

Executive Presbytery's Report Presbytery of Yukon Winter Meeting

February 27, 2015

1. Ministry Interpretation Slide Show

First Presbyterian Church in Anchorage asked me to speak to their congregation about ministry away from Anchorage. I had photos from recent visits to villages, etc. They told me the slide show interpretation was very valuable, and we should do that in all churches. I therefore need photos from all the churches to share with you. Please send photos showing your church doing Christ's ministry together. Send to office@pyukon.org

2. A time of great change: <http://www.faithandleadership.com/multimedia/ronald-heifetz-the-nature-adaptive-leadership>

Ron Heifetz has been very helpful to churches in talking about what it is to be in a time of great change, as we are today. He talks about the difference between two kinds of challenges we face.

Technical (or routine) challenges are problems where we already have the expertise to solve them. For these, we simply find the experts with the knowledge, and apply it.

Adaptive challenges are issues that require us to do things differently than ever before. We must become our own experts, and begin inventing the new way of doing things. Adaptive challenges are about moving into a new day through a new way.

Leadership for technical, routine challenges, is about showing people the answers. Leadership for adaptive challenges is about asking the questions that allows the whole body to share ideas and inspiration, to experiment together, and develop the new way of being effective together.

We are in a time of great cultural shifts, which means we are in a time of great adaptive challenge today. This meeting will provide several opportunities for exploring some ideas together.

3. The shifts are creating strains for presbytery leadership in at least three areas

- We have fewer pastors in the presbytery today than at any time in recent history. This is reshaping ministry in dramatic ways. Many of our churches are now operating without clergy on staff. Others are operating with part-time ordained clergy, and many are operating without clergy on staff.

Some churches are still doing fairly well with the old church model of ordained clergy serving their congregation. However the shortage of clergy in the presbytery requires congregations to see their pastor as a part of the presbytery's service beyond their local church.

More and more, God is reshaping the church to not be clergy-centered. Yet, we know the dangers of untrained leadership, especially as it relates to the Bible. We need to be asking ourselves what it is we see God doing, and how we can be part of reshaping the church for today. We also need to be asking ourselves how the roles of Teaching Elder and Ruling elder are changing, and how we can be faithful in meeting the challenges of these changes.

This is how it stacks up as of today. The Presbytery has 21 congregations, nine with full time clergy, four with part-time clergy and eight without ordained clergy. One congregation (United Protestant, Palmer) has more than one clergy (2 ¾ time pastors)

- a. Churches with ordained clergy (*italics indicate part-time only*)
 - i. Utqiagvik Presbyterian (Barrow)—Vacant: seeking pastor, 1 CRE
 - ii. *New Hope (North Pole) – half time pastor*
 - iii. *Fairbanks Korean—3/4 time pastor, possibly reducing to half time*
 - iv. University (Fairbanks)—Vacant: seeking a full time pastor
 - v. First Presbyterian, (Wasilla)—Full time clergy
 - vi. United Protestant, (Palmer)—Two pastors, each ¾ time
 - vii. Eagle River—Full time pastor
 - viii. *Immanuel, (Anchorage)—half time pastor*
 - ix. First Presbyterian (Anchorage)—full time pastor
 - x. First Korean (Anchorage)—Full time pastor
 - xi. Jewel Lake (Anchorage)—Full time pastor, 2 volunteer CREs
 - xii. Trinity (Anchorage)—Full time pastor
 - xiii. *Anchor (Anchorage)—pay clergy for Sunday pulpit supply*

Note that five years ago two of these congregations had two pastors.

- b. Churches without ordained clergy
 - i. The following churches have not had clergy for many years, but wish to share one between them:
 1. Olgonik (Wainwright)—session provides pastoral functions
 2. Atqasuk Chapel—volunteer CRE Paul Bodfish
 3. Kuukpik (Nuiqsut)---volunteer CRE Virgie Kasak
 - ii. The following churches have occasional 10 day support and training visits from Rev. Leisa Carrick (co-pastor in Palmer) or Rev. Curt Karns (executive presbyter), but operate day-to-day with volunteer leaders.
 1. Gambell—volunteer CRE Beulah Nowpakahok
 2. Savoonga—session provides pastoral functions
 3. Kaktovik—session provides pastoral functions
 - iii. The following churches do not have clergy oversight
 1. Chapel in the Mts (Anaktuvuk Pass)—Mark Wartes, moderator
 2. Delta—CRE Richard Mauer, CRE mentor
- Because congregations lack pastoral leaders the demands on presbytery staff, and on a few amazingly available volunteer leaders, has increased. This is true at the same time that the presbytery has sought to reduce administrative staff pay and time. Your exec is to take eight more weeks off annually than normal under full time. The Administrative Assistant is now working three half days each week. Churches trying to develop new ways of doing things, and trying to negotiate any conflict that comes with such change, are requiring more time from the stated clerk.
 - The remaining clergy are stretched across all of our committee assignments. The Nominating Committee cannot find enough clergy to cover our current rules requiring clergy involvement from four regions. Similarly, non-clergy leadership is working hard at home, making it difficult to find enough energetic leaders to work at the presbytery level.

4. **There will be at least four opportunities for exploring these issues at this meeting:**

- A conversation asking what new thing we see God doing: challenges and opportunities.
- A conversation asking about possibilities for rethinking how we find leaders for the presbytery and
- A conversation to help the national church rethink how we understand our denomination's commitment to Peacemaking.
- Finally, the Joint Parish has been preparing a proposal on reshaping how we make decisions for village and indigenous churches in our presbytery. That proposal will be presented, and may be ready for a vote at this meeting.

5. **My travel schedule changed over the past year.**

The COM and Personnel Committee asked me to begin traveling to Kaktovik for 10 days every 2nd month to provide training and encouragement to the church in Kaktovik. That church had not held worship services from Nov 2013 through Palm Sunday 2014. God is raising up new leadership for that church. They are seeking a new day for that church. This is a huge task. I am glad to offer all the support I can.

I continue to try to be present in all our congregations in a meaningful way each year. I also help the COM with some of its work. As a result I am away from home fully 50% of the time except in summer. When I began this job I was traveling about 1/3 time. I continue to try to make it to all our congregations every year.

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