

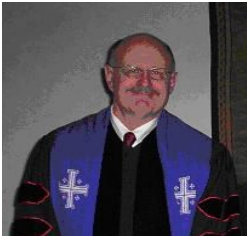


The Grapevine

CONNECTING THE CONGREGATIONS OF THE PRESBYTERY OF DETROIT

January 2017

State of the Presbytery



by the Rev. Dr. Allen D. Timm, Executive Presbyter

I read two influential articles last year that I believe speak to the church today. You can find them on the Texas Methodist Foundation website. These articles are by Dr. Gil Rendle, a Methodist Pastor and expert in organizational development. If you can't find them, send me an email and I will gladly, with their permission, share them. They make excellent articles for your next session retreat or orientation.

One article is, "Waiting for God's New Thing: Spiritual and Organizational Leadership in the In-Between Time Or Why Better Isn't Good Enough" (2015) The other article is "Be Strong and of Good Courage: A Call to Quiet Courage in an Anxious Time" (2016) Both articles emerged from a texts Gil wrestled with from the Scriptures.

The prophet Isaiah said, Do not remember the former things, or consider the things of old. I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, Do you not perceive it (43:18-19 NRSV)?

And the article on courage reminds us that Moses challenged the Israelites as they crossed into

the promised land to "be strong and of good courage" (Deut 31:6 RSV).

Here are the points Rendle makes and with which I agree:

- Dynamic churches both help people improve what they offer in worship and education and outreach, so that they continue to equip disciples to serve. But at the same time they explore what new thing the Spirit is leading them to do that will serve those who are not inside the church.
- Dynamic churches take good courage. They look for outcomes, the difference that will be made by activities or projects. They keep an eye on the mission field so that they are allocating their resources to fulfill their purpose. They cut expenditures that do not produce outcomes.

Why do I bring them up when I am talking about the State of the Presbytery?

I suggest that if churches are going to extend the mission of Jesus Christ, they are going to have to be of good courage and find creative ways to serve those outside their doors.

Yes, once again the Presbytery declined in membership. We lost 1494 members. It could be that their neighborhood can no longer

sustain a congregation. We do know that people are no longer seeking us out. But I maintain that if we offer life to the neighborhood around us, they will see our good works, and give glory to our father who is in heaven, as Jesus said. Even if the neighbors around our church don't join us, they will see what we, and those with whom we collaborate, have to offer.

But I challenge that these congregations to look outward, to find out the needs of their neighbors, to look for willing partners, and then to show the love of Jesus Christ. And I suggest that a church does not have to be large to take up the cross gives them to carry.

But not all the churches declined. Here are the churches that grew in membership in 2015: Ann Arbor, First; Auburn Hills; Berkley, Greenfield; Canton, Geneva; Dearborn, Littlefield; Detroit, Broadstreet; Detroit, Gratiot Avenue; Fort Gratiot, Lakeshore; Grosse Ile; Lincoln Park; Milford; Plymouth, First; Pontiac, First; South Lyon, First; Southfield, Korean Metro; Warren, First. Once again the Korean Metro Church of Detroit grew by the most, 48 net new members.

Here is the point I want to make in my 2017 statement about the health of the Presbytery of Detroit is. The

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churches that grew are all strong in worship, education and mission. They are seeking the guidance of the Holy Spirit to improve their ministry, while being creative in serving those in their community. They are taking good courage to stay with the purpose and mission of the church. They have heard Christ's call to "take up their cross and follow after him." They are willing to lose their lives for Jesus Christ because they know that in dying they will rise, and their ministry will bring the joy of the living God to the lives of people in their community.

These congregations hear the pain that God has when God's people suffer. They hear a call to stand with other groups, churches, and even governments, to right the wrongs that break God's heart. I would like to lift up the ministry of the South Lyon Presbyterian Church.

South Lyon went to the Principal of a school and asked what her concerns were. She said, it is for the at-risk kids in her school. Now they are one of the churches who have joined together with Kids Hope to reach at-risk kids. The First Presbyterian church of Plymouth can tell you the same story.

At the 185th anniversary celebration of the South Lyon Church, they lifted up other ministries as well. They join with the other congregations in the community to run a health clinic quarterly. They have a community wide food distributions program. South Lyon hosts a Boy Scout and Girl Scout troop. And they send volunteers each month to serve meals at Everybody Eats in Detroit. They know Christ is calling them to

stand with their neighbors. They are making a difference and they are excited about their ministry.

A church doesn't have to be large to serve those in need. We could give shout outs to a number of churches that are serving their communities. It only takes two or three members to start a mission. Those two or three can invite their friends and share what God is doing through them.

But it takes courage. It takes the courage to pray and ask for guidance from the Lord. Guidance to hear the call; time to go talk to leaders in the community and ask for advice; the willingness to talk to neighbors about what concerns them and what a church could do to help solve the problems.

I am proud to say that the Presbytery teams and workgroups offer many opportunities to train congregational leaders to learn how to serve their neighbor. They offer ministries that strengthen and transform congregations to be missional, pastoral and prophetic. There is a Leadership Training Day this week that offers training. There are a few other things that the Presbytery is doing that I want to share with you. The Planning and Visioning Team established a work group to review and set new goals for the presbytery. But they did not stop there. They established another work group to provide that the goals are met. The first goal established a theme for Presbytery Assemblies, and for 2016 the theme was "Seek the Welfare of the City." This theme will help us all seek the welfare of the community in which we live and also the metropolitan community of Detroit. For as the

prophet Jeremiah said for God, that we should pray for them, because "In their welfare, you will find your welfare." This builds on other areas that work toward serving our community such as the Second Mile Center and the Barnabas Youth Opportunities. The Hands on Mission Team is close to calling a Site Coordinator for the new mission to help young adults find their vocation, the Motor City Mission Corps. Our Presbytery will host a site for young adults who are exploring their vocation and want to serve in Detroit for a year.

About ten years ago the Pastors in Transition Workgroup set as a goal that their work would make the Presbytery of Detroit a "destination presbytery." They have accomplished a lot. New clergy find help in their start-up of ministry, through training events and follow-up action learning groups. They follow the Lilly Foundation findings, that vital pastorates include meeting regularly in a group to share learning about ministry. These pastors support one another through study, sharing, and prayer. Pastors who lead vital congregations find refreshment and new ideas through their study experiences away from the church. I want to thank those congregations who encourage their pastors to go away for study and to bring back new ideas.

As I reflect back over 2016, I want to thank those congregations who went beyond their per capita support and gave to Shared Mission and Special Offerings. Many congregations extended their mission through their giving to Extra Commitment Opportunities. Others

gave directly to missions in their community and to mission co-workers supported by the PCUSA. Thanks!

I am proud that the budget process for 2017 included this question: "What change will occur that strengthens congregations? What difference will the activities you sponsor make?" The budget reflects diligent efforts to predict the impact spending of dollars will make.

Last year we had a few staff changes. Our Accounting Manager, Bev Auger, retired. We hired a new Accounting Manager, an elder and

Trustee from Allen Park Presbyterian, Pat McBride. Our Bookkeeper resigned so she could earn hours toward her license as a social worker. When we reduced the position, she applied and was rehired. Beverly Knox retired and the Operations Team is studying how to replace her and what needs we have. Meanwhile, Operations has asked the Rev. Neeta Nichols to fill in as Temporary Executive Assistant.

As your Executive Presbyter I continue to feel honored to be your leader. I continue to engage members in ministry and to help

people with a similar call find each other. I welcome invitations to special events of congregations. My prayer is that the Presbytery will continue to strengthen its congregations so they can provide a word of hope to their neighborhood, and be a catalyst for change. May our love and outreach show a way of life that others emulate. I hope that as we Presbyterians in this metropolitan area continue to "lift high the cross, the love of God proclaim, that all the world may adore his (Christ's) sacred name."

WE CELEBRATE THESE CLERGY ORDINATION ANNIVERSARIES

JANUARY

CHRIS THOMAS	5
NANCY CARLE	10

MARCH

RENEE ROERDER	5
TED THODE	5
ARTHUR OBERG	15
SEUNG WON YU	15
BARBARA MCRAE	20
WILLIAM S. HARP	30

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