

How are we as Jesus' disciples to LIVE and LEAD in times of rapid seismic shifts and polarization, in times of fear and fragmentation? Such challenges are, and have always been, God's opportunities, just as the Chinese character for *crisis* is made up of their 2 characters for *danger* and *opportunity*! Historically, God's people HAVE been in such times before. But it is a first for most of us. As the Holy Spirit applies Scripture, the lessons of those who have gone before us, and insights from listening in our contexts, we have hope that God will lead and transform us in the times and places where we are called and sent.

God has always been the present, powerful "Way-Maker and Promise-Keeper"* for God's people in the past. Will we pray for and cultivate the trusting faith that God will be and do the same for us? (*Stephy Nobles-Beans, Assoc. Chaplain for Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Ministry, Whitworth Univ.)

1. Keeping the main thing the main thing-The main thing, our center of reality, is **Jesus Christ(1)**

2. Listening well, with God's mind and heart, is essential to leadership in these times.(2)

3. Staying rooted AND adapting/shifting, responsive to the Holy Spirit in changing contexts.

Our March 6 & 7 mini-conference *Taking the Adventure God Has For Us* themes and workshops continue to address this and better equip you and your congregation. Please share the flyer & invite ANY interested in your church.

We and the Leadership Cabinet continue to see the vision statement of the presbytery as offering clear guidance and priorities for the presbytery, leading us to focus on helping equip and strengthen pastors and churches in their discipleship and joining in Christ's mission in such times... Toward that end, we see...

- a. **The continued focus on offering Stan Ott's training and materials at presbytery meetings as imperative, foundational and transforming.**
 - a. Growing commitment to and love for:
Jesus Christ - the Body of Christ - the work of Christ in the world.
 - b. Practicing the transferable concepts under each of these "4 Great's of Jesus".
 - c. The Presbytery planning team of the LC, Russ, Julie, Susi, and Kathy, seeks to listen to churches and leaders to serve and equip! Thanks to them!
 - d. It is even more essential in these times for leaders, as well as all disciples, to BE the people of God, like filled reservoirs, before we DO the work of the people of God. This adaptation of Stan Ott's admonition is also in the words of Bernard of Clairvaux":

The {one} who is wise, therefore, will see his {her} life as more like a reservoir than a canal. The canal simultaneously pours out what it receives; the reservoir retains the water until it is filled, then discharges the overflow without loss to itself...Today, there are many in the church who act like canals. The reservoirs are far too rare... You must learn to await this fullness before pouring out your gifts. Do not try to be more generous than God. - Bernard of Clairvaux, 1090-1153, French Abbot

- b. **Strengthening Pastors and Leaders**

- a. The revamping of clusters, per Stan's suggestion, as something to be explored – using internet /Go to Meeting more as more cost efficient and time-friendlier. We have both attended clusters virtually in January/February. Thoughts?
- b. Youth Ski Retreat, February 28-March 1 in Bozeman.
- c. Offer more retreat-meetings like the January Leadership retreat in our home in Bozeman...
Discernable benefits?
Clergy and leader retreats?
- d. Offering Spiritual Direction for pastors and lay leaders (George).
- c. Supporting the large number of our churches with no pastor or searching for a pastor by preaching, worshipping and being present and prayerful; equipping and supporting search committees, sessions, deacons...; possible internship in rural/small town ministry**
- d. Equipping elders to preach and lead and as potential CRE's.**
- e. Encouraging networking and partnerships in outreach, mission and service; sharing ideas and questions, establishing a new worshipping community (we are still seeking God's leading)**
- f. Exploring possible collaborations.**
- g. Discerning together with you God's opportunities as to how we find Christ, adapt/shift, discern the way forward following Christ in the unsettled culture now: racism and violence; partisan politics and incivility; corona virus and the disruption it is likely to be in the economy and in our lives...**

We believe in God's call and purpose for our disciple communities to be *thermostats* for the Way and Ways of Christ, not thermometers of our fallen natures, culture or past mistakes. Rather, we are intended to be contrast communities/lights/havens of understanding, respect and Christian love across differences both within ourselves and for our communities.

Therefore we are exploring, discussing various ways we can better focus on and equip ourselves to be salt and light, drawing upon gifts within and without our body. We both are following colleges and universities which, expecting a restless fall, are planning various training and responses.

h. Presbytery Staffing Restructuring and financial developments:

- a. LC & its Personnel subgroup, considering its response to the challenge for our May meeting.
- b. Three questions: 1) What structure best serves the presbytery mission? 2) How are the Goodriches and staff being led? 3) How pressing is the financial situation?

Personal – We are grateful for many blessings in the lives of family in MT, including Emerson Anne Goodrich born in December! George's mom recently fell and broke her hip and is very frail and fragile, ready for heaven. Prayers welcomed as our mothers' increasing challenges and needs take more time both in person and remotely.

1. *Resilient Faith: How the Early Christian 'Third Way' Changed the World*, Gerald Sittser, p. 173-4.

2. Excerpted in Scott Cormode's article A Share Story of Future Hope @ <https://fullerstudio.fuller.edu/a-shared-story-of-future-hope/> from Cormode's *The Innovative Church: How Leaders and Their Congregations Can Adapt in an Ever-Changing World* to be published Sept. 2020