

Reflection

The gifts Christ gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ. *Ephesians 4:11-13*

Waking Up to New Learning

I spent last week in Washington state, between Tacoma and Seattle, for the Presbytery Leader Formation residency. This is a program to help prepare new presbytery executives (or those in similar positions) for the work ahead of them, and I was the newest instructor to be added in. Because COVID put the residencies on hiatus, we are trying to sort out how to give folks a satisfactory experience in learning and connecting with each other. While the program design includes three residencies (theoretically, the first three years of one's service), things got jumbled up with the two years of COVID preventing in-person meetings. So, even though quite a few people ended up not attending, we still had 40 attendees, which the veterans said was twice the size of a typical residency. And, of course, they reflect a broad diversity of contexts.

What this week represented for me was the first steps of coming out of COVID. Though I participated in one in-person conference last year, my travel schedule has been nothing like it used to be—and what with the hybrid GA, and all of the meetings for the GAPJC still on Zoom, it will still be less than before, and frankly I'm OK with that. It's always a surprise for people to hear that I'm actually a pretty strong introvert, so the limited travel has been kind of nice for me. Last week I noticed how the extroverts were beyond thrilled to be able to connect in person this last week, but I felt like I was coming out of a fog.

But it seems that it is time for us to start to wake up and venture back out into the world, and maybe participate in some continuing education again. As it happens, I have heard about some programs coming up this summer and fall that you might want to look into.

Huw Christopher pointed to the rich variety of trainings offered by **Columbia Theological Seminary**, some on-line and some in various locations around the Southeast. The full list is at <https://www.ctsnet.edu/events/> but Huw highlighted one very intriguing program for pastors of congregations, on [Developing Pastoral Intelligence](#), September 19-21. The programs include some trainings on prayer and contemplation, or leading the Presbyterian Women *Horizons* Bible Study Curriculum, for disciples seeking deeper practices of faith as well as pastors looking for new skills.

I was looking at **Zephyr Point's** Events Calendar, which includes a variety of summer camps for young people, workshops for artists and musicians, and pastors interested in interim ministry. You can find it at <https://www.zephyrpoint.org/programs/>. For me, just being up at Lake Tahoe is a wonderful retreat! I was happy to see that anyone can register for the [Ethnic Concerns Consultation](#), an annual conference that has been led and supported by Bryce Little for decades (he invited me to be the speaker in 2016), sponsored by what is now North Central California Presbytery (the merger of Sacramento and Stockton presbyteries). The October 7-9 event will have three of the most influential leaders in the PC(USA): Liz Theoharis, Co-Chair with William Barber of the Poor People's Campaign; Bruce Reyes-Chow, former GA Moderator and advocate for the future of the church; and Elona Street-Stewart, current GA Co-Moderator and key Indigenous church leader. All PC(USA) members are eligible for a \$100 discount off the already quite affordable registration fee. (Use discount code "PCUSA22" when registering.)

Because Bryce and I are hoping that others from San Gabriel Presbytery might want to go together, I would be happy to register folks as a group and we can coordinate travel etc. Just let me know.

Princeton Theological Seminary has several intriguing events coming up, including an on-line two-day reflection on the 1992 response in Los Angeles to the Rodney King police trial, called [Hope from Ashes](#), scheduled for this Friday and Saturday, May 13-14. Veronica Ota, a Princeton student from First Altadena who is under care of San Gabriel Presbytery, has been active in planning this event. The full list of options is at <https://www.ptsem.edu/the-quad/events>. Again, some are on-line, some are hybrid, and some are in person at Princeton.

As you know, we Presbyterians are big believers in education, including education for our pastors. It might be time for us to look into some opportunities to come out of our collective COVID fog. Now I'm also very clear that we need to be gentle with ourselves, and to venture out only when we are ready. But here are a few options; and I'm sure there are many others.

One of my favorite quotes from John Calvin is "the minds of the godly are rarely at peace," though to be honest this is more a reflection on our tendency to experience doubt. The full sentence is "Faith is tossed about by various doubts, so that the minds of the godly are rarely at peace." (You can find it in the *Institutes*, Book III, Chapter ii, item 37, on page 584 in the first volume of the 1960 John T. McNeill edition.) In any case, I like to think that we do have lively, restless minds, even if it challenges our faith.

Yesterday I experienced a transformational worship service, as Interwoven reflected on Mother's Day in a most unique and powerful way. I may be slow, but I'm hoping that all of us are starting to feel some fresh awareness again—in worship, in relationship, and in education.

Blessings,

