



Down in the Muck

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Rachel Yates

“Before we go any further, can you tell us what is swimming in the pitcher of water?” Nicole Melara asked our Presbytery Gathering speaker, Prof. Calvin B. DeWitt. The pitcher of dirty water had been placed, with a vase of scorched wheat, on the communion table during worship. It was a visual cue of what could happen when, because of our neglect, the earth fails to produce the wine and bread needed for communion.

Prof. DeWitt stood near the table to begin his presentation on our Christian response to climate change. He held the pitcher toward the light, examining the murky water. “A shrimp,” he decided. “But, not one you can eat.”

The water came from my neighborhood pond. On the day before the Presbytery Gathering, I crawled through the buckthorn and down a grassy slope to the pond’s edge, snagging my sweater as I went. I lowered my empty orange juice bottle into the water, retrieving sticks, mud, duckweed, water, and apparently a shrimp. Who knew?

Water that was intended by me to be a symbol of decay instead contained life. God is like that. We have been blessed with a planet that is both resilient and fragile, where life withers and where it thrives. In all of it, we are called to be faithful stewards, and we must couple our action with a sense of hope, a recognition that the Creator brings forth life in unexpected places and times.

Our worship offered thanks for this creation, while calling us to hopeful stewardship. Through the four sections gathered, we honored creation, but confessed our routine failure to be good stewards. Despite our best intentions for the Gathering, we, too, missed ways to reduce our waste generation. We have things to learn and habits to break. We don’t throw up our hands, however, but rather we learn from our missteps. Our worship gave space to announce concrete steps to care for the earth. Drawing on [overtures](#) from the last General Assembly, we found hope in our ability to make critical changes and to restore balance with creation.

Sometimes it takes a shrimp swimming in the muck to remember that we are not the Source of Life, but we are entrusted to care for all life. In hope, let us heed the call to action.

