



The Grapevine

CONNECTING THE CONGREGATIONS OF THE PRESBYTERY OF DETROIT

February 2009

“The Equipping Church”



by the Rev. Dr. Allen D. Timm, Executive Presbyter

Sue Mallory of the leadership Network has written her story of discovering the joy of service in an “equipping church,” in her book, The Equipping Church: Serving Together to Transform Lives (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001). She began her journey of equipping as Director of Lay Ministries in the Brentwood Presbyterian Church, in the West Los Angeles area (CA), after experiencing the servant hood of members who cared for her during recovery from a debilitating accident. Members sat with her, brought her family meals, and prayed for her. She started a ministry of equipping, looking for ways church leadership knows who is part of the church, how people become part of the church, what happens to people before they become part of the church, and what happens after they commit to membership. This included requirements for membership, and how are members held accountable for their covenant to membership (Mallory, 45).

Servanthood is about sharing ministry, identifying ministry

opportunities, with descriptions, calling members servants and ministers, and having people serve on teams rather than committees (44). Teams share work among members, covenant to work together and hold each other accountable, receive coaching by the leader, who also manages and delegates to the appropriate members, and is driven by the Holy Spirit and a Biblical vision (31). Mallory says one of the biggest lessons they learned in equipping ministry was that a handoff of a ministry was not enough. Follow-up and support was required to care for the servant and to get the job done (141). Servant hood is not just for the church, she says. Connecting with local agencies is a big part of ministry, as well as celebrating what members do in local agencies such as hospitals and organization.

Mallory provides resources in the appendix that are tremendous, and could be used for a session seeking to become an equipping church. These charts evaluate the current state of congregational ministry. Mallory shares the core values of an equipping church. One chart shows how to change the culture of a church, and would serve as a tool to considering how effective the session is at attracting new members, sharing the vision of the church, assessing the gifts of new members, and helping them find opportunities for service. All of this has to do with what

kind of a church a congregation is called to be. The final chart provides planning tools for putting ideas into action.

Why is this important to me? I believe that the ministry of the laity strengthens congregations to be missional, pastoral and prophetic. The pastor of the church in which I grew up helped equip people for ministry. The result was that they went out of the sanctuary and into the world, serving Christ as a light sent to the world. But it was really Elder Anne Joynt who changed everything. We noticed at First Presbyterian Church, Bethlehem, PA, that members would join the church, but not become active. Anne introduced the idea that every new member would be asked to sign a form, indicating what gifts they had and where they felt called to serve. The Lay Ministry Team, showing they were serious, called all the new members and interviewed them. After the meeting, the member would call the appropriate board in the church and help the member become connected. I have introduced this method to each church I served since then. New members were asked where their interests and gifts lay, and were helped to find a place to serve. Service is important for new members to see where God is at work, and helps them feel a part of the ministry. So, you can see why this book by Sue Mallory caught my eye.

Presbytery of Detroit

Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
17575 Hubbell Ave, Detroit, MI 48235
313-345-6550
866-345-6550 (toll free in Michigan)
313-345-7250 (fax)
Info@detroitpresbytery.org
<http://www.detroitpresbytery.org>
<http://www.PbyDetroit.org> (for documents)
<http://www.synodofthecovenant.org>
<http://www.pcusa.org>

Staff

Executive Presbyter
The Rev. Dr. Allen D. Timm, ext. 203
Assoc. Exec. Presbyter for Outreach & Nurture
Elder Brenda Jarvis, ext. 213
Stated Clerk
The Rev. Edward H. Koster, ext. 201
Director of Outdoor Ministries
Richard Grant, 517-546-0249
Resource Center Director
Joanne Higgins, ext. 215
Hunger Action Coordinator
Artheillia Thompson, ext. 207
Executive Assistant
Beverly Knox, ext. 204

Office Manager

Sandra K. Jensen, ext. 220
Accounting Manager
Bev Auger, ext. 209
Office & Bookkeeping Clerk
Rhonda Barley, ext. 200
Office Assistant
Sharon Pacioni, ext. 206

Consultants

Hands-on Mission
Mary Lloyd, 313-247-0792
Transformation
The Rev. Karen Carl, 734-213-5919
Interfaith Ministries
The Rev. Wm Gepford, 313-933-4086

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THE PARISH PAPER

IDEAS AND INSIGHTS FOR ACTIVE CONGREGATIONS

Coeditors: Herb Miller, Lyle Schaller, Cynthia Woolever - www.TheParishPaper.com

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Cynthia Woolever

What Do People Want in Their Pastors?

Jed Smith agreed to chair yet another pastoral search committee—for the second time in just five years. Margaret, another active member, buttonholed Jed after church: “I didn’t like the last pastor you helped us hire. I hope you do a better job this time!”

Jed wisely responded, “Well, I didn’t like the pastor before this one that you liked. But we both kept coming to church!”

Margaret and Jed want the same thing—a pastor who is a good match for the congregation. How do they find the right pastor?

After interviewing dozens of church people who chaired or served on pastoral search or staff-parish relations committees, Adair Lummis* concludes that all members want the same qualities in their next pastor—at least they *say* the same things. But what they *don’t* say—what Lummis calls “secondary expectations”—matter most.

Members create a “must have” clergy qualities list just as homebuyers initially give their realtor a “must have” list. However, after seeing several houses, many people realize they were completely wrong about what they *said* they wanted. Thus, the real estate maxim, “Buyers are liars.” Like real estate brokers, the lay leadership must understand what the congregation’s members really want in order to help them get it. While that might sound easy, it is not.

What Qualities Make the Good Pastor List?

“Primary expectations” are the qualities and abilities that all congregants say they value in a pastor:

1. Good preacher and worship leader. Unfortunately, these qualities mean different things to different members. The search committee should ask members to define a “good sermon.” Does it make you think, engage your mind, and reflect sound scholarship? Or does a good sermon help you feel God’s presence? Is a good sermon filled with inspirational stories?

2. Strong spiritual leader. What qualifies as spiritual strength in one congregation would not make that cut in another. In one congregation, the number of hours per week that the pastor spends in congregational work is seen as directly proportional to his or her spiritual depth. In another

setting, people define the warm and caring pastor with few outside interests as spiritually mature. In still another congregation people relate spiritual strength to personal conduct, exemplary character, and clarity about God’s call to ministry.

3. Good people skills. Members want a pastor with keen social skills. They like someone with a sense of humor, who is not too introverted but not too extroverted, either. Members want the pastor to set (and publish) regular office hours so they know when they can talk with him or her.

4. Experienced. Many congregations want a young pastor *and* someone with experience. Younger candidates often don’t have much experience, while experienced candidates are typically older.

Another wrinkle in the age-experience dilemma: more seminary graduates are now second-career pastors. They have *life* experience but possess little pastoral experience.



SOME SEARCH COMMITTEES ARE BETTER AT DISGUIISING THEIR UNSPOKEN EXPECTATIONS THAN OTHERS.

5. *Administrative competence.* This skill is hard to pin down because few members interact with or see the pastor outside worship services. Is the candidate competent at organizing people for ministries, remembering administrative details, chairing meetings, and handling conflict?

6. *Religious authenticity.* While their descriptive words differ, most members feel they know an authentic pastor when they see one. But they also rely on denominational gatekeepers—seminary, judicatory, and ordination requirements—to recommend pastors with a clear call to ministry and screen out questionable candidates.

What Qualities Appear on the Invisible List?

“Secondary expectations” can tip the balance toward one candidate over another. Unspoken expectations can prevent potential candidates from ever getting an interview. What are those invisible qualities and attributes that matter to lay people—factors that they don’t say are important, but are?

1. *Recent-past experiences.* Lummis found that church people want to either “clone or demonize” the previous pastor, or even the previous two pastors. The previous pastor’s poor health surfaced in many interviews as a reason the committee was searching for a younger pastor.

If the previous pastor served a long time—fifteen years or more—the committee may simply seek a change. They may expect their next pastor to stay fewer than ten years.

The reverse is also true. A congregation with several short pastorates may search for someone who will put down roots. If the last pastor was a woman, the search committee may want a male pastor. Some committees see this as “taking turns”—“we had a female pastor last time.” Congregations served by a retiring pastor (in his or her last pastorate) may seek a new pastor under age fifty-five.

2. *Age.* While the average pastor is thirty-two years old at ordination, the average age of pastors currently serving congregations is fifty-two. If forced to choose between a younger candidate and one with experience, the majority of congregations choose the younger pastor.

3. *Chaplain for a few.* The search committee may focus on finding a minister for the loyal, long-time church members. Those members may not want to attract new members or start new programs. The church may even have specific members that the committee knows *must* be happy about who they select. The committee’s co-dependency with these members makes the committee unaware that it lives by the saying, “If Mama ain’t happy, ain’t nobody happy.”

4. *Cultural fit.* Some congregations sense that they’re not ready for a female or a racial-ethnic minority pastor. Or they feel that “settling” for female or minority leadership

reflects poorly on their ability to attract the “best” pastors. In denominations that ordain women, about half of the seminary students are now women. While the number of minority seminary students remains small, the percentages continue to increase. Current trends indicate that search committees will wrestle with these choices sooner rather than later.

5. *Marriage and family.* Search committees can confuse the “spiritual ideal of the nuclear family” with real pastoral qualities. Sometimes, parishioners have an unspoken preference for a happily married male with a wife who does not work outside the home. She also volunteers at the church while raising “wholesome and polite children.”

The nuclear family preference discriminates against single pastors (now one-third of seminary students), females (even if they’re married), a male minister whose wife pastors another church, and co-pastors. Search committees sometimes use code language—“we want a biblical preacher”—to convey their unspoken preference for pastors that match the congregation’s theological and religious views.

The Bottom Line

Despite its challenges, calling a new pastor presents an opportunity to change the congregation’s climate and direction. Ask the search committee to discuss the items above and identify which ones matter to members. Evaluate the rationale behind the congregation’s desires. Do those wishes reflect congregational health and a future-focus?

Some of the questions committees often fail to discuss:

1. Can our pastor have a new vision for the congregation, or will some of our people interpret that new vision as an inappropriate agenda?

2. Do we want our pastor to motivate, organize, and equip us for ministries, or do we want a hired hand who does all of the ministries for us?

3. What could our congregation’s ministries be like in five years? What kind of leader could take us there?

4. Given God’s record of calling unlikely candidates to do great ministry, are our hearts open to the person God might call to lead us?

* Adair T. Lummis, “What Do Lay People Want in Pastors? Answers from Lay Search Committee Chairs and Regional Judicatory Leaders,” *Pulpit & Pew Reports*, Spring 2003 (www.pulpitandpew.duke.edu).

| February 2009 | |
|---------------|---|
| 24 | Presbytery Meeting at Howell, First |
| 24 | Statistical Report Due the Deadline is Midnight |
| 27 | Dearborn, Littlefield invites everyone to hear the Rev. Naim Ateek of Jerusalem and President of the Christian Ecumenical organization "Sabeel" speak on his Reflections on Gaza: Where Do We Go From Here? |
| 27-Mar 1 | Confirmation retreat Steps of Faith for youth at Camp Skyline |
| March 2009 | |
| 3 | Taize Worship at Dearborn, Littlefield |
| 7 | Waterford, Community Presbyterian Church Music Series Mike Dempsey & Friends 7:00 pm |
| 8 | Daylight Savings Time begins - set clocks ahead one hour |
| 8 | Celebrate the Gifts of Women Sunday and International Women's Day |
| 8-10 | Pastor's Retreat |
| 9-11 | Presbyterian Stewardship Conference Stewardship Kaleidoscope in Kansas City, MO |
| 12-13 | Western Theological Seminary, Holland, MI presents <i>Leadership and Family Systems: Being Calm and Courageous No Matter What</i> with Peter Steinke and Larry Foster more information at journey.westernsem.edu |
| 13-14 | Synod Assembly |
| 13-15 | Birmingham, First again presents Many Voices...One Song |
| 14 | Clerk's Training at the Presbytery Office in room 223 9:00 am - 12:00 pm |
| 15-16 | Ecumenical Sabbath Retreat - Different Ways of Praying...Breath, Center, Lectio, Jesus Prayer |
| 16 | Regional gathering of Presbyterians for Renewal at Detroit, Calvin East 6:30 pm - 8:30 pm |
| 17 | Taize Worship at Bloomfield Hills, Kirk in the Hills |
| 19 | Taize Worship at Troy, Northminster |
| 21-29 | Katrina Trip VIII to Pearlinton, MS |
| 22 | Birmingham, First is hosting Orientation on Faith Communities and Foster Care 3:30 pm - 5:00 pm to help promote May as Foster Care Month |
| 24-25 | Samaritan Counseling Center of SE Michigan will be giving two separate update sessions for clergy and staff who are certified in the use of the Marriage PREP materials developed by Life Innovations you can take a half day workshop in the new updated materials |
| 27-28 | Hands on Mission World Medical Relief |
| 28 | Howell Conference and Nature Center Discover & Live Your Calling Retreat 9:30 am - 4:30 pm |
| 28 | Birmingham, First presents Inclusion: Making it Real |
| 28 | Redford St James hosting Sisters in Christ Women's Conference Inspiring Your Spirit 9:30 am - 4:00 pm |
| April 2009 | |
| 5 | Waterford, Community Presbyterian Church Music Series All Choirs Palm Sunday Concert 10:00 am |
| 7 | Taize Worship at Dearborn, Littlefield |
| 10 | Presbytery Office Closed - Good Friday |
| 15-22 | The Office of the General Assembly sponsoring Unity & Reformed Heritage Seminar in Geneva Switzerland |
| 16 | Taize Worship at Troy, Northminster |
| 17-18 | Presbytery of Lake Huron conference about Christianity for the Rest of Us with Diane Butler Bass |

| 18 | Waterford, Community Presbyterian Church Music Series Thirteen:8 7:00 pm |
|-----------|--|
| 19-20 | Ecumenical Sabbath Retreat - Prayer Walk |
| 20-21 | Healthy Congregations meeting in DeWitt |
| 21 | Taize Worship at Bloomfield Hills, Kirk in the Hills |
| 25 | Hands on Mission Rebuilding Detroit Together |
| 27-May 1 | Iowa III Mission trip to Cedar Rapids, IA |
| 28 | Presbytery Meeting at Detroit, Westminster |
| 29 | Pittsburgh Theological Seminary invites all PNC's to their campus for a Placement Fair 10:00 am-3:00 pm if interested call 412-441-3304 x2146 for a reservation |
| May 2009 | |
| 2 | Follow-up to the Mission Southeast Michigan Leadership Training Day |
| 2 | PWPD Annual Women's Retreat with Keynoter Joan Gray at Grosse Pointe Memorial PC |
| 5 | Taize Worship at Dearborn, Littlefield |
| 5-19 | Pilgrimage to the Holy Land sponsored by the Middle East Work Group of the Social Justice and Peacemaking Ministry Team click here for an application in word and here for a pdf version |
| 6 | Minutes Book reading at Plymouth, First 7:00 pm - 9:30 pm |
| 7-9 | The youth drama ministry at Sashabaw Presbyterian in Clarkston called <i>6 Stools & a Folding Chair</i> presents..."Fiddler on the Roof" |
| 9 | Minutes Book reading at Detroit, Westminster 9:00 am - 12:00 pm |
| 16 | Waterford, Community Presbyterian Church Music Series Shoreline Sound 7:00 pm |
| 16 | Hands on Mission Greening Detroit |
| 17-18 | Ecumenical Sabbath Retreat - Bringing the Sabbath Home |
| 19 | Taize Worship at Bloomfield Hills, Kirk in the Hills |
| 21 | Taize Worship at Troy, Northminster |
| 23 | Hands on Mission Greening Detroit day 2 |
| 25 | Presbytery Office Closed - Memorial Day |
| June 2009 | |
| 2 | Taize Worship at Dearborn, Littlefield |
| 8 | Presbyterian Villages of Michigan Foundation 3rd annual <i>It's A Wonderful Life!</i> Golf Outing at Plum Hollow Golf and Country Club in Southfield Call 248.281.2040 for more information! |
| 11-13 | The Big Tent , an unprecedented gathering of Presbyterians for ten national conferences and convocations under one roof, will take place in Atlanta, Georgia |
| 15-18 | Hands on Mission Festivals of Health |
| 16 | Taize Worship at Bloomfield Hills, Kirk in the Hills |
| 16-20 | Hands on Mission Blitz Build 2009 |
| 18 | Taize Worship at Troy, Northminster |
| 21-23 | Synod Retreat with John Bell of the Ionia Community at Columbiere Center, Clarkston, MI |
| 23 | Presbytery Meeting at Detroit, Jefferson Avenue |
| 28-July 3 | Covenant Gathering at Camp Michindoh, Hillsdale, MI |
| July 2009 | |
| 3 | Presbytery Office Closed - Independence Day |
| 7 | Taize Worship at Dearborn, Littlefield |
| 16 | Taize Worship at Troy, Northminster |
| 21 | Taize Worship at Bloomfield Hills, Kirk in the Hills |

| August 2009 | |
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| 4 | Taize Worship at Dearborn, Littlefield |
| 8 | Hands on Mission work day at Barnabas |
| 18 | Taize Worship at Bloomfield Hills, Kirk in the Hills |
| 20 | Taize Worship at Troy, Northminster |
| 25 | Presbytery Meeting at Shelby Twp., St. Thomas |
| September 2009 | |
| 1 | Taize Worship at Dearborn, Littlefield |
| 7 | Presbytery Office Closed - Labor Day |
| 13-17 | Iowa IV Mission Trip to Cedar Rapids, IA |
| 15 | Taize Worship at Bloomfield Hills, Kirk in the Hills |
| 17 | Taize Worship at Troy, Northminster |
| 28-29 | Pastors in Transition at St. Francis Retreat Center, DeWitt, MI |
| October 2009 MONTH OF MISSION | |
| 6 | Taize Worship at Dearborn, Littlefield |
| 15 | Taize Worship at Troy, Northminster |
| 20 | Taize Worship at Bloomfield Hills, Kirk in the Hills |
| 27 | Presbytery Meeting at Port Huron, First |
| 31 | Month of Mission Breakfast |
| November 2009 | |
| 1 | Daylight Savings Time ends - set clocks back one hour |
| 1-8 | Katrina IX Mission Trip to Pearlinton, MS |
| 3 | Taize Worship at Dearborn, Littlefield |
| 6-7 | Synod Assembly |
| 13 | Presbyterian Villages of Michigan Foundation 6th Annual <i>It's A Wonderful Life!</i> Gala at the Westin Book Cadillac in Detroit. Call 248.281.2040 for more information! |
| 13-15 | Youth Mix |
| 17 | Taize Worship at Bloomfield Hills, Kirk in the Hills |
| 19 | Taize Worship at Troy, Northminster |
| 24 | Presbytery Meeting at Waterford, Community |
| 26-27 | Presbytery Office Closed - Thanksgiving Holiday |
| December 2009 | |
| 1 | Taize Worship at Dearborn, Littlefield |
| 4-6 | Birmingham, First hosting Dr. Walter Brueggeman, theologian-in-residence |
| 15 | Taize Worship at Bloomfield Hills, Kirk in the Hills |
| 17 | Taize Worship at Troy, Northminster |
| 24-25 | Presbytery Office Closed - Christmas Holiday |
| 31 | Presbytery Office Closed - New Years Eve |