

A LETTER FROM THE GENERAL PRESBYTER

November, 2007

Dear Friends,

Thanksgiving is a time to reflect on our blessings. As a Presbytery, we have much for which to give thanks.

We give thanks to God for the gift of Jesus Christ, our Lord, and for his death and resurrection that brings us life abundant and life eternal.

We give thanks for God's great love for us that we are "chosen in Christ" and "adopted as children through Jesus Christ." (Ephesians 1:4-5)

We give thanks that Christ is head of the church and is guiding our ways.

We give thanks that the Spirit is active in each of our lives, in the lives of our churches and denomination, and in the world.

It is in gratitude that we in the Presbytery office give thanks for all of you. As Paul said, "we remember you, constantly praying with joy for all of you, because of your sharing in the gospel." (Philippians 1:3-5). We are blessed by your witness and by the faith of so many congregations and people. For this, we give thanks to God.

Gratitude in action: At the same time as we give thanks for God's love in our lives, we remember that God also sends us out. As Christmas approaches, reminding us of that love, let us be active in inviting others into a relationship with Christ and into a nurturing Christian community. At Christmas, we have a great opportunity to invite others to church because people are often more open at this time of year. Challenge members of the church to reach out as a way of celebrating Christ's birth. What better way to give thanks or celebrate Christmas than to share the good news of Christ's love to a hurting people and a hurting world.

We also have the opportunity to witness to others by the way we celebrate Christmas, by what we do with our time and our dollars. I give thanks for the many ways the congregations in this Presbytery reach out to help people in their communities. The Presbytery has many options for alternative giving, as do other groups. (See the Mission information enclosed.)

An opportunity for growth and learning: On January 6 & 7, 2008, the Christian Education Committee is sponsoring a retreat at William Black Lodge in Montreat. Jon Brown will be leading the retreat, the goal of which is to nurture our own spiritual growth, as well as provide educational learnings that can be used in churches. I think it will be an outstanding retreat. (See the enclosed brochure.)

An update on some happenings: The Strategic Goals Committee led us through a visioning exercise at the October meeting of Presbytery. In small groups, we looked at what it means to be faithful and vital congregations, what helps congregations be faithful and vital, and what are the obstacles preventing growth. We also looked at how Presbytery might be in partnership with congregations to help them grow in faith and vitality. We will be sharing the results of those discussions with Presbytery as they are compiled.

Our two-day Presbytery meeting focused on mission. It was a hopeful meeting as we looked at what we were able to do together as congregations, a Presbytery and denomination. A few congregations shared their responses to people in need. It was challenging to hear the way some churches are responding, and to know of the great needs of our communities and the world. The challenge is not only to help physically, but also to share the good news.

Our goal this year has been to have every church connected directly to a PCUSA missionary. While we have not reached that goal yet, we have doubled the number since the beginning of the year with 72 churches committed to helping support at least one missionary through prayer and financial contributions. It is important that we do our part to help around the world. It is equally important for us to open our eyes to see how God is at work in many place far away, as well as close at hand.

At Presbytery, we also worshiped and had the Lord's Supper, dealt with hard issues and celebrated our work together. The Presbytery voted to be in contact with an attorney concerning the Montreat Property. We confirmed the work of the Administrative Commission in Waynesville and Marion. We heard from one of the elders at Waynesville, who elegantly described why she felt it was important to be in the denomination. We heard from missionaries in Guatemala, celebrated Ginnie Stevens' work in this Presbytery, and enjoyed listening to music together.

Looking Forward: As I celebrate Thanksgiving, I am confident that God will continue to guide us in the smooth and the rough places. My prayer is that, at this season, we all will take time to reflect on our blessings and give thanks, and that we will be open to seeing God's active guidance and work among us and in the world.

Peace,

Bobbi

Bobbi White
General Presbyter