



A Letter from Rev. Dr Laurie Lyter Bright

August 21, 2024

Grace and Peace, y'all!

I'm writing to send you my thanks, and an extra measure of courage and hope.

By the time you read this, I'll be in Ghost Ranch, New Mexico, helping to lead the inaugural James Atwood Institute for Congregational Courage, followed by a national gathering of Presbyterian Peacemaking activists in my role as executive director of the Presbyterian Peace Fellowship (PPF). The Atwood institute is an opportunity for lay-leaders and pastors alike to gather and learn best practices for enacting gun violence prevention as an expression of faith. Don't worry if you missed it - we'll be doing another one in 2025!

This gathering is just one of the ways the PPF is creatively responding to the pressing needs of peace-making in 2024. The origins of PPF are rooted in conscientious objection to war, and for the past 80 years we have been working to respond faithfully to the calling of Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace. We work on climate change and accompaniment ministry. We work for prison abolition and gun violence prevention. We create resources, lead workshops and retreats, and train local leaders in peace movement work. We shepherd overtures and take direct action and equip congregations and individuals to take a stand. PPF follows the lead of the Spirit and the consensus of the community to work towards a more peaceful planet.

My thanks to you is for this: having been to General Assembly and also been in tiny gatherings of folks asking big questions about the possibilities for a peaceful future, I am convinced that the local congregation is at the very heart of peacemaking. You are in it, day in and day out, tending to the spirits of folks who often believe themselves too small or insufficient in faith to believe the call to be a peacemaker applies to them too. It is difficult work to love and shepherd a congregation, and to effectively convey to these communities that yes, Jesus meant them too. Thank you for doing that hard work with such care and commitment. You are seen, and your work is honored.

My hope for all of us, then, is that we remember the good and bad news, that yep, Jesus meant us too. So while you are in the throes of it all - sifting through prayers and emails, keeping an

eye on the worship calendar, soothing bickering about bulletins and big feelings about paraments - remember what called you to ministry in the first place. The radical, loving, impossible promises of Jesus Christ, who stepped into your life and asked you to help bring God's loving light to every corner of the world. Starting right where you are. Starting right now.

I send you courage and joy in that hard work of peacemaking, with the promise that you do not walk that road alone. None of us can do everything, and neither are any of us absolved of doing what we can. I write to remind you of that calling and pray that you'll continue in your great work, knowing that we are here as a resource to help along the road we walk together. We are all called to be peacemakers, and called to be blessed as such.

If you want to collaborate about some good trouble, please reach out! I'm happy to be in the community of this Presbytery with you and believe we are blessed to be called into this work together.

With joy,

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