

All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation. So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making God's appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.

2 Corinthians 5:18, 20

Ambassadors for Christ

This idea, of us being ambassadors for Christ, is a favorite of mine. I like to think about how, upon our baptism, we are made citizens of the realm of heaven (sort of like a citizenship ceremony)—no longer bound to this world, but belonging to God's world. That would make every one of our churches an embassy for the kin-dom of heaven, as we are safe refuge for other citizens of heaven, and an outpost, a representative, of this invisible world we inhabit.

We often begin this ministry with food, at tables shared by everyone—the communion table, the potluck table, the food pantry table. But in our Presbytery meeting on Tuesday, one of our guests, John Williams, spoke about how his organization, the [Center for Restorative Justice](https://www.cfrjustice.org/), the recipient for this last meeting's offering, is seeking to go "beyond the table," moving from comfortable places of individual conversation to community mobilization. Through several immersive experiences, cohorts and other approaches, the Center is seeking to be agents of reconciliation for Pasadena, and for all of Southern California. You can learn more and sign up for upcoming experiences at their website, <https://www.cfrjustice.org/>. And you can give your offering, designated for them, by going to <https://sangabpres.org/donate/> and using the dropdown menu to go to "Presbytery Offering." You may give now through September 30.

As I mentioned last week, at this Presbytery meeting we were able to hear from our new worshipping communities, Interwoven and Live Oak. Both of these groups are connecting with folks of all ages and cultures with fresh approaches to ministry, including joyous worship and engagement with the community. Though many of the folks are new to the Presbyterian Church, they resonate with the ways we connect our faith, our belief as formed through the Bible, our love for each other and the world, and our response to Christ's call for compassion and justice. We tried to give you a glimpse into their communities through video—I hope most of you were able to hear them (I could not—but it seemed to be a transmission problem on my end). If you want to experience them, you are always welcome to worship with them—Live Oak on Sundays at 11 am in Temple City, and Interwoven on Sundays at 4 pm at Eagle Rock. And the Presbytery voted overwhelmingly to continue funding for them, and to request funds from the Synod as well. One note: both pastors, Harlan Redmond and Andrew Ritiau, shared how church planting is not for the faint of heart, and both of these very gifted pastors are managing many different issues related to being a new church, as well as doing much of what an established church does. So I ask you to pray for them, and let them know you're thinking of them. Both of them have their physical church home, but both properties are in need of repair, so for instance at this meeting the Presbytery voted to support Live Oak's application for a \$175,000 PILP loan for a new roof, and Interwoven continues to work with the Eagle Rock Administrative Commission to find the most expedient route towards getting that property in a more workable condition.

In this meeting, the Presbytery also approved the pastor compensation minimums for 2025. The Executive Commission had already approved COM's recommendation for benefits coverage in light of the changes at the Board of Pensions. I want to be very clear, because it seems like there's been some confusion: the Presbytery expects the church to pay for coverage for the pastor **and family**. That is not optional, unless you ask for an exception from COM. What is optional is whether you get the coverage for the dependents from the Board of Pensions. We connected with a licensed insurance broker who can work with churches to find cost-effective ways to provide suitable coverage for the

pastors and their families; see the updated resources section for more information on benefits, and the 2025 minimums. And you can contact the following people if you have questions, because the deadline for making any changes is October 4:

- Questions about the Board of Pensions, contact Kristin Leucht at kleucht@pensions.org. You can also access the calculator to cost out various Board of Pensions scenarios at <https://www.pensions.org/decision-guide/>
- Questions about the Presbytery's policy, contact Cyndie Crowell at cwcrowell1001@gmail.com or Wendy Tajima at wendytajima@sangabpres.org
- Inquiries about alternative sources of coverage, contact Martha Gonzales at Martha@chminsurace.com; 626-345-1994 phone; or 562-896-4196 cell.

We have been honored to host two International Peacemakers, Rev. Dr. Hiheon Kim and Ms. Frances Namoumou. Frances is with us now, and Hiheon was with us last week. He gave a very compelling pre-meeting presentation on the recent history of Korea, especially on the causes for the division of the Korean peninsula and the relationship with the United States. I will try to give you access to the recording of his presentation soon. Due to time constraints, he could only share a brief summary of his work for peace in Korea, but it was wonderful to be able to hear him. See the MMU for Frances' remaining speaking dates; I think it's Wednesday at 11 am at Shepherd of the Valley and then at 3 pm at Pilgrim Place.

We also heard from our General Assembly Commissioners, RE Melinda Forbes and TE Deidra Goulding. Both of them found their experiences as commissioners to the GA extremely rewarding; Deidra even stated that she hopes to go again, as soon as the next GA, which will be in Milwaukee in 2026. The Office of the General Assembly and "Unified Communications" (one of the first signs of the move towards merging OGA and PMA, the Presbyterian Mission Agency) produced a booklet sharing highlights from this GA.

Finally, for the first time in a long time we were able to have short conversations with other presbyters through breakout rooms. We have some really interesting, committed, faithful, and gifted members in this Presbytery, and I'm always glad and impressed to hear from them!

This Presbytery continues to be a place of faithfulness, relationship, and forward-thinking ministry, and this meeting showed that beautifully! And there continues to be more opportunities to partner with folks with complementary ministries, so stay tuned!

Still with gratitude and wonder,

Wendy