

**The Presbytery of Elizabeth
I Refuse to Lead A Dying Church
Presbytery Learning Experience – January 25, 2014
Designed and Led by: Cheryl Galan**

Choosing Bold Over Mild

Three learning components were woven with the business of the meeting, as follows:

Opening Prayer/Host Pastor/First Time Commissioners/Corresponding & Temp.

Stated Clerk and Consent Agenda

Memorial Moments

First Learning Component: Choosing Bold Over Mild – The Movement

“The bold church is quite serious in its intent to change the world, within its range of influence, empowered by God.”

Boldness is nothing new, says Paul Nixon.

Bold movements challenge our mildness and ambivalence
and sometimes correct it.

Israel’s exodus from Egypt.

Prophet voices calling for justice/speaking truth to power.
Jesus, who welcomed outcasts, taxcollectors and sinners
and demonstrated the redemptive power of non-violent
resistance to the forces that crucified him.

The Holy Spirit, rushing like a gale force wind into mild-mannered synagogues.

Boldness is nothing new.

Through human history, freedom movements and democratic uprisings
have happened through people willing to choose bold over mild.

Watch what it looks like: View finale clip from the flim *Les Miserables*

Boldness is nothing new

Discuss in Triads:

What ‘movements’ for change have you lived through, in your lifetime?
How have these movements have challenged or corrected your
mildness/ambivalence?

We have choices about what we do with our bold passion, do we not? Against the backdrop of drums, bloodshed, and violence of the French revolution, voices sang, “We will walk behind the ploughshare. We will put away the sword”

We have just celebrated the birthday of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., who showed us the redemptive power of non-violent resistance. As we follow in the way of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, choosing bold over mild means the kind of passion reflected in the poignant words of the character Jean Valjean at the very end of his life, who sang that his was the story of one who turned from hating...and in the process learned that to love another person is to see the face of God.

“We will walk behind the ploughshare,” they sang. “We will put away the sword”
“This is the future that we bring when tomorrow comes.”

So, Elizabeth Presbytery, when tomorrow comes, what do you hope it will bring?
In silence...what bold move can you make, today, that it may be so.

Summary/transition statement: ***Boldness is nothing new***

“In a busy world of working, commuting, child-rearing, and grocery shopping, I will give some time to a movement that promises to help me find wise solutions for my life and to truly improve my community and world.”

Nominating Committee

Synod of the Northeast

Order of the Day: Christ Church, Martinsville

Second Learning Component: Choosing Bold Over Mild
– When it gets controversial

“Boldness often rallies a base of passionate supporters, even when the boldness is a bit controversial or offensive to some.”

- Opening remarks by the Transitional Leader
- Presentation of Resolution by COM and Trustee Chairs
- Presentation of Response by Christ Church

We can choose what we do with our bold passion. In these moments before we enter a time of discussion and decision-making I would ask that we center ourselves in God’s love for each of us. Time is given for discernment. Three choices are offered.

1. Walking and Praying With The Labyrinth

The labyrinth, located in the Youth Center downstairs, offers a canvas walking path for prayer. Its single, circular path leads into the center and back out again. The path is not a puzzle to be solved or a maze with choices to be made. There are no wrong turns in a labyrinth. Walking the path is a way to engage body, mind and spirit in the act of prayer. Today, the labyrinth is offered as a tool for centering in God.

Before you enter the labyrinth, take off your shoes and take a deep breath; allow your body to relax. Stand at the threshold; clarify your intention: Why are you walking the labyrinth today?

On the way In:

- Notice how your body feels.
- Pay attention to your thoughts and feelings.
- Let go of anything that is not serving your intention.

In the center:

- Sit, stand, or kneel in a position that is comfortable for you.
- Stay as long as you like. Let yourself be still.
- Name your intention, your need before God.
- Be open to receiving. Is there a word or phrase that comes to you?
- When you are ready, leave the center, following the same path.

On the way out:

- Repeat the word or phrase silently, over and over again.
- Follow the path back to the threshold.

2. Centering Prayer

The practice of centering prayer is a way of expressing our intention to be in God's presence and to yield to God's action. Today, the chapel has been prepared for those who choose centering prayer. In a setting of meditative music and images of beauty, the following process of centering prayer will offer the opportunity to clear our minds and open our hearts to divine presence and guidance:

Listening for the Gentle Touch of Christ the Word

- Be seated in a pew and begin by focusing your attention on the communion table. Take three slow, deep breaths, as you settle yourself into this space.
- Relax and quiet yourself. Be in God's presence, with love, gratitude and trust.

- Choose a sacred word or phrase, as a symbol of your intention or need, for example....
 Come and fill our hearts with your peace.
 Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me, a sinner.
 Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me
 or simply: “Jesus” “Love” “Forgiveness” “Healing”
 “Shalom” “Savior” “Help”
- Sitting comfortably and with your eyes closed, silently repeat the word or phrase, signifying your consent to God’s presence and action. Combine the prayer word or phrase with your breathing.
- As you become aware of thoughts, feelings, perceptions, images, associations, etc., return your attention, ever so gently, to your word.
- When you hear the sound of the singing bowl, as you are ready, give thanks to God, open your eyes, return your attention to the communion table, and then make your way back to the sanctuary.

3. Intercessory Prayer In The Sanctuary

Intercession is prayer that pleads with God for your needs and the needs of others. It is an expression of concern and love for human beings, before God. It is a way of holding out one hand to God and the other to those people and situations for whom we pray, so that God’s love, life, and healing may flow through us to them.

In the sanctuary, you may offer silent prayers of intercession....

- Stay seated in a pew and begin by focusing your attention to the image of a stone wall on the screen. Take three slow, deep breaths.
- Relax and quiet yourself. Be in God’s presence, with love, gratitude and trust.
- Let the image on the screen be a prayer wall. Like the ancient wall of Jerusalem, imagine the stones of this wall holding the prayers of the faithful.
- As you continue gazing at it,
 Who comes to mind?
 What concerns do you want to bring to God?
 What do you need?
- Take a moment or two to write down the names and/or concerns. Reflect on what you want to ask, from God.

- In the moments that remain, silently say the names, the concerns, and your requests, mentally tucking them between the stones of the wall.

The Presbytery Returns from A Time for Discernment and Resumes Business

Words about process from the Moderator and/or Stated Clerk

Re-statement of the motion before us, by the Moderator

Discussion and Decision-Making

Third Learning Component: Choosing Bold Over Mild – the Mission

The Third Learning Component was postponed, on account of time. Content from this component will be added to the presbytery's next learning experience, based on the topic, "Choosing Frontier Over Fortress."

Order of the Day: First Presbyterian Church, Elizabeth

Worship and Adjournment