

General Presbyter's Report

April 24, 2012

CHRIST HAS RISEN! CHRIST HAS RISEN INDEED!

Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord." (John 20:18a)

Have a blessed Easter! I will be spending Easter at Nkhoma in Malawi with Dr. Barbara Nagy and Melia, Anna, and Happy. Many of you know Barbara and her children. Barbara is a pediatric missionary doctor from this Presbytery. We support 80% of her cost. I will be taking medical supplies, school supplies, and knitted hats for newborn and sick babies. Special thanks to the many of you who have (and are) contributing to these gifts.

It will be exciting to spend Easter worshipping in Africa. On Easter, I will enjoy the many choirs of Nkhoma, praising God and celebrating the resurrection. Although I will not understand the words, it is a reminder of how the Spirit of God is working across continents and languages to proclaim Christ's death and resurrection to people who live in very different cultures and situations. The saving love of Jesus Christ is our uniting song.

I will remember you in prayer as you sing "Christ the Lord is Risen Today." I will remember how we shared part of Holy Week together. The Palm Sunday worship services, the Holy week services at the Mayland Fellowship, Maundy Thursday in Gastonia, and the stations of the Cross at Morganton. I will miss being with you on Good Friday and for the Easter Vigil. I will remember that across the presbytery we shared the same stories of Christ's death and resurrection. I give thanks for how God is at work in our midst. May the good news of Easter continue to make our "hearts burn within us" as the disciples at Emmaus said.

Celebrating Christ's resurrection in Africa is a testimony to how the Spirit is at work in the world, including in our presbytery and churches. I am thankful for the many people who have been, and are, instrumental in sharing the gospel. I particularly give thanks for the mission co-workers from this presbytery and for all the missionaries that our churches support. This reminds me that we are a mission field and I give thanks for each of you, pastors, elders, and members who are sharing the good news with many people who do not know it in our communities. May the spirit empower us to live as Easter people and Pentecost people. May we take the good news of Easter, and like those at Pentecost, spill out of our dwelling into the street to tell others about Christ.

Happy Pentecost! In addition to being Easter people, we are Pentecost people. Jesus said, "As the Father sends me, so I send you." Jesus also said, "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." (Acts 1:6-8)

This year, our Presbytery is emphasizing a year of Evangelism. We will celebrate Pentecost in worship at this Presbytery meeting. We are encouraging our congregations to preach and read the book of Acts during the summer to learn about the outreach of the early church and to hear a word from the Lord speaking to us about how we can reach out today. The day before presbytery, Lamar Williamson will lead a Bible study at

William Black Lodge on the book of Acts. The Evangelism Committee is asking each church to do one thing for Evangelism this year. We used to think the mission field is "over there," but now we realize it is right here. We often have friends who experience hard times and wonder how they can do it without the Lord. I pray that the Holy Spirit will help us as individuals and congregations to be bold witnesses for our faith in Jesus Christ, and open our eyes to see where God is at work and give thanks.

God is at work in our lives, the churches, this presbytery and the world. The Presbytery is trying to provide greater service to the churches by having a part-time person work with churches in a geographic area. We have not been able to do this completely because of finances. Beginning this month, Barbara Ross has accepted a volunteer staff position to work with the Mayland (Mitchell, Avery, and Yancey) and McDowell areas. Barbara began doing a lot of this work as a COM member. She has expanded that to include officer training through the presbytery and is also working with Pastor Nominating Committees. I am excited to have Barbara join the presbytery staff.

On March 18, there was an open house at the Marion First Church for the free medical clinic that will operate in part of their church building. The clinic has 700 patients, eight volunteer doctors plus many volunteer nurses. They are open Tuesday from 4 p.m. to 9 p.m. and will soon open on Thursday evenings. The church is letting them have space for a dollar a year. The church may open up the fellowship hall for soup for those who have blood work and come without eating. The clinic is thrilled to be there and the church is thrilled to have them. Jeff Coffey, the pastor of the church, says that the church can see God's hand in this new adventure.

On March 25, an anti-bullying rally was held at First Morganton for youth and their parents. Over 200 folks were in attendance, which highlights the hunger and thirst for educational programs and events like this that deal with the difficult subject of bullying. The event was co-led by Kent Patton, who has worked with youth for over 25 years at Black Mountain Presbyterian Church. Using video clips and role plays, Kent showed how and why kids bully each other, and then the youth talked about ways to respond when they see others bullied, or when they themselves are bullied. The event also focused on cyberbullying which has increased the frequency and impact of bullying for today's youth. This rally was supported by the Presbytery's portion of the Peace Making Offering. Thanks to those that contributed. Your church may want to consider an event like this for your community.

The Mayland Fellowship is observing Holy Week with worship services during the week. They are doing something different this year. The event began with supper provided by the Spruce Pine members. Since the Fellowship was started by lay members of the three counties, the preachers and liturgists for three nights will be elders (Bob Ayala from Newdale, John Hall from Grassy Creek and Jim Taylor from Crossnore). The first night, George Gunn, veteran pastor of Fletcher, preached. Inspiring Holy Week music was provided by the Banner Elk choir. Music will be provided by a variety of churches and includes the Burnsville Children's Choir, Spruce Pine First Choir and Newdale Choir. Did I mention the refreshments at the end of worship provided by different churches? It is a good way to spend Holy Week, in worship and fellowship together.

When a person visited Oakwood Presbyterian Church for worship, a young girl recognized her as a guest and gave her a pretty homemade bookmark and welcomed her to the church. This person wondered if all visitors are welcomed that way ~ but it so happened the Sunday School class had just made the bookmarker and the young girl wanted a visitor to have one. Other exciting things are happening there. Oakwood is being pastored by Phillip Adams. He and Edyth Pruitt, pastor of Fairview Presbyterian, will celebrate Maundy Thursday and Easter sunrise services together. Phillip also shared with me the Jericho walk around the church that is planned. The members will walk around the church seven times and pray for the church, the nurturing of its people and outreach into the community, and for the people there and those yet to come. It sounds like a wonderful way to embody the story from the Old Testament.

I could write many pages of God's activity in our midst and I give thanks for the ways God has worked. At this Easter time, may the Spirit empower us to live as Easter people and Pentecost people. May we take the good news of Easter, and like those at Pentecost, spill out of our dwelling into the street to tell others about Christ.

Peace,

Bobbi