

GENERAL PRESBYTER REPORT
MARCH 7, 2006

My first meeting with you as a presbytery was in September 1999. At that meeting, one sage person declared that presbytery meetings were “mind-numbing and soul-sucking,” a phrase which his cohorts worked into just about every committee report on Saturday morning. Most of this was offered in jest, sort of.

I retell this story for two reasons. The first is to remind you of some of the changes in our presbytery meetings over the last six and a half years. We have a dedicated planning team which plans for excellence in worship and presentations, as well as workshops designed to provide practical ministry resources for our pastors and our lay leaders. The Planning Team reviews each comment made on the evaluations turned in at the end of our meetings and takes seriously the charge to continually improve our time together. They also plan well in advance - speakers and workshops through the end of the year are already being planned. I really appreciate the zeal with which they approach this task.

However, there is another reason I recall my first meeting. That same person who delighted in poking a finger in the eye of those who plan our meetings is also a person of deep spiritual wisdom. As much as I will always recall his comment on “mind-numbing and soul-sucking” presbytery meetings, I will also remember another phrase he often used. Serving with him on the Committee on Ministry and on the Missional Church team, I frequently heard another question: “Where is Christ in that?”

As one group would unpack and autopsy a recent meeting, often dwelling on what didn’t go as well as planned, he would ask, “Where was Christ is that?” Another group would plan an intervention, caught up in the details of who should be at the table and what should be the parameters of the conversation. And then came that annoying question once more, “Where do you think Christ is in that?” And then he moved right to meddling when he would ask me about my schedule and my work, “Greg, where is Christ in your daily work?”

These are important questions. We have a busy year in front of us. The General Assembly is meeting after a two-year hiatus. Many significant reports will be handled at that meeting. Who will stop to ask, “Where is Christ in all that we do?” The Developing Congregations & Evangelism Committee, with the help of Marcus Barber, are planning several meetings with clusters of congregations to discuss options for transformation and what it means to be a vital congregation. And the central question in those conversations will be, “Where is Christ in all that we are doing?” The Presbytery Planning Team has arranged for Betty Meadows to speak to us at our June meeting to reflect on her sabbatical where she went looking for Christ in a Waffle House.

I hope this year we will all hold one question above all others, “Where is Christ in all that we do?” The budgets and committees will all move forward as they always have. But somehow I have to believe that we as a community of faith will grow stronger only if we make seeking Christ our number one priority! May God make it so.