

November, 2015 – CoGeneral Presbyters’ Report to Yellowstone Presby. George and Kathy Goodrich

“God sends forth his love and faithfulness” (TNIV) *Recently the Psalm in the daily lectionary for the day, was Psalm 57. It is a psalm thought to be written by David when he was on the run from Saul. As such, it is appropriate for those of God’s people who find themselves hard-pressed, worried, weary. But in the middle of the Psalm, is a word of faith, hope, strength, and love for all of us: “God sends forth his love and his faithfulness,” 57:3b.*

*As we approach the Advent season, amidst the blessings and provisions, the tragedies, conflicts and suffering, may we not only **look** for the promised signs of God’s love and faithfulness in our live and the life of the presbytery, the leadership cabinet and the congregations, and in our world. May we prayerfully ask to be willing to **BE transformed** to be more like Christ and **BE** the Christ-shaped lives and community indwelt by the Holy Spirit through which God gifts God’s love and faithfulness to each other and out in mission from all of us into the world!*

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 is responsible for keeping us focused on our vision, sowing a vision for mission.

Mission and Ministry in the Clusters: We 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 a 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. This cluster met for a prayer retreat and focused prayer for congregations in the region in Lewistown on July 17 (Whitworth fellows attended as part of their Lewistown visit) as well as by conf calls. Debbie Funke is coordinator. The cluster will meet in Lewistown this Thursday, November 5.
- 2) The Billings Cluster had the Whitworth fellows join the clergy CRE’s in attendance at the June meeting. Trustful sharing and support is occurring in this group, but there are growing pains. Next gathering: November 19; Mary Davis is coordinator.
- 3) The Miles City Cluster is growing as a multi-denominational gathering of clergy. Neva Rathbun is coordinator; Next gathering – November 10.
- 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 and Freeman McCall are coordinators; next meeting will be December 3 at FPC-Butte.
- 5) Positives of the clusters:
 - a) Growing commitment, **beautifully deepening trust** in the groups, meetings and with each other.
 - 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) To further live into our vision, let’s continue to prayerfully ask what needs we are discerning, how the Spirit may be leading us 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 include:
 - a. College/Campus ministry – All underway. i.e. Presbycats’ wide outreach, visibility and relational approach on campus and Facebook, events, bearing fruit. Five peer leaders, up from three, Mission trip to Ireland.
 - b. 1001 – New Worshipping Communities. After 3-7-15 Presbytery vote to explore and moved towards starting at least 1 NWC in YP in the next year, Jack Bell convenes this new Task Force. This was our aspect of mission and equipping in our June and Nov. presbytery meetings. Vera White, PCUSA staff for this ministry, was our resource person and preacher for the June presbytery meeting. A brief organizational meeting was

held for those interested immediately following the June meeting in White Sulphur Springs. It is important that we all intentionally apply and follow up, building upon this training interest, guidance and momentum, including learning from from each other and resourcing time at Nov. presbytery meeting and in EACH session and congregation. **Input desired from congregation and individuals regarding BOTH:**

1. how existing congregations can better listen to and learn about their communities, what is happening, needs and opportunities and where to join the Holy Spirit in sharing and living the Gospel?

2. Who may God be calling to be part of a NWC leadership team? You?

3. Where might the Spirit be preparing as places for possible New Worshipping Communities?

- c. Nurturing Young Disciples – This, along with ministry to/with children AND their families, was one of the primary needs, concerns and opportunities arising from the Whitworth Fellows' research and conversations in 10 of our congregations and communities. 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 grant, preaching and spiritual formation grant.
- e. Peacemaking – St Andrew Presbyterian, Billings, long-concerned for peacemaking, is seeing a resurgence of interest. They will be hosting all those interested from the presbytery on Saturday, February 6, to consider the presbytery's advisory vote on the Five Affirmations presented by the General Assembly's Peacemaking Task Force. Their recommendation will likely inform the presbytery's vote at our March 4-5 meeting.

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) Tom Long seminar recovering the Christian Funeral and witness to the resurrection in today's secular culture July 25 was well-attended by our clergy, followed by fellowship lunch. See *August Currents* for a summary.
- b) Churches searching for pastors – **Terry called a new pastor – The Rev. Katie Emery(ELCA), arrived Oct 1. Her installation is slated for November 29 at 9:30 AM. Her clergy husband serves in Glendive. Jordan** has a temporary Lutheran CRE, Jeff Bolstad.
- c) Churches wrestling with their relationship to the denomination: **Stanford and Geyser**. PMT is working closely with these churches, but the ministry is now very fragile in both congregations. We are very grateful to CRE Jack Bell who has sensed a call to pastor in Stanford and perhaps in Geyser for one year. Pastoral Teams from the PMT continue to work with both congregations. Your sincere prayers are requested for our brothers and sisters in Christ there and the work of the Holy Spirit. A group wishes to remain and worships together.
- d) **Veva Larson** was commissioned as a CRE in the Anaconda Church on Sunday, September 20 in Anaconda and in the Big Hole Churches on Sunday, October 18. Congratulations to Veva and the pastor of those congregations, J. P. Carlson!
- e) The differences in our denomination and culture regarding same sex behavior and marriage and other topics are being experienced and handled in a variety of ways, from relatively amicable arrangements to agree to disagree to deep divisions or rumblings on the part of at least some in some congregations as to various ways to respond or express their convictions, including whether to remain. Some sessions are/have discussed their response and developed policies. This is requiring quite a bit of informal and formal time, listening, attention, prayer, consultation, visits on the part of Co-GP's, PMT and Pastoral Teams.
- f) **Commissioned Ruling Elder training was offered this summer** in Spokane in July @ Whitworth Univ. They will be making this available online.
- g) Church closing this year: **Roy**. Some real estate details are still being hammered out. Now waiting for their action. Pastor Tom Mooring had a heart attack. We expect settlement soon.
- h) We have been confidentially pastoring pastors and their family members & preaching in congregations.

- i) **The PMT will be sending to the Leadership Cabinet a proposal** for input to and collaboration with them for intentional focus, searching and developing those called to service as CRE's for service in Yellowstone Presbytery. **WHOM DO YOU KNOW WHO MIGHT GOD BE GIFTING AND CALLING TO THIS MINISTRY, TO START A NWC???** Please be asking God and paying attention to the Spirit's work !!

The REQUIRED Three-Year Boundary Training was offered May 16 in Billings and 23 in Bozeman. Mark Bassingthwaighe, from FPC, Billings, is an attorney who travels extensively conducted the trainings on ethics and misconduct patterns. Every clergy and CRE in Yellowstone Presbytery is REQUIRED to have such training every 3 years so Yellowstone Presbytery. As of October, all of our clergy are in compliance!

Camping and Youth: This continues to be a vibrant, discipling and outreach mission of the presbytery through this Ministry Team. Fifty traditional campers and additional non-traditional campers were served this summer. The eight college-age staff were excellent leaders. George was the Bible Study leader for the Elementary and Senior High Camps; David Andrew led the Junior High studies. The Willetts joined for elem camp. Curt Kochner was the Co-Director for each of these camps and offered quality leadership training to the staff during orientation.

- 2) **Curt Kochner and Susan Thomas** continue to give heavily to this ministry in countless ways. Many Thanks!
- 3) **Camp Staff End-of-season cook-out:** George and Kathy, Curt and Susan, hosted a camp staff reunion-recap cook-out and overnight at the Goodrich's home, August 22.
- 4) **Camp DVD's** portraying the Westminster Spires camping ministry 2015 are finished will be sent shortly. Please share with not only families but congregations in the fall to celebrate what God has done, educate about camp and plant seeds for ALL ages and church leaders.

The Partnership with Whitworth University for Rural Ministry Thank you all for welcoming Mirra and Joel and Terry as they have been with us this spring and summer.

Phase 1 for research and development. Whitworth fellows, Joel Silvis and Mirra Matheson, were with Yellowstone Presbytery June 1 – August 15, thanks primarily to grants from Whitworth's Office of Church Engagement

Based out of Bozeman, they listened, observed, asked questions, built relationships. They attended 2 pastor cluster meetings, part of a PMT meeting, our June Presbytery and training with Vera White; attended Sr. High Camp @ Westminster Spires; met regularly with George and Kathy; met via Skype with Whitworth staff; met with WU Prof Stacey Keogh; stayed in homes and visited 10 of our congregations and communities. They were listening and learning about God's not only the realities, strength and challenges of each, but also possibilities, missional dreams and callings God has or might have for congregations.

At the end of the summer they met for 2 days with George and Kathy and Terry McGonigal in MT to share and discuss findings and together evaluate and explore possibilities for next summer of additional fellows.

1. Their findings and feedback is as varied as the wide range of communities and congregations they visited which they shared back with each pastor.
2. The responses from both pastors, congregational leaders who interacted with them and from the fellows was that this was a very worthwhile, stretching and valuable experience. They were unabashed in saying they felt that out of the 38 fellows, they had the BEST fellowship!
3. **Phase 2.** They are highly supportive of many aspects (albeit a first time learning for all) and recommend WU place several teams of fellows here next summer. They will not only be involved in that process but both are wondering if God might be calling them to return.

Some themes and observations from their outside, young eyes this summer include:

Many congregations do not broadly know their mission, or perhaps have a mission. J & M perceive several could use

help exploring God's call and discerning and defining a clear vision/mission for their ministry.

All want to do more or better with ministry to children and youth and families or college students.

Congregations and their communities often face large economic challenges need more funding and to explore a WIDE range of creative ways that might be accomplished. Shrinking populations are often a part of this.

Underlying many areas is the need for a better understanding of and intentional discipling (versus limitations of membership mindset) as part of the culture and practices of congregations.

Reticence or resistance to changes, sometimes to THE exact actions and mindsets which are needed to move forward to accomplish *what leaders themselves say repeatedly they want to have happen* in their congregation. In some places too much valuing of comfort, contentment with current status quo. A need – people eyes to see as Christ sees, a culture of innovation and equipping pastors AND lay leaders for leading change/transformation in a way which works for each place.

New ways of doing and being church with many changes in culture, communities and congregations – adaptations, transformation and new worshipping communities depending on the community.

Quality relationships and high level of trust in pastor clusters, of prayer in one of them.

Creative exploration of buildings and other such assets in service of Christ-centered missional mission/service in the community.

Healthy collaboration, partnerships, relationships between pastors and congregations, in ministerial associations make a significant difference. Varies greatly from place to place.

George and Kathy, with their experience, gifts, expertise and respect/relational and leadership capital across the presbytery, should be able to use them more, initiate more.

There are WONDERFUL people across this amazing state. Many hardworking, dedicated people in presbytery and congregations. The Spirit of God is at work!

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.

The Presbytery Transition: 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 was the staff resource for the Stated Clerk Search Committee for the Presbytery, chair Neva Rathbun, and Debbie Funke, Dan Holland and Terry Johnson. The search team interviewed several quality candidates and nominated Elder Debbie Blackburn to the presbytery which elected her. Great work by this team!

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. The thought is to launch a shared website to inform of the resources and ministries available in both presbyteries.

c) Periodically we keep up with e-mail through the month. George's new work e-mail address: george@yellowstonepcusa.org.

Communication Susan Thomas sends out *Yellowstone Currents* the beginning of every month! She, George & Kathy continue to work together. Please submit news of ministry, mission developments, opportunities in your congregations and clusters to her or us a few days before the end of the month: ckochner@mcn.net.

Rep/Nominating Ministry Team: George & Kathy both resourced this Team, seeking to cover the many responsibilities in our 2 short weeks. Debbie Funke moderates this team which has worked extensively to nominate candidates to the vacant positions. Please see the teams' report in the presbytery packet.

Funding for 2015: several mission interpretation and fundraising emphases:

- a) The group met via phone to discuss both presbytery day and interpreting mission here and asking for support for it. See notes from this call. The program/mission budget for the presbytery has received little emphasis for some time.
- 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 \$31,244. **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, after the needs of your congregation.**
- c) The Yellowstone-Whitworth Rural Ministry Initiative, will call for the presbytery to raise money in 2015 and in 2016. 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.
- d) See Synod and per capita recommendation in bold under b below.

Service to the Larger Church includes:

- a) George led the morning Bible Study at WNL T again (September 30-October 2 – ESTES PARK, CO) and was well-received.
- b) Kathy, along with Ron, is serving as Yellowstone Commissioner to the **Synod Assembly** and its TF for reviewing WNL T. We met July 14-15, & Oct 19 in Denver.
Synod – Several items of note included –
 1. Exploring merger options in separate conversations with the Synod of the Pacific and Synod of the Southwest (Ron a part of these) in response to GA voted mandate to reduce the number of synods.
 2. David Ezekiel has taken a 9 month appointment at San Francisco Seminary in Evangelism and his position is now ¼ time.
 3. **Synod** voted to reduce Synod Per Capita from \$5.75 to \$3.50 as their programmatic and staffing needs are significantly decreased, thus giving presbyteries the option of retaining this amount for the presbytery's needs without increasing per capita on congregations. **It is our recommendation that the LC and presbytery seriously consider this option for Yellowstone, and NOT ask more from our congregations this year. Yellowstone must make up for reduced support monies from the Synod and our Presbytery staff and entities have slowly been doing some of the work Synod staff did.**
- c) **George resigned from the Board of the Intermountain Children's Services** as of the end of term in June, 2015. He have served for 11 consecutive years and been greatly enriched by my participation. The Leadership Cabinet has approved the nomination to the Intermountain Board of J. P. Carlson to represent the Presbytery.
- d) George serves on the Board of Trustees for Rocky Mountain College, This Board needs and deserves more focused time than he has to give. Kim Woeste's and other's input has been that he has an important voice and influence at this pivotal time and he is needed and should remain.
- e) Kathy serves on the Board of Trustees for Whitworth University, and on its Academic Affairs Com.
 f) George and Kathy continue to serve on the Synod Staff Forum, increasingly important for resourcing, ideas, partnership opportunities in the region with Synod staff reduction. We met Sept 2-4, then in January.
- g) **The Montana Association of Christians:** Goodriches are part of the judicatory heads group. The Annual Gathering was held in Great Falls, October 23-24, 2015. Themes on justice ministry and spirituality were featured. Please see Susan Gibb's MAC report for details.

Our Developing Ministry:

- a) George: I have completed the work for my spiritual direction certification program. Through the training I formally worked with six pastors in spiritual direction. I hope to develop this ministry in coming months. Anyone want to try spiritual direction/companioning or know someone who might benefit from it?

George will also be offering a beginning spiritual direction retreat in January or February for 6-8 interested pastors and leaders. Ask George for details.

b) We are also receiving invitations to speak on clergy/lay leadership retreats in the Synod. George was a speaker at Highland Holy Days retreat of St. Andrew Church.

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....

d) 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:

“Hearts and Minds Set on Christ: Spiritual Formation and Preaching Enrichment for Pastors”. Yellowstone has received grant monies through our partnership with Presbytery of Inland Northwest, and over 10 presbyteries in the Rocky Mountain region and west and Whitworth’s Office of Church Engagement. This grant provides the pastors access to grant monies and a year’s training beginning in July 2016 (18-22) or July 2017. Throughout the next 12 months, cohorts will meet regularly within their presbyteries for ongoing encouragement, support, and training. Each cohort will be guided by a cohort leader from the participating presbytery. Each participant will also have periodic contact with the cohort mentors, each one experienced and skilled in the integration of personal Christian spiritual formation with the process of teaching and preaching the Scriptures. See separate handout for further details and talk with George and Kathy.

Other responsibilities to the Leadership Cabinet – and more

Kathy continues to work on many aspects of the growing number of our grants, in touch with and reporting to National offices, Whitworth as well as Presbyterian Disaster Assistance. Some aspects involve us both.

George is the staff resource to the Mission Emphasis Planning Team for the November presbytery meeting.

In June Kathy wrote and the **Presbytery received a grant from Presbyterian Disaster Assistance** to support immediate and longer term ministry through the Deer Lodge church and in and with those communities following the tragic shootings affecting the Deer Lodge/Anaconda communities. We have both had ongoing conversations with Teresa Kendall, Linda Smith, JP Carlson, others and PDA regarding this ministry and PDA’s grant.

Yellowstone Presbytery Family updates -

The Community Presbyterian Church in Jordan, MT celebrated its 100th anniversary on August 15th. Five previous pastors and interns, including Dick Davis, Neva Rathbun, Tim Lanham, Caroline Fleming and Dan Krebill, brought greetings. George participated in offering the pastoral prayer and installing elders.

We are pleased to announce the **Baptism of Levi Parker Willett**, third child of Kristin and Brandon Willett, who co-pastor the First Presbyterian Church of Miles City. George was honored to perform the baptism and preach on Sunday, August 16 in the morning worship service.

Congratulations again to **Teresa Kendall and Tom Gomola on their wedding** Memorial Day weekend.

The Krebill-McDevitt clan celebrated Doris Krebill’s her 90th birthday in October!

Family Life Updates since mid June- and please keep sharing yours.

As we celebrated our 38th anniversary, we counted SO many ways God has blessed, grown, guided us. We are overflowing with gratitude for family, friends, and amazed at how God has allowed us to join in his mission, catching glimpses of holy, lifegiving, redemptive work.

George's Dad's 90th birthday celebration in June with most of the extended family was a precious, priceless time together. He was better than he has been in a while in energy and interacting with each one, including ALL 3 great grandchildren. We are grieving his death in September but so grateful for his life, love, faith and legacy. Time together as extended family, including all 3 great grandchildren, was a priceless gift.

Thank you for your years of and now prayers as my dad just passed away, home at last with Jesus, after a valiant fight and almost 95 years. God gave holy moments around his passing, We will all gather for a service for him just before Thanksgiving and then bury him here in Montana at the time he loved best here, summer and rodeo season just before July 4. Thank you for your love, prayers and patience and listening hearts as we journey through this double loss and grief. How grateful we are that Jesus is the resurrection and the life and that we grieve as those with the greatest hope!