**THE WORD FROM RICK – “Nostalgia”**

It was a quick, but very profitable trip to Louisville last week. The city was alive with color, the result of the dogwoods blooming combined with the arrival of basketball fans from the Universities of Maryland and of Miami, as well as Kansas and Villanova Universities.

While I was there for conversations related to the Presbyterian Youth Triennium, the air was filled with talk about NCAA’s South Region Finals and the Jayhawks, ‘Canes, Terps, and Wildcats. In spite of the temptations to talk basketball – it’s a very significant topic in Kentucky, even if UK and U of L aren’t playing – I felt that we got a great deal accomplished in preparation for my responsibilities at the Triennium in July.

It was exciting to hear the ideas and visions of those who have been living with this summer’s event for much of the last eighteen months, as they shared those visions with me and with staff members from the Presbyterian Mission Agency. Putting together an event for approximately 6,000 folks does not happen overnight, and I am excited that over 70 people from our presbytery will experience what is being created for them. I am particularly excited about the part that Sue and I will get to play in making that happen.

My meetings in Louisville ended ahead of schedule, and with nearly five hours before my flight, I was able to take a “nostalgia trip.” Having lived in Louisville for three years during seminary, much of the city is familiar to me, and there are many memories that even forty years of change can’t erase. So, last Wednesday afternoon, after eating dinner at the Silver Dollar, visiting the Louisville Seminary campus, and enjoying my Graeter’s bourbon ball ice cream on the previous night, I set out to visit the two metro area churches that I served during my first two years at LPTS.

I began my nostalgic adventure by visiting the place where I had my first real youth ministry position, St. Matthew’s Episcopal Church. It was my first experience with Episcopalians and high liturgy, and taught me that some of the hardest pastoral visits are to the homes of highly inactive youth who couldn’t wait until you left and whose parents had gone over to the Baptist Church years before, but who the Director of Christian Education thought I might be able to bring back. It was a good first year, but Monday nights at St. Matthew’s were not always my favorite nights.

My second stop on the adventure was Howard Park Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). It was across the Ohio River in the city of Clarksville, Indiana. There, I was more than just the youth worker. I was the Student Assistant to the Pastor, the Rev. Coleman Games. During the year, Coleman let me experience the full range of pastoral ministries. Obviously, I loved working with the youth the best, but I found that I liked teaching – both adults and kids, and leading worship, and I got to do as much of that as I wanted!

I got to spend some time walking around both of these churches. Howard Park was locked up tight, but St. Matthew’s was open and the staff allowed me to roam. I tried to recall faces and events from over forty years ago, and there were quite a few. It’s funny, I can’t remember things that I read thirty seconds after I’ve read them, but events from the past are so real and at times quite vivid. After I left Howard Park, I went and sat near the falls of the Ohio River and reflected on the journey of the last forty years. I thought about where I’ve been, the things that I have done and not done, the people whose lives have intersected with mine, and how I have changed since the first day that I set foot in Louisville. The feelings were warm and felt holy.

As I looked back at my journey, I realize that it has been amazing and that I have been blessed. It has not always been easy, but I understand the there has been a purpose for each struggle and each success, and that the high moments have been so plentiful. When I walked away from that river, there was no doubt that answering God’s initial call to ministry, and all those calls to service since that day – including the call to be a part of the life of this presbytery, have been the right decisions, and for that, I am thankful!

Grace and Peace,

**Rick**