

Report of the General Presbyter February 2023

Happy New Year! We are already a month and a half into 2023, but the new year has started and we are off to another year of shared ministry together. I'm writing with some updates and some ideas as we embark into 2023...

Death of Elder William (Bill) Thomas, Stated Clerk Emeritus

On Friday February 10, 2023, Bill Thomas passed away at home. Bill served as the Stated Clerk of this Presbytery for over 16 years until his retirement in the spring of 2018. Many of us remember Bill with fondness and joy, for his good humor, his love of the church, and his interest in the polity and rules that govern it. I will remember Bill as my "first clerk" in PSNE, someone with whom I shared many laughs and much joy. Bill had an infectious faith, was dedicated to service and passionate about the care of vulnerable children. For decades he led a weekly Bible study at Valley Presbyterian Church in Brookfield, CT. He was a man of deep faith who will be missed. I am sure by the time we have our presbytery meeting on Wednesday, the details for his memorial service will be available. Let us give thanks to God for the gift of Bill Thomas and his ministry among us, in the hope and certainty that his baptism is now complete!

Stated Clerk Search

Last month we bid goodbye to our beloved David Baer, who has served as our Stated Clerk for the last four and a half years as he makes his way to National Capital Presbytery. Thank you to everyone who joined us for the goodbye party as we roasted and toasted David! Our prayers continue for David, his wife Amy, and their two children Johanna and Timmy during this time of change and transition.

The search for our next Stated Clerk is in its early stages. The Personnel Committee has selected persons for a search team who will work jointly with Boston Presbytery, with the hopes of electing a Clerk for both Presbyteries as a shared position. The Rev. TJ DeMarco, who is a member of this Presbytery, had served as Clerk in Boston until the end of last year and continues to serve in a very part-time role for Northern New England Presbytery. The Rev. Dr. Scott DeBlock, Resource Presbyter for Northern New England Presbytery and I will resource the search team. Last year David Baer and I began meetings with our two neighboring Presbyteries and the discernment from those conversations so far is that we would like to work towards some shared positions and resources, when appropriate opportunities arise. We also have interests in some shared ministries including the restart of the Young Adult Volunteer program in our region. This is a different thing than we have done before, but it is our hope that a joint search will both yield more candidates for the position and allow us to continue to position ourselves creatively for flexible and adaptive judicatory resourcing for now and the upcoming future. Please hold the search team in your prayers as they do their work on behalf of all of us!

Matthew 25

I am very excited that we are welcoming the Rev. Dr. Diane Moffett, Executive Director and President of the Presbyterian Mission Agency today to our meeting as our preacher. Thank you to Moderator Nicole Aronson for setting this up! Diane will be sharing with us about the Matthew 25 vision and ways we can plug in. A few of our congregations have already dedicated themselves to being Matthew 25 congregations and I hope each of our congregations will consider this. It is a wonderful way to be connected to the larger connectional church of which we are each a part. *The three main pillars of Matthew 25 as directed by the General Assembly are: eradicating systemic poverty, building congregational vitality and dismantling structural racism.* As a Presbytery community we are already hard at work on the anti-racism and congregational vitality pieces of Matthew 25. Most of our anti-poverty work is bound up in local congregational work, but some of our work with immigrant fellowships and new worshipping communities could fit into this frame. *There are also three intersectional foci for Matthew 25 that weave the first three pieces together: climate change, gender justice and militarism.* The main page for Matthew 25 ministry can be found at this link: <https://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/matthew-25/> You can also join the interactive Facebook page for Matthew 25 ministries to connect with others, see the monthly webcast and be resourced: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/matthew25pcusa/> If you would like to talk more about Matthew 25, or have a specific teach-in, conversation-time or Q&A session with your congregation's session or leadership, please let me know and I'd be glad to connect you with the right person(s) for your specific context. I look forward to seeing where these resources for ministry take our local congregations, ministries and the work of the Presbytery in faith in the new year!

2023 is starting out for our Presbytery with a number of transitions. I was meeting with one of our committees of the Presbytery this past month and discussing with them the hard and also exciting space we are in as the Church today, where transition is the name of the game, and it is hard to pin down much of anything. For some of us that feels like loss or even instability, for others of us this feels exhilarating and interesting. I want to encourage us as we move through these months and even this year to embrace the new, even if it feels challenging. God is always with us, we are never alone! Jesus says over and over again "Do not be afraid! Do not be anxious!" I have to remind myself of these words nearly every day because there are always things to push and pull us into the directions of worry and stress. As I talk to our local church pastors, to those engaged in specialized ministry around the Presbytery, the thing I hear the most is that you are digging into the hard stuff of ministry for this time. We must incarnate the Gospel in this time of war, disaster, dislocation, climate crisis and deep cultural change. This will mean speaking new languages, showing up for ministry in different ways than before and being willing to change and adapt quickly. In the last few years I have been able to work with our preacher for this Wednesday, Diane Moffett, something she is always saying is that we have to "show up and

re-present the Gospel.” This is so very true. I expect we will be reinvigorated for that journey this Wednesday in worship and in our virtual gathering and community time together.

I am so grateful for you and so glad to continue to journey together to the glory of God in this place.

Blessings and Peace,

Shanna