



FROM THE PASTOR

Pastor's Ponderings ...

The Presbyterian Outlook is an independent bi-weekly news magazine on the life and happenings of the Presbyterian Church (USA). There are always several copies available for your reading pleasure on the table under the window in the parlor. It provides perhaps the most thorough and non-partisan reporting about the workings of our denomination, as well as some wonderful thought-provoking articles submitted by readers. The following article was written by Matthew A. Rich, pastor of First PC, Lumberton, NC.

It is hard to imagine that it's only happened 20 times in the 135-year history of major league baseball. A perfect game. No hits, no walks, no hit batsmen, no errors.

But it happened twice in May. On May 9, Dallas Braden of the Oakland A's and on May 20, Ron Halladay of the Philadelphia Phillies each pitched a perfect game.

And it almost happened a third time on June 2.

Armando Galarraga of the Detroit Tigers had been perfect. Twenty-six Cleveland Indians had come to the plate and twenty-six had returned to the dugout. Only one out

remained. The batter came to the plate. The first pitch, strike. The next, a ball. The third, a groundball to the first baseman. Galarraga left the pitcher's mound to cover first. His teammate threw him the ball, he caught with his glove, he stepped on first base, and he turned ready to celebrate. History, a perfect game.

But the umpire called the batter safe. Replay after replay showed the runner was out. It was a bad call. But the umpire called him safe and Galarraga's perfect game became a one-hitter.

The umpire, Jim Joyce, made a rare move and went to the Tigers' locker room after the game to apologize to Galarraga. The young pitcher responded with class and grace. While Galarraga's name has not been added to the list of those who have pitched a perfect game, I'm sure that I'll be telling my grandchildren about that play.

Those of us who lead congregations need to know something else about that almost perfect game. If you look at each defensive play, you'll see that all nine players for the Tigers recorded an out in that game. It takes nine players all working together, each using their own gifts and talents, to create a perfect game.

As congregational leaders we like to quote Paul's words about spiritual gifts: *But each of us was given grace according to the measure of Christ's gift.*

...The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers. Then we say, "Christ has given me a gift and called me to this place of leadership, so no need for a committee, even if I am chairing one. No need to involve the rest of the congregation. I'm gifted and I'll do it all myself."

It's as if Braden, Halladay, or Galarraga had said, "In order to pitch a perfect game, I need to strike out every batter. If someone hits the ball, I must field it myself and get the batter out. No need for teammates, I can do it all myself."

It's a crazy idea on a baseball field, and it's a crazy idea in the church too.

God calls particular individuals to leadership in the church, but God doesn't call leaders to do it all by themselves. If we keep reading Paul's words we find that leaders are *to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ*. So God both gifts and calls pastors, elders, and deacons in the church so they might help other Christians align their lives according to what God is doing in the world. And as we all do that, we build up the body of Christ.

Start by finding some good teammates. Trust them. God has trusted you.

I pray that those of you who are

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