

Just a note from the Associate for Mission

It was my great pleasure to spend Palm Sunday with Highlawn Presbyterian Church in Huntington. Worship began with the children parading up and down the aisles with palms waving. It was a delight to watch the parents and grandparents smile, wave and point out their cherished children. It was clear that this congregation loves well. It was evident in the prayers, the expressions of joys and concerns, in the openness to the movement of children and the rapidly expanding time of "passing of the Peace. The Choir was amazing! Let's face it, it is hard to balance a strong soprano section (I know I am a soprano!) but the men and the altos held their own and the music was glorious. I kept looking to see where the rest of them were for the sound was too big for their numbers.

I learned about their participation in the upcoming "Empty Bowls" fundraising event for the Huntington Hunger Food Bank is scheduled for April 17 at First Presbyterian Church, Huntington. Highlawn is providing soup. If you have never been to an "Empty Bowls" event they are great fun and a wonderful way to gather the community around the issue of hunger in the area.

After worship the children hunted eggs all over the property. The excitement was palpable and the children very thorough in their search.

Easter Sunday I was blessed to worship with Summersville Presbyterian. The children passed out bells to all as they spread the good news of Jesus' resurrection and the choir led us well in the hymn and special music. What was most noticeable was the laughter, the easy comfortable way the congregation tried new things and celebrated together. After worship there was no rush for the doors to beat the Baptists to Shoney's, instead the people gathered in conversations and drifted around the sanctuary until the lights were turned off and people dispersed. By the time we got to Shoney's there was still room for all.

Both Sundays I was struck by the conversations around me. People checking in with one another about the more serious things in their lives... About job insecurity, community struggles, health of young ones and the changes they see in older ones. There was joy expressed as well. They shared stories about their week, funny things that happened, joyful occurrences and prayers answered. Both of these communities expressed healthy love and care for each other, for their community and for their world. It was clear, worship was a homecoming event, a time to be with family, to express their love for each other and for the God who makes it possible for them to be together. Size of the church did not matter. What mattered was the level of fellowship and care expressed for all who entered there.

Next Sunday, when you enter the sanctuary, listen for those conversations and celebrate their diversity and connection. It is a gift from God.

Blessings!

Barbara