

Greetings & Reflections on Matthew 25

Some notes from the PMRV Transitional Administrative Group

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Hello PMRV Friends!

We think and pray for you regularly. Because of our pandemic context we meet about every two weeks these days to check in, share information and discern on behalf of the presbytery and leadership team, as was our “charter” given in October 2019. (Covid definitely impacted this “charter”!)

At a recent meeting all four of us unexpectedly began talking very deeply about Matthew 25 and what it means or could mean for us and our presbytery. It dawned on us later that our conversation and understandings might be helpful to share with the wider presbytery as we all consider becoming a “Matthew 25” presbytery.

#1 We want to assure you that the first item of our conversation was: We don’t want Matthew 25 to be seen as one more “top down” initiative or lip-service item attached to some kind of political bandwagon. (That never happens in PC(USA) land, does it? Ha, ha)

We also observed that the “Matthew 25” shorthand regularly needs some quick sorting/explanation.

“Matthew 25” is an initiative of PC(USA) which is their shorthand for a text—Matthew 25:31-46. (Although as the four of us talked we saw connections to the parables in the whole chapter and other parables.) Anyway, bottom line, the initiative is rooted in scripture. That inspired us and made us committed to continue to anchor whatever “Matthew 25” that happens here to scripture – something we all agree upon and are inspired by.

Another helpful thing to know: PC(USA) lifts up 3 areas in the Matthew 25 challenge. Note: 3 (not 1).

1. Building congregational vitality 2. Dismantling structural racism & 3. Eradicating systemic poverty. Seeing these three areas, it looks like any congregation could engage at any level with any one of those three areas. In fact, the first area may be a foundation for the other two.

The first area, Congregational vitality, is understandable, but building it none the less is a difficult work we achieve only through Christ’s help and the discipline of the Spirit. What about the other two areas which use PC(USA)’s strong language of “dismantling” “structural” “eradicating” and “systemic” related to huge social issues, racism and poverty?

The latter two challenges are ones that require much further thought, deliberation, wisdom and strength. But we found in talking about those areas unexpectedly in one meeting the four of us delved deeper into the life of our presbytery than we ever had before. So, these matters are a journey and they require processing which takes time and conversation. If our 4 person “random” conversation is any indication of journeying with Matthew 25, perhaps we may all as a presbytery deepen our understanding of PMRV, its purpose, our churches, our communities and what it means to provide a “Reformed,” scriptural, authentic witness in our locations.

Based on our experiences, we encourage you to thoughtfully consider becoming a “Matthew 25” presbytery at the October presbytery meeting, seeing it as a focus to unify and energize our presbytery. We do not know where this might lead, but its initial seeds do seem faithful, fruitful and worth tending together.

There is a basic brochure perhaps you’ve already seen, and more information will be on the PMRV website and shared at the August 2020 presbytery meeting. However, we know “information” only goes so far. Let us be in conversation and in relationship with each other as we think this through and consider how the Spirit is leading us together. Grace and peace to you all!

P.S. Just to clarify one more thing: PMRV can embrace Matthew 25 as a presbytery but it is of course a separate matter for individual congregations if they wish to work on it at the congregational level.