

Presbytery Staff  
and Officers  
are here for you:

**Rev. Dr. Roy A. Martin**  
General Presbyter  
Rmartin  
@presbyteryofflorida.com

**Jeannie Dixon**  
Stated Clerk  
Statedclerk  
@presbyteryofflorida.com

**Rev. Michael Askew**  
Moderator  
askew.michaelsr  
@yahoo.com

**Denise Vandiver**  
Treasurer/Bookkeeper  
Dvandiver  
@presbyteryofflorida.com

**Ben Powell**  
Dogwood Acres Director  
ben@dogwoodacres.org

**Melissa Willis**  
Administrator  
Mwillis  
@presbyteryofflorida.com

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# The Panhandle Presbyterian

*A monthly publication of the Presbytery of Florida*



Volume 4, Issue 8

August 2021

## From General Presbyter Roy Martin

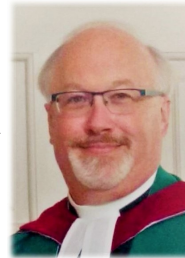
I hope the word has gotten out to everyone that the Coordinating and Planning Commission voted to cancel the August Presbytery meeting scheduled to meet at First Presbyterian Church, Lynn Haven. The spike in COVID-19 cases among the unvaccinated due to the Delta variant is rising too rapidly to risk a large meeting in a confined space.

Because the rapid rise in cases of this virus is affecting the unvaccinated primarily, I encourage any of you who have not been vaccinated to do so immediately. And, for

both those who have not been vaccinated as well as those who have, please wear your mask

when indoors among other people beyond your immediate family. Even those of us who are vaccinated can contract this virus and pass it on to others.

I know we all long to get back to normal, but we are now seeing what can happen when we move in that direction too quickly.



**The Rev. Dr. Roy Martin**

What happens to the business that was to be conducted at the August presbytery meeting? That business which is time-sensitive can be approved by the Coordinating and Planning Commission. Other business will wait until the October presbytery meeting.

Why was the August meeting not switched to a Zoom meeting? Put simply, there wasn't enough time. It takes time to prepare for one of those – weeks, in fact. And, you may recall, this was going to be the first time in a long time that presbytery was going to meet in the summer. So, I hope we will try again to do so next summer.

The October presbytery meeting is scheduled to be at Dogwood Acres but, if the virus is still going strong by then, we will have time to put together a Zoom meeting instead.

I keep all of you in my prayers.

Roy

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

September  
13-15  
2021

This annual conference offers education, worship, and amazing opportunities for growth in stewardship and generosity. Over two dozen workshops available to in-person attendees.

We will be in person in Cincinnati, OH, and online for a virtual experience.

## From the Committee on Mission and Outreach



*By Rev. Hugh  
Hamilton,  
Vice Chair, and  
Trinity, Pensacola  
Pastor*

## CMO explores potential Guatemalan mission partnership

The Presbytery's Committee on Mission and Outreach (CMO) has been working on resources to enhance presbytery's and your congregation's mission outreach, including updated forms and guidelines for 2 Cents a Meal hunger grants and Presbytery Peacemaking grants.

CMO also has been exploring a presbytery mission partnership with the National Union of Presbyterian Women of Guatemala (UNMP) in their work to improve educational and employment opportunities of women and children and health and water conditions. This effort has involved communication with The Rev. Eliane Menezes, who empowers Guatemalan women by providing leadership development and builds and nurtures

relationships between Presbyterian women in Guatemala and in the United States.

UNMP's theological scholarships provide financial aid for 12 students pursuing careers as pastors, preachers, or educators. Secular scholarships provide financial aid for Q'eqchi' Presbyterian women who are in need of basic education. Currently, five students attend classes – three in primary school and two in high school. Both types of scholarships help to diminish poverty, especially for women who are heads of households.

Presbyterian Women across the presbytery could connect and share with Presbyterian Women of Guatemala through Eliane. Men are important partners in many aspects, as well. Additionally, the National Evangelical

Presbyterian Church of Guatemala is structured in such a way that General Presbyter Roy Martin would be able to connect and share through Pastor Rosalio Ortega Hernández.

A presbytery-wide mission outreach can help unite churches across the presbytery with a common mission goal. Mission projects would vary and meet the needs of the participants.

Pulpit visits would help us expand our views and see the similarities of worship across cultures. Physical visits, when possible, would help cement the partnership as we learn from and help each other in the Lord. Zoom meetings would allow participants to connect and share between visits.

The CMO will clarify details, costs related, and expectations of parties to a partnership and will present reports to the October 2021 presbytery meeting in asking for approval.



Shown at left are the National Union of Presbyterian Women of Guatemala (UNMP) Board of Directors.

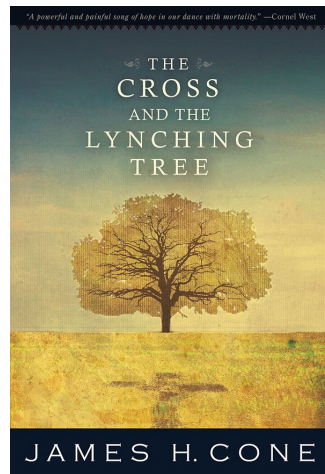
## “I Stand With You” recommends *The Cross and the Lynching Tree*, by James Cone (1938-2018)

We know that the cross is central to our faith, but how do we understand it? James Cone challenges his readers to dig deep with him, as indeed his life circumstances forced him to do, in the face of lynching in the South, particularly in the period from 1877 to about 1950.

He tells a story about growing up in Arkansas, where he was born in 1938. Whenever his dad was late coming home from work, the house grew tense until the headlights from his dad’s car beamed into the driveway. Then young James would run to the door and jump into his father’s arms, a gesture of love and deep relief.

I was born in the same year, and grew up in segregated Miami, Florida. Not once when my dad was late coming home from work did it ever occur to me that he might have met a terrible, horrific fate and that I might never see him again. A world of difference has permeated our lives.

James Cone asked himself how it was that African-Americans as a community could



survive the impact of the over 5,000 lynchings that took place in the South, whose victims were overwhelmingly African-American. (Florida, by the way, is second only to Arkansas in the percentage of lynchings per population during that time period.) How did the immediate families and close friends of those who were subjected to the shame and suffering of being stripped, whipped, hung, often mutilated, and burned, and far too often in front of an approving crowd of whites, survive, carry on, afterwards?

It was the cross. They identified with the humiliation, the injustice, the pain, of Jesus’ death on the cross. They had someone with whom they could walk who had shared their experience.

But *more* than that, they knew that the cross

was not the last word. God wasn’t through with Jesus then, and God wasn’t through with them now. Though their loved one had suffered a miserable death, God would not let that be the end. In the lynching tree they also saw the empty cross.

This is main theme of the book. But it is not the only one. The accompanying challenge for us to answer is this: why did the whites who did the lynching, but sat in their pews on Sunday, never see the connection between the cross and the lynching tree? And, can we find that connection now? It is an exercise in humility, and one to which I believe we are called. We cannot have reconciliation without understanding what it is that divides us, AND what it is that does and can unite us.

I commend this book to you and your congregations. It will open discussions on a central issue of our time, while encouraging us to focus on the meaning of the cross for all time.

## From the “I Stand With You” Task Force



*By Rev. Greta Reed,  
Task Force Member  
and Minister (HR)*

## From the Committee on Congregational Revitalization



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

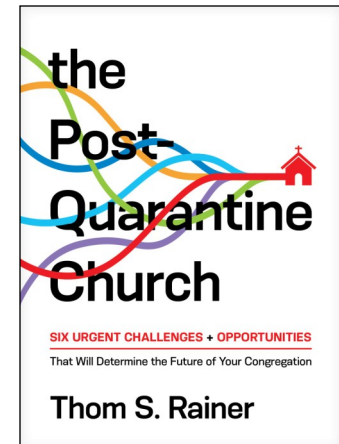
## CCR reading covers post-pandemic challenges, opportunities

The Committee on Congregational Revitalization is reading the short but important book *The Post Quarantine Church* by Thom S. Rainer. Though brief in pages, Rainer outlines a significant amount of important data that can inform our congregations as we move more fluidly through this post-pandemic time. (Of course, one wonders if the Delta variant or other subsequent variants will move us back into active-pandemic time. We pray not!)

Thom Rainer outlines six challenges and opportunities that he says are urgent as we go back to being and doing church. Here they are.

The post-pandemic church will:

- Gather differently and better
- Seize our opportunity to reach the digital world
- Reconnect with the community near our churches
- Take prayer to a new and powerful level
- Rethink our facilities for emerging opportunities



- Make lasting changes that will make a difference.

Has your congregation seen evidence of these challenges and opportunities? One of our congregations is entering a discernment process that they believe will allow them to accomplish #6, at the very least.

Congregational revitalization is important work; Rainer might go so far as to say that post-pandemic it is urgent work. CCR wants to partner with the congregations of Florida Presbytery to help guide and facilitate conversations and processes that will enhance the good our congregations already do. If your congregation feels a little *stuck* in the same-old same-old, please reach out to me! Let's have conversation about how post-pandemic challenges can become opportunities for the kingdom of God!

Rejoice  
in  
HOPE

PW Online Churchwide  
Gathering Event

August 5, 2021, 4-6 PM EST  
[www.presbyterianwomen.org/gathering](http://www.presbyterianwomen.org/gathering)

PRESBYTERIAN  
WOMEN

## Caring for Creation can be illegal

Greetings from the Northwoods of Wisconsin. We would like to think that it is a wee bit of paradise up here with its mostly cool summer temperatures, mild breezes sparkling lakes and open windows.

When the grands visit, I can go for weeks, well maybe days, without thinking about climate change, but not this year. One particularly egregious action that you might not have seen is that the fossil fuel industry is using state legislatures to pass laws to keep local governments from banning the use of fossil fuels.

In 2019, Berkeley, California became the first city in the nation to ban gas hookups in new buildings. Over the next couple years, that gas ban trend spread to Denver, Seattle and New York. The gas industry in response got a dozen states to pass laws prohibiting cities from restricting gas hookups in new construction.

Closer to home, Governor DeSantis signed into law a bill that prevents local governments from deciding which energy path they want to take. Florida towns and cities are now unable to switch to 100% clean energy because they can't ban the use of fossil fuels.

Think about this for a moment. The fossil fuel industry is getting laws



Lytton, British Columbia June 2021 Fire

passed making it illegal at the local level to stop the climate crisis. Local governments are where most of the actions to stop the climate crisis are taking place, and now they have been forbidden to do one of the most effective things possible – ban the use of fossil fuels to help the transition to renewable energy.

This isn't the first time laws have caused harm and not been consistent with our Christian values. Slavery was a legal institution. Jim Crow laws enforced racial segregation. German law restricted the rights of Jews.

What does it say about us as a society or church, if we stand by as laws cause harm? Making it harder and even illegal to protect God's creation, in my mind, is way over the line.

The World Meteorological Organization wrote this summer that 2021 is a make or break year for climate action. Surely you have seen the almost daily news about temperature

records being shattered this summer and the western fires. For the small Canadian town of Lytton, these two events collided. The local temperature reached a blistering 121 degrees and the next day the town burned down. Imagine the anger and pain you would feel if your town burned down and you lost everything.

The reality of our situation should compel action. It should compel your church and our presbytery to act for there is much that needs doing urgently. To learn more about what our denomination asks of us to address the climate crisis, go to <https://www.presbyterianmission.org/eco-journey/climate-change-resources/>.

Moving to clean energy to protect our climate is completely consistent with our values as Christians. Making it illegal to do so is not.

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

## Caring for Creation Notes



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

*What does it say  
about us as a  
society or church  
if we stand by  
as laws cause harm?*

**PRESBYTERY  
OF FLORIDA**

Mailing address:  
P. O. Box 7  
Chipley, FL 32428

Physical address:  
3320 Harmony Rd.

Phone: 850-535-2335  
or 850-535-2440

E-mail:  
office@presbyteryofflorida.com  
Web site:  
www.presbyteryofflorida.net

**Committee on Congregational  
Revitalization (CCR)**  
Rev. Lisa Martin  
revlwmartin@gmail.com

**Committee on Dogwood Acres  
(CDWA)**  
Rev. William "Bill" Lamont  
gbpcpastorbill@gmail.com

**Committee on Educational  
Resources (CER)**

**Committee on Ministry (COM)**  
Don Mowat  
dmowat@bellsouth.net

**Committee on Mission and  
Outreach (CMO)**  
Rev. Luis Ocasio-Torres  
luisjocasio@gmail.com

**Committee on New  
Congregational Development  
(CNCD)**  
Rev. A. J. Mealor  
revmealor@gmail.com

**Committee on Nominations (CN)**  
Leslie Yandle  
Leslie.yandle@gmail.com

**Committee on  
Preparation for Ministry (CPM)**  
Rev. Trinity Whitley  
trinity@faithpcusa.org

**Committee on Presbytery  
Administration (CPA)**  
Rev. Brad Clayton  
brad@faithpcusa.org

**Committee on Representation (CR)**  
Glenn Hodges  
ghodges37@comcast.net

**Coordinating and Planning  
Commission (CPC)**  
Roseanna Phillips  
roseannacpc@gmail.com

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

<b>In August</b>		<b>Looking ahead</b>	
<i>Sunday, August 1, 8 and 15</i> 2:30 – 7:30 p.m. CDT/ 3:30 – 8:30 p.m. EDT	“ <a href="#">Creation Care Buffet: Come to the Table</a> ”, Presbyterians for Earth Care’s online national conference	<i>Wednesday, September 1</i>	Board of Pensions “ <a href="#">Building Financial Resiliency in the Black Community</a> ” webinar
<i>Wednesday, August 4</i> 12:30 – 3:15 p.m. CDT/ 1:30 – 4:15 p.m. EDT	PC(USA) Administrative Personnel Association “ <a href="#">Spiritual Growth and Discipline</a> ” webinar with the Rev. Cindy Kohlmann	<i>Monday, September 6</i>	Labor Day — Presbytery office closed
<i>Thursday, August 5</i> 3 – 5 p.m. CDT/ 4 – 6 p.m. EDT	<a href="#">Presbyterian Women’s Online Churchwide Gathering Event</a>	<i>Tuesday, September 7</i> 2 p.m. CDT/ 3 p.m. EDT	Committee on Mission and Outreach (CMO)
<i>Sunday, August 8</i>	College and Young Adult Sunday	<i>Wednesday, September 8</i> 12 p.m. CDT/ 1 p.m. EDT	Committee on Presbytery Administration (CPA)
<i>Tuesday, August 10</i> 2 p.m. CDT/ 3 p.m. EDT	Committee on Mission and Outreach (CMO)	<i>Thursday, September 9</i> 9:30 a.m. CDT/ 10:30 a.m. EDT	Coordinating and Planning Commission (CPC)
<i>Wednesday, August 11</i> 12 p.m. CDT/ 1 p.m. EDT	Committee on Presbytery Administration (CPA)	<i>Thursday, September 9</i>	Board of Pensions “ <a href="#">Financial Preparation for Aging Parents</a> ” webinar
<i>Thursday, August 12</i> 1 – 2 p.m. CDT/ 2 – 3 p.m. EDT	Board of Pensions “ <a href="#">Estate Planning for Ministers</a> ” webinar	<i>Monday, September 13</i> 1 p.m. CDT/ 2 p.m. EDT	Committee on Dogwood Acres (CDWA)
<i>Tuesday, August 17</i> 9:30 a.m. CDT/ 10:30 a.m. EDT	Committee on Congregational Revitalization (CCR)	<i>Monday, September 13</i> — <i>Wednesday, September 15</i>	<a href="#">Stewardship Kaleidoscope</a> , Cincinnati, OH/online
<i>Wednesday, August 21</i>	Presbyterian Giving Catalog “ <a href="#">Summer of Song</a> ” Concert with the Mission Musicians, via YouTube	<i>Tuesday, September 14</i> 9:30 a.m. CDT/ 10:30 a.m. EDT	Committee on Ministry
<i>Wednesday, August 25</i> 10 a.m. CDT/ 11 a.m. EDT	“I Stand with You” Task Force	<i>Tuesday, September 21</i> 9:30 a.m. CDT/ 10:30 a.m. EDT	Committee on Congregational Revitalization
<i>Wednesday, August 25</i> 12 – 1 p.m. CDT 1 – 2 p.m. EDT <i>Thursday, August 26</i> 2 – 3 p.m. CDT 3 – 4 p.m. EDT	Board of Pensions “ <a href="#">What’s Possible? Strategies to Serve Better</a> ” webcast	<i>Thursday, September 23</i> 9:30 a.m. CDT/ 10:30 a.m. EDT	Committee on Preparation for Ministry
		<i>Wednesday, September 29</i> 10 a.m. CDT/ 11 a.m. EDT	“I Stand With You” Task Force