



Jan-April 2022



Held

January 26, 2022

Rachel Yates

We said our goodbyes yesterday. Despite years spent together, it all ended on a Zoom call. I suppose that's the way of the times. The pandemic prevents anything more intimate.

I knew it was coming; all the signs were there. Mostly, I knew it from the calendar. January is always that sad month when people leave us. The pandemic didn't change the rotation. Once their terms are up, our friends roll off our commissions, committees, and task forces like clockwork.

For the Commission on Transitional Ministries (CTM) (which helps our congregations during pastoral transitions), that day was yesterday. The next meeting won't happen until after the February 19 Presbytery Gathering – **save the date for a Saturday morning event!** Among other wonderful happenings, people will be newly installed or commissioned to serve. For those whose terms are ending, we said our goodbyes.

Mary Carlin, departing Moderator of CTM, asked at the beginning of the meeting for people to write down the values that made up the DNA of the group or values that they experienced. Some of those were focused outward toward the pastors and congregations CTM serves: care, support, openness to new things, flexibility, resilience, a listening presence. As much as those values reflected the work of the group, however, we heard that they also embodied the relationships among the commission members. Commissioners felt cared for, respected, and heard. They helped each other get through difficult times in their personal lives or challenges in the work. They came to trust one another. So, the departures of the Class of 2021 and those taking on new roles will be sorely felt.

You might have noticed the teardrop symbol gracing many of our publications in the Presbytery, including the letterhead above. For the next several months, we are focusing on one mark of vitality, Caring Relationships, captured in this graphic from the Presbyterian Mission Agency. Clasped hands around, or perhaps holding up, a group of people are used to demonstrate this mark or characteristic of vital ministries.

Whether at the Presbytery level or in your own ministries, demonstrating care for one another is not only how we do our work well, but it's at the heart of our relationships. It's at the heart of Jesus' command that we love one another. Care can be shown in many ways, such as being a listening presence, showing respect, supporting friends in difficult times, and being trustworthy. It can be packaged as a casserole, lap blanket, or snow removal.

Our caring, however, cannot become so perfected among the group that we unintentionally exclude others. Sometimes we become so close -- often describing ourselves as "family" -- that it makes it difficult for others to join us. In this time of focus on Caring Relationships, we are invited to examine how well we extend our caring toward the visitor or new member, as much as those whom we already know and love.

For CTM, this means welcoming three new commissioners, just as others roll off. There will be a new rhythm and new gifts brought to the group. We gift thanks to God across the Presbytery for all those in the church who have said "yes" to serving in a leadership role. (Not surprisingly, leadership development is another mark of vitality!)

So, let us practice our caring, and, just as you clasp another's hand to show your care, may you also feel held in the loving hands of others.