



December 12, 2019

Greetings!

The other day I was sitting in a coffee shop waiting for a meeting to begin. I was doing my best to catch up on a few emails while I had some free time, but I found myself drawn to the conversation at the table behind me. It was a man and a woman who were in the middle of some “church talk”. You know it’s “church talk” when two people meet in public to discuss their opinions on the parish, elders, and worship (Greek to the rest of the people in the coffee shop). During their conversation, which I was trying not to overhear, the man said to the woman; “you know, some people think, if you want new people to come, you have to start doing things differently. I just don’t see it that way.” Sound familiar? It brings to mind an overused cliché describing insanity, *“doing the same thing over and expecting a different result!”* I did my best to hold my tongue.

Fortunately, this wasn’t one of our churches.

The other week I had the honor and opportunity to sit down with the PNC (Pastor Nominating Committee) from Warner Memorial to engage in some “church talk”. Their PNC asked me if I would be a reference on their MIF (Ministry Information Form, what churches use to call a new pastor). Before I said yes, I wanted to get to know them a little more and hear what kind of pastor they were looking for.

It was refreshing to hear them talk about the dreams they had for their congregation. I met with a collection of dedicated members of the church, faithfully considering their congregation and community. Their PNC was outward facing. They realized their church sat in the middle of an ever-changing community they weren’t fully in relationship with. The PNC was clear their marker of success with their new pastor would be how well they engaged the neighborhood that surrounded them.

This PNC was putting the needs of those who have never set foot in their doors on the same level as members who had been there for decades. They were honest and realistic. They are aware of the sacred cows and potential land mines that their new pastor would have to navigate. However, their focus remained centered on *“what could be.”*

As I visit our churches around the Presbytery, I encounter leaders who are ready to take full stock of the gifts their congregation has to offer to the world and their community. They are ready to make room for Christ to lead them into what they will be next.

John