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The Panhandle Presbyterian

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Amid life's daily noise, snowfall brings a reminder

As I write this article, there is a “blizzard” falling outside. Of course, the word “blizzard” is relative. But for northwest Florida, I think any amount of snowfall is a blizzard.

There is something rather magical about a gentle snowfall. Aside from the excitement stirred up in my spouse and grandchildren, there is a calming effect. To step outside, there is a hush that comes over the typical noises of the hustle and bustle of life. A soothing kind of silence drifts over the area. Amidst the noise of societal unrest, political bickering, and other distressing sounds that tend to fill our ears, the hush of snowfall is a welcome respite – if even for a short while.

I am also reminded of a couple of scripture passages: David wrote in Psalm 51: “Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.” (Psalm 51:7) In Isaiah 1:18 we read: “Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be like snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool.”

As Christians, we can

get swept up in controversies, frustrations, hurtful conversations just as much as anyone else. Yet, we are called and challenged to do our utmost to live honorably within the bounds of scripture.

When we fail, as we all do at one time or another, we have an Advocate. We are able to confess our shortcomings and failures. No matter how dirty we become, or how much we are fouled, God, through Jesus Christ, washes us clean. In repentance we are, indeed, washed whiter than snow.

As you know, this loving act of God does not make us perfect. It does, however, release us from the burden, hurt, or shame we carry. It provides a renewed perspective and new opportunities for better living and responding to life's challenges.

Allow the kind of hush that accompanies snowfall to descend upon your mind and heart. In the stillness that comes, reflect on how God has washed you whiter than snow from previous mistakes. Then move forward in God's grace.

From our
Stated Clerk/
Acting General
Presbyter



*By Rev. Mark
Broadhead (Ret.)*

*“ Though your sins
are like scarlet, they
shall be like snow. ... ”*

Isaiah 1:18

From the Ministry of New Congregation Formation (MNCF)



By Rev. Dr. Nicole Richardson, South Walton New Presbyterian Worshipping Community Organizing Pastor

“May we remain open to the ‘new things’ God is doing in our lives, our communities, and the broader church.”

Exploration and discernment of Panhandle NWC’s path continues

As we step into February, I want to take a moment to share what I’ve been up to and where I see God moving in this season of exploration and connection. It’s been a busy, exciting, and meaningful time as I continue to learn more about the beautiful Panhandle and discern where a new Presbyterian ministry might take root here.

Discovering the Panhandle’s Story

January has been a month of learning and connecting. I visited several churches in the presbytery, including Gulf Beach, Grace (Panama City), and First Pres (DeFuniak Springs). Each visit gave me a deeper understanding of how these congregations faithfully serve their communities.

I also attended three presbytery listening sessions, which have been rich opportunities to hear stories about the region’s history and culture. Listening to your joys and challenges has deeply shaped my prayers as we move forward together.

Sharing Through Social Media

One way I’m connecting with both the local and broader church is through social media. This month, I’ve added YouTube to the mix!



Along with Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok, I’m using these platforms to share reflections, ideas, and glimpses into the work happening here in the Panhandle.

I’d love for you to follow along. And, if you know someone who might be interested, feel free to share!

[Follow me on Facebook](#)
[Follow me on Instagram](#)
[Subscribe on YouTube](#)

Worship and Learning Opportunities

At the end of January, I’ll have attended the Fresh Expressions Conference in Sterling, Virginia, where I’ll explore Missional Entrepreneurship: Training for Pioneers at the Intersection of the Marketplace and God’s Mission. I’m excited to bring back new ideas to share with you!

A Moment for Reflection

In this season of exploration, I’ve been reflecting on Isaiah 43:19: *“See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland.”*

This verse reminds me that, even in seasons of uncertainty, God is already at work, preparing

the way. Whether through connections here in the Panhandle, opportunities on social media, or ideas from conferences, I trust God’s mission is unfolding in ways we may not fully see yet.

May we remain open to the “new things” God is doing in our lives, our communities, and the broader church.

Let’s Connect!

If you’d like to collaborate, brainstorm, or simply chat about ministry possibilities in the Panhandle, I’d love to hear from you. Feel free to [email me](#). Let’s dream together about what new expressions of church and community might look like here!

Thank you for your continued prayers and support. I’m grateful to be on this journey with you and look forward to seeing where God leads us next.

Presbytery members needed to fill various ministry roles

The Presbytery’s Ministry of Representation (MR) serves the presbytery by providing names of Ministers of the Word and Sacrament, Commissioned Ruling Elders (CREs), Elders, Christian educators, and other individuals in our member congregations to serve on Presbytery ministries. We work to maintain the leadership and decision-making of these ministries inclusive with the rich diversity of its member churches.

Maintaining this balance has a lot to do with people expressing a desire to serve. We want our efforts to enable a

broad, deep, diverse cadre of leaders for all ministries of the presbytery. These ministries are the Ministry of Congregational Health (MCH), Pastoral Transitions (MPT), Leadership Development (MLD), Dogwood Acres (MDWA), New Congregational Formation (MNCF), Presbytery Operations (MPO) and Representation (MR).

These ministries have unplanned vacancies occurring for various reasons, creating a continual need for individuals to serve. If you are interested in

presbytery ministry service or you have questions, we welcome them. Presently there are vacancies in the Ministry of Dogwood Acres, Leadership Development, New Congregational Formation, Presbytery Operations, and the Ministry of Representation.

If interested in serving or just wanting more information, please [contact me](#). Find information about each ministry’s purpose and responsibilities on the Presbytery’s website at www.presbyteryofflorida.net/presbytery-ministries/

From the Ministry of Representation (MR)



By Rich Kangas, MR Moderator and 1st, Lynn Haven Elder

1st Wednesday
SACK Lunch
South Atlantic Community Knowledge

A monthly zoom for sharing across the synod!
 Join, learn and share: experience, resources, and best practices on a new topic each month.

February 5 Facilities Safety
 March 5 Peacemaking




To register, follow the QR code or visit synodofsouthatlantic.org



Clothed in Love

PRESBYTERIAN ASSOCIATION OF MUSICIANS
 WORSHIP & MUSIC CONFERENCE

June 15-20, 2025
 & June 22-27, 2025
 at Montreat Conference Center

We are there

ONE GREAT HOUR OF SHARING
 SPECIAL OFFERINGS
 HUNGER • DISASTER • DEVELOPMENT
 MARCH 5 - APRIL 20, 2025

From the Racial Justice Subcommittee



*By Susan Byram,
Subcommittee member
and 1st, Pensacola
Elder*

Subcommittee prepares to offer education and camperships

The Racial Justice Subcommittee (RJC) is excited to announce that we will be hosting the Education Hour at our upcoming Presbytery meeting on February 25. During this session, we will explore meaningful ways to address and repair historical harms that have impacted individuals and congregations of color. We are honored to welcome Rev. Jermaine Ross-Allam, Director of the PC(USA)'s Center for the Repair of Historical Harms, who will join us via Zoom to share his insights.

I highly encourage you to read the September 2024 issue of *Outlook Magazine*, which features an article by Rev. Ross-Allam, offering a thought-provoking perspective on the concept of reparations. I am confident you will find his words inspiring, and I pray that you come with an open heart and mind, ready to listen to what the Spirit is revealing to the church.

Additionally, the RJC has been working diligently over the past two summers on an important project that relates to our discussion on February 25. This project connects directly with Rev. Ross-Allam's vision of repairing

historical harms. Here's a hint: It's all about relationships!

Our project focuses on supporting children from minority families in attending Dogwood Acres Camp. Two summers ago, we were able to sponsor a group of girls from Panama City, along with a few children from Bethel Presbyterian Church. Last summer, three girls from Pensacola benefited from this opportunity. Our goal is to expand this initiative each summer, and we invite you and your congregation to get involved.

Getting started is simple: Reach out to families from minority communities who may benefit from this experience. Start by connecting with individuals you already know or partnering with local churches or schools. This initiative offers a wonderful opportunity to strengthen those relationships. Once families are identified, campers can sign up for the appropriate session at Dogwood Acres. I recommend encouraging them to attend with a friend or relative to ease the transition, especially for those who may not have been away from home before.

From my own experience, I found that the most challenging part was not securing funding for tuition, but rather helping families feel comfortable with the process and encouraging them to participate. The camp staff were incredibly supportive, ensuring that families could register without having to pay the fees upfront. We did ask families to contribute approximately 10% of the costs to foster investment in the experience. Thanks to extra funds available to us, we were also able to provide each family with a gift card for gas, additional supplies (such as swimsuits and sleeping bags), and funds for a camp T-shirt and canteen. On average, the total cost per camper was about \$600.

The three girls who attended last summer had an unforgettable experience. One high school student, although homesick, created lasting memories and talked excitedly about her time at camp for weeks afterward. The two younger girls were also thrilled by the camp activities, particularly swimming and the Barn Dance, and they are eager to return this year!

Remembering a dedicated advocate, leader and Presbyterian

You knew Buddy MacKay as Lieutenant Governor under Governor Chiles, and then for 23 days, as Governor of the State of Florida. He also was a Presbyterian.

I had the honor of working with him on environmental issues, as did my husband. While living in Tallahassee, he and his wife, Anne, sat in the pews of First Presbyterian Church. After retirement, they returned to their home on Lake Weir and to Ft. King Presbyterian Church.

At his funeral, Rev. Dr. David Cozad said that Buddy had a servant's mentality like you read about in Philippians 2:3-7A. "Do nothing from selfish ambition or empty conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. Let each of you look not to your interests but to the interests of others. Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus..."

One story he tells in his book, *How Florida Happened*, is titled, "Church Matters", and it is about graduating from law school, moving to Ocala in the '60s, and becoming aware of how segregated churches were, including his own. When it was clear he couldn't integrate his church without splitting it up, he helped found Fort King Presbyterian as an integrated church. He and



Source: *Ocala Magazine*
October 2021

Anne were members for 60 years.

He was known for his honesty and integrity in Florida government. His moral compass was set on justice and service to the public. This included a focus on Florida's myriad of environmental issues.

Because of his leadership, we were able to get the first major changes in Florida Water Law since it passed in the 1970s. It required the water management districts to plan for the water needs of the public and to make sure that in allocating water for people, agriculture and other industries that they avoided harming our natural systems and the critters that depended upon them. It wasn't easy, but this happened because of Buddy's determination.

He also helped protect the Green Swamp, which is a major recharge area

for the Floridan Aquifer and the Everglades, even though the mother of the Everglades, Marjorie Stoneman Douglas, denounced legislation he was supporting as a sellout. But, always the gentleman, he found a way forward.

In his book, he also wrote a chapter titled, "The Strange Story of Ecosystem Management". He was supportive of our efforts to take a theoretical approach to managing natural systems and turn it into a reality. It was highly successful and won a national award. But as soon as administrations changed, it was cancelled. He wrote about the irony of what happened. We had developed a popular program that reduced regulations while improving environmental protection, and it was rejected. He was dumbfounded.

He walked in Jesus's steps as a politician and as a Presbyterian caring for creation and doing all the good he could. Saying goodbye to such a great Floridian and Presbyterian is hard.

Caring for Creation



By
Pam McVety,
*Presbytery
Stewardship
of Creation
Enabler*

"Saying goodbye to such a great Floridian and Presbyterian is hard."

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All views expressed in this publication are not necessarily endorsed by the Presbytery of Florida as a whole, as we remember "God alone is Lord of the conscience." (F-3.0101)

DOGWOOD ACRES CAMP AND RETREAT CENTER PRESENTS



Pause

**A Yoga & Mindfulness
Retreat for Women
Feb. 28-March 2, 2025**

This weekend will include gentle yoga instruction, mindfulness exercises, keynote presentations, a journal, guided hikes, healthy meals and snacks, workshops, worship/meditation and plenty of time to just be still.

**When: Evening February 28th
Afternoon March 2nd**
**Where: Dogwood Acres Camp and
Retreat Center**
**Cost: \$230 (Includes all activities,
lodging, and meals)**

Rescheduled
Dates

New Spots
Available



inhale



exhale



Dogwood Acres Retreat Center

SAVE THE DATE

Winter Stated Presbytery Meeting



TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 25, 2025
GRACE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, PANAMA CITY