

CoGeneral Presbyters' Report March, 2016 Yellowstone Presbytery George & Kathy Goodrich

How are we, as Christ's disciples and as communities of disciples, to think, speak and act like Christ in a culture of anxiety/fear and polarization?

1. Remember that as Christ's body, the church, we are "the called out ones", the meaning of the Greek, *ekklesia*, I Pet. 2:9. We are disciples of Christ FIRST, citizens of God's realm or Kingdom, not of a particular political party, candidate, ideology or culture. It is in the midst of these we are called to be lights, salty agents of God's mission of redemption, and reconciliation transformation.
2. We can pray for and choose faith in God and not give in to the anxieties and fears. II Tim 1:7, Mt. 6:25-34. Our God is sovereign in the midst of change and uncertainties, as so many passages and Psalms express such as Ps. 46.
3. Remember our identity and community is IN CHRIST and we are COMMANDED by Jesus to cultivate and exhibit the character of Christ, in how we treat all people and ESPECIALLY in how we think of, speak and live with one another in Christ's body, Mt. 5-7, Gal. 5, Eph. 4-5, Col 3... Jesus COMMANDED, and then empowered his VERY diverse disciples, then and today, by the '*dunamis*' of the Holy Spirit, to love one another AS he has loved us (John 13:34-35)

"We must seek a radical new way of being the Church: loving those we disagree with – a potential gift to the world in bitter conflict." - The Archbishop of Canterbury, Austin Welby.

Actually, loving those we disagree with is not truly radical or new... Rather, it is Christ's way, the only way to be Church. It is the only way the Church - the local church, the national church, or the global church – evidences the life of Christ and the gospel, has the credibility of its high calling, and hangs together enough to accomplish its mission and authentically proclaim and demonstrate to the world what Christian Discipleship is.

We are different, were given different gifts (I Cor 12). As humans we will disagree. That is certain. However, can we do so as with self-discipline and authentic, Christ-like love? If Christ commands us to love one another in His Church, it must not only be imperative that we do so, it must also be possible to do so, enabled by the Holy Spirit. And the country, the world *needs* the Church again – to show how it is done.

How will we, in Yellowstone, as disciples, choose to follow the ways of Christ and be transformed so we embody the life and character of Christ? live the Love of Christ in our time together? How will we live God's love in the congregations we serve?

We are praying for ourselves and all of us and are eager to hear what God is doing and showing you as you pray and discuss this as congregations, clusters. Please share the stories with our Yellowstone community.

The Clusters, our structure regionally in the presbytery for community, mutual discipleship and mission among our pastors/CRE's, are all active and alive in Christ – and the pastors are alive to one another. Each cluster has its own convener and includes dwelling in the Word, sharing and support, and prayer. These are vital as isolation, burnout, lack of personal spiritual nurture and practices and lack of supportive community are among the obstacles to healthy pastoral leadership. White Sulphur cluster has adopted a vision for a mission specific to the cluster and in the presbytery that God is calling the cluster to pursue together. ***The Holy Spirit is at work among the participants of the cluster!***

The Clusters and their conveners:

- a. The Butte Cluster – Freeman McCall and Rusty Craig
- b. The White Sulphur Cluster – Debbie Funke – includes a few lay leaders
- c. The Billings Cluster – Mary Davis
- d. The Miles City Cluster – Neva Rathbun and Kristin Willett- includes some pastors from other denominations.

Suggested Next Phase for Clusters:

- a. Prayerfully consider in light of our vision statement: where the Holy Spirit is already at work? How is each pastor/session making disciples and disciple-making leaders in each congregation? How might they share spiritual gifts of leaders or groups to strengthen this work and the congregations in their cluster? The presbytery? What ministry they might offer to the larger presbytery? (See Leadership Cabinet goals below and in their report.)
- b. Prayerfully dream and seek to discern, in light of our vision statement: how God may be leading the cluster and the congregations they serve in mission together?

Leadership Cabinet Goals for 2015/2016: We made substantial progress as a Cabinet and staff in the pursuit of our adopted goals in 2015. With us serving only half-time, these provide important foci and prioritization for us all as Leadership Cabinet and presbytery.

Our Leadership Cabinet 2015 Goals categorically were:

Over all Value: Experimentation

- A. Communication
- B. Building Community
- C. Spiritual Nurture of Pastors and Leaders
- D. Stated Clerk Transition

For 2016 the Leadership Cabinet adopted the following goals, and the sub-points below indicate ideas raised at our meetings or options we hope the presbytery may consider.

- a. Emphasize **disciple-making and forming** in congregations and presbytery

Do you long to be more of who Christ intended you to be, do you want to become a better, more effective leader and develop better leaders in your congregation? While the quality of leadership does determine the reach and vitality of a congregation, *“the quality of the church’s leadership is directly proportional to the quality of its discipleship.”* (The Forgotten Ways: Reactivating the Missional Church, Alan Hirsch). Our leadership crisis is really about our discipleship crisis, what Dallas Willard refers to as “The Great Omission” in the American church today!

 - i. Discuss and pursue through clusters
 - ii. Offer resourcing – see separate handout
 - iii. Learn from congregations, presbyteries, groups doing this effectively
 - iv. Support PMT clergy retreat
- b. Build community in the presbytery, continuing to grow our communication
 - i. Emphasize and develop Clusters
 - ii. Develop Presbytery Sunday
 - iii. Support PMT’s clergy retreat
 - iv. Offer an Elder/lay retreat or several by clusters, or presbytery-wide.
 - v. Website and Facebook updating

- vi. Currents usage expanded.
- c. Focus on the spiritual nurture of pastors, leaders and potential leaders by understanding and using spiritual gifts. (Also see goals above)
 - i. Emphasize and develop clusters
 - ii. The development of a cohort (7/16 to 7-17) of interested pastors to pursue participation in the PCUSA grant, *“Mind and Hearts Set on Christ: Spiritual Formation and Preaching Enrichment for Pastors”*. See separate handout.
 - iii. The identification and initial training of 1-2 more spiritual directors in the presbytery.
 - iv. The strengthening and equipping of pastors, plus church treasurers and clerks or personnel committee members, in partnership with the Board of Pensions through: The BoP seminars and consultations -
 - a. Mark Frey’s seminar on Saturday, March 5, following the presbytery meeting – See flier and RSVP.
 - b. September 27-30, 2016 in Billings.
 - v. DREAM Grant, PCUSA and Whitworth grants towards Yellowstone Whitworth Rural Ministry Initiative: Supporting, strengthening our pastors, congregations and new ministry and mission possibilities and developing future leaders for Christ’s Church in partnership. We have been working on this during the fall/winter. This is the second year and we just met with the six students (down from the 10 hoped for due to *high* demand stretching WU grant funds) placed in 3 Yellowstone parishes based on a variety of requirements. The need: to raise, find, vote the final \$6,000 for required stipends for these students. See separate handout.
- d. Clarify the covenant with Glacier and explore other **partnerships** for future collaboration (see goals above)
 - i. Work on existing partnerships with other presbyteries and Whitworth University

Camp – The annual winter ski retreat to be lodged at FPC, Butte, skiing at Discovery, is scheduled for February 26-28. George will be participating again. PLEASE publicize and invite folks. Speak to George or Curt for more details, go to link on center section of our website yellowstonepcusa.org.

New Worshipping Communities – Jack Bell, CRE, chair

Starting New Worshipping Communities: A Process of Discernment (2014) by the Presbyterian Mission Agency. This booklet was given to each person attending the last 2 presbytery meetings and is available for [Free download here](#).

A MUST see – excellent collection of free, downloadable resources and videos on 8 New Worshipping Communities which have sprung to life in Northwest Coast Presbytery over the last several years. <http://www.northwestcoast.org/learning-community>

Other Items to Report:

General Information: Please consult the presbytery website for updated information, forms, etc: www.yellowstonepcusa.org and the *Yellowstone Currents* edited by Susan Thomas with our sincere thanks!

Intermountain: For resources for churches such as teaching videos or Lenten children’s sermons based on the lectionary from the chaplain go to <http://www.intermountainministry.org>

- a. JP Carlson has been enthusiastically chosen by the Intermountain to serve as our representative from Yellowstone Presbytery.
- b. At the Board meeting on December 3rd, George Goodrich received the Summit Award, the highest award Intermountain gives occasionally to staff or volunteers for service to the Agency. "I was humbled and delighted to be selected!"

Rocky Mountain College Board. George continues to represent the presbytery on the Board, and serves on the Church Relations and Student Affairs Committees.

Whitworth University: Kathy serves on the Board of Trustees and on its Academic Affairs Com. These are times of both challenge and opportunities, particularly for Christian colleges and universities on many fronts including emotional and mental health, racial tensions, costs,

Synod of Rocky Mountains: Kathy, along with Ron Hanson, serves as Yellowstone Commissioner and its TF for reviewing WNL. Meetings set for March and August.

God's provision and answer to prayer has resulted in the Goodrich's raising about \$41,000 against a budget of \$30,000 in 2015. **THANK YOU** for your care, prayers, encouragement and support as we partner together here in Christ's mission. We are *deeply* grateful, especially since our families' crises meant we could not donate much extra time to fundraising this year as we have in years past. 21 donating individuals and churches help us surpass our personal goal of \$40,000. 18 of those donors are within the presbytery.

In 2016, with losses in church membership in some congregations and a drop in projected income from per capita, we may need to raise additional funds

Personal

We remain SO very grateful for your kindness, prayers, support, cards and letters as we grieve our dads and celebrate their legacies and home going to be with Christ. Mere words are inadequate to convey how much you and this means on our ongoing journey in which we want to cooperate with Christ that we might grow more and more like him until we "graduate" to Christ's presence. God's Spirit was so very present during Kathy's Dad's services which we helped lead. Kathy's mom was blessed and touched and pleased. She is doing all right, riding on prayers and 50 years of walking with Christ through calm and rough seas. George's mom had a minor stroke in early December and is ok but it can be draining and complicating at times. Your prayers and your wisdom welcomed.

Other news, our daughter Gillian is on target to receive her Masters in Spanish Literature in May. And, Chip and Staci are having another little boy in March! Joy!