



**WE ARE THE PRESBYTERY
OF WESTERN COLORADO**

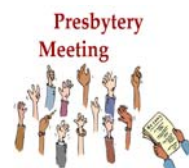
Pressing News

Spring 2019

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Sonlight Christian Camp Hosting our May Presbytery Meeting



So you've heard that we'll be hosting our next Presbytery Assembly at Sonlight—but you may not know that much about our ministry. Let me fill you in!

Sonlight Christian Camp began in 1979, founded by Winston and Mary Marugg as a ministry to get kids backpacking out in God's creation—specifically in the Weminuche Wilderness of the San Juan Mountains. What started with two kids, one summer, one backpack trip has blossomed into 9 resident camps and 8 backpack trips every summer, and many ski and devotional retreats in fall, winter, and spring.

Sonlight's mission is to *Be With Kids and Show Them God*. So its facilities, staff, and hospitality are geared toward serving the faith development of youth. All of our summer camps are for youth, divided according to age. High school students get priority for Sonlight's backpacking trips. Even our many adult retreats have come to appreciate Sonlight for excellent food but basic amenities.

Our cabins are designed with simplicity and youth in mind. The total sleeping capacity of the camp is 70 people, with 51 bottom bunks and 19 top bunks. All sleeping areas are bunk-style, so each guest shares space with five to sixteen others. Every cabin has its own bathroom with toilet, sinks, and shower; Winchester Cathedral (our plenary gathering space) has extra bathroom facilities, as well. Guests bring their own linens or sleeping bags and towels; Sonlight provides pillows and pillowcases.

All meals are served family-style. A "hopper" from each table gets the food from the kitchen in serving dishes and diners pass the dishes

(Continued on page 2)

around. Sonlight serves multiple dishes at every meal, providing balanced nutrition. We try to accommodate all dietary restrictions that we're made aware of in advance; choices may be restricted for those we find out about last-minute.

The Lodge has wifi access with VERY slow speeds and limited bandwidth. The Cathedral (where Presbytery will be conducting business) does not have internet access.

For those who want to make the drive a day early, Sonlight will have beds available Thursday night and breakfast and lunch available Friday. The price for this extra lodging and meals will be \$55 (paid by the individual and not reimbursed by the Presbytery).

For much more information about Sonlight and our facilities, please visit [sonlightcamp.org \(https://sonlightcamp.org/retreat-groups/\)](https://sonlightcamp.org/retreat-groups/).

In Christ with You,

Emrys & Sara Tyler
Co-Directors



Please watch for an email that will have a link for registration for Presbytery Sonlight Camp will handle the registration Logistics **if you don't receive this email by April 15th, please call at 970-264-4379 to register!**

DEFINING CHURCH VITALITY: LET ME COUNT THE WAYS

Most pastors, laypersons, and denominational leaders develop a personal theory that says *one particular factor* is the key to congregational vitality. Each of those theories is correct and incorrect. Each “favorite factor” is important, but church vitality is a result of a long list of factors.

What Is the Church’s Macro Mission?

Looking at church vitality from the macro direction produces a list of classic, universal mission functions for churches of every size, in every generation, in every kind of community. From this perspective, all vital churches have the same mission. Theologians and church historians have summarized that macro mission with terms such as *Koinonia* (fellowship/relational/community), *Diakonia* (service), *Didache* (Bible teaching), *Kerygma* (proclamation), and *Leiturgia* (worship/communal prayer). We see this macro mission in the writings of theologians, the printed mission statements of denominations, and the preambles of local church constitutions. All of these documents are biblical, truthful statements of purpose.

Most church leaders and members feel adequately informed with the three verses in which Jesus answered the macro mission question: the Great Commandment, the Great Commission, and the Apostle Paul’s definitions of the church’s macro mission. Stated in those biblical ways, congregations accomplish that macro mission by doing three things: (a) transforming the quality of peoples’ lives by helping them strengthen their spiritual connection with God (Luke 10:27); (b) helping hurting people in the church, community, and across the world who have physical and emotional needs (Luke 10:27); and (c) encouraging more people to form a spiritual connection with God (Luke 10:29-37; Matthew 23:19-20).

What Is the Church’s Micro Mission?

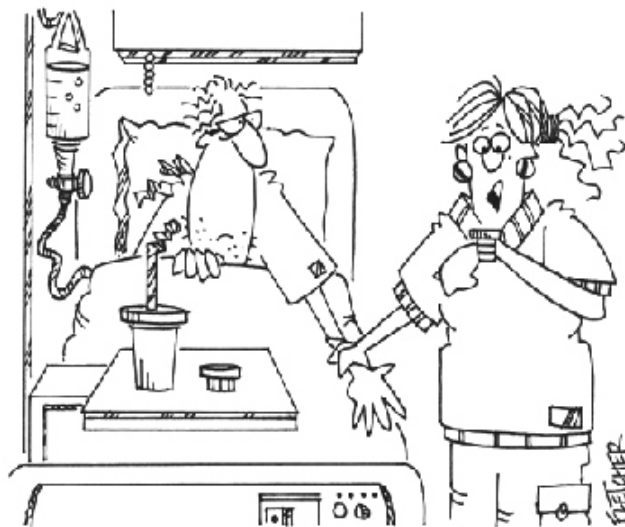
Why is the micro mission important? Books, journal articles, and blogs that answer this micro mission question tell us “how to do it” in small churches or megachurches, while other experts write about the mission

of churches located in urban or rural areas or other specific environments. Ultimately, congregations use dissimilar ways to accomplish Jesus’ mission and ministry in each community and generation.

A healthy congregational mission identity fits its size, fits its members, fits its resources, and meets the contemporary needs of people in its surrounding community. Most unhealthy congregations fall short—not by affirming something other than a biblically mandated macro mission—but by emphasizing a micro mission identity that does not fit that congregation, community, or generation.

What Is the Church’s Method Mission?

The church’s method mission tells people how to do worship, how to do evangelism, how to do member care, etc. Research indicates that healthy congregations deliver on the macro and micro mission with the following methods.



“JUDGING BY THE NUMBER OF VISITORS WHO SAID THEY LOVED YOU...YOU EITHER ATTEND A VERY AFFECTIONATE CHURCH, OR YOU’RE A LOT SICKER THAN I THOUGHT.”

- **Worship that honors God, spiritually enriches members, and retains young adult newcomers.** When a congregation loses its ability, especially with its worship music and preaching, to connect with the people in its community and generation, that failure predicts the end of all its mission accomplishments.
- **Children and youth church school classes and programs that retain parent newcomers.** If the congregation lacks Sunday school classes for children under high school age, it will probably die within a few years, unless it is located in a retirement community. Also, a strong youth ministry program is important to members of most congregations. These methods recognize the validity of the old adage “Kids go where kids are!” and they know that parents often follow.
- **Adult Sunday church school and other adult groups that give members and newcomers a sense of belonging.** Few people experience a strong sense of belonging and spiritual growth except through regular meetings with other church attendees in adult groups that focus on Bible study, prayer, service, recreation, or social interaction.
- **Adult new member involvement in groups and ministries that nourish faith development and growth in discipleship.** New members need to get into a group of some kind—choir, prayer group, Sunday school class, softball team, etc.—within the first six weeks after they join. They need to get into a ministry of some kind within six months after they join. Declining membership churches assimilate the 30 percent who are extroverted. Healthy churches figure out how to involve the other 70 percent, who wait for an invitation.
- **Concern and care for members during times of illness, loss, and other stress.** Some church leaders operate only in a “spiritual achiever” mode that recruits new members. Other leaders operate only in a “mending the broken” mode. Healthy congregations do both. They do not neglect caring about people.
- **Community service/benevolence/world missions that accomplish Jesus’ commandment to love our neighbors.** Jesus defined love of neighbor in a startling way. He said it should include people we do not know, not just people with whom we are acquainted.
- **Sharing faith, inviting others to church, and hospitality that accomplishes Jesus’ Great Commission to make disciples.** All human groups experience a natural centripetal force that pulls them toward taking care of each other instead of reaching out to others. Healthy churches counterbalance that with centrifugal force methods that reach out to not-yet-members in extroverted ways.
- **Atmosphere of faith, hope, and love that promotes the spiritual growth of members.** The absence or

presence in congregational personality of the Apostle Paul’s three famous words predicts a great deal of what it can and will accomplish. A strong emphasis on the power of prayer is especially crucial. People who never talk with God do not often experience God’s presence, power, and guidance.

- **Organizational systems that motivate and involve members in our ministries.** Organizational structures that fit a congregation’s size increase its ministry effectiveness by enlarging the number of people involved in its ministries, reducing conflict, and increasing democratic decision making. Dysfunctional organizational structures often go unrecognized by church leaders because their defects have become invisible due to years of “we have always done it this way.”
- **Clergy and staff that motivate and equip members for involvement in ministries.** From the years when the Apostle Paul spun off start-up churches across the Roman Empire, clergy have played a key role in developing and sustaining the ministry of laity. Without this team effort, few congregations achieve their maximum potential in answering God’s call.
- **Financial stewardship that is part of members’ spiritual growth and adequately supports church ministries.** Financial giving is one of the prime methods by which people experience personal spiritual growth. Without encouragement from their church, the crab grass of self-centeredness crowds out the green growth of spiritual development. Eventually, low emphasis on stewardship stunts the congregation’s size.
- **Property and facilities that support present ministries and future goals.** Facilities are not everything, but inadequate parking, sanctuary seating, or classroom space short-circuits a congregation’s effectiveness.

The Bottom Line

Healthy, effective churches accurately answer the classic theological question, “What is the mission of the Church and how do we accomplish it?” They build on the biblical *macro mission*, apply it contextually with *micro mission* activities, and exhibit multiple *method mission* strengths.

On which of the above lists does your church need to focus more energy?

Herb Miller served as coeditor of *The Parish Paper* until 2012. This issue honors his substantial contribution to this ministry.

WHAT IS CONTEMPORARY WORSHIP?

At First Church, the newly arrived pastor faced a question over whether to continue holding its evening service, which utilizes a rock band, praise songs, and emphasizes casual dress. To foster discussion, the pastor held a class for church leaders titled, “Worship: Changing to Reach a New Generation.” In class, a woman who attends the more traditional morning service raised her hand. “Pastor, I keep hearing people talk about contemporary worship. What exactly does that mean?”

Defining Features of Contemporary Worship

Contemporary worship has its detractors and defenders. But what is it exactly? Swee Hong Lim and Lester Ruth have written a history of the phenomenon, which emerged among independent and Pentecostal churches in the 1970s and 1980s and was later labeled “contemporary worship” when it was adopted by Mainline Protestant churches after the mid-1990s. They identify at least four qualities that distinguish this style of worship.¹

To explore these features, imagine stumbling upon an alternative style of worship service with no prior experience of it.

Entering the church building through its fellowship hall in search of the sanctuary, you are surprised to find others drinking coffee at café tables as they wait for the service to begin. Musicians with guitars, a keyboard, and a drum set perform a microphone sound check. When an electronic countdown board reaches zero, the band launches into a heartfelt song praising God and Jesus. “Your love is amazing, steady and unchanging, Your love is a mountain, firm beneath my feet.”² What follows is a set of three songs, each one heartfelt and focused on personal devotional experience. The song’s musical style seems reminiscent of popular songs heard on your favorite digital audio stream.

Music. An innovative use of music is a key quality of contemporary worship. Composers rely on styles drawn from current types of popular music, such as rock, jazz, and folk. Music leaders typically seek to create a sense of flow by playing a set of songs back to back without interruption. The personal, devotional tenor of much contemporary music is unmistakable. Lim and Ruth analyzed the most popular songs on Christian Copyright Licensing International (CCLI)’s list of top twenty-five songs from 1989 to 2016. They found that a majority of songs took the form of a prayer or expression of adoration, and that prayer requests tended to be self-directed, with almost no intercession for others.³ This focus on the devotional fits with what Lim and Ruth identify as the “Pentecostal genetic code” of contemporary worship as it emerged in the decades since 1980.⁴ Finally, another musical characteristic has been the tendency to place the musicians, not the pastor, front and center in the worship space, designating one



“I DIDN’T UNDERSTAND
THE ARCHAIC LANGUAGE IN THE SERVICE...
WHAT EXACTLY IS A PRELUDE, A HYMNAL...
AND A DOXOLOGY?”

musician as the “worship leader” who handles most of the worship service apart from the sermon.

As the music set ends, the worship leader, dressed informally in jeans and no-tuck shirt, with a guitar strapped to his neck, offers an informal greeting. His language seems informal and conversational, as if you had encountered each other on the street.

Informality. A strong preference for informality in dress, speech, and leadership style is another key quality of contemporary worship. This worship trend emerged from the Calvary Chapels, an association of independent churches serving beach communities in California and the Vineyard Churches in California, before spreading to independent megachurches in the 1980s and Mainline Protestant churches in the 1990s. Leaders are expected to adopt a dressed down appearance and a relaxed style, and in some congregations, drinking and snacking may be encouraged. At The Gathering, a rapidly growing United Methodist church in St. Louis, members stop in the foyer for a cup of coffee to take with them into the sanctuary.⁵ Lim and Ruth call this “a truly novel development in the long history of Christian worship.”⁶

Relevance. Adapting worship to the people, rooted in a “sense of anxiety” about “inherited forms of worship” is another feature of contemporary worship.⁷ Such concerns are not new. In the mid-twentieth century, many churches began developing a strategy of targeting youth through ministries that “meet them where they are.”⁸ Later, influential megachurches such as Willow Creek Community Church in South Barrington, Illinois began targeting “seekers” without prior church experience. At the same time, church growth advocates urged leaders to adapt worship times to the “life rhythms of those one hoped to attract” by shifting from Sunday to days and times more convenient to work schedules and family recreation time. In this view, churches that use the lectionary and follow the Christian year are creating their own “distinctive world” that unchurched people “cannot easily break into.”⁹ This idea undergirds the widespread use of the sermon series to shape the worship experience.

The sermon begins. The preacher, standing behind a portable music stand, offers a brief sermon based on the Scripture lesson, 1 Corinthians 13, Paul’s famous passage on love. As she speaks about love, still images

are projected on the screen: grandparents and grandchildren playing, lovers kissing, and a friend consoling someone in distress. The service ends with a set of songs, their words projected on the screen.

Technology. Dependence on electronic technology is ubiquitous in contemporary worship. This includes everything from amplified use of electric guitars, keyboards, and drums to the employment of LED projectors and screens for song lyrics and video clips to the live streaming of the service to remote campuses. Jet-tisoning the hymnal in favor of projection allows worshipers more freedom to be expressive, but it comes with its own irony: each technological advance moves worship leaders toward a closer management of time, and less spontaneity.¹⁰

What Shall We Call It?

Worship is changing and will continue to change in response to the world around us. Is “contemporary worship” the best label to designate what’s happening with worship today? Independent churches that were the early adopters in the 1980s simply called what they did “worship,” while a number of worship consultants working today prefer terms like multisensory or multimedia worship.

Clearly, no simple division exists between “contemporary” and “traditional” worship, which are each fed by many sources and streams.¹¹ Whatever it’s called, church leaders must continue to grapple with new ways of engaging in this ancient practice called worship.

1. Lim, Swee Hong and Lester Ruth, *Lovin’ on Jesus: A Concise History of Contemporary Worship* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2017).

2. Brenton Brown and Brian Doerksen, “Hallelujah,” Vineyard Songs (UK/EIRE).

3. Lim and Ruth, 95-96.

4. *Ibid.*, 32-33, 123.

5. Doug Moore, “At This Fast-Growing Church, Everyone Is Welcome. No Asterisks,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, July 15, 2018, https://www.stltoday.com/lifestyles/faith-and-values/at-this-fast-growing-church-everyone-is-welcome-no-asterisks/article_f18d1db9-8ef8-5510-8232-3a25f43740f9.html.

6. *Ibid.*, 7.

7. Moore, 4.

8. *Ibid.*, 16.

9. Lim and Ruth, 29.

10. *Ibid.*, 38.

11. *Ibid.*, 9-12.

Shannel B. Lorange Clergy Wellness Fund

At the 2018 September Presbytery Meeting in Cortez, a precious gift, made in the name of Shannel Lorange, was acknowledged in a Plenary Session of Presbytery, in the amount of ~\$16,600. It was determined at that session the gift would be utilized, in its entirety, for the "...wellness of the clergy and leadership in The Western Colorado Presbytery."

Shannel was born August 28, 1960 in Gunnison, Colorado, graduated from Englewood High School, and earned a BA in Business Administration from Metro State College. She became a member of Wellshire Presbyterian Church in Denver, Colorado in 1987. She was ordained as a Deacon in 2007. Rev. Katie Robb Davis, a pastor at Wellshire, shares that Shannel "was known here at Wellshire for her participation in women's retreats, and for providing massage for people who biked to church on our annual "Bike to Church Sunday."

Shannel felt the call to become an ordained minister and came under care of the Presbytery of Denver in 2009 as she pursued a Master of Divinity degree at Union Presbyterian Seminary. According to Rev. Christine Beitzel, one of her Committee on Preparation liaisons, Shannel was "often invited to be the student preacher in both the Union Seminary Chapel and as a Seminary Representative in the surrounding churches. She became a friend to many and her prayer circle was large." Shannel was diagnosed with terminal brain cancer in January of 2014 and had to leave seminary before realizing her call.

Shannel's bequest was given to the Synod of the Rocky Mountains PC(USA) in the fall of 2017. The Synod Assembly then decided to split this bequest amongst the 8 Presbyteries in the Synod.

Presbytery expressed its deep appreciation for this gift and engaged in an in depth conversation as to how we could honor Shannel Lorange and this very generous gift.

Presbytery directed the Committee on Ministry (COM) to provide the vehicle for meeting such needs, applying the monies in this fund. The extent of immediate needs was unknown at the time of the meeting, but there were testimonials as to needs within WCP.

Protocols for the administration of the fund were needed, as outlined in a motion at this Presbytery meeting. COM is finding that such protocols necessarily need to provide some ambiguity, but paramount is CONFIDENTIALITY with regard to any petition for this type of assistance.

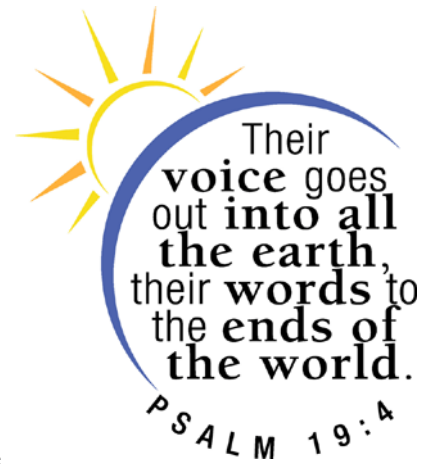
To this end, COM has elected to have the Vice Moderator and Moderator of COM be the "contact persons" for any petition for assistance in the area of mental and/or emotional help. Reporting to COM will be managed in providing very general information, while still completely being considerate of the confidential nature of this relationship to be developed.

COM believed that CONFIDENTIALITY is one of the paramount concerns to having such a program serve the purposes intended, i.e. helping our Pastors and Presbytery Leadership.

Contact: **Joan Walker, Vice Moderator COM 970.241.1457**
 Email: walker@acsol.net

John Thompson, Moderator COM 562.714.7540
 Email: johnthompson.claimslitigation@gmail.com

Faith in Action Event March 2019



We had an amazing event in the Northern Cluster with over 100 participants from all four churches: First Pres., Grand Junction, Monument Pres., Covenant Pres, and First Pres., Glenwood Springs., along with a few members from the Central Cluster.

This "Faith in Action" Event was on Sunday, March 10, at First Presbyterian Church in Grand Junction.
We started at 4:00 and finished at 6:00 with a wonderful catered meal!

The participants heard from four different perspectives on how we can take our faith into our own life surroundings and be "Missional"!

Three presenters in each group briefly shared how God had led them to share their faith in a variety of ways: Faith in the workplace, faith in the community, faith with different generations, and faith through individual opportunities.

The response to the event was overwhelmingly positive!

The dinner hour was buzzing with each table sharing more and hearing what others are doing to spread the seeds deeper and wider!

Please know that if you see this as something to take to your cluster, any of the pastors or Northern Cluster leaders would be happy to share more details.

Northern Cluster Leaders,
Mary Hammond Atkinson
Jan Gammill

SAVE THE DATES

SEPTEMBER 20-22

2nd Annual Women's Retreat

At

Sonlight Camp in Pagosa Springs.

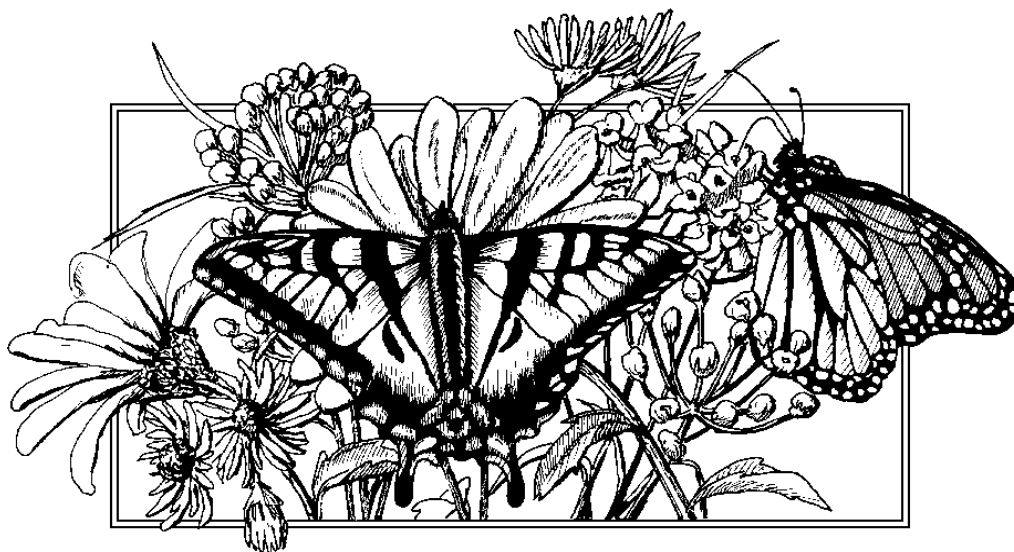
Watch for more information coming soon.

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.



EASTER

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