Lead Presbyter’s Report

February 1, 2025

In ministry and in life there are times when we may feel like we are wandering in the wilderness. Time in the wilderness is valuable because it reminds us to rely on God for provision and guidance. In the sixteenth chapter of Exodus, we find the story of God providing manna and quail for the Israelites. The Israelites ate manna for 40 years. God continually provided for their most basic needs. In the seventeenth chapter of Exodus, God delivers water from a rock to quench the thirst of God’s people. Another reminder of God’s provision.

Giving thanks to God is woven into the liturgy of our churches worship, and as disciples it is woven into the fabric of our lives. We give thanks for God’s grace, love, and forgiveness. We give thanks before we break bread and enjoy a meal, and we give thanks for the gifts God has given us and the opportunity to serve. I believe we are called to continually look at what God has provided and prayerfully discern how best to use those resources to serve God.

I am 16 months into this ministry, and I continue to be inspired by the mission and ministry I see taking place around the presbytery. After visiting all our congregations, I better understand our diversity of witness and variety of expressions of mission outreach. I am energized by God’s call and look forward to the milestones we will pass together. As I noted in my State of the Presbytery presentation at Montgomery Center last month, the state of our presbytery is strong, but it could certainly be stronger.

“The mission of the Presbytery of St. Augustine is to support our faith community, so that together we are a greater witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ.” The first values listed on our values statement in the manual of operations not the presbytery is: “relational, communal, and connected.” Relationships are the ties the bind us together. A big part of my ministry is strengthening our community of congregations and providing spiritual leadership. To that end, I have been fortunate to visit and worship with every congregation in our presbytery. To strengthen our relationships and connectedness we began cluster gatherings last year. These gatherings are places to enjoy food and fellowship as well as offer mutual support. The gatherings have been so well received we decided to offer them once a quarter this year. Our ARC’s are fully staffed and in regular contact with the pastors and churches in their areas. I gather with them about once a month to do my best to stay up to date and informed about the joys and concerns in their areas. This year I am intentionally providing time and space to meet with ministers one on one to listen and if invited to offer whatever I can in terms of coaching and support.

I have been working through the transition as we are outsourcing some of our communication needs. We have been interviewing for a part-time receptionist and that person will serve as the conduit to our communication services team. I believe this will lead to better communications, but the transition will take a little time.

We passed two new policies at the last presbytery meeting, one related to boundary training and background checks. Implementation meant that I needed to take about 5 hours of training through the Florida Department of Law Enforcement. To be good stewards of the presbytery’s resources 1/3 or our ministers will have a level 2 background check each year for the next 3 years or so until all are up to date and compliant with the new policy. The Presbytery of St. Augustine also adopted new policy on antiracism. The policy itself contains many valuable resources. I recently read another resource that I will be sharing with the coordinating council that I think can provide the training our policy requires.

I give thanks to God for the opportunity to serve with you in this portion of Florida.

Peace,

David