

Why Stay in the PC(USA)?

Twelve Reasons:

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presbyterians for renewal

Mobilizing leaders of congregations within the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to be biblically faithful and missionally minded in their service to Jesus Christ.

Are We Listening for God?

by Moongil Cho, Pastor, Duraleigh Presbyterian Church, Raleigh, NC

One of the most important figures in biblical history is Elijah. He was important enough to be confused with Jesus by the Jews in the First Century, and powerful enough to be seen at the Transfiguration along with Moses. But, “Elijah was a human being like us,” (*James 5:17*) and he proved it. In spite of his great victory over the power of Baal on Mount Carmel, Elijah was deeply troubled by the threat of Jezebel. It was serious enough for him to willingly die; “Take my life, I am no better than my ancestors.” (*1 Kings 19:4*)

It is natural, from time to time, for those who are in Christian ministry to have the same feelings Elijah expressed. One moment, we are so energized that nothing seems to be impossible. But in the next moment, we can be deeply hurt and affected by challenges that grow to seem insurmountable.

What drives such a swing to a feeling of loneliness? A sense of powerlessness.

Elijah may have expected Jezebel to acknowledge the power of God after hearing about what happened at Mt. Carmel. On the contrary. She became more hostile than ever. Suddenly, Elijah felt alone and powerless. All he experienced at Mt. Carmel became meaningless. His hope was gone as well. Since Elijah was a faithful man, he would rather his life be taken by God than to face Jezebel. Elijah, the great prophet of God, pleaded for an honorable death.

And God answered, but in a very different way. In the middle of his darkness and hopelessness, Elijah heard the voice of God, carrying a new mission, sending him back the very way he came, but to anoint the kings of Aram and Israel as well as to anoint Elisha as his successor. (*1 Kings 19:15-16*) God’s voice in the midst of a troubled time brought more than a mission—it brought assurance. There were 7000 faithful people in Israel! His fear of loneliness now lifted, Elijah recovered and was able to continue his ministry.

We are at an important juncture in the history of the PC(USA). Our evangelical witness is strong. Yet many strong pastors and sessions are feeling very lonely, like Elijah. Some of the people who now feel alone have, in other times, led the denomination in reaffirming faithfulness. Now they are wondering if they should stay with the same denomination they have helped. They feel alone. They feel they have become a shrinking minority. They consider leaving for “greener pastures.”

But, let us, like Elijah, hear what God is trying to say. There are many more Christian brothers and sisters within the same denomination who are fervently praying to God than we might think. Elijah chose to be obedient by listening to God’s comforting and assuring voice and accepting God’s new mission and ministry. If those who are considering leaving actually leave the denomination, many like-minded brothers and sisters will still respect their faithfulness and courage. But, what about the particular mission God has intended for our denomination? Will the God-given mission of faithfulness be able to be fulfilled?

At times in my ministry, I have known what it feels like to think you are among a shrinking minority. But God will never leave his faithful people. God does extraordinary life-saving acts using an ordinary person like you, me, and Elijah. Have we heard the assuring voice of God?