

# Presbytery Community Reflections

November 2009

Devotion for Sessions, Commissions, and Committees

Presbytery of the Western Reserve

Presented by *Future Directions Task Force*

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## Acts 16:9-15

Have you ever wondered what the apostle Paul said to Lydia and the other women he met by the river near Philippi? Scripture tells us that he sat down and spoke to the women and that Lydia opened her heart to listen eagerly to what Paul said. We know that afterward she and her household were so moved that they were baptized that day, but we are not told how Paul started the conversation. Did he begin by telling them about Jesus' death and resurrection and how it was women followers who first discovered Christ was risen? Or did he begin by sharing the story of how his own life had taken a whole new direction? Did he talk about ways he had seen Christ at work changing peoples' lives, their relationships and whole communities?

In an article in the Alban Institute's *Congregations* magazine, two pastors write that "faith sharing does not come easily to many of us, including people with a sincere and vibrant faith." They believe "that the stories from our lives of God's power and grace are gifts we have been given and that our best response to those gifts is to pass them on." They are convinced that we need practice talking about our faith and hearing others' stories.

When we hear a powerful story about God's activity in the life of someone we always let that person know we have been touched by what we heard ...that their story has strengthened our faith. And then we ask the most important question, "Who else needs to hear this?" <sup>1</sup>

1. Why do you think many people avoid talking about their understanding and experience of God? What kinds of barriers keep us from going deeper into conversations about faith, even with other members of our congregation or presbytery?
2. Are there ways in which your committee or congregation practices talking about faith? Or, about where and how God might be at work in your community?

<sup>1</sup> Heather Kirk-Davidoff and Nancy Wood, "Who Else Needs to Hear This? Turning Pastoral Visits into Opportunities for Faith Sharing," *Congregations*: Alban Institute, Spring 2009