

## Presbytery Co-Leader for Transformation and Vision Report

This meeting is an important one in our life together as a presbytery. We are celebrating the hard work and achievements of our New Worshipping Communities and their presence within our collective story. This is the first time I have been part of a presbytery with such an active collection of diverse New Worshipping Communities and they do a phenomenal job of exploring with us what is possible for churches when they really jump into the movement of the spirit and ask the question, “What is God calling us to do next?” I am especially moved by their persistent and powerful effort to reach out to those of God’s children who have never had an experience in church or who, sadly, have had negative moments in their times of worshipping and fellowshiping with organized faiths. That is the element of New Worshipping Communities that I want to lift up for our consideration during this meeting—the call on all of us to reach out to the lost and lonely, the forgotten and the abused, the one who doesn’t believe that anyone cares about them, and the one who is sure that that is the case. For regardless of our theological persuasion, our political stripe, our understanding of divinity and holiness, it remains the call of all of us to reach out to the one who is struggling and offer a home, a church family, a love, and an acceptance of the person standing in our midst when it becomes clear that they are in need of Jesus.

Last Sunday, I “attended” an online gathering of Kevin Long’s Intertwined Faith Community. I was moved by the deep openness there was amongst his folks to searching for the movement of the spirit in the silence, readings, simple collection of holy items on the table, and in the prayers for our world and the needs of his community. Seeking to be open to all those who yearn for ways to follow in the footsteps of Jesus while taking care of the planet and working towards social justice for all of God’s children, Kevin has created a space for authentic question and questing for the movement of God. By making himself available in the spaces that people occupy during the week, coffee shops, bars, and restaurants, he has crafted for himself a ministry of presence where those who seek his guidance can find him in their day-to-day lives for he has made himself one of them. We, in our positions as leaders of the church, could learn much from him as we seek to reach out to those in our communities who wish to encounter that still small voice in their lives.

Kelly Wiant’s gathering, The Circle HBG, explores the ways that church can be a place of both support and, more importantly, safety, as she intentionally reaches out into the queer community in Harrisburg to offer a community where each person can be who they were authentically made by God to be. Using the practice of [The Circle Way](#), Kelly creates a space in which there are no “leaders” because everyone is on the same path of searching for and seeking the presence of God in their lives. Attending Kelly’s meetings takes both courage and vulnerability to open oneself to the movement of God

because this is a time of struggle and difficulty within the LGBTQIA+ communities. Those in power throughout the nation have turned their collective ire against members of these groups, especially trans folks, in a way that has left many unsure whether it is safe to be their authentic selves. This is what makes gatherings like The Circle HBG such an important example of what God calls all of us to do. By reaching out to those in their community who are struggling, Kelly follows in the footsteps of the great shepherd who still seeks those sheep which have been lost or kicked out of the flock. We, in our positions as leaders of the church, could learn much from Kelly when it comes to offering the love of God to those who are too often found on the outside looking in and who struggle to believe that they share in the *imago Dei* with the God who created them.

Dan Snyder had a vision to reach out into the community to address the most basic of needs—the body’s need for food and the soul’s need for sustenance in the Word. Bringing those two yearnings together, he envisioned Breaking Bread Together, a gathering of folks around the dinner table for fellowship, a Jesus story, and communion together. Dan’s dream of what church could be has become a reality and is inspiring other congregations in our presbytery to follow in his lead and form their own dinner churches in which other communities are reached out to in love and compassion. We, in our positions as leaders of the church, could learn much from Dan when it comes to sensing the movement of the spirit in his life and catching a vision from the Holy One to try something different.

We are truly blessed in this presbytery to have a number of New Worshipping Communities doing new and exciting ministries, reaching out to the unchurched, and offering security and a place of belonging to peoples for whom both are often in short supply. Let us give thanks to our creator for all the blessings of this life but especially for those people who, in faith and courage, step out to do new things in the name of Carlisle Presbytery.