



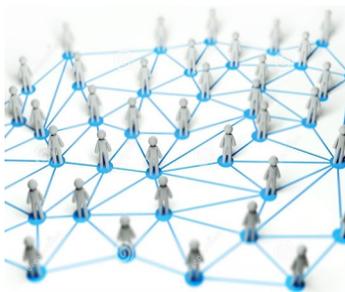
Missions Update

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Missions Update is a semi-regular publication of the Missions and Evangelism Ministry Team of the First Presbyterian Church of Kenosha. Its goal is to help the congregation better know and understand the people and activities we are supporting.

Missions and Outreach Ministry Team

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Connection!

What does it mean when you say that you are Presbyterian? Does it mean you believe certain things? Maybe. We do come from the Reformed church that formed during the Reformation of the 1500's in Europe. John Calvin later explained the core of Reformed beliefs about God, Christ, Church and other theological topics. But not all Presbyterians believe the same things. Does it mean that you value certain social stances the church has stood for, either recently or historically? Maybe. The Presbyterian Church has long been grounded in a concern for missions, education, health care and evangelism. We were among the first denominations to ordain women, accept new interpretations of Scripture, to accept scientific findings as supplemental to Scripture (not contrary to it), and recently the denomination cleared the way for congregations and presbyteries to make decisions about the ordination and marriage of gay and lesbian men/women/couples. But not all Presbyterians support those stances.

So what does it mean to be Presbyterian? Literally it means to elect the people who make decisions for the church. Unlike denominations that rely on clergy and bishops to

make all decisions for the church, in the Presbyterian system ruling elders and teaching elders (pastors) work together, elected by the congregation and presbyteries, to make decisions for the Church. We come together as congregations, presbyteries and synods to govern the church and discern God's will. We are connected with all other congregations in the denomination—truly a Body of Christ that depend on each other to carry out the mission and ministry of Christ.

There are a couple of ways to clearly witness this connection. 1) See us at work. We gather to worship, pray, discern, and decide at session, presbytery, synod, and General Assembly meetings. 2) Stewardship—through how we give to the other levels of church government, we stay connected with other congregations and Presbyterians around the country and around the world.

The idea is simple—we are stronger together. By partnering with other congregations we are able to do more ministry. By pooling our resources, we are able to more effectively and efficiently carry on the ministry of the Church. And so it is that the mission budget is filled with line items that support presbytery, synod, and General Assembly

missions. We stay connected to other congregations by giving to the presbytery and synod who then distribute the money to ministries, mission projects and churches in need. We support one another in this way, allowing churches that are financially stronger to help those that need help without having to do it on an individual basis. Our mission giving is another way we stick together.

Another way we stick together is through the Special Offerings we collect four times each year. Again, the idea is that all congregations collect the One Great Hour of Sharing or Peacemaking Offering, we will have more resources to tackle specific problems in the world or Church. This congregation collects all four offerings and thereby partners with other congregations around the country to support those particular projects.

The other way we stick together is through our **per capita** giving. Per capita literally mean “for each head.” As such, it is often thought of as a tax. Sorry—we don’t tax in the church. However, it is a very Presbyterian (that is to say VERY organized) way that we join together to support the work of the higher levels of government. I guess when this happens anywhere else in society, we call it a tax. But in the church, it is a voluntary way for churches to stay connected and support each other. It is also a good way for those higher levels of church government to know how to budget.

PER CAPITA is set by each presbytery, synod, and the General Assembly. For our congregation, the amount is \$30 per active member of the church. This is the amount the church is asked to contribute to the work of the larger church (as well as the mission giving mentioned above). This is money used to pay staff, buy supplies, maintain offices, as well as support ministries and mission work. At the synod level, the money supports college ministries around the Synod of Lake and Prairies, ministries on various Native American reservations, support for small and rural churches, food programs and other creative and vital ministries. In the Presbytery of Milwaukee our per capita dollars are added to those of the other contributing congregations to support mission grants, session partnership grants, to support racial/ethnic ministries in the presbytery, to help offset some of the costs for inquirers and candidates for ministry, and other programs. These are all part of being the church together. We work together to accomplish things. Per capita is just one of the ways we fund that work.

Often, if you hear about per capita funds at all, they make the headlines only when a congregation refuses to pay them as some form of protest against the decisions of some level of church government (usually General Assembly). The GAPJC (General Assembly Permanent Judicial Committee), the highest court in the Presbyterian Church, ruled that per capita payments were not compulsory. No level of government can force a congregation to pay per capita, nor can they limit their participation in the government and process of the church. That is what makes per capita different than a tax. However, choosing to not pay per capita is a bit like choosing to not participate in a family event. It is the epitome of “My way or the highway” or “I’m taking my marbles and going home” thinking. It is a flat out refusal to be a part of the Body of Christ, together with other churches, unless you get your way. I am in favor of protesting a decision you don’t support. I am in favor of finding ways to discuss all opinions about a decision. But I do not support a congregation withdrawing from the communal support of ministry and mission to show displeasure.

This congregation pays its per capita dollars. In that way, and many other ways, we participate in the ministry and mission of the Presbyterian Church (USA). We ask each member to prayerfully consider giving their share of per capita over and above their pledge to the ministry of this congregation.

This year the per capita amount is \$30. The church will pay \$30 per active member of the church to ensure the work of the various levels of the PC(USA). Please consider your connect to other Presbyterians around the country and contribute to per capita. You can do this by check (there is an offering envelope dedicated to per capita giving) or online. Let’s partner together to do good work and stay connected!

