



“Only Jesus Christ, who bids us follow him, knows the journey’s end. But we know that it will be a road of boundless mercy. Discipleship means joy.” - Dietrich Bonhoeffer, The Cost of Discipleship

Dear Friends,

Joy... is not a word I associate with Lent. The ringing alleluias and bright decorations of Easter call joy to mind more easily than does this season patterned on Jesus’ fasting and prayer in the wilderness. We might take on typical Lenten practices like study, self-denial, or acts of mercy in a serious or even hopeful spirit, but joy? Still, when someone like Dietrich Bonhoeffer describes discipleship as joy, you pay attention.

The *Book of Order* has a lot to say about how we organize and govern ourselves as Presbyterians. But before it sets forth any governing structures, it lays a foundation of what it means to be part of the church: “Membership in the Church of Jesus Christ is a *joy* and a privilege” (G-1.0304, there’s that word!). It then offers this rich and challenging description of what it means to take part in God’s mission through this community of believers:

- proclaiming the good news in word and deed,
- taking part in the common life and worship of a congregation,
- lifting one another up in prayer, mutual concern, and active support,
- studying Scripture and the issues of Christian faith and life,
- supporting the ministry of the church through the giving of money, time, and talents,
- demonstrating a new quality of life within and through the church,
- responding to God’s activity in the world through service to others,
- living responsibly in the personal, family, vocational, political, cultural, and social relationships of life,
- working in the world for peace, justice, freedom, and human fulfillment, caring for God’s creation,
- participating in the governing responsibilities of the church, and
- reviewing and regularly evaluating the integrity of one’s membership and considering ways in which one’s participation in the worship and service of the church may be increased and made more meaningful.

As you consider all the ways of serving God, which of these inspires *joy* in you? I invite you, in this Lenten season, to pray and discern over where God may be calling you to deepen your joy and your commitment as a disciple of Jesus.

Grace and Peace,
Rev. David Baer, Stated Clerk