

To: The Sessions and Pastors of Yellowstone Presbytery  
Date: September 10, 2008  
From: The Chairs of Vision Team for Yellowstone Presbytery  
Ric Tieman, Elder First Presbyterian, Bozeman  
Debbie Blackburn, Elder Springhill Church, Belgrade

Can you imagine a church in which both leaders and members are inspired and united by a vision of God's mission for God's church in the community and world, and not content simply to be consumers of a church's Sunday morning programs?

Can you imagine a church that is able not only to talk about God's mission and purpose, but is also able to organize and concretely move toward realizing that vision?

Can you imagine a church that is not content to be a Sunday gathering of strangers but interacts and learns to become a committed community of Christ-followers, open to all?

Can you imagine a church that measures its health first of all not by its budgetary or membership goals or numbers, but by the *evidence* of the fruit of the Spirit - love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, and self-control?

The challenge for today's church is to be open to the power and to the promise of God's vision of the future. Without a vision, we are going nowhere. "A vision initiates movement. It involves passion, a deep emotional commitment to new possibilities. Vision energizes the church. A compelling vision will challenge modes of worship and practices of ministry; vision will draw the church toward a new future....Vision serves the church like the North Star serves the explorer."

We would like for you to join with us and the churches of Yellowstone Presbytery as *together* we seek to discern God's vision for *this* Presbytery. We believe that God has called us to be equipped and sent to support each other as we join Christ in His ministry and mission with one another for the world God loves. The May meeting of Presbytery said clearly that anyone and everyone should have input into this process. So the Presbytery Council has set aside 2009 as a time for seeking clarity about where God might be leading Yellowstone Presbytery in the future. How can we effectively do ministry together to reach and serve Montana and the world with the Gospel and love of Christ? How do we best align ourselves and resources to *live* God's dream for us with greatly reduced income (due to the loss of Partnership Grants from the Synod & national church)?

In order to prepare for the Presbytery meeting in November (Nov 7-8 in West Yellowstone), we would like for sessions to spend 20-30 minutes at their September and/or October meetings reflecting on the Scripture study outlined on the 2<sup>nd</sup> page. This will begin our process as Christ's body of discerning God's vision, with Rev. Marianne Rhebergen. Secondly, please send your elder commissioner to the November Presbytery meeting with your input. If possible, consider selecting an alternate commissioner and encouraging this person to also attend the meeting. (They will have a voice but not a vote.)

If you would like to have one of us, or George or Kathy, come to help you with this, we'll try to be available as our schedules allow. Please be thinking about whether you have someone on your session or in your congregation who might be gifted in visioning and leadership to join our Vision Team as we'll be seeking to flesh out our listening, discerning group at the November meeting. Questions? Contact us at: [rtieman@jhoe.com](mailto:rtieman@jhoe.com), [DEB4CATS@aol.com](mailto:DEB4CATS@aol.com).

## **Interactive Bible Study for Sessions of Yellowstone Presbytery**

**Introduction:** This study is an exercise called “Dwelling in the Word.” There are three parts...

1. Pray and Read the text aloud slowly. Let people reflect for several minutes.
2. Answer the following questions in conversation as a group. (Use Newsprint, take notes.)
3. Decide what input you would like your elder commissioner to share with the rest of us at Presbytery on November 7-8. Pray for Christ’s church – locally, presbytery, nation.

**Step 1:** Prayer, Reading and Dwelling in the Word.... Acts 6:1-7

**Background:** Jesus Christ has died, risen and ascended into heaven. The disciples have received the Holy Spirit at Pentecost in Jerusalem. The opposition to the early church and to the Gospel message is mounting. Yet the church is growing quickly, powerfully...

**Acts 6:1-7** (TNIV)

- 1) In those days when the number of disciples was increasing, the Hellenistic Jews among them complained against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of the food. 2) So the twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, “It is not right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables. 3) Brothers and sisters, choose twelve men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit of wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them 4) and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word.”
- 5) This proposal pleased the whole group. They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit; also Philip, Procurus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicholas from Antioch, a convert to Judaism. 6) They presented them to the Apostles, who prayed and laid hands on them. 7) So the word of God Spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith.

**Step 2:** Listening to the Word through the text and brothers and sisters. Probing Questions:

- 1) What struck you in this passage? An idea, an action, a word or phrase? Explain why?
- 2) What is God up to in this text of the Bible?
- 3) What is God up to among us?

**Step 3:** What input are you led to share with our Presbytery through your commissioner? Pray for Christ’s church – locally, presbytery, nation.