

Saying *Thank-You, Thank-You, Thank-You!*

By Charlie Gross, Acting Head of Staff

“Grace to you and peace from God our Father. In our prayers for you we always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, for we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints,”

(Col. 1:2b-4)

The staff of the Presbytery of Donegal is very intentional about praying for you and giving thanks for your powerful and faithful ministry in this region. We are blessed to be in this ministry with you! But, we can do more! We have been wisely advised by the Transition Team report that we should increase our efforts to find ways to support you, encourage you, and equip you for this journey of faith. I personally believe that they nailed down a great truth. We will make this a high priority as we start implementing this report.

Another one of my high priorities is saying “Thank-You!” I asked Kathy Bartels and Susan Harner to calculate how many “volunteer” hours are given to the ministry of our presbytery. Just calculating the hours of meetings, travel time, and a bit of preparation time for the basic organizational structure, they arrived at 5,625.6 hours for the year. If you multiply this by \$19.51/hour (from Independent Sector research), you arrive at \$109,755 worth of volunteer labor. This is a HUGE donation to our ministry! Thank-you!

This represents many, many hours of preparing, traveling, meeting, praying, discussing, e-mailing, minute taking, and minute reading! Thank-you, thank-you, thank-you for your faithful efforts in being an exhibit of the kingdom of God in this time and place!

The staff of the Presbytery of Donegal will increase our efforts to find ways to support you, encourage you, and equip you for your powerful and faithful ministry in this region.

How can I say THANK-YOU with the right tone and expression? How can I say THANK-YOU so that you hear it and know that I mean it? On Thursday, October 23rd, I hosted a luncheon for the volunteers on the presbytery staff. Betty Duncan and Barb Warren were able to attend (picture below). Kathy and I presented them with a white rose and a “thank-you” balloon (along with a delicious lunch). We are so grateful for these servants and we are immensely grateful for your amazing acts of charity! We also owe a debt of gratitude to Mrs. Melissa Matheson. She is extremely faithful in her support of our Resource Center. Thank-you staff! Thank-you all!

Thank-you from the bottom of my heart!

Charlie Gross



Thank-you to all our volunteers on the presbytery staff!

Imagination, Metaphor, and Leadership

By the Rev. Dr. Michael R. Wilson

Adding another worship service, changing the instruments up front, sprucing up the stewardship program, and finding the right Sunday School curriculum will not be enough. In the midst of the many, vast, and constantly multiplying anxieties of our age, the call of technical fixes is constant and overwhelming. While many of those techniques are important, we must say consistently and forcefully that they will not be sufficient. Should many of us have the courage and energy it takes to add a Saturday evening worship service? Sure. Do most Presbyterian churches need to grapple with the changes in worship music of the last thirty years? Absolutely. Are Presbyterians, by and large, giving sacrificially and living in ways that will sustain the earth for generations to come? Honestly—no. Do we need to find curriculum that will engage and shape minds that are formed in an age of instant access to immeasurable amounts of information and brains shaped by video games and split second images on TV? Of course we do.

But, will finding the “right” program to answer these questions (and so many other anxieties—staffing, membership numbers, youth programs, mission trips) really get at the problems that stalk so many of our congregations (even some of the ones that seem so vibrant)? I don’t think so. So many of our conversations seem to be aimed at how to prop up the world that exists without asking any questions at all about the social world that we have created.

I believe that the call to leadership in our age is a call to imagination. Let me emphatically state that what I don’t mean by this is a leader sitting in a room imagining what he or she would like everyone to do, and then giving orders (suggestions?) to everyone else. By this, I mean one of the primary tasks of leadership is to call disciplined attention to the way that we have imagined the world in which we live. Charles Taylor describes a social imaginary as “the ways people imagine their social existence, how they fit together with others, how things go on between them and their fellows, the expectations that are normally met, and the deeper normative notions and images that underlie those expectations.” (Modern Social Imaginaries, p. 23.)

We all have expectations of the congregations of which we are a part, the role of the pastor in that congregation, and of the role of a presbytery in our lives. To tinker with staff job descriptions or change committee assignments doesn’t do us much good until we have discussed the images that we are using about the organizations of which we are a part.

Leadership must engage imagination and image, and we are not making headway as leaders until we are discussing with people the images that we are using. We access reality through the metaphors that we use. And we shouldn’t be misled into thinking that we can attach other structures (adding a “contemporary” worship service) or

declare ourselves to be a certain way (we are now a missional church) without attending to the metaphors that we use to describe ourselves.

How many times have we used the image of a congregation as a family? In some places, it is so common that we don’t even know that we are using it. But, family is an image that immediately takes us into a certain connotation of what church is. And while I’m aware that for some, it is a happy image (I had good parents) and for some it is a painful image (my family is a source of distress and damage), that is not my primary point here. To speak of church as family is to enter a certain narrative of the purpose of our congregation. Does family mean in my life that my needs are met? Then church will take on that same imagination—and we’ve got enough Christians who believe that the church exists to meet their needs! Does family mean that I’ve found a place that will protect me from the pains of this world? Then the

church had better do the same. The task of leadership is to raise awareness of these images and help people discuss them, so that they can claim God’s goodness in those images and also be formed by other (biblical) images of God’s people.

What about our images of pastor? Think of the images of pastor as therapist, coach, teacher, midwife, or CEO. I’ve seen them all—and you probably have, as well. What’s the imagination behind these images? And is it no wonder that we have such conflict between congregations and pastors (and such depth of unhappiness in some pastors) when there are an overwhelming number of images of the role of the pastor should do and be. A long, frank conversation among church leadership about the images we use for our pastor and the imagination behind it would be much more fruitful in many places than grumbling about pastoral salaries. And this goes on among Sessions (we pay him that much for what?) and pastors (I can’t believe I put up with all of this and all I get paid is that!).

And what of our beloved presbyteries—that seem to slip in function and struggle for identity in these strange days. Do we refer to the presbytery as a judicatory? What we need to come to grips with is that this is an entire imagination. A socially constructed imagination. And one that Joseph Small talks about brilliantly in “The Travail of the Presbytery.” Here he notes the changing size of the presbytery in our own history—from 35 churches in the middle of the 20th century to over 35 churches in 1980 (p.7). With that, presbyteries have become program agencies and mission agencies and those imaginations have competed with regulatory ideas and corporate images as we have discussed the purpose of a presbytery.

Is it no wonder that we are confused about what a presbytery is to do and how it is to function? When a presbytery has become a mission agency, we should not be surprised that it gets into trouble in the days

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Ten-Foot Angel Graces Pequea's Prayer Garden

Recently, a magnificent and mighty ten-foot angel appeared in the prayer garden of Pequea Presbyterian Church. The angel was created by local carver Dean Fox, to resemble, "the angel of the Lord."

The carving holds a sword and his hands appear to be wounded and bleeding down onto the sword (this is something that appeared naturally in the wood as it was carved). There seems to be a tear running down his cheek.

Visitors have stopped to see the angel and are telling others about the statue. Some have taken photos, and others have cried when they saw it.

In the garden there is a mailbox for prayer requests and a book where people can share scripture, poetry, or their thoughts. The garden was dedicated last summer on a Sunday as part of worship. A clap of thunder was heard as the congregation left the garden and hailstones rained down to cover the area in white. An amazing sight for those who were blessed to witness it.

Missionary Julie Nichol Witnesses Answered Prayers

Missionary Julie Nichol, serving in Kenya, has accomplished one of her goals in establishing a ministry at Kenyatta University. In recent months, she has witnessed a number of her prayer requests receiving answers from God. Although not always exactly the answers she had hoped for, Nichol is grateful for the response.

Although the ministry has taken off smoothly, Nichol was still in need of a house on the campus. God has provided her with a nice place about 15 minutes drive from the campus, and she is grateful for that, but would like to be closer to the students with whom she is working.

Nichol had also been praying for a male counterpart to minister to the male students on campus, and she has been blessed with Weche, a Kenyatta University alumnus, who recently received his masters from a theological school. She describes Weche as "very passionate and knowledgeable about God's word," and she says he "is undertaking the men's ministry leadership with gusto."

A third hope was that the Navigators could become a registered ministry at the university. At her last report, the university chaplain is willing to register the group under the larger umbrella of another Christian organization (the Christian Union), which is a hopeful, but unfamiliar arrangement.

Nichol also reports that the Sunday night large group meetings, which the ministry started, have been quite successful and have generated a lot of enthusiasm and creativity from the students. Attendance nearly doubled from the first meeting to the third. The evening meeting has been christened "Nav Jioni." "Nav" for Navigators and "Jioni" meaning evening. "The students are quite pleased with it, and I can sense they are truly making it their own," said Nichol.

Continued prayers for the ministry are requested, and Nichol especially asks that prayer warriors might join her in praying the following Scripture for the students of Kenyatta University, that they may become mature and rooted in their faith in every way, from Isaiah 61:3:

*"They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the LORD
for the display of his splendor"*

The Donegal Digest

Bellevue (W. Davies)—A home meal exchange occurred on Sunday, October 26. Hosts provided the main course, but had no idea who would be guests at their homes, only how many would be there. The goal of the exchange is to help church members become better acquainted with their brothers and sisters in Christ.

Fairview (Dr. M. Atkinson)—The church held its annual Fall Fest on Saturday, October 25. The fun included games, hay rides, a bonfire, and scarecrow stuffing. Food included a chili cook off contest and roasted marshmallows.

Paoli (Dr. R. Larson)—On Friday, December 12, from 5 to 8 p.m., the church will host an evening of Winter Wonders. This outreach serves local families. A children's gift shop, entertainment, and more will accompany this evening of generosity.

Slateville (C. Curley)—Slateville and Slate Ridge will hold a combined Christmas Eve service at 7 p.m. on December 24, at Slate Ridge. A December 21 candlelight service will be held at Slateville.

Stewartstown (Dr. R. LaForce)—The Central PA Blood Bank will hold a blood drive on Wednesday, Nov. 26, from 2 to 6 p.m., at Stewartstown Presbyterian Church, 14 College Ave., Stewartstown. To schedule an appointment, call Harry Nizer 717-993-6572.

Trinity (Dr. W. Wilkins)—The adult education class undertook a study of faith and politics looking at questions about Biblical perspectives on political leadership, moral government, and the teachings of Christ. The class, which was led by the Rev. Wilkins, ran from October 5 to November 9.

Unionville (J. Howat)—The church youth group will join in the contemporary worship services each Sunday evening at 6 p.m. from October to November, as part of a Purpose Driven Youth program. Forty days of games and programs tied into "40 Days of Purpose" will follow the worship participation events.



Help wanted

Central Presbyterian Church, Downingtown, PA, is seeking a full-time Youth Director. Responsibilities of this position include coordination and oversight of youth ministry programs from third grade through high school. Major duties include outreach to students, discipleship of students in and out of the church, and recruiting, equipping, and training of ministry teams. Ministering Sunday evenings for senior high and Wednesday evenings for upper elementary school and middle school youths is essential. Candidates must have a personal commitment to Jesus Christ, a great love for youth, and a strong desire to nurture them in their Christian journey. Strong relational skills, proven organization skills, attention to details, and written and oral communications skills are needed. Qualifications include a degree in youth ministry and/or two years proven experience. E-mail resumes to: personnel@cpcdowningtown.org or mail to Youth Director Search Committee, 100 Uwchlan Ave. Downingtown, PA, 19335 or fax to 610-269-9842.

First Church of Phoenixville is seeking a Worship and Praise Team Leader to lead the music and direct the praise

team during our contemporary rise and shine service. This salaried, part-time position (approximately 10 hours per week) is an opportunity for the right candidate to contribute to a loving, growing, and thriving church. Interested musicians should forward their resume to: secretaryfpc@comcast.net or mail to: The First Presbyterian Church of Phoenixville, 145 Main Street, Phoenixville, PA, 19460 RE: Praise Team Leader.

Stewartstown has announced an opening for a church organist. Duties include playing one service per week, plus additional special services throughout the year. Full information regarding job description, terms, and salary, may be obtained by calling 717-993-6278 or e-mailing stpresby@verizon.net.

Unionville is seeking a Director of Children's Ministry. The position includes planning and implementation of children educational programs, infant through 5th grade, developing Christian-based curricula, coordination of Sunday School teachers, and family programs. Inquiries and resumes may be directed to UPC Office, attn: CE Ministry Team, 815 Wollaston Rd., P.O. Box 447, Unionville, PA, 19375, 610-347-2327.

Imagination, Metaphor, and Leadership

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of individualism and direct global access to mission. And when executive presbyters become "church bureaucrats," then we shouldn't be shocked that they become the lightning rod of all the anxieties and anger we feel about the nameless and faceless bureaucracies that manage (and mis-manage) so much of our lives. I believe that our conversation needs to be not just about the purpose of the presbytery, but about the images and metaphors we are using when we talk about it—because through them we are entering narratives that will shape us and the choices we make. Are we primarily a governing body? If so, how do we speak genuinely about developing community—because exercising power and living out vows of support can come into conflict. And when they do, our primary imagination will hold sway in our actions and choices.

We leaders have incredible power in the images and metaphors we use. The question will be whether we have the courage to hold up those metaphors in the light of the gospel of Jesus Christ to see whether or not they faithfully give witness to God's glory in this day and age.

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