

LISTENING TO THE HEARTBEAT OF GOD –
FROM PASTOR LAWRENCE



MYRTLE
COLLABORATION

Pastor Mike, our host at a Myrtle Collaboration site visit, wore a t-shirt printed with the message, “I am more than you see.” As soon as I saw these words, a few mental gears clicked into place. These six simple words so aptly summed up our recent series of worship experiences during Lent.

As you may already know, Oxford Presbyterian Church is in a season of listening now through this fall as part of the three-year Myrtle Collaboration. Our prayer is that the outcome of this collaboration will fashion OPC to become, even more than it is today, a community of CALLING.

We set off on this adventure with worship experiences in Lent that launched this season of listening. I will never forget the privilege and gratitude I felt to be in conversation with Kent Peterson and Anne Bailey as they shared God’s call throughout their respective faith journeys. *Truly, we are so much more than we see.* If you missed these worship services, you will find them on our church website -

<https://oxfordpresbychurch.org/services/> (Find the reflection questions asked during these worship services in the accompanying text box.)

As followers of the Risen Christ, “I am more than you see,” may be one of the most compelling testimonies of Easter. From the empty tomb to the table at Emmaus, the transforming power of Jesus Christ was certainly more than met the eye.

The work of the apostles bears witness to this truth as well. Who could have seen that Peter, the fisherman, unschooled in building social movements, would be called to lead the disciples and establish the church? Who could have seen that Paul, the Pharisee, determined to snuff out the early Christian community, would be called to take the movement to the Gentiles in Europe? Jesus the Christ did!

Though Jesus saw beyond the surface, the shocking truth too often missed in nearly two thousand years of reading the book of Acts is this: while Jesus called Peter, Paul and others as disciples – he then sent them out to navigate their calling without any roadmap or any directions.

Nearly two thousand years later, we are also headed off the map. For much of the Easter Season, we will become a society of explorers as we study the book of Acts in this the next phase of our listening in the Myrtle Collaboration. Our goals are: 1) to deepen and renew our own sense of calling as individual disciples of Jesus

Christ, 2) strengthen our congregation's understanding of calling, 3) reflect where our church may grow into our calling as we live into our mission in the face of a changing world.

Our exploration in May will continue through worship which is the heart of our congregational life. These Sunday morning worship experiences will include more storytelling as well as small group conversations. The journey also will take us back to the roots of our congregation's history. On Sunday, May 26, we will gather for worship in the sanctuary of the Seminary Church. One week later, Sunday, June 2, we will return for worship at Historic Hopewell Church when our forebears in ministry answered the call to stand on the frontiers of faith.

Jesus Christ is calling Presbyterians in Oxford to explore the frontiers of faith in the 21st century. The world in front of us is nothing like the world behind us. I'm not worried. I'm prayerful! I'm hopeful! I'm eager to explore with you! For the Lord sees beyond the surface of our lives to call out our gifts, our skills, and our passions to transform this world that God so loves.

Myrtle Collaboration Questions:

From worship on March 24 - Isaiah 55:1-9

- Who are the guides that helped me find my voice?
- How has my voice changed through the seasons of my life?
- How is God calling me to raise my voice now?

From worship on March 31 - Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32

- How have I experienced God longing to truly welcome me home?
- How is the Lord calling me to offer my gifts in this season of life?
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From worship on April 7 - Jeremiah 29: 11-14

- When did I feel God's call to me through *plans for my welfare and not for harm* - to give me a future full of hope?
- What is my prayer as we become a congregation of calling?