



**WE ARE THE PRESBYTERY  
OF WESTERN COLORADO**

# Pressing News

March—April 2017

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## Presbytery Invitation

**May 12-13 2017  
First Presbyterian Church  
Durango, CO**

The Consultation Committee of the Presbytery is encouraging all Teaching elders and any others who are interested to attend the spring Presbytery meeting in Durango, CO. We will be having special presentations from Consultant from the Sowers Field Rev. Stan Wood and part of that will be a keynote presentation by Dr. Wernett, Vice President of MissionInsite, on how churches can use that important resource.

- **Do you know about MissionInsite? This is a new resource that is available to all WCP congregations during the next 4 years of the consultation process**

MissionInsite ([www.missioninsite.com](http://www.missioninsite.com)) is now available to all churches in the WCP; this resource provides each church insights into their ministry area context and their congregants. MissionInsite empowers churches by providing the tools they need to visualize and cultivate who their members are and understand the ministry area of a local congregation. At the May 12-13, 2017 Presbytery meeting, to be held at First Presbyterian Church Durango, a workshop will be provided on how to use this resource.

**Request: Presbyters from each church, are asked to bring a lap top to the May meeting (at least one lap top per church).**

*The Rev. Matt Royston*

*Will be installed as Pastor of*

*Monument Presbyterian Church*

*April 23, 2017 4:00 PM*

*At Monument Presbyterian Church*

*All are invited to share in this joyous occasion.*

*For more information please contact Monument Presbyterian Church at  
970-255-6549*

**Do You Enjoy Writing? Do You Hate Writing but Have Great Ideas to Share? Is Your Congregation Reaching out in Mission? How? Want to Get the Word out about amazing happenings at your Church? Beth is waiting to hear from you!!!**

**The Presbytery Blog is in need of contributions. We need to stay connected and one way to do this is through the Presbytery Blog on our website. Please consider contributing to the blog even if you are not a writer. Prayers, concerns, joys, celebrations all are shared here. It is a wonderful way to share what is going on in our daily lives, congregations, and Presbytery.**

**Also appreciated would be ideas to share on the Presbytery Facebook page. What would you all be interested in learning about? Beth is always looking for ideas and inspiration.**

**To Contact Beth in the Presbytery Office Call 970-240-8455, Cell 970-497-6925, or email [beth@wcopresbytery.org](mailto:beth@wcopresbytery.org).**

## GUIDE TO GOOD GOVERNANCE

After months of meetings, the long-range planning committee of Epiphany Church submitted a report to the congregation's board. The report highlighted three important conclusions: (1) the average age of regular worship attendees is going up while worship attendance overall continues to decline; (2) action steps must be taken immediately; and (3) major changes are needed in ministry priorities. After careful review, the board laid out five possible courses of action. How did Epiphany Church board members respond? They chose sides, with each action plan attracting supporters and opponents. How are they going to move forward and make decisions?

### Governance or Ministry?

Governance is how we make decisions as a congregation. Typically, the board takes responsibility for big-picture issues and works to help the congregation achieve its mission. The board accepts responsibility for keeping the church's resources—people, money, and property—safe. The board also pursues ways to creatively leverage resources to more effectively serve the congregation's mission.

Ministry is different from governance, even if the same people do both. We know many people in the congregation who wear two hats, serving on the board *and* working in the church's food pantry. Ministry is all the other things a congregation does: offering meaningful worship, educational and spiritual development groups, community service, and outreach. Dan Hotchkiss suggests a simple way to understand the difference: governance produces words on paper while ministry produces action.<sup>1</sup>

Why is the distinction important? Churches often feel great about their ministries and concentrate on their programs. However, they tend to spend less time ensuring that the way they govern does not impede the growth and vitality of those same ministries. Dysfunctional governance structures can create an inward focus, a resistance to change, complacency, arrogance, and diffuse accountability.

### Signs of Healthy Governance

Congregations may try to borrow organizational models from businesses or nonprofits. However, congregations are different from these organizations and they must work to customize an appropriate decision-making structure. Further, there is no one right way for churches to make decisions. Rather, the structure must be a good fit for the values, beliefs, faith tradition, and size of the church. Regardless of these differences, Hotchkiss outlines several principles of good governance.<sup>2</sup>

- *Unified structure for making governance decisions.* Typically, an elected board clarifies the church's mission, vision, and strategic issues. In most cases, the board delegates to others the authority to achieve these goals and monitors that those members with authority use their gifts responsibly.
- *Unified structure for making operational decisions.* In most congregations, full- or part-time staff assumes responsibility for programs, assisted by lay leaders. Supervision can come from staff,



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committee chairs, or team leaders. The board delegates authority to these staff and members to carry out the church's ministries.

Congregations adopt a structure that generally arises from the church's size. Size, as measured by church attendance and participation, affects all aspects of organizational behavior. Hotchkiss identifies three common forms, clearly associated with church size, and each with pros and cons.<sup>3</sup> No single structure is perfect.

*The board-centered congregation.* This type is common in small churches. Committee chairs, a secretary and/or treasurer, clergy person, and maybe one or more at-large members fill board seats. Although the board is responsible for the overall mission, committee chairs are tempted to "represent" their program, creating a mild conflict of interest. Program administration and issues take center stage at meetings. The smaller the congregation, the more time is required to make decisions that move the church toward ministry effectiveness.

*The committee-centered congregation.* This structure appears most often in churches with 100 to 400 attendees. Hotchkiss describes its essential trait: both the planning (governance) and actions (ministry) are delegated to appropriate committees by the board. The board rarely grasps the reins of their governance role. Instead, the board listens to reports and leaves strong leadership to others. In some instances when conflict arises, the staff and other leaders become triangulated.

*The staff-centered congregation.* In large churches, full-time staff takes on more organizational and governance work. This structure's effectiveness depends on the quality and gifts of a small number of leaders, making it unstable in the long run. On the plus side, this model can also maximize the opportunities for members to be involved in ministry.

Because no advice fits all, congregations must discern the governance form that best reflects their values and purposes. If the congregation feels called to spread the Gospel through outreach, then their governance would be organized for evangelism. If the congregation emphasizes advocacy and social justice efforts, then their governance structure would be organized to achieve those purposes.

### Common Mistakes

There are some patterns that rarely work in any church. The mistakes listed below point to some of the biggest offenses.

*Large boards.* The governing board should be comprised of 6 to 8 members and rarely should the board seat more than 12 people. Larger boards find it difficult to keep all members fully engaged, attendance is spotty, participation is low, and many attend unprepared.<sup>4</sup>

*Too many committees.* Most churches benefit from mobilizing ministry teams to accomplish their mission (see "How Ministry Teams Get Things Done," *The Parish Paper*, January 2016). Rarely does a congregation need more than four standing committees: Finance, Personnel, Governance, and Nominating.<sup>5</sup>

*Weak agendas.* The central agenda item should be big questions that require discussion. Some churches divide the agenda into two sections: (1) items requiring little or no discussion (minutes, approval of treasurer reports) that can be dealt with quickly as a set; and (2) discussion-only items. Discussion on new proposals should occur over several months before board members are asked to vote. They should never be asked to vote during the meeting in which the possible change is first presented.

*Ministry separated from money.* The governance structure should not facilitate separating members into financial-only and ministry-only teams. All ministry efforts require resources and good stewardship. Likewise, financial decisions should reflect the church's values and priorities. Failure to integrate money and ministry can create power-needy leaders who exercise veto power in congregational decisions.

### From Good to Great

Governance is always difficult in congregations. The Gospel compels churches to be part of transforming individuals, communities, and the world. Yet to carry out that commandment requires some level of institutional stability. Hotchkiss summarizes this tension between stability and instability: "The stability of a religious institution is a necessary precondition to the instability religious transformation brings."<sup>6</sup> With this in mind, ask yourself: How does our governance structure allow us to focus on our church's mission? How does it facilitate or impede our ministry efforts?

1. Dan Hotchkiss, *Governance and Ministry: Rethinking Board Leadership*, 2nd edition (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016), 50.

2. *Ibid.*, 6.

3. *Ibid.*, 30-40.

4. *Ibid.*, 81.

5. *Ibid.*, 56.

6. *Ibid.*, 1.

# THE PARISH PAPER

IDEAS AND INSIGHTS FOR ACTIVE CONGREGATIONS

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## SMALL IS BIG AGAIN: RECLAIMING SMALL CHURCH MINISTRY

Although megachurches garner a great deal of attention, these supersized congregations comprise only a small fraction of all worshipping communities in the U.S. The current estimate is that only about 1,650 megachurches (worship attendance exceeds 2,000) dot the landscape out of a total 330,000 congregations across America. In fact, most churches are small: two out of three Protestant churches attract less than 100 worshipers in a typical week. Some scholars predicted that megachurches would essentially put small churches out of business. But the percentage of large churches as part of all churches is growing slowly while the number of small churches has remained stable. While the church's larger mission continues to be carried out by many small worshipping communities, small churches may get locked into self-criticism. However, more congregations are embracing the strengths associated with their small size. As one congregation proclaims: "We're not just any small church. We're the small church that's here!"<sup>1</sup>

### What Do Small Churches Need?

Lewis Parks, a champion of small congregations, claims that they can do big things with "a little cooperation with the Spirit on the part of those gathered, a little striving for excellence, a little freedom to express local religious creativity, and all things sprinkled with lots of hospitality"<sup>2</sup> A few other suggestions include the following:

*A compelling story about their history, purpose, and mission.* Members often possess a common narrative about when and why the church was established and some specifics of that particular historical period. But fewer members know the chapters in the church's history. For example, which pastors or lay leaders exerted a major influence in embracing new mission or overcoming risks? What community events (such as rapid population growth, departure of a major employer) affected the church in a major way? How do mem-

bers describe the current chapter in the church's narrative? Too often, the church's story that clearly reveals the congregation's ongoing ministry remains implicit. When members share greater awareness of the church's mission and history (how did we get here?), they gain greater clarity about the congregation's unique identity. Consider engaging members in an exercise that surfaces the church's history, experiences, traditions, and untested assumptions.<sup>3</sup> Then, create a vision statement that captures these insights and use it on your website, with social media, and other church communications.

*Intentional efforts to increase visibility.* Effective approaches are size-specific. Every small church can creatively send the message to newcomers and the community—"we are here, we care about you, and we welcome you!" An electronic presence (website, Facebook, Instagram) establishes a virtual welcome mat. A well-maintained and lighted church building signals a physical "home" that anticipates visitors.



OUR OLDER DEMOGRAPHIC INTERPRETED  
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AS STRINGING TWINKLE LIGHTS AROUND THE STEEPLE.



Participation by members and leaders in community events suggests commitment to the well-being of neighbors. Hosting community events, speakers, workshops, and the arts indicates that the church is a willing partner in promoting their neighbors' quality of life.<sup>4</sup> Form a team of six members to test the congregation's visibility by instructing them to approach five people they do not know. Next, have these members inquire: "Have you ever heard of (the name of your church)? What do you know about it (for example, location, programs, etc.)?" Reconvene these volunteers and share the results. Based on what you learn, devise one or two new action steps to increase the congregation's community profile.

*Customized methods for outreach.* Context is everything when developing strategies to welcome newcomers. Would your community be described as active or sedentary, family- or career-focused, a stable or mobile population? A family-focused and stable community is more likely to respond to family and friend networks. If a population is career-focused and mobile, investments in electronic and social media will likely pay dividends. Have leaders discuss the key characteristics of the church's community five years ago, currently, five years from now, and ten years in the future.<sup>5</sup> Refine the church's strategies based on these observed changes.

*Purposeful efforts to pass along the faith to future generations.* Following the words of Robert Schuller, congregations should view faith development as planting seeds: "Anyone can count the seeds in an apple, but only God can count the number of apples in a seed." Research shows that when congregations value nurturing faith in children and young adults, that emphasis and their hard work bears fruit. How does the church measure success in this ministry area?

Seed-planting congregations in this way also make ministry with millennials a priority. Parks makes a convincing argument that small churches are best suited for reaching out to this age group—adults born between 1981 and 1996.<sup>6</sup> Millennials' life experiences differ greatly from previous generations and one in three are religiously unaffiliated.<sup>7</sup> They were more likely to be raised in a nontraditional family and are more culturally diverse than past cohorts. Despite growing up in an online world, they place a high value on friendships and relationships. Small

churches offer them the unique opportunity for intimacy and caring relationships. They are looking for safe spaces for themselves and their children. Review the demographics within a fifteen-mile radius of the congregation to determine the age profiles of residents and to create updated strategies to reach unrepresented groups.

*Accept reality and build on strengths.* Garrison Keillor famously said: "I believe in looking reality straight in the eye and denying it." Small churches cannot afford to deny reality. Leaders can accept the things that cannot be changed while identifying the advantages that small size affords. Sometimes, cherished programs or even the church building have to be sacrificed in order for the congregation's future mission to thrive. Consider a four-session group study to discover new insights for small-church ministry.<sup>8</sup>

## Making Small Big Again

Margaret Mead's statement inspired many in earlier generations: "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has." A parallel truth applies to congregations. Never doubt that small churches have changed the world and they will continue to do so.

1. Lewis A. Parks, "A New Way to View Small Church Vitality," Lewis Center for Church Leadership, October 14, 2015 (<https://www.churchleadership.com/leading-ideas/a-new-way-to-view-vitality-in-smaller-congregations/>).

2. Ibid.

3. Trey Hammond, "Timeline of Place," *Leader Guide for Places of Promise: Finding Strength in Your Congregation's Location*, 2008 (<http://www.uscongregations.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/leaderguide.pdf>).

4. Cynthia Woolever, "Keys to Growing a Small Church," *The Parish Paper*, August 2012 (Vol. 20, No. 8).

5. Statistics available by county, city, town, or zip code at U.S. Census (<http://factfinder.census.gov>).

6. Parks.

7. Michael Lipka, "Millennials increasingly are driving growth of 'nones'" Pew Research Center, (<http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/05/12/millennials-increasingly-are-driving-growth-of-nones/>).

8. Use the free online resource from *The Parish Paper*, "Coaching Small Congregations toward Positive Change," <https://www.theparishpaper.com/sites/default/files/resources/Church%20Effectiveness%20Nuggets-%20Volume%2027.pdf>.

**April 26, 2017** is Administrative Personnel Day in the United States. This is a wonderful idea to help the support staff of your ministry to feel valued members of your mission team by encouraging them to join The Administrative Personnel Association, along with flowers and a card.



## WHAT HAVE YOU DONE FOR YOUR SUPPORT STAFF RECENTLY?

Have you heard of APA - Administrative Personnel Association? APA is the PCUSA professional association, established in 1976, for administrative support staff in churches, governing bodies, agencies & related institutions. The organization is comprised of support staff across the country who feel called by God to serve the church. APA offers opportunities of networking, education, support & growth for its members and as a pastor and/or presbytery/synod leader you know already how important these are for you in your position. They are equally valuable for your support staff.

The mission of APA is to provide for the professional development & personal growth for support staff through continuing education for certification as well as regional & national conferences and workshops.

The many benefits of becoming a member of the Administrative Personnel Association are not only for your support staff but for you & those in your congregation or organization they serve as well. APA's certification program is recognized by PCUSA's Division of National Ministries & they feel this association is so important that they assigned a liaison staff person to APA. All certified APA members are listed in the Directory of the General Assembly & according to the Book of Order, have voice on the floor of their respective presbytery.

So why not visit APA's web site: [www.pcusa-apa.org](http://www.pcusa-apa.org)! You can find a membership application; certification information; how to contact regional & national officers; upcoming regional & national conferences; and more information about this most beneficial organization.

**Be a supporter of one of your most valuable assets -- your support staff!**

**Please send me more information regarding APA!**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Church/Governing Body/Agency \_\_\_\_\_

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