

Co-General Presbyters' Invitation:
For Presbytery Meeting, February 22-23, 2010

George Goodrich

*“Those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength.
They shall mount up with wings like eagles
They shall run and not be weary.
They shall walk and not faint.” Isaiah 40:39-40*

I learned a spirit-strengthening, faith-building, love-deepening, career-saving, discipline in the winter of 1983. One dreary, winter afternoon I picked up Henri Nouwen's *The Way of the Heart*, and retreated to a quiet Sunday school classroom in the church in which I was then an associate pastor. As I read, the Holy Spirit breathed the life of God into my sore, work-seared soul. God's salving presence enveloped me, meeting and transforming me.

From that point on, God prompting, I began to take monthly retreats at a camp 50 miles out of town. Before long other members of the pastoral staff began to join me. We traveled out together; made dinner and played together in the evening. Then in the morning we patterned solitude, silence and prayer with God until lunch. Over cold-cut sandwiches we would then share what God had said. The Spirit was sweet to us. The Holy Spirit taught and touched us through each other. And staff unity deepened in our growing love as we grew closer to Christ.

Later, throughout my 20 years as pastor of First Presbyterian Church of Reading, PA., I tried to faithfully to follow a personal retreat pattern of taking Friday afternoons weekly to retreat to a Jesuit Spiritual Center near town. Once a month I tried to plan a full day there to put myself in the hands of God and to listen to what God might say.

Kathy will tell you that I was a usually a different person when I came home...More peaceful, attentive, playing with our kids, listening and loving as Christ does whether at home or the AIDS hospice.

Often I would preach and teach out of what God "said" on those retreats. But more importantly, in them God came close, bound my wounds, convicted me and forgave me of sin, reaffirmed my call, and guided our leadership and ministry.

This report could have outlined yet again, where Kathy's and my work interfaces with the work of our committees and council. It could have highlighted perspectives and priorities of the presbytery. But important as they are, do they matter as much as holding out to you God's invitation to meet with each of us? I am grateful to say that God has taught me the truth of the verse I opened with. I know that those who wait on God renew their strength. I offer the pattern as a suggestion to you.

So we are toying with the idea of offering two one-day personal spiritual retreats for elders and pastors, probably in May, or in the summer. If you are interested in hearing more, please e-mail me at ghgoodrich@aol.com. Let's go deeper together.

God's Grace and Peace Be With Us All,
George and Kathy