



Spirit Inspired
Worship

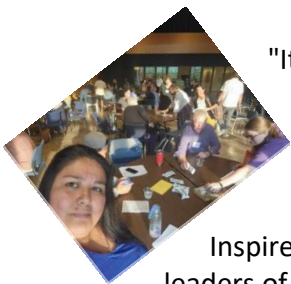


Building Our Future Together

August 30, 2023

Rev. Dr. Dan Gonzalez-Ortega, Evangelista del Presbiterio

And when he got into the boat, his disciples followed him. A windstorm suddenly arose on the sea, so great that the boat was being swamped by the waves, but he was asleep. And they went and woke him up, saying, "Lord, save us! We are perishing!" And he said to them, "Why are you afraid, you of little faith?" Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a dead calm. They were amazed, saying, "What sort of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him?" (Matt. 8:23-27 NRSVUE)



"It was a pleasure to spend a few wonderful days reflecting on the future of the PC(USA) and spending time with lovely people!" This is how our sister Sandra Ballesteros, leader of San Jose Parish in Beloit, describes the experience she lived during her participation in the "Ecclesial Formation/Discernment event" held during August 18-19 in Minneapolis, Mn.

Inspired by the origins in the gospel accounts of Jesus calming the storm in Galilee (Matthew 8:23-27), leaders of the PC(USA) Mid Council convened a group discernment with members of various PC(USA) congregations and churches. A particularly poignant version of this story exists in ancient church mosaics that were partially defaced during the iconoclasm controversy. Mosaics that formed images of people were rearranged haphazardly, obscuring any clear view of those on the ships or those with them.

During this event the participants were rooted in these stories as they discerned what is happening now and what the needs for the future will be. Some questions that were guide conversations include:

- What does a specifically Reformed ecclesiology look like and mean as the church is "being reformed" at this time?
- What are the ecclesial formation needs within the PC(USA)?
- What would be some initial steps we can take now to move us further into this future even as it continues to unfold before us?

The organizing bodies asked Parroquia San José for a leader from our community to participate in this activity. Sandra Ballesteros was a worthy representative of our congregation, highlighting the interest and commitment that the Presbytery of Milwaukee has in promoting our work and presence as a Hispanic Presbyterian community in PC(USA).

N.B. from Rachel Yates: The questions with which this group wrestled are indeed the weighty questions of the day. I appreciate that they balanced both the abstract and the concrete. Discerning what "church" looks like in this moment is a challenge that could swallow us whole. In the group's work, they didn't throw up their hands with the immensity of that definitional challenge. They asked two additional questions that will serve all of us well: how can the church shape us as disciples for this discernment work; and what small steps can we take right now even if we don't have it all figured out.

Though the waters are rough and the waves high, we can have faith that Jesus will not let our boat be swamped.