

Cheryl D. Galan, Interim Executive Presbyter
The Presbytery of Carlisle

My memory of the Presbytery of Carlisle begins in 1979, when I came to Hershey to be interviewed to serve Derry Church, as Director of Christian Education. Fresh out of Grove City College, Derry took a chance on me and I jumped into a ministry of Christian education that proved to be as formative for me as for those I served. My children were baptized at Derry and I was ordained as a ruling elder there. Among the members of this congregation I found significant relationships that remain, to this day.

While our children were young, I served for a short time at Faith Church, and then was called to Market Square. I loved the urban setting and the congregation's commitment to peace and justice in the city and in the world. At Market Square I heard God's call to the ministry of Word and Sacrament. The church supported my sense of call and walked with me through my years at Princeton Theological Seminary. When I was called to serve a small congregation in Ontario, NY, the Presbytery of Carlisle ordained me in a service of worship at Market Square.

During these years, I was active in the life of the presbytery. I served the Education Committee, eventually as chair. I participated in Cleric, as well as gatherings of Christian educators. I attended presbytery meetings. I led workshops in many churches and taught at Synod School. So now I return to this place where for some of you, it will be picking up where we left off... but for most of you, I am a stranger.

Why me? Why now? For all of the years of my ministry, I've been aware of and impacted by the significant cultural changes that have rocked our congregations and denomination. I've felt the impact of religious climate change in shifting patterns of engagement in church life, in declining membership statistics, in the loss of whole congregations to dismissal or closure. I've grieved the loss of who we once were.

And yet I remain hope-full that we are living through a time in which God is calling forth our gifts, for the sake of new expressions of the gospel. I believe this a time that is ripe with potential, for Presbyterians. We have work to do!

We get to ask ourselves, what now, God? Now that we can't fix it, solve it, control it, or make it right with the things we know so well, how do we know who we are? How do we find our voice and use our influence, to create expressions of the gospel that address the needs of our communities today? Amid the divisions and polarities in our nation, how might we come together in common purpose, that our witness to Jesus Christ might be bold and life-changing?

I don't come with answers, but I do believe that the presbytery is the right place to explore the questions. I believe that as we come together in experiences that ground our life in God...as we listen to our various perspectives...as we expand our collective imaginations...as with a spirit of experimentation we step out of our usual ways and groupings...a new and compelling vision for our future will emerge.

In these words, written by your Interim Executive Presbyter Search Committee, and in the stimulating conversations that followed, I hear a strong call to join you in this work:

To help the Presbytery of Carlisle to ford the ecclesial river from “what-has-been” to “what-can-be,” we seek an Interim Executive Presbyter whose commitment to Christ, church, and world is spacious, tenacious, courageous, and sometimes appropriately outrageous, befitting our deep desire to live the gospel in our time.

The images below are statues at a place called *Grounds for Sculpture* in Hamilton, NJ. They caught my eye, as I thought about what-has-been and what-can-be, for presbyteries like Carlisle, today.



In this image, the presbytery functions like the hub of a wheel, with the congregations relating to the presbytery, at the center. Resources of money and people may flow both ways...from the congregations to the presbytery or from the presbytery to the congregations. Congregations relate to each other primarily as spokes connected to the hub, at the center. Within this structure, the purpose of the presbytery is found in its function as a regulatory agency and resource hub.

This image illustrates the potential for relatedness among all parts of the presbytery. Congregations are connected at the center and also to each other, suggesting a presbytery that functions more and more as a relational network. There is a sense of movement in this image...and transparency. There is also a perspective that looks outward, toward the world beyond. Pathways converge and the way is revealed in the form of a cross. Grounded in God, following the way of Jesus and focused on the world outside the window, leaders and congregations make the road by walking and discern God’s purpose for the presbytery.

I am excited to ford this river with you and look forward to being with you, in person, at the December 4th meeting, as we begin.

Blessings,
Cheryl



Statement of Faith
Cheryl D. Galan

I believe in God and live in a relationship of trust in the One whose love is at the center of all that was, all that is and all that will be. This love is expressed through a world inhabited with incredible diversity, the fruits of the Creator's infinite imagination, unconditional love, and abundant goodness. With a sense of adventure and risk, God made humanity in the divine image, and gifted us with all we need to sustain and fulfill our lives. Freedom is among God's good gifts to us, a gift we have both enjoyed and exploited for our own purposes.

I believe in Jesus and affirm my need for healing and salvation, for I, too, have abused God's gift of freedom. My sin brings pain to myself, others, and to the heart of God. Our sin wounds the world, threatens the well-being of people and the planet, and violates the intentions of our Creator. Through his life, death, and resurrection, Jesus offers the grace of forgiveness and opens the way to life, both abundant and eternal. In the life of Jesus, I find a way of living that is authentic and reliable. In the death of Jesus, I find self-giving love and unwavering faithfulness that are redemptive. In the resurrection of Jesus, I find assurance that God's power and love will prevail, bringing life out of death, hope out of despair and fulfilling God's intentions for creation and for my life.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, breath of God, who enlivens all of creation and dwells in me. This Spirit empowers and equips us to know and follow Christ. Source of inspiration, the Spirit opens the eyes of our hearts and minds to God's Word. Source of our gifts and passion, the Spirit urges us to live and work for the common good.

To affirm what I believe, I need the church. As in the waters of my baptism, I was welcomed into God's covenant community, I now receive the support, instruction, and companionship of this Body, that I may live more deeply into to my identity and vocation as a follower of the living Christ. The church's worship is my response to God, in whom I experience hope and home. The church's nurture immerses my life in practices and relationships by which I am being transformed. The church's mission engages my participation in God's activity in the world today.

By the church's sacraments, I am nourished and sustained. At the font, I received the grace of belonging among God's people. Spirit-sealed and marked as Christ's own, my life is made new. With gratitude, I offer healing and hope, joy and peace to others. At the Table, I receive the grace of love and forgiveness. In the taking, blessing, breaking and sharing of Christ's body and blood, I am joined with all who believe, in heaven and on earth, and I am connected to Christ, whose Spirit is present with us.

In all that life holds, in the beginnings and at the end, we are loved. This, I believe.