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From General Presbyter Roy Martin

Not long ago, I went out to start the car because I needed to go to the office. I was in a bit of a hurry because the rest of my day was loaded with Zoom meetings and I needed to get something from the office for one of those meetings. The car did not start. When I hit the start button, all I heard was click, click, click. The battery, it seems, had met an untimely demise.

We are now entering the season of starting things. Schools and colleges have started but several of them have shut down again. Why? Because of COVID-19. People have started getting out more but, as a result, more people are being sidelined with what? COVID-19!

And what about the Church? Now is when we are used to starting up Sunday School and other programs after suspending them for the summer. But many churches suspended those activities well before summer and don't see a way clear to start them up again this month. Why? You know the answer.

I am hearing of churches across the country who have just gone ahead and made the painful decision to close down in-person gatherings of any kind until next year. If the projections about the combination of COVID-19 and the flu this Fall are correct, that may not be a bad decision.

But I still believe we can be the Church! I have said it before that what is required is creativity. I am hearing of more and more of our congregations who have invested in a Zoom



The Rev. Dr. Roy Martin

account and, in addition to worship, are preparing Sunday School classes, committee meetings, children's ministry, youth ministry, and a host of other activity through that medium. And it is happening in large and small congregations!

Beyond the use of Zoom or other social media, how else might your church start up activities again that don't involve in-person gatherings? We don't have time for dead batteries. We have ministry to be about. I believe God will equip us with whatever it takes to accomplish God's ministry in our midst. May God bless you as you seek to serve in God's name.

Roy





WANTED: Presbytery of Florida Commuter Volunteer Team Members

Presbyterian Disaster Assistance (PDA) has a long and robust history of supporting volunteers engaged in long-term recovery. Most recently, PDA has collaborated with response volunteer teams, some coming from neighboring states, to address basic needs immediately after a disaster.

Since COVID-19 has changed how disaster preparedness, response, and recovery can be carried out, PDA and Florida Presbyterian Disaster Assistance Network (FLAPDAN) have developed a model for disaster volunteers for COVID-19 that may also be adapted for future pandemics.

Stay at home orders, social distancing protocols, personal protective equipment (PPE), prohibitions to inter-state travel, and other mandates require disaster response and recovery organizations to adapt. Until a vaccine is discovered and administered, it is no longer possible to send deployed personnel into a disaster area because they will need overnight lodging and meals.

One adaptation organizations are implementing is using “commuter volunteers”. These volunteers would travel by car/van and bring all they need for a day’s work (food, water, PPE, tools) without the need for lodging.

PDA and FLAPDAN are working with Presbyteries to develop a Commuter Volunteer model in states with a history of high disaster incidences. Because Florida is such a state, and hurricane season is now underway, the need for commuter volunteers is especially urgent.

After a disaster, a team of Presbytery commuter volunteers will provide their own transportation to the work site and return home the same day. Overnight lodging will not be provided. The typical work includes muck/gut, debris removal, and temporary repairs to stop additional home damage.

If you are interested in more information or would like to register as a presbytery volunteer, please contact Presbytery of Florida Commuter Volunteer Team Coordinator Tim Crawford at (850)651-8029 or tcrawford@cox.net, or visit <https://www.flapdan.org/commuter-volunteers>.

From the Racism Task Force



By Rev. Trinity Whitley, Chair, and Faith, Tallahassee, Associate Pastor

Task force gathering ideas for addressing systemic issues

The Presbytery's Coordinating and Planning Commission shared at our June Presbytery meeting that they were committing our Presbytery's time, energy, and prayers to address the systemic issues of racism in our communities. To that end, a task force has formed to offer suggestions to the Presbytery on how we might focus that energy moving forward.

The following people have joined the task force to help move us forward: Michael Askew (Minister, Gulf Beach, Panama City Beach), Jeannie Dixon

(Stated Clerk), Linda Lamb (Member, Fellowship, Tallahassee), Harvey Jenkins (Minister, Honorably Retired), Roy Martin (General Presbyter), Trinity Whitley (chair, Minister, Faith), Robert Woolfork (Member, Trinity United, Tallahassee), and Joan Wooten (Minister, First, Pensacola). We are focusing our work on gathering information about what churches are already doing to address systemic racism, working with the Committee on Educational Resources to provide a list of educational resources, and

striving to create connections to other predominantly black denominations in our region in hopes of beginning regional dialogues and relationships as we move forward. We hope to share our work with you at the October Presbytery meeting during the education hour.

If you want to help with this task force, it is not too late to join. Please email me at trinity@faithpcusa.org. Together, with God's help, we can help overcome the sin of racism that pervades our society.

From the Committee on Congregational Revitalization



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

CCR reaching out to congregations to encourage, assist

The Committee on Congregational Revitalization is actively reaching out to congregations that may need an energizing boost in their revitalization efforts. We're excited about partnering with churches that want insight into their demographic place and their determined possibilities as centers for mission.

Through MissionInsight and Holy Cow! Consulting, we have tools that can help. And we have trained consultants on our team who are eager to help! If your congregation is interested in learning more about revitalization and its growth potential in your area, please contact me! You don't have to wait for



CCR to contact you! Knowing that there are lots of great revitalization resources out there, we're also putting together a Revitalization Toolbox that can be useful for many facets of a congregation's life. The Toolbox will contain media, written, and people resources focused on revitalization. Watch for this in the coming months! And we're reading together Tim Soerens' latest book, *Everywhere You Look: Discovering the Church Right Where You Are*. In the book's forward, Walter

Bruggeman writes, "*While the institutional church is needed, its heavy burden of nostalgia, default to quick fixes, and shrinking budgets will necessarily require new imagination... Soerens begins by asking the 'big why' question: Why a church at all? The answer is that the church's why is found in God's desire to which we may attach our own desire. That desire of God is that the world be a venue of generous neighborliness. The church exists to embrace the desire of God!*" We invite you to read along with us; the book may be purchased from Amazon, or better yet, ordered through your neighborhood bookseller.

From the Committee on Dogwood Acres



By
Ben Powell,
Dogwood Acres
Director
and 1st, Quincy, Elder

Enjoy downtime outdoors at DWA's new tent camping area

At Dogwood Acres, we continue to use this Corona downtime (yuck!) to make improvements to the camp while we are without guests. The next major project will be the rewiring of the Chapel, installing new lighting and making the stage lighting easier to use.

Another improvement will be the installation of a new central air conditioner and heating unit in the office, thanks to a very generous unsolicited gift from one of our Presbytery churches!

Speaking of new improvements, recently I have talked about our new Tent Camping Area. The ten "tent pads" (think 12' x 12' wooden decks) are ready to be used. In addition to the pads, we have cleared all the brush from the area, built a fire-ring and installed tall lantern poles at each pad. The Camping Area is in close proximity to the Pool Bathhouse, and it is easy walking distance to showers and full bathroom facilities.

Surely my prayers will be answered for cooler weather in a few weeks, and with the cooler weather of October and November, I hope we can put the new camping area to good use. The Committee on Dogwood Acres (CDWA) has approved the cost of \$35 per night, which, I think,



makes it a real bargain.

I hope we can put together a church tent camping retreat soon, or maybe have a group made up of members from several churches using the new facility at the same time. It will be easy to socially-distance, and the fresh outdoors will lend itself to a safer environment than almost anywhere else we might choose to go. I am more than willing to help put together a full weekend of activities like nature trail walks (including explanations of some of the trees and other interesting vegetation at

DWA), how to read a map and use a compass (the forester in me is surprised how few people know how to use a compass; it's fun!), how to build a campfire and maybe improving our campfire cooking skills with some fun recipes I have, and (most importantly) a lot of downtime to help recharge after this long extended virus isolation.

If you are interested in me helping put together a tent camping weekend, please do not hesitate to contact me at 850-528-3575 or ben@dogwoodacres.org.

Mark your calendar
for this virtual conference!

Rethinking Evangelism

October 12-14, 2020
montreat.org/rethinking

Montreat Conference Center in partnership
with Theology, Formation, & Evangelism in the
Presbyterian Mission Agency

Environmental injustice = racism

The older I get, the more appalled I am at the widespread injustices in this world and their outright commonness and people's acceptance of them. I just finished the book *How to be an Antiracist* by Ibram X Kendi and saw myself for the first time as part of the racist world. Here is why: I have been a decades long environmental scientist, who has fought hard for the environment, but am guilty of being insensitive to the burden of environmental injustice on our brothers and sisters of color and the poor.

So what is environmental justice? The term has two distinct meanings. The more common one describes a social movement that focuses on the fair distribution of environmental benefits and burdens. The other meaning refers to environmental laws and their implementation in a discriminatory manner.

My theory has always been that if we keep our air, water and land clean, then everybody will benefit. However, this doesn't make past decades of toxic contamination to our land, water and air go away. In fact, the existing environmental regulatory system limits present-day pollution and destruction, but does not completely eliminate it, so we continue to pollute and degrade our environment.

Developers, the fossil fuel industry, governments and others have discriminated against

people of color and the poor. For example, the cheapest land is usually where the poorest people live. It is also the land that is selected for landfills, chemical plants, hazardous waste sites and other types of pollution and destruction. Interstate on- and off-ramps are nearly always constructed through urban neighborhoods where people of color and the poor live, creating unsafe air quality that leads to health impacts, such as premature births, asthma, heart attacks and early death.

Since the 1980s, Presbyterians have recognized and dealt with environmental injustice. We helped produce an ecumenical study guide on environmental racism with the National Council of Churches of Christ. The 2018 General Assembly approved a policy on environmental racism and justice that builds on a 1995 GA policy, "Hazardous Waste, Race and the Environment".

Meanwhile, Presbyterian Disaster Assistance has provided funds to help the residents of Flint, Michigan, respond to the lead poison in its drinking water. It has distributed nontoxic water supplies and filters, educated residents, supported spiritual care and worked on emergency response efforts.

In case you are not familiar with what happened in Flint, I highly recommend the documentary film, "Flint: The Poisoning of an

American City," which is a disturbing example of how 100,000 primarily poor people and people of color have been irreversibly poisoned by lead. This crisis is the result of years of infrastructure neglect and violation of drinking water rules. And it is not limited to Flint. Some 5,300 American cities have been found to be in violation of federal lead rules.

Low income is a major factor in exposure to pollution. I just saw a presentation by NETWORK, advocates for justice inspired by Catholic sisters on federal policies that have contributed to the US racial wealth and income gap. Our country has a history of 400 years of racist laws that contributed to the racial income gap. Such income disparity makes it difficult or impossible for people of color to extricate themselves from poverty and exposure to pollution.

These stories of environmental injustice are mere hints at a huge and complex problem that is part of the larger issue of institutional racism. We all need to learn more about this issue and the toll it takes on our brothers and sisters of color and the poor, because 400 years is much too long. A good first step is to check out our denomination's resources on environmental injustice and racism at www.presbyterianmission.org.

As usual, please share your comments and questions with me at pammcvety@hotmail.com.

Caring for Creation Notes



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

"... the cheapest land is usually where the poorest people live. It is also the land that is selected for landfills, chemical plants, hazardous waste sites and other types of pollution and destruction."

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The Panhandle Presbyterian



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

Currents of Faith
The Stewardship of change in community, technology, and across generations.

September 22 & 29
& October 6

Three day virtual event!
11:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m. on each Tuesday

Our gifts to the Peace & Global Witness Offering enable us to work together to build God's Household of Peace where everyone is welcome; where all can find compassion, peace, and justice.

**IF WE ALL DO A LITTLE,
IT ADDS UP TO A LOT!**



PEACE & GLOBAL WITNESS

SPECIAL OFFERINGS

PEACEMAKING AND RECONCILIATION

SEPTEMBER 6-OCTOBER 4