

## **LISTENING TO THE HEARTBEAT OF GOD – FROM PASTOR LAWRENCE**

We are the sixth generation. While we celebrate the inspiration and gifts of the previous generations, what will be our legacy in Christ's work for future generations? Join us on Dec. 8 and Jan. 19 to frame this "Called to Life!" vision for our congregational future.

Roughly six generations ago our forebears in faith arrived in this community with new visions. One vision began to burn brightly at Hopewell when anti-slavery Presbyterians from South Carolina formed a congregation. Near Four-Mile Creek, pastors and members of Hopewell Church helped escaped slaves travel along the underground railroad.

As Hopewell Church grew, it gave birth to several churches throughout the area including the Seminary Church. Members and missionaries, professors and pastors carried Christ's light from the Seminary across the country and throughout the world.

Another group of Presbyterians in Oxford caught the vision of establishing a university. This isn't much of a surprise considering our denominational values. A mentor once said *Higher education is the oldest form of Presbyterian Church mission beyond the congregation.*

Robert Hamilton Bishop, John Witherspoon (*Continued...on page 2*)  
(*Listening...continued from page 1*)

Scott, and William Holmes McGuffey all served as Presbyterian pastors and founding faculty members of Miami University. Dr. Philip Shriver and Edith Puff include in our congregational history the remark by Walter Havinghurst, *Miami could not have been more Presbyterian if it had been founded by John Knox himself!*

Their vision created a legacy we celebrate and cultivate today.

At the cusp of 2020, God gives us the opportunity and Christ calls us to cast a new vision for the sixth generation ahead through our "Called to Life!" initiative (formerly known in our congregation at the Myrtle Collaboration).

Launched after Labor Day, the "Called to Life!" small groups met for six weeks. Over 40% of our Sunday morning worshipping congregation participated in this energetic process. Not only were these small groups

personally meaningful for so many, the outcome also identified five distinct visions or congregational calls. These are:

- Stewardship for Creation in a time of climate change
- Guiding purpose driven living for adults in their “Third Thirty”
- Facilitating a culture of inclusion in our community
- Improving food security in our community
- Addressing economic inequality in our community

As members of the sixth generation, we seek - and we need - your heart, mind and voice as we prayerfully discern which one of these five will become the primary call of our congregation for the future.

Save two dates! On Sunday, December 8 join us immediately following an abbreviated worship service for a two hour congregational retreat from 11 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. Hosted in the Seminary, we will gather in small discussion groups and large groups. We will listen to the Holy Spirit, one another, and our own voices. We will learn more about community needs, share inspiration about how to respond to those needs and then ideas for engaging all generations.

The second and final retreat in our “Called to Life!” discernment will take place on Saturday, January 18 at 9:00 a.m. in the Seminary. At that time we will discern the primary call of our ministry.

This call will not diminish or replace the mission work and relationships already woven into our ministry. This vision for our future will be a guide and gauge for new mission work and relationships.

What will the sixth generation from now say about us today?

It is my fervent prayer that the sixth generation will look back at 2019/2020 in the Christ centered life of Oxford Presbyterian Church and exclaim - *Their vision created a legacy we celebrate and cultivate today.*

Bring your heart, mind and voice to the retreats as we are all “Called to Life!”