

Ponderings from a Presbyterian Pilgrim



I'm writing down my ponderings this time while on pilgrimage to Minneapolis, Minnesota immersed in full-scale, head-on, down and dirty Presbyterianism. Many of you have never had the opportunity to participate in the biennial family reunion our denomination calls "General Assembly."

Along with commissioners from Whitewater Valley Presbytery--the Rev. Oscar Clavel (Tabernacle, Indianapolis), the Rev. Joy Bilger Goehring (White Lick, Avon), the Rev. Betty Gilbert Griffith (Immanuel, Indianapolis), Elder Nancy Kriplen (Second, Indianapolis), Elder Tonya Paddock (First, Liberty), Elder Fabio Socarras (John Knox, Indianapolis) and Young Adult Advisory Delegate Elizabeth McDonald-Zwoyer (First Meridian Heights, Indianapolis)—I sat and watched how people of faith dialogued, discussed, debated, discerned and decided a variety of issues over which many of us have very different perspectives, opinions and insights. Unlike our commissioners, however, I had no voice or vote during the proceedings. Mine was simply a ministry of presence and prayer.

I prayed for all the commissioners and advisory delegates from around the United States (and indeed from around the world when the missionary and ecumenical advisory delegates are included) as they engaged in heartfelt and prayerful interchanges and made decisions which each person considered Spirit-led and Spirit-filled. I prayed for Presbyterians back in Indiana, and all over the United States, and around the world who would be affected by these decisions now and in the days and years to come. I prayed for my own ministry among you, knowing that it would be shaped—even without my voice or vote—by the decisions that were made.

And so, as our Presbyterian brothers and sisters gave over a week of their time to think about, to pray over, and to reach conclusions concerning a myriad of issues—from the proposed inclusion of the Belhar Confession into our Book of Confessions, to our relationship with the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, to exploring how we Presbyterian leaders need to address the changing concepts of marriage and civil unions, to how we should discern those who should be ordained as officers within our denomination, to how we best engage in efforts to bring about peace in the Middle East—through all those dialogues, discussions, debates, discernments and decisions I felt drawn to pray. Simply know that wherever the journey takes us as Presbyterian Pilgrims that we need to remember where we are and why we are here. We are in the presence of God and we are here to glorify God and enjoy God forever!

And my prayer was that we not forget—EVER—the prayer of Jesus that we might all be one. I think you know the one:

"My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: I in them and you in me. May they brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me."
(John 17:20-23)

Much occurred during this General Assembly that might serve as a catalyst to drive us Presbyterians further apart. I pray not. I pray that we might see that if our Lord cared enough to pray for us, that we might care enough about each other to continue to pray as He prayed so long ago. I pray that you will join me in that prayer...

Prayers for the Journey...

Alan



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