

CREDO 101

One of the ordination vows that we make when we are ordained as ministers, elders, or deacons, and one that we make every time we are installed as a church's pastor or as active elders and/or deacons, is to "pray for and seek to serve the people with energy, intelligence, imagination, and love." Over time, however, many begin to run out of energy. One of the many ways a pastor, and sometimes elders, is able to rebuild their energy is through participation in the PCUSA's Board of Pensions' CREDO conferences.

and Late career, for those ordained for 10 or more years. Occasionally, there may be CREDO conferences for specific demographics and there have also been CREDOs for Mid-Council Leaders. Most recently, I attended the Recently Ordained CREDO which meant that all my fellow participants were in their first 5 years of ordained ministry.

One of the blessings of the Recently Ordained CREDO is that it is a two-year commitment. Last year, during my first week of CREDO I experienced

personal insights, developed an ever-evolving Rule of Life with practices that correspond to many of my core values, made a lot of new lifetime friends, and had conversations that I didn't know that I needed to have. As a group, we broke bread together, reaffirmed our baptisms, cried together and laughed together, oh did we laugh, and

bonded over shared experiences. We learned about the four-step lifecycle process identity, discernment, practice, and transformation, or IDPT for short. We learned that we were not alone in the struggles of ministry. All of us were dealing with similar issues in our own respective contexts. And we were reassured that we were enough.

I recently returned from my second week of CREDO. During this second week, what was learned in our first year was reinforced. We re-looked at our Rules of Life, updating them as necessary. There were a lot of laughs and a lot of crying; plenty of tissues were used. The joy of the Recently Ordained CREDO is that you are with the same cohort both years, so it was a

CREDO is a conference that is focused on pastors' wholeness and wellbeing. The mission of CREDO is "to provide opportunities for clergy to examine significant areas of their lives and to discern prayerfully the future direction of their vocation as they respond to God's call in a lifelong process of practice and discernment." Each conference is led by a team of experienced faculty who guide participants in a visioning and discernment process through five key areas of well-being: spiritual, vocational, physical, emotional, and financial health. There are three different types of CREDO conferences that are regularly offered: Recently ordained, for ministers ordained for fewer than 5 years; Mid-career, for those ordained for 5 or more years;



blessing to reconnect with all the friends that I had made last year. There were times, especially when we were watching the *Barbie* movie or when some broke out into singing “Part of Your World” from *The Little Mermaid*, that I forgot we were all pastors. We’re already making plans of how we can get together next year. Overall, this second week was fun, restful, and also soul-wrenching at times. I will forever be grateful for the opportunity that I had to go to CREDO.

To all my minister colleagues in the Presbytery, if you get an invitation to attend a CREDO conference, act on it immediately. You won’t regret it.

And for all who are in various stages of ministry, lay or ordained, consider exploring the visioning and discernment process in the five key areas of well-being: spiritual, vocational, physical, emotional, and financial health. Embrace your place in the lifecycle process of identity, discernment, practice, and transformation. Trust that you are not alone in the struggles of ministry as we are probably dealing with similar issues in our own respective contexts. And rest assured—you are enough.

If you want to hear more about my CREDO experience, don’t hesitate to reach out to me.

—Evan Wildhack, *Big Picture Team Convener*
& pastor at Corfu Presbyterian