

âCo-General Presbyters' Report to Yellowstone Presbytery, February, 2013

*"For perfection as well as its reward does not consist in spiritual delights (though favors from God these are) but in greater love and in deeds done with greater justice and truth." – Teresa of Avila, Interior Castle, 1577.*

**Discipleship and Spiritual Formation:** In accordance with Yellowstone's Vision Statement section on equip disciple-making congregations *and leaders*; we are very interested in asking and digging much deeper, "What is disciple-making, and how do congregations accomplish this by the Holy Spirit?" And secondly, "How might a presbytery create a culture of discipleship and be helpful to congregations and leaders to make disciples, to create a culture of living intentionally as disciple communities?" As funding grows more tentative for the presbytery, these questions seem to be the most important and urgent ones the presbytery and we need to be asking in 2013.

Exploring current thinking and fruit-full practices in Discipleship and Spiritual Formation, what we are pursuing includes the following:

- A. George attended the PCUSA National Discipleship Conference, January 21-24. Subsequently, we were asked to be on the National Planning Team for this National Conference in 2014. Kathy serves on the PCUSA National Evangelism Network (sort of Advisory Board-think tank)
- B. Kathy and George attended a regional conference (at a PCUSA church, attended by primarily Presbyterians) for the *Imago Christi* movement, led by the Rev. Dr. Tom Ashbrook, Lutheran pastor, author of **Mansions of the Heart: Exploring the Seven Stages of Spiritual Growth**, January 10-12, 2013. Based on Scripture and the paradigm of phases (mansions) in the writings of Teresa of Avila, ongoing spiritual transformation in Christ-likeness and love relationship with Christ/in Christ is integral for Christians and essential for leaders and the life and ministries of our congregations. Spiritual formation is not something "relegated to one of the aisles in the consumer market," one optional program for leaders or for a few 'spiritual' types. (p. 240)
- C. **ENGAGE: The Gospel** – Ray Jones and Dave Loleng send their warmest greetings and along with others in the Evangelism & Church Growth Office are very grateful for our piloting and input in developing ENGAGE. Many suggestions we ALL provided are incorporated. The new complete curriculum and process is 2/3 complete. It is divided into 3 booklets – ENGAGING the Gospel (God's Big Story), ENGAGING Discipleship and ENGAGING Mission. It includes leader guide, participant booklet, DVD's and online videos. Thus far – check out

<http://www.pcusa.org/news/2013/1/9/new-pcusa-curriculum-congregational-ministries-publ/>

Videos - <http://www.pcusa.org/engage/engage-new-normal/> <http://www.pcusa.org/resource/engage-church-shifts/>

- D. Interaction with, learning from others with similar passion and focus including Rev. Dr. Stan Ott, Vital Churches Institute, Rev. Dr. Tod Bolsinger, San Clemente Presbyterian Church & TAG Consulting.
- E. We will focus our sabbatical / study leave time (see below) on these questions and to bring forth a product (s?) and some equipping opportunities that may be directly helpful to the leaders, sessions and ministries in Yellowstone Presbytery.
  - a. George has already offered mini-retreats at FPC, Lewistown and FPC, Stanford on Saturday, February 9. Please ask Jed, Editha and their leadership about these workshops.
  - b. Others requesting these workshops so far: Debbie Funke in Manhattan, Robert Shy in Colstrip; and David Andrew in Dillon. *Anyone else interested?*
  - c. Our hopes include:
    - i. To cull & offer a good bibliography of books, curricula, videos, best practices, etc. for pastors/leaders on the topic.
    - ii. To grow deeper in Christ ourselves and help leaders understand more about spiritual growth and how it can happen in the Holy Spirit through their practices, their processes and their relationships. For example the practice of: Dwelling in the Word has gone a long way in creating a discipleship culture among us.

- iii. How can churches help us grow and LIVE as Christ's disciples in the places where we spend MOST of our time, at work and at school, in our marriages, families, communities and relationships?
- iv. To by the end of 2013 write paper on how small presbyteries can create a community and culture of discipleship and enable their congregations and leaders to grow spiritually in Christ-likeness and in mission together.

**Vision Structure Task Force:** The second main foci for the year for us and for the presbytery seems to us to be the discernment and implementation of a new presbytery-wide structure to fulfill our Vision, being worked on by the Vision Structure Task Force. This is proving to be a very large undertaking and complex process, but also exciting. Goal: A new structure which will equip and encourage congregations in a given region to prayerfully determine and carry out the presbytery's vision and the mission of Christ in their section of the presbytery while also partnering in Yellowstone and beyond as God leads. The immediate benefits we see to the emerging plan:

- A. The congregations in a given branch/covenant order of the presbytery can prayerfully dream and discern God's mission for them in context where they are, the rest of the presbytery in support.
- B. New relationships can be nurtured between congregations, leaders, members, youth and more leaders and gifts may be more easily be nurtured and involved.
- C. A stronger sense of ownership by the Branch/covenant order Churches and leaders for the mission in their region. More events and ministries done in collaboration between congregations.
- D. It may be, if presbytery staffing is to be reduced, that these branches/covenant orders, after becoming established, may be able to function with less presbytery support.
- E. We'd like to say that this restructuring will save money, but we are not entirely sure of this.
- F. Please see the report and updates of the Vision Structure Task Force for more details.

**1001 New Worshipping Communities** – Both our call as Christians and leaders in Christ's church and our Presbytery's Vision Statement compel us to prayerful exploration and seeking as to where and how the Spirit is moving for formation of new worshipping communities. Biblically, sociologically and historically this is one of the MOST effective strategies to fulfill BOTH "Equipping and encouraging discipling congregations and leaders" and "Going out to Join Christ in Christ's mission". We have spoken with Vera White, new National staff, and Craig Williams, West Coast Regional Staff.

*"New church planting is the only way we can be sure we are going to increase the number of believers in a city/town and one of the best ways to renew the whole body of Christ [including existing congregations in the city/town]. The evidence for this statement is strong – Biblically, sociologically and historically. [However] a lack of Kingdom-mindedness may blind us to this evidence...New churches best reach 1) new generations; 2) new residents; and 3) new people groups...New churches bring new ideas to the whole body, surface creative strong leaders for the whole body of churches, challenge other churches to self-examination, and serve as feeder churches for other congregations in the community." ( Excerpted from article for discussion and study on Church Planting sent out in 1001 New Worshipping Communities Dec. 2012 e-newsletter.)*

**The Bakkan Oilfield Ministries:** It would seem that a fourth foci for the year should be determining how God might lead us to be reaching out in mission to those coming into our state for the development of the oilfields and coalfields. Questions are percolating: "How might we, alone or in partnership, begin a new worshipping community since new populations predominantly prefer those to established congregations?" "How do we support the communities and the churches in those regions which are experiencing the influx of workers, families, needs and opportunities?" The Mission Committee has begun to ask such questions. Other denominations are, too. "How might we work together in support of and learn from our congregations which are bearing or will bear the brunt of the coming change?"

COM - The lack of conflict in most Yellowstone congregations and the presbytery frees time and energies for exploring how we can more effectively live and share the story of what God has done and is doing in and through Christ, and hopefully pay closer attention to how we can better join what Christ is *already* up to and love and serve our families, communities, and world. COM has been very hard at work to move towards providing increasing responsiveness, support, connection, and equipping and to regularly scheduled visits every few years. See COM report.

**Other Areas in 2013:**

- A. The Dream Team is looking at various ways we may staff to meet the presbytery vision statement as partnership funds from Synod disappear (about \$39,000 a year) at the end of 2013. Please see the Dream team report for details. See C below for area of future collaboration.
- B. The Synod is conducting interviews of presbytery councils/Leadership Cabinets to determine how our presbyteries may benefit from the Synod. Synod Representatives have requested to be at our next LeaderCab meeting for this purpose.
- C. The UKirk movement, a new PCUSA emphasis to develop collegiate ministry with and through local congregations, has asked Glacier and Yellowstone to help pilot this new paradigm and movement with the office of Collegiate Ministries in Louisville. PLUS, a seasoned college minister will provide Yellowstone and Glacier leaders, congregations, with training/equipping for this ministry & mission, and it comes with the serious possibility of a grant from the Murdoch Foundation are part of this exciting new possibility to reach out to, love, serve and disciple college students! Please see the materials that were just received.
- D. Board of Pensions sent out an important email Feb. 11. Input and feedback are needed to the Board of Pensions regarding significant restructuring of medical coverage and dues. Tom Sheffield, EP, Denver Presbytery, has contacted us asking for input from our presbytery BEFORE February 28.

Sabbatical for George and Kathy. We have served with you all for 8 ½ years. According to the sabbatical policy of the presbytery, we may be considered for a sabbatical. The Leadership Cabinet has unanimously approved personnel committee's unanimous recommendation of this sabbatical plan for the following main reasons. They have both requested that in finalizing the dates with the Personnel Committee we create more time for rest and refreshment, Sabbatical is based on Sabbath rest.

- A. At the May 2012 meeting of Presbytery the Personnel Committee was asked to help us establish a sabbatical in the near future. The thought was that this was overdue and would benefit both the Goodriches and the presbytery as a whole. Also, it is important to model and encourage the importance and many benefits of a sabbatical for all our pastors/CRE's and congregations.
- B. The topic of creating a vital, disciple-making culture and leaders in the presbytery and in churches is very timely, as fulltime Staff may or may not be possible much longer. This is at the heart of the vision of the presbytery.
- C. Taking a full three to four consecutive months away in this calendar year would be impractical and would likely slow the process of implementation of the new structure, if it were adopted. The Personnel Committee suggested, and we agreed, to the following schedule of blocks which seemed doable for both ourselves and the presbytery AND which provides for time IN 2013 for the presbytery to receive some benefits in light of the uncertain future of finances and staffing:
  - a. January 2013 – Attend the two brief conferences in January, total of ten days (George, Kathy, 4), including four days travel. See above, Discipleship & Spiritual Formation. Cut back from original proposal. 2-3 make up weeks to be arranged with Personnel in light of needs to Presbytery and Goodriches.
  - b. Mid-May – Mid-June, 2013 – four weeks for travel and reflection on two periods of time when the Church was refined and redefined itself in the face of opposition and/or pressure from culture, state and/or church institutions (New Testament scholar Dr. Jim Edwards of Whitworth University is leading a trip to Germany to study the Reformation and Bonhoeffer and the Confessing Church under the Nazi's. We plan to go on this trip, taking a little time before and after for further travel, much needed rest and integration of our learning.
  - c. August 1- September 22, 2013 for a week's vacation, personal refreshment, reflecting and writing on the proposed topics. Kathy - National Association for Relationship and Marriage Education Annual Training Conference in August.
- D. The Personal Committee recommended and Leadership Cabinet approved that the cost of this sabbatical be provided for from the funds we have *already* raised in excess of our budget over the years. Estimate: about \$15,000 in addition to a regular salary and benefits.

We are very grateful for God's Provision for all \$44,000 of the budgeted Admin support for 2012, plus \$6,000, and a few gifts and pledges for 2013! We count it a privilege to serve Christ with you in our partnership in the gospel.