

Executive Presbyter Report to Presbytery

August 16-17, 2019

Calvin Crest, Fremont NE



Introduction

The work of PMRV continues to take on new excitement with continued possibilities for even more vital ministry. The following information in this report will keep you apprised about the as we work to be faithful to God in all we do for the kingdom. The work of our committees continues, and there are some creative programs that you will discover later in this report. As always, I continue as pastor to pastors, head of staff, resourcing committees, our ecumenical representative in the community and with our GA partners, and worshipping with our congregations. Let us continue to pray with and for each other.

Matthew 25

With the beginning of the ministry of the new Executive Director and President of the PMA, Rev. Dr. Diane Givens-Moffett, a new vision for ministry and mission in the PCUSA was cast. The concept of being a “Matthew 25 Church” took hold, and congregations around the denomination adopted this vision for their work in communities. Several presbyteries have adopted the Matthew 25 approach for ministry, and at its most recent Synod of the Lakes and Prairies Meeting, our Synod voted unanimously to become a Matthew 25 Synod.

Your congregations will learn about Matthew 25 concept of ministry, and in my visits to your churches along with others around the presbytery, you will hear more about what the Matthew 25 approach to ministry means. With this commitment comes the importance of understanding what is involved in becoming a Matthew 25 Presbytery, and most important, becoming a Matthew 25 congregation. The PCUSA website (www.pcusa.org) contains the details of the Matthew 25 theological concept. It outlines what is involved in becoming a more relevant presence in our world today through becoming a church of action, being actively engaged in ministry around the world, and that human effort is required to be the best ministry-focused denomination that we can be. It takes commitment from all of our congregations, presbyteries, synods, and committed church leaders such as everyone. (This paragraph was adapted from the PCUSA website.)

At a recent Leadership Team Meeting, one of our LT (Leadership Team) members mentioned the importance of becoming a Matthew 25 presbytery. In order to become an effective Matthew 25 Presbytery, our congregations must be aware of what it means to do so. Take the time to read Matthew 25, concentrating upon Matthew 25:31-46, considered the heart of the chapter, especially for those who want to delve more deeply into this venture.

There are three essential components to the Matthew 25 commitment, namely:

1. **Building congregational vitality.** This area is so important that the PCUSA called The Rev. Dr. Kathryn Threadgill to be the Associate for Vital Congregations. Kathryn is a PCUSA pastor who has devoted her ministry to working with our congregations in vitality and growth. We look forward to inviting her to PMRV sometime soon in order to present and to lead us in new and creatively designed projects and programs for the communities in which PMRV is located and serves.
2. **Dismantling structural racism.** This area has powerful meaning in 2019, especially in the current political and religious climate, and beyond. Many forms of racism show themselves more boldly today than in recent years. However, as the Church of Jesus Christ, we are called to address systemic and individual racism, whether it is covert, overt, unconscious, or conscious. God calls us to address the cruelty of racism throughout structures of the church and society. The PCUSA provides leadership in anti-racism, provides leaders to work with groups, congregations, synods, and presbyteries. The Synod of Lakes and Prairies has provided effective training in this area through the presentation of the author of a most effective book, "Dear White Christian". The author provided strong leadership at a Synod meeting 2 years ago. The book is still in demand and well worth reading and discussing. With the tools that one learns from the programs in anti-racism, we become better equipped to address such sins. The Leadership Team of PMRV read the book, "Waking Up White" and discussed it over a period of months as the LT met to prepare for future meetings. There is a small team from PMRV comprised of pastors and elders who have come together, read the book, held discussions, and are in the process of seeking additional empowering tools and skills to share with congregations throughout the presbytery. Please see me for additional information. I will share the names of those leaders with you.

3. Eradicating systemic poverty. Systemic poverty erodes the fabric of a society, denying many families and individuals opportunities to live quality lives. The lack of food, shelter, clothing, health care, and education keeps many people in substandard living conditions, creating and maintaining a permanent “underclass”. Working together to dismantle poverty empowers our brothers and sisters around the nation and around the world to live quality lives and to reach out to help others to do the same. Ministry in our communities and in our world that is devoted to this crucial aspect of life keeps us faithful followers of the model of Jesus Christ.

Access the PCUSA website (www.pcusa.org), read about the Matthew 25 concept, and discuss it with your session and congregation. It is the vision of the Leadership Team and yours truly that PMRV will become a Matthew 25 Mid-Council (Presbytery). Our Synod, Synod of Lakes and Prairies, has already taken that step and has set a precedent.

If you would like more information about Matthew 25 or if you would like for me to visit with your session, please contact me at the office.

Committees, Teams, and Other Meetings

I have continued to meet with committees, pastors, teams, and Synod gatherings. As a member of Synod committees, I have continued to meet with those committees, have attended and participated in Synod meetings, and as a member of a GA committee, I meet with GACIER Committee periodically. If you would like additional information, please feel free to contact me at the office and schedule a time for coffee or lunch. I look forward to seeing you and to sharing with you about our denomination and synod.

FELD and SJP

Two of our committees, FELD and SJP, are partnering to provide an outstanding event for PMRV for 2020. Please look for more details about this program and all of the opportunities that it will bring. The partnering of committees is a fine way to increase communication, process, collaboration, and to reach more members of PMRV for learning opportunities. This partnership effort is a creative one for our presbytery, so let us look forward to excellent opportunities.

The BIG TENT

The Big Tent Conference is an outstanding way to learn what the denomination is doing in its continued ministries and mission. This past July 31-August 2 (which included a separate conference for Communities of Color) provided an excellent opportunity for church leaders to assemble in plenaries, bible study, worship, and separate workshops addressing many areas of church work. We met in Baltimore, MD and several downtown hotels provided excellent space and service. The main hotel for meetings was the Lord Baltimore Hotel. Others included the Crowne Plaza Hotel and the Renaissance Hotel. I was engaged in many opportunities to continue learning, to share what our presbytery is doing, and to make stronger connections with GA staff, Synod staff and leaders, and other presbytery leaders. Resources from this outstanding biennial event are available at the PMRV Office. Please contact me for additional information. I hope that several leaders from PMRV will attend upcoming Big Tent Events.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

PMRV continues to partner with the “Black Votes Matter” Program, directed by Mr. Preston Love; and that program has recently returned from the Civil Rights Tour that it provides for high school students in the North Omaha Public Schools. The report is available. PMRV is happy to partner with this program and with

another community theater arts program directed, produced, and created by Ms. Portia Love. A community play has been showing by Ms. Love, and some of our PMRV members have attended. The play provides opportunities in theater arts for Omaha residents, students, aspiring actors, and it has received most positive reviews.

Please contact me for additional information.

Report submitted by,

Rev. Mary Newbern-Williams
Executive Presbyter