



NATIONAL CAPITAL
PRESBYTERY
Missional · Pastoral · Prophetic

April 3, 2011

Dear Colleagues,

Regarding the April 3, Washington Post article. You may have people with questions, thus some corrective points are appropriate.

We of course have 108 churches, not 180. I also reported that there had been 40 of our churches that have had some instance of sexual misconduct over the 50 years of memory the Sexual Misconduct Response Coordinating Team could recollect. The article seems to imply that every one of these cases was as heinous as this predatory incident at Vienna. While we have had a few that heinous I can count them on one hand. Most of these were “wanders” rather than “predators” and involved clergy and lay adults. Even so, 40 of a 108. Boundaries can be violated in any congregation. It can happen here.

The Post article would lead one to believe the Response Team did not know anything until recently. That is not a fair representation. The Response Team knew of this incident in 2005 as an inappropriate email case which the Vienna Church had addressed. The Response Team did have a conversation with Vienna Church staff. Again in 2007 the Sexual Misconduct Response Team heard of continuing inappropriate emails and contacted Rev Pete James who handled the matter and reported some of the systemic changes at Vienna then. The team also reached out to the parents of the victim who reported the continuing email contact on the part of the perpetrator. Only recently did the Response Team know the extent of the abuse. And Vienna only knew the extent of the abuse some years after the actual abuse had occurred

I kept notes on my conversation with the reporter. My exact words were “I am like a bishop but not a bishop.” I did not at any time refer to myself as “like a Catholic Bishop.”

Please pray for the survivors that they may find healing and for all the rest of us who also share their trauma over this abuse of spiritual trust.

Again,

Rev. Dr. G. Wilson Gunn, Jr.
General Presbyter
National Capital Presbytery
11300 Rockville Pike
Suite 1009
Rockville, MD 20852
240-514-5350