



The Grapevine

CONNECTING THE CONGREGATIONS OF THE PRESBYTERY OF DETROIT

June 2011

Speaking Inside and Outside the Walls



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

In Gil Rendle's book, Journey in the Wilderness: New Life for Mainline Churches (Nashville: Abingdon, 2010), he says the church of today must learn a new language. Quoting Walter Brueggemann, Rendle says we are living in a wilderness that requires the ability to speak inside and outside of the wall, taking on the metaphor of the walls of Jerusalem.

Writes Brueggemann, "People of faith must be bilingual. They must have a public language for negotiating at the wall. And they must have a more communal language for processing behind the gate, in the community, out of sight and range of imperial negotiations" (Rendle, 7). Rather than being held by safe and weak stories, the congregation must remember who it is as a community of faith and "what can happen in the neighborhood if members of the congregation come to terms with their discomforts and fears" (13).

Why must we be bilingual? Society has changed. Culture has secularized, people distrust institutions,

demographics have changed, and the emphasis on world religions has made people question what is truth.

So how do we communicate that we have something life-giving for the world? Rendle says first we as congregations must ask who are we, what has God called us to do, and who is our neighbor? These are the questions of identity, purpose, and contextual focus. Rendle says, "It is not your father's wilderness." Today we find ourselves in a different mission field.

The challenge for leadership today (94-104)?

1. Frame the adaptive questions: What do we need to be doing in the next three to five years to be more faithful?
2. Move to the balcony: getting to the place where perspective can be seen, and priorities set
3. Use your locus of control: by using the power you have to change what you can – mostly oneself
4. Focus on outcomes, not what goes into a system, but what changes as a result, "what we are trying to make different"
5. Protect the voices of creative deviants: what new questions do they bring?
6. Align Resources and

attention to where outcomes are wanted: focusing the people, dollars, and time where the learning and action is required

7. Practice poise: leadership introduces discontent, not satisfaction, and poise is required, living with "one foot outside the system" at all times for support

Finally, Rendle challenges leaders to give up the "tyranny of the all." Leadership needs to set the pace, and define what needs to be done. Sessions need to focus on outcomes, or what will be different when teams spend money, not on previous budgets. Sessions have to accept that not everyone in a congregation will come along with the leadership. It is leadership's job to keep before the congregation, in the words of Jeremiah, God's plans for a future and a hope.

I recommend you read this book and make it a topic for your next session retreat, or take a chapter each meeting. It is that good! It is about the church serving in the wilderness, demonstrating and sharing the good news of Jesus Christ.

As a 2011 Service Project of Presbyterian Men, on Saturday, June 4, 50+ people came to help refresh & restore facilities for a start-up church serving the Hispanic community in Mexican town, Southwest Detroit. (Comunidad Los Del Camino led by Elias Cabarcas)



Clergy Ordination Anniversaries

AUSTIN, MARY,	15
DAVIS, ROXIE ANN,	35
ELLENS, J. HAROLD,	55
KNUDSEN, RAYMOND,	45
MARVIN, FRANK C., JR.,	60
MICHALEK, DANIEL,	35
MOORE, PETER,	30
TAYLOR, BERNARD,	30
DAVIS, WILLIAM,	40
FINDLAY, WILLIAM,	45
TUCKER-LLOYD, IRIS,	15

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