

Pastoral Perspective – *On the Church’s Calling, for Christ in Mission to the World*

Inwardly Strong, Outwardly Focused: *Called to Risk and Trust as Christ’s Faithful Evangelist*

*I pray that out of His glorious riches, He may **strengthen** you all with power through His Spirit in **your inward being**. –Ephesians 3:16*

*For those who want to save their lives will lose it. But **those who give up their lives for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will find true life**. –Mark 8:35*

After having recently attended the inaugural conference of the Presbyterian Global Fellowship¹ held at our denomination’s largest congregation, Peachtree Presbyterian Church² in Atlanta, Georgia, I was reminded of a particular passage in Part II of *The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (USA)*. Chapter III in the *Book of Order’s* section on Form of Government, entitled “The Church and Its Mission”, contains a piece that addresses the nature of our missional calling as the church³ of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Based on the New Testament Scripture on the Great Commission toward the end of the Gospel of Matthew (28:16-20), the first piece that comes to mind tells us that,

“The Church is called to be Christ’s faithful evangelist, [as we are] going into the world, making disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all he has commanded.” [G-3.0300 c. (1)]

The church—the “called out” ones—we, the people of the triune God (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit), is/are called to go out into the world... And as I relayed along with the lectionary texts in preaching the sermon at worship in the park last Sunday, we the church are called to be “Internally Strong, [and] Externally Focused.”⁴

We are meant to be *inwardly strengthened* with God’s power through prayer in order for us to be *outwardly focused* on our apostolic/missionary calling to minister to those outside in the world around us. Furthermore, as members of the body of Christ,

“The Church is called to undertake this mission **even at the risk of losing its life**, trusting in God alone as the author and giver of life, sharing the gospel, and **doing those deeds in the world that point beyond themselves** to the new reality in Christ.” (G-3.0400)

We are provided both biblical and constitutional warrant as derived from Scripture to prayerfully discern God’s leading and guidance, and to seek the Lord in pursuing certain initiatives for this new season of our journey and life together in this family of faith.

In light of this, I invite us to consider anew and take note of signs of the church’s activity in the world, as may be evidenced throughout this, prior, and/or subsequent newsletters. While we seek to encourage and build one another up *inwardly* in love (1 Thessalonians 5:11; Galatians 5:13), I believe we would best do so by also ensuring we are *outwardly* paying attention to our missional calling, thereby being effective in building community through Christ. For His glory and the expansion of His kingdom, with you, I am

In His Service,
Pastor Rex

¹ <http://www.PresbyterianGlobalFellowship.org>

² <http://www.PeachtreePres.org>

³ The word “church” in the Bible is translated from the original Greek word, EKKLESIA, which refers to “ones who are called out”. The words “ecclesiology” and “ecclesiastical” are derived from this word that is referring to the study of and relating to the things of a set apart people called out for God’s holy purpose. Missional theology would regard this purpose as the mission of God (Latin, *missio Dei*) with its root meaning of “sending”, even as the word “apostles” in the Bible is derived from the Greek meaning, “sent ones.” That is, we are called and sent out for God’s purpose out of God’s character on a mission of love.

⁴ Phrase quoted from a message given at the PGF conference by speaker, Dr. Stephen A. Hayner, *Peachtree Associate Professor of Evangelism and Church Growth* at [Columbia Theological Seminary](http://www.ColumbiaTheologicalSeminary.edu)