

1. The Emerging Situation: a. An unusual number of pastors will be retiring in the next few years b. Generally, pastors attracted to Montana's small churches feel isolated and unfamiliar with the context. Therefore, they may only stay a few years. c. The cost of a full-time pastor with the required benefits is moving beyond the capacity of the individual small church. d. Many existing churches are finding it increasingly difficult to grow in today's culture (see Growing Young & Stan Ott's DVD's, outline and handouts from February workshops here: Transformed & Mobilized: Love & Called – Gifted and Equipped -> Sent). Reasons include:

- 1. Many trends in culture, beliefs, mindsets, lifestyles mean we live in a radically different culture than even 15 – 20 years ago. Those above 30 are like immigrants, foreign to our present culture/subcultures. Pastors and older leaders (30/40 +) not used or trained to understand and operate in our present realities.

- 2. Fewer people especially, younger generation respond to previous 'attractional' approaches, in which most pastors were previously trained. New approaches required.

- 3. Many Montana counties and towns are decreasing in population

- 4. Some congregations are gaining in membership, some are in decline.

- 5. Many of the key needs in people and reasons people would be likely to come to a church have shifted. We need to educate ourselves in those and how to be passionate and culturally relevant in sharing, caring and embodying the Good News.

e. Some churches will likely have trouble searching for and calling a pastor, especially a pastor equipped with mindset, practices and capabilities to lead the changes and adaptations to thrive in ministry & mission in today's realities.

2. Shifts and equipping in the mindset, practices, & capabilities of Transformed and Mobilized needed in our congregations – pastors and sessions and leaders - NOW so that they stand the best chance to make progress moving from declining and maintaining to discipleship-focused thriving and

outreach/service/mission. Unless this occurs they will not search for or attract a pastor with the above passions and abilities nor understand what and who they need to look for in such a pastor.

3. Possible Structures for Pastoral Ministry for existing churches: a. A Full-time pastor for one church. Some of our congregations are still able to afford a fulltime pastor and to pay the pastor well, but few.

b. A Full-time pastor shared by two or more congregations or of congregations that are federated, yoked or combined in some fashion. Partnering with other denominations to effectively pastor churches in a region may be considered, as in Denton (UMC) and Stanford (PCUSA).

c. Tentmaking / Bi-vocational pastors. Some pastors and CRE's are now part-time with the church and part-time in another job. Are there employment possibilities in your community that could support a part-time pastor?

d. Commissioned Ruling Elders (CRE's) for one or more congregations. i. One CRE to a congregation ii. Two or more CRE's in a given congregation who serve and lead according to their gifts.

e. A Regional Pastor who may travel and serve several congregations in a region of the presbytery while equipped elders/CRE's lead the local ministry. i. The regional pastor equips the local elders to serve, lead and raises up disciples to Christian maturity, sends out to mission and ministry 24/7. ii. On the pattern of a circuit rider with services on different days of the week. iii. Travels for special services, such as weddings, funerals. iv. May moderate the sessions. v. Could work on a team with several others, i.e. CRE's according to Spiritual giftedness, passions, callings, experiences.

f. Technology enabled worship: i. A sermon is streamed into the local congregation from another church (great care needed with this), while present pastors and presbytery equip elders/deacons, others to not only lead the rest of worship but are trained to listen, care, connect, lead groups... according to their spiritual gifts, passions, experiences.... ii. Music: may be streamed also to congregations who lack competent musicians or we could have pastors who have extensive expertise using audio and video now, share with and equip others.

g. Encourage new worshipping communities and House Churches probably with called/gifted/trained leaders, yet non-pastor dependent. Research needed as to how this has been working elsewhere – ID this passion and work on a concrete strategy to share this message & opportunity and expand Yellowstone's New Worshipping Community group. The model of a denomination sending out teams of 3 to start churches is proving most effective in today's culture. All 3 with discipleship-based, relational,

mission-minded ways of operating: 1 evangelist giftings, 1 pastor & other giftings, 1 with music passions/abilities. These supported mostly from the outside for several years.

4. Possible steps forward: a. Pray. God is not confused or anxious about the emerging challenges and opportunities for Yellowstone Churches. God has attracted and is growing some remarkable pastors / leaders to Yellowstone Presbytery and will likely do so in the future. b. Promote, teach, embed/integrate into our congregations the basics of c. 1. discipleship and the Transformed and Mobilized: Loved & Called -> Gifted and Equipped ->- SENT content (Presbytery vision, Stan Ott's focus) ; 2. Growing Young: 6 Essential Strategies to help Young People Discover and Love Your Church d. Study and integrate how churches in rural areas and small towns are growing today. e. Alert the congregations and pastors to the emerging situation and inform them of options and invite them in a positive way. Work with the sessions and pastors at every stage of the process.

f. Begin to explore / test the above options in local churches as seems fitting in context. i. Immediate concerns: Jordan / Big Hole (3 congregations) / Miles City / Lewistown ii. Probable coming retirements or departures in the next three-four years: Philipsburg / Butte / White Sulphur / Forsyth / Ennis / Manhattan iii. Possible Pastor Transitions: Dillon in a couple years and two other churches

g. Research and learn from what forms of ministry are emerging in other presbyteries and denominations. The UMC in MT are prioritizing \$, staff time and equipping into the areas that Stan taught, expanded.

5. Think through how such changes could likely alter the face and ministries of the presbytery. i. Fewer full-time pastors. More lay & elder leadership. ii. Increased regional connectional grouping within the presbytery along with presbytery-wide focus. The focus will be more on building discipleship and ministry in the local churches and context. iii. Increase in relationships, networking and partnerships iv. What if the presbytery had only a Stated Clerk in five years for financial or staffchange reasons? i. What models might enable the mission of the presbytery then? ii. How will the presbytery prioritize for ministry and mission?