

Greetings,

*As we begin this new year there is good news and bad news. Lamentations first: our hearts are heavy with the tragic violence in Tuscan, Arizona. As a nation we mourn and wonder at the senselessness of it. We hear and read viewpoints and commentaries and watch the memorial service from afar. President Obama got it right, the force for unity is stronger than the force for evil." You and I know what force that is. In what I call "the Other Lord's Prayer," Jesus prays for our unity, "Holy Father...may they be one, as we are one." (John 17:11) I thank God for the good news of the gospel and for our unity in Jesus Christ. I write more on my blog <http://jbestblog.blogspot.com/> of our Presbyterian witness in a time of ranker in our civil discourse.*

*Rich Lichti, our presbytery associate, has indicated his intention to retire. Rich has been a pillar of strength to many, and for me. He shall remain among us, but we shall miss his humble, yet highly skilled service as a member of our staff. Please read his letter below and the message from Bill Fuerstenau, the convener of our Staff Services Committee. Bill will be the point person for arrangements to recognize and celebrate Rich's brief but extraordinary service at the February 12th Presbytery Meeting.*

*Some good news! During tough times, it's important to celebrate the victories. Leslie Keusch, our office administrator, recently came into my office smiling and said, "Someone should say thank you to the congregations!" Her records show that Presbytery received (one regular monthly check from one congregation shy of ) 100% fulfillment of Sessions' declared intentions of Shared Mission support for 2010! On behalf of every person whose life has been touched by our ministry and mission, I thank the multitude of you who made this happen. And Kudos to Rev. Pat Ramsden, the Administration Ministry Team and the many collaborators who produced our Stewardship/Mission Interpretation Program "Building Hope!" We do have a story to tell! Your gifts do make a difference! Praise God!*

*Larry Nelson, our treasurer, also has a smile on his face as he closes our financial books on 2010. He has informed me that Presbytery's operating budget ended 2010 with a positive cash flow of \$19,000! Look for his more precise report at the February meeting. I thank the pastors' leadership and Sessions trust in us to support this ministry, and team effort of many ministry team, committee, agency leaders and members, and our Presbytery staff, who demonstrated good stewardship of the funds entrusted to us. Thank you all. Praise God!*

*Finally, the members of the First Presbyterian Church in Jonesville beamed at the installation service of their new pastor, the Rev. Emily Miller. I also smiled as the transition time between installed pastors for this congregation was just 11 months. Kudos to Elder Nancy Toth, the COM Transition counselor, who guided them during this transition. Nine year old, Kaelyn Breuklander transformed the Installation Service warming the hearts of all present with her solo. Thanks be to God!*



*Grace and Peace to you in this new year,*

*John*