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The Panhandle Presbyterian

A monthly publication of the Presbytery of Florida



Volume 3, Issue 4

April 2020

From General Presbyter Roy Martin

The pandemic is now upon us. Many of you have wisely chosen to not have worship or other gatherings on your church's property and have replaced such gatherings with online approaches. I am afraid this will be the norm for the foreseeable future – including Holy Week and Easter.

There have been reported case of the coronavirus within the bounds of our presbytery, and I think its is reasonable to expect those numbers to rise.

So how can we be the Church now? Well, for the Church, this is nothing new. Christians have been actively engaged in ministry and mission through centuries of

pandemics and other deadly periods throughout its history. The Church has always been able to adapt through difficult times.

Even now, you can be checking up on the homebound through phone calls, working with organizations remotely to make facemasks, and supporting financially the collection of other needed supplies. I know that some of our congregations are already doing these things and more and, if you are, I hope you will share what you're doing on the Presbytery Facebook page.

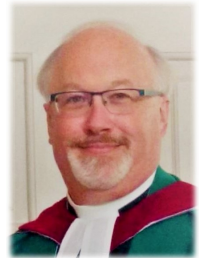
I also hope you will not forget to support your church financially. Though the offering plate is a primary way of making your contributions, there are other ways, and I

encourage you to utilize whatever way works best for you and your church.

Most of all, let us not cease in praying for those who have contracted this terrible virus, for the medical community who now work under the threat of contracting the virus, for the elderly who are most vulnerable to the virus, and for the rest of the world who suffers, as well ,from the virus.

I am praying for you that God will keep you safe.

Roy



The Rev. Dr. Roy Martin

Dear Friends throughout our Presbytery,

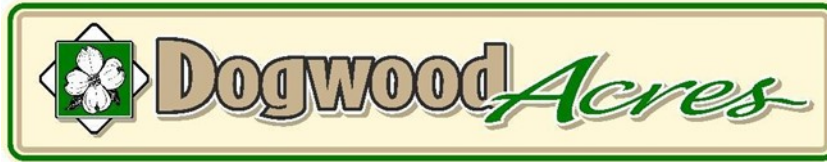
Here at Westminster Oaks, we are following the protocols mandated by the leadership of Westminster Communities of Florida as well as by our Governor.

We are not allowing visitors to our campus at this time. We are having to suspend all community gatherings. We have closed communal dining and replaced it with delivery programs. We are reaching out to our residents by video, email and phone. If you have a member who resides here, and there is an issue with communication, you are welcome to engage my assistance in getting a message to someone.

Thank you for taking all the precautions we know to take and finding ways to keep our spirits alive for the duration.

Sincerely,

Taylor Phillips, M.Div. - Chaplain, Westminster Oaks
850-878-9993, ext. 286



Dear Dogwood Acres Campers, Families and Friends,

First, we hope and pray that you and your loved ones are doing well and staying safe in this uncertain and concerning time of COVID-19.

Please know Dogwood Acres Retreat Center and Summer Camp is taking every precaution to keep our guests and campers safe. We have updated our health-related plans and procedures to help ensure a safe and healthy environment at the camp.

Though Summer Camp is still a few months away, we understand families and parents have questions about whether or not to register their children and what will happen as the virus situation develops.

At this time, we are planning to have our full Summer Camp schedule beginning in late June and running through the month of July. We encourage parents to register their campers for summer camp as normal. If it is determined it is safe to hold the summer programs you can rest assured every precaution will be taken to ensure the health of the campers and staff, including things like extra staff training, new hand wash and sanitizer stations, extra care in the kitchen and dining hall and a team dedicated to keeping the facilities clean and sanitized. The health of the kids and staff will be the number one priority. In the event the situation leads us to cancel summer camp, we will inform everyone as soon as possible. We are monitoring the information daily and vow to communicate with you often. Please be aware that many of us in the outdoor ministry community view summer camp this summer as possibly being one of the safest alternatives to many of the options open this summer to our children and youth. Only time will really tell, but we are cautiously optimistic.

If in the event you have or will register a camper and we are forced to cancel the summer camp program, you will have options. If you have made a registration deposit or paid full registration, we gladly offer these three possibilities. A request should be directed to the Director, Ben Powell.

- 1.) Feel free to request a full refund of your payment.
- 2.) Consider donating your payment to help Dogwood Acres recover and prepare for the month ahead.
- 3.) Reserve the money towards another Dogwood program in the future.

If you have questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to reach out to either our Program Director, Emma Hodges, at programdirector@dogwoodacres.org / (850)321-0844, or our Director, Ben Powell, at ben@dogwoodacres.org / (850) 528-3575.

As plans and policies change, we will continue to keep you informed. Be sure to follow our Facebook page and website for updates.

Stay safe, and Blessings to each of you!

Dogwood Acres Staff and Ministry Team

**THE OUTDOOR MINISTRY OF THE PRESBYTERY OF FLORIDA
3320 HARMONY ROAD, CHIPLEY, FLORIDA 32428 – 850/528-3575**

Committee on Ministry Myth-Busting

This is the first article in a series hoping to share information on the work of the Committee on Ministry and to dispel myths that are typically heard.

The Committee on Ministry (COM) is one of the very few committees mandated by our denomination's Book of Order for local presbyteries. Well, the name may not be mandated, but the work covered by the committee is.

Myth Buster 1. There is a statement that is often read as an oxymoron. "I'm from the government, and I'm here to help." Some simply swap a couple words and hold to the same oxymoron: "We are from the Presbytery, and we are here to help."

Actually, this is very true. All told, there are 52 areas of responsibility with which the COM for the Presbytery of Florida is charged, ranging from assisting congregations search for installed or temporary pastoral leadership, caring for pastors and educators,

maintaining good relationships between congregations and the Presbytery, and providing guidance for those called to serve in temporary pastoral relationships.

Myth Buster 2. "The Committee on Ministry is just the Presbytery's gestapo." In other words, there is the myth that the committee simply goes around looking for trouble with pastors or congregations and to come down heavy on those who don't toe the line.

No. COM does not go about looking for ways to stick its nose into a congregation's ministry and work. However, when problems are brought to the committee's attention, the situation must be looked into and appropriate responses determined – sometimes, but very rarely, with difficult mandates. No one likes that kind of interaction, including

members of COM. Most often, matters can work out amicably.

Myth Buster 3. "The Committee on Ministry is the Presbytery's tax collector."

No. COM does not engage in any kind of fundraising or collecting of funds, although we are aware of what congregations pledge and give to the ministries of the Presbytery. When a congregation does not pledge, or when a congregation falls short of fulfilling a pledge, or a congregation gives nothing, this may be an indicator that there are challenges facing a congregation. In cases like this, an inquiry may be made pastorally to learn if there is a concern and what kind of assistance may be helpful if there is.

Yes, we are from the Presbytery, and we *are* here to *help*!

From the Committee on Ministry



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

**You shall
be called
repairers
of the
breach**

— ISAIAH 58



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



From the Committee on Congregational Revitalization



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

CatWalk congregational assessments on hiatus, for now

The Committee on Congregational Revitalization is putting all Holy Cow! CatWalk assessments on hold during the pandemic. It's difficult to have to do this, because we were just getting started working with several congregations. However, God is faithful, and we will get back to it when the way is clear.

In the meantime, pray

with us that the Spirit of God will be evidenced in the creative ways our congregations reach out to members, guests, and those who have particular needs in our neighborhoods during this time.

Every day is a new opportunity for revitalization, even in difficult and trying times, so let's pray and

work (with social/physical distancing in mind, of course) for the gift of new life that God brings about in the resurrection of Jesus.

Happy Easter from CCR!



2021 Churchwide Gathering of Presbyterian Women!
 August 5-8, 2021, St. Louis, Missouri

www.presbyterianwomen.org/gathering

Climate change and the Easter Bunny

At this time of year, our children think of bunnies. In church, we adults think of the crucifixion and the resurrection. But when do we think about eco-justice and its relationship to Eastertide?

The darkest day of the year for Christians is Good Friday, the day of Christ's crucifixion, when God sacrificed his only son for us in hopes that we humans would embrace Jesus's teachings on love, wisdom, mercy, righteousness and compassion. By our inactions in helping the poor and sick, and by ignoring the pain that his creation is in with the warming of our planet, we have turned our back on the greatest sacrifice ever made – a sacrifice so horrific that none of us could bear to make it.

The brightest day on the Christian calendar is Easter, the day of Jesus's resurrection. It is so miraculous, so wondrous and so powerful that it fills us with hope: it presents a fresh opportunity for everyone to follow Jesus's teachings. With the coming of Easter, we can take a deep breath, look honestly at what is happening around us, and faithfully to the reality of what is happening to God's creation.

For children, Easter



presents the Easter Bunny – a cheering reminder of the sweetness of young life – but today, the cheer is marred by sorrow.

Way back in 2012, it was reported that rising temperatures are adversely affecting five species of rabbits in the United States. One of those species lives near us in Florida – the Lower Keys Marsh rabbit, which lives on islands that are being swallowed up by sea level rise. Research shows that these rabbits have lost a whopping 64 percent of their habitat in the last five decades due primarily to sea level rise.

The same report said that the snowshoe hare's survival is threatened differently by climate change. The hare's color changes from white to brown in synchrony with the customary seasonal melting of the winter snow. Now the snow season is shortened, but the hare's fur remains white for the customary duration of the winter season, making it easy prey for predators. Who would have thought that

with just one degree Celsius of warming, rabbits would be facing life-threatening problems? This is a story that none of us should have to share with our children.

As Christians, we believe that God never turns away from us. He keeps giving us opportunities to make amends and follow his teachings. He will not forsake us but he also keeps giving us signals that he wants us to follow his message – signals so loud and so clear that there is no mistaking that they are clearly a mandate to follow him.

He wants us to enjoy life's abundance, but he is signaling us that his creation is hurting – his birds are disappearing, his lands are flooding, his people are suffering, his works are out of kilter and his rabbits are at risk.

At this time of year, our children think of bunnies. In church, we adults think of the crucifixion and the resurrection. It is also a good time to think about eco-justice and its relationship to Eastertide as we stand at the foot of the crucifixion cross on Easter and see the light of the risen Lord.

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

Caring for Creation Notes



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

“Way back in 2012, it was reported that rising temperatures are adversely affecting five species of rabbits in the United States. One of those species lives near us in Florida...”

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Rev. Chris Erde

You're invited to join in a virtual Easter egg hunt April 11

As plans for traditional Easter egg hunts are cancelled, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) congregations, camps and other ministries and interested churches are invited to participate in an online event being hosted on social media Saturday, April 11. The Presbytery of Nevada, who planned the event, is asking congregations nationwide to consider the Easter story in Scripture and then provide a picture of an egg and tell what Easter means to them (or share favorite Easter-related scriptures, poems, hymns, prayers, etc.). These should be posted on Facebook and/or Instagram by 2 p.m.

CDT/3 p.m. EDT on April 11, using the hashtag #onebasket2020 to connect them to the egg hunt, and also including a tag for your church or other PC (USA) entity.

Families or groups can then "hunt" the eggs, making a list of churches and entities who've "hidden" eggs, or even mapping the places where the eggs have originated. Meanwhile, participants have a fun yet meaningful opportunity to discuss and discover the significance of Easter together.

To protect children from potential hashtag trolling, "eggs" may be emailed to office@presbytery

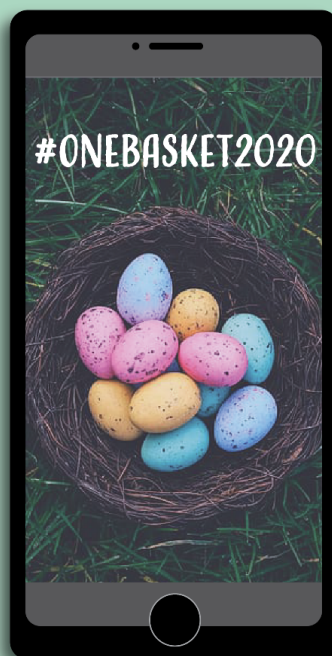
offlorida.com by Thursday, April 9, to be posted on the Presbytery's Facebook page. Congregations also are encouraged to designate a contact to receive submissions in advance to be shared through the church's social media, rather than by individual members. Additionally, families are welcome to "hunt" for eggs via hashtag search without participating in the "hiding" activity. Churches or groups also can challenge each other to find the most eggs. Or create scavenger hunts for certain egg features.

Learn more at <https://nevadapresbytery.org/2020/04/01/virtual-easter-egg-hunt/>.

SATURDAY, APRIL 11

Join your church or camp for a

**VIRTUAL
EASTER EGG HUNT**



Re-read the Easter story in your Bible. Before noon on April 11, post a picture that includes an Easter egg and tells us what Easter means to you.

Use the hashtag #onebasket2020 and tag your church or camp! Families, see how many eggs and stories you can find!

As always, please monitor your child's use of media.

BROUGHT TO YOU BY CHURCHES OF THE PC(USA)

