

## General Presbyter's Report

We all know that the way we need to engage ministry is shifting all the time. Today, shifting means a constant state of flux!

I was talking to a colleague of mine in mid-council ministry last week who is leading change in our denomination on shifts in what was thought of as interim/transitional ministry training and our conversation centered around the fact that all ministry today is transitional - whether you are installed or interim, congregational or specialized. As ministry leaders (lay and ordained) we have to think more about the leadership need(s) than about neat buckets of ministry categorizations that has dominated our past and still try to dominate our present. But those discernments are not easy, and there is no roadmap.

The Rev. Cameron Trimble of the Center for Progressive Renewal recently offered a fantastic blog, [\*Trends Impacting your Church \(whether you know it or not\)\*](#) about some of the shifts that need to be made in an ongoing way as we do ministry that is built nearly entirely around what Roy Oswald of the former Alban Institute used to call the "management of polarities." Our ministries crave for us to reduce everything around to two simple points or two polarities: black and white, either/or - we crave it for our thought processes and ministries to stay in the illusion of simplicity or ease of management as we exist in a world that is anything but. The truth is nothing in ministry today can be reduced to either/or thinking and "solutions" of the past no longer will serve us into the future. These are for many, sobering and anxiety-producing realities. Rev. Trimble talks about these trends:

- E-commerce and stewardship
- Robust online engagement that toggles back and forth with local physical community
- Hyper-focus on Sunday morning as the road to disengagement
- Linkages between hate-speech, online forums and the message of grace and justice we can bring into these worlds

I'd add to this list the need to really dig into demographic trends in our communities. As a denomination that is nationwide about 90% white, when national statistics are about 60% white, we need to ask ourselves hard questions about how we organize community, worship and everything else we

do. What creates barriers? What isn't going to work anymore for the future? And what sort of leadership is needed?

The Roundtable has just agreed to engage PSNE in a year's work of work and reflection with Jessica Vasquez-Torres of [Crossroads Anti-Racism Training and Organizing](#). We'll be talking more about this at our November Presbytery meeting.

Daniel Yang writes about the trendlines of Hispanic ministry in the United States in *Christianity Today*, [Four Ways New Hispanic Churches are Challenging Church Planting in America](#). One of the items on our September meeting docket is the formation of a new Emerging Ministries Committee of the Presbytery. This will enable us to have a group in PSNE that is focused on immigrant ministries such as our own Brazilian Fellowship that is growing and providing a vital witness on the Cape; but also to act as a scout and guide to new ministry opportunities around the entire Presbytery. This is an exciting time as we intentionally focus on future ministries and ones that will probably not look like anything we have had before.

A final word on all of these ideas: at our last meeting of the Presbytery I noticed that there was great energy and attention when two of our college chaplains, the Rev. Tracy Mehr-Muska and the Rev. Jenny Peek spoke about what's going on in campus ministry and what the generational cohort they serve is all about. I think one of the greatest untapped resources in PSNE are our specialized clergy and non-congregational ministries. Many of them engage with people and communities that are outside traditional congregational ministry. At the same time, congregations crave connection to and genuinely want to meet, serve and partner with the folks who tend to be engaged elsewhere. Our specialized ministries have much to teach us and oftentimes are out there on the cutting edge well before those of us (myself included!) are. We are blessed by so many amazing leaders throughout this Presbytery, please connect to each other, there is a wealth of knowledge out there.

As we turn to a new programmatic year and our plans for 2020 and beyond as a Presbytery, it remains such a joy to be here among you and alongside you in ministry! God is always doing a new thing! And that is Good News!

Blessings,



Rev. Shannan Vance-Ocampo, General Presbyter