

The Next Level

July 3, 2018

Several years ago, I joined a Habitat build day with other members of my church. If you've done this, you know the scheduled work projects are decided by the builder, not by the volunteer laborers. It turned out that my job for the day was to assemble scaffolding, so that the exterior finish could be added to the upper story by the next day's work crew.

Oh sure, I've painted and hammered and tiled over my lifetime. I'm particularly good at deconstruction. But assembling scaffolding was something altogether different. I remember feeling a degree of apprehension for the crew that would follow. Gladly, our work was checked closely by the contractor.



I have to confess, however, that I was disappointed by the task. Granted, I constructed something needed as part of the overall house project, but I couldn't "claim" any piece of it.

There was no tangible result from my effort. I wouldn't be able to drive by later and say, "I helped add siding/paint/drywall...to this house." I took no pride in sturdy scaffolding.

So, you might imagine how I felt when the Council decided the Presbytery's main role was to be the *scaffolding* for our congregations and leaders. As we've worked on the Presbytery's vision statement, we continue to hear the refrain that congregations and ministers want to be supported in their ministries. You aren't asking to be inspired or encouraged or empowered or equipped. You want to be supported.

As Christ directs each of you, you want to feel that your efforts will be supported through resources, training, and finances. You hope the Presbytery will support you through our communications and processes and, dare I add, through our forms and committees. When we disappoint you -- and sometimes we do -- we hear that you didn't get the support you wanted.

In other words, scaffolding.

As I explained this revelation to Alan Timm at Grace United (Fort Atkinson) he reframed this concept helpfully: "You provide scaffolding so churches can go to the next level." I like that image.

In the end, our collective response to the grace we have received through Jesus Christ needs to be about moving the Church to the next level. Together we will build a community that seeks first to glorify God and second to serve as faithful disciples in a fast-paced, changing, and broken world. If that means I give up "claiming" the results or I let go of my need to take pride in the outcome, those are both good things. I look forward to hearing from you how the Presbytery can best support your ministry.