



# The Grapevine

CONNECTING THE CONGREGATIONS OF THE PRESBYTERY OF DETROIT

August 2013

## The Ordered Ministry of Ruling Elder



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

One of the contributions of Reformed Theology is the ministry of elders. John Calvin introduced the idea, based on his reading of the early church. Not all were teachers and pastors, but others governed the church. Hence he separated the duties of ruling and teaching elder. The Scottish Church followed the First Book of Discipline and continued Calvin's distinction of the ministry of ruling and teaching elders. Teaching elders were to study and pray, and guide the congregation in the way God was leading. Ruling elders were assigned the responsibility of ecclesiastical discipline, management of the life of the congregation, and the nomination and election of teaching elders.

Later the Second Book of Discipline added the council of the presbytery because the session needed help. The presbytery covered a geographical area and made sure there was strong teaching and preaching. Again ruling and teaching elders shared the ministry of ecclesiastical

disciple, financial administration, the right administration of the sacraments, and ensured that the churches followed the Provincial and General Assemblies.

When all of these bodies met for the oversight of the church, they included the active participation of ruling elders. This history is told by Joan Gray and Joyce Tucker in their revised, Presbyterian Polity for Church Leaders: Fourth Edition (Louisville: Geneva Press, 2012), which I recommend to you for new officer training. Gray and Tucker cite instances in Virginia and Delaware of the first Presbyterian form of government that included parity between teach and ruling elders. While teaching elders bring expertise in theological and biblical studies, ruling elders bring their wisdom of governance of mission and program. The first Presbytery, Philadelphia Presbytery, was founded in 1706. By 1717 there was a need for synods, and the Synod of Philadelphia was formed. I served a congregation in Bethesda, Maryland, that was formed in 1723 by an itinerant preacher sent by the Synod of Philadelphia.

All of this background serves as backdrop for the new Form of Government, which begins with the Foundations of Church

government that call the church to be in mission. The church is called and sent to show the love of Jesus Christ to neighbor and friend. The church is called to join the work of Christ in showing God's love and justice to the world.

Teaching elders equip the saints and lead them to hear God's word today. Teaching elders, by virtue of having time during the week, and the connections with community leaders, have the opportunity to discover the needs of the community. Ruling elders bring their vision and their ability to administer and run programs to the table. Together ruling and teaching elders complement each other and provide the leadership that is needed. By sharing voice and authority at the session, no teaching elder can begin a program or ministry without the wisdom and counsel of the session. By sharing the ordination of the laying on of hands, we recognize that the Holy Spirit empowers both groups to serve and to minister in the name of Jesus Christ. Deacons are ordained, too, because their ministry of service and compassion is also a work of the Holy Spirit.

In G-3.0201, we read that the session is the council that has

Continued on page 2

the responsibility of governing the congregation and guiding the witness of the congregation in the world so that the church as a community of faith, hope, and love witnesses to the world, and extends the make of the church (F-1.0304). As leaders in the congregation, session guides the order of worship, provides for regular preaching of the word, guides efforts to reach into the community and the world with the message of salvation and the invitation to a committed discipleship, and plans for ministries of social healing and reconciliation in the community. The session also provides that the sacraments will be rightly administered and received, and nurtures the covenant

community as disciples of Christ in their nurture, education, fellowship, and stewardship. The session is also charged with maintaining the church property as a witness to the world, leading the congregation in participation in the whole church, and maintaining the covenant of discipline in the congregation as witness to the world of healthy relationships that can forgive and restore community in times of difficulty.

I am sharing all of this to urge you to attend the opportunities the Presbytery extends this Fall for teaching and ruling elders to grow and learn. There will be opportunities for elders to learn about worship on three Sunday evenings. These opportunities will show you what other elders

have discovered in their congregations in witness and worship. There will be an evening to experience vital worship. There will be a meeting to lift up healing and reconciliation in Detroit and its metro area. February 8 there will be a leadership training day for new elders, deacons, and trustees. May we show the love of and justice of Jesus Christ to the world around us, so that, in following him, they may too exhibit the sovereign rule of God.

**Clergy Ordination Anniversaries**

**August**

FAIR, FAIRFAX	25
HUFF, JASON	5
SCHAEFER, ANNE N.	30
SMITH, BRYAN DEAN	25

**September**

KIDDER, ANNEMARIE	15
MABEE, CHARLES	35
PORTER, JAMES	20
SMALLEY, DIANE	25

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**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

**Staff**

*Executive Presbyter*  
The Rev. Dr. Allen D. Timm, ext. 203  
*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*  
Artheilia 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

**Consultants**

*Hands-on Mission*  
Mary Lloyd, 313-247-0792  
*Transformation of Congregations*  
The Rev. Dr. Richard Brownlee, 419-450-0466  
*Youth Hands-on Mission*  
Charon Barconey, 313-770-5822  
*Interfaith Ministries*  
The Rev. Wm Gepford, 313-933-4086

# THE PARISH PAPER

## IDEAS AND INSIGHTS FOR ACTIVE CONGREGATIONS

Coeditors: Herb Miller and Cynthia Woolever - [www.TheParishPaper.com](http://www.TheParishPaper.com)

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### Growth or Decline? 10 Key Questions about Worship Attendance

Three out of four congregations attract the same number of or even fewer worshipers than they did five years ago. Review the following questions to determine if your church could take steps to attract and retain more newcomers.

**1. Does your newcomer rate exceed your departure rate?** Churches lose members each year—through death, transfers to other churches, members moving out of town, or people becoming less active participants. To maintain a stable and active membership, churches must offset any losses by welcoming new members. The average congregation loses 7 percent of its members each year. Therefore, for every 100 members, a church must add 7 newcomers annually for the church to remain the same size.

**2. In any given year, what percent of your worshipers are visiting for the first time?** On average, 2 percent of attendees in any given worship service are attending that congregation for the first time. Without first-time visitors, congregations shrink in membership over time.

**3. What prompts someone to visit your congregation for the first time?** Half of new members say they found out about the church they eventually joined because someone they knew mentioned the church or invited them to attend worship. More new members in conservative Protestant churches—two out of three—say they visited a church for the first time because of this personal invitation.

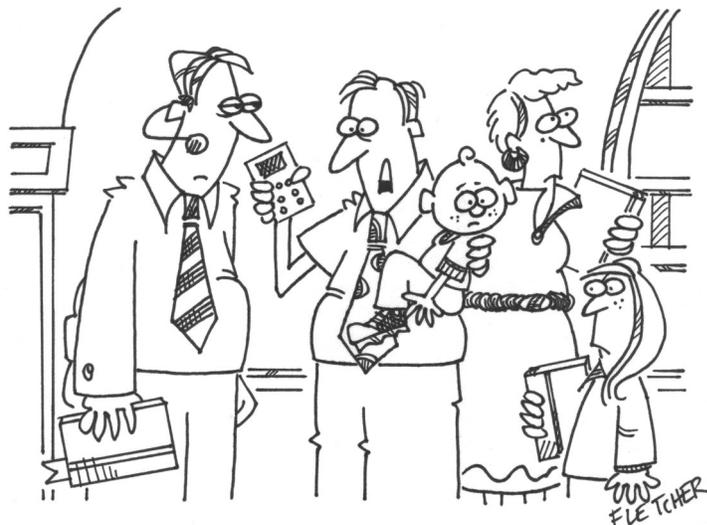
One out of four first-time visitors said they decided to attend services because they noticed the church building when they passed by. A small number—one in ten—said they were actively looking for a church associated with a particular denomination.<sup>1</sup>

What other factors increase the number of first-time visitors? Visible signage informs potential visitors about the kind of congregation it is and when services are held. Additional signage should designate directions if the church is set away from major

roads, building entrances, parking, the nursery, and other important areas of the church. Adequate signage signals to visitors that you are expecting them.

Additionally, an increasing number of people now “see” your church for the first time through the church’s website. Your website should be designed to meet the needs of both visitors and current members. On the home page, give visitors the essential information they need—the times of worship services, the church’s street address, a map showing the location, and how to contact the pastor and other church staff. Don’t make your potential first-time worshipers click through your site searching for basic information.<sup>2</sup>

**4. What percent of your first-time visitors return for a second time, and again and again, until they become members?** About one in three new members say they visited *one* other congregation before attending their current church for the first time. An equal percentage visited *two or more* churches before attending the present one. On average, congregations can expect about 10 percent of their first-time visitors to become future members.



ACCORDING TO YOUR WEBSITE, THIS CHURCH IS CURRENTLY “UNDER CONSTRUCTION.”

In a few fast-growing churches, as high as 30 percent of first-time visitors eventually join. Increasing both the number of first-time visitors *and* the percent that return is essential.

#### **5. Why do first-time visitors decide to return?**

Research shows that newcomers name three factors that most impressed them as worship visitors and made them want to come back again: the friendliness of the people (40% mentioned it), the overall worship experience (36% gave this reason), and the quality of the sermon or homily (34% said this played a role in their decision to return).

Visitors often report that they were only greeted by the official greeters posted at the door and the pastor as they exited. Divide the sanctuary seating area into sections and station additional undercover greeters to look for visitors. If a fellowship time or study group follows services, ask the pew greeters to invite visitors to go with them. Having someone show the way is another demonstration of generous hospitality.

#### **6. How does your church follow up with first-time worship visitors?**

Surprisingly, one in three new members said they were *not* contacted after their first visit to the church. Asking visitors to complete a visitor card is the first step in gaining the information for a later contact. Design a strategy that involves multiple methods (letters, postcards, emails, phone calls, or personal visits) based on the number of times someone has visited. A first-time worship visitor would receive a different kind of follow-up than on subsequent visits.

#### **7. What percent of your attendees are between 18 to 29 years of age?**

The aging profile of current members strikes many young people when they visit for the first time. That is because the average worshiper is 54 years old, 10 years older than the average American. Often the largest age group among attendees is worshipers over 65 years of age. In the average congregation, one in three worshipers is 65 years of age or older. Attracting 18 to 29 year-old visitors is not impossible. Congregations with a high concentration of emerging adults offer multiple points of entry into the life of the congregation such as non-traditional worship times and formats, study groups and age-specific adult education, opportunities to volunteer in community service, and social gatherings. An expert on best practices for young adult ministry argues that congregations should pay more attention to the church's identity, not less.<sup>3</sup> Even congregations

with small numbers of emerging adults can provide opportunities for worship leadership and ministry in the church or community.

#### **8. What percent of your current attendees are not yet members?**

On average, one in ten worshipers regularly participate in a congregation but are not yet members. Most of these nonmembers are not involved in any church programs or activities beyond attending worship services. Nonmembers tend to be younger than 45 years of age. How does your church construct a bridge that helps attendees cross over into membership? Are new-member or adult programs aimed at explaining tenets of the faith and a call to discipleship?

#### **9. How is your congregation known in the community?**

If a dozen random people in your area were approached and asked, "What do you know about [fill in the name of your church]?" How many would say they have never heard of it or that they know nothing? Every community is different and every congregation has the opportunity for unique ministry that fits their location such as quality children's ministry or school-age programs, senior services, outstanding music or promotion of the arts, or advocacy for marginalized groups of people. Identify and build on your congregation's distinctive strengths to better serve God and others.

#### **10. Do the worship services help people connect to God?**

Long-time members grow accustomed to the liturgy, music, and pace and find meaning in the familiar. Ask the last 10 people who joined the church how they experienced the services when they first began attending. Also contact recent visitors and ask them about their reactions to the service. Listen carefully to these reflections and share them with worship leaders. Newcomers often provide good insights into the ways services can be more effective in meeting attendees' spiritual needs.

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1. Statistics in this issue come from the U.S. Congregational Life Survey ([www.USCongregations.org](http://www.USCongregations.org)).

2. See the free download, *Church Effectiveness Nuggets: Volume 8, How to Attract First-Time Worship Visitors* ([www.TheParishPaper.com](http://www.TheParishPaper.com)).

3. J. Roberto and M. Hayes, "Best Practices in Young Adult Faith Formation," Lifelong Faith Associates (2007).

## Presbytery of Detroit Calendar of Events

To have your Churches event posted please send the information to [sandy@detroitpresbytery.org](mailto:sandy@detroitpresbytery.org).

<b>August 2013</b>	
27	<b>Presbytery Meeting at 4:00 pm, St. Paul's Presbyterian Church, 27475 Five Mile Rd., Livonia, MI 48154; 734-422-1470</b>
27	Foster Care Ministries meetings with the Faith Communities Coalition on Foster Care 6:30 p.m., Mid Oakland Co. FCC: Kirk in the Hills, Long Lake Rd., Bloomfield Hills, MI MDHS Director Maura Corrigan to speak
<b>September 2013</b>	
2	Presbytery Office closed in observance of Labor day
3	Taizé Worship 7:00 pm at <a href="#">Dearborn, Littlefield</a>
7	Warren, First, 3000 E. 12 Mile Rd., Warren, MI 48092, 586-751-1721 holding it's 2013 Bocce Charity Challenge at the church. <a href="#">Click here for flyer</a>
7	Congregational Development Ministry Team hosting Presbytery wide Worship 6:00 pm at Dearborn, First, 600 N. Brady, Dearborn, MI 48124
8	Barnabas Youth Center "Swing4Dreams" Golf Outing Fund Raiser, 1:30 pm - Shotgun Start, Sycamore Hills Golf Club, 48787 North Ave., Macomb, Michigan 48042. <a href="#">Click here for more information</a>
19	All Clergy day of reflection, education, and preparation. Clergy will learn how to discuss sensitive and controversial issues with your congregation, including the proposal to redefine the definition of marriage 10:00 am - 3:00 pm at Grosse Pointe Memorial PC, 16 Lakeshore Dr., Grosse Pointe Farms, MI 48236. <a href="#">Click here for more information</a> <a href="#">Click here to register</a>
21	Warren, Celtic Cross Fall Holiday Craft Show and Bake Sale from 9 am-4pm and table rentals will be \$25. For further information please contact Celtic Cross Presbyterian Church, 11451 E. Ten Mile Rd., Warren, MI 48089 or call 586-757-7832.
23-24	Pastors in Transition at St. Francis Retreat Center, DeWitt, MI
28	Presbyterian Men's work day
28	Clerk's Training 9:00 am - 11:00 am in the Resource Center of the Presbytery Office, 17575 Hubbell, Detroit, MI 48235
<b>October 2013</b>	
1	Taizé Worship 7:00 pm at <a href="#">Dearborn, Littlefield</a>
5	Jr. Hi Youth Rally at Howell Conference and Nature Center, Triangle Lake Rd., Howell, MI 48843 10:00 am - 4:00 pm. <a href="#">Click here for flyer</a> <a href="#">Click here for registration forms</a>
5	Mission Planning Workshop sponsored by Hands-On Mission 8:30 am - 12:30 pm at Drayton Avenue Presbyterian Church, 2441 Pinecrest Dr., Ferndale, MI 48220. <a href="#">Click here for flyer</a>
10-12	Kenya Mission Annual Conference at Dearborn, First 600 N. Brady. <a href="#">Click here for more information</a>
11	Dinner with the Kenya Mission Network at Dearborn, First 6:00 pm. <a href="#">Click here for more information</a>
10-13	Take a Pilgrimage Through Faith with a group at Howell Conference and Nature Center. Sponsored by Presbyterian Pilgrimage. <a href="#">Click here for more information</a>
20	Ruling Elder Seminar "Revitalizing Worship and Mission" 4:00 pm - 7:00 pm at Lake Shore PC, 27801 Jefferson Ave., St. Clair Shores, MI 48081. <a href="#">Click here for information and registration</a>
26	<b>Month of Mission Breakfast 9:00 am followed by Presbytery Meeting at 11:30 am at Grosse Pointe Memorial, 16 Lakeshore, Grosse Pointe Farms, MI 48230</b>
<b>November 2013</b>	
3	<b>Daylight Savings Time Ends</b> - set clocks back one hour
3	Ruling Elder Seminar "Revitalizing Worship and Mission" 4:00 pm - 7:00 pm at First PC, 529 Hendrie Blvd., Royal Oak, MI 48067. <a href="#">Click here for information and registration</a>
5	Taizé Worship 7:00 pm at <a href="#">Dearborn, Littlefield</a>
8	Multicultural Ministry Team presents "A Gathering on Reconciliation- Addressing Race and Racism- In Metropolitan Detroit" 6:30 pm at Westminster Presbyterian Church, 17567 Hubbell, Detroit, MI 48235. <a href="#">Click here for flyer</a>
10	Ruling Elder Seminar "Revitalizing Worship and Mission" 4:00 pm - 7:00 pm at First PC, 701 Church St.,

	Plymouth, MI 48170. <a href="#">Click here for information and registration</a>
28	Presbytery Office closed for Thanksgiving Day
	<b>December 2013</b>
3	Taizé Worship 7:00 pm at <a href="#">Dearborn, Littlefield</a>
14	Men's Advent Communion Breakfast 8:30 am at Park United Presbyterian Church, 14 Cortland, Highland Park, MI 48203. Speaker is the Honorable Kurtis Wilder, Judge, Michigan Court of Appeals and member of Plymouth, First. <a href="#">Click here for flyer</a>
24-25	Presbytery Office Closed for Christmas Holiday
31-Jan 1	Presbytery Office Closed for New Year Holiday
	<b>January 2014</b>
28	<b>Presbytery Meeting at 4:00 pm, St. John's Presbyterian Church, 1961 E. Lafayette, Detroit, MI 48207; 313-567-0213. Installation of Moderator and Vice Moderator.</b>
	<b>February 2014</b>
8	Church Leadership Training at The First Presbyterian Church, 600 N. Brady, Dearborn, MI 48124 8:30 am - 3:45 pm with keynote speaker Dr. Craig Barnes, President and Professor of Pastoral Ministry, Princeton Theological Seminary. <a href="#">Click here for flyer</a>
22	<b>Presbytery Meeting at 9:00 am Location TBD This is a Saturday Meeting</b>
	<b>March 2014</b>
	<b>April 2014</b>
26	<b>Presbytery Meeting at 9:00 am Location TBD This is a Saturday Meeting</b>
	<b>May 23014</b>
	<b>June 2014</b>
14-21	<b>General Assembly Here - No Presbytery Meeting.</b>
	<b>July 2014</b>
	<b>August 2014</b>
26	<b>Presbytery Meeting at 4:00 pm Location TBD</b>
	<b>September 2014</b>
	<b>October 2014</b>
25	<b>Month of Mission Breakfast 9:00 am followed by Presbytery Meeting at 11:30 am Location TBD</b>
	<b>November 2014</b>
	<b>December 2014</b>
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