

George and Kathy Goodrich

1. The Emerging Situation:

- a. An unusual number of pastors will be retiring in the next few years
- b. Generally, pastors attracted to Montana's small churches feel isolated and unfamiliar with the context. Therefore, they may only stay a few years.
- c. The cost of a full-time pastor with the required benefits is moving beyond the capacity of the individual small church.
- d. Many existing churches are finding it increasingly difficult to grow in today's culture (see *Growing Young* & Stan Ott's DVD's, outline and handouts from February workshops here: *Transformed & Mobilized: Love & Called – Gifted and Equipped -> Sent*). Reasons include:

- 1. Many trends in culture, beliefs, mindsets, lifestyles mean we live in a radically different culture than even 15 – 20 years ago. Those above 30 are like immigrants, foreign to our present culture/subcultures. Pastors and older leaders (30/40 +) not used or trained to understand and operate in our present realities.

- 2. Fewer people especially, younger generation respond to previous 'attractional' approaches, in which most pastors were previously trained. New approaches required.

- 3. Many Montana counties and towns are decreasing in population

- 4. Some congregations are gaining in membership, some are in decline.

- 5. Many of the key needs in people and reasons people would be likely to come to a church have shifted. We need to educate ourselves in those and how to be passionate and culturally relevant in sharing, caring and embodying the Good News.

- e. Some churches will likely have trouble searching for and calling a pastor, especially a pastor equipped with mindset, practices and capabilities to lead the changes and adaptations to thrive in ministry & mission in today's realities.

- 2. Shifts and equipping in the mindset, practices, & capabilities of Transformed and Mobilized needed in our congregations – pastors and sessions and leaders - NOW so that they stand the best chance to make progress moving from declining and maintaining to discipleship-focused thriving and outreach/service/mission. *Unless* this occurs they will not search for or attract a pastor with the above passions and abilities nor understand what and who they need to look for in such a pastor.**

3. Possible Structures for Pastoral Ministry for existing churches:

- a. A Full-time pastor for one church. Some of our congregations are still able to afford a full-time pastor and to pay the pastor well, but few.
- b. A Full-time pastor shared by two or more congregations or of congregations that are federated, yoked or combined in some fashion. Partnering with other denominations to effectively pastor churches in a region may be considered, as in Denton (UMC) and Stanford (PCUSA).

- c. Tentmaking / Bi-vocational pastors. Some pastors and CRE's are now part-time with the church and part-time in another job. Are there employment possibilities in your community that could support a part-time pastor?
- d. Commissioned Ruling Elders (CRE's) for one or more congregations.
 - i. One CRE to a congregation
 - ii. Two or more CRE's in a given congregation who serve and lead according to their gifts.
- e. A Regional Pastor who may travel and serve several congregations in a region of the presbytery while equipped elders/CRE's lead the local ministry.
 - i. The regional pastor equips the local elders to serve, lead and raises up disciples to Christian maturity, sends out to mission and ministry 24/7.
 - ii. On the pattern of a circuit rider with services on different days of the week.
 - iii. Travels for special services, such as weddings, funerals.
 - iv. May moderate the sessions.
 - v. Could work on a team with several others, i.e. CRE's according to Spiritual giftedness, passions, callings, experiences.
- f. **Technology enabled worship:**
 - i. A sermon is streamed into the local congregation from another church (great care needed with this), while present pastors and presbytery equip elders/deacons, others to not only lead the rest of worship but are trained to listen, care, connect, lead groups... according to their spiritual gifts, passions, experiences....
 - ii. Music: may be streamed also to congregations who lack competent musicians or we could have pastors who have extensive expertise using audio and video now, share with and equip others.
- g. **Encourage new worshipping communities and House Churches probably with called/gifted/trained leaders, yet non-pastor dependent.**
 Research needed as to how this has been working elsewhere – ID this passion and work on a concrete strategy to share this message & opportunity and expand Yellowstone's New Worshipping Community group.
 The model of a denomination sending out teams of 3 to start churches is proving most effective in today's culture. All 3 with discipleship-based, relational, mission-minded ways of operating: 1 evangelist giftings, 1 pastor & other giftings, 1 with music passions/abilities. These supported mostly from the outside for several years.

4. **Possible steps forward:**

- a. Pray. God is not confused or anxious about the emerging challenges and opportunities for Yellowstone Churches. God has attracted and is growing some remarkable pastors / leaders to Yellowstone Presbytery and will likely do so in the future.
- b. Promote, teach, embed/integrate into our congregations the basics of
- c. 1. discipleship and the *Transformed and Mobilized: Loved & Called* -> Gifted and Equipped -> SENT content (Presbytery vision, Stan Ott's focus) ;
2. *Growing Young: 6 Essential Strategies to help Young People Discover and Love Your Church*
- d. Study and integrate how churches in rural areas and small towns are growing today.
- e. Alert the congregations and pastors to the emerging situation and inform them of options and invite them in a positive way. Work with the sessions and pastors at every stage of the process.

- f. Begin to explore / test the above options in local churches as seems fitting in context.
 - i. Immediate concerns: Jordan / Big Hole (3 congregations) / Miles City / Lewistown
 - ii. Probable coming retirements or departures in the next three-four years: Philipsburg / Butte / White Sulphur / Forsyth / Ennis / Manhattan
 - iii. Possible Pastor Transitions: Dillon in a couple years and two other churches

- g. Research and learn from what forms of ministry are emerging in other presbyteries and denominations. The UMC in MT are prioritizing \$, staff time and equipping into the areas that Stan taught, expanded.

5. Think through how such changes could likely alter the face and ministries of the presbytery.

- i. Fewer full-time pastors. More lay & elder leadership.
- ii. Increased regional connectional grouping within the presbytery along with presbytery-wide focus. The focus will be more on building discipleship and ministry in the local churches and context.
- iii. Increase in relationships, networking and partnerships
- iv. What if the presbytery had only a Stated Clerk in five years for financial or staff-change reasons?
 - i. What models might enable the mission of the presbytery then?
 - ii. How will the presbytery prioritize for ministry and mission?