

Jesus' Three *GREATS* = Keeping the MAIN thing the main thing

*Jesus replied: Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. ' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself. ' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.*Mt. 22:37-40

When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. 18 And Jesus came and said to them, All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Go [verb=as you are going] therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age. Mt 28:17-20

Have you also been asked, or asked yourself and the Holy Spirit, “What is the most important thing I/we should be doing or focusing on, have as our emphasis?” “What is the ‘latest’ , “new, improved” thing or program of emphasis our church should have?” “What is God’s mission for this, God’s church?” We sure have too, in a group, a church and as Exec’s.

Jesus' Three *GREATS* = Keeping the MAIN thing the main thing!

As we seek to cultivate, grow in and embody

LOVING Jesus

LOVING, grow as God’s people/disciples

LOVING the world God made and loves, making disciples *as we go*

In light the 3 foundational commands, priorities, of Jesus for his followers and in light of the times, trends and contexts in which we find ourselves (see Trends for 2023 article link below), we and the Leadership Cabinet have been asking these questions and invite us all to continue to be curious and open asking questions such as:

1. **What can we likely anticipate as** realities, trends and contexts, needs? How can we listen well to those within and without our churches.
2. What is the Holy Spirit saying as we pay attention, **reflect alone and in community?**

What should be our priorities – in BEING the people of God as well as DOING the work of the people of God?

3. What **innovations** may the Spirit be inviting us to?

A few helpful resources among many:

<https://careynieuwhof.com/future-church-trends/> For 2023 – previously sent

9 Min podcast - *Leadership for the Long Haul-* (and in times of complex, adaptive challenges & change), Tod Bolsinger and Markus Watson, PCUSA pastors. discuss this quote from [*Leadership Without Easy Answers*](#), by Ronald Heifetz:

"In a crisis we tend to look for the wrong kind of leadership...in short, someone who can make hard problems simple. But problems like (we have been facing) are not simple.... Making progress on these problems

demands not just someone who provides answers from on high but changes in our attitudes, behavior, and values. To meet challenges such as these, we need a different idea of leadership..."

<https://www.markuswatson.com/2023/01/10/leadership-for-the-long-haul-a-quick-conversation-with-tod-bolsinger-146/>

Six-stage process moving people from isolation to community (with God & others). Luke Edwards

Listening - Loving People - Building Community - Exploring Discipleship - Church Taking Shape - Doing It Again

Underpinned by prayer & continuing connection to the wider church, usually a congregation

From: Summary article: @ <https://freshexpressions.com/2022/10/10/fresh-expressions-journey-six-steps-that-can-move-people-from-isolation-to-christian-community> & Book, *Becoming Church*

While this is primarily focused on new fresh expressions of church started by a few, connected to a congregation(s) it also applies to the existing churches and the presbytery.

1. Work with Leadership Cabinet on wide range of items including:

a. prep for Feb. in person day retreat for evaluation of last few years , listening, Visioning & discerning God's priorities for 2023

b. Established a Transition Team to consult with LC: Daniel Triller, TE, Dillon; Teresa Kendall, TE, Deer Lodge; Chuck Wright, Commissioned RE, Manhattan/Butte; and Sandy Welch, RE St. Andrew, Russ Kline, *ex officio* as LC Moderator & Personnel subgroup.

The scope and depth of it's work on transition includes not only Yellowstone in this GP leadership transition, but the many transitions and shifts underway in the world, culture and church during/post covid and the post-Christian culture, here and elsewhere. Every pastor is functionally a transitional pastor! The hope is that this process and prioritization will include broad listening and interaction with the presbytery.

c. Personnel – We both met in December with Personnel for our annual reviews, noting many things the Spirit has been doing, and growing edges for us as leaders. Wide range of conversations and steps for presbytery leadership and administrative responsibilities, denominational needs related to Kathy & George's transition and George's retirement .

2. PMT– Significant time needed here with new PMT leadership, ongoing searches, church transitions and equipping, supporting and consulting with congregations with no pastors, often partnering with PMT members.

a. conversations with pastors/CRE's for personal and professional matters

b. Participated in Karolee Larsons's Commissioning to FPC, Butte. Gifts to Karolee from the presbytery.

c. Churches and ministry in eastern MT - First zoom conversation for PMT in eastern and staff regarding state of churches, leadership, trends in eastern MT. Prayer, brainstorming and intentional reaching out underway to listen and learn from key leaders in various churches. In future, widening the conversation to other churches/denominations, including ELCA conversations in early May. Plans have emerged for part-time pastoring and partnership -Hysham, Forsyth and Costrip.

d. Conversations with various pastors, key leaders in churches

e. CLC , major overhaul underway. Kathy attended Exec zoom info session and conversation with CLC leadership. Much was not ready to read or in form it could be shared with presbytery or congregational leaders. They propose a very aggressive implementation calendar. If this occurs, it will require a great deal of time for Co-Moderators, Caroline and Kathy, and others we ask to join so we can learn and operate in the new system.

f. Candidates' exegesis exam and many related systemic concerns of deep concern to ALL presbytery leadership, and those working with candidates and beyond

g. research on some GA overtures

h. Lay and CRE Training/equipping for ANY interested YP Church Leadership – George and Bob Hunter (author, PCUSA pastor) completed the 4 session *Helping When It Hurts*

Feb. zoom gathering - Dwelling in Word on Mark 1 – healing the leper, sharing & praying for one another, listed topics desired for future trainings.

March 7 – Theme: Domestic Violence, Caroline Fleming is special guest

4. Our Synod has half new leaders and the input, and the perspective and history from us as the longest serving execs in the Synod has taken on a much larger role. We meet monthly on zoom and 3x a year in person as able. Always energizing and provides ideas and partnership options. Will keep you posted.

5. Camping and Youth – Westminster Spires bridge not safe and not fixed, sadly, so only a one week camp at Hyalite Camp June. George met with Team planning our Plan B one-week camp June, and other camp related calls and work. A time of transition and adapting and God is doing new things in new places, with new people...

6. Very part-time Financial/office person. Thanks to Ric for this connection. Kathy has met in person with Deb Jackson several times. She is more than we could ever have hoped for in competence and spirit and people skills. All going smoothly, & takes only an hour a week. She is happy to help us with other things as needed. Kathy thinks this will be needed as Co-GP position moves to true halftime. Deb has time and can do a few more things in the time we agreed for her. She is eager to meet us at presbytery attend our equipping times and promote them.

7. George attended MAC closing worship service along with all the other judicatory heads in Helena in January. Worthwhile to be there. (Only a handful of others in attendance.)

8. George is mentoring new Glacier Exec, Chuck Carlson!! at request of National office!

9. Training churches for both the equipment and ways of better hybrid/online functioning & worship and understanding and adjusting to the reality that a hybrid way of operating IS the new reality and how to do it well. High Tech and High touch/relationship and connecting are here to stay. Kathy spoke with ELCA's Colter McCarty who is willing to provide training. A group needed of at least 2 who can

Personal

In this season of multiple losses, grief and transitions, we would appreciate prayer for healing of every kind, faith, faith-fullness, and protection with multiple challenges on every side at the moment. Thank you for your kindnesses and understanding as you all are living in and have journeyed through so much yourselves. We just returned from Virginia for the burial of Nancy Goodrich and time with George's brothers, their wives, and a few nieces and husbands.

We are seeking :

-to practice the discipline of daily gratitude, including for the "small" things such as beauty, a card received smiles and times with little people, kind friends,

-To steward and honor our limits and bodies in this time of layered grief and traumas and illness.

-to make prayer the foundation of all we do for unless the Spirit moves, works, transforms, opens doors, 'we labor in vain'!

We just celebrate George's 70th this month!