

Southwood

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Dear Southwood Family,

I am writing you upon my return from this year's General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) to encourage you that you belong to a denomination that longs to be "faithful to the Scriptures, true to the Reformed faith, and obedient to the Great Commission." That motto shaped our gathering in Richmond last week, and we seem especially to be "Knit Together" (our theme for GA) in our commitment to that motto when we worship and pray together. The worship services and prayer gatherings were, as usual, a highlight of the week; I commend them all to you, especially Wednesday night's sermon by Rev. Ben Robertson on how Jesus exceeds our expectations and Thursday night's worship in Korean and English (<https://www.youtube.com/@pcageneralassembly1973/streams>). In case you didn't know, 10-15% of the members of the PCA are members of Korean-language churches here in America. I came home reminded that it's when we turn our hearts to God in worship and prayer that we most find ourselves tangibly united in love for Him, for one another, and for the world.

In a cultural moment where the Church in our nation (and almost every denomination) is shrinking numerically, the PCA is consistently growing again each year since Covid. This year nearly 5,000 covenant baptisms, nearly 5,000 covenant children professing faith in Christ, and nearly 5,000 profession of faith baptisms are joyful aspects of that growth ... Praise the Lord! We're focusing together on planting churches both locally and globally, and the stories of God's work would encourage your souls to hear. Work on college campuses across the country and world through RUF reaches 20,000 students every week. Pray for God's continued blessing for the sake of his kingdom and the PCA's continued faithfulness to his mission.

As with every denomination, there are matters where brothers and sisters who love one another and are united in worship, prayer, and mission honestly disagree. I thank God that presently in the PCA issues that are splitting other large denominations are not even being discussed or debated because of our shared commitment to the authority of God's Word in all of life and in every church. Nonetheless, it seems to be in these areas where we differ that we sometimes also struggle to love one another and practice the unity Jesus has purchased for us. No single issue sticks out this year, but I'm happy to talk with you about specific questions if you have them. Thank God for his mercy on our denomination, ask Him to bear with us patiently where we dishonor Him, and pray that we would grow in living out our commitment to his Word and mission in every way.

Grace and Peace,



Pastor Will