

November, 2011

Two people are better off than one, for they can help each other succeed. If one person falls, the other can reach out and help. But someone who falls alone is in real trouble. Likewise, two people lying close together can keep each other warm. But how can one be warm alone? A person standing alone can be attacked and defeated, but two can stand back-to-back and conquer. Three are even better, for a triple-braided cord is not easily broken.
Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 (NLT)

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

As a covenant community of churches and fellowships, the Presbytery of Long Island is far more than a regional office, or a higher level of church self-governance. The Presbytery of Long Island is the cluster of churches joined together to nurture disciples through joint youth ministry. The Presbytery of Long Island is the Saturday morning gathering of 40 church leaders from 12 different churches, seeking to grow in their spiritual leadership in the tasks to which Christ has called them. The Presbytery of Long Island is a group of 20 lay and clergy volunteers from 20 different churches who gather monthly, and work constantly, as the Committee on Ministry to assist and support congregations and pastors in times of transition and crisis. The Presbytery of Long Island is all of us.

As a covenant community, we have committed ourselves to deepening discipleship, building community, and obeying Christ's call to mission. At this year's visioning retreat, we have heard through the deep concerns and dreams of our congregations Christ's calling for renewed attention and energy in the following areas: youth and young adult ministries; immigration and cross cultural ministries; poverty and hunger ministries. The Shepherding Council is actively responding on drawing together groups of people and resources to engage in these areas. This hands-on work, along with the important ongoing ministry of the Presbytery, needs continued support. Please prayerfully reflect on both these new, and our continuing hands-on ministries, as you consider your church's pledge this year.

At the October Presbytery meeting, you approved a budget for 2012 that was balanced, but represented significant cuts in program support and staff. We are all aware that continuing, long-term efforts are necessary to see our shared vision for ministry reflected both in future congregational and Presbytery budgets. In 2012, the Shepherding Council will put priority in implementing the recent recommendations of the Stewardship Task Force. This will likely include the launching of two resource groups, one for stewardship nurture and one for communications. The new communications group will provide churches with quality materials like the recently-released, "What is Stewardship" DVD, plus support for our churches in connecting for partnership potential, and interpreting the missional benefits of our Presbytery connectedness. The stewardship group will address both the theology of stewardship as a daily, whole-life spiritual practice for disciples, as well as providing resources and expertise in the traditional financial areas of stewardship campaign services, estate planning opportunities and expanded facilities use by the surrounding community.

Despite economic concerns and setbacks, during this past year our combined unified mission support truly transformed lives and communities in the name of Jesus Christ. Together, local and global ministry has been supported and nurtured. Our whole church, at all levels of governance, offers witness to the call of Jesus Christ, and that witness belongs to all of us. In the name of Jesus Christ, your mission pledges sustain and nurture the ministries to which God is calling and leading us as, a "triple braided cord" of churches. May God continue to bless our work that we may faithfully serve together as "a partnership of churches committed to deepening discipleship, building community, and obeying Christ's call to mission and evangelism".

Yours in service to Christ,

Shepherding Council of the Presbytery of Long Island
Elder Kirk Dorn, Shepherding Council Moderator
Rev. John Underwood, Moderator, Presbytery of Long Island
Rev. Mark Tammen, General Presbyter, Presbytery of Long Island