

## Clerk's Corner

[Jesus] said to them, "Therefore, every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like the master of a household who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old." – Matthew 13:52, NRSV



Greetings! As I begin my service as Stated Clerk in National Capital Presbytery, I am grateful for all the expressions of welcome and other good wishes many of you have offered me. Some of you I am privileged to know already, and the rest of you I look forward to meeting soon.

This spring is a transitional time for my family. My wife Amy is a teacher, and our two children, Johanna and Timothy, are in eighth and second grade, respectively. They are staying in New Jersey to finish the school year, and we plan to relocate to the DMV over the summer. While I am absolutely thrilled to be here with you, I am very much looking forward to an end to driving up and down I-95, and I am eager to settle into a new home with my family.

I hope to use this space to communicate with you about my work, and to offer support for the ministry of you, my colleagues, and the communities you serve. There will be plenty of occasions for me to talk about the *Book of Order* or *Robert's Rules*, but I thought I would begin with these words of scripture above. When Jesus speaks about "scribes" in the gospels, he often has sharply critical things to say about them, so as someone whose ministry role might plausibly be described as that of a scribe, I take notice when Jesus speaks positively of a scribe who has been "trained for the kingdom of heaven." What might someone whose ministry deals with processes, structures, and records offer in witness and service of God's inbreaking reign?

**Something new and something old...**

The word "therefore" points us back to the preceding verses, where Jesus has offered a series of short parables about the kingdom of heaven. It is like a treasure hidden in a field, or like a pearl of great value, Jesus says, for which people might sell all that they have. It is like a net cast in the sea, drawing up all kinds of fish, where you need to separate the good from the bad. Eugene Boring notes the familiar vocabulary of images used in these parables—the "treasure" store—which would have been common among other religious teachers.<sup>1</sup> The images and metaphors are familiar, but Jesus employs them in surprising and innovative ways that reflect the new thing God is doing, and he invites others—perhaps the gospel author, you, me—to do the same.

One of the most satisfying aspects of my work as a stated clerk is the unexpected phone calls that begin something like this: "We are really excited to be doing this new thing at our church, but we're not quite sure how it fits with our polity. Can you help us?" I thrill at opportunities to brainstorm with you how to put our old treasures in the service of the new thing God is doing in your community—so if you have a puzzle or a question like this on your mind, please do me the favor of inviting me to collaborate with you!

God is calling us to new ministries, new relationships, new ways of loving and serving our neighbors—telling the "old, old story" in an ever-changing world. I look forward to discovering with you how we might bring out of our treasure what is new and what is old.

Grace and Peace,

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<sup>1</sup> M. Eugene Boring, "The Gospel of Matthew." *The New Interpreter's Bible*. Leander Keck et al, eds. Nashville: Abingdon. Vol. VII, p. 315.