

## REPORT OF THE GENERAL PRESBYTER 135th STATED MEETING OF THE PRESBYTERY OF WESTERN NORTH CAROLINA APRIL 25, 2023

*“The first step towards getting somewhere is to decide you’re not going to stay where you are.”*  
— JP Morgan

Sometimes in life, as well as in ministry, there is a point which we have to decide what direction to go in. For some people, this could be a harrowing decision. Questions arise in our minds such as, “What am I going to do now?” “Where should I go?” “Lord, are you sure this is where I am supposed to go?” Even more difficult is the pull to stay where we are. We are comfortable with things around us and that keeps us from considering moving out of our comfort zones. However, we all know that few things in life are static. For those of us who follow in the footsteps of Jesus, we are acutely aware that God’s Holy Spirit moves us from where we are to whom God calls us to be. If we individually and collectively are to move forward, we have to be confident enough to take the first step, trusting that God is leading us.

We are doing just that here in the PWNC. An example of this is the hiring of new Presbytery Associates. The Personnel Committee conducted interviews and extended offers for three positions, which have been accepted. Our three new Presbytery Associates are Tom Phillips, Schaap Freeman, and George and Beverly Thompson (they will share one position). Each of them will serve a geographic region of the Presbytery to build relationships with pastors and congregations, in addition to providing training for Pastor Nominating and Associate Pastor Nominating Committees and such. I am impressed by their commitment, range of experience and skills, and desire to work in the PWNC. You will have the opportunity to meet them at the Presbytery meeting!

The Revisioning Task Force is continuing to take steps in discerning our design for ministry. You may remember following our strategic planning retreat last fall that we formulated a strategic implementation plan which has separate tasks for four quarters of 2023. In the first quarter, (January to March) we have accomplished three of the six tasks (communication specialist in place, launch pastoral cohorts, and assess staff needs). We are now focusing on the tasks of second quarter (April to June) –

- Use town hall meetings to relay envisioning to congregations
- Provide more regional opportunities
- Facilitate break-out groups at Presbytery meetings
- Plan/provide adult curriculum workshop
- Schedule African-American Advisory Committee meeting

- Launch CP cohorts
- Model new forms of worship at Presbytery meetings
- Have Clerks of Session gatherings

In addition, we are examining and discerning the purpose of our committees and ways of being more relational and mission-focused. Please keep us in your prayers for this important work.

We are taking steps as a Presbytery to renew relationships with our international partners. You may remember last December I was a part of the Presbytery delegation to visit and get to know our partners in Guatemala, specifically in Sur Occidente and Suchitepéquez Presbyteries. By the time you read this, I will have returned from a Presbytery delegation trip to Malawi. Eight of us went to reestablish relationships with our partners at Nkhoma Hospital, Ebenezer School, the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP) and the Seminary. We are blessed to have these relationships!

I continue to be amazed and blessed in my visits to churches in the PWNC. You all have been so gracious and welcoming. In addition, WE are blessed with a great administrative staff who is always ready to serve. Marcia Puckett, one of our Administrative Assistants, retired on Wednesday, April 5<sup>th</sup>. She has served us faithfully for the past 28 years and she will be missed. Please keep her in your prayers.

As we all continue to follow the teaching of Jesus Christ and the leading of the Holy Spirit, may we not be afraid to take the first steps toward whom God is calling us to be, both individually and collectively as the PWNC.

Peace,



Byron