Director’s Message

Can’t you hear the hammers ringing? Can’t you hear the hammers ringing? Surely He died on Calvary Surely, Jesus died on Calvary

The sound of a steel hammer striking a large steel nail or stake is unique. Though electronic instruments and the advances of artificial intelligence now replicate and replace many sounds, musicians find it difficult, if not impossible, to reproduce this particular percussion.

The words at the opening of this letter come from gospel legend, Richard Smallwood’s 1987 song, Calvary. Smallwood solicits our imagination to recall the sound of the hammer driving nails into the hands and feet of Jesus on the day he was crucified.

The sound did not signal the end, but the final transfer of responsibility of sharing God’s love to the church.

Fifteen centuries later, Martin Luther, a law student turned Augustinian monk and heir of Bishop Augustine of Hippo, would strike another memorable nail. Luther was disturbed by what seemed to be a decaying church. Recent antics of the church included suggesting that people pay to get their deceased loved ones into heaven. The church was moving further and further from its purpose. So at midnight, on October 31, 1517, he nailed a copy of 95 theses to the door of Wittenberg Castle Church.

Luther’s theses challenged the church to reform, to return to prioritizing God’s love for people over property and profits and to embrace tasks that demonstrate that love accordingly.

This year, we celebrate the 506th anniversary of this call for reformation.

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) celebrates with its own sound; one that is ringing across the land. In a world where 1% of people control more wealth than all others of us combined, there is a call for our church to deepen our concern for the ever-increasing “least of these.”

It is a call to revitalize our congregations. Beyond physical growth, this call asks congregations to reimagine themselves as the hands and feet of Jesus without which the world will not see Him moving. It is a call to action, to heal our country’s two oldest and deepest infections of poverty and racism.

It is a call to end gender inequality. It is a call to address climate change which often plays a role in sustaining poverty. It is a call to address militarism which often plays a role in displays of racism and far too often allows guns in the hands of those who take the lives of our children and others we love.

Can’t you hear the thundering sound of justice rolling down like a mighty river and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream?

How shall we respond?

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