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The Panhandle Presbyterian

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February 2019

From General Presbyter Roy Martin

What a wonderful presbytery meeting last Saturday at First Presbyterian Church, Fort Walton Beach! Sharon Schuler and her congregation outdid themselves in hospitality.

It was a joy to welcome two Ministers of the Word and Sacrament into our presbytery: the Rev. Steve Rhodes, who was received as a member-at-large and is honorably retired, and the Rev. Luis Ocasio who will be installed as the next pastor of First Presbyterian Church, Havanah, Florida. We also recognized and gave thanks for the ministry of the Rev. Bill Bess who is now honorably retired. We are blessed that he will remain in our presbytery and continue to be active in its work!

Additionally, we voted to allow two of our

inquirers to become candidates for ministry: Erin Rosica and Riley Pickett.

We wish them both well as they continue their study for ministry.

The highlight of our gathering was to hear from our denomination's Co-Moderator, the Rev. Cindy Kohlmann. She preached a most inspiring sermon for morning worship and led an insightful discussion of our denomination's push to help congregations move forward as neighbor churches. It is an honor for any presbytery to receive a visit from a General Assembly moderator and I am personally grateful Cindy



**The Rev. Dr.
Roy Martin**

was able to find time in her busy schedule to spend three days with us. In addition to the presbytery meeting, she also led discussions at Fellowship Presbyterian Church in Tallahassee and Trinity Presbyterian Church in Pensacola and preached at First Presbyterian Church, Lynn Haven, on Sunday. Thank you, Cindy!

We continue to work on our new presbytery structure and we invite you to be part of it as a committee member. Please let us know of your interest.

We have organized DiscipleFest 2019, which is an opportunity for you to come and participate in the workshops of your choice. We will worship together and enjoy lunch. It all takes place on March

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**First Presbyterian Church of Havana, FL,
invites you to the service of installation for
The Rev. Luis José Ocasio as Pastor
Saturday, February 2, 2019, at 2 p.m. EST.
*All attending clergy are invited to robe.***

Continued from page 1

23rd at Dogwood Acres. See what courses are being offered and the registration form on page 3 in this newsletter.

Finally, we continue to monitor the progress of those congregations affected by Hurricane Michael. Suffice it to say here that, while some congregations has made their repairs and are

moving forward in mission and ministry, the larger number of congregations are and will be for some time engaged in insurance claims and rebuilding efforts. That being said, most are moving beyond their own needs to address the needs in their larger community. If you are interested in helping, please feel free to contact any of the affected

churches directly. They are as follows:

- Blountstown
- First, Lynn Haven
- First Marianna
- Grace, Panama City
- Parkway, Panama City
- St. Andrews, Panama City
- First, Port St. Joe
- First, Wewahitchka

Blessings,
Roy

From the Committee on Congregational Revitalization



By The Rev. Lisa Martin, Vice Chair

CCR invites you to become part of an exciting adventure

Is your congregation as healthy as it can be? Are you wanting to grow, but don't know how? What's the community like around the church? Does what's happening in the community influence the congregation's health and potential for future ministry? The Committee on Congregational Revitalization (CCR) is excited to explore how it can best help



congregations be the centers for mission that God needs in this part of the Kingdom!

CCR is researching "best practice" tools that will 1) help a congregation know itself better; and 2) will aid in understanding community

demographics. Your prayers are coveted as CCR takes seriously its call to be a blessing to the congregations that make up the Presbytery of Florida!

For more information, or to become a part of this exciting adventure in the presbytery's life, contact the Rev. Dr. Jim Huffaker, chair; or the Rev. Lisa Martin, vice-chair.

The Mustard Seed Gathering

Celebrating and resourcing the work of the small church

March 8-9, 2019, at Calvin Center, Hampton, GA – In Partnership with The Outreach Foundation

Join together with other small church pastors and ruling elders to focus on the challenges and blessings of the small church.

Workshop Topics:

- Asset Mapping • Change Dynamics
- Collaborative Ministry
- Small is not a Liability

Pre-Gathering Option Friday, March 8

10 am -4 pm: \$50 including lunch
Stewardship in the Small Church
OR Preaching for Ruling Elders



Friday, March 8, with dinner (5:30 pm ET) thru Saturday afternoon, March 9 (3:30 pm ET)

Housing (double occupancy) in the Conference Lodge and meals included \$175.00 per person

Twenty-five \$100 scholarships available to pastors of congregations with 100 or fewer members.

Contact Camille@theoutreachfoundation.org for the promo code that applies that scholarship at registration.

— DiscipleFest 2019 —

Saturday, March 23, 2019 • 9 a.m. – 3 p.m. CDT
Dogwood Acres Summer Camp and Retreat Center, Vernon, FL

A COMING-TOGETHER OF ALL PRESBYTERY of FLORIDA CONGREGATIONS
offering worship, music, fellowship, and workshops as we celebrate our oneness in Christ.

Registration: 9 a.m. CDT - Worship: 9:30 a.m. with Rev. Carol Wood preaching - Lunch: Noon CDT

Morning Workshops - 10 a.m. CDT

1. Book of Confessions: This workshop will explore the range of confessions that constitute the foundation of our polity, and involve participants in drawing on the richness of the confessions' theological insights.

Presenter: Rev. Dr. Joan Wooten

2. Clerks of Session: Basic Roles and Responsibilities (Offered again in afternoon): Learn the basic role and responsibilities of the clerk of session. Find resources to help you in this ministry. For new and returning clerks.

Presenter: Jeannie Dixon

3. Communities of Transformation: How to Avoid Toxic Charity and Do Local Mission

Collaboratively: Ever wonder if your efforts to help those in need are truly helping? Wish you could do more mission in partnership? Then you need to hear about Communities of Transformation, a collaborative poverty alleviation effort. **Presenter:** Rev. Emily Proctor

4. Doing Justice: What does the Bible mean by "justice"? Can the church be faithful without doing justice? What pressing justice issues face us today? How might congregations "do justice" in their unique settings?

Presenter: Rev. Brant Copeland

5. How to Understand Scripture: This workshop will offer time-tested tools for interpreting scripture that can open the door to

deeper and clearer understanding of what scripture has to say to us.

Presenter: Rev. Dr. Roy Martin

6. Personality Types and Conflict Resolution Styles: Ever butted heads with someone at a committee or Session meeting? This workshop will help you understand your personality type and conflict resolution styles.

Presenter: Rev. Mark Broadhead

7. Stewardship Basics: Faithful Response to God's Amazing Generosity: This workshop will focus on tried-and-true financial stewardship practices culled from years of ministry with many congregations.

Presenter: Rev. Lisa Martin

Afternoon Workshops - 1 p.m. CDT

8. Clerks of Session: Basic Roles and Responsibilities (Repeat of morning workshop): Learn the basic role and responsibilities of the clerk of session. Find resources to you in this ministry. For new and returning clerks.

Presenter: Jeannie Dixon

9. Climate Change, Presbyterians and Justice: Change happens. How do we faithfully discern where God is leading us next, and how do we help make and navigate change in our congregations and communities? **Presenter:** Pam McVety

10. Faith and Politics: This workshop will establish the theological relationship between faith and politics in our Reformed tradition, and will involve participants in identifying ways in which they can

initiate peacemaking conversations in their own communities of faith.

Presenter: Rev. Dr. Joan Wooten

11. Music in Worship: Challenges in Smaller Congregations (some larger ones, too!): We'll discuss options to put music solidly back into your congregation's church service or bring variety to your current music ministry.

Presenter: Linda Lovins

12. Prayer and Spiritual Formation: This workshop will help you open your ears, heart and mind to listen for God's still, small voice, and deepen your spiritual journey.

Presenter: Rev. Mark Broadhead

13. Presbyterian Polity: Wonder why we Presbyterians do things the way we do them?

Discover how our practice is informed by our theology, history, and experience.

Presenter: Rev. Dr. Roy Martin

14. Revitalization Basics: Getting Your Congregation's Ox Out of the Ditch: Explore basics of congregational revitalization that allow us to breath in the possibilities and power of the Holy Spirit so that we engage with others in a more winsome way.

Presenter: Rev. Lisa Martin

15. Worship and Sacraments: Where did the sacraments come from? How do they fit into the Reformed/Presbyterian Tradition? How do they shape Christians? We'll probe these and others issues as we learn together.

Presenter: Rev. Brant Copeland

DiscipleFest Registration – Please print legibly • Registration Deadline: Friday, March 8

Name _____

First

Last

On-site child care provided FREE. Please list name(s)/age(s):

_____ Age _____

_____ Age _____

Address: _____

Email: _____

Home phone: _____

Cell: _____

SPECIAL NEEDS (physical, dietary, etc.). **On-site transportation will be available if needed.** _____

Workshop Registration:

Morning: 1st Choice # _____ Alternate # _____

Afternoon: 1st Choice # _____ Alternate # _____

Fee is \$15 per person (Includes lunch).

Lodging not included. Please contact Dogwood Acres Camp & Conference Center at ben@dogwoodacres.org.

Send completed registration form with your check made payable to *Presbytery of Florida* to:

Presbytery of Florida DiscipleFest, P. O. Box 7, Chipley, FL 32428

GA Co-Moderator visits, Presbytery Moderator installed at Jan. 26 meeting



Worship and other celebrations, fellowship, special guests and hospitality were all part of the Presbytery's Jan. 26 meeting at First Presbyterian Church of Fort Walton Beach. A major highlight of the gathering was a visit from the Rev. Cindy Kohlmann, 223rd General Assembly Co-Moderator, shown above at left, preaching a message entitled "Reporting Good News" during morning worship.

Rev. Kohlmann also participated in the installation of Rev. Sharon Schuler, the host church's pastor, as Presbytery of Florida 2019-2020 Moderator. Shown conducting the installation at above right, from left, are outgoing Presbytery Moderator Rev. Chris Erde and Rev. Kohlmann with Rev. Schuler.

Other special guests included The Rev. Joyce Liebermann, Synod of South Atlantic Executive Presbyter/Stated Clerk; Jim Kirk, Presbyterian Disaster Assistance Associate for Disaster Response (U. S.); and Kathy Broyard, Florida Presbyterian Disaster Assistance Network (FLAPDAN) Executive Director.

**LAUREL HILL
ARTS & HERITAGE
Festival**

ARTS, CRAFTS, MUSIC!

SAT., APRIL 27, 11am-3pm • FREE!

LAUREL HILL PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH YARD • 8115 FOURTH STREET
LIVE LOCAL MUSIC • COTTAGE FOODS
HISTORIC AND CULTURAL DISPLAYS

PRESENTED BY
THE LAUREL HILL AND CRESTVIEW
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCHES AND
THE FRIENDS OF THE ARTS

Presbytery welcomes two ministers, honors retirement

At the Presbytery's Jan. 26 meeting, attendees met and welcomed two ministers into the Presbytery and conferred the title of Honorably Retired upon Rev. Bill Bess, retiring as First Presbyterian Church of Havana's pastor as of Jan. 31.

The Committee on Ministry introduced **Rev. Luis Ocasio**, who will be installed as 1st, Havana's new pastor Saturday, Feb. 2, at 2 p.m. EST.



Rev. Luis Ocasio

His most recent academic degree is his Master of Divinity from Puerto Rico Evangelical Seminary, but he also holds a Doctorate in Psychology from Carlos Albizu University. Since his ordination in 2014, he has led a congregation that is composed primarily of employees and residents in the tourist area of Old San Juan.

Under his leadership,

that congregation has grown and received a "1001 Worship Communities" grant for outreach to homeless persons. His last congregation was also involved in an ecumenical worship service, Oasis at Noon.

Rev. Ocasio has worked with Presbyterian Disaster Assistance to bring aid to pastors and their families throughout Puerto Rico. His background in clinical psychology has included, among other things, working with victims of sexual abuse.

He's currently serving through 2020 on the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly, which will involve three or four trips to Louisville each year.

His sons Luis (age 8) and Rodrigo (age 6) are excited about having a reason to wear their new coats in our cooler weather. They are both honor students who take their math and science classes in English. Rev. Ocasio is married to Aracelis "Ary" Fernandez Nieves, who is quite musical. Ary has used her bilingual skills in a human-resources position at an organization that brought investment to Puerto

Rico, but plans to pause her career for a time to help the boys adjust to their new home. Rev. Ocasio's father-in-law is also a Presbyterian pastor who helped him discern his calling.

Rev. Steve Rhodes isn't "new," but is returning to our Presbytery.



Rev. Steve Rhodes

He was born on the Naval Air Station in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, in 1951 where his father was stationed. His family settled in Jacksonville, FL, after his father's retirement. He finished secondary school there and eventually attended Florida State University graduating with a Masters in Counseling and Social Work in 1974.

He fell in love with Judy Dunn and married in 1972. They had four children, – two boys and two girls – and now have eight grandchildren.

Along the way, he accepted God's call to

From the Committee on Ministry

full-time ordained ministry. That call began in Daytona Beach, FL, where he started a Young Life Ministry in 1977. Two years later, realizing his need for a biblical and theological foundation, he was accepted to Columbia Theological Seminary in 1979. Since graduation in 1982, he has served all sizes of congregations in Georgia, South Carolina, Utah and Florida as Solo Pastor, Head of Staff or Associate, doing New Church Development and, most recently, serving as an Interim in Columbia, SC.

He has served at every level of the church structure and has spent 30 summers doing domestic and overseas short-term mission work. Additionally, he's spent 30+ years coaching youth sports, mostly baseball and soccer.

In February 2018, he decided to "officially retire." After a time of needed rest, reflection and reading and helping with his son's business, he looks forward to whatever new ministry God is calling him to.

From the
Committee on
Dogwood Acres



By
**Dr. Linda T.
Lovins, Chair**

*“Dogwood Acres
is truly a gem in
our Presbytery.”*

“Grace everywhere!” Dogwood Acres reports

On Friday and Saturday, Jan. 25th and 26th, 40 youth and adults gathered at Dogwood Acres for the Youth and Kids’ Work Day. What a blessing!! These young people and adults represented:

- Christ, Tallahassee
- First, DeFuniak Springs
- First, Quincy
- Grace, Panama City
- Gulf Breeze
- Trinity, Pensacola

Here’s a list of their amazing accomplishments:

- Repaired the gaga ball pit
- Repaired the deck behind Koinonia
- Repaired railings along the walkway
- Cleared parts of the Prayer, Orange, and Yellow trails
- Deep-cleaned the dining hall and kitchen
- Cleaned out the freezers
- Cleared limbs from the cabin area
- Moved all the firewood to its new location

A participating First, Quincy, parent described her experience in these joyful words:

What an enjoyable and productive time my son and I had at the DWA Youth Clean-up Day in January. Staying in the cabin was a fun experience, and listening

to my son reminisce about DWA summer camp memories was extra-special. It was refreshing to experience some of what my children enjoy during their summer camp stays at DWA. We worked, ate, and lodged with strangers who are part of our denominational family, just as the children do at camp.

My idea of “rustic Dogwood Acres” has changed. It was comfortable, clean, and complete with friendly staff. I was amazed at the amount of hard work and clean-up that has occurred on the property so soon after the damage from Hurricane Michael! Dogwood Acres is truly a gem in our Presbytery.

From Ben Powell, DWA Director:
Many thanks to Emma Hodges, member of the Committee on Dogwood Acres and a 2018 Summer Camp Assistant Director. She was God’s gift to the effort. Jason Williams, Program Director, was a champion for all his organizational work and tremendous energy and enthusiasm! Jason organized the event.

Amid all the reports about how productive and

wonderful the day was, there was only one negative comment: “Why couldn’t we stay Saturday night, too?!!” The adults who stayed in the cabins for the first time had a great experience and are looking forward to the next time. Grace everywhere!!

Dogwood Acres will re-open for business at the end of February. As post-hurricane recovery efforts continue, Dogwood’s beautiful spaces will ring out with the voices of participants in the nine retreats already scheduled between now and summer camp. There are a few prime weekends and weekdays available. Call Ben at 850-528-3575 to inquire about booking an event at the Presbytery’s “gem.”

Thank you to everyone who participated in the Youth and Kids ‘Work Day, as well as all who have stepped forward with time, talents, and donations to help DWA recover since October 2018. We continue to look forward to hosting volunteer groups that will stay at Dogwood Acres to work on-site or in nearby communities. Grace is everywhere, indeed!!

A new year and new opportunities

Happy belated New Year to one and all. Each new year gives us opportunities, blessings and challenges. And in some ways, a new year is like a new beginning, an opportunity for us to decide to do things differently with our lives. This is such a year – and we need that opportunity right now.

Our area is still recovering from Hurricane Michael and, for some, the recovery will take decades. This is our third hurricane in a row, and we are facing more, and more violent, storms in the years to come.

Blue tarps still cover many of our rooftops. Our friends and neighbors are still rebuilding, arguing with insurance companies, filling out papers for FEMA, sleeping in tents, and depending on the charity of friends and neighbors for places to sleep. Many jobs have been taken from us, too.

One of the most devastating and long-lasting impacts of Hurricane Michael is the destruction of timber farms. From the Gulf Coast up through South Georgia, hundreds of thousands of acres of

trees are lying on the ground. More than half a million acres of trees in Bay, Calhoun, Liberty, Gadsden, Jackson and Gulf counties are gone.

With this loss goes jobs, income and diminishing chances of recovery any time soon. This is a monumental tragedy that is painful and life-changing for far too many of our brothers and sisters.

None of us wants to repeat this tragedy, but as long as the waters of the Gulf of Mexico continue to warm, they are guaranteed to fuel ever more powerful hurricanes. This is our new reality. Our world has changed and will not change back until we alter our own choices.

When we face a disaster, our church is first in line to help us recover. But it is last in line, or not in line at all, in embracing the new global reality. It continues to invest in fossil fuels.

For decades, it has committed its investment managers to meetings with fossil fuel companies – and these companies keep spending hundreds of millions of dollars to convince us that they are

not responsible for our climate crisis, that fossil fuels have nothing to do with the carbon emissions that are heating up our world. Most of us know that this is a big, dangerous lie, but still we have not rid ourselves of our fossil fuel investments.

Our church's response to climate change is like living in a two-story house with the heat running on the lower floor and the air conditioning running on the top floor. This is not smart.

We are funding the monster called climate change and, at the same time, we are paying for the damage it is causing. It is time to get on the same side of the ledger by divesting ourselves of our fossil fuel holdings. As we start this a new year, we can rid ourselves of our investments in fossil fuels. We can take a life-saving, planet-saving path. We don't even have to wait to make this decision at the 2020 General Assembly. Our money people can make this choice today.

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

Caring for Creation Notes



By
Pam McVety,
*Presbytery
Stewardship
of Creation
Enabler*

“Our church’s response to climate change is like living in a two-story house with the heat running on the lower floor and the air conditioning running on the top floor.”

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The Panhandle Presbyterian

Save the date:

In February

- Saturday, Feb. 2* 2 p.m. EST Installation of Rev. Luis Ocasio as Pastor, 1st, Havana
- Sunday, Feb. 3* Souper Bowl of Caring
- Thursday, Feb. 7* 8 – 10:30 EST Comedy Open Mic at Calvin’s Coffee House, UKirk Tallahassee
- Saturday, Feb. 9 – Sunday, Feb. 24* Various dates/times SERRV (Sales Exchange for Refuge Rehabilitation and Vocation) Market open in 1st, Ft. Walton Beach Christian Education Center
- Sunday, Feb. 10* 7 p.m. CST Church & the Arts Concert Series: Ukelele Orchestra of St. Andrews, at Gulf Beach, Panama City Beach
- Tuesday, Feb. 12* 10 a.m. CST Committee on Congregational Revitalization meeting at Presbytery office
- Thursday, Feb. 14* Deadline for entering church statistics online
- Thursday, Feb. 14* 8 – 10:30 EST Music Open Mic (Valentine’s Edition) at Calvin’s Coffee House, UKirk Tallahassee
- Friday, Feb. 15* 9:30 a.m. CST Committee on Nominations/ Committee on Representation meeting at Presbytery office
- Sunday, Feb. 17* 7 p.m. CST Church & the Arts Concert Series: Classic Folk & Pop musician Ken Sizemore at Gulf Beach, Panama City Beach
- Wednesday, Feb. 20* Submissions deadline for the March *Panhandle Presbyterian* newsletter
- Thursday, Feb. 21* 8 EST Poetry Open Mic at Calvin’s Coffee House, UKirk Tallahassee
- Sunday, Feb. 24* 10 a.m. CST Westward Road gospel trio leading worship, followed by “Winter Friends” reception, at 1st, Ft. Walton Beach
- Tuesday, Feb. 26* 1 p.m. CST Committee on Presbytery Administration meeting at Presbytery office

Looking ahead

- Wednesday, March 6* Ash Wednesday
- Friday, March 8* DiscipleFest 2019 registration deadline
- Friday, March 8 – Saturday, March 9* Mustard Seed Gathering small church event at Calvin Center, Hampton, GA.
- Tuesday, March 12* 9:30 a.m. CDT Committee on Ministry meeting at Presbytery office
- Friday – Sunday, March 15 – 17* Dogwood Youth Conference for middle and high school students
- Friday – Sunday, March 15 – 17* Synod of South Atlantic Association of Smaller Congregations’ 32nd Annual Conference, Epworth by the Sea, St. Simons Island, GA
- Tuesday, March 19* 12 – 2 p.m. CDT Presbyterian Foundation “Project Regeneration” workshop at Grace, Panama City. Includes lunch.
- Thursday, March 21* 9 a.m. CDT Coordinating & Planning Commission meeting at Presbytery office
- Saturday, March 23* 9 a.m. – 3 p.m. CDT DiscipleFest 2019 at Dogwood Acres

**DYC
2019**
@ DOGWOOD ACRES

**Dogwood
Youth
Conference**
March 15th-17th

For youth grades 6th - 12th

**COST:
\$125.00
PER PERSON**

www.dogwoodacres.org