

*[Blessed] are those who do not follow the advice of the wicked, or take the path that sinners tread, or sit in the seat of scoffers; but their delight is in the law of the Lord, and his law they meditate (chew) day and night. They are like trees planted by streams of water, which yield their fruit in its season, and their leaves do not wither. In all that they do, they prosper.” (Ps. 1 is intro and theme for the entire Psalter) Ps. 1: 1-3, NRSV*

*Abide in me[Jesus] as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing.” John 15:4,5*

Pause and prayerfully reflect on these scriptures and questions as individuals, as congregations, as presbytery. Be honest and specific. Note the similarities to the 3 parts of our Yellowstone vision statement.

1. Are we sinking our roots along the streams of *Christ's* living water? What false 'streams' compete or pretend to provide water?
2. How are we cultivating DEEP spiritual root systems in the Word – living and written – and in the spiritual practices/disciplines to grow as disciples and disciple communities?
3. Are we really bearing fruit – in ongoing transformation into the likeness of Christ, in joining in Christ's mission in changing times and circumstances?

**Emerging Mission in the New Structure:** The new structure presented that the mission and ministry of the presbytery would emerge in the clusters and in new task forces under the umbrella of the Leadership Cabinet, which was responsible for keeping us focused on our vision, sowing a vision for mission.

**Mission and Ministry in the Clusters:** We now have four strong clergy clusters – Butte, White Sulphur, Billings and Miles City. Each cluster is dwelling in the word, praying with and for one another, deepening relationships, and exploring God's calling for their cluster or beyond. (Note particular focus on our vision & LC goals 2 & 3)

- 1) The White Sulphur Springs has become the locus for prayer ministry and spiritual formation ministry, and has both lay and clergy membership. Beginning to discuss future retreat offerings for the cluster churches and the presbytery. Debbie Funke is coordinator. Next meeting: April 24.
- 2) The Billings Cluster had 11 clergy in attendance at the March meeting. Trustful sharing and support is occurring in this group, but there are growing pains. Next meeting: April 30; Mary Davis is coordinator.
- 3) The Miles City Cluster has yet to pick a theme to offer. But there is a clear need for pastor support in eastern Montana. Pastors from other denominations are attending. Neva Rathbun is coordinator; met April 9.
- 4) The Butte Cluster: This group wrestles deeply with the issues of the day. They are concerned for the cohesion of the presbytery and for justice. Rusty Craig is coordinator; next meeting is April 30.
- 5) Positives of the clusters
  - a) Growing commitment to the groups, meetings and each other in the group.
  - b) Spiritual Growth and formation of those involved in this mutual discipleship.
  - c) The emerging training retreat format in partnership with the presbytery.
  - d) Regularly meeting now. All seem to be going to a new level.
  - e) Some mentoring is happening in a way that nips potential PMT problems in the bud.
  - f) Increased connections, communications and hopefully collaborations between pastors in regions.

**Mission in Task Forces:**

- 1) Peacemaking Fellowship – After a year of discerning, A peacemaking fellowship emerged out of this year's Convocation. Freeman McCall, Jody McDevitt and Merry Lee Hooks are the leaders.
- 2) To further live into our vision, let's be asking what needs we are discerning to help the presbytery develop disciplemaking leaders, congregations, and ministries, who join in Christ's mission. Areas in which people have already expressed need or interest:

- a. College/Campus ministry – Ukirk. Rev. Dr. Jason Santos, amazing new PCUSA Associate for Collegiate Ministries see - <https://www.pcusa.org/news/2014/8/28/jason-brian-santos-head-pcusas-collegiate-ministri/>
- b. 1001 – New Worshipping Communities. 3-7-15 Presbytery voted to explore and moved towards starting at least 1 NWC in YP in the next year, (motion by Jack Bell)
- c. Nurturing Young Disciples-Kathy continues to hear stories, receive requests from pastors & congregational leaders for resourcing and/or consulting for better, more fruitful ministry in this area.
- d. Strengthening, equipping rural congregations in discipling, missional ministry. See DREAM
- e. Mission, theme for 2015 presbytery meetings, 3-15 equipping led by Jody, presentation and solid groundwork laid with fruitful group work and preliminary sharing in clusters . ?? Talk with Jack Bell who expressed willingness to work with a task force to explore & develop Mission in YP.

**PMT (formerly CoM)** We continue to be involved in pastoring pastors and resourcing PMT & churches, particularly those in pastoral transition or some contention (See ongoing communications from PMT):

- a) Churches searching for pastors – **Terry** is actively searching; **Jordan** has a temporary Lutheran CRE, Jeff Bolstadt, to whom the session is considering extending a long-term contract.
- b) Churches wrestling with their relationship to the denomination: **Stanford and Geyser**. The Stanford Church has not voted to enter the discernment process. PMT is working closely with these churches. We should know more soon. George will attend the Stanford session meeting on Sunday, April 12.
- c) Following the presbytery’s vote not to concur with **Amendment 14-F** and the national vote of presbyteries to concur, the reaction of presbytery churches has been quiet. No letter has been sent from the presbytery leadership to help with interpreting the ramifications of the vote. Some sessions have discussed their response and developed policies.
- d) Church closing this year: **Roy**. The Presbytery voted to close the Roy Church. The church was to close as a PCUSA church on March 31, 2015. Some real estate details are still being hammered out. Members wishing to remain PCUSA will transfer their membership to FPC Lewistown.
- e) We have been confidentially pastoring pastors and their family members & preaching in congregations.
- f) Board of Pensions Regional Gathering in San Diego, CA, April 22-23. David Thompson and Ron Hanson will represent us. We should ask them to report at the June Presbytery meeting, coordinating with Kevin.

The REQUIRED Three-Year Boundary Training offered 10-2 p.m. ,May 16 in Billings and 23 in Bozeman. Mark Bassingthwaighe, from FPC, Billings, is an attorney who travels extensively conducting trainings on ethics and misconduct around the nation. Every clergy and CRE in Yellowstone Presbytery is REQUIRED to have such training every 3 years so Yellowstone Presbytery, with a gift from a church or 2, is offering this FREE for Yellowstone pastors and CRE’s. **Since ALL congregations need to train their leaders and volunteers, especially with minors, NOTE NEW group rates for all non-clergy/CRE’s – groups of 2-4 : \$10 each, Group 5+: \$5 per pserson.** Brochure & reg. info is posted on our presbytery’s homepage. The registration as of April 9 is Billings 14 and Bozeman 7.

**Camping and Youth:** This continues to be a vibrant, discipling and outreach mission of the presbytery through this Ministry Team. We are planning and promoting camp for 2015. Please check the presbytery website for our July dates, share info in congregations, pray and ask what kids outside the church you might send!

1. Curt Kochner and Susan Thomas have given heavily to this ministry in countless ways. Many Thanks!
2. *Summer Camp Staff:* This year we have hired nine college-aged staff, for the most mature staff we have had in years. Very grateful and excited and we will be intentionally adding a component for leadership training for them.
3. The church in the northern section of the presbytery of Wyoming have decided to ask Wyoming Presbytery for permission to conduct camp there for the next five years, so Wyoming presbytery will not be sending us any campers from a closing camp.

4. The annual Winter Ski Retreat (FPC Butte & Discovery Ski) was held on March 13-15 at the Butte Church. George helped organize the weekend and was one of the speakers. Over forty folks attended.

**The Emerging Partnership with Whitworth University for Rural Ministry** Whitworth is in conversation with us (Kathy and George and the Presbytery) about piloting the redevelopment of their Rural Ministry Initiative and serving as their satellite in Montana, others in WA. It was wonderful to have Terry McGonigal with us for informal conversations and to speak and preach at our March Presbytery meeting. The time and people meant a great deal to him as well. Further details will be available after Kathy and George's meetings April 15.

1. We learned the end of January that our application for the PCUSA's new DREAM Grant was accepted, one of only eight to be awarded this year! Thanks to all of you who piloted our new vote via email provision. We met the deadline!
2. Whitworth's Office of Church Engagement has awarded us grants for both: a. advanced research in rural ministry in some of our communities summer of 2016, and b. summer 2016
3. The delays in the process at the national level (\$\$ notification moved from mid November to the end of January) affected the deadlines for implementation with student ministry fellows this summer in congregations, which will now become phase 2 in 2016.
4. **Phase 1** for research and development will now be possible thanks to a grant from Whitworth's Office of Church Engagement. 2 Students, Mirra Mattheson & Joel Silvius, rising seniors, have been identified to serve in the presbytery, based out of Bozeman, as fellows this summer focusing on multi-sector research of several of the communities/counties where our congregations are as well as conversations and learning about God's possibilities, missional dreams and calling of several potential congregations. At least 1 Whitworth Professor, Dr. Stacie Keogh, Sociology (her, Ph.D. is from University of Montana!) will be collaborating with us and some professors from MSU Bozeman are part of ongoing conversations. The fellows will be based out of Bozeman and travel out for research in communities and hopefully spend time at Westminster Spires as well.

The research, networks and unfolding opportunities will then inform the Grant administrators (in YP and WU) in collaboration with the 2 bodies towards detailed planning for **phase 2** with more fellows for summer of 2016.

And so we join in Christ's mission through a new opportunity of pioneering ministry, discipleship and mission, in partnership with Whitworth University.

**The Presbytery Transition:** We adopted a half-time schedule in October of 2014. Transition continues for us and presbytery. We are grateful to all of you who are answering God's call, investing your gifts & time in this mission.

- a) George is the staff resource for the Stated Clerk Search Committee for the Presbytery being chaired by Neva Rathbun. Target date is to have someone able to attend Stated Clerk's training in early October.
- b) George is serving with Jody McDevitt and others on a task force interfacing with Glacier Presbytery to explore, map the possible coordination and collaboration of future ministries.

c) Periodically we keep up with e-mail through the month. George has a new work e-mail address: [george@yellowstonepcusa.org](mailto:george@yellowstonepcusa.org).

d) Occasionally, we must schedule a presbytery-related meeting on our own time. January, in particular, was a month in which we worked for the presbytery a great deal on our personal time, due to important developments in some congregations. At times this balances out as we are also trying to honor previous commitments to other entities made prior to the new schedule. We were sorry to miss the February Leadership Cabinet meeting for our yearly Covenant Group meeting of pastors from around the nation in early February, our 30<sup>th</sup> year of our covenant in Christ. Presentations on TRANSITIONS and Living, Leading in Ministry in Liminal Circumstances. POWERFUL and helpful.

\*\*\* We felt as if we were on holy ground as we shared, laughed, worshipped, celebrated the life and ministry of member and treasured friend, Steve Hayner (President of Columbia Seminary in Atlanta and keynote @ our 2013 convocation in Great Falls), struck down by pancreatic and liver cancer. Steve was ready to be with Jesus, filled mostly with characteristic joy, humor and love, which intensified as he neared 'home'. There are no adequate words to convey the stories we heard from the Hayner family and closest friends gathered with us, of God's powerful presence, transformation of lives of children, teens and adults, miracles, angel sightings,... A MUST read for Christians, especially pastors, will be the forthcoming book of Steve & Sharol's blog posts during and after his death will be published in July, *Joy in the Journey: Finding Abundance in the Shadow of Death, IVP.*

**Communication** continues to be our challenge in the presbytery. However, Susan Thomas has volunteered to help develop a presbytery newsletter! She and George are scheduled to meet by phone on Friday, April 10 for initial discussions. Please submit news of ministry and mission developments in your congregations and clusters to her: [ckochner@mcn.net](mailto:ckochner@mcn.net) or us...

**Rep/Nominating Ministry Team: See their update and requests for input following meeting late in the week.** George & Kathy both resourced this Team in April, seeking to cover the many responsibilities in our 2 short weeks. They are working on vacancies, processes, forms, RE commissioner and a youth advisory delegate for the 2016 GA.

**Funding for 2015:** The Leadership Cabinet and Presbytery should consider a couple of fundraising emphases:

- a) The program/mission budget for the presbytery has received little emphasis for some time. This budget funds the Westminster Spires Camping ministry for about \$12,000 a year; Other funding for such ministries as Campus ministry and contributions to such independent ministries as the Institute for Peace Studies at Rocky Mountain College, is allocated from the Program Budget, about \$7,500 funds the Goodrich ministry package as mission. Please see the update in the presbytery packet and from our Financial folks for the number of Churches pledging to this outreach ministry budget.
- b) Our fundraising efforts for 2015 are going well – and we are VERY GRATEFUL to God and the friends and congregations of Yellowstone Presbytery who were able to contribute. The goal: \$40,000, is ambitious and we are already at a little over \$19,000. *We would be most grateful if you would consider making our ministry a line item in your mission budget this year, or certainly in 2016.*
- c) The Yellowstone-Whitworth Rural Ministry Initiative, will call for the presbytery to raise money in 2015 and in 2016. We expect to have a better sense of this need after our next meetings April 15 with the Office of Church Engagement & Terry. New DREAM initiatives such as this can sometimes be more attractive to those who have not previously given, for new monies or to those outside the church.

**Service to the Larger Church includes:**

- a) George has been asked to lead the morning Bible Study at WNLT again (September 30-October 2 – ESTES PARK, CO)
- b) Kathy is serving as the Yellowstone Commissioner to the Synod Assembly and its TF for reviewing WNLT, in its new structure. See Synod Minutes 3/15/15. A few key items include: decreasing Synod contribution to presbyteries; WNLT – decrease in attendance, change of location to Estes Park, CO only 2015 as trial; Synod conversations/explorations as a result of GA mandate for reduction in number of Synod to no more than 12; ideas and opportunities for collaboration & partnership.
- c) **George has resigned from the Board of the Intermountain Children's Services** as of the end of my term in June, 2015. I have served for 11 consecutive years and been greatly enriched by my participation. I will work with Jody McDevitt to come up with a new representative to nominate to the IMCH Board.
- d) George serves on the Board of Trustees for Rocky Mountain College, but confidentially plans to resign later this year. This Board needs and deserves more focused time than he has to give. Input welcomed.
- e) Kathy serves on the Board of Trustees for Whitworth University, its Academic Affairs Com.
- f) George and Kathy continue to serve on the Synod Staff Forum. Ask, if interested.

### **Our Developing Ministry:**

- a) George: I am within two months of completing my spiritual direction certification program. Currently, I am working with six pastors in spiritual direction. I hope to develop this ministry in coming months. Anyone want to try spiritual direction/companionship or know someone who might benefit from it?
- b) We are also receiving invitations to speak on clergy/lay leadership retreats in the Synod.
- c) Kathy is partway through her formal training with the Barnabas Leadership Group to be a trainer and coach to work with presbyteries and groups of leaders in enhancing "your leadership capacity and caring for your soul." This integrated approach utilizes a cohort and coaching model. Ask her about this....

Further, several leaders and congregations have asked Kathy to come and work with them to equip and implement "Sticky Faith" approach in congregations. That includes spiritual formation for children, teens, parents and adults in congregations. Ask her about this....

### **Upcoming equipping events in the region include:**

1. WNLT Sept 30 - Oct 2 Estes Park. See Presbytery and Synod websites. Creative worship, Marcia McFee.
2. Tom Long on funerals, FPC Bozeman, 9-1. See Presbytery website.
3. Whitworth Institute for Ministry - July 20-24, 2015. CRE training concurrent. Programs for children as well. "Pursuing the Common Good: Engaging Culture with the Gospel". Walter Bruggemann, Anne Zaki from Egypt, Any Crouch. [www.whitworth.edu/WIM/](http://www.whitworth.edu/WIM/)

### **Other responsibilities to the Leadership Cabinet – and some odds and ends**

- A. I, George, have contacted Presbytery Vice-Moderator, Teresa Kendall, to let her know that I am the staff resource for worship planning at presbytery meetings. Teresa, if you need help, holler.
- B. I, George, am available to meet by phone with the presbytery meeting planning team to develop the mission theme for the next two meetings.
- C. I, George, was asked and privileged to speak pastorally to the presbytery after the voting on the amendments at the March presbytery meeting. Thanks for the trust.
- D. I, Kathy, continue to work on aspects of our grants, in touch with the National offices, and Whitworth. Some aspects involve us both.

### **Family Life Updates -**

- a) Charlie Goodrich turns 1 April 29! His parents are doing well and chasing him as she crawls everywhere about to take off!
- b) The extended Goodrich family is gathering in June for George's Dad's 90<sup>th</sup> birthday. He is excited & increasingly frail.
- c) Kathy's Dad's cancer is slowly spreading with some impairments which will require more consults and seeing if he can tolerate any new treatments. God is sustaining her mom in body, mind and spirit amazingly.