

Report of the General Presbyter September 9, 2008

“Roll out those lazy, hazy, crazy days of summer...” That’s what the old song proclaimed, but I have found this summer to be anything but. It has been a wonderful, but very full three months since our last stated meeting of the presbytery. As you recall at that June meeting we approved three pastoral calls, and then, at a July called meeting we approved two more. The new calls and the services of ordination and installation have provided me with many opportunities to travel around the presbytery and share in congregational celebrations.

The meeting of the General Assembly in San Jose was another highlight of the “not so lazy” days of summer. I found that my new position caused me to view the meeting through different eyes. As a pastor I always kept an eye on the assembly with a concern for how the members of my current church family might react to the actions of the larger church. As General Presbyter that sense of concern was magnified. The question for me became: “How will this decision be received by the congregations in Transylvania, and how will it affect our growing sense of unity?” I am pleased with the plans our commissioners (and others who went to San Jose as visitors) have created for sharing and discussing the actions of the assembly long before we are asked to vote on the overtures.

My time at G.A. was immediately followed by a week of continuing education at Montreat, N.C. I shared in the Church Unbound conference which challenged us to look at the church of the future. “What is the church you’re dreaming of?” That’s the question that was asked again, and again through the week. The church we all grew up in no longer exists, and we don’t know yet what the church of the future will look like. So we live in that uncomfortable “between” time where we are all called to dream a bit. Like our ancestors, we are in a wilderness, dreaming of a promised land we can only imagine. We’re challenged to work to make the church of the future faithful to the teachings of Jesus – those truths he taught by his example as well as with his words.

That challenge is, of course, the directing image for us all, as we leave the summer behind and begin another church year. The summer has been marked by optimism. The General Assembly looked to the future in electing a young moderator, filled with energy and vision. The image of a church unbound (set free) and ready to be shaped by the fresh winds of the Holy Spirit, is one we can all embrace. I am pleased to be with Transylvania Presbytery as we work to strengthen every one of our congregations and pastors as we move forward, waiting to see what God has in mind for us around the next bend.

Richard Smith