



EASTMINSTER PRESBYTERY

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Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

My thanks to the presbytery for sharing in a surprise celebration of my 60th birthday at the most recent meeting of Eastminster Presbytery on July 14. Special thanks to my wife Joan for orchestrating the surprise and providing the three cakes, to Administrative Assistant Marianne Lidstone for emails, arrangements, and balloons, and to so many of you who provided cards for the birthday card shower. It was a surprise! It was good fun! (One card assured me that I'm not as old as most of the planets or Napoleon!?)

As we Presbyterians grow older (I now qualify for a Golden Buckeye Card), I am frequently asked if I *feel* different. If you, like many fellow Presbyterians are 60 or over, you know the answer is yes and no. Yes, the joints do tend to stiffen a bit after sitting through long meetings. Yes, I take a handful of pills and supplements each morning. But, no, the spirit is more alive than ever. My sense of call to ministry has grown rather than diminished. The challenges that present themselves to the church are energizing. It's an exciting time to be Presbyterian, no matter what age one happens to be.

As the Presbyterian Church grows older in terms of our average age, we need to guard against getting older in spirit. Remember, those of us hovering around age 60 grew up in the 60's. We were the agents of change. The change was not always for the better, but we knew about how to dream. Then we weren't afraid of change. What's happened to us now? Consultant Gil Rendle tells us that people don't fear change, they fear loss. Change means some of the things that bring us security and comfort because of familiarity are likely to disappear. We like things the way they are, or perhaps the way they were, and we want to keep them.

Jesus had something to say about loss. According to Jesus, personal losses are sometimes a good thing. "For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it" (Mark 8:35). When we are willing to lose some things that we like or that make us feel comfortable for the sake of the Kingdom of God, these are good losses. All change is not good. But some change furthers God's Kingdom and glorifies God. It's time we lose resistance to the changes God is seeking to make in our churches and in our lives.

Wouldn't it surprise a lot of people if we sixty-somethings who were change agents in the 1960's decided we'd lead the way in bringing the good and necessary changes in the church that will further God's agenda? Now where did I put my peace medallion?

In Christ's service together,
Dan Schomer