

## **Bearing Fruit for a New Day**

Eric Hoey

The other day I bought some beautiful apples. Being a former pastry chef, I know my fruit. At least, I thought I did.

I look for shape, color, freshness, and even the aroma in good fruit. What I failed to see in one of these beautiful apples was a little dark hole on the bottom of the apple. On this particular day, I pulled out a knife and sliced the gorgeous apple in half. To my surprise, I found a worm had eaten most of the core of the apple before I got to enjoy it! As I traced the path, the worm had entered the apple from the tiny little hole toward the bottom. Only time would tell before the apple showed signs of decay and that the core had been eaten away.

As I looked at the 2006 statistics for the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), I did not see anything surprisingly new. However, there is one statistic that simply broke my heart. Over the past three years, the number of adult baptisms had **decreased** from 10,459 in 2004 to 8,297 in 2006. The decline is approximately 1000 less per year. This tells me very clearly that Presbyterians **do not** know how to share the “Good News” of their faith and welcome people into our churches through baptism.

***I believe that this is the worm in the apple of the Presbyterian Church (USA).***

If we continue down this path of not being able to share our faith, the apple of the PC(USA) will soon fall apart!

We Presbyterians know better. We are told in Scripture, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matt. 28:19). Written in our own Constitution is this: “The Church is called to present the claims of Jesus Christ, leading persons to repentance, acceptance of him as Savior and Lord, and new life as his disciples” (G-3.0300 b). Have we ignored this essential part of our faith or are we too afraid of sharing the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ?

As the new Director of Evangelism and Church Growth for the General Assembly Council, I am committed to seeing every Presbyterian be **Inspired, Instructed, and Inter-connected** with each other, so that we can be more faithful to our task of evangelism. We must hear the call to the first of the six great ends of the church, “The proclamation of the gospel for the salvation of humankind” (G-1.0200).

I firmly believe that if every Presbyterian were able to have the skill and the confidence to share his or her faith to only one person in the next ten years, we could stop the decline of our denomination and start a new wave of bearing fruit in the name of Christ. If “each one” were to “reach one,” 2.4 million people would experience the life-changing transformation of Jesus Christ.

I hope we are up to the task.

Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day (Acts 2:41).

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