

Presbytery of Wabash Valley
Summary of Assembly & Retreat
September 16-17, 2011

Last weekend, Geneva Center and beautiful weather provided a nurturing context for focusing on spiritual practices and important decisions about the collective ministry of Presbytery.

- Many gathered Friday afternoon to take a birds-eye view of the revised **Form of Government** through the Outlook Webinar. In total, at least 100 of us viewed this introduction to nFOG, either as PWV or sponsored locally by congregations.
- By dinnertime, 53 had gathered for dinner and an evening focused on spiritual practices. **Marcia Smith-Wood (validated ministry as a Spiritual Director) and Debbie Coe (First, Crown Point)** had set up eighteen prayer stations around the building and out on the grounds. There were candles, books, listening-and-noticing journals, guided mediation, crayons and other supplies for imaging, prayer beads, simple crosses, ACTS prayer, guidelines for centering prayer, and a host of other ways to connect with God through prayer. Many prayed through the labyrinth, under the moonlight and lit with luminaries in the trees and around the circle, culminating in a bonfire in the center.
- **Jeff Brown (Co-Commissioned Ruling Elder at Cutler) and Chuck Compton (Pastor, Flora Presbyterian Church)** told passionate stories about their spring trip to Haiti, and how much they learned about the country, its people, the long-lasting destruction of its floods and earthquakes, and the real value of their presence with the congregation of the church they helped renovate. The photographs showed lots of smiles, deep hand-dug pits, floors for poured concrete made of switches and cardboard, electrical wiring pirated from a nearby building, and finally worship together in the refurbished chapel.
- **Inquirer Barbara Vinson** talked about her faith journey through years of parenting children who lived with disabilities, through lay pastor training with her daughter, through the tragic car accident that took her daughter's life, ever closer to answering God's call to ministry. After examination, Presbytery approved Barbara's enrollment as a Candidate. She is in her final year at McCormick Theological Seminary.
- The Assembly accepted **University Church of Purdue** as a specialized ministry of Presbytery. Assembly also approved a "bridge agreement" defining the temporary framework for relationship with Presbytery, while it moves forward with revision of its constitution, bylaws, board, and formal relationships in collaboration with Presbytery Council, COM and other teams and committees.
- **Policy for Conversations** with those individuals and others considering their relationship with PC(USA) was reviewed, and approved by Assembly. Our policy is premised upon assuming good faith and the best intentions of those who are discerning, and reminds us all that this discernment is done in relationship with one another through Presbytery.
- In other business, eighty-six presbyters present as Assembly took a first look at the **proposed half-year budget** and anticipated per capita commitments for 2012 as we move into a fiscal year model. We elected presbyters from congregations and ministry to **40 leadership positions**; studied **Scripture** together and explored its personal meaning for us, accepted received reports of extensive actions of Commission on

Ministry, Council and other teams, committees and commissions, Financial reports, Terms of Call and Records Review reports, work of Missional Transformation Team with congregations and other aspects of our lives as Presbyterians, and collected \$354.94 for the PC(USA) **Peacemaking Offering** before adjourning for an afternoon picnic with our fourteen guests at the Geneva Center Pavilion.

Once in a while, someone will ask “What does ‘the Presbytery’ do for us?” This summary is one answer: we gather together as Presbytery of Wabash Valley and work together to serve Christ’s Church in the many ways listed above. Besides the 40 people elected, there are at least another 100 who work on various teams, committees, commissions, serve as moderators, liaisons, transitional care consultants, GA and Synod commissioners, and a few of us as staff. Together—we are Presbytery, and this report just hints at what we do for one another in Wabash Valley.

– Linda L. Long, Stated Clerk