

Report of the General Presbyter

Dr. Kevin Yoho
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Together Transforming
Lives, Congregations, Communities, World
Connected to the Synod of the Northeast and Presbyterian Church (USA)

GP Proclamation

New Brunswick, NJ: First PC

05/11/09: NJ Executive Collegium meeting

Bridgewater, NJ

05/28/09 Retooling Ministry for the 21st Century pastor training Event 2

Newark, NJ: Roseville UPC

05/30/09: Conference on Community, Mission, and Evangelism

Upper Montclair, NJ: PC of Upper Montclair

05/31/09: Installation Service for the Rev. Gregory Horn as pastor

Bloomfield, NJ: Presbytery Center

06/04/09: Administrative Commission for West Orange

New Brunswick, NJ: First PC

06/08/09: NJ Executive Collegium meeting

Bridgewater, NJ

06/25/09 Retooling Ministry for the 21st Century pastor training Event 3

Minister Transitions in the News

The Rev. Charles W. Rawlings and his wife, Joan, will be moving to San Jose, California. As a member at large of Newark Presbytery for many years, Chuck was instrumental in leading many initiatives over many years that recently included the Globalization and the Middle East work team. His commitment to justice and education was pivotal in the Port of Elizabeth and Learning Centers project that has earned funding from the New Jersey Presbytery Partnership Group (PPG), the Synod of the Northeast, and PCUSA. Globalization and Middle East Work Team Honored Chuck and Joan June 7th, hosted at Central Presbyterian. We are sad to see Chuck and Joan move so far away and wish them God's blessings in abundance.

The Rev. Noelle Kirtchner's Associate Pastor relationship at First PC at Caldwell was dissolved, at her request, effective June 30, 2009. Noelle and her husband, Chad, welcomed their first child, Owen Michael, into the world on February 3rd. Noelle intends to request minister at large status and remain a member of Newark Presbytery. She continues to serve on the Committee on Examinations.

The Season of the Church: What Time Is It?

There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven: a time to be born and a time to die, a time to plant and a time to uproot, a time to kill and a time to heal, a time to tear down and a time to build, a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance, a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them, a time to embrace and a time to refrain, a time to search and a time to give up, a time to keep and a time to throw away, a time to tear and a time to mend, a time to be silent and a time to speak, a time to love and a time to hate, a time for war and a time for peace. -Ecclesiastes 3.1-8

It's interesting that the most familiar title of this ancient Hebrew Scripture is Ecclesiastes, taken from the Greek translation meaning "to gather." The Greek-speaking Jews translated the Septuagint from the Hebrew so that Hellenized Jews, who out of necessity abandoned their ancient language, could read the Scripture. The title is taken from the word used for the Teacher (qohelet, קהלת) who "gathered" the words and the audience to listen. The title Ecclesiastes uses the same root used in the New Testament for church (ecclesia, εκκλησια). The gathered were sent out by Jesus when he said at his ascension, "In your going, make disciples of everyone" (Mt. 28:16-20). That expectation of the church "going" and "growing" was energized and empowered on the day of Pentecost. In the liturgical calendar, we are now in that season of Pentecost, the Season of the Church.

In the season of the church, what time is it? The Teacher says that there is a time for everything and the wise hearer will discern what time it is, what time just passed, what time is just ahead. If we do not humbly and honestly recognize the seasons of life, and the seasons of our church, we might be left with little more than Ecclesiastes' pronouncement of life's futility. The Teacher admonishes the hearer to remedy the futility with amazed reverence for God, when he writes, "The last and final word is this: Fear God. Do what God tells you (Ecc. 12:13).



As to the seasons, we have a tough challenge in reconciling what time we want it to be with what time it actually is. To make matters even more complex, the season we are in, even if recognized, will lead to yet another season that requires more adjustment, different thinking, actions, and priorities. The Teacher of Ecclesiastes' message to the Church is to embrace what God is delivering in the present and urges us to be open to what is emerging.

As a presbytery before God, we take courage from Jesus' ever-presence in the Spirit as we struggle to recognize the time we are in and together in faith, embrace what God is bringing into our experience. We seek to be wise disciples followers, servants, leaders, as we move, grow, lead, and serve.

To crudely [paraphrase Dylan](#), a church not busy being born is busy dying.

The Pentecost Church was busy being born, and kept being born, and born again, and again. We are here today due to the essential fact that the births exceeded the deaths.

For birth to occur in a sustainable period of time some things must change, be replaced, even die, as new things are being born. Every stage is humbly and deeply respected. Each person has a critical role in every time and process. Each stage leads to the next. One stage is not better than another. In the aggregate, the times of the seasons reflect the dynamic Creative, Redemptive, and Sustaining work of God. Our own Presbyterian motto, reformed yet always reforming, reflects the life cycles of the church. In awe of God's presence, we can be empowered to recognize the times of the season of our life, and of our church as we seek to love the whole world as God sends us out to demonstrate love, kindness, justice, forgiveness, and hope.

I am proud of every congregation in our presbytery for many reasons. One reason is the incredible love each church uniquely expresses for God in Jesus Christ. Another is the positive ways each is moving away from the outdated and underserving metaphor of mission as a Map (where predictability of the path was confidently known), toward the image of mission as a Compass (where we discern a vision for where God is leading us to go, true north, and adjusting our path to align us in that direction). I observe a sincere devotion to one another and a respect for our congregational history and place of worship. Other reasons include generosity and selflessness despite great hardship, giving to others in their communities, joy in the midst of staggering challenges, a desire to make a difference in the world, and the determination to accept God's invitation of new possibilities.

What time is it? Consider this question for your church as a pastor and session. In what ways is your church being born anew? Soon, the Mission Council will lead the presbytery in a comprehensive review of our mission design to help make it more congruent to the time we are in, and the time that is approaching.

The Teacher knew that if there is to be room to embrace what's coming, we must respectfully adapt or sometimes say good-bye to those notions, ideas, and forms that are ill-suited for the time we are in, and entering. Newark Presbytery is busy being born! We are birthing it together. We are not only to be changing, but growing in faithfulness, health, and effectiveness. I am grateful to serve among you as your colleague and am listening to assist you as your General Presbyter. May God bless your "going" and "growing" now, and in the time that's coming.

Gratefully,

