



**WE ARE THE PRESBYTERY
OF WESTERN COLORADO**

Pressing News

Holiday 2013

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Advent Discipline

And if a stranger dwells with you in your land, you shall not mistreat him. The stranger who dwells among you shall be to you as one born among you, and you shall love him as yourself; for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God.

Leviticus 19: 33-34

It may seem odd indeed that I would choose a text from Leviticus to write about at the beginning of the Advent season. Perhaps you will assume this author has succumbed to old age senility or at the very least has caved under the onslaught of the Advent crush. Well, I cannot comment on my senility, I will leave that determination to others, but I assure you that the chosen passage has been chosen with great care.

This season of Advent places Pastors and Church Leaders in a precarious predicament as we preach and teach about 'leaving the Christ in Christmas' while at the same time hurrying through a veritable whirlwind of activities that barely give us the chance to catch our breath, much less the chance to catch the Holy Spirit of the season. We tell others that they should remember the true 'reason for the season' while we lose sleep, lose perspective and lose our minds in the crush of church responsibilities.

We are truly strangers in a foreign land this Advent season.

The foreign land is the commercial crush and breakneck schedule that we heap upon ourselves and we struggle against it, often simply waiting until the season is over to finally catch our breath and inhale the true winds of the Spirit. By then, everyone else is gearing up for a New Year's celebration and we are finally letting the birth of Christ sink in. Or worse yet, we give up on Christmas all together and chalk it up to the loss of childhood dreams that cannot be recaptured by the adult church schedule.

As Paul once said, let me offer a "more excellent way".

Just as we confess the need for physical exercise at least a couple of hours each week to keep our bodies in shape, perhaps it is time to confess the need for spiritual exercise to keep our faith in shape. What if each of us closed the door and spent only a couple of hours in each of the weeks of Advent to just sit and listen and pray. I know it isn't profound but it does have numerous examples in scripture. How many times does Christ go off to be by himself to pray? Or check into why he travels to the seacoast of Tyre and

(Continued on page 2)



Sharing God's Mission

"O give thanks to the LORD, call on God's name, make known God's deed among the peoples." Psalm 105:1

Thank you for your ongoing gifts to the presbytery for our shared mission. The following story provides a firsthand account of how your congregation's generosity is helping to make a difference both within your presbytery and in Presbyterian ministries across the United States and around the world. As you work on your budgets this fall, please consider a gift to the shared mission of the church through your presbytery.



New worshiping community at UKirk Ole Miss grows tenfold **By investing in students, asking for commitment, ministry expands from 5 to 50**

More than 70 percent of church-attending high school students will lose their connection to the church during their college years, and only 20 percent will ever return, according to a recent study by [The Barna Group](#).

Pastor Howard Dudley, campus minister at University of Mississippi (Ole Miss) and leader of [UKirk Ole Miss](#), is on a personal mission, battling each day to help reclaim students from becoming part of this statistic.

[UKirk](#) (University Church), the network of PC(USA) collegiate ministries and one of the growing young adult ministries of the Presbyterian Mission Agency, equips churches to engage college students to become lifelong followers of Jesus Christ.

For Dudley, ministry revolves around one-on-one time with students. He takes each of his students to lunch and gives them a clear message: "I need you and your commitment." He believes that when college students are asked to invest, they do. Under Dudley's leadership, UKirk Ole Miss has increased tenfold. He opens the doors to all students and local young adults ages 18-24.

As Dudley says, "Our job is to provide a space for college students to grow, challenge their faith, and understand what it means to belong to God," and that is exactly what he is doing.



(Continued from page 1)

Sidon. Or examine the days spent in the wilderness before his public ministry? Or what about that moment in the garden just before his arrest?

I believe the very best Christmas gift we can give ourselves as church leaders this Advent is to discipline ourselves to dedicate just an hour a week to prayer and silence. Don't just talk about how others should do it, get out there and do it yourself. If we are to be strangers in this foreign land of Christmas crush let us do what the Israelites did and rely on our faith to keep us holy.

Merry Christmas,
Rev. George "Blake" Blakesly

THE PARISH PAPER

IDEAS AND INSIGHTS FOR ACTIVE CONGREGATIONS

Coeditors: Herb Miller and Cynthia Woolever - www.TheParishPaper.com

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E-newsletters: Worth More Than You Know

E-newsletters are pervasive—marketers, businesses, politicians, civic organizations, and physicians, among many others, prize them for the content they deliver. Churches have also embraced e-newsletters because information can be easily shared with members. But they're worth more—much more.

Whether your congregation is new to e-newsletters or a long-time user, the vast majority of congregations do not fully mine the reader information that e-newsletter companies make available. Many people are aware that e-newsletters provide “open” and “click” rates; however, this overlooks 90 percent of what makes e-newsletters such a powerful tool for building community, empowering your staff, and reaching out to others.

Using E-newsletters Effectively

In an age where social media (Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, etc.) and mobile technology represent the cutting edges of communications, e-newsletters are a bit old-school. What sets e-newsletters apart from any other form of electronic communication?

- *They provide a true look into readers' reactions to what your church is supporting.* While social media allows for feedback and reaction, those writing are aware that everyone is seeing what they're saying and reacting to, so they self-screen what they say. They may “like” something not because they really like it, but because a friend—or the minister—put it up. E-newsletter subscribers, however, do no such self-screening. Most are unaware that others are tracking what they open and click (though this is beginning to change), and in the comfort of their home or office they feel no compunction to engage something for reasons other than genuine interest.
- *They provide unparalleled granular detail about who reads your material.* E-newsletter data allow you to track readers' reading histories, who they have shared the information with, and how many times any given piece is read over time and by who.

- *They can help develop a stronger sense of community.* E-newsletters require a great deal of work. Some congregations are finding that in this work there is an opportunity to create community by turning members into profile-writers, book reviewers, designers, and editors. The e-newsletter goes beyond sharing information; it develops community.

Best Approaches

Developing healthy approaches to working with e-newsletters ensures that you remain flexible in your work. Done right, e-newsletters should constantly be changing as you use them to experiment with new ideas and adapt to what your members show interest in.

- *Think and Learn.* E-newsletters are popular tools for sharing and promoting activities and programs. In reality, pushing information is among the *least* effective uses of this tool. When building your e-newsletter, think first about what you want to learn, not what you need to communicate. Are your education programs connecting with people? Do you understand how people connect with one another? What are the big ideas your congregation wrestles



EVEN THE MOST CAREFULLY DESIGNED
E-NEWSLETTER WILL NOT REACH EVERYONE.

with? Are people's spiritual needs being met? Are they growing spiritually? Are there undiscovered volunteers you don't know about? Running articles that test these ideas will yield rich results.

- *Track, Track, Track.* It's not enough to know how many times something was opened, or how many clicks it received. Alone, this data tells you little. However, placed in context, and measured over time, you will begin to understand the habits and interests of your congregation. Are people on mobile or desktops? Do they read in the morning, afternoon, or evening? Are they sharing the information on social media? If they are, which channels? Do certain members read everything? Who are they? Do certain members just lurk? Why? What time of year do people respond to which topics? Tracking can tell you all this, and raise hundreds of additional questions.
- *Embrace Being Wrong.* The desire to be right all the time will impede your ability to learn what your e-newsletter is teaching you. Pieces that receive few clicks and opens aren't failures but important lessons in what people respond to. Maybe it was poorly written. Poorly timed. Poorly placed. Ask the hard question: Why did this fail to engage congregational readers? Then search for the answers.

Mistakes to Avoid

We expect a lot out of our church communications. And although most of us know that no one way of communicating will reach everyone, we want to believe that we can develop that one channel that most people in the congregation will depend on for information. And while carefully designed e-newsletters will tell you a lot, they are not a panacea anymore than social media, print newsletters, bulletin boards, phone trees, or public announcements. But to get the most out of this communication tool, here are five practices to avoid:

- *Don't send a PDF of your existing print newsletter.* Most people don't read print newsletters. Putting your print piece in e-newsletter format won't change that. An e-newsletter represents a whole other way of communicating, so wrapping it up in an online format won't make the print version more appetizing, or the electronic communication exciting.
- *Don't expect everyone to get on board.* As noted above, e-newsletters can be great community builders. But not everyone is going to share your excitement. Don't expect or force them to. If you do, those who resist will feel left out and unheard.
- *Don't expect instant results.* Building a readership takes time. Many church leaders expect half or more

of the congregation will read the e-newsletter in the beginning. They're shocked when they realize that only 10 percent of subscribers (and not everyone subscribes) will read what you write at first. Time, patience, and a willingness to be wrong and to learn will change this.

- *Don't abandon other communication channels.* On average, you can only expect 10 percent of subscribers to click through and read your e-newsletter early on. Most congregations are fortunate to get 30 percent of members to subscribe initially. If you drop other communication channels right away, you're effectively cutting off 60-70 percent of your congregation. Allow the e-newsletter to blossom and work in tandem with other ways of communicating.
- *Don't ignore the tracking.* The ability to track what every reader reads, and doesn't read, over long periods is what sets e-newsletters apart from social media, the website, and print publications. If you choose to ignore it, you have effectively nullified all the positives that e-newsletters bring to a congregation.

So What Do I Use?

There are many good e-newsletter programs on the market. The oldest, and probably best known, is Constant Contact, which features robust analytics, easy design, and a full range of exceptional templates. Many other programs share the program's one drawback—it costs. Not much at first, but Constant Contact and others charge for every little feature.

MailChimp is an excellent alternative. Analytics, photos, and basic templates are all free, as are sending the emails—so long as your list doesn't exceed 2,000 people and you don't send more than 12,000 individual emails per month. Most churches will never come close to this.

Final Thoughts

E-newsletters offer a communication learning experience that no other tool can match. With careful tracking, you can learn what your congregation reacts to, improve the way you communicate with them, and test new ideas. The results? Empowered staff, a more connected congregation, and unprecedented insight into your members' lives.

About the Writer: Martin Davis owns Sacred Language Communications, formerly directed Alban's Congregational Resource Guide, and has 20 years of experience working with congregations (www.sacredlanguagecommunications.com).

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THE PARISH PAPER

IDEAS AND INSIGHTS FOR ACTIVE CONGREGATIONS

Coeditors: Herb Miller and Cynthia Woolever - www.TheParishPaper.com

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Why a Sense of Belonging Matters

With our cultural emphasis on individuality, too many people are lonely and feel disconnected from others in their community. Because a sense of belonging can be linked to economic development, city planners and community organizers attempt to create environments where residents can enjoy a sense of belonging. Local churches also provide some of the fiber that weaves people together by offering them a place to belong and to be known.

Strong congregations organize in ways that help people feel close as they worship together, disclose life's joys and sorrows, and share their deepest beliefs. Strong congregations find approaches to encourage emotional attachment because having a sense of belonging is a basic human need. Psychologist Abraham Maslow, who wrote about the hierarchy of human needs, cited belonging as the third most important, coming after only physiological and safety needs. For worshipers, the sense of belonging is how individuals *experience* community. Intentionally fostering a sense of belonging among members is one of the weight-bearing walls in the structure of strong congregations.¹

What Creates a Sense of Belonging?

Focusing on members' vertical relationship with God alone—with little attention to their horizontal relationships with other worshipers—slowly unravels the community's overall health. What exercises increase the congregation's heart rate?

Offering friendship. Close friendships generate feelings of belonging. One of the most important resources a congregation can offer to people is friendship. People flourish when we give them our time, attention, and acceptance. Unfortunately, congregations too often offer "help" to those in need without also offering friendship.² Likewise, worship services may be experienced in the same space, but the opportunity to make friends is not part of the equation. Strong churches create many avenues for people to learn the names and interests of others as well as group social time. Intentionally practicing multiple means for long-term members as well as newcomers to be known and to know

others is sacred work. As John O'Donohue asserts: "Friendship is the nature of God."³

The size of the congregation doesn't make a difference in whether people have close friends within the church or whether their participation is increasing or decreasing. Both large and small churches must engage in practices to address this fundamental human need.

Helping worshipers grow spiritually. When congregations help worshipers grow spiritually, they are also creating stronger bonds with others. Worshipers who are spiritually connected are also emotionally connected. The venue for spiritual growth varies but most people need to devote time to private devotional activities, seek to grow through worship service participation, learn from and with others in a small-group setting, and discover new truths through service and leadership. Frederick Buechner shares the conviction that "when faith stops changing and growing, it dies on its feet."⁴ Congregations that fail to meet these needs of their members place them at spiritual risk.

Creating opportunities for participation and service. Worshiper involvement and participation that grows over time signal that the sense of attachment and belonging is also rising. People gain a sense of



satisfaction from contributing to the congregation's ministries and feel part of a team.

Typically, a sizable percentage show up at worship but sit in the bleachers during other church activities. In the average congregation, only one-third of the worshipers engage in at least four of these ways: attending services; joining a small group; holding a leadership position; being a part of church decision making; and regularly giving money. Some churches believe that they lose members because new attendees drift away not long after joining. But in truth, these newcomers never formed meaningful attachments. Effective congregations build assimilation bridges by which newcomers quickly bond to new friends, groups, and service opportunities.

Meeting age and life cycle needs. Congregations with a healthy heart—those with a high percentage of worshipers feeling a strong sense of belonging—recognize how younger worshipers connect to places (e.g., through sports teams or mission activities). Worshipers younger than forty-four years of age count on being emotionally attached to their congregation as a key ingredient for their commitment and involvement. At the same time, congregations cannot take older worshipers' attachment for granted. In fact, congregations with an older age profile tend to have lower overall scores on sense of belonging measures.

Building positive engagement in the congregation's future vision. When a congregation captures worshipers' imagination about the church's future ministry possibilities, worshipers also have a greater sense of belonging. They are able to envision what the faith community working together can accomplish with God's help. Further, they have been offered a stake in that future by committing to share their time and talents to make it happen. Everyone acts on the shared belief that the best years of the church's ministry lie ahead.

When Being Friendly Is Not Enough

A true congregational strength consistently operates whether or not the worshipers or leadership are aware of it. Further, a real strength is embedded in the behaviors, beliefs, and values of the majority of worshipers. As a result, a number of worshipers can leave without diminishing this strength nor does it depend on a few key leaders. A genuine congregational strength gains momentum and muscle when it becomes central to the conscious identity of the congregation.

Without routine maintenance and regular exercise, the strength of a healthy sense of belonging among church members and the experience of community

quickly deteriorate. Strong congregations demonstrate four pathways to generating feelings of belonging. They:

- Develop groups that help people feel loved and give them the opportunity to express love for others.
- Promote friendships that give newcomers feelings of acceptance and self-esteem.
- Offer service or leadership roles and responsibilities that give people a sense of purpose, meaning, and positive self-identity.
- Present spiritual-growth experiences that deepen members' life-shaping values.

Each of these pathways are like load-bearing walls. Remove one or more of the walls and the structure is weaker and more vulnerable to mission failure.

The Bottom Line

"The hunger to belong is not merely a desire to be attached to something. It is rather sensing that great transformation and discovery become possible when belonging is sheltered and true."⁵ This description underscores why strong churches make possible the greatest individual transformations and discoveries of all. With the significance of belonging in mind, review the structure, practices, and rituals present in your current worship services, educational programs, small groups, ministry outreach, and decision-making processes.

- Does participation give people the chance to make friends and deepen their relationships with others?
- Does involvement foster greater spiritual growth and understanding?
- Does participation help people to learn more about the congregation's ministry vision and help them find a place to use their gifts toward that purpose?

1. Cynthia Woolever and Deborah Bruce, *Beyond the Ordinary* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004).

2. Christine Pohl, *Living into Community* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 170.

3. John O'Donohue, *Anam Cara* (New York: HarperCollins, 1997), 15.

4. Frederick Buechner, *Secrets in the Dark* (New York: HarperCollins, 2006), 173.

5. John O'Donohue, *Eternal Echoes* (New York: HarperCollins, 2009), 22.

PRESBYTERY OF WESTERN COLORADO
2014 Budget

Our budget is divided into two categories--**Ecclesiastical** (the funds we use to make decisions about our mission—funded by **per capita**) and **Mission** (the way we do our mission—funded by our **mission giving**). Line item budgets are available upon request.

ECCLESIASTICAL FUND

Income

Per Capita Funding	73,160.00
Other Funding from Investment Income	<u>00</u>
Total Income	<u>73,160.00</u>

Expense

Administration	7,600.00
Committees/Commissions	5,100.00
Ecclesiastical Staff (Clerk, Treasurer)	31,285.00
Insurance, Taxes	5,375.00
Contingency	9.49
Per Capital Passed On	
Synod Per Capita	10,712.25
General Assembly Per Capita	<u>23,790.51</u>
Total Expenses	<u>73,160.00</u>

MISSION FUND

Income

Total Congregational Mission Giving	45,000.00
Synod Block Grant	26,400.00
Other mission income	750.00
From P/Yrs Mission C/O	<u>14,373.00</u>
Total Revenue	<u>88,523.00</u>

Expense

Mission Programs	9,600.00
Evangelism & Church Development	00.00
Mission Staff (General Presbyter, Secretary)	62,923.00
Local Mission Grants	00.00
Other Mission	<u>14,000.00</u>
Total Expenses	<u>86,523.00</u>

TOTAL PRESBYTERY BUDGET FOR 2011 **159,683.00**

Please prayerfully join in partnership with other congregations in the Presbytery of Western Colorado to fulfill our mission and ministry.



Reminder

All Mission Giving Money must be turned into the Presbytery Office by January 6th in order for us to be able to turn it around and submit to the General Assembly by January 14th. This is only if you wish to have these gifts counted at the General Assembly level for the 2013 year. This includes all special funding like Theological Education Fund and Christmas/Joy offering. General Assembly closes their financial books by the 15th of January so please know that anything received in the Presbytery office after January 6th will not be submitted to General Assembly for the 2013 giving year.

A Round of Prayer

In the Presbytery of Western Colorado

For 2014-2015

2014 marks the Fourteenth year we've been doing this: it's a simple, biblical, faithful idea that has great power. Many of our congregations have been joining in prayer each week, praying for other congregations, ministries, and people in the Presbytery of Western Colorado. It has been a source of great blessing.

You are invited to join in this "Round of Prayer." It includes each of our congregations and fellowships, pastors (both retired and active), Candidates and Inquirers, and Presbytery and Synod staff. Pray for spouses, too: their names are in parentheses.

There are too many entries to do in one year, but that's okay! You are encouraged to send cards, make phone calls, or send e-mail greetings to those for whom you pray. If you need more information please call Presbytery Office at 970-240-8455 or toll free at 877-927-7372.

Sunday, January 5, 2014 Stephen Smith (Samantha), Honorably Retired Tulsa, OK

Sunday, January 12: Richard Engdahl (Brenda), Honorably Retired, Ridgway

Sunday, January 19: Montezuma Valley Presbyterian Church, Cortez, Pastors Kim and Steve Nofel

Sunday, January 26: Jim Patton (Charlene), Honorably Retired, Cortez

Sunday, February 2: : Roy Altman (Kathy) Honorably Retired, Silt

Sunday, February 9: Inquirers: Rebecca Branton, Garrett Mostowski (Paige), Joshua Rodriguez (Abby)

Sunday, February 16: Covenant Presbyterian Church, Grand Junction, Pastor Chuck Jerome (Sue)

Sunday, February 23: Cluster Leaders Heather Lundquist (Bob), Blake Blakesly (Lynn), Thelma Starnier, Rick Underwood (Faye), Brigitte Evenson (Larry), Mary Hammond Atkinson (Clark Atkinson)

Sunday, March 2: Sandy Cox (Bill), widow of deceased minister, Santa Barbara California

Sunday, March 9: Monument Presbyterian Church, Grand Junction, Pastor Jeff Harmeling (Mary)

Sunday, March 16: Bill Forbes (Gloria), Honorably Retired, Whitewater

Sunday, March 23: William Postler (Jan), Stated Clerk, Presbytery of Western Colorado

Sunday, March 30: Presbyterian Church of Delta,

Sunday, April 6: Gary Hendrix (Dorothy) Presbytery Accountant

Sunday, April 13: Edgell Pyles (Marti Pickett), Honorably Retired, Carbondale

Sunday, April 20: EASTER: Celebrate our Lord's Resurrection! Christ is Risen Indeed!

Sunday, April 27: First Presbyterian Church, Grand Junction, Pastor Tom Hansen (Shelly), Associate Pastor Travis Fletcher (Jill)

Sunday, May 4: J. Cyrus Smith, Honorably Retired, Grand Junction

Sunday, May 11: Betty Kendrick (Max), Widow of deceased minister, Cedaredge

Sunday, May 18: Allison Community Presbyterian Church, Pastor Alan TeBrink (Brenda)

Sunday, May 25: William Mangrum (Valerie), Minister at Large, Durango

Sunday, June 1: Beth Gilleece (Jim), Administrative Assistant, Presbytery of Western Colorado

Sunday, June 8: PENTECOST: Rejoice in the Power of the Holy Spirit!

Sunday, June 15: Christ Presbyterian Church, Telluride, Pastor Pat Bailey (Debbie)

Sunday, June 22: Candidates: Andy Konigsmark (Dodie), Jennifer McKenzie (Andy), Sarah Tunall

Sunday, June 29: First Presbyterian Church of Durango, Pastor Beau Smith (Kristen)

Sunday, July 6: Chuck Robison (Karen), Honorably Retired, Austin, Texas

Sunday, July 13: Mary Mayhew (Glenn), widow of deceased minister, Montrose

A Round of Prayer – Page 2

Sunday, July 20: United Church of the San Juans, Ridgway, Interim Part Time Pastor Harry Strong (Anna)
Sunday, July 27: Gary Hixson (Kathleen), missionary in Spain and other countries
Sunday, August 3: Marilyn Ruth (Al), widow of deceased minister, Colorado Springs
Sunday, August 10: Lake City Community Presbyterian Church, Pastor Rick Underwood (Faye)
Sunday, August 17: Jim Cory (Cappy), Honorably Retired, Montrose
Sunday, August 24: Mary Jean Smatla (Thomas), widow of deceased minister, Grand Junction
Sunday, August 31: Florida Mesa Presbyterian Church, Pastor Dan Straw (Kathy)
Sunday, September 7: George Miller, Honorably Retired, Montrose
Sunday, September 14: Dorothy Loyer (Robert), widow of deceased minister, Eckert
Sunday, September 21: Eckert Presbyterian Church, Pastor Jo DeVinny (David)
Sunday, September 28: Jim Petersen (Janet), Honorably Retired, Ridgway
Sunday, October 5: Synod of the Rocky Mountains David Ezekiel, Interim Synod Exec., Lynn A. Smit, Stated Clerk; Liz Saperstein Synod Treasurer, Bobbie Hoffman Administrative Assistant
Sunday, October 12: First Presbyterian Church, Montrose, Pastor Alan Gibson (Teri)
Sunday, October 19: Mary Hammond Atkinson (Clark) minister at large, Grand Junction
Sunday, October 26: Fran Ferguson (Bob), widow of deceased minister, Knoxville, TN
Sunday, November 2: Rico Community Presbyterian Church, Suzy Meyer, Supply CLP
Sunday, November 9: Bill Young (Pat), Honorably Retired, Grand Junction
Sunday, November 16: X Lazy F Ranch, Jared Clark Manager
Sunday, November 23: First Presbyterian Church, Glenwood Springs, Pastor Charis Caldwell (Mike Buechin),
Sunday, November 30: Barbara Parker (Harold), widow of deceased minister, Florida
Sunday, December 7: Blake Blakesly (Lynn) Honorably Retired, Ignacio
Sunday, December 14: Pine River Calvary Presbyterian Church, Bayfield; Pastor Brian Caselles (Sherry)
Sunday, December 21: **CHRISTMAS! Celebrate the Lord's Birth!**
Sunday, December 28: Sandy Newman (Clark Lagow), Honorably Retired, Durango
Sunday, January 4, 2015: Roger Knapp (Linda), Honorably Retired, Santa Fe, New Mexico
Sunday, January 11: Larry Zirschky (Sharon), Minister at Large, Columbia, South Carolina
Sunday January 18: Julianne Fraley-Gilchrist (Jon), Minister at Large, Alberta, Canada

Now, start at the top, make appropriate adjustments, and keep praying!



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*Merry Christmas From the
Presbytery of Western
Colorado*

