

Synod of Lincoln Trails

Report of the Synod Executive

January 27, 2012

I write these words on January 20 – one year from Inauguration Day 2013... lest you believe I'm thinking these days only about the spectacle of American politics, my attention in recent months has been focused on Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) "politics." Dr. Maria Harris, renowned teacher of Christian Education, long ago reminded me in her pivotal work *Fashion Me a People* that the work of ministry is pastoral, priestly, and political. Political in the sense of "polis" – the body; we are called to minister to the body of Christ and to our particular expression of that body, the PC(USA). As I write, the Fellowship of Presbyterians has gathered in Orlando, FL, with nearly 2,100 Presbyterians in attendance. As they cast their vision, unveil their theology, benefits plan and their polity, (there's that reference to the body again!), the long-term impact of their gathering on the 'body' of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A. is yet to be revealed. As I write, the Mid-Council Commission, appointed following the 219th General Assembly, is preparing for its February meeting. In Dallas, in early February, they will prepare their report to the 220th Assembly; it will most certainly contain the recommendation that Synods be eliminated from the structure of the PC(USA) as governing bodies. The impact of this recommendation on the life and ministry of the PC(USA) and on the 'body' of faithful Presbyterians in Illinois and Indiana is yet to be revealed.

Yet in all these things, I am reminded of God's care for the "polis" – for the body of Christ. Again and again in scripture, God's people are told to "go" even though "you know not where I am sending you." And again and again, God's people are given traveling companions – partners for the journey. And always and always, God's promise is sure, "I will be with you!"

In recent weeks I have been conscious of that promise. At their December gathering, the Executive Collegium of this synod expressed its commitment to the leadership development efforts for which our synod is known across the church. Moderator-elect, Cheryl Montgomery, WWV Executive Presbyter, Alan Thames, and I met with colleagues from three other synods in early January to explore possibilities for partnership in mission and ministry in the Heartland of our country. Spirited conversation and exciting ideas are leading to further exploration of possibilities. The Administrative Commission for Midwest Hanmi presbytery continues its faithful and careful work; there is good hope for the presbytery's future. A mid-January conversation about "leadership for a church that is yet to be" involved 30 persons from 7 of our presbyteries; future conversation possibilities are already emerging. Those of us who work together at 1100 West 42nd Street continue to benefit from the collegiality and cooperation which has resulted from the sharing of office space with the Presbytery of Whitewater Valley.

Yes, our nation's politics are a spectacle these days. And the politics of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) are all around us as well. My prayer is that we, as the Synod of Lincoln Trails, will in future weeks and months ***dare to be a spectacle – a demonstration, in the words of our 'polity', of what God intends for humankind!*** And we can...for God has given us each other as traveling companions! And always and always, God's promise is sure: "I am with you!"