

Interim/ Transitional Ministry Report
The Presbyterian Church in Geneva
Rev. Dr. Deborah Lind-Schmitz

First, it has been an honor and delight to serve the Presbyterian Church in Geneva and the Geneva Presbytery. Thus, this has been an adventure and transition for me, too. You have been very gracious and welcoming. Thank you so much. Second, the report I usually present to the session and presbytery follows the outline of five critical areas during transitions.

1. Coming to Terms with History
2. Discovering a New Identity
3. Allowing Needed Leadership Change
4. Reaffirming Denominational Connections
5. Commitment to New Directions in Ministry

Here are a few observations and events in 2013 as I reflect on these transition tasks.

History: Heritage Sunday in September provided an opportunity to share your rich heritage and a rediscovered historical treasure. Dr. Hart's son also brought the PCGNY's history to the fore as well as its dedication to local mission. The following Stewardship campaign celebrated the church past as well as future. "Building on the Past, Celebrating the Present, Hoping in the Future". Here is an excerpt from my presentation on Heritage Sunday.

The Presbyterian Church in Geneva can claim almost two hundred and twenty years of ministry if you begin with the Presbyterian missionaries and Geneva residents gathered at the Paultney Hotel. Eleven Presbyterian churches were organized under the spiritual leadership of Rev. Jedediah Chapman. This year, we rediscovered the receipt book where Rev. Chapman recorded donations as early as 1800. It was a thrill for me to see his calligraphy and penned signature next to the donation "for the support of the gospel in Geneva".

Another historical activity occurred in summer worship when Eleanor Stearns as Elizabeth Cady Stanton preached. She reminded the congregation of Elizabeth's courageous stance and her persistent fight for justice. A great example for the present church as major issues of justice will need support in the PCUSA.

The more recent history of the two Geneva churches merger, various associate ministers and James Gerling's long pastorate were discussed in private and less formal ways.

Identity: What do you say about the Presbyterian Church in Geneva? What do others say about PCG? My analysis of this congregation's identity was based on both current and past ministries of community involvement, inclusivity and tolerance. Quiet opposition to injustice and persistent involvement to improve the community is not highly publicized. Worship, music and education are the three major components that define this community of believers.

It is a temptation to describe a congregation by the pastors. It is a challenge to develop language to articulate who you are and who you are called to be. I have tried to stretch your imagination this year and introduce a few "changes".

One initiative was Worship on Wednesday. ARC and the Geneva Adult Day Care residents and staff attended the monthly morning chapel.

Leadership: Officer Training on January 4 organized the Session and Deacons with information on the church and the call. The spiritual component of this short retreat focused on I Corinthians 12. We discussed the unity and diversity of the Body of Christ and healthy habits of a congregation. A healthy change is every committee will have a chair and an alternate chair.

Staff/Personnel: Personnel committee and I conducted a long overdue "annual review" of major employees. I worked to develop supportive systems and teamwork for both paid staff and volunteers.

Denominational relationship: Building Bridges and educating the congregation about the PC (USA) included:

- Hosting a Geneva Presbytery meeting and the new hymnal, "Glory to God" workshop. Served on the Committee on Ministry and attended Interim Ministers gatherings in the Geneva Presbytery.
- Connected the congregation and staff to PCUSA.org and reintroduced the Book of Order, the Book of Confessions, the Book of Common Worship and other Presbyterian resources. .
- Attended the Mission Trip to New York City- Art, Laura Lewis and I joined a group of 32 Presbyterians from other churches in the presbytery

Commitment to a new future: January worship focused on our commitment to Christ. There is great energy and spirit in the leadership and committees. You have a future as a congregation willing to speak up and step out for God's sake.

God bless you with Peace, Courage and Hope,
Pastor Deborah Lind-Schmitz

