

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON CHURCH DEVELOPMENT & VITALITY

May 30, 2020

This past two plus months we the church have found ourselves in a strange and unfamiliar situation due to the COVID – 19 pandemic. Congregations have not been gathering on Sunday mornings for worship. It doesn't mean we have not been worshipping, we have just been doing it differently. Many of us have had to learn new skills, becoming videographers, Facebook and YouTube masters, and “tele-evangelists”. We have expanded our ability to Zoom from one meeting to the next. It has been and will continue to be a new way of doing ministry, at least for most of us. We should look at it as a challenging view into the future of being church. Ask yourself the question: What are we experiencing today that might be the new way of ministry and being church in the future? Being a committee that is charged with stimulating the vitality of the churches of Albany Presbytery CCD&V could not have designed or implemented a more vigorous or demanding training course. We all have learned a lot and we have been made aware of how much we still need to learn. The challenge is before us.

All that being said, I turn to the current work of the Committee on Church Development and Vitality. We last reported to you in the fall. We have continued to work with congregations to find new ways to share ministry with other congregations, fostering strength in the larger community. We continue to provide support as needed to the Schoharie area churches as they move forward in their new life together. We continue to monitor and support the Shared Ministry of Tribes Hill and Amsterdam United as they begin their search for new pastoral leadership beginning next May. We also continue to be available to the other congregations that are in a pastoral sharing arrangement. The Committee has recently been approached to work with COMAC on reviving a shared ministry initiative in Washington County. This is a renewed initiative which is just emerging.

We have worked in conjunction with COMAC to assist churches assess their options when seeking an installed pastor is deemed out of the question. Last fall we assisted Bethany Presbyterian review possible options for filling their pastoral needs when their Stated Supply Pastor stepped down from active service. After consultation with the Session and COMAC we were able to connect them with a Commissioned Lay Pastor to serve as a Temporary Supply.

We are exploring programs from other churches, seeking new ways to do ministry and mission. We have supported the Columbia County effort to establish Earth Church, a New Worshiping Community. Earth Church has been the recipient of grants from PCUSA to support their ministry. It is our intention to continue to serve as a mentor and resource to congregations that desire to seek out new life in this ever changing landscape of "ministry in the 21st Century." To that end we are and will continue to review new innovative ideas developed by other congregations and determine their applicability for churches in our Presbytery.

I have given you a snapshot of the work this committee is engaged in. The Committee on Church Development and Vitality has a broad mandate to serve the churches in our Presbytery in ways that will be sustaining and vital. To accomplish this mandate we need members who want to actively participate in helping our churches that are exploring new directions. If this is a ministry that excites you, please talk to one of the committee members.

Respectfully Submitted
Rev. Laurence C. Greenwold, Chair

Joyce Brewer, Ruling Elder,
Rachel Mastin, Minister,
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Linda Martin, Minister,
Lois Wolff, Minister,

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