

E-News for 3/22/23

As of today, I have been in Ohio for a month. I have enjoyed worshipping with several congregations, sitting down with sessions, visiting with PNCs, and sharing meals and coffee with pastors. My calendar is rapidly filling up with invitations to visit congregations to preach, worship, or attend a mission, education, or fellowship event. Please, keep those invitations coming! I told the Search Committee that I believe that ministry is incarnational; that as disciples we are called to imitate Jesus Christ by “moving into the neighborhood” as Eugene Peterson put it in his paraphrase of the prologue of the Gospel of John.

With thirty-nine congregations, three chaplaincies, a New Worshipping Community, and thirty-eight retired pastors it will take me a while to visit each one-by-one. My goal is to do so; however, since that will take time, I want to provide a few larger gatherings for us to get to know one another now while I continue to work to set up more personal visits. Coming out of the Pastors’ Retreat, the Resource Committee also noted the hunger that this presbytery has for building relationships again after several years apart because of COVID. I hope that these events will help all of us build stronger relationships and I look forward to seeing how the Spirit moves in our midst to build-up our common ministry. So, I am inviting anyone in the presbytery to join me for one (or all) of the following social times:

Meet & Greet at [Porchlight Coffee Co.](#)

Monday, March 27 from 9a-12
798 Grant St in Akron

Meet & Greet at [Glenwood Grounds](#)

Friday, March 31 from 9a-12p
2906 Glenwood Ave in Youngstown

Both of these locations are connected to incarnational ministries that are seeking to show the light of Christ in their neighborhoods (Porchlight is connected to [South Street Ministries](#) for whom we collected the offering at the last presbytery meeting and Glenwood Grounds is connected to [Hope for Renewal](#)). These locations were suggested by some of you because we have congregations engaged in both ministries! If you come out one of those mornings, the coffee and pastries will be on me.

COVID also taught us that we have some powerful tools to connect with each other from a distance. While those of us who prefer an in-person gathering experienced loneliness, others discovered the joy of connecting using these new tools. Those who worked long hours, lived far from family, resided in nursing homes, or had limited mobility suddenly found themselves connected to their families, churches, and communities again because we all learned to use those new technologies! A member of my congregation in Louisiana who has Multiple Sclerosis celebrated with me that “the church and world came to meet me where I am!” During those days I enjoyed getting online to play games, make music, share drinks, and meet “face-to-face”

with friends near and far. Some of those gatherings have continued these three years later. Those gatherings were incarnational too. Thanks be to God that we now have one more tool to connect us! So, I'm inviting anyone who would like to connect to join me for a Zoom check-in during Holy Week. I'll offer a brief devotion and prayer and we'll take a moment to simply breathe and check-in during this most hectic week of the Church Year. This one is pet-friendly but sadly you'll need to provide your own beverage!

Eastminster After Hours

Tuesday, April 4 from 7p-8p

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81251384455?pwd=ZXJOV2QrdHFtYlVibzdJaWtXdlg0Zz09>

If you're wondering if this invitation is for you, it is. Whether you are a pastor, chaplain, ruling elder, deacon, congregation member, mission partner, or someone who isn't any one of those but for some reason still likes receiving the Eastminster Newsletter, I'd be glad to see you at any of the above. Until then...

May the Peace of Christ be with you,
Barry