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Wow, it's August already! We hope you have enjoyed some vacation time to either get out of town or enjoy a staycation at home. Pressing pause on work and taking time to focus on rest, to recharge and refresh, and to enjoy laughter and the companionship of those you love is just so valuable. And renewing! We pray that our pastors are taking advantage of their study leave time as well. We spent the last week of our study leave (reading week) in a cozy cabin in Gatlinburg. We brought several books with us to read and even finished a few. We spent mornings and evenings on our deck, just gazing upon the beautiful Smoky Mountains. We watched the mist float above the trees drawing a zig-zag path, defining the creek beds below. We took afternoon naps. We played pool (there was a pool table in the cabin!)

We have enjoyed hosting the neighborhood luncheons once again this summer for our church pastors and validated ministers throughout the presbytery's four neighborhoods. There's no agenda, just a free lunch and fellowship with neighborhood colleagues. It has been a delight to reconnect with our pastors, and to carve out space for colleagues to meet one another, sometimes for the first time!

The newly created Committee for Social Justice met for the first time in July. This committee has been added in the revised Mission and Operations Manual, which Presbytery approved in May. We look forward to the conversations, discernment, and directions which will be coming from this faithful and energized group in the months to come.

As the summer months start to draw to a close and the time and attention of our churches shift toward fall programs, Advent and Christmas planning, stewardship and budget planning, we are praying for you all. As you assess and adapt to what it all really looks like now, identify what kind of challenges we are up against, and how Jesus is meeting us where we are, we are praying for you all. In the midst of these times of multiple, multi-layered unpredictable life transformations, may you discover the God who transforms death to life, despair to hope, empty to full, and broken to whole, where we are.

We look forward to visiting you and your churches! If you have a special event, a big celebration, a crucial conversation, or a desire to reinforce the shared mission and ministry which defines us as Presbyterians, let us know. We've got open dates on our calendars, and we would love to enjoy your company, share in your worship of God, hear more of your stories, and give thanks for the many, many blessings we enjoy together.

Robin & Ray Thomas