

**Report of Interim Executive Presbyter, Grand Canyon Presbytery
University Presbyterian Church, Tempe
June 5, 2010**

Madame Moderator

[It's a joy to be part of welcoming some new faces – already noted – to our leadership this day. Beth Kath has been with us now over a month and is already confirming our good hunches about her skills, interests and contributions to our life. And, it's a delight to meet and welcome Eric Heiser as our interim (excuse me), pro-tem Stated Clerk.

However, Madame Moderator, I don't believe Eric has been duly vetted by this body, and so, with your permission, I would like to ask two questions to clarify the depth of his knowledge of non-parliamentary procedure. Frankly, we all may know something about Roberts Rules of Order, but, Eric, would you explain to this body what a "point of irrelevant interaction" is? Finally, would you describe for us the difference between a "point of personal outrage" and a "point of grudge"?

Madame Moderator, I'd say we have an excellent Stated Clerk pro tem, and I would like the minutes to reflect that I did examine Mr. Heiser, as duly requested by Dick Coffelt.]

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Three things are happening today – in the meeting and around the edges that have especially caught my attention. Fairly significant matters. The recommendations we are considering regarding our sister congregation at Desert Hills is one of them. The reflection time on the Planning Committee's offering of a possible picture of our life together for the future is a second. And the division in our state over immigration reform is the third - and what we are called, as Christian people with differing opinions, to do – especially for those who may be pretty vulnerable. Three things – big ones, in my opinion.

All three of them beg a particular question: how much of ourselves are we willing to invest to offer a response that is foremost, faithful to our God and to one another? Are you willing to invest yourself in some humbling work as we consider the perspective of brothers and sisters who are feeling called to part company from us? Are you curious? Are you open to hearing? Are you willing to listen to someone else's disappointment, even if you don't share it? OR, are you willing to invest yourself in a planning process that is getting clearer about the ways - we hope - that God wants us to relate to each other – and to work together as a presbytery? Are you willing to put some time into what may feel like a head-trip journey – roll up your sleeves, share what is truly important from where you sit/stand/serve? AND, are you concerned that all five of our Hispanic congregations and fellowships have experienced decline in worship and a loss of leaders recently? Are you willing to get out of the comfort zone of your Sunday morning pew and worship with our Hispanic community – where even they are divided about

this immigration law – but I suspect are all united around a sadness, and a wariness, and a weariness. Are you willing to spend a Sunday morning worshipping our God in Spanish, because even if you can't speak or understand a word of this beautiful language, your presence communicates the love of Jesus Christ?

The convergence of these three things today – for me – is all about investment... and commitment on our part. How much of ourselves are we willing to invest in some challenging, controversial, difficult work?

I recently attended a meeting of the Board of Pensions – 24 hours when we presbytery and synod leaders heard from our national staff. And one of the most impressive presentations came from the Director of our Financial Investments – Judith Freyer. In it she reviewed something called the investment cycle which, she said, starts in optimism and moves through experiences that ride up – excitement, thrill, euphoria. When the ride eventually turns downward – as it must – it begins in anxiety and denial, followed by fear and panic. It bottoms out in depression and then, something happens that starts ride upward again with hope, then relief, and eventually a return to optimism. Judith talked about the last two years in our economy, but it got me to thinking that this cycle works pretty well for emotional investment, too – for the ways by which we invest ourselves in other matters, like the challenges before the church.

The interesting thing I learned is that the point of greatest risk is the time of optimism; and the moment of greatest opportunity is the moment of depression. It seems counter-intuitive (most of us think of investing when times are good; and most of us think of holding back when times seem troubled). Not so – remember that Microsoft began in the 1980's at the bottom of a previous economic downturn.

You and I know this – because we're people whose ancestors have understood that you don't run from hardship, you show the world where you have placed your hope. Think Jeremiah and a plot of land purchased during a pretty depressing moment for Israel.

So, how shall we respond to Desert Hills? How shall we engage an emerging vision for this Presbytery? How shall we accompany our Hispanic friends in the faith? Carpe diem, folks. Seize the moment, because God's doing some new things.

Some of which you're about to hear now from Glyndon Morris, Council Moderator. Blessings on our day, friends. And, as always, thanks for the time this morning.

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