

**“Seek first the reign of God and His righteousness and all these things will be added unto you...” Luke 12:22-34**

**This prompted the question, “Do I/we seek the reign of God today, in and for my/our life? Congregation? For the presbytery? For the world and my/our sphere of influence?” And HOW? How would you answer?**

*“You will know as much of God, and only as much of God, as you are willing to put into practice.”*

**Eric Liddell, The Disciplines Of The Christian Life**

*“We would like a church that again asserts that God, not nations, rules the world, that the boundaries of God's kingdom transcend those of Caesar, and that the main political task of the church is the formation of people who see clearly the cost of discipleship and are willing to pay the price.”* **Stanley Hauerwas, Resident Aliens: Life in the Christian Colony**

*“If western societies have become post-Christian mission fields, how can traditional churches become then missionary churches?”* **Darrell Guder, PhD, PCUSA pastor, author, retired Dean of Princeton Seminary**

*“At the moment of crisis, you will not rise to the occasion, you will default to your training.”* Tod Bolsinger (From training talks, Canoeing the Mountains, to church leaders in February  
What Do You Do in Default Mode?

\*Preaching (“Talking Longer”) \*Programs (“Old Tricks”) \*Pastoral Care (“Trying harder”)

**We start with a regional perspective first this month, reporting from important time with Rocky Mountain Synod Staff Forum, in Denver:**

#### **A. Trends across the Synod of the Rocky Mountains. What may God be saying in all of this?**

- a. Clergy shortage is here for small, rural & smaller town churches in our region & across the nation. Other synod presbyteries are in it, too.
  - 3 presbyteries committed to further conversation and exploration as to ways we can proactively collaborate such as interpret, recruit, explore a rural internship for seminarians, ...all ideas welcomed. Let’s make time to explore this.
- b. The pace of change and technology is impacting all of our churches and ministry – **How?**  
*We need to discuss and be learning/teaching ongoing adaption as the NEW NORMAL*
- c. Essential to explore new ways/model of equipping, pastoring church in rural areas, small towns and cities, including:
  - i. Equipping, empowering lay people:
    - to discover, develop and use their spiritual gifts, including additional training for some in areas to cover much of what a pastor would do,
    - creating a ministry team/teams for a congregation or cluster of congregations, especially those with no pastor, but goal is for ALL congregations
    - churches “discover their resources in God/faith, selves, church, community, and ...”
  - ii. Dinner Church / “small discipleship communities,” as part of existing congregations, instead of stereotypical, institutional/building/program focused “church.” Addressing spiritual hunger, loneliness, identity and purpose
- d. Presbytery meetings:

- i. Need ways for times of listening, asking and conversation for input on the topic of “Imagining the future of the rural church.”
- ii. Times for educating and empowering lay leaders as well as. How do we spark saving change in rock-ribbed, determined congregations. See iii.
- iii. See ways to address the need in bold below.

A resource to watch and discuss ourselves and consider ways to share broadly- Tod Bolsinger’s videos, *Canoeing the Mountains*, and accompanying book of presentation to Philadelphia Presbytery & that ELCA Synod. See section II G below for info & links

### **B.Yellowstone Presbytery, synopsis we shared of goals and challenges:**

- a. Equipping and encouraging focus LC Goals for 2019, including Creating a Discipleship Culture versus membership/consumer culture (a need all others concurred with)
- b. Challenges of small and/or rural churches, most of which apply to medium sized churches –
  - i. Financial challenges
  - ii. Need to transition to practices and culture of discipling & equipping the saints for ministry, to discern where the Spirit is at work, be creative, relationally based, spiritually strong, embodying Christ, outwardly focused... and how to be *adaptive* 21<sup>st</sup> century congregations.
  - iii. Hard to attract pastors, especially 21<sup>st</sup> century culture *equippers*
  - iv. Shrinking pool of existing leaders through death and people leaving community
  - v. Fear and/or resistance to adapting for 21<sup>st</sup> century in local congregations, and pastors and sessions not trained how to lead change – see ref. to Bolsinger materials below

### **II. Steps we are taking to provide strong pastoral leadership and equip other for pastorless congregations:**

A. Aiding the search: George is contacting seminaries and working with the placement office to publicize our vacancies.

B. Publicizing the calling, opportunity and need for CRE’s. Working with PMT on giving prayerful thought to varied aspects of training, preparation and oversight:

Margee Smith, Lewiston. Formal coursework complete. Several others expressing interest or praying about whether God may be leading them to explore this training and calling.

C. Training lay leaders in Jordan, monthly. Lewistown on Spiritual Formation and direction, at their request.

D. Rethinking curriculum for training. Some of the material is dated for equipping leaders for the church of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It’s no longer 1960! The overwhelming need is for what can be called a missional mindset modeling Christ and sent OUTSIDE the church to join in Christ’s mission versus the old “attraction” model.

Interestingly, in small towns the people can be very missional with eyes, hearts for meeting needs, relating and embodying Christ in the community, but may need training to share the Good News and their own story/testimony of faith and God at work in their lives and ways to adapt as a church.

- iii. Search committees need to be informed about the new realities and needs trends in mission and ministry as they begin to search for a pastor trained to equip and help them navigate these trends into fruitful ministry and mission. Usually this requires a fresh study of scripture and their community to discern God’s mission/vision for them NOW. Gospels and Acts helpful here.
- E. Observation: two of our pastorless churches are numerically growing without clergy pastoral leadership: Hysham and St. Andrew.
- F. Regional or cluster equipping is more important than ever. LC offering opportunities in September.

- G. **Canoeing the Mountains: Christian Leadership in Uncharted Territory**, by Rev. Dr. Tod Bolsinger (PCUSA pastor, trainer, seminary prof.) All day training for PCUSA's Synod of the Trinity, Philadelphia Presbytery and regional ELCA in Feb. 2019

4 video presentations, 4 podcasts for download. I have heard a previous version of this at PCUSA events and watched several of these. Very important to understand and practice.

- What Brings Change?** \* Relate (new communities)  
\* Repeat (new practices)  
\* Reframe (new ways of thinking)  
\* "Shifting"

Radical = change at the root (Not "tweaking!" or "improving" *the ways we have been doing it*)

Go to - Philadelphia Presbytery's Facebook page, under videos, has these 4 videos posted from Feb 28.

<https://presbyphl.org/re-cap-canoeing-the-mountains-event/>

Summary article of the training [http://www.syntrinity.org/featured/author-tod-bolsinger-helps-direct-leaders-as-they-are-canoeing-the-mountains/?utm\\_content=Michael&utm\\_source=VerticalResponse&utm\\_medium=Email&utm\\_term=here&utm\\_campaign=March+8+Enews%3A+Future+Church+Symposium%2C+Canoeing+the+Mountains](http://www.syntrinity.org/featured/author-tod-bolsinger-helps-direct-leaders-as-they-are-canoeing-the-mountains/?utm_content=Michael&utm_source=VerticalResponse&utm_medium=Email&utm_term=here&utm_campaign=March+8+Enews%3A+Future+Church+Symposium%2C+Canoeing+the+Mountains)

**God's Opportunity for adapting leaders and church cultures for effective ministry in these new and shifting times. We need to be equipped and proactive NOW, as urgency of our churches is acute. Some will not be viable in 3-5 years with approaching pastor transitions, .**

**Kathy's Observations of urgency focused after preaching and meeting with some of our church leaders:**

- a. **Financial and membership crises are God's opportunities.** We need to be ready for, catalysts for change which most will never consider or do unless desperate, "We can't go on as we are". (pain of staying the same and dwindling/dying is now worse than that of growth and change with its pain, unknowns and loss).
- b. A Need for Vision, Hope, cultivating spiritual growth/roots, being good neighbors – locally, globally.
- c. Need to discover, develop a new culture and way of being church for 21<sup>st</sup> century, and start to live into it or only a chaplain/caretaking, old school pastor will be interested, further accelerating decline.
- d. Essential to live and grow and discern God's mission *before* and *while* finishing MIF, calling of a pastor.
- e. A culture of Lay equipping, training and ALL in ministry according to gifts is essential in all churches.
- f. Important for LC and PMT to communicate and collaborate on this, which is starting.

**Recall Two National Needs within the church from the Heath Rada Moderatorial Term:**

- a. **Improvement of Preaching** – Thus preaching cohort
- b. **Improvement of Spiritual Formation** – A request from Lewistown Church.... Do we need to provide training for pastors in spiritual formation and then group spiritual direction?

BUT- Also living God's concerns for compassion, righteousness, justice, as we respect the many and varied ways our diverse presbytery may see as best to live out their faith in addressing them

- a. Immigration
- b. Economic plight of ranchers and farmers caught in the trade wars. (see Bozeman Chronicle article 4/7)
- c. Our shrinking, underserved Rural Communities who grow our food, protect our land
- d. Stewarding creation ( Gen 1) Environment – Climate Change and various pollutions; i.e. impact of longer summers...
- e. Racism in our bounds: Native American and Anglo and Latino,

**Camping and Youth: Met after Presbytery on March 30**, George attended. See Curt's Camping report.

- a. Staffing and publicity are essential and underway now.
- b. Child and Youth protection policy will be highlighted again in training.
- c. A lot of rental of the space this summer during off-camp weeks.
- d. Summer camp speakers:
  - a. Elementary camp (July 14-18) George
  - b. Junior High Camp (July 21-26) George
  - c. Senior High Camp (July 28- August 2) Daniel and Callie Triller

**2. We continue to see the need for Increased Discussion and Understanding of:**

- a. **Christian Discipleship for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century:** What does a discipleship culture look and act like? “How would Christ live? What would He do if he were in my body?” Different congregation should be asking this question in its local and cultural contexts... And the, with God’s leading and prompting, do it.
- b. **Spiritual Conflict:** From Job 2 to Jesus himself, to Ephesians 6 and Revelation, the Scriptures are clear that we are embroiled in the unseen, epic spiritual battle of good and evil. What evidence do we see of this in our day? How might God be leading us to better understand, be equipped for and live out this part his commission to disciples(Luke 9, Mt. 10...)? What might be the consequences if we do not? See Andrews’ article in May/June *Presbyterians Today*.

**Opportunities for equipping, connecting:** Please publicize & bring group to Regional gatherings in September

“Won’t You Be My Neighbor?” Jackson Hole conf May 31 -June 1 including Co-moderator Vilmarie @ [https://pcjh.org/?event=wont-you-be-my-neighbor-presbytery-event-with-vilmarie-cintron-olivieri&event\\_date=2019-05-31](https://pcjh.org/?event=wont-you-be-my-neighbor-presbytery-event-with-vilmarie-cintron-olivieri&event_date=2019-05-31)

Whitworth Leadership Summit – June 24 -27, @ Whitworth Univ., Spokane. Note the Speakers, schedule, tracks and more info @ <https://www.whitworth.edu/cms/administration/church-engagement/whitworth-ministry-summit/> Yellowstone is a partner presbytery.

**1. Stated Clerk Transition from Jim to Melissa:**

- a. June 1, 2019. Each having half- responsibility for the job.
- b. November 2, 2019. Melissa becomes stated clerk, performing 2/3rds of job.
- c. January 1, 2020, Melissa has the whole job.

**2. Charles and Melissa Johnson, PCUSA co-workers from Zambia again this August:** Suggested Donation to cover their travels: \$250 per Church.

- a. August 17 & 18 - FPC Billings
- b. August 19 - ?
- c. August 20 - FPC Dillon
- d. August 21 & 22 - Personal time
- e. August 23 - FPC Stanford ?
- f. August 24 & 25 - FPC Great Falls
- g. August 26 - FPC Bozeman
- h. August 27 - Ennis with Steve and Elaine Hundley, maybe with church folks
- i. August 28 - Personal time
- j. August 29 - Depart for Texas
- k. **Is this schedule correct?**

**Personal** – Both of our moms have had increased challenges and needs the last several months.