

General Presbyter's Report Bobbi White, General Presbyter

Jesus said, "You are witnesses to these things."

"You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. (Luke 24:48 and Acts 1:8)

We are Easter people. Jesus said, "You are witnesses to these things." Our Presbytery's work has been described as strengthening congregations to be faithful and vital witnesses to Jesus Christ. Our current Presbytery Mission is "SEE, We are the Body of Christ (Strengthening Congregations, Equipping Disciples and Leaders, and Engaging in Mission)." What are some of the ways that we equip disciples to be faithful and vital witnesses to Christ? Let me share just a few!

At the Middle School Rally in Montreat last weekend, I was pleased to watch the high school students of the Presbytery Youth Council lead parts of the retreat. They greeted the middle school students, led the different fun activities, provided the music, and were the leaders in the small groups. It was exciting to see how their leadership and faith has been nurtured by Beth Gunn and the other adult leaders in this Presbytery. The middle-school participants seemed to be having a great time. They were also challenged by the keynote speaker and by the Youth Council leaders in their small groups to grow in their understanding of their faith and God's love for them.

The applications for the Presbytery Youth Council are due May 22nd. It is a wonderful opportunity for youth in your church to learn leadership, grow in their faith and experience our connectional church. When I was in high school, my experience of being on Youth Council helped to shape my faith in many ways. I am sure that is the case for many of you as well. Please encourage your sophomores, juniors and seniors to apply (presbyterywnc.org; Youth Connection; Presbytery Youth Council).

There is also a Presbytery Youth Mission Work Trip (WOW - Week of Work). It is exploring and working in the Asheville area through Asheville Youth Mission during July 12-17. Mission trips can be life changing. This is available for smaller membership youth, as well as for our larger churches. For information about the Youth Council and Mission Trip: presbyterywnc.org; Youth Connection; Time to Mark Your Calendar.

The Church Leadership School provides an outstanding learning opportunity for people who want to deepen their faith, be better leaders in their congregation, and/or serve as Commissioned Lay Pastors (CLPs). Bob Ayala said that the school was life transforming and life-changing for him. Many people in our Presbytery's program are transformed, energized, and become excited about scripture and their faith. Some attended because they felt God's nudge. Graduates say they are better Sunday School teachers, mission coordinators, session members, and faithful disciples. They are stronger leaders and witnesses in their churches. Some have become Commissioned Lay Pastors. John Stanley and Joe Gernoske have served at First Gastonia and Trinity, respectively, as pastors of visitation/congregational care for more than ten years. Others have served as solo pastors, and a few have served as chaplains, staff of Presbytery, and as the Stated Clerk.

The School has six independent quarters of study. The courses cover Old and New Testament, theology, worship, ministry, church history, faith development and more. Studying scripture and theology with new friends can be spiritually energizing. Consider attending in September.

Another important Presbytery function is your support of people studying to be pastors. Joseph Taber, who was one of the preachers at the last presbytery meeting, went through our Presbytery's Committee on Preparation for Ministry process to become a pastor. So did Michael McKee, who is now serving at Newland, and Marshall Nord, who is using his talents as a media evangelist. These pastors are a blessing to congregations and beyond.

At this meeting, Patrick McElwaine, currently in that process, is taking the next step by requesting to become a Candidate. His Session recommends him and now he needs approval of the Presbytery. See the Committee on Preparation for Ministry's report for the process, and continue to remember all of our Candidates and Inquirers in prayer.

Last week, people in the Presbytery had the opportunity to attend "Heart of Prayer, a Spiritual Retreat" which was held in Montreat. Revs. Edna Banes and John Rogers led that retreat. John has just written a wonderful book on prayer. Edna is a well known, experienced pastor and educator. This was a wonderful opportunity to grow deeper in our prayer life.

Other ways the Presbytery equips disciples includes our "Engaging in Mission" work. We support Camp Grier and their work of integrating the good news of the gospel with their adventure program for campers. We support the Ebenezer School in Malawi that provides excellent education, nurturing children in a Christian environment. The alternative is to have a hundred kids in a classroom, with only the teacher having a book. We help children in Guatemala attend school, learn how to read, and have an opportunity to escape poverty. It is hoped that through our "Building H.O.P.E. Campaign," Guatemalan students will be supported.

There are other ways that you, through the work of Presbytery, can help to equip disciples and church leaders. This year, as we look at our new mission/vision statement and our old structure, we will be asking about the needs and ways of equipping disciples and leaders. What should the Presbytery be doing? How should the Presbytery support pastors, educators, elders, church leaders, our youth and more? We welcome your input on these questions.

Peace,



Bobbi

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Strengthening Congregations,
Equipping Disciples,
Engaging in Mission