

If western societies have become post-Christian mission fields, how can traditional churches become then missionary churches?

Dr. Darrell Guder, Princeton Seminary, Emeritus, Dean, Professor, author; *The Continuing Conversion of the Church, The Incarnation and the Church's Witness.*

In times of great change, learners inherit the earth, while the learned find themselves beautifully equipped for a world that no longer exists.

Eric Hoffer

The Vision Statement of our presbytery is the framework for our report this time. Please note the 2019 goals from our Leadership Cabinet following it's evaluation of 2017-18's:

I. Yellowstone Presbytery – guided and sustained by scripture, the Holy Spirit, and prayer—is a community rooted in the love of Christ:

These are times of rapid change which can be confusing and unsettling times for many of us, for the people Christ calls us to shepherd and for the people and communities where God sends us to proclaim and embody the Good News. Nationally and globally, developments on the political scene are unsettling for many. Culturally, the calls for setting things right by addressing racism, sexism, and immigration rightly capture the conscience and passion of the church. Events in the Roman Catholic Church, Southern Baptist Convention, United Methodist Church, in the Willow Creek Church, to name a few, are sadly eroding public and attender confidence in all churches. Worship attendance nationally is in steady decline. The pastor shortage across the larger Church continues. Yet, the spiritual, relational, social, justice hungers continue, as God's opportunities for the body of Christ, us as Christ's disciples.

Where do we find our new patterns, power and basis of response to these challenges and calls?

We, as Presbyterians, have pledged, with the Church in every age, to be "guided and sustained by Scripture, the Holy Spirit, and Prayer..." The Directory for Worship is instructive for our reliance on Scripture (W-2.2001): ***"The Church confesses the Scriptures to be the Word of God written, witnessing to God's self-revelation. Where that Word is read and proclaimed, Jesus Christ the Living Word is present by the inward witness of the Holy Spirit..."*** The Holy Spirit brings God's voice through scripture present in our context and helps us rightly apply and be guided by the scriptures today. **BUT-** The Holy Spirit mainly does so through prayer, the spiritual practices/disciplines and disciple communities. When we are humble and patient and prayerful, the Holy Spirit can help us discern the way forward together, as Christ's twenty-first century disciples. Believing this, we have life, Christ's life, as Yellowstone Presbytery – and as individual congregations.

II. We Will Gather Together... "And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging each other and all the more as you see the day drawing near." Hebrews 10:24-25. In all of our God-loving, Christ-following diversity, we are the body of Christ and the better for meeting together. The opportunities to gather with each other in Christ are regular and intentional:

A. Three presbytery meetings a year... at which we worship; we dwell in the Scripture in such a way that we believe that Christ is actually, spiritually present; we fellowship with, pray for and encourage one another in faith and life. ***At presbytery, as we are in our Churches, Sunday to Sunday and in groups and 1-1 throughout the week, we are the body of Christ gathered for God, for each other and for the sake of Christ and Christ's mission in the world God loves. We also:***

- a. Meet monthly as clusters of pastors and lay leaders... Butte (Veva Larson), Central (Debbie Funke), Billings (Dave Thompson), and Miles City (Neva Rathbun).
- b. Convene as the open-to-any preaching cohort before presbytery meetings (Jack Bell or Susi Ennis).

- c. Work, study, pray and attend to various teams, ministries and missions of our presbytery – PMT, LC, Camping and Youth...
- d. Pray for each other in the presbytery's round of prayer, posted on the Yellowstone Presbytery website: yellowstonepcusa.org.

III. **We Will Equip and Encourage disciple-making congregations and leaders for living the Gospel... intentionally becoming more like Christ, ably sharing our faith; impacting leaders. We equip and encourage each other at presbytery meetings through:**

- a. **Resourcing modules:** This presbytery meeting we are providing resources and encouragement for pastors and leaders to obey Christ's command/invitation: "Follow Me." Recent meeting resource topics include: (Kathy list...)
- b. **Denominational Concerns and Policies:** Helping churches and pastors interpret and appropriately implement the guidance and prescribed policies of the PCUSA. In this year, the Children and Youth Protection Policy.
- c. **Sharing in the meeting by several congregations** what is happening and what God is doing in their corporate life and mission...
- d. **Refining our opinions (our perceptions of what God is doing)** through dialogue on issues, overtures, etc.
- e. **Resourcing between meetings...**

A. Kathy and I are available to equip and encourage leaders in congregations to better learn, explore and practice some of the works of ministry and service,

- 1. including visioning and adapting to be missionary, missional communities of disciples in the 21st century, preaching, lay pastoral care, etc. as we are doing in Jordan and elsewhere.
- 2. Moderating sessions and serving communion in pastorless churches.
- 3. As we travel through the presbytery, preaching and pastoring, guiding, listening, dreaming with you we are aware that we are the face of the Presbytery, expressing the care and nurture of the presbytery for its churches.

B. Other leaders across our presbytery with a wide range of spiritual gifts, experiences, passions...

C. Jim Tarr, Stated Clerk, is helping our congregations remain in compliance with denominational procedures. This will be a year of transition as Jim, working with Debbie Blackburn and George helps transition Assistant Stated Clerk Melissa Perrault into the Stated Clerk roll. See LC and it's Personnel function update.

D. Susan Seibert in our office can answer many questions.

E. Equipping and resourcing events, and consultations of various kinds we and the LC or PMT provide for our presbytery, often in partnership with other presbyteries, a university, other denomination...

NOTE for 2019 -

Whitworth Leadership Summit, June 24 – 27 beginning with silent retreat option

Formerly WIM

<https://www.whitworth.edu/cms/administration/church-engagement/whitworth-ministry-summit/speakers/>

With the GA Co-Moderator, "WON'T YOU BE MY NEIGHBOR?" Equipping Conf in Jackson Hole , May 31 – June 1, See flier REGISTRATION BEGINS: APRIL 8, AT PCJH.ORG

F. Missionaries we partner with to join us periodically

G. Equipping opportunities we partner with our congregations

IV. **We will go out to join Christ in Christ's mission** in our communities, Montana and the World... embodying and sharing Christ's Good News; loving and serving, as we are commanded, in words,

actions, and relationships... From each gathering presbytery meeting, God sends, deploys us in the power of the Holy Spirit as 'sent ones' into God's world, each with our specific gifts and callings.

But God's primary mission is accomplished and the Gospel shared and embodied/lived out in the local congregation, which in turn nurtures, equips and sends/deploys us as God's followers into our families, communities, world as disciples 24/7.

- i. As we said 15 years ago when we came to the presbytery, we understood our primary calling as, "*We are to do all we can to help you and your congregation have a fruitful ministry.*" We are privileged to be servants of Christ and the Gospel, joining you in Christ's mission by being your servants.

Some of the places and areas of Christ's mission we corporately join

- b. **Camp Westminster Spires: The primary ministry we do together as a presbytery.** Curt Kochner chairs the cCamping and Youth Team, joined by new and younger talent. Please see the Camping and Youth report.
- c. **Local mission in partnership with a congregation when we meet there. Sometimes in the past those able to be present have served in a local mission on Friday morning before the presbytery meets... Might we do this again?** If your congregation hosts the presbytery, is there a mission of your church in town that we might serve in for the morning if there is no training workshop ahead?
- d. **Joint Mission Trips...** FPC Billings to East Africa 2020
FPC, Bozeman, others... please keep us posted as possibilities arise.

Supporting and praying for Pastor Paul Neshangwe and his congregations and broader ministry in Zimbabwe, Charles and Melissa Johnson

- e. **Whitworth Fellows...** One fellow is confirmed and will be based out of FPC, Dillon. We are praying and seeking 1 – 2 more. (There were MANY more ministry site applications than available fellows this year.

Family Life

We are deeply grateful for your friendship and prayers. George's mother has had 2 minor but impactful strokes in the last 4 months and life is growing increasingly difficult and complicated.