

Mikes' Mission Notes



I recently had the pleasure of meeting with Jeff Boyd, a PCUSA Mission Co-worker based in the Democratic Republic of Congo and working as regional liaison to Central Africa. During the conversation Jeff could reflect on some of his experiences with creating partnerships between African Churches and American churches, even partnerships between churches in different countries in Africa. He said the most successful partnership he has seen have been ones that centered on mutuality, and particularly the ones where a project was not a part of the initial conversations. In one instance, he spoke of churches in Africa and the United States working together to create a joint advent reflection. In another partnership, he described how members of an African church were invited to visit a presbytery during an annual presbytery wide retreat and then went on to lead the retreat from their perspective. Both sides described it as a powerful experience. He also pointed out the importance of creating methodologies for creating a partnership where listening is central as well as the importance of prayer.

I couldn't help but think of National Capital Presbytery amid all this. Yes, there is important information for those engaging in international mission here, but National Capital Presbytery is so diverse in so many ways, that I believe some of his advice applies right here in local mission partnership creation.

Presbyterian Churches are pretty good at organizing around issues and projects, as is evident in the Presbytery's Mission Networks (Earthcare, Global Mission, Israel/Palestine, Refugees) and joint mission programs, and there is no reason to stop that sort of organizing. Yet what if congregations in this presbytery were more intentional about listening to one another, particularly to churches that differ in substantial ways? I think the presbytery's new dismantling racism taskforce is an important example of this kind of work, but it's a starting point.

I get often get asked by churches what other congregations are doing in the presbytery, and I am happy to do that, but what if each congregation sent some elders to another nearby Presbyterian church with the intention of listening and learning from that other congregation. What are the closest Presbyterian churches to your congregation? What are they doing, what are they praying for, where is their heart?

Engaging in this sort of relationship building, with an eye towards mutual engagement (since every church has something it can learn and something it can teach), it might yield great service oriented projects, or it may not, but in these days of growing division and isolation, isn't growing new relationships a mission?

TOGETHER WE ARE MAKING A DIFFERENCE!