

# **Jeff's Jottings**

## *A house united*

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By Jeff Japinga  
Executive Presbyter

Just two weeks ago, my friend Jerrod Lowry was elected general presbyter of Coastal Carolina Presbytery. He'll join another friend (and former student), Laura Lupton, on a Presbytery staff that will have some major challenges in the months to come, in the wake of Hurricane Florence. Ted Churn is executive presbyter of North Carolina's New Hope Presbytery; Steve Scott is in Salem Presbytery, Jan Edmiston in Charlotte. Along the South Carolina coast, Gavin Meek started just a month ago as transitional executive in New Harmony Presbytery. Shepherds in turbulent times, all of them: real people who represent the hundreds of thousands in harm's way this weekend. Pray for them. Pray for their people.

Then please consider a gift to [Presbyterian Disaster Assistance](#). Send a gift individually, if you haven't already, or consider a special offering or fundraiser at your church. Our own PTCA Mission Team worked this spring with PDA still responding to catastrophic flooding two years ago. The needs are and will continue to be great; please consider how you can help.

It means something to be a connectional church. We often talk about what it means to be Presbyterian. We'll name the Book of Order, or the Board of Pensions, or the decisions of the General Assembly. Those are often what bring us together, or what fractures us.

But being Presbyterian — being a connectional church — is not only, maybe not even primarily, about those things. It's about standing together with real people with deep hearts for God and each other, all across the presbytery and the country (and the world, for that matter). People like us, people different from us, but all faithful in their own ways and their own neighborhoods. All

this week, I've heard Presbyterians in Texas and the Gulf Coast; in wildfire-ravaged parts of California; in tornado-broken Marshalltown, Iowa, and flooded Appalachian mountain towns, offering their support to their brothers and sisters in the Carolinas, just as they had received support when crisis struck them in the past year. Connectionalism.

The world continues to focus on what divides us. Being Presbyterian claims a common future where congregations and members are supported in their own places of ministry, even as those same congregations and members offer their own hands and prayers to their colleagues across the landscape of the Presbytery and the denomination. Where we are, together, nurturing thoughtful expressions of God's mission in the world, a house united.