



August 26, 2021

Presbytery News

Special Presbytery Notices

Words from our Interim Executive Presbyter

At Presbytery last Saturday I shared some of my thoughts on ministry during the pandemic and how sometimes it seems overwhelming to live in the world today where we often feel numbed by everything going on. I try to find words and images to express what I'm thinking and feeling about what seems to be a long haul, not only behind us, but before us. I often come up empty. That doesn't happen very often with a pastor and preacher.

Recently a colleague shared a blog by a pastor in Seattle, Washington, The Rev. Jenny Smith, with me. She found the words that express how many of us are feeling these days, including me. I'd like to share them with you and hopefully, it helps.

A link to her blog site and this post is below.

Grace and Peace,
Stephen

The Second Marathon:

A Thought For Pastors On Walking the New Normal

Rev. Jenny Smith

[Visit her Blog](#)

I'm hearing this refrain in every corner of my pastor world.
Today felt like a day to name it out loud.

Pastors are tired. On a soul level.

It's tempting to think we can solve it with a few days off. But we know we can't.

This is bigger than individuals.

This is systemic.

The oppressive thing about capitalism and consumerism (and white supremacy culture, for that matter), is our utter inability to listen to our need to rest. More on that in a moment.

But first, my brother runs marathons. It's amazing to see the training and preparation that goes into this accomplishment. I ran 20 minutes without stopping a year or two ago and it felt like I crossed the finish line at the Olympics! I cannot even imagine what it feels like to run for 26.2 miles and feel absolutely depleted at the end.

Well, maybe my soul does know that feeling. Maybe yours does too. We just ran a marathon.

We closed our doors to in-person worship. We figured out online worship. Maybe. Kind of.

We received email after email from frustrated congregants.

We felt the brunt of unprocessed grief in our communities.

We tried to continue as many ministries as we could sustain.

We dreamed up new ones.

We crashed and burned.

We wondered if giving would continue.

We became video chat professionals.

We spent hours looking at blank screens summoning sermons to write themselves.

We ached with isolation.

We spoke hope and grace and possibility.

We questioned our call to ministry.

We agonized over the safest ways to return to in-person gatherings.

We took a few days off here and there, trying to find solid ground to rest on.

We smiled on camera as if we could stir our hearts to life with our own pleading.

We received grace and stunning kindness from people in our communities.

We watched colleagues look like they had it together. But we guessed they didn't either.

Then we opened our doors to in-person worship again.

We crossed the finish line! We made it! We did a hard thing! Then...

Instead of collapsing at the finish line in a heap.

Instead of drinking water.
Instead of resting our aching bodies.

Something else happened.
An official-looking race organizer slapped another number on our back
and pushed us toward another starting line that mysteriously appeared.

Wait. What?

A second marathon? Right now?
We look down at our blistered aching feet, our hopeful but exhausted heart, our
overwhelmed but determined mind, and we take a step forward into life as a
gathered community once again.

Why? **Because our world doesn't know how to stop.** (Unless a global virus
shuts down the world.) White supremacy pushes and coerces and manipulates
into productivity and results. Consumerism causes people to demand their
preferences and tired pastors oblige.
Capitalism relies on resisting rest and driving our bodies for the bottom line.

These forces celebrate when we ignore what our souls whisper.

I don't have a magic next step for my community of pastor-friends today.
Six-month sabbaticals for all would be a good place to start.

But I do know this.
As the gears come to life in our faith communities, we have the opportunity to tell
the truth, to slow the pace, and question everything as we enter the new normal.

Yes, our second marathon has begun. Ready or not.
Problem is, our bodies are still recovering from the first marathon.

Maybe the answer is to stop running the second race.

What if we looked at each other and gently nodded.
Slowed our forced jog.
And started walking.
Together.

What if we walked our second marathon?

Side by side. No racing. No competing with anything or anyone.
Resting when it's time to rest.
Saying yes to a new idea when it glistens with possibility.
Saying no when something feels too heavy.
Asking new questions in places we assumed the old answer.
Giving others permission to rest because we choose rest.
Questioning the speed at which we live and move.
Loving our people with beautiful boundaries in place.
Taking a nap.
Going to therapy and spiritual direction because we're humans too.
Breathing deeply of God's grace and love and restoration.

Maybe this is how we disrupt the deeply engrained oppressive realities of our
world. We choose to walk.

Together.

Here's to the second marathon. I'm with you, friends.

I'll be over in the slow walkers crew that laughs and takes a lot of breaks.
Want to join me?

I imagine Love will surprise us again.

Grace upon grace.

Jenny

- ¹ God is our refuge and strength,
a very present help in trouble.
² Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change,
though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea;
³ though its waters roar and foam,
though the mountains tremble with its tumult.
⁴ There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God,
the holy habitation of the Most High.
⁵ God is in the midst of the city; it shall not be moved;
God will help it when the morning dawns.
⁶ The nations are in an uproar, the kingdoms totter;
he utters his voice, the earth melts.
⁷ The Lord of hosts is with us;
the God of Jacob is our refuge.
- ⁸ Come, behold the works of the Lord;
see what desolations he has brought on the earth.
⁹ He makes wars cease to the end of the earth;
he breaks the bow, and shatters the spear;
he burns the shields with fire.
¹⁰ 'Be still, and know that I am God!
I am exalted among the nations,
I am exalted in the earth.'
¹¹ The Lord of hosts is with us;
the God of Jacob is our refuge.
Psalm 46

Support PDA's response to our neighbors in Haiti & Tennessee



**PRESBYTERIAN
DISASTER ASSISTANCE**

OUT OF CHAOS, **HOPE**



Haiti Disaster:

The scale of the disaster facing Haiti after the Aug. 14 earthquake is becoming clearer. The quake and its aftershocks have left almost 1,500 people dead, thousands more injured and an unknown number of people are still missing. At least 13,000 homes were destroyed, and roads, bridges and communication systems have been severely damaged. This catastrophe comes on top of Haiti's ongoing struggles with endemic hunger and poverty, COVID-19 and continuing civil unrest, and as Tropical Storm Grace bears down on the region.

Tennessee Flooding:

Heavy rain caused catastrophic flooding and flash flooding across Tennessee beginning August 21. At least 17 fatalities have been confirmed. PDA is responding to this disaster and is processing an initial assistance grant to meet emergency needs. We will continue support through the long-term recovery phase.

Presbyterian Disaster Assistance (PDA) is providing emergency relief and short-term recovery in the impacted areas through our established local partners and in collaboration with ACT Alliance and its members. The PC(USA), through PDA and together with regional World Mission colleagues, will remain active throughout the entire recovery process, accompanying our partners in the area as they determine long-term program needs and providing financial support for rebuilding and resilience.



GIVE. ACT. PRAY.

GIVE: Gifts can be made online, by phone at (800) 872-3283, or by check, which can be mailed to Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), P.O. Box 643700, Pittsburgh, PA 15264-3700.

ACT:

- Download and use the bulletin insert.
- Share our Mobile Cause campaign link with your members.
- Learn how you and your congregation can help families who have lost everything in the devastation. Stay informed and like us on

Facebook, download resources and share updates with your congregation.

PRAY: As this earthquake continues to cause destruction and loss of life, please pray with us that the communities affected by this event and those offering assistance will be strengthened, have their needs met and be reminded of the hope found in God.

[Give to Haiti](#)

[Give to Tennessee](#)

Protecting Afghan Refugees at Risk

The situation in Afghanistan is rapidly deteriorating. As the Taliban regains control following the U.S. withdrawal, families are in urgent and immediate danger.



Attacks from the Taliban on Afghan nationals who supported the U.S. mission have increased. The U.S. government promised to protect them and is now working to bring them to safety by granting priority access to the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program and providing Special Immigrant Visas — a visa category created and allocated by Congress to ensure that no U.S. ally would be left in danger.

Since 2009 CWS has resettled more than 7,000 Afghan SIV recipients and their families to safety in the United States. There are currently 18,000 Afghan SIV applicants who are in desperate need of immediate resettlement to the United States along with their families. Countless other Afghan refugees are also in desperate need of safety, including human rights defenders, NGO workers and people who will be persecuted under the Taliban.

CWS resettlement offices and affiliates welcome these Afghan families when they arrive in the United States, providing housing, employment and other social services so that they can thrive in their new communities. We are in urgent need of housing and other support to host families, and have issued an [emergency appeal](#).

[Give to Afghanistan](#)

Thank you for your contributions at Saturday's Presbytery Meeting.

\$205 was collected for Calvin Crest Camp and Conference Center

\$60 was collected for the Haiti Earthquake Relief

Opportunities to continue to help those who are hurting and struggling in Haiti, Tennessee, and arriving Afghan Refugees through Presbyterian Disaster Assistance and Church World Service are listed above.

Pastor Retreat

Oct 27-28, 2021

Benedictine Retreat Center, Schuyler NE



Homestead Presbytery is offering, as a gift to our pastors, a fully funded 2 day spiritual retreat at the Benedictine Retreat Center (Schuyler NE) on **Wed Oct 27 through Thurs Oct 28**. Focus will be on spiritual awareness, self care, and resilience with ample opportunity for personal meditative time. Additional information will be available soon.

You may also contact Jane Holtzclaw at:
pastorjane728@gmail.com or the Presbytery office for further information.



Ever Dreamed of Being a Church Finance Administrator? Here's your chance!

First Presbyterian Church in Lincoln is seeking a new Finance Administrator. The Finance Administrator is responsible for the overall financial life of the church and First Presbyterian Church (FPC) Foundation in terms of record-keeping, accounting, payables, payroll, reporting, and working with directly with other staff responsible for receiving and recording deposits. This is a part time job, 20 hours per week, with a flexible schedule.

For more info: <https://fpclincoln.org/job-openings/>

**Fall Conference at Calvin Crest Conference
Center, Fremont, NE**

Best Laid Plans

Proverbs 19:21

September 20 –22, 2021

In the summer of 2019 the Great Plains Small Church Connection Planning Team chose the theme of **Best Laid Plans** based on the scripture

Proverbs 19:21:

The human mind may devise many plans, but it is the purpose of the LORD that will be established.



Now 2 years later we invite you to come for 3 days of retreat, rest, and renewal to **Calvin Crest Camp Conference and Retreat Center**. Beautifully situated along the Platte River near Fremont, Nebraska
4:00 p.m. Sept. 20 — 1:00 p.m. Sept. 22, 2021

Plenary speaker: Stephanie Ahlschwede, United Methodist pastor
Workshops, sharing ideas, prayer, Bible study, encouragement, lovely setting, great food.

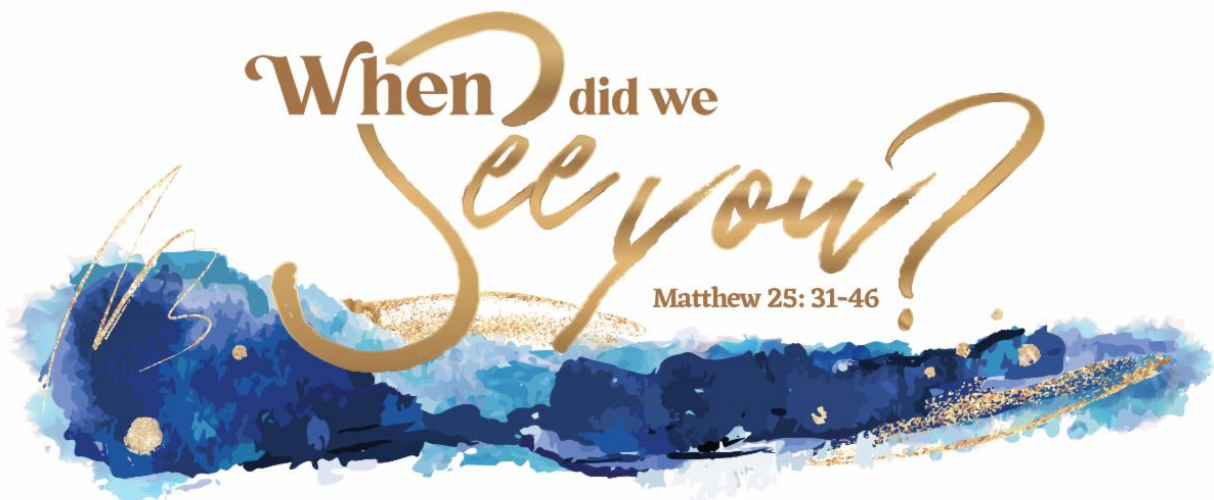
- Single occupancy, per person—\$250 INCLUDES MEALS & LODGING IN PROETT HALL
- Double occupancy, per person—\$200 INCLUDES MEALS & LODGING IN PROETT HALL
- Commuter, per person—\$125 INCLUDES MEALS

More information and Registration at:

calvincrest.org/gpsmallchurchconnection/

Registrar: Claudia Krogmann 507-665-3198

Homestead is looking for a Registrar and Leaders for next year's Youth Triennium!



PRESBYTERIAN YOUTH TRIENNIUM 2022

July 24-27 • Indianapolis, IN

Homestead Presbytery is looking for Youth Triennium

Leaders and a Registrar for next year's Triennium! If you are interested or know someone who would be a great fit in the role, please contact the Presbytery office at hpooffice@homesteadpres.org or 402-413-2143

Homestead Presbytery has a NEW PHONE NUMBER!!

402-413-2143

Make sure to write down the new number for
Homestead Presbytery!



Weekly Prayer Requests

Dunbar

Prayers are requested for the well being and prosperity of the Dunbar congregation. May they continue to grow as a caring and nurturing Christian community, as well as individuals, focusing on prayer, Bible study and worship.

Homestead Presbytery

840 S. 17th Street, Lincoln, NE 68508

Monday-Thursday 9:00am-4:00pm

Friday 9:00am-12:30pm

Office: 402.413.2143

Interim EP: 803.556.3355

Stated Clerk: 402.217.3684

