

GENERAL PRESBYTER'S REPORT

July 30, 2019

As PWNC, being the body of Christ, we covenant to SEE . . .
Strengthen Congregations, Equip Disciples, and Engage in Mission.

At this Presbytery meeting, we will celebrate the tenth anniversary of Ebenezer Institute of Learning in Malawi by receiving an offering to support scholarships for education. There are also other anniversaries to celebrate:

- 30th anniversary of Presbytery of Western North Carolina
- 25th anniversary of the Guatemalan Partnership (January 2020)
- 15 year anniversary of partnership in Nkhoma, Malawi
- 7 year anniversary with Camp Grier (501(c)3)

In 1989, the Presbytery of Western North Carolina was formed. It is our 30th anniversary. Our Mission Statement read, *“Out of our rich heritage of our three former presbyteries, Asheville, Catawba, and Concord, from the mountains to the Piedmont, with congregations small and large, with people of different ethnic and cultural background, with varied theological perspectives within the Reformed faith ---*

“God calls the Presbytery of Western North Carolina to build an effective witness for Jesus Christ to all people within our bounds and beyond, through active, faithful congregations, . . . Empowered by God we seek to share the Gospel and to demonstrate God’s love and justice as evangelists and servants of Jesus Christ.”

As the new PWNC, we were to strengthen connections; affirm and assist the smaller churches; support ministries of compassion and justice; nurture congregations, church professionals and individuals, challenge churches to grow in numbers and in faithfulness, and to share God’s grace with the world.

Over the years, PWNC has successfully done this as the body of Christ, strengthening congregations, equipping disciples and **engaging in mission. Today we are featuring anniversaries of our engaging in mission.**

The early presbytery had a passion for mission, hunger, compassion, peace, and justice. Its vision included the local community and the world. PWNC had an “alternative Christmas giving” when that was a radical practice. Its 2 cents a meal program reached out locally and globally. Mission trips for PDA were a common practice. PCUSA mission co-workers, Ellen Dozier and John McCall, were supported. Mission teams were sent to the border ministry in Mexico. PWNC understood God’s love for all people, and for those with much to share that much was expected.

GUATEMALA (25 years)

This new Presbytery had visionaries who helped establish the covenant with two presbyteries in Guatemala, Sur Occidente and Suchitepéquez, with whom we celebrate 25 years of partnership in January 2020. Over the years, God has expanded our vision and ministry to include even more brothers and sisters, both here and in Guatemala. This partnership has allowed more than 30 churches in the PWNC to be matched with a sister church in Guatemala. Together, sister churches have the opportunity to build relationships and explore new ways to positively impact the lives of the people in their sister churches. Some churches do this by providing scholarships to children, supporting the continued education of their pastors, engaging in health projects, or completing other local initiatives. PWNC churches who are not matched with a sister church also have the

opportunity to engage in the partnership through delegation trips and by supporting education, health and microloan projects in our sister presbyteries.



Last week, Newton First Presbyterian Church was blessed to host Timoteo and Aidee Rodas, a couple from their Guatemalan sister Church. When members of Newton's congregation asked how they can continue to support, Timoteo responded, "Keep sending scholarships". He continued, "We used to think it was good if someone from our small village got through the 6th grade. Now, thanks to the scholarships, we expect students to graduate from high school, and we have two students in college." Education is a way out of poverty. Think of the impact of his statement!

God continues to point us in ways we could not have imagined. Several years ago, education experts from the three presbyteries met in Guatemala to evaluate future educational needs and

how we can partner to grow the scholarship program. This task force came back with wonderful plans, but without any idea of how we could fund the more than \$250,000 needed to implement their ideas. The Building HOPE Ministry Campaign was an answer to prayer, and provided a tool to fund the critical education ministry they had identified.



As we celebrate this wonderful partnership, be reminded that:

- ❖ We have laughed and cried and prayed with each other. We have buried friends, celebrated births, marriages, and ordinations and grown in our faith together. We have learned from each other and have become more faithful.
- ❖ Guatemalan children now have the opportunity to go to school, graduate from high school, and go on to receive a college education.
- ❖ Women are helped by Presbyterian Women's microloans to better themselves economically and personally, to get out of extreme poverty, and to give their children a chance to attend school.
- ❖ Health has been improved with input from Health Coordinators, better stoves, and water filters.
- ❖ Libraries are being put into schools and churches, teachers and parents are being taught how to help children read.
- ❖ The Guatemalans joined us in funding 80% of Dr. Barbara Nagy's support in Malawi, allowing them to give to mission, as well as receive. The first money of Barbara's support were quetzals. Kids collected cans at soccer games for children in Malawi. Money is still given to the hospital at Nkhoma.
- ❖ Thirty plus church to church partnerships enrich our faith and allow us to be part of God's work in the world.
- ❖ PWNC youth have learned from Guatemalan youth, and some have done their senior projects connected to Guatemala or our partnership.
- ❖ Pastor Kevin Frederick (Waldensian Presbyterian Church) developed a curriculum called "Men in the Mirror," to address "machismo," and domestic violence in the Guatemalan home. This program aligns with Scripture and equips men to model Godly leadership. It has been well received in churches across Guatemala and is now being promoted among law enforcement agencies.



NKHOMA MALAWI – THE HOSPITAL, EBENEZER SCHOOL, RURAL HEALTH CLINICS, MOBILE HEALTH UNIT, SEMINARY GRADUATES, & MISSION CO-WORKERS (15 YEARS)

This is the 15th year of our relationship with the folks in Malawi. It all started with Dr. Barbara Nagy, a Pediatrician at Nkhoma Hospital. This Presbytery made a decision to begin providing 80% support for Barbara. After visiting Barbara in Malawi, we started working with the hospital. That decision led to so many other ministries. God has continued to expand our vision:

- When visiting Barbara, we started working with the hospital on bathrooms and staff housing.
- In year three, the hospital asked us to help start a school so their employees would have a school for their children. First Gastonia funded the first building with two classrooms.
- Now, there are about 400 children at Ebenezer in pre-kindergarten through middle school, and PWNC supports more than 60 scholarship students.
- We helped fund the hospital's nine rural clinics and their staff housing to get electricity and updated or improved facilities. We continue to support the mobile health unit, and hospital improvement. Equipping all clinics with electricity and water has been one of our primary objectives.
- PWNC has supported the hospital in many ways, helping with staff housing, supporting a medicine fund, painting education murals in the wards, fixing exam rooms, etc.
- This year, a major project was funded by a PWNC donor, enabling the Nkhoma Hospital and village to double their water supply, so there would not be rationing of one hour of water in the morning and at night. This significantly impacts the hospital, schools, seminary, Synod, and people.
- This year, seminary graduates, helping to serve over one million Presbyterians, got bicycles to travel to their churches, as well as study Bibles and clerical shirts. We have also helped with seminary housing.
- Last year, we celebrated visits from Chrissie Mbewe, principal of Ebenezer and Vasco Kachipapa Banda, General Secretary of the Nkhoma Synod. The Nkhoma Synod has over one million Presbyterians.
- Mission Teams travel to Malawi every year to strengthen relationships, work with our partners in ministry, and share together our faith in Jesus Christ. Each time we go, we hear, "You care and you come back." Justin, a college student on this year's team said, "our time and our relationships are more important to them than our money."
- Mission teams have included about 150 people collectively, who worked hand in hand, side by side, with Malawians. Members say that being there is a spiritual experience, where they see God at work. Being there changes your life forever, whether you are a college student or a senior citizen.

CAMP GRIER (7 YEARS)

Our Presbytery has been a long-standing contributor to Camp Grier for many years. While the camp has only been supported as a 501(c)(3) for 7 years, this relationship and ministry is definitely worth celebrating!

In 2013, the number of campers were decreasing, particularly with older youth. There were questions about the future of the camp and its viability. However, PWNC shared the vision of Camp Grier's director and Board that Camp Grier could be a premier Christian adventure camp. When Salem and Charlotte had financial challenges and had to pull their support, PWNC continued with its funding and also added Camp Grier to its Building HOPE Ministry Campaign. The camp needed an infusion of capital to grow and thrive. It had to purchase new equipment, expand existing programming,



update poor lodging and facilities and get ready to appeal to campers and off-season visitors. Since 2015, we have contributed \$311,400 through Building HOPE. We celebrate the wonderful growth of the camp during this seven-year relationship.

The Camp has invited us to come celebrate with them on Camp Grier's Dedication Day. This will be held Saturday, August 31, from 11:00 a.m. until 5 p.m. Camp Grier will dedicate some of their newest additions, as well as the horse riding arena and new lake facilities. (See more details in the packet.)

ENGAGING IN MISSION

The anniversaries mentioned above in the "Engaging in Mission area," have happened because different people and groups have seen a vision and responded to their understanding of God's call. There are other wonderful mission happenings that were not mentioned, including PDA trips, Nickel a meal, etc. Some churches are working to end systemic racism, tackling immigration issues, confronting homelessness, etc. Other things are also happening in "Equipping Disciples" and "Strengthening Congregations," which is so critical to our work as a Presbytery.

FUTURE ENDEAVORS

In addition to these anniversaries and wonderful celebrations, I want to share some things for you to look forward to in the future.

An important project in the presbytery is helping churches look at where and what God is calling them to do and be. PWNC was involved in a pilot project with the Presbyterian Foundation, that was targeted to help churches see God's vision as it relates to their particular church. The plan was to take what we had learned and redesign it to benefit our presbytery. A new process has been created and utilized at one of our churches. Plans are already underway to work with two other churches. It is our hope that through this work we will be able to benefit all of our churches who engage in this learning.



Another important and exciting change for the Presbytery is the new Advocate Program. The Committee on Ministry and General Council want us to have stronger and more supportive relationships with the churches in the Presbytery. This is particularly important during times of transition. People are volunteering to be advocates with two to five churches. The goal for these Advocates is to get to know the congregations, the pastors, their needs and celebrations, and to share with other local churches places where churches might be able to work together. The Advocates will attend a worship service and hopefully get to know you, and you them. Watch for announcements of the Advocates in your area.

The Building HOPE Ministry Campaign's Vital Churches Task Force is trying to assess the technology needs of the churches in the Presbytery. They are asking for volunteers to help. If you or someone you know is interested, please let the Presbytery office know.

The Peace and Justice Committee is recommending that the Presbytery consider becoming a Matthew 25 Presbytery and that our churches consider that also. Watch for more details on that initiative.

SUMMER PROGRAMS AND OUTREACH

Southminster looked at new ways to do their summer programs. They hosted four basketball camps and one art camp instead of a traditional VBS. In explaining this, Dan Oedy wrote, "As followers of Christ committed to



being 'reformed and always reforming according to the word of God,' we want to be open to the movement of the Holy Spirit." After observing success stories of "themed camps," we tried an Art Camp and Basketball Camps last year. They have been more appealing to the participants – many of whom would not attend a VBS program. Our objective is to REACH out and spread the gospel and love of Jesus and camps have been extremely successful in accomplishing this goal. Themed camps – in a church – are a niche that is underserved. There are many VBS programs.

Also having camps spread over four weeks, allows families who need summer activities for their children to fill some of those hours with positive programs. The participant level is manageable. It gives the leaders the opportunity to build "authentic relationships," which is one of our core values and makes a church community unique and faithful. Adding the lunch option was a real positive for the families. Scripture remind us there's something very powerful about sharing a meal together. The parents are willing to pay because their children are excited to attend. The church continues to pray about how they can most effectively REACH, TRANSFORM and SEND.

Third Street was asked to support a summer food site for children who are food insecure. They also host a non-food pantry, where people can get non-food stamp items like soap, toothpaste, toilet paper, and shampoo. They have a new pastor and they celebrated the work of the Spirit in their midst, like many other churches, by wearing red at Pentecost.



Warren Wilson has been growing in young families and children. To reflect that growth and to also reach out and encourage that growth, they are making a youth and children's room and planning to create two children's playgrounds that can be shared by the church and community.

As always, I am encouraged and excited to see the work of God's people in our Presbytery. I urge you to be open to the Spirit and be willing to try new things as we seek to share Christ's love in our community and the world.

Peace,

Bobbi

Bobbi White