

Lead Presbyter's Report

October 2, 2024

Psalm 1:1-3

“Happy are those who do not follow the advice of the wicked or take the path that sinners tread or sit in the seat of scoffers, but their delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law, they meditate day and night. They are like trees planted by streams of water, which yield their fruit in its season, and their leaves do not wither. In all that they do, they prosper.”

I have had the opportunity to be with you in ministry for exactly one year. As I reflect on the last 12 months, I have a better understanding of where we are as well as the possibilities that are in front of us. As I have driven across the beautiful part of Florida that is home to the 53 churches in the Presbytery of St. Augustine, I have spent a fair amount of time praying, reflecting and dreaming.

So far, I have visited 49 of our congregations and will worship with the other four as soon as possible. My spirit has been nurtured by uplifting worship and inspired preaching. While each church is an individual mission outpost that responds to God's call, in their community, in unique ways, we are woven together as a presbytery, sowing seeds of God's love in a wide variety of mission endeavors. Together we are yielding fruit like trees planted by streams of water. Many of our congregations offer space for 12 step groups so people can find wholeness and healing. We have congregations that collect and distribute clothes for those housing insecure, others offer backpacks filled with school supplies for children in need and food pantries can be found in several of our locations. It is impressive and that list is just a sampling.

I know we will continue to serve God in ways that are familiar to us and yet I also know that God calls us to move beyond the familiar. I believe if our trees are going to continue to bear good fruit, we must look for fresh springs and new streams where we can plant. The future is ripe with possibilities. What will those new forms of ministry look like? Where will those new expressions of mission take shape? I don't know. It could look like two or three churches working in a new partnership that strengthens each of their ministries. It might be seen in the form of commissioned pastors guiding congregations that have been or are searching for leadership. It could be seen in shared use agreements that bring in additional funds to underwrite the ministry for years to come. It will happen in places where communities recognize the need for change and are willing to step out into the unknown trusting that God will guide them. God continually calls us into partnership to advance the cause of Christ. I do not know what the future holds, but I know who holds the future. I look forward to serving alongside you in both ways that are comfortable and familiar to us and to faithfully venturing into the unknown and seeing where God leads us.