

**God's people are *Loved & Called, Gifted & Equipped & Sent to join in Christ's mission!***

*The gifts that he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ.*

*Ephesians 4:11-13*

**Living as salty disciple-making, disciple sending churches and discovering God's opportunities in the current and growing clergy shortage:** We are likely to see an increase in the shortage of full-time pastors in rural congregations across America and in Yellowstone Presbytery. Why? ... And, since God's call to equip disciples and to mission do not change, what might God be saying and doing?

Why? Some reasons include:

- a. Many changes in both churches and the culture in North America and the West.
- b. The baby-boom generation clergy are retiring.
- c. Seminary enrollments and those entering pastoral ministry have been declining.
- d. The rising costs of a full-time pastor in our nation (salary, housing, medical and pension benefits and ministry expenses) mean that a full-time pastor may be increasingly out of reach of a local church.
- e. Generally, clergy are coming from and gravitating to urban and suburban churches over small-town and rural congregations.

**And, since God's call to equip disciples and to mission do not change, what might God be saying? Doing?**

**Times of change are God's opportunity to wonder, pay attention, ask questions, learn, let go and adapt.**

\*Do our current priorities, practices and ways reflect those of citizens of heaven who model Christ?

\*Have we neglected God's spiritual gifts, calling and mission to EACH of us (Eph. 4, Mt 28...), over-relying on a pastor?

\*What can we learn from the practices and life of the early church in Acts and the first centuries?

Here in Yellowstone Presbytery, we have had a record number of congregations seeking pastors in a short period. In 2017 -2018, we have seen eight churches seeking pastors, with six securing some form of pastoral leadership. So far in 2018-2019 we have five congregations currently seeking pastors, for a total of 11 of our 23 Yellowstone congregations involved in pastoral searches. More changes will occur in the next 3 years.

We and the PMT have been asking what God might be saying and exploring a variety of options. The Community Church of Jordan had two Whitworth fellow student pastors and is developing an exciting and unique approach to their search. *While* they continue to seek a pastor, we are helping them train teams of lay people to identify their gifts and callings, make pastoral calls, preach and lead worship, offer spiritual care and leadership to live out Eph. 4:11-13, whether or not they may find a full-time or part-time pastor.

Further, the presbytery is exploring a variety of models for pastoral ministry, which "*equip the saints [disciples of ALL ages] for the work of ministry*" and may include: bi-vocational pastors; churches sharing a pastor; or regional pastors who preach occasionally, moderate session, perform complicated pastoral care, while encouraging and training the gifted lay leaders in the congregation to be God's leaders in the church, day-to-day; or churches which may be completely lay-run with Commissioned Ruling Elders. Clearly, in rural America God's Spirit is at work, stirring and moving in new ways, may we listen to and follow the Spirit's leading us into God's future together.

So we ask you to be open to what the Holy Spirit seems to be doing among us. Please dream with us and offer your ideas, so that together we may grow more like Christ, joining the Spirit in 'turning the world upside down' as Christ's present and future Church.

**The following report is framed on the 2018 Leadership Cabinet Goals:**

**1. Encourage and emphasize discipleship among the people of Yellowstone Presbytery.**

**Camping and Youth** held a highly successful camping summer ministry season. Highlights: About 40 campers; a very mature counseling staff, including 4 Whitworth Fellows; the program direction Kara Kochner Todd; the craft hall again directed by Elder Cynthia Kessler; George and Katie Emery (Terry) and husband Will Johnson (ELCA pastor in Glendive) providing the spiritual input; Curt Kochner serving as overall director. A **Camp Staff Reunion** as held at the Goodriches, **Sept 29.**

\* **Rep/Nom reports 3 new, young nominees accepted terms on the Camping/youth Ministry Team.**

\* **Winter Ski Retreat will be February 22-24, 2019** at the invitation of the **Butte Church.**

\* **Curt Kochner chairs the Camping /youth Ministry Team.** (See his report) He and their family are deeply grateful for the kindness and prayers during his bout with pneumonia.

\* **Camp rentals by outside groups was up this summer.**

**Equipping in Partnership with other presbyteries or groups –**

**Communication training workshop for congregations by PCUSA Communications staff** offered in partnership with Glacier in Helena Sept 27, thanks to a generous grant from our Synod. Valuable education, examples, steps & processes, and resources for pastors church leaders to share God's Good News and the Spirit at work in and through our disciple communities, important in this visual media age. Some of the workshop was recorded & we received valuable handouts. \_\_\_\_\_

**Rev. Ameer Isaak, pastor in Tyre, Lebanon,** spoke 10/8 in YP, hosted by St. Andrew Presbyterian. Thank you. We are grateful and blessed to have had this opportunity thanks to Wyoming Presbytery and their formal partnership. Read Mike Ferguson's article about the courageous, compassionate faith and tangible ministry of this tiny church in the midst of the enormous refugee crisis. Wyoming Presbytery plans to post some video clips Thank you to the hospitality and work of Rev. Susan Barnes and St. Andrew. Thank you to Susi standing in for Kathy at the last minute.

**The PMT offered two superb and timely Boundary Training seminars** in September by Mark Bassingthwaight, Esq., required for all CRE's and pastors every three years. It is important to offer training in this area to leaders and all who work with youth in your church. Kudos to Dave Thompson and thanks to First, Billings and First, Bozeman for hosting these important events.

**Preaching/Teaching, Spiritual Formation Cohort, 2018-19:** In partnership with Whitworth's Office of Church Engagement, and under the leadership of Susi Ennis, Jack Bell and Debbie Funke, the presbytery is offering monthly meetings for Growth in preaching/teaching the Bible and spiritual formation. The cohort met for the first time on Sept 14, at FPC-Billings. Seven pastors and one lay leader attended. **The next preaching cohort meeting is scheduled for Thursday, November 1, the evening before presbytery, at the Bozeman Comfort Inn's Board Room, starting with 6 p.m.**

**dinner.** Please RSVP to: [pastor.susi.ennis@gmail.com](mailto:pastor.susi.ennis@gmail.com). Pastors, CRE's, any interested in developing in these areas are welcome.

**George has begun to offer monthly lay pastoral leadership training for interested leaders in the Jordan congregation.** He preaches once a month in this unsettled season for that church and has led a workshop he and Kathy wrote on how to make a pastoral visit and in October taught the first of several workshops on preaching. Homework required. Links to Whitworth lay Institute offered. This could be presented in other churches in the future.

**The Whitworth Fellows, 2018.** This was the fourth summer in which the presbytery has hosted and greatly benefitted by the ministry of Whitworth Fellows. Two Fellows, Joel Schroeder (second year) and David Hendricks, who are exploring God's call to pastoral ministry, were placed as student pastors in the Jordan Church. Joel, who graduated this past May, remains for the next three months in Jordan to student pastor. George will travel to Jordan once a month for supervision. Kathy, via phone and when he is in Bozeman.

- The Other Two Fellows, Luke Ekstrom (second year) and Daniel Roberts, traveled extensively through the presbytery, providing input and observations to the LC in June, helping churches explore how to better attract and serve young people, helping run VBS's, building relationships and discipling, preaching, as counselors at Camp, learning about the Presbyterian ministry and processes and all 4 attended Garrett's ordination/installation.
- A small amount is included in the 2019 budget hoping for 4 fellows in 2019.

**St Timothy's Chapel** on Georgetown Lake reports another successful summer season. The Board met on Saturday, September 8. George can forward to you the summer-end report of Board Moderator Ron Hanson to those interested.

2. **Support the spiritual nurture of pastors and leaders across the presbytery.** (See above also)
  - a. **1-1 pastoral interactions, conversations, prayer... with pastors/leaders** in a wide range of circumstances/challenges have been numerous.  
**2 pastoral recently announced changes.** We have been in conversation with them – **Katie Emery, Terry & Fallon**, is moving to Denver as an associate pastor at an ELCA church in Longmont, CO. A PCUSA pastor is next in their rotation.  
- **Susan Barnes, St. Andrew, is moving to Louisville** as her husband, Mike Ferguson, has just accepted the position as Editor of the PCUSA New Service.
  - b. **Equipping, supporting the PMT and its role here** continues to be very active. We have 5 churches with no pastor.
  - c. **Clusters began for the fall.** George attended the Miles City Cluster which is seeing some rejuvenation with the addition of Garrett Mostowski and his wife, Sarah Logemann, (approved Oct 2 to seek a call); the Butte Cluster will welcome Daniel Triller (new pastor in Dillon) and Debby Schmidt (new UMC pastor in Philipsburg) when it meets in Oct. Kathy attended an uplifting White Sulphur /Harlowton Cluster retreat Oct. 5. Wenda Fry (ELCA in White Sulphur) invited to join that cluster.

The Butte Cluster has, for some years offered a hymn/worship song sing in September, held this year on Sunday, Sept 23 at the Melrose Church.

- d. **Lay Leader training:** George now offers a monthly training session on Sunday for the Jordan church. First topic: equipping for lay pastoral care. Additional training events will feature prepared on-line courses in lay training from Whitworth. We both offered this training in the Lewistown Church in October 2017, and now they have a very active lay visitation ministry. George also presented the material in Colstrip in July.
- e. **Spiritual Direction/Companioning for pastors and lay leaders.** God seems to be opening a ministry of spiritual direction through George now. He is now companioning four to six pastors, who have started/asked to explore spiritual direction with him. Ask him about this, and your input is appreciated.

3. **Foster community in the presbytery.**

- a. **See Cluster developments above.**
- b. **Updating clusters, leaders, whole presbytery and Susan Thomas for *Currents*.**
- c. **Please welcome New pastors Garrett Mostowski (Miles City, installed on August 11) with his wife, the newly approved candidate “ready to receive a call,” Sarah Logemann. AND In Dillon, Daniel Triller, with wife Callie, expecting a child! Daniel’s installation as pastor was a wonderful celebration Sunday, October 14.**
  - i. **To offer welcome: [garrett.mostowski@gmail.com](mailto:garrett.mostowski@gmail.com)**
  - ii. **[djtriller@gmail.com](mailto:djtriller@gmail.com)**
- d. **Presbytery Meetings** The resourcing, worship and life together we are experiencing as a presbytery are being favorably received. Kudos to the planning teams this year and note our debrief at our June LC meeting. A wide range of pastors, long-time elder commissioners, and ones there for their first or second time said how they were helped, challenged, equipped, better connected from the May meeting. That’s the goal. Presbytery meetings: Resource-full, relevant, vision-giving, nurturing and equipping, collegial, inspirational, connecting with God and others.

4. **Support Presbytery staff by establishing and strengthening the Personnel sub-group.**

- a. **The Personnel Sub-Group had a** productive first meeting. – we, and all the staff, are very grateful for this provision of the LC and this sub group. We provided them with documents and a brief history as there has not been a Personnel group for 5 years. They have been meeting to talk with all professional staff first.

5. **Examine staffing patterns and budget in light of the changes in synod support and determine if adjustments are needed.** *At the June Leadership Cabinet meeting we began to look at what our funding options and budget options look like and begin to formulate a plan for 2019.*

- a. **This is only partly underway** with so many on the LC and staff having very full lives and with unexpected health & family emergencies, camp, new pastors entering and also, perhaps because the presbytery financial condition continues to surprise. God provides - who’d have thunk it? Oh us of little faith!
- b. **The Administrative Fund, monies raised by George and Kathy towards their salary, benefits and expenses is low for this time of year as our time has needed to go to so many needs and**

transitions. We have also sought to keep expenditures and expenses lower. As of October 24, we have received \$10,904 towards a budget of \$35,000. We received an encouraging inquiry from a substantial donor. Please ask if your congregation can be supportive from its mission budget, when the appeal circulates in November. And please pray for this effort and the time needed for it.

6. **Other Matters:**

- a. **Insurance:** The supplemental insurance suggested by our agent to be up to date and requested by the LC has been obtained. George, aided by Debbie Blackburn, submitted all the forms. The requests were approved and the additional, pro-rated premium for 2018 has been paid. The total annual insurance premium (camp, staff,...) will be \$10,059.
- b. **Budget, 2019.** George worked with Budget point-person Dan Holland. Dan and the LC worked on the proposed budget factoring in no income from Synod and a few less members in some churches.
- c. **Pastoral Ministry Team (PMT):** We continue to heavily resource this ministry and are excited for the new pastors and spouses God is bringing into presbytery churches! A year ago we all were anxious about seven congregations searching at once for pastors. Of those seven five now have called or interim pastors. Currently: Those churches actively seeking pastors: Jordan, and Hysham will be combining with Colstrip to search for a new pastor. And, we are saying good byes as well, as Steve Weber has just completed a fruitful, healing interim in Dillon and Susan Barnes and Katie Emery they will be leaving the St Andrew and Terry churches, respectively, in November.
- d. **Board of Trustees, Rocky Mountain College.** George has been the Representative from the Synod and Presbytery for about nine years.
- e. **Synod of the Rocky Mountains:** Kathy continues, with Jim Tarr, as a Synod commissioner from the presbytery. Kathy is chairing their Personnel Committee for a second year. The Synod met September 23-25 in Denver. See report. Kathy & George meet with the Executive Presbyters' Staff Forum of the Synod 2-3 times a year, next, November 11 -13 in Denver.
- f. **Partner Presbytery with Whitworth University's Office of Church Engagement continues to provide Fellows and quality, regionally relevant, opportunities at reduced prices to our pastors, leaders, congregation and presbytery via video, and in person.** Both of us continue to help with the planning and leadership of the Whitworth Institute for Ministry in June in Spokane. George was one of the presenters this year on the topic of *"Seasons of the soul and life in ministry, how pastors and leaders may help in the spiritual growth and formation of people in the church and what that looks like over the many seasons of life before heaven."*

**NOTE NEW 2019 dates: June 24 – 28 [www.whitworth.edu/wim/](http://www.whitworth.edu/wim/)**

**Personal** – We are deeply grateful for ongoing brain healing for George's brother, Tom, and that our mothers are doing pretty well right now. We are grateful for them and their wisdom, prayers and steadfast faith in Christ in this season. Regular visits to see them are important.

**Our Holy Land Trip** - Hardly a week goes by where we are not enriched and integrating insights, growth, and material from our amazing trip to the Holy Land. We would like to continue to explore ways this can enrich and equip you all across our presbytery and its congregations. What would you like to hear about, explore or see pictures of to enrich and equip you as disciples.