

General Presbyter's Report July 27, 2010

I started to title my report to you, "Four hundred and thirty pounds of broccoli and a new parking lot." That is because these are two of many good news stories of mission and growth. One small church that has had the same number of people, (about forty) in worship for several years, now finds itself coping 25 more bulletins and needing more parking. Wow!

Then I heard that a church had a beautiful green lawn, which has now become a community garden with the objective of sharing the proceeds with agencies working with hunger. The rumor says that the church gave 430 pounds of broccoli to use for meals at several agencies in Asheville. Wow!

The Lord is at work in many ways. I believe the Lord is at work in our presbytery, the churches in this presbytery, our denomination and the General Assembly. So what about General Assembly so far?

As I write this message, we are only a couple of days in the General Assembly. So far, we have had inspiring opening worship and daily worship. Worship and long committee meetings, along with prayer and song, have been the order of the day. Each of our commissioners has been dealing with important issues,

As many of you know, Maggie Lauterer stood for moderator. Her candidate for vice-moderator was a wonderful young Korean woman pastor from California. Maggie made our presbytery proud and showed her pastoral and leadership gifts and passion for church's growing.

Our commissioners have been on many of the key committees. They have been working hard. Paula Wallace was on the committee that studied the New Form of Government (nFOG), which has passed the Assembly with amendments, many of which Paula had worked on. It was felt that it was important for the presbyteries to look at this new form of government and not be denied this opportunity. As we know, this kind of recommendation comes to votes in all the presbyteries.

In addition, the General Assembly has approved sending the Belhar Confession to the Presbyteries for their study and decision. For this to pass would require a two-thirds "yes" vote in the presbyteries and would then require that the next General Assembly also approve by a two-thirds majority. It is a high standard. Many felt that the Belhar Confession was important enough for presbyteries to study and vote on.

Heath Rada chaired the Bills and Overtures Committee. Heath and his committee are trying to coordinate all our work. Carolyn Poteet's committee dealt with many mission opportunities that faced limited funding, yet managed to find creative solutions. James Bernhardt dealt with issues of peace and justice. Maggie Lauterer dealt with Ecumenical and interfaith issues about Jews, Christians and Muslims. Annie Franklin worked with ordination standards and Jackie Scott looked at Civil Unions. Bert Sigmon, Charles Davenport, Anita Bernhardt and I are also at General Assembly, as well as a number of people from our presbytery who are on GA committees, exhibitors or observers.

The General Assembly will take up more business. Our Commissioners will be speaking to the business at the Presbytery meeting. As I have said earlier, the General Assembly has many tough issues and it will be hard for anyone to agree with all of them. Our presbytery will have an opportunity to vote on those overtures sent to the presbytery. But decisions made at the General Assembly must not cause us to lose our

focus on “making disciples” and “demonstrating God’s love.” After the General Assembly, we will establish a way for everyone to learn about and discuss the issues on which we will vote as a presbytery. I believe the work of the Holy Spirit will work in our General Assembly and through our presbyteries, even when we cannot see it now. Let us pray that we will keep our focus on Jesus and the work in which Jesus calls us to do.

Peace and grace,

Bobbi