

Report of the General Presbyter January 7, 2021

*“Getting to know you,
Getting to know all about you.
Getting to like you,
Getting to hope you like me”*

- Lyrics to the song, “Getting to Know You” by Rodgers and Hammerstein

Happy New Year!! I hope you and your loved ones had a safe and blessed holiday season and look forward to the changes that 2021 will bring.

Since our last Presbytery meeting, I have been spending time visiting (albeit safely and socially distanced) around the Presbytery, learning about our various churches, ministers, and ministries. One of the various ways I have done this is by the weekly Thursday “Lunch with the General Presbyter” using Zoom. All the spaces were filled and I had lots of lunch dates with ministers of the Presbytery. Online technology has been a wonderful substitute for in-person gathering! I plan to continue this in 2021. I have also had the opportunity to visit some of our congregations (either drive-by or in-person) as I spent a full day with each of our Presbytery Associates - Bob Ayala (Mitchell and Yancey counties), Charles Davenport (Gastonia area), and Barbara Ross (Avery County). I had a wonderful time discussing life and ministry with a number of the pastors and was impressed at the ways they are discerning mission and ministry in the course of the pandemic. One of the churches that I visited was Tee Gatewood’s congregation, Arbor Dale Presbyterian in Banner Elk, which sits right above Holston Presbytery Camp and Conference Center. I was the Summer Camp Director there when I was in seminary and the counseling staff worshipped there occasionally. It was great to see all of the renovations to the church since that time. Arbor Dale has come a long way! It was also wonderful to visit the other congregations in those counties.

Like many of you, I have been in more Zoom meetings than I care to count. Nevertheless, I am thankful for this technology so we can continue the work of the Presbytery of Western North Carolina. Whether I am meeting with the General Council, Committee on Ministry, Committee on Examinations, or an Administrative Commission, the work is important and the development of relationships are vital. One fun thing I did was teach a preaching course for the Church Leadership School in December. I was excited to see those who have a heart for ministry or just wanted to learn more about preaching the

Word of God. I was also honored that they put up with my teaching! ;-). Zoom has also come in handy as I have participated in livestreamed worship with Grace Covenant Presbyterian Church in Asheville. I have also provided three pre-recorded sermons for pastors to use for their congregations and those have been received well.

Looking toward the future, I plan to continue establishing relationships as well as focusing on the work of the Presbytery. I will set up more "Lunch Dates with the General Presbyter," which will begin later this month. I am also available to preach for your congregation by virtual or pre-recorded means and welcome invites to do so. Beginning later this month, I am leading an ad hoc committee of the General Council to examine our process of nominations, which may include reviewing our committee structures as well. Also, I plan to give more emphasis to the PCUSA's Matthew 25 Initiative since the PWNC has gone on record to be a Matthew 25 Presbytery. We have some individual congregations who have signed on as well and I hope to highlight their work in this area to support you and your congregations as we take on this important initiative. These are just a few things on my plate to date.

I continue to be encouraged by your prayers and support as your General Presbyter. I pray that God will further bless you, your loved ones, ministry contexts and all of us in the Presbytery as we work together to fulfill God's will. And like the song says, I look forward to "getting to know you."

Peace,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Byron".

Byron Wade