

Leadership Cabinet

April 8, 2025

Yellowstone Presbytery Leadership Cabinet met via Zoom for its scheduled meeting on Tuesday, April 8, 2025, beginning at 1:00 p.m.

Cabinet members present:

RE Melissa Bell
MWS Ashley Birk
RE Julie Boksich
RE Charlie Brown
MWS Karolee Larson
MWS Jamie Schmeling
MWS Dave Thompson, Moderator

Members excused:

None

Others present:

Treasurer Ric Tieman (1:25)
General Presbyter Kathy Goodrich
Stated Clerk Caroline Fleming

1. **Opening:** Moderator Dave Thompson called the meeting to order at 1:10p.m. with prayer.
2. **Dwelling in the Word:** Mark 11:1-11 – Jesus’s triumphal entry. *They allowed them to take it – without any questions. *Jesus is already ahead of them; He goes before them; giving insight, wisdom, and words. **The Lord needs it* – God needs things, wants things from us – even when we couldn’t possibly use anything we have. *The colt had never been ridden – “a wild ride!” (trained and untrained horses plus the noise of the crowd) * Creator of universe needs it; colt knows it is the creator –connection to visions of Balaam’s donkey and what it can see. *Connection to Romans 8:28 (NT Wright) – God is doing this WITH us – God inviting us to be part of the redemptive work. Question: in times like we are experiencing now, what can I/we do? Jamie prayed us to the next part of the meeting.
3. **Spirit Sightings & Prayer Concerns:** Depressed; **Melissa** – healing & sad with death of nephew; had lunch with a friend who asked if they could attend church with her; physical therapist sent her flowers; blessed by people God has put in her life. **Julie** was with us on zoom – shared about the people at the hospital who have been present with her; she sings and speaks of many Holy Spirit moments; the staff at the hospital have been trained to build relationship, this is not good news; yet everyone says you are such a nice person.” Wants to keep finding joy and pointing to Jesus. Granddaughter is a hospice nurse who never went to church and is now talking about Jesus – continued prayer; **Jack & Caroline;** Give thanks for the Meadowlarks that are out. **Ashley** recovering from a fall & her dog Koda. **Karolee:** Redeem our Routines. Beautiful Poem read by Ashley. **Jamie & Kathy** –sharing about the activity of the Spirit at the Installation service – joyous celebration! **Jamie** - and after Sunday’s worship – “I’m coming again and bringing my friends;” **Caroline** – Jack does have cancer which can receive treatment to prolong life; have a great doctor; must wait until Jack is healed from both surgeries before proceeding with any treatment.
4. **Quorum:** A quorum was declared present.
5. **Vision Statement:** The Presbytery Vision Statement was read by Melissa.
6. **General Presbyter’s Report:** (Attachment A):Psalmist would tell us to keep allowing wonder and awe to well up from within us which parallels some recent brain research that states:

“when you feel awe – there is a connection to something larger than us” – which we know is God and Godself. Kathy shared some research that was completed from 2018 – 2024 about the increase of churchgoing interest and religious interest among 18 – 24-year-old males! Experience of people saying, “I’m looking for community... connection...just need something.” *What do we need to be and / or be aware of when these people find us – or to help them find us?* What is the Spirit calling us to do? Rejoicing with those who rejoice and Weeping with those who weep... The church was never intended to be efficient; rather it is to be like Jesus.

Prayer Partners & Presbytery (Ephesians 3) – making connections, building relationships...providential and comforting; lovely gift and cultivation of good things.

Question: sense of people being ‘overloaded’ – what do we need to do?

7. **2-minute break**...The Jesus with skin on is much needed in all that we are living...hugs etc.
8. **Approve February Minutes** (spelling of Charlie’s name @ no. 3; no 17. Spelling there) The minutes of the February 11 meeting were reviewed.
 - **Action:** A motion was made and seconded to approve the minutes of the February 11th meeting of Leadership Cabinet. The motion passed.
9. **Leadership Retreat discussion:** planned for May 29 (the day before presbytery). NOON Start with Lunch; program start at 1pm?
Conversation. Let’s do it – Sabbath together. Spiritual practices together. Play and fellowship. “Founder’s Day Lecture – Dr. Carol Bechtel” (link on youtube.)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mds11n5nl-0>
Show of hands to have this retreat: yes (8), middle (1), abstain (1)
Planning – food, gathering, activities & flow of the day, etc. – Kathy, Julie, Jamie
Hospitality – food / party – Kathy, Caroline, Dave, Melissa
Sabbath Rhythms – visions, contemplative prayer, prayer beads, novel, poetry / writing
10. **March Presbytery Meeting:** Feedback - *Davis’s stopped Kathy twice to express their thanks about how they were celebrated!!! Almost speechless. Beautiful for them to be seen and celebrated. Appreciated the “Practicing the Way” book gift and practice. Bummer about the video stuff not working. Recommendation about test run of videos online for people with technology in advance. What can we do with the Book, Practicing the Way, again at this next presbytery meeting to continue going forward? Sandwich making was incredible. The Axe throwing was out of this world! A great way to connect & build relationships. Recommendation about having more conversations about the amendments – more time to read, talk, and discern is helpful. Education around amendments is important. Stopping for prayer. Taking breaks. Idea about helping talk about complex matters – idea of ELCA synod approach with cards (color for yes, color for no, color for neutral / questions). Conversation about process and preparation for consideration of these overtures. Idea: do it like we do with any changes to our standing rules -with two readings, small group time for discussion and prayer. Also, an option for someone to present a bit about ‘for’ and a bit about ‘opposed’.
11. **May Presbytery Meeting Prep:** at present, a very short meeting. (May 30) with dinner and fun option on Thursday night. Friday meeting starts at 9:30AM gather; 10AM start; 4PM Finish. Christine Long (BOP) & Sandra Moon (Pres. Foundation) will be present. Camp update (Sarah) and Triennium Update (Dave); TEAM: Kathy, Caroline, Deb (office admin), Ashley (aux).

support), Melissa, Julie – This team will be responsible for the Theme, Docket, interface with the church and such including adding something in from the Practicing the Way.

12. **Camping & Youth Update:** Jamie is pastor for Explorer week.

Triennium – Mission stuff & sightseeing (Dave organizing)

13. **PMT Update:** with the Angst, some of our churches get easily anxious about what is going on in the world and being without a pastor – intense anger and anxiety has warped things which leads to difficulty and energy-zapping, grief – which all gets magnified and pushed on PMT and presbytery. PLEASE PRAY. THE ROAD IS HARD.

14. **RepNom** – no update has been received as of this moment. They did meet in Kathy's off time. She has nothing to report as she was not present.

15. **Task Force** – no update yet. Kathy meets with Sarah (Tunell) later today.

16. **Treasurer's Report & Website Update:** January and February have been received from the accountant. She recreated January 2025 to correct some additional 2024 invoices.

Bowman Fund – received verification of use from St. Timothy's. Where does this documentation go for our practices? Does this get included in the Treasurer's report for the next presbytery meeting? Ric will add in his report for May meeting for purposes of documentation.

Calendar Item – question for Caroline. Need to find another meeting date.

Jamie thanked Ric for adding a special designated line item to make donations to the Linda Hofer fund.

Need to remind folk about available funds for use in the presbytery.

Encourage and Equip Grant for zoom / computers? Request received from the Dillon church.

17. **Clerk's Report** – reported overture votes. Working on completing presbytery minutes.

Prepping a letter for Presbytery churches concerning the two new polices that were added in accordance with the book of order and the need for churches to have these also. **Need to hold our corporate meeting so we can report this to the Montana Secretary of State. This report is due April 15.**

18. **Motion to recess to Corporation meeting was made, seconded, and passed.**

President: Melissa Bell, Moderator of Presbytery

VP: Dave Thompson, Moderator of LC

Secretary: Caroline, Clerk

Treasurer: Ric Tieman

***Ric – Requested to make the change of our formal business name with the Secretary of State.

Motion & seconded to approved the above as officers; Passed.

Motion & seconded to adjourn. Motion passed.

19. **Announcements:** Future LC Meeting May 13: 1-3:30 (Higher Ed Grant discussion)
Presbytery Meeting May 30 @ FPC Bozeman

20. **Motion to adjourn with Prayer**, Seconded & Passed. Charlie prayed.

Respectfully submitted

Jamie Schmeling, Acting Clerk

Leadership Cabinet Action Items		
Responsible Person(s)	Action Item	Due Date
Ongoing Action Items		
Personnel committee	Update Presbytery's Personnel Policy	Ongoing
Jamie, Dave, Caroline	Create a monthly presbytery newsletter to communicate regularly with our churches and pastors.	No date set
LC members	Seek people with a passion for earth care who would work with St. Andrew in bringing concerns/ideas to LC and presbytery	Ongoing
Caroline	Create and send information on mission pledges and where the money goes to churches	No timeline
LC members	Think about possible equipping topics including how to recognize gifts in others and help them share those gifts, doing evangelism that builds on Ron Pyle's storytelling workshop.	Ongoing
Ric	Work with Caroline Fleming, teaching them to post items on the website.	ASAP
All Members	Send Kathy stories of spirit sightings	As they arise
New Action Items		
Kathy, Jamie, Julie	Plan May 29 presbytery retreat	Before 5/13
Kathy, Caroline, Dave, Melissa	Plan food for the May 29 retreat	Before 5/13
Melissa, Julie, Ashley, Kathy, Caroline	Plan May 30 presbytery meeting	Before 5/13
Ric	Conduct training on saving documents to the cloud	May 22
Caroline	Report Corporate officers to Secretary of State	By 4/15
Caroline	Contact Secretary of State office to change corporate name	ASAP

General Presbytery Report to Leadership Cabinet April 8, 2025 Kathy Goodrich

"A baby is God's opinion that life should go on." Carl Sandburg

"Spring is nature's way of saying, 'Let's have a party!'" – Robin Williams

Ferris Bueller's quip is an invitation full of theological wisdom,

"Life moves pretty fast. If you don't stop and look around once in a while, you could miss it."

And, I would expand, as the Psalmists do, allow wonder and awe to well up in your soul for they literally transform you, just as God designed! Neuroscience reveals that: awe is calming and centering, and one feels more connected to others, and to "something larger". [*Podcast - The Science of Awe: Why Wonder Boosts Happiness, Health and Connection, Dr. Daniel Stickler with Dacher Keltner, PhD by Qualia.]

Awe and Wonder - I am praying for myself, our leaders and churches that we will all be stopping to:

1. look, to savor God's gifts of beauty, answered prayers, new life both *human* (Caroline's great grandson) and *spiritual*- spiritually curious and hungry folks.

There's been a 5-fold increase, 2018 – 2024, in churchgoing and religious interest among 18-24 year old males in England and Wales!! [Bible Society UK's research, on Justin Brierly podcast; Rev. Steve Foster first hand stories, St. Aldate's Church, Oxford, UK.] In the last 2 months I have personally been in 3 conversations with folks 25-40 ish who showed up at a PCUSA church, "Seeking community...wanting to connect...I was raised in the church and think I need something...feeling alone" in life and or grief.

"I believe we're at a turning of the tide moment in the West. But will the church be ready to receive the meaning seekers returning on the tide?" Justin Brierly. What may the Spirit be saying, inviting us to explore, reconsider, do and be?

Published 2 weeks ago, the *Future-Focused Church: Leading through Change, Engaging the Next Generation, and Building a More Diverse Tomorrow* by Powell, Mulder & Chang (USA) contains up to date research and ideas for a wide range of churches who desire to explore this.

2. Rejoice with those who rejoice as with Jamie and the Miles City Church at the glorious celebration this last weekend among other joys and signs of life; new faces at presbytery and dinner & fellowship, laughter and axe throwing – Thank you, again, Karolee. Other joys, answered prayers?

3. And we are called to weep with, pray with and for those who weep, grieve, struggle. Right now, that is many of us on LC, PMT, RepNom, and others across the presbytery.

I am praying we may have Jesus's "people eyes", as is portrayed in the video, with curious compassionate listening and love with skin on to each other on LC & presbytery, in our churches, and communities. Are we people and churches who enable others to feel seen, heard, loved?

Amidst the shifts, changes, griefs, losses and resulting chaos, uncertainty, the intensity of feelings is often overflowing in anger and anxiety, harming people, our churches, and leaders in our presbytery who have a wide range of needs and challenges in leaders, pastors and churches .

Prayer – Prayer is not merely preparation for the work, prayer IS the work as several notable leaders have said over the centuries. Eugene Peterson in *Earth and Altar*, wrote that “Prayer is political action. Prayer is social energy. Prayer is public good.”

Jesus in John 15, explaining how his apprentices/disciples were to abide in him, was clear that “...If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.” Vs. 5.

Eph 3 prayer and prayer partners

Presbytery meeting– I have received a great deal of thanks and appreciation for a wide range of presbytery. The widest range of elders and pastors have mentioned how they appreciated Practicing the Way and are using it, finished the book or exploring how they and others might use it.

PMT, LC, Rep Nom, Synod - In the time since presbytery I have followed up on an enormous range things and pastoral and process matters. There is much more than any person, even with more hours could get to. PMT is exploring tapping some gifts in new ways to help as it is stretched thin.

A theme _ Overload, Adversity, illness and suffering Testing - to reflect on, what may the Holy Spirit be saying

The sheer volume of adversity many are experiencing for a wide range of reasons is substantial right now. It is impacting me and staff and PMT and RepNom.

Ric commented that he is experiencing many being overloaded. And I know I am one of those who is overloaded. Personnel has asked that I seek to continue to empower and consult with our leaders and keep equipping them to understand and be able to do more and more. I am, but it is labor intensive, as all discipleship is. And, quite a few who have been equipped then leave, or their lives sideline them for a range of reasons. So, with fewer people, fewer people with the experience or bandwidth or skills to understand a situation, or refer something to, some unable to follow through and do what they have indicate they will or hope they can do, there are fewer who recall their training or refer to documents, i.e. search processes or what the BOO says. Thus, my work and that of PMT in particular is VERY complex and difficult. to be, has grown exponentially. I have heard of this in other presbyteries and the synod as well.