

**Executive Presbyter's Report to Presbytery**  
**February 24, 2021**

*For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently. **Romans 8:24-25***

We are currently living out a very sacred moment for the world, and also for our presbytery. Okokon Udo has pointed out that those *gray times*<sup>1</sup> that come with loss—those times between what was and what is next—are sacred times.<sup>2</sup> They are sacred, because this is a time when we are called to turn to God both for comfort in our grief, but also for inspiration for our future. When we respond to God's call in faithfulness, God is also faithful and turns toward us with Holy Spirit presence, guidance and power. These are sacred times, indeed.

Clearly, there is much for the world to grieve right now. Five nation-changing events have happened in this past year: COVID 19, the presidential election, the George Floyd tragedy, urgent environmental challenges, and January 6, 2021. All of these have shaken our society to the core. Even as the vaccines are distributed and the end of the pandemic comes into view, we know that the world we rebuild together will be different than the old world we knew.

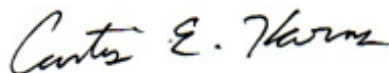
Similarly, after a year of COVID restrictions, and at a time when our presbytery staff is changing, we know that the church we rebuild will also be different than the church of past decades. Indeed, because this time of change has come upon us so compellingly, I am grateful for Okokon Udo's insight that this is a sacred time. This is a time for our churches, and for our presbytery, to turn to God in all earnestness as we take a fresh look at our mission, and our strategies for pursuing that mission.

One of the great challenges for organizations in their *gray time* is the need to embrace two competing tasks, and to express the competing emotions that go with those tasks. In order to move forward, it is necessary to acknowledge and grieve what we have lost as we leave the past behind, at the same time that we embrace the hope and excitement for the new thing that awaits us for the future. Indeed, emotions that are not expressed become embodied in our attitudes, our actions, and even in our bodies. Yet, there is nothing that breathes life, and excitement, into a faith community like reaching for God's vision for our common ministry. Both of these are necessary now.

For this reason, the Leadership Team will now be taking time to design a process for our presbytery to conduct a mission study. It will give members of the presbytery a chance to share our deepest hopes and prayers, and to discover God's inspiration arriving in our midst.

It is my hope that the churches of the presbytery will find their own process for doing something similar. The presbytery is in this sacred time. It will be fascinating to see what God will do among you.

In Christ's service,



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<sup>1</sup> Udo actually calls them *liminal times*. I choose to call them *gray times*, because they are not so dark that there is no hope, but times where the new vision is still foggy and not yet clear.

<sup>2</sup> This was part of Udo's online presentation to the PC(USA) Association of Mid-Council Leaders, Feb. 2021.

Curt Karns