

July 25, 2018

Friends,



The body of Christ known as Santa Fe Presbytery is both unified in its core beliefs and diverse in its varied peoples and experiences. That diversity has become clearer to me this year as I've served as moderator. I've witnessed a wide spectrum of members' perspectives, in the arenas of theology, politics, ethnicity, gender, and so on.

The tenor of the July presbytery meeting at Peñasco will be set by our listening to 4 of our members sharing their stories of uneven opportunity, as they reflect some of the rich diversity of our presbytery.

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The Presbytery of Santa Fe is a collaborative community of congregations engaged by the Triune God in worship, education and mission.

In our presbytery, we proclaim and maybe even idolize our diversity. But ultimately, we know that our oneness is because we all acknowledge Christ as our only salvation. In the abstract, we can affirm that broader, diverse participation and input can give richer, fuller understanding and outcomes, regardless of the task at hand. That's an upside of diversity. But along with this benefit, embracing diversity requires that I, and you, encounter, listen to, respect, and consider the voices of those whose experiences are different than ours. Yoked in Christ, we are called to love our neighbor... Samaritans, tax collectors, "them," "others," _____, _____; you fill in the blanks as whom Jesus would identify as your (and my) "neighbor," living outside our circle of comfortable friends.

At our February presbytery meeting, we started to explore the topic of uneven privilege as it exists in our environment. I advocated we use the term "privilege," but since that presbytery meeting I've learned that is a loaded word for some. So, I propose using the term "opportunity." In February, at the table discussions of uneven opportunity, we didn't always behave in a loving, generous manner. There were times that I and others were more focused on voicing our opinions, rather than respectfully listening to the feelings of others.

The motivation of having uneven opportunity as a presbytery topic for 2018 is not to malign or blame a certain group or class of individuals (e.g., older white males, of which I am one). No, this exercise in 2018 is intended to be primarily an individual, personal faith journey where each of us examines one's own opportunities/blessings, resisting the temptation to judge those around us. It is intended to afford us the chance to (1) consider and explore our unique individual opportunities, (2) contemplate them as we listen to the stories of others, and then (3) decide for our self how you and I can be good stewards of these opportunities, using them to support and affirm our sister or brother who hasn't been as fortunate.

At the Penasco meeting we'll hear a few of the personal stories, perhaps previously unknown to us, from four members of our family. I hope you'll come and continue in the discovery of God's rich blessing, and call, to each of us.

Bryan Beck, moderator