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Presbytery
of Florida
Furthering the Ministry
of Jesus Christ in Northwest Florida

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New EP/SC shares first note to our beloved presbytery

I'm writing this a few weeks ahead of my official start date, which feels a little strange—but also right. By the time you receive this, it will be May 1st, my first day serving as your Equipping Presbyter and Stated Clerk. So, while these words are written in advance, they are meant to meet you right at the beginning of our shared ministry together.

I am truly grateful for the opportunity to serve alongside you. I cannot wait to meet you, hear your stories, and learn about the ministries that are already shaping the life of this presbytery. But before anything else, thank you again.

The search process is

never just a process—It's people. It's time, discernment, prayer, and a willingness to listen for God's movement. So, thank you to the EP/SC Search Committee: Joan Wooten (Chair), Michael Askew, David Dick, Linda Lovins, and Kathy Welsh. You made this experience feel thoughtful and grounded. It didn't feel rushed, and it certainly didn't feel transactional.

Eric Spoon, thank you for your steady leadership. There's a sense of continuity here that I don't take lightly.

To those I met on April 8th—whether in person or online—thank you for the warm welcome. It was a

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From our Equipping Presbyter/ Stated Clerk



By Rev. Mario Bolivar

"...I don't come with all the answers. In fact, I suspect that the most important work at the beginning will be listening..."



At left, Rev. Bolivar and wife, Melissa (Mel), enjoy the beauty of Dogwood Acres

Continued from front

brief moment, but it offered a glimpse of something meaningful. It made me think, “There’s something here worth paying attention to.” And I’m looking forward to discovering more of it, slowly and intentionally.

Right now, life is in transition. My wife, Melissa—who goes by “Mel”—and I are preparing to move. We’re getting our home in Lake County ready to go on the market, working with a realtor, and trying to make thoughtful decisions about where to land next. There’s excitement in that, but also a bit of uncertainty, if

I’m honest. We’ll be in your area that first weekend, just before I fly out of Panama City (ECP) to attend the Presbyterian Leadership Formation program at the Bon Secours Retreat and Conference Center. That program, I’m told, is as much about formation as it is about information—which seems fitting for this season.

Between now and then, you may notice me becoming more present—especially on social media. Part of that is simply so you can get to know me. But part of it is also an invitation. It seems, to me, that your stories, your ministries, and your shared life are not always told as

often—or as clearly—as they could be. And maybe, together, we can work on that. Not to promote ourselves, but to bear witness to what God is already doing among you.

Also, remember. I don’t come with all the answers. In fact, I suspect that the most important work at the beginning will be listening—paying attention, asking questions, and learning the rhythms of this presbytery. This is just a first note. A first step.

Count it all joy. Be of good courage. And know that you are loved.



May 16, 2026



Save

The Date

SUMMER STATED PRESBYTERY MEETING
@DOGWOOD ACRES
SUMMER CAMP & RETREAT CENTER

Assistant stated clerk anticipates Presbytery's journey ahead

The time has come that I write my last newsletter article as Stated Clerk, now as Assistant Stated Clerk, for the Presbytery of Florida. As I sit here and write this, I do so with mixed emotions. I am sad, because I have enjoyed my time helping this presbytery continue in the absence of a presbyter. I am joyful, because I know that the future is in God's hands, and I believe God has called the right person to help us move into the future.

As a friend of mine used to tell me about what it takes to prepare for the future, "The only thing between us and the future is air and opportunity." He would then take in a deep breath and say, "And there goes the air." My brothers and sisters in

Christ, what we have before us as the Presbytery of Florida is not empty air, but life-giving opportunities.

Beginning in May, the Presbytery will be embarking on a journey of faith with a new Equipping Presbyter/Stated Clerk leading the charge. I hope and pray that we will all live into this opportunity and give Rev. Bolivar every chance to help shape this Presbytery in a way that honors her history while helping us see the future.

It is important that each one of us be patient in the transition, helpful in the work to be done, and loving in our building a new relationship with Rev. Bolivar and his family. He is entering this Presbytery at a time when we are discerning how to

best move forward with our Strategic Plan, as well as Dogwood Acres, and we need to all be in prayer that the pathway we take truly glorifies God.

We are the Presbytery: not the EP/SC alone, not the Presbytery staff by themselves, not just the Presbytery moderator, and not the ministry moderators. The only thing holding us back in our spiritual journey is ourselves. All of us make up this presbytery, and all of us must do our part to ensure her future gives every opportunity to succeed.

New adventures are coming, and what they will hold is for God to know and the Holy Spirit to reveal. But through all that is coming, let us never forget the words of Isaiah 40: 31 – 32, "Even youths will faint and be weary, and the young will fall exhausted; but those who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint."

No matter what comes our way as a presbytery, God has a plan. Let us trust in God's plan and let the Holy Spirit move and work amongst us in our journey of faith together.

Thank you for this opportunity to serve as the Stated Clerk for the Presbytery of Florida. May God's grace lead us in this next stage of our presbytery that is full of opportunity.

From our Assistant Stated Clerk



By
Rev. Eric Spoon

"New adventures are coming, and what they will hold is for God to know and the Holy Spirit to reveal."



**DOUBLE THE JOY.
DOUBLE YOUR
IMPACT.**
Matching Gifts for
Dogwood Acres
Summer Camp

This summer, you can do twice the good for the children and staff of Dogwood Acres.

For a limited time, a generous anonymous donor will match every gift—dollar for dollar—up to \$5,000. That means your support goes twice as far in creating unforgettable camp experiences.

Our goal: Raise \$10,000 to transform this summer.

Your donation helps provide:

- Hands-on environmental education activities
- Updated recreational equipment
- Arts & crafts supplies for the entire summer
- New, comfortable cabin mattresses
- Enhanced lakefront safety for every camper

Make a one-time gift or become a monthly supporter:
dogwoodacres.org

Or mail your gift to:
Dogwood Acres
3320 Harmony Road
Chipley, FL 32428

Don't wait—your doubled impact ends June 1, 2026.

From Dogwood Acres



By Christy Williams,
Director

“While I can’t claim that a week at Dogwood Acres can solve everything, a week at summer camp can make a meaningful difference in a child’s life.”

The answer is ...“summer camp”

If the answer is “summer camp”, what are the questions? As the school year and extracurricular activities wind down, many parents, pastors, educators, and youth workers find themselves asking these questions: Where can young people grow in mind, body, and spirit? What experiences will stay with them beyond the summer? How can we get kids off screens and connecting with others and the outdoors? Where will my child feel supported, accepted, and guided by trusted role models?

To each of these questions, and to many others, the answer is simple: a week at Dogwood Acres.

While some camps focus on sports, academics, or helping kids stand out, places like Dogwood Acres take a different approach. We believe every child already stands out—as a beloved child of God—and our goal is to nurture that identity. Camp offers a unique set of life skills that support the whole person, not just performance or achievement.

Today, many young people spend significant time on screens, which research shows can impact their academics, limit meaningful social interaction, and contribute to mental health challenges. As a result, some youth

struggle with confidence, empathy, and developing relationships. Camp helps address these gaps by creating a space where campers engage face-to-face, learn to live in community, and practice kindness in real time.

While I can’t claim that a week at Dogwood Acres can solve everything, a week at summer camp can make a meaningful difference in a child’s life. Campers build friendships, try new activities, and learn resilience by pushing through challenges with encouragement from other campers and their counselors. Even the most independent campers often discover the value of community—helping a friend on a hike, cheering each other on, and learning responsibility for themselves and others.

As a Christian camp, Dogwood Acres, provides an added layer of impact through faith

formation. Faith is woven into every part of camp life and each day is shaped by prayer, worship, and study, offering over 70 hours of intentional faith formation—more than many children experience in an entire year of Sunday School. Surrounded by nature, campers connect with God’s creation, learning gratitude and stewardship through both activities and Bible lessons.

As you consider the many options for your child’s summer, I invite you to ask the questions—where will my child experience a sense of belonging, be challenged, and be loved for who they are. And when you do, I hope you’ll find the answer leading you to a place like Dogwood Acres—where lives are shaped, faith is deepened, and young people discover who they are meant to be.

SUMMER CAMP 2026 REGISTRATION OPEN!

SUMMER DATES!

High School Week
June 21-26

Intro/Discovery/Adventure
July 5-10

Intro/Discovery/Adventure
July 12-17

REGISTER AT DOGWOODACRES.ORG

Fossil fuels more than a climate change problem for creation

Fossil fuels are more than a climate change problem. They are a source of worldwide conflict, economic hardships, misery, deaths and major air and water quality problems that are poisoning creation and making us ill. They helped us thrive in the past, but we now have other cleaner, safer and cheaper energy options.

We have seen fossil fuels on fire in the Middle East darkening the skies and polluting the air. In March, over 10 million people in Cuba experienced a nationwide blackout due to fuel shortages caused by the U.S. oil blockade. Our everyday costs, from fuel to food, are rising. The common factor in all of this is fossil fuels.

In Iran, bombed oil storage facilities and refineries released thick black smoke containing soot and sulfur dioxide, creating [black rain](#), causing immediate respiratory problems. Heavy metals, dioxins, furans and PFAS chemicals were released at bombed military airfields and factories. These chemicals make their way into surface waters and aquifers, poisoning residents.

Over 3,000 people have died in the Iran war. The electric grid failed in [Cuba](#) primarily because of the lack of oil, and there was an unheard-of violent protest. People were



Source: *Mother Jones*, March 11, 2026, [The Bombing of Iranian Oil Facilities is Causing a Health and Environmental Nightmare](#) AFP/Getty

without power, or the ability to cook, or to run essential medical equipment. Now, they don't have enough fuel to transport food to where it is needed.

Reliance on fossil fuels makes us insecure. It affects our national security. It makes us go to war. It makes us violent. It hurts the least of us the most. It makes us lie about the impacts of fossil fuels and the possibilities of a change to renewable energy.

It makes unimaginable sums of money for a very small number of people and a couple hundred companies. It makes us pollute our homes, neighborhoods and the planet.

If we reduce our reliance on them, the world would be a better place. We would stop fighting over them. We could become a safer, healthier, cleaner and happier place. We could reduce the impacts of climate change. We all would breathe easier.

The good news is that

we have renewable energy and battery storage, ready to be implemented on a scale and speed that could satisfy much of our energy needs. In March, [renewable energy supplied more power to the U.S. than natural gas](#). Florida [ranks third](#) in solar power in the nation. Energy from the sun, and wind is now the cheapest power on the planet and growing faster than any energy source in history, according to Bill McKibben. To read more about this, check out his new book, *Here Comes the Sun: A Last Chance for the Climate and a Fresh Chance for Civilization*.

It is our choice: more wars, rising fuel costs, pollution and climate change with fossil fuels, or fewer wars, free fuel with sun and wind and a healthier and cleaner environment with renewable energy. No energy source is perfect, but one clearly provides us a better future.

Caring for Creation



By
Pam McVety,
*Presbytery
Stewardship
of Creation
Enabler*

“Our everyday costs, from fuel to food, are rising. The common factor in all of this is fossil fuels.”

From the Ministry of Representation (MR)



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

New Congregation Formation, Presbytery Operations volunteers needed

Our presbytery's ministries thrive when their members reflect a broad, deep, and diverse group of leaders guiding their work. Are you interested in making a meaningful impact with your time and talents?

The Ministry of New Congregation Formation (MNCF) needs new members in its 2027, 2028 and 2029 classes, so prospective members can commit to serving only one year, or two, or three. This ministry focuses on planning and nurturing new worshipping communities, bringing

fresh energy and outreach to our presbytery and the larger church.

Also needing a member in its 2027 class in the Presytery's Ministry of Presbytery Operations (MPO). If you have a "head for business", human resources background, role in your church's stewardship efforts, or simply an interest in "making things run smoothly," this is an ideal spot for you.

The Ministry of Representation continually needs new

**VOLUNTEERS
NEEDED!**

people with experience and a heart to serve the ministries' missions at Presbytery. If you feel called to join a Ministry and become a part of what God is doing in our presbytery, contact the presbytery at office@presbyteryofflorida.com.

1st Wednesday SACK Lunch Conversation (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.

We meet 12-1:30 pm Eastern Time.

May 6 - Retired Church Professionals
June 3 - Earthcare
July 1 - Youth Ministry
August 5 - Grant Writing

To register: scan the QR Code or visit synodofsouthatlantic.org



Smaller congregations can benefit from CRE leadership

Have you ever wondered who a CRE is?

A Commissioned Ruling Elder (CRE) is:

A ruling elder who has gone through at least two years of training in theology, bible, church polity and more under the leadership of the Presbytery's former **Committee on Ministry (COM)**, now the **Ministry of Leadership Development (MLD)**, and, after completion of this time of study and discernment, is commissioned to lead a congregation for a specific period of time.

Our Presbytery currently has four CREs serving congregations and two ruling elders who are in the process of becoming CREs.

During the 1980s, certain presbyteries initiated the appointment of

Commissioned Lay Preachers (CLPs) to serve congregations who were geographically isolated or had limited resources. By the mid-1990s, the scope of these roles was broadened to encompass additional pastoral responsibilities, such as session moderation and the administration of baptism, with the stipulation that CLPs must be ordained ruling elders. In 2011, The Book of Order updated the designation from *Commissioned Lay Preacher* to **Commissioned Ruling Elder**, or Commissioned Pastor, thereby providing greater clarification regarding the duties and parameters of the role.

That is a lot of words!

Practically speaking, a CRE is a ruling elder who offers sound and

educated leadership to a congregation who might not otherwise have consistent pastoral leadership. Presbyteries with smaller congregations and churches that are located miles from one another have found these leadership roles to be invaluable in providing consistent leadership to their people.

CREs study for two years. We recommend a program at Union Presbyterian Seminary, called Pathways (<https://www.upsem.edu/leadership-institute/pathways-overview/>).

There are others, and most of them are offered completely online.

During this education time, the CRE Explorer/Disciple works with a mentor and the MLD in five key areas:

- Education for Ministry
- Spiritual Development
- Interpersonal relations
- Personal Growth
- Professional Development

If you would like to know more about the Commissioned Ruling Elder process, or if you would like to begin this process, please contact Cathy Mooney, moderator of the Ministry of Leadership Development at reverendmooney@yahoo.com.

From the Ministry of Leadership Development (MLD)



By Rev. Cathy Mooney, MLD Moderator and 1st, DeFuniak Springs Pastor



Worship & Music Conference
Presbyterian Association of Musicians



WHO'LL BE A WITNESS?
PRESBYTERIAN ASSOCIATION OF MUSICIANS
2026 WORSHIP & MUSIC CONFERENCE
JUNE 21-26 & JUNE 28-JULY 3
<https://www.presbymusic.org/conference>

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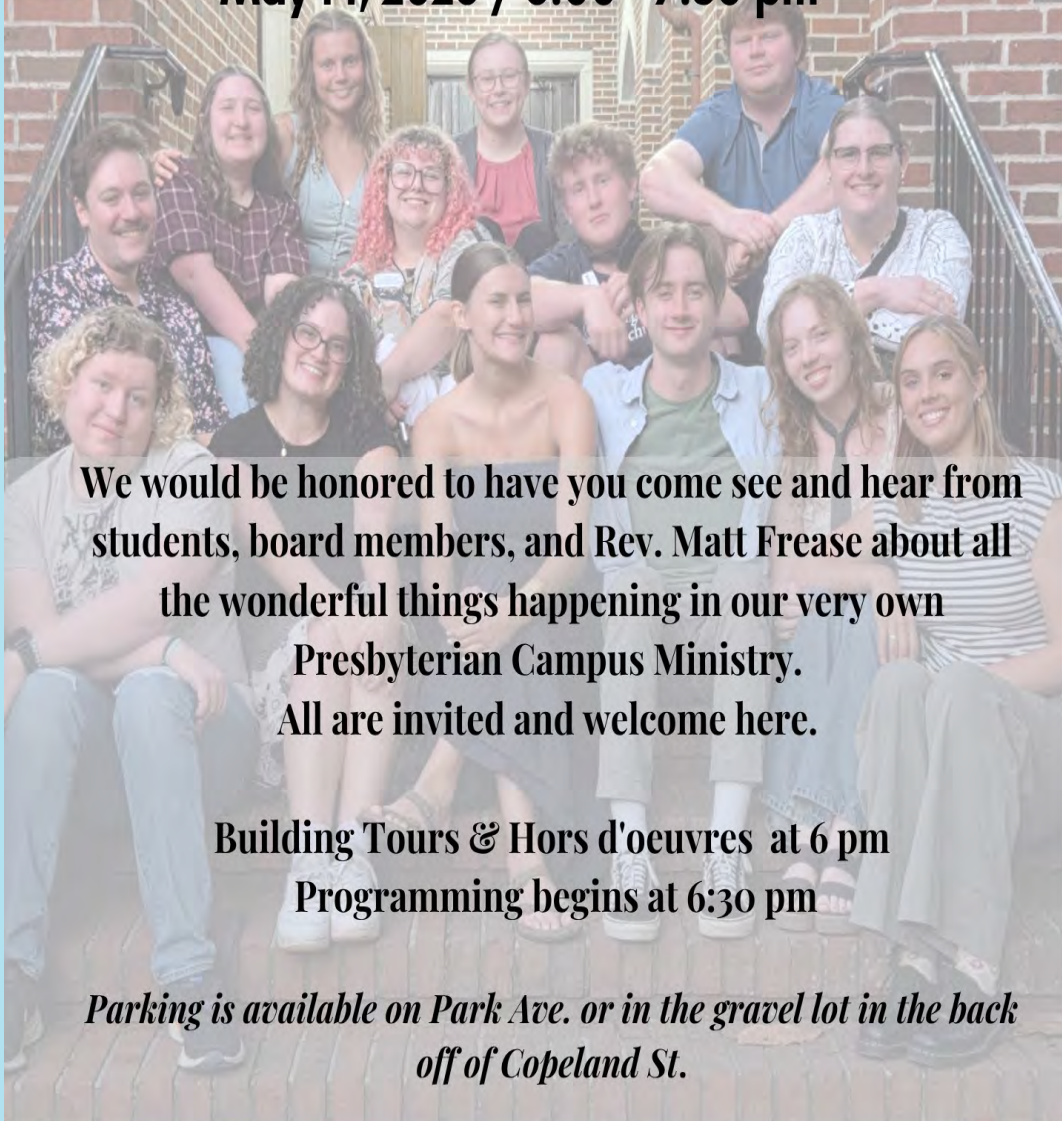
**Presbytery
of Florida**

Furthering the Ministry
of Jesus Christ in Northwest Florida

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)

You are invited to attend
**UKirk Tallahassee's
Annual Open House**

May 14, 2026 / 6:00 - 7:30 pm



We would be honored to have you come see and hear from
students, board members, and Rev. Matt Frease about all
the wonderful things happening in our very own
Presbyterian Campus Ministry.
All are invited and welcome here.

Building Tours & Hors d'oeuvres at 6 pm
Programming begins at 6:30 pm

*Parking is available on Park Ave. or in the gravel lot in the back
off of Copeland St.*



**Scan or Click Here for
More Info & to RSVP or
call 850-222-6320**

WWW.UKIRKTALLAHASSEE.COM