

On our YP ski retreat last weekend, I suddenly became aware across the room and from input from a few other students that Billy (names of students changed) and John, from different towns, got into a minor fight on Friday night. I brought them together, sat down with them and listened, especially attentive to the visibly traumatized one, as the three of us talked. As they felt listened to, respected, and cared for, they began to settle down. Then over the weekend Dave Thompson, pastor at FPC Billings; Heather Mclean, adult volunteer from Billings; and I spoke about the love of God for each of us, imperfect as we are. God desires to love others and this world through *us* all our lives long, in whatever calling and way God gifts us, including students. By Sunday breakfast, Billy and John were friends, *choosing* to sit on either side of me at the table.

Why does Dave Thompson drop everything to focus on leading and organizing a youth retreat for about 40 kids? *Why* do elder Russ Kline and Lee Weber arrive early and stay late, cooking and cleaning every meal for these kids and leaders? *Why* does Jim Tarr ski with the kids and play the drums in the Sunday worship service? *Why* do I “sleep” on the floor for two nights and prepare talks as faithfully as I can? *Why* do all the adults give up a rest-up weekend to be with kids many of whom are struggling with sad and complex lives?

Because we are God’s loved & called, gifted and equipped disciples, SENT to join in this, Christ’s mission. That these students will experience, know the love of God for them, coursing through *us* and know God’s love and calling and purpose for *their* own lives! Thanks to all who participated. God was beautifully at work!

We are all impacted by the combativeness, tragedies & uncertainties in our culture and world along with transitions and challenges in our presbytery, churches and the personal lives of pastors, their families as well as leaders. Amidst the many clamoring and competing messages and issues, may we *remember* and *remind* ourselves and each other,

***WHO and WHOSE we are and
*WHY God has called us for God’s purposes,**

just as the Israelites did year after year, telling and retelling each other the truths and stories from scripture and of God’s mighty acts, goodness, faithfulness and *hesed*/lovingkindness

May we be aware of the ‘tyranny of the urgent’, of the many tasks, where anxieties or issues, as pressing as they may be, can distract us from “Keeping the main thing the main thing”.

As Stan Ott put it,

As God’s disciples/disciple communities we are

***Loved and called, gifted and equipped and -> sent to join Christ in Christ’s mission
For God’s glory and the sake of the world God loves***

Leadership Cabinet

a. Evaluated and Set five priorities for 2018 to help us live out our presbytery vision –

1. Evaluated/assessed what progress made on 2017 goals.
2. Seeks to always Ask: Where are we, how are we aligning our priorities, work, funds with our Vision? and what may the Holy Spirit be doing now in YP, Larger Church, our culture and world?
3. Please see the Leadership Cabinet report for these goals and action steps.
4. The LC has established a team to collect stories of the Holy Spirit’s work among us to share.

b. Planning, equipping, networking for our three Presbytery Meetings

1. March 2-3 – St Andrew, Billings
2. May 4-5 – Federated Church of Harlowton
3. Nov 2-3 – First Presbyterian Church, Bozeman
4. Improved sound for conference calls; explore Live stream, esp. if weather is threatening.

c. **Budget** - The funds raised for the support of our ministry and position for 2017 surpassed \$39,000! We are so deeply grateful for God's provision and your prayers, encouragement, prayers and the sacrificial giving, which are so very humbling.

Opportunities and concerns for 2018-2019 Budgets and beyond- Projected income and expenses;

1. Synod grant is gone; we receive a final \$12,652. 10 for 2018. Implications are far reaching.
2. Might changes in tax code impact charitable giving for presbytery and churches?
3. Sharing God's vision and Telling the stories of God at work, & God's opportunities. It is these that per capita supports. Per Capita interpretation and education with leaders and churches.
4. Explore other sources of income?
5. Systematic way to identify those across the presbytery with the gifts of apostle & evangelism.
6. Sharing the Good News daily and where are we to start new worshipping communities?

d. **Establishing an operation Personnel sub group of LC**

1. Staffing in 2018 with funding decline from Synod / Stated Clerk Search... There are a variety of options for staffing in the future... Dan Holland is working on projection of expenditures for 2019-2020.
2. Reviews for all presbytery staff..

e. **Mission Development?** How might we better motivate, strengthen leaders and churches in both a missional mindset/orientation and in what been understood as "Mission"?

Possibility of Presbytery mission trips? And/or churches partnering in mission, on trips?

Identify who in our presbytery might be passionate and gifted to lead this for the presbytery. This is a gift and passion for Jack Bell.

f. **Current Presbytery Partnerships:** Glacier, Wyoming presbyteries; Whitworth; Synod relationships; Lutherans and Methodists

g. **Church property**

1. Geysers Church – The Cabinet agreed with Geysers Admin. Commission that after exhausting a variety of options for both Yellowstone, or Glacier, and trying continue the ministry, then explored if there was a nucleus to start a new ministry, recommending the sale of this property appears the only choice left.

2. Oswego Land: Paul Hellend and Susi Ennis are representing us to determine interest in purchase by the Tribe or by local property owners.

h. **Insurance Questions:** Jack Bell is ably moving us forward; George is drafting answers to the required questions .

PMT [CoM] – Pray!

In the PCUSA, we have a shortage of qualified PCUSA pastors available, who understand ministry in the 21st century, and who would even consider a rural or part-time call. With the pivotal importance of many pastoral transitions underway and several approaching in the next 1-4 years, there is a great deal needed from the Stated Clerk, Dave Thompson and the entire PMT, and us as Co- GP's – networking, meeting with and educating sessions and PNC's, equipping existing church members to discover, develop their sense of being called and gifted by the Holy Spirit, and help equip them to do the ministry, reference checking, preaching in churches without pastors, phone conversations with leaders in churches as well as serious candidates who have important questions. With the uncertainties, anxieties and extra workload in a congregation without a pastor, sometimes, unresolved questions, concerns, conflicts, power plays or frustrations surface. Depending on the leadership, spirit and skills of both church leaders and presbytery staff and PMT, these can be times of growth in faith and for the body of disciples, or potentially become divisive or discouraging.

- a. **Develop and offer Lay Training approach and opportunities** with Whitworth's online Video materials combined with PMT guidance, oversight, and mentoring;

Explore if/how clusters can support and collaborate. Get funding and promote it.

b. Help Churches obtain pastors

- c. Pastoral care, support, equipping of pastors and families. Future retreat.
- d. We, the Stated Clerk and PMT are hard at work on a large list of things to do, policies being worked on, challenges and upcoming transitions in some churches
- e. Good News! Mary Davis is now serving the Church of the **Big Hole**; Garrett Mostowski was examined by the PMT for examination by the presbytery to be considered for call to **Miles City**; **Jordan** is talking with a potential candidate; **Dillon** has begun its search; **Lewistown** is welcoming Diane White as its interim; **Hysham** and **White Sulphur Springs** are searching and getting by for the present with pulpit supply; **Philipsburg** will be served by the UMC in its next pastoral rotation after Sally Ralston retires this summer.

Stated Clerk Search and Training - Pray

a. **Support the committee in its search** – Kathy is staff for this Committee Jody McDevitt, Chair, Paul Helland, Debbie Funke & Don Holland.

Cluster and Cohort Gatherings

a. These are crucial for health and effectiveness of both pastors & churches and for sharing, embodying and preserving the Christ-like respectful culture, unity and vision of Yellowstone Presbytery.

How to share and educate and strengthen?

- 1. Integrating New pastors? Integrating lay leaders?
- 2. Discuss and assess effect of departing pastors?

b. Individual Clusters

- 1. White Sulphur Prayer Cluster –Next cluster retreat is Friday, 4/6 in Harlowton; 10AM
- 2. Billings – Regrouping. Next Meeting – Thursday afternoon, March 8 at 4:00 PM.
- 3. Miles City –Solid, but missing Leon. Next meeting, 3/7 in Miles City.
- 4. Butte – 3/112 is next scheduled meeting

c. Whitworth Preaching/Teaching Cohort

Camping and Youth

- 1. The Presbytery Child Protection Policy - first draft having been submitted to Leadership Cabinet and PMT.
- 2. Foundational listening, assessing and equipping needs.
 - a. **How to help churches** understand, care for and reach youth in their church and community in love, with the gospel?
 - b. How help churches understand and disciple children, parents and youth
 - c. How best equip pastors, leaders to understand the facts and transformational insights in *Growing Young* research including March presbytery presentation/ interactive workshop by Whitworth Fellows and Presbycats, and Westminster Spires staff)

2. Winter Retreat in Billings, 2/23-25. Went extremely well! Young people from Billings, Butte and Manhattan attended the retreat hosted by FPC-Billings. Thanks to Curt for his work on this. And to Bill Gladdery & Jessica Jones from Butte; Kristin Kochner & Jim Tarr, from Billings; Matt Muehleman, Presbycat & Manhattan youth leader; Dave Thompson, Heather Mclean and George who spoke; Russ Kline and Lee Webber and their team of cooks or helpers including Jody Ferested; and the FPC Billings congregation for welcoming us all into the worship service on Sunday morning.

3. Summer Camp

- 1. Recruiting summer and longer term staff
- 2. Revamp the camp date and tasks

Dates for Summer 2018 for Westminster Spires

Staff Training: Thursday, July 5 – Saturday, July 7. Curt and George lead

Elementary Camp: Sunday, July 8 – Thursday, July 12. George is main speaker.

Junior High Camp: Sunday, July 15 – Friday, July 20. George is main speaker

Senior High Camp: Sunday, July 22- Friday, July 27. Katie Emery and Will Johnson speak.

Please also check out **Rockhaven Camp**, a ministry of First Presbyterian Church of Bozeman

d. **Fall Retreat** Evaluate it from past years and for the future with youth team and pastors/ youth leaders. Set dates and place now....

Whitworth Fellows –We have 2 teams of 2 this summer

a. Fellows 2018 - rReturning fellows: Joel Schroeder & Luke Ekstrom; New fellows: David Henderson and Daniel Roberts; Much more to share in May.

b. K & G have been in touch with them & will meet with the 2018 fellows by Skype

c. YP must Raise money to cover stipend contribution and expenses.

d. George & Kathy Plan and travel for orientation in Spokane in March/April.

e. Finalize placement of two for the summer

f. Plan the preaching/ministry schedule for two Bozeman-based fellows serving and further education, equipping and dreaming about Growing Young

g. Retreat and summer schedule for training

Train our GA Commissioners and YAAD– Kathy does this, in consultation with Stated Clerk.

St. Timothy's Chapel

1. G and others Attend Board Meeting on January 15 in Anaconda.

2. Budget to be approved by Cabinet and Presbytery (at May meeting)

3. By-laws / standing rule updates to be approved by Cabinet

4. YP has been providing them with subsidized help from a Co-GP, Treasurer, Stated Clerk, &, bit from Office Manager. We can no longer afford to cover admin. personnel costs & will need reimbursement.

5. Help them in securing pastors for summers of 2018-19 as requested; Help the Chapel rethink its wedding policy.

Office Logistics:

Susan Seibert continues to ably assist us and all as the Office Administrator. **Check out the website for answers to your questions: www.yellowstonepcusa.org; or call the presbytery office: 406-586-7706.**

Personal Update – We continue to be very grateful to God for the call to serve and partner with you and body here as together we serve Christ and his mission.

We enjoyed a wonderful family reunion/ 90th birthday celebration for George's mom, happily settled in her new apartment. Continuing prayers are appreciated for George's brother, Tom, following his Traumatic Brain Injury from an October car accident. For grace, hope, healing and return to more "normal" ministry, family and community sooner not later. We thank God for some signs of progress.

Since we had our 40th anniversary this past year, we are spreading out times for reflection and celebration over the year. We recommend it!

Goodrich Study Leave trip to Israel – We have saved the funds and time, for 3 years to finally travel to Israel. This Whitworth Univ. trip is led by NT scholar Dr. Jim Edwards, world circumstances permitting. We will be out of the office June 1 – 8. The beginning of the trip falls during our end of May "off" time.