



We have a substantial number of rose bushes at our house, and last week I carried out the annual task of pruning them back to prepare for spring. At this stage, it now looks like we have a substantial number of thorny sticks in our yard, with no beauty or even the appearance of life in them.

And yet, if they were not pruned, the rose bushes would ultimately become unproductive, and could even develop rot and disease. Right now they look awful, and every year I find myself wondering if I've cut too deeply. And every year, when the seasons turn once more, we are blessed with a glorious explosion of beautiful blooms on our reinvigorated bushes.

In John 15, Jesus talks about what life is like for those who belong to him: "I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch of mine that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit." (John 15:1-2) So clearly life with Christ is to be characterized by fruitfulness, and branches that do not bear fruit are cut off and removed.

But notice that the fruit-bearing branches do not escape getting cut. Pruning the branch of a grape vine requires removal of excess shoots and sucker vines that draw energy and vitality away from the main branch. It's only when that branch is cut back that it becomes able to produce good and abundant fruit.

So as we consider our own walk with Christ, how might the Lord be pruning us to prepare us for greater fruitfulness? God often uses the trials and tribulations of daily life to highlight those things that need to be eliminated so we might be wholly centered on him. This is true for congregational life as well. What activities or programs (or even committees!) does the Father need to cut back from our "churchianity" so we can bear fruit for the kingdom in our communities?

Jesus spells out the essential requirement for discipleship: "Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing." (John 15:4-5) What this means is that if we are abiding in Christ, then fruitfulness is guaranteed, even in those seasons when it appears that nothing is growing. This should encourage us both in our personal life and in the life of whichever church we are connected to, as we can rest in the promise of Christ that his word will not fail, and that fruit will abound. And that's really good news.

Yours in Christ,

Rev. Ed Rees

Transitional General Presbyter

AROUND THE PRESBYTERY

Announcements & Opportunities



**CALLING ALL
Honorably Retired Pastors**

The NEGA Clergy Care Committee cordially invites you break bread with us.

Friday, March 13, 11:30am
Cabin Creek BBQ, Nicholson, GA
199 Memorial Drive, Nicholson, GA 30565

Wonderful food, paid for by us.
Bring an appetite and a smile.

Please RSVP to Ross Brown,
ross@rossb.net

Ordination Anniversaries

We celebrate and give thanks for the NEGA clergy marking ordination anniversaries this month. The Clergy Care Committee encourages you to hold these individuals, their families, and their ministries in your prayers.

Ron Gilreath
Cheryl Barnes
W. Davies Owens
John Harrison
William Quarles
Emmie Smock
Stuart Ritter
Sang Won Han
Tom Query

Hurricane Helene Long Term Recovery in the Augusta Area

In January:

- 71 Project Sites in 3 Counties (Richmond, Columbia, McDuffie)
- Work Accomplished: Repairs as well as Partial and Total Rebuilds
- By Mennonite Disaster Service
- By Christian Disaster Service (Church of the Brethren)
- 342 Volunteers for a Total of 13,403 Volunteer Hours

2026 Northeast Georgia

PRESBYTERY MEETINGS AND EVENTS

February 28, 2026

10:00 a.m.

Covenant Presbyterian Church
Athens, Georgia

May 19, 2026

2:00 p.m.

Co-hosted by Commerce Presbyterian & Calvary Presbyterian
Meeting location:
Commerce Presbyterian Church, Commerce, Georgia, Georgia

August 2026

Leadership Training Event
Date & Location To Be Determined

October 20, 2026

First Presbyterian Church
Clarksville, Georgia



Two Centuries of Faith in Action: First Presbyterian Milledgeville Celebrates Bicentennial

The congregation of First Presbyterian Church of Milledgeville (established 1826) is delighted to invite our siblings in Christ across the Presbytery to join us as we celebrate 200 Years of Faith in Action.

Throughout the spring and early summer of 2026, we will be hosting a series of special services and events that honor our frontier beginnings, our rich musical heritage, and our shared future in the heart of Milledgeville. From the skirl of bagpipes to the "simplicity and grace" of Clyde Tipton's compositions, we are gathering to give thanks for God's faithfulness in every season.

Featured Bicentennial Highlights:

- April 12: Kirkin' o' the Tartans (11:00 a.m.) – A festive celebration of our Scottish heritage featuring bagpipes and a Blessing of the Tartans.
- May 3: Our Journey Begins (11:00 a.m.) – A frontier worship experience featuring the playlet "From These Beginnings." (Pioneer attire encouraged!)
- May 24: Music of Clyde Tipton (11:00 a.m.) – Celebrating the legacy of our beloved composer and conductor during the Pentecost season.
- June 11: Bicentennial Open House (6:30 p.m.) – An evening of community and discovery featuring the Monticello PC Bell Choir and historian Bob Wilson.
- June 14: Bicentennial Service (11:00 a.m.) – Our culminating celebration of two centuries of fellowship and service, followed by a catered lunch.

Whether you have deep roots in Milledgeville or simply wish to share in this milestone of the Reformed tradition in Georgia, you are most welcome. We look forward to celebrating 200 years of vision—together. A full schedule of events is available at https://bit.ly/FPC_Bicentennial

Location: 210 S Wayne St, Milledgeville, GA 31061

Contact: (478) 452-9394 | milledgevillepcusa@gmail.com



Disaster Emotional and Spiritual Care Academy *Spring 2026*

Presbyterian Disaster Assistance is pleased to announce that registration is now open for the [2026 Disaster Emotional and Spiritual Care Academy](#)

Six weeks of live, free online programs will offer pragmatic and informative sessions to help faith and community leaders address needs emerging from disasters and other crises.

Tuesdays, March 24 - April 28, 2026

11:00 am - 12:30 pm ET

Appropriate for all levels of experience and expertise

[Click here to register](#)

Schedule at a Glance

- March 24, 2026 - "*Calm in Crisis*"- Lutheran Disaster Response
- March 31, 2026 - "*Talk Saves Lives*" (suicide prevention) - Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services Prevention Division
- April 7, 2026 - "*Responding with Care: A Trauma-Informed Approach to Disaster Response for Diverse Communities*"- Lutheran Disaster Response
- April 14, 2026 - "*Risk and Protective Factors*"- Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services Prevention Division
- April 21, 2026 - "*Tools for Building Resilience*"- Presbyterian Disaster Assistance
- April 28, 2026 - "*Emotional and Spiritual Care in Human-Caused Disasters*" - Presbyterian Disaster Assistance

For more information, contact Kathy Riley, Presbyterian Disaster Assistance Associate for Emotional and Spiritual Care: kathryn.riley@pcusa.org.

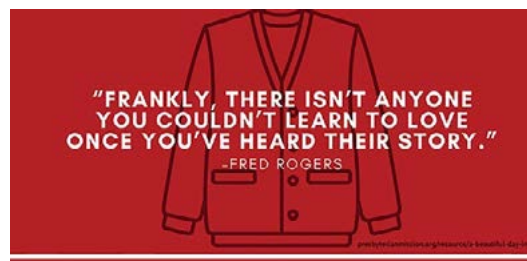


Next Small and Mighty Zoom Gathering
March 3rd
7:00 – 8:00 pm ET / 6:00 – 7:00 pm CT

Topic: Making the Most of Polity in Small Churches

Summary: Sometimes it can feel like Presbyterian polity must be stretched and squeezed to make things fit for small churches, but small churches are also used to stretching resources to make the most of the gifts we have and figuring out how things designed for a different space can work. Join us for a conversation about ways that small churches (and the presbyteries that love them!) can use Presbyterian polity to support and extend the ministry and mission of our smaller congregations.

Hosted by the Association of Smaller Congregations If you have interest in learning more about the Association of Smaller Congregations or have questions about this Small and Mighty Zoom Gathering, please reach out to
ASC President, Caroline Dennis
at cvdennis.wpcgwd@gmail.com



MR. ROGERS DAY
MARCH 20TH

Fred Rogers was an ordained minister of word and sacrament for the PC(USA) and is a notable public figure whose work around peace and reconciliation are worth remembering. Rogers was also a pioneer in the world of Christian education and formation of young children. March 20th was his birthday and the day that the PC(USA) has chosen to highlight all we can learn from his work.

<https://pcusa.org/about-pcusa/agencies-entities/interim-unified-agency/ministry-areas/christian-formation/mr-rogers-day-resources>