

## **From the Desk of the Acting Associate Executive Presbyter...**

I can smell God. Ok, not really (maybe?) but it is an apt metaphor for describing my experience since I last submitted a report. Like the smell of coffee early in the morning, God is permeating our community and seeping through our boundaries, perhaps even causing smiles to form. For example, the small group conversations at our last two presbytery meetings have illuminated relationships between a rural and an urban church. Or, how the simple act of talking with each other has drawn us closer together, even though we are talking about some deep issues. God is bringing us closer together.

To continue the metaphor, the committees I work with and the conversations I participate in seem to be evidence of the slow, persistent bubble of percolating coffee. The Stewardship Committee is evidence of this. For many years this committee has asked itself, "How can we be helpful to the Presbytery?" It has tried many things: celebrating churches who give, distributing Mission Snapshots, even helping to coordinate the Spirit of Stewardship event. Yet, the committee has begun to ask the deeper question, "How does our work illumine God's work?" The truth is that I have no idea how to answer that question, nor does the committee at this moment. But the question shows us why we are doing this work – God. God is permeating our conversations in a very real way.

Another area that God is permeating strongly is the Church Planting and Revitalization Committee. I have given MissionInsite presentations to 10 different churches with another one on the schedule. These presentations, among other things, have reminded churches that is already in their midst. The Church Planting side of the committee is hard at work fostering a New Worshipping Community Cohort (50+ people on the list so far). Multiple events have passed, and the summer is full of upcoming plans for the NWC Cohort. God is showing up.

Having visited many of the churches in Heartland Presbytery, I can say without a doubt that I can smell the distinct smell of God in your midst too. God is brewing some very exciting things for your churches and communities.

In good Presbyterian fashion you will want to study the data, so I will say to you, call a pastor you have never met, go out for coffee. Talk about how God is working in your contexts. Then you too will begin to have the data to smell and know that God is at work.

Respectfully Submitted,

Sally S. Wright