

WE are CALLED to ERADICATE SYSTEMIC POVERTY and to CARE FOR CREATION.

In the midst of pandemic, indeed with a vision clarified and confirmed by the challenges of pandemic, our congregation took the bold step forward into the future by claiming these two compelling and complementary calls.

How did we arrive at this point on the journey?

In the summer of 2018, our congregation received an invitation from Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary to join the Myrtle Collaboration. What was the Myrtle Collaboration, we, and many in the congregation asked? Myrtle is another name for Queen Esther who accepted the call to step forward and lead her people when they needed her most. The purpose of the Myrtle Collaboration is *an Initiative to Reclaim the Vocation of Every Child of God.*

Since the beginning of 2019, our congregation asked a series of questions in worship and small groups, in congregational retreats and personal reflection. Questions such as: *How is God CALLING me? What gives me joy in the deepest part of my being? How is the Holy Spirit beckoning me to share the gift that only I can share to change one day, one person at a time?*

Is this broad? Yes!

Is this challenging? Definitely!

Is this grace filled? Certainly!

In fact, this process has been filled with grace upon grace. These many months of listening for our call as individuals and as a congregation brought so much life and spirit to our ministry. Additionally, we engaged with community and university leaders in conversations that informed our final proposal and built partnerships that will continue far into the future.

By God's amazing grace we discerned our congregation is called to these two compelling and complimentary missions:

- Eradicating Systemic Poverty
- Caring for Creation

First, these congregational calls are rooted in the witness of scripture and also proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ to the ends of the earth. Second, these calls affirm long standing mission commitments of our congregation while also boldly charting a new course responding to the most urgent needs of the world today. Third, these two congregational calls filled so many in the church family with energy and passion that it feels the Holy Spirit is rekindling the spirit of the early church in our ministry. As a result, our congregation claimed a new name for this mission process - "Called to Life!"

On Friday, March 27, 2020, we submitted our congregational proposal to the Myrtle Collaboration Office at Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary. Even though the world necessarily paused in the face of pandemic, actions related to our calls still are occurring throughout the congregation. Our longstanding partnerships with the Family Resource Center, Talawanda Oxford Pantry and Social Services (TOPSS), Oxford Seniors and the Backpack Program are growing stronger. When this time of social distancing passes, we will relaunch the missional and public initiatives of these calls.

The first generation of Presbyterians in Oxford answered the call by impacting countless lives across the nation and around the world. They formed Miami University, the Oxford Theological Seminary, Oxford College for Women and more.

Our generation of Presbyterians in Oxford is called to a new frontier.
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