Hello Everyone!

The summer is slipping away and I’m suddenly realizing how much work was ‘set aside’ during the craziness of the season. As the game of Catch-Up continues, I would like to remind you of the last remaining Zoom call for the Visioning Exercises. They are open to all members of the presbytery as we share ideas for how to move forward. To participate, simply click on this link:  <https://zoom.us/j/7308595259> on Saturday, September 28, at 9:30am to join in the discussion.

In order to make the best use of our discussion time, here are some worksheets  (<https://www.northernplainspresbytery.com/visioning-training>) that will help you consider some of the topics that will be covered.

If the scheduled time doesn’t work out for you, feel free to complete the worksheets on your own and email them to me at [revmarji19@gmail.com](mailto:revmarji19@gmail.com) by September 30.

On a completely different note, I’ve continued to travel around the presbytery visiting congregations and sharing in Sunday morning worship experiences. I am amazed at the incredible similarities and drastic differences from one congregation to the next. All of the people I’ve met along the way have been wonderful, sharing thoughts and ideas on a variety of subjects offering much for me to think about during the long drive home.

One thing I was not expecting to find was the wide range of attitudes toward Presbyterianism in general. A surprising number of churches do not have a recent – let alone current – Book of Order anywhere in the building – and many congregational leaders have not seen one for years. When I’ve asked congregations whether or not it matters that the word ‘Presbyterian’ is on the sign in front of the building, the answer has often been, “No, not really.”

I’m not sure what to do with that. On the one hand, I find it absolutely amazing that the ‘denominational divide’ that was once so prevalent is finally breaking down and we can openly accept each other as fellow Christians, regardless of background. On the other hand, I find it very sad that in so many cases, we seem to have lost our understanding of what it means to be Presbyterian and why that tradition is important.

In a previous congregation where I served as pastor, one of the elders asked me what I would do if the church decided to leave the denomination. My immediate response was a very adamant, “I would resign. I will not leave the PCUSA.” The elder was quite shocked by such a strong reaction – especially since I had just started that position a few weeks before. For her, denominational identity wasn’t a big deal. She had spent her entire life in the Presbyterian church and had never known anything different. I grew up in a Missouri Synod Lutheran Church and had spent several years “church shopping” in different denominations. In the end, I found my church home – and my call to ministry – in the PCUSA.

The new Book of Order came out over the summer. If you’ve not had the opportunity to order one yet, here is the link to the online version:

<https://sangabpres.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/2019-2021-Book-of-Order.pdf>

If you are curious about what it means to be Presbyterian and would like to explore what we do and why we do it, please join me for **a Zoom discussion on Thursday, October 3rd, 10am-12noon**. The conversation will be focused on the first section of the Book of Order: *The Foundations of Presbyterian Polity.* I hope you will join in the conversation.

To participate in this conversation click the link below at the time.

Time: Oct 3, 2019 10:00 AM Central Time (US and Canada)

Join Zoom Meeting

https://zoom.us/j/845069716

May God’s peace and blessings be with you always!

*-Marji*