Zoom on July 21. A significant amount of our conversation focused on the health and well-being of the congregations that make up Florida Presbytery, especially smaller congregations.

We all know how stressful this pandemic is: learning how to worship online, figuring out how to hold Zoom meetings, keeping loved ones connected when we can't be together physically. For many smaller congregations, sometimes it's difficult to maneuver through the technical terrain that is before us.



Many of our older members don't have computers, and if they do, they may not know how to operate Zoom or any other meeting platform. It can be a lonely experience.

CCR is concerned about those congregations that do not have steady pastoral leadership. Too often, without a guiding hand, these congregations can feel abandoned. Therefore, CCR is working with our General Presbyter, Roy Martin, to

reach out to congregations that may need some extra encouragement and assistance during this time. We are hopeful that we will find everyone well and continuing with ministry and mission in their place (from a safe distance, of course, and not meeting together on Sundays).

Would you like to join us in our effort to be a blessing to our brothers and sisters in the presbytery? Contact me (revlwmartin@gmail.com) to find out how you can make a difference for the kingdom of God!

## Phases in Re-Opening Church Buildings in Response to a Public Health Emergency

### PHASE ONE

*No Live, In-Person Gatherings  
(Stay-at-Home Orders,  
Most Businesses and Institutions Closed)*

#### CONGREGATION PROTOCOLS UNDER PHASE ONE

- Congregations holding virtual worship, livestreamed or recorded
- Bible studies, coffee hours, social gatherings, and meetings via telephone or online
- Pastoral care via telephone or online
- Continued ministries of service and compassion within safety protocols
- First assessments of economic impact on members of the congregations and wider community--preliminary adjustments of budgets, ministry goals

**PHASE ONE Public Health Indicator:**  
**PANDEMIC CASES, HOSPITALIZATIONS AND DEATHS ARE INCREASING**

*Approved and endorsed by the Presbytery of Florida's Coordinating and Planning Commission  
5-14-2020*

## CER shares ideas to stay connected and growing in your faith during the pandemic

- Use your church directory to help you pray for your congregation. Work your way through the directory this month and be sure to let your church family know you're praying for them.
- Read the book of Proverbs in a month. There are 31 chapters so read one-a-day.
- Open dinner with one of the questions and answers from the Westminster Shorter Catechism. Set a goal to memorize a good portion of the catechism. Do this as a family and encourage and challenge one another along the way.
- Set up some front porch visits with someone you haven't seen in a while.
- Parishioners, send your

pastor a card thanking them for their continued ministry to the congregation.

- Pastors, find ways to thank and acknowledge the ways your parishioners are continuing to carry out their ministries.
- Encourage your church to try a "coffee hour" after worship on Zoom.
- Call/FaceTime a church member you haven't seen and simply catch up.
- Do an online daily devotional at <https://d365.org/>
- Become acquainted with your neighbors and share your faith with them.



## From the Committee on Educational Resources

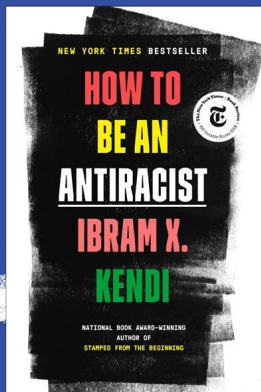


*By Rev. John Kupar, Chair and 1st, Pensacola Associate Pastor, and Rev. Brian Yount, Vice Chair and Trinity, Pensacola Associate Pastor*

- Experience the power of God's creation by growing something new.
- Explore mission opportunities for your church to participate in once group size restrictions can be lifted.
- Read through one of the gospels in one sitting.
- Check out some of the faith & spirituality movies on Netflix or another streaming platform.

## Presbyterian Peace Fellowship PPF VIRTUAL BOOK CLUB

Begins Aug. 15  
Meeting weekly for 10 weeks



REGISTER:  
[bit.ly/ppf\\_antiracist\\_bookclub](https://bit.ly/ppf_antiracist_bookclub)



The Presbyterian Foundation's Church Financial Leadership Academy is a Netflix-style service ready to help you understand church finances. <https://bit.ly/3f7TYI7>

## From the Committee on Dogwood Acres



By  
**Ben Powell,**  
*Dogwood Acres*  
**Director**  
*and 1st, Quincy, Elder*

## DWA focuses on facilities, explores options in “New Normal”

The past two years at Dogwood Acres have been an adventure. Working through the effects of Hurricane Michael and now the effects of a pandemic have been challenging for us. To go from construction on many of our buildings, replacing walkways and decks, updating spaces for guests, plus the removal of over 400 downed trees, was hard work. We are grateful to the staff at Dogwood Acres and the wonderful volunteers who poured countless hours into our facilities making improvements for camp.

We worked hard and, unfortunately, the Covid - 19 pandemic occurred. For the safety of everyone involved, retreats had to be canceled, and even more we regrettably, we had to cancel summer camp. As the virus continued to spread, the new idea of substituting a portion of Summer Camp with Family Camp also had to be canceled.

The circumstances of these events, however, have not led us to despair. Rather, they've caused us to begin to look at things anew. Last year, our theme revolved around rebuilding, renewing and focusing on what God is doing at work in your Dogwood Acres.

We can say we have faithfully continued in that spirit. One of the things we have been able

to focus on are the needs of our facilities. During this downtime, improvements continue to be made with resources we had before the pandemic.

Roads were paved, both physically and metaphorically, in our dreaming for DWA to create a better experience for our guests. We created new RV spots and tent pads to be utilized for those who want a new way to experience DWA “under the stars.”

Volunteers did extensive new landscaping with plants so generously donated. We examined ways to improve and make safe the kitchen and dining experience for our guests.

We are excited to think about new members being added to our board this winter. We love the team members that will rotate off, and are so appreciative of their work. In the past, we experienced new folks bringing new energy and

ideas that allow us to further the ministry and work of Dogwood Acres in new ways.

Although our spring and summer plans had to be cancelled, we are looking forward to the possibility that our guests may be able to return in late fall.

To make a long story shorter, we are dreaming with new hope as we explore our options that will allow us to continue the vital work and ministry during these difficult times.

We are hopeful in the midst of the challenge before us, faithful in spite of the odds, and confident we will come out stronger and better than before. Through Grace, we are determined to move forward. Most of all, we believe and trust in a triune God who is still sovereign over all of the earth, including your wonderful camp. Please keep us in your prayers as we examine what it looks like to live and do ministry in this “New Normal.”



### Putting Together the Puzzle: Exploring Medicare and Post-Retirement Medical Options

**Thursday, August 27, 2020**  
**2-3 p.m. ET**

Learn more & register: [www.pensions.org/your-path-to-wholeness/lifelong-learning-through-board-university/webinars](http://www.pensions.org/your-path-to-wholeness/lifelong-learning-through-board-university/webinars)



## Nearly a decade of failure to stop funding the Climate Crisis

As my eight-year-old grandson ran out the door to jump in the lake, he leaned over my shoulder and said he liked the picture on the right better. The problem is that is not the world we are leaving him. It's the one on the left – hot and polluted. This millisecond exchange reminded me that our denomination once again failed to address the fossil fuel divestment overture at General Assembly this summer. Our money is continuing to fund the fossil fuel industry which is creating the world on the left.

We started preparing the fossil fuel divestment overture in 2013 and took it to the 2014, 2016, 2018, and the 2020 General Assemblies. This year the GA determined that it would tend only to “essential business” because of the pandemic, and not deal with social issues. So, our house is in order, but the world is disassembling before our eyes.

Here is what has happened over the last ten years while Presbyterians have fiddled around the edges of climate action.

► **The concentration of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere not only continued to rise, but is now rising at a faster rate.** For the healthiest outcome, we need the atmospheric concentration to be 350 ppm or less, but it is now over 400ppm. It has increased by nearly 25 ppm while we have claimed to be making progress with the industry.

► **This has been the hottest decade** since record keeping began 140 years ago. Even the most hardcore denier is having to acknowledge that this is not the world he or she grew up in. We now have had to install air conditioning



Source: Climate.news.org. February 11, 2020. We broke down the last decade of climate change in 7 charts. News Editors

in our Northwoods lake house. During the week of July 4<sup>th</sup> we experienced 90-degree temperatures.

► **Climate change grew more costly.** Droughts, floods, freezes, severe storms, hurricanes, wildfires and winter storms are so expensive that we now record them in billion dollar increments and the trend is upward.

Most of us understand that the COVID-19 pandemic is real and serious, and that action is required to address it. We must adopt social distancing and face masks, while we wait for a vaccine. Our response has been spotty, but most recognize that where proper action is taken, the virus is in decline.

We are not responding to the climate crisis the same way: It is unfolding slowly, but hitting us harder and harder every year. We have been given a gift of time to address it, but we are squandering it. There also is no magic bullet such as a vaccine to solve it, and there is a critical point of no return where we will not be able to stop it. History will show that this failure will be the biggest mistake mankind has ever made.

So, with glacial slowness and half-hearted attention, our denomination tragically

continues to not address the climate crisis the way it could. In June, the Pope called on all Catholics to divest their fossil fuel holdings, stating that time is running out, even though the Vatican has no investments in fossil fuels.

In contrast, through four General Assemblies over six years, we have failed to stop funding an industry which is causing existential harm to all of us. For the first three General Assemblies our excuse was that we were at the table talking to the industry and making progress, even though carbon emissions continued to rise and the industry continued to manipulate public opinion against addressing the climate crisis. This time our excuse was the virus. What will our excuse be next time?

I offer some good news to those who want to pursue divestment in their congregation. The Presbyterian Peace Fellowship is offering a Zoom training about why and how to work with your congregation to divest from fossil fuels on August 19 at 8:00 PM ET. Go to [www.presbypeacefellowship.org](http://www.presbypeacefellowship.org) for registration information.

As always if you have any comments or questions, please contact me at [pammcvety@hotmail.com](mailto:pammcvety@hotmail.com).

## Caring for Creation Notes



By  
**Pam McVety,**  
*Presbytery  
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*“... through four General Assemblies over six years, we have failed to stop funding an industry which is causing existential harm to all of us.”*

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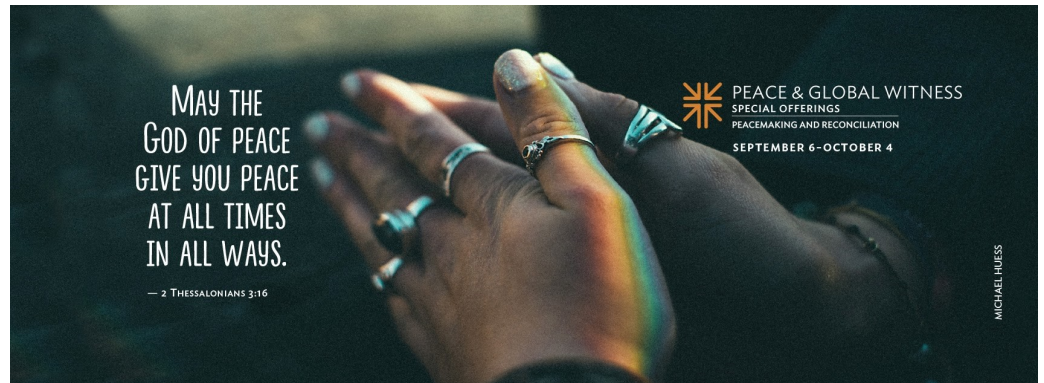
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**The Panhandle Presbyterian**



## Tell Us How Your Ministry Is An Everyday Superhero!

Share your ministry of hope and inspiration with other churches and partner denominations! The first 35 entries win a \$35 gift card for their organization, and a chance for your story to be featured in our fall/winter issue of *The Steward*.



TELL US HOW YOUR ORGANIZATION HAS PERSEVERED AND FOUND WAYS TO CREATIVELY SERVE YOUR MINISTRY DURING THESE UNPRECEDENTED TIMES. TO SHARE YOUR STORY [CLICK HERE](#)

**Entries Due By: September 15th**

