

February 2019

Sisters and brothers,

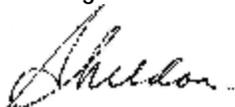
As always, our presbytery meeting in February is shaped around our observance of Black History Month. This year we are privileged, as part of that celebration, to welcome the Rev. Dr. Diane Givens Moffett, Executive Director and President of the Presbyterian Mission Agency. Her words at her election by the General Assembly last year were charged full of gospel hope and missional zeal. An avid advocate and glad disciple of our Lord Jesus, she rallied the assembly to imagine greater things in our future, to God's glory. I look forward eagerly to the word from the Lord that she will bring us, and urge as many as possible to be present to hear her.

One of our primary purposes in gathering as a community of faith is to encourage one another, according to Hebrews 10:24-25. I have no doubt that we will be greatly encouraged by the dynamic music ministry of Rev. Nikki Porter, as well as by the preaching of Rev. Moffett. But the greatest source of encouragement is simply being with friends and colleagues in ministry. It's not just about enjoying inspiring worship, though that is truly a wonderful gift. It's certainly not about checking off everything on our business list, though that is necessary work made lighter as we do it together. It's not even about hearing candidates for ordination tell us about their faith and sense of call, though that certainly stokes our hope for good things in our future. It is the simple act of being with each other that nourishes us most.

In my college years I played piano for an African-American congregation, and learned from them the power and joy of simply being together with fellow-saints. We arrived by 7:30 am each Sunday to spend holy time around coffee and doughnuts while digging in to some of the best Bible studies I have ever witnessed. The worship service began somewhere around 10:30, and usually went through 1:00 or later. We had communion every week, and for the first time in my life I felt literally swept up in the "joyful feast of the people of God." Table fellowship. Teaching. Preaching. Music. Sacraments. All splendid. But what made that five hour stretch pass like a fleeting moment, and what left us leaving with far more spring in our step than we had coming in, was the renewal of relationships. There was plenty of chatter all morning long, none of which felt intrusive to whatever was happening in the chancel. Being together was the main thing; everything else was just the icing on the cake.

I love presbytery meetings because that is when I get a chance to see you and greet you, something I get to enjoy far too seldom. I know I will be encouraged, and I dare to believe you will be too, so long as we come with open hearts and hands to our fellow pilgrims with whom we gather.

Looking forward to being with you,



Sheldon W. Sorge
General Minister

Seeking to be Faithful Together

Guidelines for Presbyterians During Times of Disagreement

In a spirit of trust and love, we promise we will . . .

Give them a hearing . . . listen before we answer.

Nicodemus, who had gone to Jesus before, and who was one of them, asked, "Our law does not judge people without first giving them a hearing to find out what they are doing, does it?" (John 7:50-51) If one gives answer before hearing, it is folly and shame. (Proverbs 18:13)

1. Treat each other respectfully so as to build trust, believing that we all desire to be faithful to Jesus the Christ:
 - we will keep our conversations and communications open for candid and forthright exchange;
 - we will not ask questions or make statements in a way which will intimidate or judge others.
2. Learn about various positions on a topic of disagreement.
3. State what we think we heard and ask for clarification before responding, in an effort to be sure we understand each other.

Speak the truth in love.

But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body's growth in building itself up in love. (Ephesians 4:15-16)

4. Study the Bible together to better understand what God's Word says to us in our disagreement.
5. Share our concerns directly with individuals or groups with whom we have disagreements in a spirit of love and respect in keeping with Jesus' teaching.
6. Focus on ideas and suggestions instead of questioning people's motives, intelligence or integrity;
 - we will not engage in name-calling or labeling of others prior to, during, or following the discussion.
7. Share our personal experiences about the subject of disagreement so that others may fully understand our concerns.

Maintain the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace.

I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. (Ephesians 4:1-3)

8. Indicate where we agree with those of other viewpoints as well as where we disagree.
9. Seek to stay in community with each other though the discussion may be vigorous and full of tension;
 - we will be ready to forgive and be forgiven.
10. Follow these additional Guidelines when we meet in decision-making bodies:
 - urge persons of various points to speak and promise to listen seriously;
 - seek conclusions informed by our points of agreement;
 - be sensitive to the feelings and concerns of those who do not agree with the majority and respect their rights of conscience;
 - abide by the decision of the majority, and if we disagree with it and wish to change it, work for that change in ways which are consistent with the Guidelines.
11. Include our disagreements in our prayers, not praying for the triumph of our viewpoints, but seeking God's grace to listen attentively, to speak clearly, and to remain open to the vision God holds for us all.

Stated Meeting of the Presbytery of Pittsburgh

February 21, 2019 – 1:00 p.m.

Pittsburgh Theological Seminary

Rev. Dr. Trent Hancock (Outgoing Moderator); Rev. Steven Werth (Incoming Moderator)

Pittsburgh Presbytery is a covenant community

† formed by the triune God;

† called to share together in the ongoing life & ministry of Jesus Christ;

† proclaiming & demonstrating the Gospel publicly in word & deed in the power of the Holy Spirit.

PRE-PRESBYTERY EVENT

“The Matthew 25 Church” by Rev. Dr. Diane Givens Moffett

11:00 am – 12:30 p.m. in the John Knox Room

PRESBYTERY MEETING DOCKET

Gathering for the Work of the Presbytery

Welcome from the Moderator, Greetings from our Host, Introductions and Announcement of New Calls, and Recognition of Retiring Ministers.

Remarks from Rabbi Ron Symons, Senior Director of Jewish Life at the Jewish Community Center of Greater Pittsburgh, on the Response to the Tree of Life Tragedy

Adoption of the Docket and Consent Agenda and Announcement of the Intention to Introduce New Business

Worship and Celebration of the Contributions of African-American Churches

Rev. Dr. Diane Givens Moffett, President and Executive Director of the Presbyterian Mission Agency, will preach and Rev Nikki Porter (Eastminster Presbyterian Church) will lead music.

Who We Are & Presbytery Matters for Today

Installation of 2019 Presbytery Moderators

Board of Pensions report on new Healthy Pastors, Healthy Congregations program

East Branch Report on Pittsburgh Theological Seminary

General Minister’s Report – State of the Presbytery and search for new Director of Justice Ministries

Peacemaking Ministry Team Report – Rev. Matt Fricker’s Report on his return to Iraq

Stated Clerk’s Report

Vote on Proposed Constitutional Amendments 18-D, 18-E, 18-G, 18-H.1 and 18-H.2

Hearing from Our Commissions and Committees

Commission on Preparation for Ministry Report

Administrative Commission on Transformation Report

Executive Committee Report

Commission on Ministry Report

Committee on Nominations Report

Going Forth by God’s Grace to Serve

New Business

Report from the Roll Clerk, Words of Thanks and Closing Prayer