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

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Are we needing new language for congregational life?

Over the past several weeks, (53 days, but who is counting) I have had the privilege of preaching in a few of our congregations and visiting several others across the Presbytery of Florida. Those experiences have left me with a growing conviction: *We may need to acquire some new language if we hope to understand what is really happening within our churches.*

I realize that phrase may sound a little strange. New language? What kind of language?

Before I go any further, let me be clear about something. I am delighted to say that what I have witnessed across our presbytery is not decline, despair, or resignation. Quite the opposite. I have encountered vitality.

I have seen congregations finding creative ways to serve their communities. I have listened to stories that remind me of the feeding of the five thousand, where a few loaves and fish somehow become enough—and then more than enough. Churches with limited resources are accomplishing ministries that, on paper, may not seem possible. Volunteers continue to show up. Neighbors continue to be served. New

relationships are being formed. The gospel continues to be proclaimed.

The Presbytery of Florida may appear small by some measurements, but numbers alone rarely tell the whole story. The evidence of the Holy Spirit's work is everywhere. We are a vital presbytery. We certainly face challenges, as every presbytery does, but we also possess the energy, faith, and commitment needed to continue fulfilling Christ's Great Commission. We are striving to love God, love our neighbors, and care for ourselves as disciples of Jesus Christ.

And perhaps that is exactly why language matters.

Too often, churches unintentionally learn to speak the language of scarcity. We talk about what we no longer have, who is no longer here, or what used to be. Those concerns are real and should not be ignored. Yet if that becomes our primary vocabulary, it can shape how we see ourselves and our future.

What if our language reflected the abundance of God's grace? What if we became more intentional about speaking of generosity,

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From our Equipping Presbyter/ Stated Clerk



By Rev. Mario Bolivar

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Continued from front

possibility, calling, and mission? What if our words matched the reality of a God who continues to provide, equip, and send?

Those questions led me back to a book by Israel Galindo titled *The Hidden Lives of Congregations*. It is a book I first read during executive leadership training in 2017 and revisited in 2020 as my congregation emerged from the

pandemic. Galindo argues that every congregation has dimensions that are not immediately visible: its emotional systems, identity, life stage, spiritual culture, and assumptions about itself.

The more churches I visit, the more I find myself wondering about those hidden dimensions. What stories are shaping us? What assumptions are guiding our decisions? What culture are

we creating through the language we use every day?

I suspect that renewal often begins there.

Not with a new program. Not with a new committee. Not even with a new strategy.

Sometimes renewal begins when we learn to see differently, speak differently, and ultimately imagine differently what God is already doing among us.

SAVE THE DATE

SUMMER STATED PRESBYTERY MEETING

Tuesday, August 11, 2026

First Presbyterian Church
of Milton

www.presbyteryofflorida.net/presbytery-meetings/

Hurricane season means it's time to get prepared

The 2026 Atlantic Hurricane Season is upon us, and news the has already been quite interesting. Each year, multiple agencies submit their predictions of tropical events for the season. This season, they range from seven to 20 named events, with three to nine of these storms making it to hurricane strength, and one to four potentially becoming major hurricanes!

To add perspective, from 1851 to 2025, there have been a seasonal average of 10 storms, although from 1990 to 2025, that average has increased to well over 14 storms per year. The most active storm season in 2020 saw 30 named storms, while there was only one storm reported in 1914.

One thing we do have going for us as far as the 2026 hurricane season goes: Most of the predictors agree the strong Pacific Ocean El Niño will result in high-level windshear, which should reduce the number of named storms for the year.

So, with the information of a below-average season, we can sit back without a care for this hurricane season, right?

Nothing could be further from the truth; it only takes one storm to make a mess of our lives. So, what do we do to minimize this impact of a tropical system on our

lives? We prepare! If you have a home disaster plan and you have not reviewed it in a while, it needs your attention. Dust it off and make sure you have it up to date with phone numbers, insurance policy information, and other things needed to make it complete.

If you do not have a plan, I would encourage you to start on one now. Go to this [Home Disaster Plan](#) link for a resource to help you put it together. It is also time to go through your [Hurricane Preparedness Kit](#). Inventory the kit to make sure everything you need is there, replace aging batteries, and any outdated supplies.

Don't forget your church plan, too; if you have already completed your annual review, excellent, you are on the right track. If you have yet to review it, I will all but guarantee it is out of date. Open it up, read it, and make updates to ensure it meets all your needs.

If, by chance, you have not yet put together a church disaster plan, NOW is the time! Use this [FLAPDAN Church Disaster Plan](#) link to get a template for your church. If you need help with your plan, feel free to contact me at (850) 217-2597 or hurricane.approach818@passmail.net

Also know, your Presbytery is a resource for help. We will do everything we can to

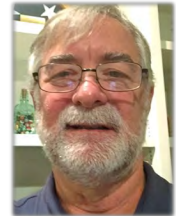
contact your church as soon as possible after a storm impact. To help us in that effort, make sure your church's contact information at the presbytery office is current. Call (850) 535-2335 or email office@presbyteryofflorida.com with your updates. Do it now before you forget.

Experience has shown us, hurricanes can be life-changing events. But your preparation efforts now will certainly help protect you, your family, and your church should the worst happen. We pray you continue to have a safe and enjoyable summer!

Sources:
[2026 Atlantic Hurricane Season, Wikipedia, 14 June 2026](#)

[North Atlantic Ocean Historical Tropical Cyclone Statistics, Colorado State University](#)

From the Ministry of Leadership Development (MLD)



**By Tim Crawford,
Florida Presbyterian
Disaster Assistance
Network
(FLAPDAN)
Board Member,
MLD member and
1st, Crestview
Ruling Elder**

"Experience has shown us, hurricanes can be life-changing events. But your preparation efforts now will certainly help protect you, your family, and your church..."

From Dogwood Acres



By Christy Williams,
Director

“Not only does this show the true connectional nature of our denomination, but it broadens our reach beyond the bounds of the Florida Presbytery.”

Can you hear me now? Summer camp begins with partnerships

We have just finished our second week of the 2026 Dogwood Acres Summer Camp season. During our first week, we hosted 70 staff and campers for the third annual Florida Diabetes Association camp at Dogwood. This week of camp equips children and youth to live full and active lives while controlling their diabetes. Our partnership with the Florida Diabetes Association and Tallahassee Memorial Hospital is an important one for Dogwood as we get to expand our ministry to those living with diabetes, and as a place for retreat for medical personnel and personnel-in-training.

This past week, we welcomed campers from Savannah and Flint River Presbyteries. These campers drove as much as six hours to spend a week learning to listen to God in prayer, people and new places and live in Christian community. We are thankful for this new partnership with the presbyteries from South Georgia. Not only does this show the true connectional nature of our denomination, but it broadens our reach beyond the bounds of the Florida Presbytery.

It was a delight to have our Equipping Presbyter/Stated Clerk Mario Bolivar staying in Cabin 6 this week, and especially fun to



welcome him to breakfast, energizers and morning worship on Tuesday. As shown above, he and the Savannah Presbytery staff member showed they have the moves to keep up with even the most active campers during energizers!

Thank you to everyone who contributed to our Double the Joy campaign! We not only met our goal of matching a \$5,000 gift, but we exceeded that greatly by raising just over \$20,000! Your generosity and ongoing support allowed

us to more than double the joy that campers experience at Dogwood. Because of each of you, our camp ministry is thriving.

A huge reason Dogwood's summer ministry continues to be successful is our staff. I ask that you, and your congregations, pray for all our staff during these summer months. Year-round staff: Eric, Robert, Sharon and Katina (and me, too!). Summer staff: Becca, Maya, Hailey, Antha, Clara, Kate, Rose, Jake, Andrew, Ford and Ethan (not pictured).



Twelve years of advocacy finally yields divestment plan

By the time you read this, the General Assembly (GA) will be over. As I write in mid-June, however, Presbyterians for Earth Care, Overture Advocacy Team, is just beginning our long assembly process of advocating for the two overtures with which the presbytery concurred in February: CLJ 02, *Changing Course for a Green Future*, and CLJ 03, *The Green Future Endowment Fund*.

CLJ 02 calls on our fiduciaries to set a goal of fully divesting from stocks in fossil fuel energy companies by 2030. This is the date identified by Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) scientists for making dramatic reductions in greenhouse gas emissions—reductions that, if achieved, may help protect the planet from further catastrophic warming.

CLJ 03 establishes an endowment fund from which grants may be made to congregations and communities that are suffering from or adapting to climate change.

Our overture preparation work began last fall with research, drafting, discussion among ourselves, and numerous consultations with concerned programs and individuals. This was followed by preparation of the final overtures and handouts. This information and more is available at <https://presbyearthcare.org/general-assembly-2026/>.

On June 13, we presented our overtures at a well-attended forum hosted by Presbyterians for Peace Fellowship. The assembly officially began with online committee meetings June 22–24, at which we testified. Commissioners and others participated in a Community Day on June

27, where we had a table and volunteers available to explain our overtures and answer questions. The plenary sessions took place in Milwaukee from June 28 to July 2. All meetings were livestreamed.

To learn more about our overtures, please read this beautifully written article by Rev. Fred Milligan from *Presbyterian Outlook*, which is posted on the PEC website: https://presbyearthcare.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/04/Divestment_March16_RT.pdf.

Here is some truly important news: For the first time in our 12 years of advocacy on this issue, the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy (ACSWP) concurred with our overture and advised the assembly that we should seek the quickest and most efficient transition away from the production of fossil fuels.

NOTE: As of June 29, 2026, the PC(USA) has made an historic decision to remove the great bulk of its investments from the fossil fuel industry. [Click here to learn more.](#) The Presbytery commends Pam McVety for her extensive efforts as Overture Advocate.

Caring for Creation



By
Pam McVety,
*Presbytery
Stewardship
of Creation
Enabler*

“ Our overture preparation work began last fall with research, drafting, discussion...and numerous consultations ... followed by preparation of the final overtures and handouts.

COLLEGE & YOUNG ADULT SUNDAY

August 2, 2026

Listening to Jesus' Instructions
Matthew 14:22-23

God Is with Us in Every Season
1 Kings 19:4-8

Belonging & Becoming
Jeremiah 1:4-10

Liturgies of Celebration and
Commissioning

pcusa.org/collegesunday

Office of Christian
Formation

UKIRK
MINISTRIES

From the Ministry of Pastoral Transitions (MPT)



**By Pam Nulty,
MPT Vice Moderator
and Northminster,
Pensacola
Ruling Elder**

*“MPT asks you to
be in prayer,
earnestly, for all our
Pastor Nominating
Committees...”*

Summer brings no rest for church Pastor Nominating Committees

As you read this, summer is in full swing. The kids are out of school, and college students are home (with their laundry!). Families are planning and taking vacations and trips to see family and friends.

Meanwhile, the work of the church marches on, and some of those busy working are our Pastor Nominating Committees (PNC). They are under our care as part of the Ministry of Pastoral Transitions (MPT). We are here to guide them, help with any issues or questions they may have and pray for them.

The various PNCs work tirelessly behind

the scenes in their search for an interim or full-time pastor. They meet weekly as a group and are in contact with each other through texts, emails and phone calls during the rest of the time. At their meetings, they review matches received from the PC (USA) Church Leadership Connection (CLC). They discuss and prayerfully consider whether to invite candidates to take the next steps. This includes checking references, meeting via Zoom and finally deciding whether to invite them to meet in person. During the rest of the week, they read many prospects' Personal Discernment

Profiles (PDP) and listen to many sermons online.

Currently, six churches in our presbytery are actively seeking an interim or full-time pastor:

- Trinity, Pensacola
- First, Quincy
- Faith, Tallahassee
- Parkway, Panama City
- Freeport
- First, Marianna

MPT asks you to be in prayer, earnestly, for all our Pastor Nominating Committees, that they will have the wisdom to listen, discernment to recognize God's choice and unity to move forward together in faith.

COME FIND REST

**September 25-26, 2026
Eastminster Presbyterian Church
Columbia, South Carolina**



**Augie Gil
Festival Director**

Interest sessions led by Rev. Emily
Mooneyhan & Rev. Melissa McNair-King



**Alicia W. Walker
Keynote Speaker**

Church musicians and worship leaders are invited to join PAM's South Atlantic and Puerto Rico Region for a weekend of singing, learning, and rest. Through workshops and rehearsals, we will explore how to incorporate sabbath within ministry, and leave refreshed, encouraged, and supported for the work we are called to do.



Visit presbysmusic.org/south-atlantic
or scan the QR code for more information



Presbyterian Association of Musicians
**South Atlantic and Puerto Rico
Region** | [PRESBYSMUSIC.ORG/
REGIONS](https://presbysmusic.org/regions)

Why say “yes”? Presbytery service benefits those who serve

When we think of church ministry, we picture the walls of our local church. But, sometimes our faith calls us to a higher service. Serving at presbytery is a step beyond the home church and makes an impact across the entire presbytery.

Why say “yes” to the call to serve? First, you will expand your perspective. Working alongside leaders from neighboring congregations breaks down isolation and reveals the diverse ways God is moving in our presbytery.

Second, you bring vital representation. Our presbytery thrives when our ministries reflect the rich talents of different ages, backgrounds and church sizes.

Third, your specific life experience offers fresh viewpoints that can shape the future of our connectional church.

And, finally, it clarifies your purpose. Many find that presbytery service deepens their personal faith and equips them with new skills to bring back to their home church.

Ministry is never meant to be done alone. By stepping into a presbytery role, you join a team dedicated to building up the body of Christ. Step beyond your home church and make that lasting impact across the presbytery. Every local church is a part of a larger body. By saying “yes” to presbytery service, you

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!

provide the vital connection that holds our community together.

Whether your passion lies in mentoring youth or supporting pastors through transitions, budgeting presbytery resources, or organizing local mission projects, your unique spiritual gifts are needed. If ready to answer the call, please contact the Presbytery at office@presbyteryofflorida.com or 850-535-2335 or me at 850-832-6577.

From the Ministry of Representation (MR)



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

*“By stepping into
a presbytery role,
you join a team
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building up the
body of Christ.”*

Rooted in Hope

Equipping Leaders for Ministry with Older Adults

OLDER ADULT MINISTRY CONFERENCE
SEPTEMBER 16-18, 2026 KNOXVILLE, TN

POAMN
Presbyterian Older Adult Ministries Network

<https://poamn.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)

PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN OF THE PRESBYTERY FALL MEETING

August 8, 2026 9:30 Central/10:30 Eastern
First Presbyterian in Chipley

Join us for a day of fellowship and sharing of ideas!

Please RSVP to Denise Pentecost @quilt4food@aol.com or
850-591-0949.

Chipley ladies are providing lunch for \$15, payable that day.

Hope to see you there! Bring a friend!