



Mission Presbytery

Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

Mission Presbytery serves God as a unique expression of the body of Christ in South Texas. As faithful stewards of God's gifts, we proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ by

- Fulfilling the mandates of the Book of Order
- Encouraging and supporting congregations in mission and ministry
- Doing together what we cannot do alone.

September 8, 2009

Dear Friends, mi Amigos!

I love "Texas friendly!" Even before the June Presbytery meeting, while visiting FPC in Kerrville just after my interview with the Search Committee, many folks welcomed me; then I drove with John Wurster to the Divide Chapel in the Hill Country where Tuffy, a true Texas gentleman, with hat in hand, offered a genuine invitation to come back and worship anytime. That hospitality continues to be extended to Harry and me wherever we go; as we were looking for a place to live, Malcolm McQueen welcomed us to San Antonio as we stood under a large oak tree. We have felt your warm hospitality as we have worshiped with you. Thank you for all of your hospitality: the meals, overnight stays, gifts, and prayers!

I spent a day with the folks in Divine Redeemer Presbyterian Church, San Antonio, who help support the House of Neighborly Service, which shares space with the church offering a thrift store, food distribution, and child care. Across the street, I visited the House of Teens helping where needed in the neighborhood, including a Square Gardening project, and the Time Dollar program which offers community support and connections in a variety of ways. The whole community is blessed by each other's presence.

I made my first visit to the Valley, praying and visiting with pastors and leaders in many of our churches. I saw and heard about the incredible ongoing mission work in Harlingen (Treasure Hills, Segundo, FPC), San Benito (Getsemani, FPC), Brownsville (San Pablo, Primera Iglesia Prebiteriana Mexicana, and FPC where I also was blessed to visit with Kathy and Juan Trevino), Mercedes (FPC and Principe de Paz), Weslaco (FPC and a cluster potluck, yum!), McAllen (Betania, FPC, First Korean PC), Mission (FPC), Donna (La Vida Eterna NCD), and Edinburg (FPC). I also spent time with the Valley Colleague Group and saw the ministries and our presence in food pantries, El Instituto, Ministerios de Fe, Puentes de Cristo, Su Casa de Esperanza, and Loaves and Fishes. Wow!

I traveled to Austin enjoying the PW meeting and was warmly welcomed by the gathering of the Austin area pastors. I plan to visit the other clusters as well. In these first weeks I am experiencing an overwhelming sense of gratitude to God as I see so much "good fruit" in this presbytery, as I visit with folks in our churches, sit with committees and divisions, meet with the staff, pastors, and leaders, and visit places of ministry and mission, watching your passion in action and listening to your cares and dreams. In the following weeks and months, please know that I am doing my best to listen to you as together we discern what God is calling us to in the future. We are God's people, and I trust and hope in "this new thing" that God is doing here and now. Let us "listen to what the Spirit is saying" to Mission Presbytery.

Our video conferencing capability is almost complete which will allow us to offer the Acts 16:5 Initiative bringing together all our clusters on November 9-10. Also I am excited about John Knox Ranch and the Winter Retreat on Evangelism at Mo Ranch with Rev. Eric Hoey. Finally, as we approach the 1-year anniversary of Hurricane Ike September 13, let us remain focused on Christ's call to be the church in the world.

Blessings and Peace,

Hilary

Elder Hilary Shuford
Executive Presbyter

Rev. Dr. Miles H. White
Stated Clerk

Elder Susan Penrod
Associate Presbyter, Christian Education

Elder Ruben P. Armendariz
Church Development Consultant

Elder Lita Simpson
Youth Ministries

Rev. Sam Riccobene
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