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GOOD NEWS

from the

Presbytery of Great Rivers

We are called to share Christ's love by partnering in service,
uniting in worship, and risking in ministry.

October 22, 2018

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This week, we invite you to pray for . . .



Viola - United Presbyterian Church
United Presbyterian Church
2571 State Hwy 17, PO Box 350
Viola, IL 61486
Rev. Matt Downey
Mr. Dick Whittington, Clerk of Session
Mr. Rich Luxmore, Treasurer



Virden - First Presbyterian Church
First Presbyterian Church
111 S Church St, PO Box 303
Virden, IL 62690
Ms. Sara Gwinn, Clerk of Session
Ms. Sue Kime, Treasurer

2019 Assembly Dates

Mark Your Calendar

OCTOBER

COM Meeting

Tuesday, October **23**
10 am - 3 pm
Peoria-First Federated

Leadership Team Meeting

Wednesday, October **25**
10 am - 2 pm
Presbytery Office

PLEASE NOTE CHANGE!

Nominating Committee

Conference Call
Saturday, October **27**

Office Closed

October 5, 12, 19, 26

NOVEMBER

ASSEMBLY MEETING

Saturday, November **3**
9:30 am - 2 pm
Galesburg-First

Admin Team Meeting

Wednesday, November **28**
1 pm - 4 pm
Presbytery Office

Office Closed

November **21-23**

DECEMBER

Committee on Ministry

Tuesday, December **4**
10 am - 3 pm
Peoria-First Federated

Office Closed

December 19 - January 2

[Click here for the PGR Calendar](#)

The 2019 Assembly dates have been scheduled as follows:

Feb. 26 @ FivePoints in Washington

June 8 @ First Pres in Macomb

Sept. 10 @ First Federated in Peoria
Date Changed from 17th

Nov. 9 @ IL College in Jacksonville

Reflections on Participating "Virtually" in a Presbytery Assembly

On September 22nd, we conducted an experiment using Zoom technology to include a "virtual microphone" at our presbytery assembly as a way to virtually include those who were physically unable to attend the meeting in Carlinville. At the time of the meeting announcement, a call went out welcoming people into the experiment if they knew for sure they otherwise would not be able to participate. At the day of the assembly, we had a total of six commissioners connected virtually, one joining us from an airplane, four attending from a "satellite site" in Woodhull, where about a dozen total people gathered with the meeting projected on a larger screen. Because we do not have such activity explicitly permissible in our bylaws, a physical quorum was needed to "suspend the rules" to permit electronic participation and voting. For this first run-through, Rev. Ryan Landino, Lead Presbyter for Transformation, ran and monitored the computer and was able to project an image of the virtual participants on the screen at the Blackburn College meeting site. On September 19th and 20th, we had a trial run with those participating remotely to practice navigating the technology and share expectations on how to communicate. After the assembly on October 3rd, virtual participants had a debriefing together to talk about the merits of the experiment and how we could strengthen the process moving forward. The following reflections were written by two participants, who one connected individually and another who facilitated the satellite site where more people gathered.



Zooming in on Assembly

by Dan Colvin (CLP), Warsaw

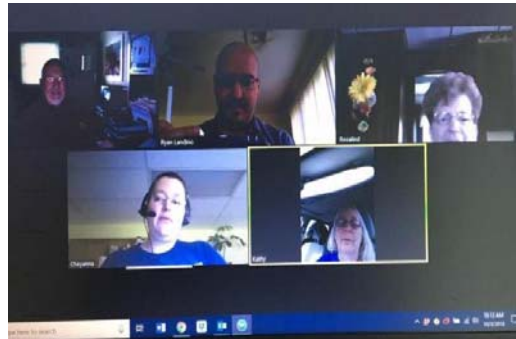
"I was one of those involved in the recent "virtual microphone" assembly experience, one in which a few of us "attended" the meeting electronically rather than physically. Ryan has asked several of us to give you our impressions. I am happy to do so, in part because I hope Presbytery continues to explore ways of including members to be more involved in and knowledgeable about matters of import among us.

The Technology

For this meeting we used Zoom as our software. It proved to be successful. I was able to see and hear the speakers and the projections well (with a few minor exceptions) and the clarity of the transmissions was certainly sufficient. In many respects, as I sat at my desk in my study, I found that it was roughly equivalent to looking at the large screen I had become accustomed to viewing at assembly meetings. During debates I could easily hear and follow comments by commissioners.

There are, however, some challenges inherent in the technology right now. When I wanted to speak, I wasn't always acknowledged, perhaps an inherent flaw in the program or because we asked Ryan to wear too many hats during the time. Voting also presented a challenge, especially in voice votes.

I found myself feeling sorry for Ryan at times as he tried to rotate his laptop for the right view. As we progress in dealing with this technology, we will need to develop our skills in this area. The use of several cameras, the use of one or two technicians, the modification of software - all are exciting areas to explore.



The Experience

Overall, I found the use of Zoom and the experience of the meeting were a most positive experiment. I always look forward to assemblies as a time to meet with other pastors and elders, to share a meal together (which I, of course, missed this time), and to reaffirm the manifest realities of our "connectional" nature. After the first few minutes of becoming accustomed to the technology, I found I could enter into the meeting emotionally and spiritually.

One of the real advantages of this technology is focus. In my "other" life I was a Shakespeare professor. I used to remind my students that viewing a play as opposed to watching a video of that play were very different experiences, for in going to live theatre you look around, talk to your companion, hear the sounds of both stage and audience, etc. But in video, the director/creator controls what you see and hear. So it was with this experience. Ryan controlled my focus and thus my experience (all in a good way).

My Conclusions

This has been an exciting, informative, prolegomenary experience. If we really do wish to make our assemblies more inclusive and open, this seems to me to be a path we should pursue. I pastor a church - Warsaw Presbyterian - on the Mississippi River, far away from most churches in our Presbytery. Our members would find it difficult to attend a meeting, but a commissioner from our church could be part of our assembly with this technology. And that would make our congregation feel more united with others in our presbytery.

While these "virtual" meetings are a wonderful addition to our assemblies, I would be remiss were I not to mention something that was, for me, a sadness - I could not be present for worship and for the sacrament. Even though I felt united with all in spirit, I missed the full experience of worshipping together."

Impressions of Meeting Virtually from a Satellite Site

"This year we had a number of individuals who wanted to participate at the Carlinville assembly meeting. There was a lot of energy around spending the day together traveling, visiting Blackburn, and meeting other people from the presbytery. Then the AIWood Aces Marching Band schedule came out and we realized the schedule conflict and the trip was winnowed down to me and one voting commissioner who did not have to be at the marching band event. We shared a feeling of disappointment--then the Leadership Team offered the chance for us to be a satellite site for the meeting.



Since we often carpool with other commissioners, I sent an email inviting them to join us at United Church of Woodhull, and three people came that morning. The other ten people (including me) were from the United Church of Woodhull. We gathered expecting to have a larger number of technical problems than we did, which meant once we got used to some of the parts we could not fix, the meeting went well. We sang along to the

hymns, participated in all the parts the main site did, simply on a smaller scale. It was a good morning. We took a break for lunch and after lunch our numbers decreased by three. We continued with the meeting until the last two reports and new business because the majority of us needed to get to the marching band show. We left joyful and thankful we had been given the opportunity to participate in the meeting.

One of the unexpected outcomes of being a satellite site was the opportunity for teaching. Two-thirds of UCW's session was at the assembly meeting, several who had never been or had only been to one. Since we could not be heard unless we were unmuted, when a question came up, I was able to explain without disrupting the tables around me as happens when we are site. This also allowed follow-up questions to be asked and for everyone to understand what was happening and how it connected to the work and worship we do in Woodhull. At the end of the day sitting in the bleachers watching the Aces Marching Band, I listened to discussion about the meeting and how impressed they were at our willingness to use technology to include them, people who work during the week and are always making a choice between whether to be present for their children or to volunteer more at the church. I sat on the bleachers grateful our presbytery had made these people talking with me feel welcome and a part of something bigger.



The next day the members who had met at Blackburn College came up to tell me they had enjoyed their time in the morning at the meeting. They could not believe how easy it was to spend a morning in Woodhull and Blackburn and how proud they were of the presbytery for trying this new experiment. Then they told me a little bit about how they first met at Blackburn College, and I smiled feeling as if we as a presbytery had accomplished something grand by including our people."

LEADERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES STILL AVAILABLE!



The Nominating Committee is in need of volunteers. We are looking for ruling elders for COM, CPM, and Visioning Team. We are in need of teaching elders for the Permanent Judicial Commission and Administration Team. If you are interested in serving, please contact Rev. Cheyanna Losey at cheyannalosey@gmail.com. Thank you.

Our Shared Mission and Per Capita Dollars at Work:

On October 4-7th, your presbytery mid council leader delegates, Lead Presbyter for Transformation Rev. Ryan Landino and Stated Clerk Rev. Elissa Bailey attended the Mid Council Leaders Gathering (formerly known as the Polity Conference) in Chicago, hosted by the Board of Pensions and the Office of the General Assembly. We joined presentations on the history and current use of per capita, participated in candid reflections and feedback on the most recent General Assembly, and attended fruitful workshops such as strengthening ecumenical cooperation, using Robert's Rules, and deepening mid council spirituality and self-care. We are grateful for the opportunity to collaborate with other leaders on the unique challenges of 21st century ministry.



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