

Greetings to the Saints of Mission Presbytery!

Dear ones, while things in life have never been perfect, I (and perhaps we) have never lived in a time when it has been harder, or more necessary, to do ministry and to be the church.

There was a time when people thought the church would be a safe place with nice people where nice Christians would serve. I have met some number of seminarians along the way who thought that going to seminary was basically going to be like an extended church camp, where we would all sing “Kumbayah” and get along. There was a day when churches had respect in their communities, when their preachers’ sermons would be published and debated in local newspapers, when they would be consulted as moral authorities on issues of the day.

Well, as we know now, thanks to the work of Phyllis Tickle and Diana Butler Bass and Brian McLaren and others - as if we needed to consult outside sources! - that is no longer the case. As our friend Rodger Nishioka says, the church of the 21st Century has more in common with the church of the 1st Century than it does the church of the 20th Century. We can no longer “build it and they will come.” Seminarians today are being told that they should expect to be “tentmakers,” working only part time in most cases, and that they should plan their lives accordingly. All across the denominational board, this is the case.

If Rodger is right and we must expect to have more in common with the 1st Century church, then that means that we should expect to be smaller. More subversive in our faith. Riskier in our plans. Flexible while being faithful. And unafraid to speak out. I think that’s all good.

Friends, I’ve not known such a time in my lifetime when evil has been so prevalent, when self-centeredness and entitlement and unwillingness to grapple with difficult issues have contributed to so much harm to so many. And never has there been such a time in my lifetime and yours when our calls to serve have been more essential. What better time to be the church?

This is that Kairos moment, dear ones, when we are called to be The Church: to face our chairs outward instead of inward, to know God’s truth and to speak it boldly, to not just “look for the helpers” but to be the helpers, and to do so without regard - even, as it says in our Book of Order “at the risk of its life”

We as followers of Jesus Christ have work to do. My plan is to double down on my own devotional and spiritual life, and pray that doing so will provide a springboard for me to speak and to act as God desires. I hope you’ll join me in doing the same. Keeping you and us all close in my prayers.

PRESBYTER SIGHTINGS

October 6 - Campus Ministry Think Tank, San Marcos First

October 7 - General Council, San Antonio University

October 8 - Worship with Canyon Lake

October 12-17 - Mid-Council Fall Meetings in St. Louis

October 20 - Inauguration of new President at Schreiner University

October 22 - Installation for Kathy Escandell, McAllen First

October 24 - PCHAS Fall Luncheon, San Antonio

October 27-28 - Meeting of Mission Presbytery, Corpus Christi Parkway

October 29 - Lead a class and worship with the Convencion gathering, Brownsville

October 31 - Happy 500th Anniversary of the Reformation!