

Yellowstone presbytery sisters and brothers in Christ, it is a privilege to serve as your Co-General Presbyters, partners in Christ's ministry & mission. Your prayers, faith, love, service and perseverance are an encouragement to us. We thank God for the myriad of ways over the last year we have seen the Holy Spirit is at work in and through **you** as leaders and disciple communities (congregations) here in Montana in changing and challenging times – mission trips; new ways of offering Vacation Bible Schools; serving and partnering in your communities; pastor search committees prayerfully seeking God's guidance and welcoming pastors; your gifts of time, prayer, long drives, conference calls, deliberations in groups and committees... :)

As Christ's disciples all of us seek to love and honor God through our various spiritual gifts, callings and personalities. We worship regularly, we pray frequently, we serve as faithfully as we know how. But, *where, we wonder, is a deep, stirring, passionate love for God and for each other in Christ's body? How do we deepen into a Christ-like love and compassion for the poor, the hurting, the least and the lost - marks of the Christian and of vibrant disciple communities?* In Almost Christian: What the Faith of Our Teenagers is Telling the American Church, Kenda Creasy Dean, Princeton Seminary associate professor of Youth, Church and Culture's research delivers prophetic and practical challenges and opportunities to us in the church today. The tepid faith and absence of teens in congregations is NOT mainly about *teens*. Rather, they are a "barometer of American churches." What children and teens hear, see and experience from us adults is "that Christianity is not a big deal, that God requires little, and that the church is a helpful social institution filled with nice people focused primarily on 'folks like us' " "What we have been less able to convey is faith." Ouch!

Do we long for the Holy Spirit to rekindle a vibrant, contagious, embodied love for God and neighbor in us? In the community of disciples where you worship? We are praying for this in our lives, in our presbytery. **Linda Valentine** is putting such questions on the table for us with our denomination's adopted priority and theme 2008-20012, "**Growing God's Church Deep and Wide.**" Separate information introduces **Growing God's Church Deep and Wide, Part II, equipping for Yellowstone Presbytery congregations and leaders, offered in clusters** around the presbytery courtesy of the PCUSA's Mission Council staff in Church Growth & Evangelism – your GA per capita @ work in YOUR congregation, in our presbytery!! We also would like to facilitate conversations and opportunities such as a half-day retreat regionally, which enable our relationship with God to grow deeper. Learning from the Spirit in each other we would seek to develop life-transforming practices as disciples which our teens can imitate as we all demonstrate Christ to the world around us.

Key Developments include: (please refer to the reports of ALL our committees, ministry teams...):

The Vision Team continues soliciting input in preparing its report. Ric Tieman and Debbie Blackburn faithfully lead the Team. We are hearing from you that you agree with the general direction the presbytery is going towards the fulfillment of our Vision Statement. In August Council discussed and provided input on "Four strands fulfilling the Vision statement", the 8-page draft you received. Council thought the processes, practices and patterns of building interconnecting relationships are putting us on the right track and offered improvements and further questions and ideas. As to structure of the presbytery, there is also general agreement that the current structure is not serving well and that implementing Option 2 in some form is desirable. The Vision Team is continuing according to your guidance, then, in these directions. However, it is also becoming clear that all 8 presbyteries in the Synod of the Rocky Mountains are in various forms and levels of need, even crisis. Our ongoing adaptations and planning with regards to form/structure need to include conversations with them take into account their needs and explore new partnerships and collaborations. The Team will bring its report in February, but adjustments may have to be made to

partner with other presbyteries in our synod (see below).

Camping and Youth: Thanks to Cathy McLean for her dedicated past service to the programming of the Camp. Thanks to Brent Long and the Facilities Team for bird-dogging the well. Thanks to Curt Kochner and Susan Thomas for stepping into the leadership of this committee. New life is springing up here. At the Jr/Sr High Youth retreat this fall over 40 students from 8 congregations attended. Thanks to all who were adult counselors on the retreat. We were asked by the teens helping Susan and Curt plan to be the retreat speakers. Ask any there about the ziplines!!

Committee on Ministry: Triennial Visits are beginning again according to the *Book of Order* mandates. Please welcome those who have come to listen to and support the work of God in your congregation. They will come with a list of resources to help strengthen the mission and congregational life of each church. They will share the mission of the presbytery. They come to bring the love and connectivity of the Body of Christ.

Mission Committee: Our mission committee has not met much this year due to the family concerns of Jim Moses, the moderator. Yet, mission is at the heart of our Triune God, our calling and our Vision Statement. Thanks to Jim Moses who has led the committee these last two years. The Nominating Committee will be bringing a newly nominated moderator in its report. Who do you know with a passion for mission who can join in? The next meeting of the Mission Committee – November 13 in Billings.

Synod's transition's impact on presbytery – Departure of Synod Executive & Office

Administrator: Zane Buxton, Synod Executive, is leaving the position to take an interim pastorate in Boise, ID and the Synod eliminated the position of Rebecca Kennedy, Office Administrator. This throws a great deal of new responsibility and work to presbytery staff and the Synod Coordinating Council of which Ted and George are members. In the next two years all eight presbyteries face varying degrees of visionary, financial, and staffing crises. What might God's Spirit be saying to us through this opportunity to explore and experiment with partnering and collaborating more with sister presbyteries and others in local, regional and global mission and ministry?

Fundraising for Our Salaries and Expenses: As you may know we must raise approximately \$44,000 in 2010 to offset half of our salary and of our ministry expenses. As of November 1, we are deeply grateful to having received or have pledged to us approximately \$38,500. How grateful we are to those of you who partner with us! Before long, we'll be sending out our stewardship request. Please watch for it and contribute as you are graciously led.

Priorities:

1. Vision Team ongoing Implementation for planning and restructuring to better fulfill our Vision
2. Strengthening and supporting leaders and congregations
3. Mission emphasis and Committee assessed, adapted for greater responsiveness & fruitfulness.
4. Camping & Youth Ministries revitalizations and working in consort with Campus Ministries, new options?
5. Stewardship and Financial Development for Christ's ministry and mission.
6. Resource all Committees towards developing goals and steps in the fulfilling of our Vision Statement.
7. Prayerfully seek with all of you the deepening of the Spiritual Life and Passion of the Presbytery.

Hosea 12: 6: "So you, by the help of your God, return; observe justice and mercy [love], and wait on your God continually."

Grateful to be in God's Service and Yours,
George and Kathy