

Business as [un]Usual

Notes from Stated Clerk Barbara Lutter about the business of the presbytery in such an unusual time as this.

Here's Something!

The next Stated Meeting of the Presbytery will be held the FIRST SATURDAY of February, 2021. That's February 6, 2021. Start time: 9:00 a.m. End Time: 10:30 a.m. It will be a virtual meeting, so get your Zoom on! P.S., if you have business to bring to the presbytery for action, please contact me as soon as possible ~ "sooner, not later."

Here's Something!

The Nominating & Developing Leaders Committee (NDL) welcomes receiving names of persons in our presbytery who possess gifts of service and who may be interested in serving on a presbytery committee. Is there a teacher in your congregation that enjoys working with young adults? We've got a place. Is there a realtor or insurance broker in your church? We have a great need for this expertise. Maybe you have interest ~ we'd love to hear from you! In short, if you know someone, say something. Send names and contact information (if you have it) to Tom Ruter, chair of NDL. Thomas_j_Ruter@yahoo.com

Here's Something!

It's the most wonderful time of the year... unless you are a clerk of session. Did you know that your clerk of session is submitting your church and session records to the Stated Clerk for "review"? And did you know that the clerk of session is also compiling all sorts of statistical and demographic information, preparing the Annual Statistical Reports for submission?

And I can hear some of you questioning, "Why do we do this? And why should I care?" *The Short Answer* is, "We do it because *The Book of Order* requires it and the General Assembly directs us to submit session records, rolls and registers for annual review, and submit demographic and membership information annually." That's a mouthful ~ and it doesn't really answer the question "why." Also ... if the answer starts with the words "*Because the Book of Order*," generally people stop reading and skip to the next article. That short answer doesn't tell the whole story, and I hope you'll read on.

The Real Answer is a bit more nuanced. (We are Presbyterians, after all.) We report these statistics about our church membership so that the Office of the General Assembly (OGA) can identify and track membership trends, and use that data to plan programs and ministry resources that are relevant for our congregations today. And, of course, the General Assembly (GA) uses the membership numbers to calculate our presbytery's per capita assessment. The presbytery's per capita apportionment supports the mission of the church, including mission, ministries and programs.

If your congregation's membership rolls reflect membership of 700 members, but in reality the membership of your congregation is 350 members, that doubles the amount of per capita assessed to the presbytery. With about 57 congregations, the per capita assessment could be dramatically inflated. This is why the session of your congregation is encouraged to "clean the rolls" on a regular basis: removing persons who are no longer members and adding the new church members to the rolls. And this is one reason "why" you might care about the numbers your clerk of session is reporting.

Did you know that our presbytery pays per capita every year for the number of members as reported by our clerks of session ... regardless of whether a congregation contributes per capita funds to the presbytery? Per capita payments are an important part of our covenantal relationship within the presbytery, and between your church, the presbytery, the synod and GA. But I digress.

The purpose of this article is to alert you to the huge task your clerk of session is facing right now... in the middle of the most wonderful time of the year. Reporting membership statistics is pretty tedious. Reporting all these numbers can be a frustrating task. For many of our clerks, this is not the most wonderful part of their job! In fact, it can be pretty thankless. But it is required ... and it is an important task.

This past year, especially, has been filled with stress and anxiety for all of us. I suspect that 2020 has been the yuckiest year for a lot of us. For the clerk of session at your church, this may be the yuckiest time of all.

So Here's Something! Appreciate your clerk of session. Send a note or email of encouragement and gratitude. Write a note of thanks on the Christmas card you send. Send virtual hugs and pats on the back. We all need affirmation and encouragement ~ and I guarantee your clerk of session will be glad to hear from you.

I send you Christmas Blessings. I wish good health for you and your families. And, I hope to see you in person next year!