



Why Should We Care?

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We're in the throes of preparation for the February 4 Presbytery Gathering. [Registration](#) is open! It's the first time in people's recent memory that the Stated Clerk for the General Assembly has visited. We're thankful to Carroll University which initiated that contact, inviting the Stated Clerk to participate in its Founders' Day events on February 5. That started the ball rolling, and now the day is almost here.

Our business meeting should be relatively short – did I just jinx us? – so we might get to spend extra time with Rev. Dr. J. Herbert Nelson, II in our “Conversation between the Clerks.” Our own Stated Clerk, Rev. Dr. Christian Boyd, will facilitate the conversation about the how we serve as co-workers for the gospel in our congregations and specialized ministries. Because 2020 is a General Assembly year, we're also curious to get a preview of what's likely to come up. What are the issues that our commissioners Rob Ater and Cathy Manthei and youth advisory delegate Elizabeth Tan will be asked to decide?

We also have a more basic question for the Stated Clerk: why should we care? With all the pressing matters and ministry interests in our individual settings, why should we care what happens at the General Assembly? Sometimes, it feels like the most tangible outcome of the GA is an increase in *per capita*. So, in that sense, I guess we should care how the work of our national office, Synod, and Presbytery is being mandated and prioritized. Still, I think our relationship has to be about more than money.

You might feel that at the local level: why should we care what the Presbytery of Milwaukee is up to or, even, what the closest Presbyterian church is doing? We're busy enough as it is.

I've seen moments in these past weeks, however, where our connections have been deeply important. I've worked with congregations that are considering their futures and whether God is still calling them to fruitful ministry. Others are working through pastoral transitions while striving to be faithful and collegial. Another is wrestling with internal conflict. I've been humbled and encouraged by the gratitude expressed for the Presbytery's involvement.

I long for even more. I long to celebrate in ministry with you and to dream about innovative and meaningful manifestations for the Church.

It makes me think of our relationship with God...of course. For good reason, we take care not to see God as solely the provider of our tangible needs (I pray, I get). We should likewise take care that God is not just the source of help in troubled times. Yes, God, is present in our times of need and trouble, but don't we hear, time and again, that God wants to be in a deeper relationship with us? Pretending we've got everything under control, until we don't, excludes the Holy from the very reason we engage in ministry as the Church.

Mind you, I'm not equating the denomination with God, but I do think we have the chance to model in our relationships the love and desire for connection that God shows us. Then, we don't have to ask, “why should we care?” because we do care. We count on each other in times of need, but we also rejoice together, imagine together, and worship together.

Did I mention there's a Presbytery Gathering on February 4? It's a great opportunity to put all of this into practice. I hope to see you there.