

January 28, 2010

Dear Friends in Christ,

With the New Year comes a new journey – a journey of discernment that we will travel together. Like many of our member congregations, the presbytery itself faces both challenge and opportunity. Someone has suggested that we in the church find ourselves in the midst of a “perfect storm” brought on by change in the culture to a context less friendly to the institutional church, by dated and cumbersome organization that hampers our ability to adapt, and by a level of anxiety that limits our capacity to engage change creatively.

How do we find our way in such a storm? Sailors look for markers to bring their ship through the storm safely. As people of faith, we find our way by seeking God: by listening to scripture, by listening to God, and by listening to each other.

Our process will not simply return us safely to familiar ports; our process relies on God to reveal a new course. Through prayerful reflection and conversation, we seek to discover what God calls us to be as a presbytery and where God asks us to go. We hope to learn what God requires of us, and to ready ourselves for the direction God sets before us.

Decisions about how we will faithfully use our resources—our people, our facilities, our finances, and our particular history and polity—lie ahead of us. This journey of discernment will allow the committees and council of the presbytery to make wise recommendations, and allow the commissioners and minister members of the presbytery to make important decisions faithfully. We ask you to join in the journey by committing time and energy during Lent to spiritual practices of discernment built around scripture, prayer, and reflection.

Resources will be made available at the February presbytery meeting to introduce the process; they will invite personal spiritual practice and communal discernment. The timeline for the process anticipates gathering perspectives on our common ministry from participants this spring, and synthesizing insights about the emerging identity and call of the presbytery over the summer. Our goals are to articulate a vision of the presbytery’s mission, and bring recommendations for alignment of resources in support of that mission, for consideration at the November stated meeting.

We are confident that God has a vision and a hope for us in the presbytery of Giddings-Lovejoy. Please join us in a journey of discernment, as we discover what plans God has for us at the dawn of a new decade!

Faithfully,

Carol DeV Vaughan
Moderator of the Mission Council

Jim Cook
Moderator of the Discernment Team