

June 18, 2023  
Matthew 9:35-10:8  
“Sensing the Sending”  
The Rev. Emily Berman D’Andrea

This time of year has so much promise and possibility. With the end of the school year we heave the big sigh that we made it through. With the beginning of Summer comes the collective deep breath that there may yet be surprises and unknown possibilities on the horizon. It’s as though we are poised on the cusp of something, eager to be sent out to explore what that might be. Do you sense it? I imagine our graduating seniors sense the possibilities of what’s coming next.

Here at Potomac Presbyterian Church poised on the cusp of Summer we’re celebrating 60 years of mission and ministry in this place. Potomac Presbyterian Church turned 60 this year and so all Summer long we will be marking that milestone, because 60 years of God’s faithful people ministering through this church is something worth celebrating!

We’ll do this by looking back and looking ahead. In looking back we’ve invited those who’ve been a part of the community in the past to share their thoughts and memories over the coming months. In looking ahead we’ll listen to and invite your comments and ideas for what you’re excited about for the next chapter of mission and ministry at PPC.

Show Celebrate 60 slide

I did some looking back by reading the church's 20-year history that PPC church historian Lynn Bigler lovingly pulled together in 1983. That 20-year history is posted on our church website if you're interested in reading through it and I imagine some of you have read it and are familiar with it. From reading that history I learned that Potomac Presbyterian Church was founded and began on Sunday, Jan 27, 1963 when 27 adults (or 10 families) gathered at Potomac Elementary School (adjacent to where we are now) to hold the first worship service. On April 10 of that same year at the Potomac Elementary School the first Communion Service was held.

#### Show Timeline 1963 slide

On May 1, 1963 the church's organizing pastor arrived, Dr. James K. Leitch. When a Presbyterian Church is started an organizing pastor is appointed ordinarily by the Presbytery to help the church get up and running. There's then a period of discernment to determine the congregation's viability and whether the church may call and install a pastor.

Sept. 15, 1963 the first Sunday School classes were held and coffee hour was instituted. No wonder fellowship hour (as we call it today) is so sacred, it was **instituted** in the church's very first year and has been going on ever since!

The first youth group met at the home of Bill and Nancy Kyle in November 1963. The first Elder Board (or Session as we call it today) was elected and installed for a period of one year in December 1963.

### Remove Timeline 1963 slide

Four years later after construction on this building was completed the congregation held the first worship service in this sanctuary on March 26, 1967. One thing I learned from reading that history of the first 20 years is about the clergy snuffer that's above my head. Clergy snuffer is not the official name.

I learned, "because it was acoustically necessary, the architectural firm of Grigg, Wood and Browne located a 'sounding board' or tester to be hung over the chancel. Our tester, [the one above my head] hung in the First Methodist Church of Charlottesville, VA in the early 1900's. They no longer needed it when their church was renovated and so it was purchased for \$150 in 1967 to be used in this space."

### Show sounding board slide

I've had many people ask me about our sounding board or tester so in researching it further I discovered a third name, abat-voix which is French meaning abat (to beat down) and voix (voice). The literal translation is, a structure that beats down the voice. The structure is normally shaped to assist vocal projection, being formed as a parabolic reflector. Who knew?

For our purposes it's no longer necessary as we now have microphones but that's the history of this sounding board, tester, or abat-voix in case you were wondering, or in case you get asked about it.

Remove sounding board slide

One more fun fact about our history, in December the same year the church building was completed, 1967, *Steeple to People* was chosen as the name for the church newsletter. To this day, we call our church newsletter, *Steeple to People*.

As I said we are both looking back and looking ahead during this *Celebrate 60 Summer*. Looking ahead, so that you're aware of some of our 60<sup>th</sup> celebration events, we have invited former pastors and musicians to preach, play, or bring greetings. This gets kicked off today as the Rev. Dr. Kenda Grams will share video greetings in just a bit. On Sunday, July 2 during the 10am worship service, church member and professional jazz musician Bryan Eng will share his musical gifts with the congregation.

Show Bryan Eng Slide

Bryan grew up attending PPC and is now on tour across the country. Bryan and his jazz sextet will perform at Blues Alley in DC on July 17.

Remove Bryan Eng Slide

Pastor Emeritus, The Rev. Kerry Stoltzfus who served as Pastor from 1985-2009 will return to preach on Sunday, July 16. We will welcome back The Rev. Leslieanne Braunstein who served as Associate Pastor from 2003-2009 on Sunday, August 27. Our 60<sup>th</sup> Celebration will culminate on

the weekend of September 9-10 with “An evening with Marcus Hummon” as our Berger Lecturer.

Show Marcus Hummon slide

Marcus grew up singing in this congregation. He’s a singer, composer, and song writer, most recently you may know him as the composer of the score for *American Prophet* the musical based on the life of Frederick Douglass that was at Arena Stage last Summer. He is a Grammy winner and an inductee into Nashville’s songwriter hall of fame and will be with us in worship on Sunday, September 10 sharing his musical gifts that morning.

Remove Marcus Hummon slide

On the Sundays when we don’t have an invited guest, we’ll be sharing your thoughts on looking back and looking ahead during our *Celebrate 60 Summer*. Our technology specialist James Chhetree has been taking videos and will continue to share them so that you may reflect on something memorable and share what you’re looking forward to in the next 60 years. Contact James so your thoughts and ideas get heard and shared during our *Celebrate 60 Summer*.

I hope you can sense the excitement and also the ways that God has used the members of this congregation over the past 60 years to send them out to share in the mission and ministry of Jesus. This is ultimately what we’re celebrating this during our *Celebrate 60 Summer*, that connection of being sent out in Jesus’ name!

This correlates with what we read in Matthew's Gospel. In the scripture passage Preston read, we sense the excitement that builds as Jesus sends his followers OUT to share in his mission and ministry. All the senses are engaged for the sending. The passage begins with Jesus himself teaching, proclaiming the good news, curing diseases, and sicknesses. We read that Jesus has compassion (caring for ALL), as he senses that the people he's with are harassed and helpless. Jesus then summons others to do exactly what he's doing, giving authority to the disciples and those he's called, to cure sicknesses, and cast out demons. Next, Jesus summons his followers to find those who are lost and to do as he has done, proclaim good news, cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, and cast out demons. ***Caring for ALL with Faith, Hope, & Love.***

In an article from *Reformed Worship* magazine written by Allan and Lynn Likkel, they summarize what's happening in the Gospel passage. They write,

"There is a wonderful movement in this passage from Jesus' eyes to his heart to his hands. Or, to express it another way, from vision to mission to action."<sup>1</sup>

During our *Celebrate 60 Summer* we experience something similar to what we read in scripture, which is movement from vision to mission to action. Our founding members had a vision of what could transpire if a worshipping community was built and nurtured at the corner of Gary and River Roads. Those founding members pursued the vision and moved toward the mission of gathering for worship at the elementary school, meeting in homes for fellowship, raising

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<sup>1</sup> Allan & Lynn Likkel. "A Challenge for Today's Christians: Three Services for the Pentecost Season in Response to the Great Commission." [www.reformedworship.org](http://www.reformedworship.org)

funds for the building, and sharing their resources with those in need. The movement then to the action that Jesus describes--proclaim the good news, cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, and cast out demons, this the work has been bequeathed to us. This is where we pick up for the next sixty years.

What does action look like for us at PPC? I have 4 suggestions.

1. Working in the Earth Care giving garden where vegetables are grown to give away to those in our area who don't have easy access to fresh vegetables. All Summer we will weed & water the garden, pick vegetables, and deliver the produce to food hubs. The giving garden is 1 mile from the church. Next work days are June 19 & 21 from 9-11am. Sign up on the church website so that you can get notifications of future work days. All are welcome to help with this action.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> suggestion for action is to:

2. Attend the Juneteenth activities hosted by and supportive of the Scotland AME Zion Church restoration project. You may recall on April 23 the talk that Scotland Church member Chuck Williams gave to our adult education class. He reminded us of the history of the Scotland community being an area where freed slaves could own land in Montgomery County. Proceeds from the Juneteenth celebrations will go toward helping to restore the historic church that is uninhabitable due to flooding.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> suggestion for action is:

3. Prayer. Pray for those who need healing, health wholeness, community. Pray down the church prayer list. Write, call, pray for those who are on the list to let them know you've asked Jesus for healing for them. The prayer list is found on the hard copy bulletin.

The 4<sup>th</sup> suggestion for action is to:

4. Register to run in the July 4 Autism Speaks 5K or walk the mile to support finding a cure for Autism. Our church has helped to support this race for many years because members Susan and Dan Pereles have organized the race and in turn raised awareness about autism and funding for autism research.

Those are just 4 suggestions of what action might look like today.

In the history of the first 20 years of the church is written, "In the early days of the church Potomac was still very rural and horsey. On the Sundays when there were horse shows, either in Potomac or elsewhere, about half of the congregation would be missing. Rev. Jim Leitch is quoted, 'until I came to Potomac, I never quite realized just what horsepower was.'"

Though Potomac is not as rural and horsey as it was 60 years ago, we've still got formidable horsepower sending disciples into the mission field and moving people to action. There is a wonderful movement in the Matthew passage from Jesus' eyes to his heart to his hands. Or, to express it another way, from vision to mission to action. The call-to-action is for **each one of us!** What will you do with that call to action? What will I do? Or put another way how do you sense the sending?



Amen

Stand and sing Hymn #626 Praise I will Praise You Lord