

A LETTER FROM THE GENERAL PRESBYTER

November 20, 2008

Dear Friends,

Give thanks with a grateful heart.

Like Paul, who wrote to the Philippians, "I thank God every time I remember you, constantly praying with joy in every one of my prayers for all of you, because of your sharing in the gospel from the first day until now. I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ." As I travel about the presbytery, I am blessed to see the many ways God is working in your midst. As we go into the Thanksgiving, Advent, and Christmas seasons, I give thanks for all of you and for your ministries.

Dorland Memorial, a small church, gave extra because they saw a need; Waynesville sent a letter of thanks to the presbytery for offering support they didn't need. They saw the Spirit at work in their midst. Two candidates from this presbytery were ordained this week. They celebrated renewing of baptism vows and the Lord's Supper. Third Street is excited about serving Thanksgiving meals for those who would otherwise have none.

There were exciting reports for those returning from Guatemala and the Gulf Coast. I know others are thankful for the use of Presbytery's shower trailer after a hard-days-work. I heard a high school student explain what it meant to her to be on the Youth Council. I pray for Rachel, our Young Adult Volunteer teaching in Kenya. It is encouraging to hear churches talk about the new members in their midst. God is at work. We need to listen to God's voice and see where God is leading and what God is already doing. We need to give thanks and commit ourselves to following where God leads.

I give thanks for our missionaries and for Dr. Barbara Nagy, who particularly needs our prayers. As many of you know, Barbara has been trying to adopt Happy, a three and a half year old Malawian girl. Happy has lived with Barbara, Anna, and Melia for almost three years and during that time Barbara has been trying to finalize the adoption. Several weeks ago Happy was taken from Barbara by a social worker that claimed that Happy had to be returned to her village. Happy had to spend a night at the Crisis Nursery and the next day she was in a van to be returned to the village, when someone gave her back to Barbara. This has been traumatic for the whole family. Happy is with Barbara now and they are still trying to work through the adoption. Please keep Happy, Barbara, Anna and Melia in your prayers and pray that the adoption will soon happen.

One way to give thanks and to remember others in this economic downturn is through the alternative Christmas giving, whether through the presbytery or other organizations. This year for \$20, there are four adult alternatives: two for Guatemala (for children's scholarships and the health program) and two for Malawi (the Nkhoma hospital and the new school). There are also great options for children. Order your cards from Lisa.

In the past some people have given larger gifts for an oxygen concentrator and \$500 for one day's supply of medicine at Nkhoma Hospital. I was asked about opportunities for this year. The cost of medicine for the hospital and health centers for one day is \$500-\$600. When asked about a home mission items, I thought of a way we are trying to help small churches. The presbytery hopes to provide \$4,000 or \$5,000 dollars to several churches to help them be able to pay for a full time pastor. A gift of \$400 would be about

one month's help for those churches. If this is something you want to do, cards will also be provided for those gifts.

God calls us to reach out to others. We are now a mission field in our own back yard. In spite of the economy and the many issues with which we are faced as an individual, churches and presbytery, I have great hopes for the next year. The presbytery is going to try to bring in a three-year Bible based process for renewal and transformation to offer to churches. This program is called the Acts Initiative, using the book of Acts as its inspiration. This process has had good results in other presbyteries. One pastor said that although he had great success in growing membership, he felt like this process helped him grow disciples. It has been used by large churches and small ones and churches with differing theological perspectives. The Transformation/Evangelism Committee wants to provide the opportunity for all churches with their pastors and a team of church leaders to come and hear about the opportunity at a two-day workshop on March 6 and 7. More will be coming. Please put that date on your calendar.

We are learning that many of our new members do not have basic knowledge of the Bible. The Christian Education Committee is looking at possibilities to offer a program for the presbytery to help. Several places in the presbytery churches have come together for officer training. If you are interested in this, check with me at the presbytery office.

I am excited when I see the many opportunities we have to bring people to Jesus Christ, to nurture our members, and to demonstrate Christ love for others.

I hope you have a wonderful and blessed Thanksgiving.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bobbi". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style with a long horizontal stroke at the beginning.

Bobbi