

Romans 12:1-2: "I appeal to you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect." When we offer ourselves in responsive, thankful worship, the Holy Spirit renews us with the mind of Christ. The verse is both a call to personal commitment to God and a challenge to offer ourselves together for our renewal of our mind of Christ as the united Body of Christ. May it be so for us.

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 sewing a vision for mission.

- A. **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, deepening relationships, and exploring God’s calling for their cluster. So far:
1. The White Sulphur Springs has become the locus for prayer ministry, the first cluster to offer to its churches in particular and to the presbytery as a whole a Saturday retreat on Spiritual renewal and Prayer. 40-plus people from nine different churches attended. The event was written about enthusiastically by GA reporter, Mike Ferguson, ([link](#)).
 2. The Billings Cluster is beginning to form plans to offer a similar retreat for its churches on the theme of Stewardship. The profound and trustful sharing and support is occurring in this group.
 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.
 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.
 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.
- B. **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. Clearly the Holy Spirit is leading.
 2. To further live into our vision, let’s be asking what needs we are discerning to help the presbytery develop discipling 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.
 - b. 1001 – New Worshipping Communities.

- c. Nurturing Young Disciples... One elder: the Equipping done at the presbytery meeting in Butte was one of the best presbytery meetings in years.
- d. Strengthening, equipping rural congregations in discipling, missional ministry.
- e. The whole area of Mission and talking with Jack Bell who would be willing to work with a task force to develop Mission in the Presbytery.

PMT (formerly CoM):

- a. We continue to be involved in pastoring pastors and resourcing churches, particularly those in pastoral transition or some contention:
 - a. Churches searching for pastors – **Terry** is actively searching; **Jordan** has a temporary Lutheran CRE who is doing a great job after the sudden departure of the previous CRE.
 - b. Churches wrestling with their relationship to the denomination: **Stanford and Geyser**. Some other congregations are dissatisfied with GA's actions in 2014 and are trying to determine their response. This dissatisfaction varies in intensity. And the result of presbytery's voting on the Amendments in March will significantly impact Yellowstone Congregations, regardless of which way the controversial votes go. George and other members of the Pastoral Team with Cabinet Moderator, Jody McDevitt, met with the two churches on January 20, 2015. It seems that pastoral relationships are being re-established between these congregations and the presbytery.
 - c. Church closing this year: **Roy**. Reporting a per capita of about 27, but in reality about 10 Presbyterians and then a growing number of independent attenders. The PMT will bring a report that the Roy church had building and financial assets of about \$53,000, with much work to be done to upgrade their building. A settlement amount of \$5,000 was determined by negotiation to be paid to the presbytery. The agreement will be presented to the Presbytery for approval in March. The church will close as a PCUSA church on March 31, 2015. Members wishing to remain PCUSA will transfer their membership to FPC Lewistown.
 - d. We have also been confidentially pastoring of pastors and preaching in congregations
- b. Expect the Three-Year Boundary Training to be offered on May Billings and in Bozeman. A lawyer, associated with FPC-Billings will present. Every clergy and CRE in Yellowstone Presbytery will be required to attend one of these workshops.
- c. J. P. Carlson was installed as pastor in Anaconda on Sunday, January 11th at 4:00 PM; and on January 18th at 4:00 PM in the Big Hole. Check out the pictures **on the Yellowstone Presbytery Facebook page.**
- d. On February 24, at the request of the PMT the Presbytery observed a **Day of Prayer and Fasting** specifically for the Stanford and Geyser and Terry Congregations and for the churches of the presbytery in general. Thank you to those able to prayerfully observe this day.

Emerging Divisions in Congregations: We, with the PMT, are increasingly aware that the issues of the day and the actions of the 221 General Assembly in 2014 are fraying the unity of Yellowstone Presbytery congregations and congregations in every presbytery.

- *In one congregation have adopted marriage and building use policies to see these policies strongly questioned by different-thinking members of the congregation.*
- *In another congregation, the session and pastor have thoughtfully begun the process to leave the denomination, only to see a similar response.*

We offer the following thinking:

1. *Please reread our intro letter to this report.*
2. *Please assume that members in your congregation hold a different opinion on the issue of marriage from your own, and devoted Christians will differ on this and other issues.*
3. *Please ask for help in managing the exploration and discussion of these issues from the PMT or from us.*
4. *The only way we know to maintain the unity in congregations is to face the dividing issues, but always keep "main thing the main thing." Remember that:*
 - a. *The Church is Christ's Church, not our own.*
 - b. *He calls us to take the cross in service to him and one another (Mark 8:31-38).*
 - c. *That those who favor gay marriage see the issue as a justice issue and will press faithfully and fervently for justice; that those who see the gay marriage issue as biblically defined sin will press for holiness and faithfulness in themselves and in the church. Both are seeking to honor God and read the Bible faithfully as they understand it.*
 - d. *The world, the flesh and the devil are our common challenges, struggling to bring disunity and derailing of the churches from their mission.*
 - e. *Fasting and Prayer days in your congregation. We would love to help you with this.*
 - f. *There will be challenging days ahead for all of us in the church and in the culture, but God is not surprised. God will see us through.*

Camping and Youth Ministry: The Camping and Youth continues to be **ry:** vibrant mission of the presbytery through this task force. In consideration for this summer: a week of presbytery camp for anyone interested particularly for family ministry. We are beginning to plan and promote camp for 2015. Please check the presbytery website for our July dates.

- a. Curt Kochner and Susan Thomas have given heavily to this ministry. Many Thanks!
- b. **Presbytery:** Please help us promote this ministry for the summer by suggesting high school and college-aged young people apply to be counselors; and by suggesting to families that they consider sending their young ones as campers.
- c. The Camping mission of the presbytery will be featured in the afternoon resourcing session at the March Presbytery meeting. Curt Kochner, presenting.

- d. George is also interfacing with Steve Shive, the Exec Presbyter of Wyoming Presbytery as Wyoming wrestles with its future in camping ministry
- e. The annual Winter Ski Retreat will be held on March 13-15 at the Butte Church. George is helping to organize this weekend and with Traci Ruschetti and Orrin Feddes, will again be one of the speakers. Please invite your youth!

The Emerging Partnership with Whitworth University for Rural Ministry Whitworth is in conversation with us (Kathy and George and the Presbytery) about helping redevelop their Institute for Rural Ministry and serving as their satellite in Montana. Further details will be available before our meeting and after a meeting with Rev. Dr. Terry McGonigle who will be present for the March Presbytery meeting.

- a. The Dream Grant was one of only eight to be awarded this year in the PCUSA!
- b. But the delays will likely affect the time table for implementation.
- c. Two Students are expected to serve among the presbytery churches as fellows this summer. And so we begin a new era of ministry discipleship in partnership with Whitworth University.

The Presbytery Transition:

- a. We adopted a half-time schedule in October of 2014. We are still in major transition:
 - a. Periodically we keep up with e-mail through the month. George has a new work e-mail address: george@yellowstonepcusa.org.
 - b. 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.
 - c. Thanks to First Bozeman for being willing to house the presbytery office: Dan, Jody, Linda, Larry and all the session – our thanks! And to Ric Tieman and his office for helping us move!
 - d. We are grateful to those of you who are stepping up – Jody, Dave Thompson, Debbie Blackburn, others.
 - e. In this transition time we are also trying to honor previous commitments to other entities made prior to the new schedule – for example, we will miss the February Leadership Cabinet meeting for a yearly Covenant Group meeting in Atlanta
- b. The office is now located in room 1001 of FPC-Bozeman. Susan Seibert, administrative assistant, half-time is there in the mornings.
- c. George has been in contact to signal my role in resourcing Neva Rathbun and the newly formed Stated Clerk Search committee and participated in the initial phone call.

Communication continues to be our challenge in the presbytery. However, Susan Thomas has volunteered to help develop a presbytery news letter! Final conformation pending on Susan's serving. Please submit news of ministry and mission developments in your congregations and clusters to her: ckochner@mcn.net or us...

Our fundraising efforts for 2014 were again successful – and we are VERY GRATEFUL to God and the friends and congregations of Yellowstone Presbytery who were able to contribute. The goal: \$40,000. The actual as of 1/6/2015 - \$41,960. I have hand-written and **completed all the thank-you notes to those churches and individuals** who gave financially to Kathy's and my fund raising efforts in 2014. ***And thanks again to those who were led and able to give!!!*** Because of their generosity we still minister among you.

Funding for 2015: The Presbytery should consider a couple of fundraising emphases:

- a. As in past years, we Goodriches are budgeted to raise at least \$40,000 again this year towards our salary, housing and ministry expenses.
- b. The program / mission budget for the presbytery has received little emphasis in some time. This budget funds the Westminster Spires Camping ministry for about \$12,000 a year; about \$7,500 funds the Goodrich ministry package as mission; 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. Please see the update in this packet for the number of Churches pledging to this outreach ministry budget...
- c. The Rural Ministry Project, which we are undertaking in partnership with Whitworth will call for the presbytery to raise additional undetermined funding in 2015 and 2016.

Service to the Larger Church:

- a. On Friday and Saturday, Feb 6-7, we served the Presbytery of Plains and Peaks. George preached the evening worship and Kathy and George presented Engage as the PCUSA's valuable curriculum for disciple-making / engaging faith and ministry.
- b. **I have 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 invite the leadership Cabinet to work with me to fill my *ex officio* board position and am helping Intermountain with its church relationships.
- c. I am planning to resource for **the presbytery the team that meets with Glacier Presbytery's team to discuss possible partnerships.** I have calendared the first meeting on Wednesday Evening, March 4, 2015

Our Developing Ministry:

- a. George: I am within five months of completing my spiritual direction certification program. Currently, I am working with six pastors and one lay leader in spiritual direction. We are also receiving invitations to speak on clergy/lay leadership retreats in the Synod. However, valuable as these ministries are, we may not break even... So please pray that God continues to lead us and provided. Ask George about this....

- b. 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....