

GENERAL PRESBYTER'S REPORT

Rev. Bobbi White
October 23-24, 2009

“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (Matthew 28:19-20)

“As the Father sends me, so I send you.” (John 20:21b)

I am always delighted, when I am part of a group that is exploring scripture together, with how fresh scripture speaks in both new and old ways. For three days, the general presbyters from across the country met. We spent one third to one half of our time in Bible study and worship, trying to listen to God's voice. Of course, we did business, shared challenges and exciting things we see God doing in the churches, and explored new learnings. There was a plan for three years of training for new general presbyters focusing on “spiritual leadership.” However, my strongest memory was sitting around tables sharing about scripture. I yearn for us to do more of this as a Presbytery.

In reflecting on Jesus' command to us, I often hear people say that we do not have enough resources or faith to do what they think God is calling us to do. As I have reflected on this, I look back at the disciples that Jesus taught and commanded to go spread the word and heal the sick. Matthew often speaks of them as having “little faith.” We often see Jesus using the “not adequate” to perform miracles. I believe Jesus wants to do that through us!

Before Jesus fed the five thousand, he told the disciples to feed them. When they said they couldn't, he asked them what they had. The response was only five loaves and two fish. Indeed, those resources seemed grossly inadequate. Yet, the Lord used those few resources to feed thousands. The Lord can use our resources, both great and small!

In the next story, when Jesus walks on the water, he chides the disciples, “you of little faith, why do you doubt?” Even when Jesus gives the Great Commission, Matthew says that the disciples worship, but some doubted. My prayer has often been, “O Lord, increase my faith.” Now I wonder if it should also be, “O Lord, help me use my little faith for your kingdom.”

I believe during this time, God will use even our little faith and our small resources to build the Kingdom. God is calling us to step out into a hurting and more secular world to proclaim the Gospel, grow in our faith, and feed the hungry. God calls us to believe God will use even us, and multiple our gifts and offerings.

There are many ways I can see God using our gifts:

- Morrison is looking for new ways to reach out to their neighborhood and invite people to their church and to help the children in a local school.
- New Vision, the new church development in Conover, is inviting people to church using morning radio “invitations.” They are providing 70 backpacks of weekend food for children at a local elementary school and helping youth pay to play in a soccer league. They provide worship at a local nursing home.
- Banner Elk and Waldensian have started new worship services to reach people who may not now be coming to church, and in Banner Elk’s case, to reach out to college students.
- Kenilworth has a food pantry for people with HIV/Aids and people in hospice. Their collection box, near the sidewalk, encouraged two youth, not members of their church, to canvas the neighborhood collecting food. Another person joined the church when she saw their ministry. They have invited the neighbors to come to the church for a music concert. On some Saturdays, church members and others gather to help neighbors by providing free yard work and more. They witness by wearing their church tee shirts
- First Gastonia packed more than 30,000 meals for hungry people. It was a task that involved everyone from the children to the older adults.
- Third Street does blood pressure checks. Soon they will invite the community to learn how to prepare and eat healthy meals.

God calls each of us and our churches to reach out in different ways and to grow in our faith, both those of us with little and great faith, and those with small and large resources.