

CoGeneral Presbyters Report to Yellowstone Presbytery March 1, 2011

Yellowstone Presbytery is moving forward in support of our vision statement, congregations and leaders:

- A. Phase III of our Journey – Living our vision, seeking to embody God’s preferred future as an outpost of Christ church, called, gathered, equipped and sent....The Vision Team in Phase III of our journey seeks to lead, encourage, equip us to discern and think differently, about cooperating with God’s transforming work in us and with God’s mission in the communities and world around us. The presbytery’s calling now is to continue to evaluate and align *who* and *how* we are, and *what* we do with our Vision. We are encouraged to continue to grow in the practices of disciples: how we come together and live together; new ways of deepening our relationships and building bridges and collaborating/partnering with other churches, presbyteries, groups; new ways of how we will address change and decisions in a time of accelerated shifts and elaborate 10-year long-range plans can become obsolete in just 2-3 years; and finally some adjustment in our structure to support the first three categories. *Check with Ric Tieman and Debbie Blackburn for more info, stay abreast of materials and their reports.*
- B. ENGAGE – . In keeping with, as result of, our Vision statement, Yellowstone was given a grant from The Office of Church Growth & Evangelism and Eric Hoey and Ray Jones will be in Montana providing training and coaching for disciplemaking and evangelism with interested congregations and leaders. (See separate handout) They will partner with our participating congregations and leaders to train and coach as well as pilot, adapt and contextualize the PCUSA’s new ENGAGE resources*.

*ENGAGE Jesus and learning to share the stories of who he is and what he has done for us individually and as disciple communities

ENGAGE in disciple-making

ENGAGE our communities and changing contexts through outreach, service; Living and growing as disciples and disciple communities through our words and works

Begins in February and March into the summer of 2011

- C. Sessions are prayerfully exploring and dreaming together what God might have for their congregations in ministry and mission. In December George sent a letter to sessions asking them three questions (*See the attached Letter*). It is exciting to hear that the questions have launched some important reflection, visioning and conversations among you. This is exciting: Congregations seeking God’s vision for them to connect with Christ, one another and reach out in their communities! We have heard that the letter has been picked up by other presbyteries in the Synod to help ignite new vision and new ways of “measuring” the Spirt’s work in congregations. *Please let George know how the conversations have been going in your session.*
- D. The Holy Spirit seems to be reigniting a work with the youth in some congregations, the presbytery and the Camp at Westminster Spires. *Check with Curt Kochner and Susan Thomas for details, Jody McDevitt for Rockhaven.*
- E. Presbytery Mission –The Pre-meeting mission opportunity, partnering with and led by St. Andrew, part of the presbytery’s living our Vision, connecting and partnering in effective ministry together. It could well change the life and sense of mission of the presbytery. And Zimbabwe! St. Andrew is successfully completing its leadership of this project after four years. Two other congregations, supported by the mission committee, are considering hosting the on-going mission. *Talk with Ken Sirroky, moderator of the Mission Committee for details.*

- F. The Outpouring of love and support for Mary and Dick Davis and the Anaconda Congregation during Mary's recent critical hospitalization is becoming indicative of our growing commitment to one another across this presbytery.
- G. Engaging the culture and the larger church: The Synod and the General Assembly are scaling back staff and services for financial reasons. Presbyteries are being expected to assume an even greater role in supporting PCUSA/congregational mission and ministry. These are times to ask, "How do we *do* church differently for THIS time?" While God's call for presbyteries and congregations to be disciple-making, disciple-sending congregations is timeless, the way we do this must adapt. We heartily commend this presbytery for stepping up to the visioning process and the need to prioritize in light of our Vision, discovering God's opportunities in the changes in how we do mission and live together.
- H. God's Amazing Provision: By year-end 2011, at least four of the eight presbyteries in the Synod of the Rocky Mountains will be financially compelled to go to part-time General Presbyters. We are grateful to God and to you to be able to report that we were budgeted to fundraise \$44,500 in 2010 – or about half of our salary and ministry expenses. At the close of the year the raisings reached a little over \$47,000. Finances will be an on-going concern in the coming years, but we believe, at least through 2013, the Lord will provide.
- I. Changes in Presbytery Council Leadership: We gratefully acknowledge the service of our Council members who have just "retired" including Fran Babcock has moderated the Presbytery Council for 6 years. She has given untold hours and energy to this work. Please join us in honoring her and Jim for their long and faithful years of leadership – a service they have provided with all diligence. And we welcome Leon Rathbun, the moderator elect for the next three years. Please join us in welcoming and praying for Leon and the other new Council in important leadership roles.
- J. Pastoral Changes in the Congregations: After a period of relative pastoral stability in the presbytery, the following churches are in pastoral change or without confirmed pastoral leadership: Poplar, Miles City, Hysham, Jordan, White Sulphur Springs, West Yellowstone. First, Billings, Deer Lodge and Forsyth have recently seen the calling of new pastoral leadership. God is leading in each of these situations, but helping churches and pastors in change is taking a great deal of training and time from CoM and the presbytery staff at present. *Check with Neva Rathbun for more info and to offer any suggestions you may have for pastors or clp's.*

"Your presbytery is on the right track and ahead of many other presbyteries in discerning and pursuing God's vision of what it means to be disciples, make and send disciples, join Christ's mission, and adapting to God's opportunities and denominational changes." That is a condensing of what we heard from Paul Hooker, in light of our Vision and directions as a presbytery. Paul is Exec Presbyter from St. Augustine Presbytery who led our nFoG discussions. That is also what we are hearing from Eric Hoey and Ray Jones, who lead the Evangelism and Church Growth Unit for the PCUSA in Louisville. That is what we are hearing from numerous other pastors and Presbytery Execs around the country with whom we are sharing the Vision and practices here of what a presbytery can be, equipping, support, sending of missional congregations and leaders within the presbytery. How grateful we are to be partners with you for the work of Christ in Montana – "for such a time as this!"

George and Kathy Goodrich

December 10, 2010

To: Pastors and Sessions

From: George Goodrich

Re: The Spiritual Condition of the Congregations in Yellowstone Presbytery

“Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit’ says the Lord.” - Zechariah 4:6

For decades the General Assembly has asked us to file statistical reports, measuring each church by the “bucks in the bank, the butts in the pews, and the buildings we worship in.” Such measurements are important. We ask you to file the statistical report. But what we measure become the standards by which we determine success or failure, and it becomes our goal to grow by our measurements. Isn't there more to church and our life together than that?

So I am asking you to attempt to “measure” something else. *Would you kindly discuss together at a session meeting early in the year what the Holy Spirit seems to be doing in and through your congregation?* Then send on to me a one-page write up of your group thoughts by the February 28, 2011 presbytery meeting?

Here is a suggested process (But please use any discussion process as the Spirit leads you):

1. A brief opening prayer, asking for the Holy Spirit to speak to and through each person present.
2. A minute of silence for people to reflect on some of the following questions:
 - a. “What does the Holy Spirit seem to be doing/saying in and through the congregation?”
 - i. What are the ways God seems to be blessing this congregation?
 - ii. What is our congregation known for in the community?
 - iii. What opportunities for mission and ministry are before us?
 - iv. Frame and answer another question...
3. 15-60 minutes of group discussion... Someone could write ideas on newsprint or a board.
4. Then a five minute summary time... What did you hear the Holy Spirit “saying” to us as a whole?
5. The clerk drafts a one-page summation of what you all heard and sends it to me at the presbytery office. This piece might also serve as a basis for future session discussion.

How will we use these findings?

We think we'll use them this way, but your ideas are welcome:

It is helpful to me, to the vision team and to the council to hear from you. The Holy Spirit often leads similarly in a whole region, so if several churches point out similar movements of the Spirit, we can get a clearer picture of God's work in the presbytery.

1. We will use your input as we plan the resourcing portions of presbytery meetings.

2. We will seek to network you with other congregations that are sensing God's leading and blessing in similar ways.
3. We will share your spiritual report with presbytery council and the vision team to help inform them of God's leading in the presbytery and, particularly, in ways that the Spirit may be leading in fulfilling the presbytery vision statement (On our website: www.yellowstonepcusa.org).
4. We will inform our presbytery committees of the insights of our congregations and attempt to guide you to resources in the presbytery, in other congregations, and at the General Assembly level that may help you fulfill your Spirit-led vision.
5. We may use your input as a basis for triennial visits by the Committee on Ministry in the next couple years.
6. We may send copies or portions of your findings on to the General Assembly level with a report to the GA of what the Holy Spirit is doing in and through us in Yellowstone Presbytery.

Thanks ahead of time for your willingness to listen for and discern the Holy Spirit's leadings in your congregation – and among all of us!

A blessed Christmas and a Holy Spirit-filled year to all of us!