

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

For Christ in the Heart of Charlotte

MINUTE FOR MISSION

PNC

MAY 15, 2011

We on the Pastor Nominating Committee (PNC) begin each of our meetings with devotional and prayer time to help us remember that this is indeed not our search, but God's. I'd like to share one of these devotionals with you today.

The scripture is Revelation 2: 2 – 7; it is part of John's pastoral letter to the church at Ephesus.

*To the angel of the church in Ephesus write:
These are the words of him who holds the seven stars in
his right hand, who walks among the seven golden lampstands:
I know your works, your toil and your patient endurance.
I know that you cannot tolerate evildoers; you have
tested those who claim to be apostles but are not,
and have found them to be false. I also know that you
are enduring patiently and bearing up for the sake of my
name, and that you have not grown weary. But I have this
against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first.*

Let anyone who has an ear listen to what the spirit is saying to the churches.

Follow tradition or don't follow tradition. Build up the community of faith in a time of transition and pressure. Discern God's will and follow it patiently and without tiring. And do it all with the love that you first felt toward your God and your church. This is the task ahead. No big deal.

Actually, the message in these verses energizes me. I think it brings to mind three things that are important for us to consider. One, that God calls us to live in community. Two, that the community is called to reevaluate itself upon occasion. And three, that all we do, must be done in love.

The angel to whom the letter is addressed represents the church's collective identity. The community of faith. God wants us to live together in community with others. The support and love and shared faith born out of living together is part of God's plan for His church.

While living in Christian community brings great benefit, it can also bring great challenge as referenced in John's letter. The church at Ephesus is doing much of what is expected and not growing weary while doing it. So are we. They are bearing up. So are we. But God suggests they might not be doing it with the enthusiasm they had at first. He asks them to go back and look at what they used to do and how they did it. He wants them to listen again to what the Spirit is telling them – reevaluate their community. That's where we are.

I think He is saying that they need to look at their old ways through new eyes. And I think that is an enormous part of what we are being asked to do on the PNC and as a congregation. In the book "Invitation to the New Testament," it says, "Commitment to one another includes the negotiation of our lives in the context of a pledge to be in community. Oftentimes, this cooperation...is worked out in a community that has a history long before any newcomers arrive... The best communities of faith consciously, and in good conscience, assess and reassess these commitments to tradition or else the community itself loses vitality."

With the idea of assessing and reassessing our community of faith in mind, I'd like to tell you about a special summer series that will allow us to do just that. The series is called "In the Heart of Charlotte; celebrating what God is doing through a community of faith."

We invite you, indeed we NEED you to join us

- To celebrate what God is doing in and through this community of faith right now.
- To listen for the ways that God might be calling First Presbyterian Church forward.
- And to participate in the PNC's faithful process of discernment in our search for a new Senior Minister.

Each Sunday, the combined adult Sunday School classes will gather in the Wood Fellowship Hall to learn firsthand about a different ministry of the church. On several Sundays throughout the summer, the PNC will lead small breakout sessions to listen to your insights and reflections as we work to discern God's will for the future of our community of faith. Ever mindful that our conversations must be grounded in and guided by God's word, there will be a summer long, church wide devotional to accompany the series. The devotions will help us focus on what the various ministries provide and the reflection questions each week will also help us begin to discern where the Spirit is leading us. Please watch *FirstNEWS* and *Tradewinds* for more on the series as well as information on a written survey in which we will ask you to participate in the coming weeks.

We have a history here that needs to be honored and not ignored. It tells the old, old story of First Pres and her love! Our challenge for now is to look at what we did "at first." We must re-evaluate it. We must keep what is most critical and let go of what is not really important. We must listen to the Spirit.

And we must do all of that with the love and energy and enthusiasm that we first felt for this church and for each other. We are called to do it. We are called to do it together. And I look forward to it.

Julie Caldwell