



Paying Attention to the Adjectives

February 16, 2022

Rachel Yates

"I've been told to pay attention to the adjectives," she said. As I explained the marks of vitality that will guide the Presbytery's 2-year effort to build ministry vitality, I started with "caring relationships." "Caring relationships," repeated Rev. Libby Howe, with an emphasis on the adjective. Rev. Howe, the Congregational Support Coordinator for Justice & Peace Ministries at Wisconsin Council of Churches, focused on the adjectives as we explored ways her ministry might intersect with the Presbytery's vision.

This Saturday we will kick off our Caring Relationships theme in a powerful way. At the Presbytery Gathering, we will take time to watch a short documentary, "Purple" and then try out some exercises that increase our own focus on the adjectives. We'll consider how to demonstrate caring for people with whom we don't agree.

As Christians, caring for *everyone* is not optional. Our Scripture for the Presbytery Gathering comes from Romans 12: "Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor..." If you're following along in the lectionary, this Sunday's Gospel reading from Luke 6 is equally clear and direct: "Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you."

Caring relationships sound nice. They sound easy, when we're just taking care of people we hold dear. As our relationships expand, however, caring gets tricky and then downright hard. If our ministries only show caring for one another – our close-knit group – then we will struggle to be vital. Through the marks of vitality, we are being encouraged to lean into the harder work of caring relationships with all people: people in the community; people of different political persuasions; people of different cultures or races; people of different socio-economic classes. We will experiment on Saturday with a set of tools to begin that work.

From time to time in Fresh Impressions, we will feature video snippets of people from the Presbytery of Milwaukee who capture what it means to be in a caring relationship. We are delighted to share these stories of caring ministry happening in our midst. Do you have a story to tell about how you've received care from your congregation? Are you part of a ministry that extends caring in an unique way? [Please let us know](#) so that we can celebrate that with you.

For each mark of vitality, we also have resources available to you on the Presbytery website: www.pbymilwaukee.org. From the home page, click on this blue square to see resources for every mark.



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Clicking on the image for Caring Relationships (held hands) will send you to articles, videos, and other items to help you dig in. Take the informal quiz you'll find there to gauge the baseline for your Caring Relationships efforts. We pray these resources will guide you in this hard, essential work.