



The Grapevine

CONNECTING THE CONGREGATIONS OF THE PRESBYTERY OF DETROIT

August 2011

Gil Rendle, Journey in the Wilderness: New Life for Mainline Churches
(Nashville: Abingdon, 2010).



Reviewed
by Allen D.
Timm,
Executive
Presbyter

Last year a group of over 100 young adults gathered for dinner once a month in a room over a bakery in inner city Detroit. The Detroit Soup Project invited participants to donate \$10, and to present a project to improve Detroit. They would listen, debate, and vote. After each meeting, one went out with \$800 as a grant for a project that would improve the city of Detroit. What does that say to the church? How can we, the church, invite them to join our work in the city? How can we show them we are open to them? How can we give them authority and send them out? How can we build their trust in the church? How can we share a word of hope that grounds their life?

These are the challenges Gil Rendle challenges presents in this book. We are wandering in the wilderness because culture has changed. People no longer seek out a church. No longer do most Americans wake up on

a Sunday morning and ask, "Where is a church I can attend?" We find ourselves in a culture that has become secular. People distrust institutions. The demographics have changed. There is a growing acceptance of world religions. These are marks of change.

To lead the journey in the wilderness, a congregation must communicate that they have something life-giving for the world. Rendle's first step calls congregations to ask who they are. Second, they must ask what God has called them to do. Finally, they must ask, "Who is our neighbor?" These are the questions of identity, purpose, and contextual focus. Rendle lifts the theme, "It is not your father's wilderness." Today we find ourselves in a different mission field.

Rendle challenges church leaders to frame the adaptive questions that ask, "What do we need to be doing in the next three to five years to be more faithful?" Leaders need to move to the balcony to gain perspective and set priorities. Leaders need to be more flexible and provide opportunities for leadership and mission to the community. They need to serve the people in their neighborhood.

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, that is, what will be different when teams spend money. 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 believe Rendle is right about our world today. I believe Rendle has given us a challenge to find a map in the wilderness. Maybe we won't find the Promised Land, but our journey must make a difference. I recommend you read this book as a session or staff. Rendle's deep faith and vision guides the church that wants to serve in the wilderness, demonstrating and sharing the good news of Jesus Christ. What can we accomplish over a bowl of soup, like the young adults in Detroit?



Serve Fellow Christians in Hands-on Mission Opportunity

In this hands-on experience, you will work side-by-side with congregants. Come to serve as well as enjoy Christian fellowship in a meaningful way. Be creative; bring a son or daughter with you. There is plenty of work for all skill levels, genders and ethnicity.

Save Saturday, October 10, 2011 for
Presbyterian Men's Service Projects
Select from two startup churches in: 1) Highland Park and 2) Southwest Detroit.

1) Park United Presbyterian Church

14 Cortland St.
 Highland Park, MI 48203
 Established in 1893, the current facility was built in 1910-1911 to accommodate more than 200 members. Today, the same facility is in need of significant repairs to support its current membership. Two workdays last year by the Presbyterian Men made significant progress toward the renovation of this historic church. Among tasks still needed is roof work, painting and replacement of ceiling tiles.

2) Comunidad Los Del Camino

7354 Whittaker St., Detroit, MI
 Formerly the Southwest United Presbyterian Church in Detroit, the facility has undergone a transition to become a Hispanic startup church named Comunidad Los Del Camino. Our workday held earlier this year addressed landscaping and general clean up. In October we will continue the work with an emphasis on plastering and painting. More information on both projects will be available soon.

Program

8 am Registration
 9 am—3 pm Work day
 Noon Lunch

Contact: John Emmert

(313) 559-0929
 jjemmert@yahoo.com

Participants are encouraged to bring their own tools.

The Presbyterian Men's Fellowship, Presbytery of Detroit, 17575 Hubbell, Detroit, MI 48235 — (313) 345-6550 x203



A PLACE OF REFUGE

TRANSITIONAL HOUSING

1st Annual Picnic

Saturday, September 10, 2011
 Noon - 4 pm
 25570 Grand Concourse
 Southfield, MI 48075
 Office: 248-809-2387

Rhonda Barley, BSW Executive Director



Come and meet the young men and tour our home

Presbytery of Detroit

Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
 17575 Hubbell Ave, Detroit, MI 48235
 313-345-6550
 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

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 The Rev. Dr. Allen D. Timm, ext. 203
Stated Clerk
 The Rev. Edward H. Koster, ext. 201
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 Richard Grant, 517-546-0249
Executive Director Second Mile Center
 Ruth Azar
Resource Center Director
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 The Rev. Estelle Aaron, 216-280-1338
Youth Hands-on Mission
 Charon Barconey, 313-770-5822
Interfaith Ministries
 The Rev. Wm Gepford, 313-933-4086

RULING ELDERS! ANSWER THE CALL TO LEAD!

Did you know? You are responsible for your congregation (nFOG G-3.02) and accountable to God...Hebrews 13:17

LEADING IN A CHANGING CULTURE

SPONSORED by: GROWTH STRATEGY WORK GROUP of the Planning & Visioning Ministry Team

The First Convocation of Ruling Elders in the Presbytery of Detroit
 [Pastors are invited, too]

This is NOT just another Presbytery Meeting!

Outcomes:

- 1) Create awareness of cultural change
- 2) Understand the need to lead as a Ruling Elder
- 3) Lead towards positive change
 - a. Understand barriers to change
 - b. Discuss how to get started

Thursday, October 13, 2011

5:00 PM box dinner \$10

(Payable at the door to the "Presbytery of Detroit")

5:45 PM-8:30PM Program

At The First Presbyterian Church
 600 N. Brady Rd., Dearborn, MI 48124

Advanced registration requested by Thursday, October 6, 2011

5 ways to register - just pick the one that works best for you!

1. On-line at www.detroitpresbytery.org/11013RulingElderConvocation.htm
2. E-mail your information to sandy@detroitpresbytery.org
3. Call your information in to Sandy Jensen at 313-345-6550 ext. 220
4. FAX this sheet to 313-345-7250
5. Snail Mail this sheet to Presbytery of Detroit, 17575 Hubbell, Detroit, MI 48235

First Name: _____ Last Name: _____

Phone No.: _____ Email: _____

Church: _____ City: _____

Clergy Ordination Anniversaries

BLAIKIE, DOUGLAS	25
WINGROVE, WILLIAM	35
REED, PHILIP	30

The Parish Paper

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THE PARISH PAPER

IDEAS AND INSIGHTS FOR ACTIVE CONGREGATIONS

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

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Why Do Smart Churches Make Dumb Decisions?

By inventing the phonograph, young Thomas Edison launched a major change in how and when we listen to music. And his light bulb changed our world by lighting the nights.

But Edison's high IQ didn't prevent him from making a bad decision. After building his fame with light bulbs that used direct current, Edison couldn't imagine a world in which alternating current ruled. So he opposed the new and far superior AC technology which (a) can be inexpensively fed through wires over vast distances and (b) can power both tiny light bulbs and giant machines.

By rejecting alternating current, Edison paved the way for his star employee, Nikola Tesla, to spread the use of electric power across the world. Decades after AC proved itself the world's best commercial current, Edison kept arguing that his DC idea was better!

That Edison story captures the major insight in Zachary Shore's book, *Blunder: Why Smart People Make Bad Decisions* (New York: Bloomsbury USA, 2008). Edison fell into a cognitive trap—a rigid mind-set that can block smart people from seeing the importance of new facts—and thus, blocks the addressing of new circumstances.

For that same reason, highly intelligent church members sometimes make unwise decisions that undermine their church's future.

By learning how to recognize those thought traps, we reduce their destructive power over us and our church.

1. In the cognitive trap of “info-avoidance,” people actively disregard information that they prefer not to hear. In one congregation, an obsession with positive-thinking caused the governing board to automatically discard new ideas that could have fixed major problems. Influential church members repeatedly said to one another, “Our church is wonderful and we don't need to change anything.” Thus, the governing board (a) obsessively avoided hearing unpleasant information about declining worship attendance, (b) labeled people who delivered that information as “negative thinkers,” and (c) tranquilized itself with the false hope that “things will get better if we stay positive.” Last year, that congregation closed its doors.

With many church members, fear is a “cognitive killer.” Their fear of failure paralyzes constructive thought and action. As in a bad dream, they want to scream but

no sound comes; they want to run, but they can't move. The result: Several years of slow death, until the church becomes terminally ill and no type of action can save it from closing.

2. In the cognitive trap of “static cling,” people refuse to recognize that a fundamental change is under way. In a center-city congregation, the ethnic composition of people living in a seven-block radius of its front door changed. In a suburban congregation established fifty-five years ago, the driving distance from homes of new community residents is no longer ten minutes; now, it is twenty-five minutes—too inconvenient a distance for most young parents to drive their youngsters to youth activities. A rural county has lost 50 percent of its population since 1960. Thirty years ago, most of a church's worshipers were farmers; now most of them are commuters.

When demographics change, the cognitive trap of “static cling” often blocks churches from fine-tuning their ministries in ways that connect with the spiritual needs of a new population base.



“We have such a wonderful church! I don't see why we need to change anything, do you?”

3. In the cognitive trap of “fearing to appear weak,” churches continue to use methods that attracted numerous attendees four decades ago. Some such churches are striving to avoid the appearance of “entertaining people” or “catering to modernity in order to attract members.” Other such churches—locked into old habits—refuse to fine-tune their worship, buy a keyboard, sing praise songs, or install projection screens.

In some such churches the pastor drives with one foot on the brakes. In other such churches the rigid mind-set of two or three long-term members—quoting “Give me that old-time religion; it’s good enough for me”—blocks their congregation from decisions that attract and retain significant numbers of age-eighteen to forty-four young adults. In still other such churches pastor and people form a conspiracy to “stand by our faith”—and many of their decisions bar the church doors against most younger and new people.

Such churches tend to excuse their future-blocking behavior by blaming the people who don’t attend their worship service or participate in their 1950s-style ministries. “People are just not as committed as they used to be!” they exclaim with sadness that feels a bit like thinly veiled arrogance. By portraying themselves as loyal to God in ways that “less spiritual people” cannot achieve, such churches give themselves an anesthetic that keeps them from feeling their inflexible mind-set.

4. The cognitive trap of “cause-fusion” takes a variety of forms. A few such churches blame their declining worship attendance on “so many people staying home to watch worship on TV”—not realizing that research proved their theory false two decades ago. In other such churches, a “mono-causal myopia” blames declining worship attendance on one single cause—failing to see that in most cases declining worship attendance results from a combination of five to seven causes.

5. In the cognitive trap of “one-dimension obsession,” people believe that only one thing is important. Some of them say, “What we need is great preaching!” Others say, “If we just had a better building!”

Actor Nicholas Cage played Ben Gates, central figure in the movie *National Treasure*. Cage asks his partner, “What is one step this side of crazy?”

His partner replies, “Obsessed?”

Cage says, “No, passionate!”

People who are crazy, or obsessed, or passionate about effectiveness in *only one* of their church’s ministries seldom build long-lasting congregations.

6. In the cognitive trap of “mirror imaging,” people think other people think like they think. In a congregation whose members’ median age is sixty-five, most of the worshipers assume that today’s young-adult parents want the same type of worship and Christian education methods for their children that they wanted as young

-adult parents. When that mirror-imaging theory proves untrue, many of the older worshipers don’t get it—and in some cases blame today’s young adults for faulty thinking and low spiritual commitment.

7. In the cognitive trap that believes “expertise equals sound decisions,” people value education over effectiveness. In one such church, a highly educated, classically trained, music director (a) has never worked with youth and (b) defines excellence in church choirs as “performance quality”—with no emphasis whatsoever on “developing a spirit of warm fellowship among choir members.”

The belief that knowledge is more important than achievement leads many churches to weak results in various ministries. Expertise in a field does not always equal (a) the ability to work with people so that they feel like a world-class team and (b) sound judgment regarding strategy and policies that meet the spiritual needs of worshipers. Expertise doesn’t always generate wisdom; sometimes it generates rigidity.

8. In the cognitive trap of “cure-allism,” people dogmatically believe that a successful method works the same way in every church. When worshipers say, “If we do what Rick Warren’s Saddleback Community Church in California does, maybe we can become a great church, too!” they are often participating in the “cure-allism” delusion.

Churches do not automatically become effective by imitating great churches elsewhere. Effective churches become open-minded enough to (a) learn the spiritual needs of parents, youth, and children in their surrounding community and (b) learn how to provide worship, programs, and caring that meets those needs.

Practical Application: During the first few minutes of a regularly scheduled governing board meeting, distribute a copy of this *Parish Paper* issue to each person. Read it aloud as the group follows along. Ask each person to place a number in the margin beside each of the eight cognitive traps (using a scale of one to five, with five signifying the most nearly accurate description of our congregation’s thinking pattern). Collect the sheets. Ask someone to tabulate the answers and be ready to report the totals during a fifteen-minute discussion at the end of the meeting.

Ask your governing board members to help one another stay aware of the various invisible, self-destructive cognitive traps that block their congregation’s future effectiveness.

Presbytery of Detroit Calendar of Events

To have your Churches event posted please send the information to sandy@detroitpresbytery.org.

August 2011	
25	Eastside Faith Communities Coalition on Foster Care Regional Meeting 6:30 PM at Grosse Pointe Memorial Church, 16 Lakeshore Rd. Grosse Pointe Farms, MI 48236
27	Warren First Cruise Night. Click here for flyer
28	Garden City PC holding a Neighborhood Festival at the church 1841 Middlebelt Rd., Garden City, MI 48135 2:00 pm -6:00 pm. Click here for flyer
30	Mid-Oakland Faith Communities Coalition on Foster Care Regional Meeting 6:30 PM at First Presbyterian Church, 1669 West Maple Rd. Birmingham, MI 48009 Speakers: Kelly Ramsey and Lorraine Weber, For the Seventh Generation; Sheri Falvay, Director of Services to Children and Families at the Michigan Department of Community Health will also speak on traumatic impacts foster children may experience and ways congregations can help
31	Deadline for submitting application to be a GA Commissioner in Philadelphia, PA in 2012. Click here for application
September 2011	
4	Kirk in the Hills Carillon Concert 10:00 am and Noon at 1340 W. Long Lake, Bloomfield Hills 48302. Click here for more information
5	Presbytery Office Closed Labor Day
6	Taizé Worship 7:00 pm at Dearborn, Littlefield
10	The Social Justice & Peacemaking Ministry Team is holding an open meeting at the home of the Rev. Ellen Acton at 1:00 pm. For more information please contact Ellen at 248-722-3240
10	A Place of Refuge 1st Annual Picnic Noon - 4:00 pm 25570 Grand Concourse, Southfield, MI Click here for flyer
10	2011 Bocce Charity Challenge hosted by Warren, First 3000 E. Twelve Mile Rd, Warren, MI 48092. Click here for more information
13	Birmingham Faith Communities Coalition on Foster Care meeting at First Presbyterian Church, Birmingham at 6:45 pm
15	Mid-Michigan Regional Meeting 6:30 PM at Mott Regional Tech Center 1401 East Court Street, Room 1403, Flint, MI 48503
16-18	Howell Conference & Nature Center Middle School Adventure Retreat. Click here for flyer
18	Fundraiser for the Rev. Diane Smalley hosted by Fort Street PC, 631 W Fort Street, Detroit, MI 48226. Click here for more information
23-25	Lumberjack Work Weekend at Camp Westminster on Higgins Lake. Click here for flyer
24	Evangelism Training for Congregational Teams with Dr. Jack Stewart 8:30 am - 3:30 pm. at Royal Oak, First. Click here for flyer
24	Garden City PC hosting Grace Centers of Hope Fund-Raiser at the church 1841 Middlebelt Rd., Garden City, MI 48135 doors open at 5:00 pm. Click here for flyer
27-28	Pastors In Transition with Graham Standish at the St. Francis Retreat Center, DeWitt, MI Click here for brochure
28	Alma College presents John Bul Dau a leader of the "Lost Boys of Sudan" workshop <i>Working for Change</i> 2:00-4:00 pm Click here for flyer and lecture <i>Journey to Leadership</i> 8:00 pm Click here for flyer
28-Nov 9	Synod of the Covenant needs congregations to host church leaders from Mexico and Cuba. Click here for more information
29-Oct 2	Michigan Presbyterian Pilgrimage at Howell Conference & Nature Center. Click here for brochure . Click here for application
October 2011	
4	Taizé Worship 7:00 pm at Dearborn, Littlefield
8	The Multicultural Ministries Work Group invites you to a one day workshop on the Book of Revelation at Birmingham First from 8:30 am-4:00 pm. Click here for flyer and registration form
10	Presbyterian Men's Service Projects, select form two sites 1) Highland Park or 2) Southwest Detroit. Click here for more information

10-11	POAM Certification Course. Click here for more information
11	Planning & Visioning presents <i>Connecting with Your Community</i> 5:30 pm - 8:00 pm at Birmingham, First dinner included
11-14	2011 Joint ARMSS / POAMN Convention & Conference La Quinta Inns & Suites, 303 Blum, San Antonio, Texas 78205 Click here for more information
13	Leading in a Changing Culture an evening for all Elders and Pastors 5:00 pm - 8:30 pm at The First Presbyterian Church of Dearborn, 600 N. Brady, Dearborn 48124. Click here for flyer
15	1st Annual Jr High Youth Rally held at Howell Conference and Nature Center 10:00 am - 4:00 pm. Click here for flyer
15-23	Katrina 13 Mission Trip to New Orleans, LA. Registration deadline Sept 11. Click here for flyer . Click here for application
16	Birmingham First, 1669 W. Maple Rd, Birmingham, MI 48009 presents Diane Bish, First Lady of the Organ in Concert at 3:00 pm. Click here for more information
22	Minutes Book reading in the Lounge at Detroit Westminster, 17567 Hubbell, Detroit MI 48235 9:00 am - 12:00 pm for those clerks that were unable to attend either of the previous sessions.
25	Presbytery Meeting at Ann Arbor, Westminster, 1500 Scio Church Rd., Ann Arbor 48103; 734-761-9320
29	Month of Mission Breakfast 9:00 am at Detroit, Westminster 17567 Hubbell, Detroit, MI 48235 Click here for flyer
November 2011	
1	Taizé Worship 7:00 pm at Dearborn, Littlefield
4-5	<i>Embracing Racial and Cultural Diversity: A Vision of the Presbytery of Detroit</i> to be held at First PC, 1669 Maple Rd, Birmingham, MI 48009. Click here for more information
4-6	2011 National Tentmaking Conference <i>The Flap on Tentmaking</i> to be held at Stony Point Center, Stony Point, NY. Click here for more information
5	Clerk Training 9:00 am at the Presbytery Office. Topic: Statistical Report
6	Daylight Savings Time Ends - set clocks back one hour
8	Mid-Oakland Faith Communities Coalition on Foster Care Regional Meeting 6:30 PM at Kirk in the Hills Presbyterian Church, 1340 West Long Lake Road Bloomfield Hills, MI 48302 Michigan Department of Human Service Director, Maura Corrigan to speak, service agencies invited to provide materials, contact info and display items--tables will be provided.
15	Deadline for submission of nominations for the Presbyterian Men's George Irwin Service Award. Click here for form
22	Presbytery Meeting at Royal Oak, First, 529 Hendrie Blvd., Royal Oak 48067; 248-541-0108
24	Presbytery Office Closed Thanksgiving
December 2011	
6	Taizé Worship 7:00 pm at Dearborn, Littlefield
10	Men's Advent Communion Breakfast at Livonia, St. Paul's, 27475 Five Mile Rd., Livonia 48154. Keynote speaker is Lloyd Carr, retired head coach, U of M Football Team. Click here for flyer
23-Jan 2	Presbytery Office Closed for Christmas and New Year Holiday
January 2012	
5	Presbytery's books close at 5:00pm please make sure the 2011 Per Capita and Shared Mission are submitted
26-28	Calvin Symposium on Worship at Calvin College, Grand Rapids, MI. For more information contact Bob Szwed, Chair of Congregational Life Ministry Team at bszwed@yahoo.com
February 2012	