

Presbyterian Women of the National Capital Presbytery
Moderator's Report
April 26, 2014

Our 2013 Spring Gathering/Annual Meeting was held April 20, 2013 at Berwyn Presbyterian Church in Berwyn Heights, Maryland. We reviewed the annual audit report, 2013-14 budget, honored our Honorary Life Membership recipients, recognized memorial gifts, approved a change in our by-laws to add three new positions to the CT, and elected new officers for the class of 2015.

The business meeting was followed by an important message from *Bread for the World's*, Rev. Dianne Ford Dessables, regarding the 1,000 Days campaign. 1,000 days is the time between conception and a child's 2nd birthday. Good nutrition during this time can have a big impact on the child's development, ability to learn, and rise out of poverty. Please check out 1,000 days website www.thousanddays.org for additional information.

Rev. Deborah Rounds led us in worship with assistance from PW/NCP's Coordinating Team. Rev. Rounds provided an inspiring communion meditation on leadership. Music was provided by pianist and music director, Margaret Washnitzer and The Gathering Ensemble, a combination of NCP Coordinating Team members and Berwyn PW members. Our special music was "Lift Thine Eyes to the Mountain" from "Elijah" by Mendelssohn. "I closed my eyes and heard angels singing."

Rev. Rounds also installed the class of 2015 to their new positions on the Coordinating Team, again to the theme of light and leadership. The installation was followed by a commissioning ceremony for those women planning to attend the Synod Summer Gathering at Massanetta Springs in June 2013.

Shortly after becoming moderator, several CT members attended a PW Gathering at Trinity Presbyterian Church in Herndon, VA. Margaret Anderson presented PW History at the Churchwide level, I presented PW history within our Presbytery, and the ladies of Trinity presented PW at the Congregational level. Trinity Herndon PW are involved in a number of activities, outreach, and mission work that they established and continue to support.

PW/NCP also co-hosted and attended a Multicultural Gathering of our Presbytery at Chevy Chase church in May. The event was very successful, with representation from many of the presbytery's congregations. The event concluded with an inspiring multicultural worship service that included a communion service.



and awe inspiring event, just the multi-generational/multicultural worship alone was well worth the trip. It was exciting to see the very young participate in worship and attend worship with their parent's front and center.

Our music leaders were three gentlemen with a bluegrass background hailing from Greensboro, NC, Rich Richards (piano, guitar, banjo), Joe Richardson (piano,

In June PW/NCP attended the Synod Summer Gathering in Massanetta. 24 of us gathered around the anniversary banner for a picture. The picture was Judy Wenig's idea, unfortunately she was unable to be in the picture due to her duties with the Synod Summer Gathering Planning Team. In all we totaled 27 in attendance at the gathering.

In August, several NCP CT members attended the Big Tent in Louisville, KY. What a rewarding



guitar, banjo, trumpet), and Scott Neely (cajón, guitar, washboard). They played every genre of church music for us. Additional music was provided by the children in attendance and the glorious closing worship music was provided by Charleston, S.C.-based St. James Presbyterian Church choir.

Your moderator attended the Justice, Peace and Compassion partner conference at Big Tent. Training was in sustainable and effective organizing practices. We started by learning how to identify injustice in the world then brainstorming with what we knew about a topic to discover what we still needed to learn. We divided the group into subgroups to further discuss one aspect of the injustice, as many injustices overlap with other topics, i.e. food injustice could have subgroups on human trafficking or immigration issues. Next we explored methods, strategies, and skills of community organizing, engaging in conversation about power, privilege, assumptions, and why activism often fails, failure to include those you want to assist in the planning process. We concluded the training event with onsite visits and local action: Refugee Agricultural Program Partnership, the People's Garden, Environmental Racism Tour, or a protest at a local Wendy's to join the Fair Food Program.

I stayed over for Sunday's Big Tent post conference, Culturally Proficient Leadership Education hosted by Presbyterian Women; the study guide "Radical Hospitality". I am excited about this new resource from Churchwide and hope many of our area PW groups will use this study in our churches. This session introduced participants to Presbyterian Women's new resource on culturally proficient leadership grounded in a spirituality of hospitality. The study is structured as a Bible study by incorporating biblical and theological reflection with the development of skills for culturally proficient leadership; it is particularly relevant for those of us in leadership roles.

Power without love is reckless and abusive, and love without power is sentimental and anemic. Power, at its best is love implementing the demands of justice and justice at its best is power correcting everything that stands against love.

Martin Luther King, Jr.

We held our August 24, 2013 coordinating team meeting at Ebenezer Presbyterian Church in Woodbridge, VA, our site for our Fall Gathering. Our opening prayer and devotion was presented via teleconference with our spiritual nurturer, Lakesha Bradshaw. We had a few technology issues with this first go around, we will work on solutions for our next CT meeting, but I see this meeting option continuing to be available at future CT meetings.



I also had the privilege to be an invited guest at the October 4, State Assembly of Church Women United in Greater Washington, "Opening New Doors: Justice, Hospitality and Opportunity". I must confess this was my first exposure to what Church Women United was all about. Yes, our church participated in local meetings of the Prince George's Chapter, Doll Luncheon, World Day of Prayer celebrations in the past, but I was not exposed to the bigger picture. The Keynote speaker was Stephanie Jones, CWU Advocacy Coordinator on Capitol Hill. She told us that advocacy is like saving drowning people, but the real goal is to stop people from throwing people into the water to drown. Our goal should be changing policy to make lasting changes. Church Women United affiliates help by providing the background, research that will be used to develop policy on Capitol Hill. The policy makers need us in the room so they can develop policy that will work and have a lasting impact. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. stated 50 years ago, "The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends towards justice". It takes 100's of millions of people to take a firm but gentle grip on that arc to bend it toward justice, we need to brighten the corner where we are and bend that arc toward justice.

Our Fall Gathering, *An Abiding Hope* was held on October 5 at Ebenezer Presbyterian Church. We were warmly welcomed by the Presbyterian Women of Ebenezer PC with a continental breakfast so we could get the day started on the right foot. Reverend Yaw Nkansah, Ebenezer PC, welcomed us with Matthew 28:1, "After the Sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb."

Followed by the Lighting of the Christ Candle and Devotions with Lakesha Bradshaw, stating that God doesn't play favorites a "Blessed Life" is for everyone and is not based on your situation or circumstances. God sees us all the same. We also dedicated the Fellowship of the Least Coin offering gathered throughout our presbytery.



Our Bible Study Overview was presented by Rev. Yena Hwang, Associate Pastor at Fairfax Presbyterian Church. Rev. Hwang reminded us that it is important to know the context that words are spoken from, i.e. Rev.



Hwang is a daughter with parents who immigrated to the US from Korea, she is also a wife, a mother, an older sister, just to name a few roles. Therefore, when Rev. Hwang speaks she speaks from this context. It is also important to know the context in which you are heard, i.e. many in our audience migrated here from Ghana, others from the mid-west, and still others born and raised in the Washington Metropolitan area. We need to ensure our words will reach our audience in a context that they will understand. Rev. Hwang also explained the organization of the Jewish Bible into three parts, the Torah or Law, the History, and writings. Exodus and Deuteronomy are from the Torah. Finally, the books of Exodus and Deuteronomy cause us to consider our relationship to God and our thoughts on immigration.

We had a total of 8 workshops available to choose from. Our workshop topics included a continuation of the Bible study overview, what does it mean to be a ruling elder, Immigration reform updates and biblical reflection on why as faith members we are engaged in these efforts, sewing pillow case dresses and britches, Bible Trivia/Jeopardy, World Mission projects of a relatively new immigrant Ebenezer PC, praying with art, images and contemporary icons to deepen our spiritual exploration and practice not to provide answers but to invite questions, and finally, enriching our personal worship and spiritual journey through praise and worship music.

Lunch was provided by Ebenezer Presbyterian Church and included fruit, vegetables, various meat and meatless wrap options, tuna salad sandwiches. The table was adorned with a carved watermelon, once again showing us a warm welcome into Ebenezer PC worship spaces. The evaluations were filled with appreciation for Ebenezer Presbyterian Women's warm welcome and generous hospitality.



After our afternoon workshop session, we gathered once again in the sanctuary for a closing ceremony lead by our praise and worship workshop leader, Shirli Hughes, Minister of Music, Westminster Presbyterian Church, Washington, DC. Rev. Hughes led us in a medley of familiar praise and worship hymns. The workshop participants formed a choir directed by Rev. Hughes. What a blessed and rewarding day we had

PW/NCP was one of the co-sponsors of the Presbytery's Multicultural Gathering on October 19th. another rewarding experience. LaKesha Bradshaw, Spiritual Nurturer Coordinator, was ordained as Associate Pastor at Silver Spring Presbyterian Church on November 10.

Our Annual Coordinating Team retreat was held in Springfield, VA. We had an ambitious agenda that included selecting a topic or cause to rally behind for 2014 and into 2015. We choose Food Injustice. We asked the tough questions that we need to learn more about:

- How can we feed more who are hungry?
- Why do we detest the growing number of immigrants when we all them to work as slaves?
- How can we ensure safe foods in the United States?
- How do we eliminate additives from our foods?
- How do we end Hunger?
- What is Food Justice?
- How do we teach fair and just eating?
- How do we advocate for fair wage and agriculture?
- How are Food Justice and the environment interconnected?



On February 22, we held our Annual Prayer Breakfast using the World Day of Prayer Program, Streams in the Desert. We heard the Bible Story as told by storyteller, Reverend Casey FitzGerald followed by the message from Reverend Philomena Ofori-Nipaah, who told us how she use to wake up at 4 am as a little girl in Ghana to fetch clean water for her mother and family. She walked a great distance for a little girl, but she had to in order to get the

cleanest water of the day. Rev. Philomena challenged us to carry the Word to the world as a woman carries water from a stream, to help other women to fetch the living water from their desert. Isaiah reminds us to look for the stream in the desert. We are all in a desert; we get distracted, interrupted by our gadgets. We must look for the stream in our desert, our faith reminds us when we look at a rock, water will flow, and we already have what we need, from Holy Scripture, living water.

I attended the Synod of the Mid Atlantic CT meeting on March 14 & 15 at Massanetta Springs, VA. Each presbytery is given an opportunity to speak and/or provide a written report. I am on the Justice, Peace, and Missions Committee and we discussed ideas for a workshop at the Synod Summer Gathering. We heard a report from the Summer Synod Gathering Co-Moderators, each presbytery will need to provide volunteers to read during plenary (Lighting and prayer), Ushers, Communion Servers. We will be doing the Linus Blanket project again and Hygiene Kits and a 3rd mystery project. Silent Auction Basket, minimum of \$100.00, the goal is to raise \$2,000. One idea is to ask churches to volunteer at the Spring Gathering to donate \$25.00 baskets or an item to collect into one basket.

We held our March 29 CT meeting and finalized our plans for our Annual Spring Gathering/Business meeting at Trinity Presbyterian Church in Herndon, VA.

Blessings,

Peggy Sisson
Moderator, Presbyterian Women of the National Capital Presbytery