

Paul B. Long, Jr.
Annual Report
June 2018

It has been now a full year since I have been without call. Without call doesn't mean without calling, and so I've continued regular ministry opportunities as they presented themselves, including preaching in churches without regular pastors, some hospital visitation and visitation of elderly folk (as friend and not as their pastor).

From June '17 to December '17, I averaged preaching perhaps twice a month, and since February 3-4 times a month. I have continued adjunct teaching at Belhaven, teaching two courses each semester. Frankly, in my Belhaven classes, there is more evangelistic and disciple opportunity than in most church settings. Few students are from Reformed backgrounds, and many are nominal or unbelievers. It is a wonderfully calling-satisfying ministry, except perhaps in levels of remuneration.

In January my father died, happily for him, a bit more bittersweet for us. God's hand was evident to us all through the process of dealing with his death, and there were times of sweet comfort and assurance, as well as times of great emotional fatigue as the responsibilities of the elder brother (and executor) fell to me. There are many history and mission memories to sort through, which is a daunting task; I'm getting better at discarding some of the relics.

One tid-bit might interest you. I found session minutes of Buffalo Presbyterian Church (WVa), dated 1864, and later. Apparently, an ancestor was the clerk and took records home. I contacted the PCUSA presbytery offices, and they were thrilled to get those session records for their history. Of course, if it were PCA, I guess it would be presbytery's fault for not reviewing those records in a timely manner.

A month after my dad's funeral, my father-in-law died in his sleep. Consequently, my mother-in-law's cancer surgery had to be postponed until just a couple weeks ago. That funeral was very different from my father's but also a sweet time of comfort and great praise and thanksgiving for the assurances of eternal life. All that to say, in addition to the stresses of being without call, this year has been an emotional roller-coaster.

I continue to apply for pastoral positions, in seven or eight states so far, but barely get a nibble. I'm tempted to shorten my C/V, removing all evidences that I might be over 40 and any mention of grandchildren. I wonder if "missionary" is a bit off-putting to search committees seeking a really nice, ordinary, same-culture pastor. In one year of seeking, I've found only one PCA church realizing the usefulness and wisdom of an experienced man to take them through the difficult transition between pastors. And that one church was in Wisconsin—just how far north is that?

RBI held an extremely helpful workshop for us pastors in our presbytery, and until it was about over I was the ONLY pastor present. Not sure what that says about the rest of you pastors, but it was very helpful for me. By God's grace we are surviving financially yet drawing on our savings every month. I would really like to be gainfully employed by end of summer, and yet I know the Lord had me here for this time. Settling my dad's estate has been far more time-consuming than I could have imagined, but I think there's light at the end of the tunnel. Hopefully his house will sell soon, and we can wind up most things by end of summer.

Thank you for your prayers during this time of transition.

Yours in Christ,
Paul