

A Message from the Moderator August 2026

“Prayers are being lifted for our Presbytery from Basel today!”



Grace and peace to you.

I am writing from Basel, Switzerland where I am attending a conference on Abraham Kuyper and Karl Barth. Being here has been an encouraging time with colleagues. It has also been a time that has challenged me to do a lot of remembering about our Reformed Tradition. And it has been a time that is calling me to be a better global neighbor.

Yesterday I presented a paper on Kuyper and Barth in South Africa.

At the center of my presentation was a prominent figure in South Africa's apartheid history, J. D. du Toit. Du Toit is known as a writer, poet, advocate for the Afrikaans language, and translator of the Bible into Afrikaans. A pastor and trained theologian, his work justifying apartheid using the Bible is one of the eight most significant scriptural defenses of the apartheid system. In it, he refers to God as the *Great Divider*. He uses the Creation account, the Tower of Babel, and other biblical passages to argue for the God's will for division. The first time I read his work, it was shocking. But I believe that recovering the works of du Toit and others, and speaking about these theologies of division is important so that we remember. Such theological justifications for fracturing communities have impacted continents, nations, and countless human bodies over centuries. And unfortunately, in many parts of the world, theologies of division continue.

Du Toit's rather shocking understanding of God stands in stark contrast to John Calvin. I journeyed to Geneva on Tuesday where I was able to see a three-panel mosaic about the persecution of the Huguenots that led to Calvin's forced migration from France to Switzerland. Calvin would remain in Geneva without Swiss citizenship for most of his life, actively contributing to his community. He would become a global leader in the Reformed Tradition. One of the conference historians noted that much of Switzerland's wealth has risen out of pharmaceuticals and banking – industries that tie back to early



Calvinism. He helped set up the sewer system in Geneva, established programs to assist refugees, and used gifts and talents to strengthen education, the legal system, business, health care, and overall community vitality.



Abraham Kuyper, Karl Barth, and Jean Calvin play a formative role in our Reformed Tradition. They were pastors, teachers, church leaders. But they were also ordinary people who chose to use their lives to glorify God, and to love and care for their neighbors.

As I walk the diverse streets of Basel, hearing French, German, Dutch, Arabic, and other languages, I am mindful of my global neighbors.

I am compelled to be a better global neighbor. And, I am also mindful of my neighbors in the Presbytery of the Miami Valley. I am mindful of my neighbors in Springfield where theologies of division continue to impact neighborhoods, families, children, and human bodies each day. I am mindful of my neighbors who walk with them in the midst of tremendous difficulty. Prayers are being lifted for our Presbytery from Basel today!

Finally, gathering with others for learning, refreshment and challenge this week has me looking forward to our Presbytery meeting on September 8th. Our communal life is such an important part of our witness as each part of the body contributes to our life together as a whole. I look forward to seeing you there!

Gratefully,

Diane

The Rev. Diane Ziegler

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