



**WE ARE THE PRESBYTERY
OF WESTERN COLORADO**

Pressing News

Fall 2012

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HOW TO AVOID FALLING IN LOVE WITH A JERK: The Foolproof Way to Follow Your Heart without Losing your mind

(Previously published in hardcover as *How to Avoid Marrying a Jerk*) by John Van Epp, Ph.D.

Based on years of research on marital and premarital happiness, *How to Avoid Falling in Love with a Jerk* will help you break destructive dating patterns that have kept you from finding the love you deserve:

Ask the right questions to inspire meaningful, revealing conversations with your partner

Judge character based on compatibility, relationship skills, friends, and patterns from family and previous relationships

Resolve your own emotional baggage so you're ready for a healthy relationship

JOHN VAN EPP, Ph.D., conducts seminars and workshops worldwide on marriage and relationships. His popular video program, *How to Avoid Marrying a Jerk*, is being taught by certified instructors internationally in thousands of churches, singles organizations, educational and agency settings, and throughout the military. Visit his website at www.johnvanep.com.

WHAT THE EXPERTS ARE SAYING ABOUT HOW TO AVOID FALLING IN LOVE WITH A JERK

"Eye-opening and practical, *How to Avoid Falling in Love with a Jerk* is for anyone who's tired of dating and wants to finally find 'the one.'"—JOHN GRAY, AUTHOR OF *Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus*

"An insightful and creative contribution to managing the complexity of choosing a life partner. I heartily recommend it."—HARVILLE HENDRIX, Ph.D., author of *Getting the Love You Want* and *Keeping the Love you Find*.

"Don't be part of the 'where-was-this book-when-I needed it?' crowd. It's not too late—read it now!"—PAT LOVE, Ed.D., author of *The Truth About Love* and *Hot Monogamy*

"This is an excellent book to be read by college age students and above as well as people who have experienced a divorce."—JIM CORY, D.Min., General Presbyter of the Presbytery of Western Colorado

Presbytery Meeting



Highlights

Presbytery in Brief

At our Sept. 21 & 22 meeting at the Covenant Presbyterian Church in Grand Junction:

- The Rev. David Ezekiel (Synod Exec.) reported that this is a time of transition for Synods. Many are downsizing, reducing staff, or partnering with other Synods. The Synod of the Rocky Mtns. is beginning a process (led by our own Jan Gammill) to determine its future mission and structure.
 - The Clerk reported that the Presbytery will be voting on the various amendments proposed by the recent General Assembly at our May 2013 meeting. **None** of these amendments are particularly controversial.
 - Commissioners Steve Nofel and Barb Ter Louw reported on this past summer's General Assembly. Steve indicated that there was a seemingly conscious decision to "slow down" in regard to the more controversial issues facing the church. The Assembly voted 52% to 49% **not** to change the definition of marriage (from "a man and a woman" to "two persons") and by 313 to 311 **not** to divest from certain companies. Given the overload of reports and proposed amendments, it is understandable that one of the amendments being sent to the presbyteries will require the support of a second presbytery for any new overtures to the Assembly.
 - The Rev. Kevin Keaton (our Board of Pensions representative) noted that the Board is inviting letters of objection over the Board's new policy to offer coverage for "domestic partners." Pension dues will rise to 33% in 2013.
 - Beth Gilleece demonstrated the Presbytery's new website (wcopresbytery.org) and gave instructions on how to use the various forums and discussion groups.
 - Under the Consent Docket the Presbytery maintained the mileage reimbursement rate for 2013 at \$.40 per mile, voted small raises for the Clerk and Administrative Assistant/Communications Administrator (and increased her hours), authorized the Committee on Ministry to allow an interim pastor to become the next installed pastor in certain situations, and designated the cluster leaders as "church volunteers" who will receive an annual stipend of \$2500 each.
 - The Presbytery elected the Rev. Pat Bailey as our new moderator for 2014. Elder Roger Koch will be the moderator for 2013. And the Rev. Rick Underwood was elected to be the second cluster leader for the central cluster (along with Elder Thelma Starner). The Presbytery also elected new members of its various standing committees.
 - The Presbytery celebrated the upcoming retirement of the Rev. Jim Cory (General Presbyter) as of 12/31/12. Presbyters presented Jim with an engraved Waterford Crystal platter and a silver chalice (made in the 1850's).
 - The Presbytery approved per capita requests for 2013 totaling \$38.55 (almost a \$2.00 per person decrease) and an Ecclesiastical Budget of \$73,591. The Presbytery approved a Mission Budget of \$75,873.
 - The Presbytery met and got to know two new members: the Rev. Beau Smith (new pastor at FPC Durango) and the Rev. Blake Blakesly (an honorably retired member who transferred here from Philadelphia Presbytery).
 - After extensive discussion the Presbytery voted to defer any payments (interest or principal) on the loan to the Florida Mesa Presbyterian church for two years.
 - The Presbytery voted to certify Alan TeBrink "ordination ready" as soon as he completes his CPE requirement through the San Juan Regional Medical Center.
- Vicki Sutton reported that the Presbyterian Women are planning a Retreat sometime next Spring. Dates and place to be announced.

The next Presbytery meeting will be May 22 & 23 (Wednesday & Thursday), 2013, at the Monument Presbyterian Church in Grand Junction. (There is no Winter meeting scheduled. Instead the clusters are expected to meet sometime in January or February.)



Reminder

Please submit the Theological Educational money from your congregations during the Month of November and not December for the contributions to be counted in the 2012 fiscal year. This is due to the timing of Theological Education year end closing of their Financial records.

Visit the Website at
www.wcopresbytery.org

See events, information about our congregations, our new presbytery structure and our Blog.

Also if you would like to be a part of our communication Forum please send your name, email address, the Congregation you are a member of to beth@wcopresbytery.org so she can register you and send you basic information.

Also if you would prefer to get this newsletter via email please also send an email to the above address

THE PARISH PAPER

IDEAS AND INSIGHTS FOR ACTIVE CONGREGATIONS

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

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Where Are the Unchurched?

About half of all Americans are affiliated with a church or congregation.¹ However, some parts of the country—like the Northeast, New Mexico, and Texas—with high percentages of Catholics, boast high affiliation rates. In these places, a congregation of some kind claims almost 59 percent of the population. Some upper Midwestern states—Nebraska, the Dakotas, Minnesota, Iowa, and Wisconsin—are also highly churched. Western states typically show the lowest affiliation rates.

American congregational geography reveals a church landscape marked by dispersion and concentration. Churches affiliated with the largest U.S. denominations are *not* uniformly spread across the country.

Dispersion: Of 236 major U.S. religious organizations, only twenty-one denominational groups report adherents in all fifty states and the District of Columbia.

Concentration: Yet many of these twenty-one denominational groups' adherents are also extremely concentrated geographically. All twenty-one groups report that at least half of their adherents live in just ten states. Here are some of the major differences in denominational dispersion and concentration patterns.

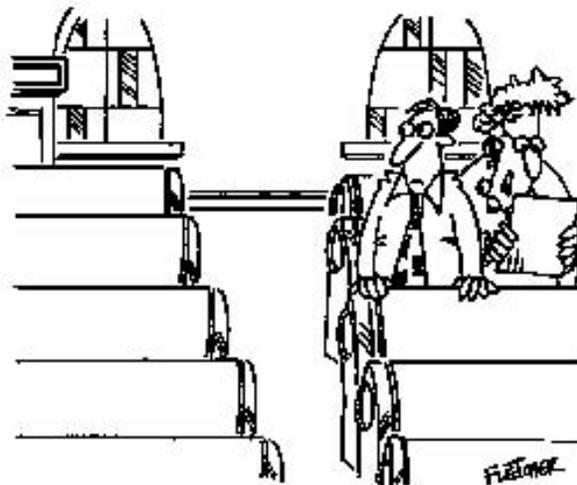
- United Methodists and Unitarian/Universalists are the *least* concentrated geographically (55% and 54% of their adherents, respectively, reside in just ten states).
- Other groups are slightly more concentrated, such as the Salvation Army and Presbyterians (58% of adherents reside in just ten states).
- Much more concentrated than other groups are Churches of Christ and Southern Baptists (72% and 75% of adherents, respectively, reside in just ten states).
- Muslims are *most* concentrated (86% of adherents reside in just ten states), with Mormons following not far behind (76% of adherents reside in just ten states). One in three Mormons resides in Utah.

The dispersion and concentration of religious groups affects how their members feel. Worshipers in low-concentration regions of their denomination may feel like outsiders or an overlooked minority. At the same time, holding a unique religious status in the community can fuel a cohesive, congregational identity and a strong sense of belonging among members.

The dispersion-concentration factor influences what effective congregations *do* as well. What works in one church setting will not necessarily work in another community with a different religious geography.²

Updating the Religion Atlas

In 1952, religious demographers began collecting information on congregations and adherents for every state and county. The Religion Census replicated that effort in 1971, 1980, 1990, 2000, and 2010. Their most recent census identifies 344,984 congregations with a total of just over 150 million adherents.



THESE NEW STATISTICS SAY OUR CHURCH
IS REALLY POPULAR WITH PEOPLE
WHO BELIEVE BUT DONT BELONG.

The Religion Census shows that Mormons (Latter-day Saints), Muslims, and nondenominational Christians are on the rise across the country. In fact, the Mormon denomination is the fastest growing group in about one-third of the states. The Muslim population is growing at a faster rate than the general population, which grew about 10 percent between 2000 and 2010. Other faith groups experiencing significant growth include Pentecostals, Evangelicals, and Unitarian Universalists. Both Buddhists and Hindus have temples in most states now—adding to greater religious diversity in the western states and northern New England.

The new census also brings to light the impressive size of the nondenominational movement. Nondenominational and independent churches are now the third largest faith group, with more than 12 million adherents, claiming 4 percent of the U.S. population. In 48 states, nondenominational churches rank in the top five religious groups.

Americans Are Spiritual but Unchurched

This news challenges any prevailing myth that there is no one for churches to reach in their community. The past decade of change often hinders church leaders from a current feel for how many of their neighbors are unchurched. Members can also lose track of who really lives around the church.

Many people identify themselves as Christian, Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, Muslim, or something else, yet do not affiliate with a specific church, parish, temple, or mosque.⁴ The rising tide of unaffiliated Americans is not evidence of increasing secularism because polls consistently show that most adults still believe in a personal God (seven out of ten adults). Why people continue to believe but decline to belong is an important question for all faith communities. This new information leads us to ask the right kinds of questions about the people in our community and can direct our focus outward. The essential jump is from this new information to action.

Map the Unchurched in Your Community

The Religion Census website provides information for every county in the U.S., and allows users to chart religious trends in their community. The website also displays national maps that show the geographic concentration of all major denominations.

First, go to www.thearda.com/rcms2010/ and select the county where your church is located. Next, make a list of the ten largest denominational groups in your county based on the number of adherents in 2010.

Also record the number of adherents for each of these top ten denominations and the percentage of the county population the number represents.⁵ (The website displays this information.) Finally, discuss with your leadership group:

- How does the unaffiliated percentage in our county compare to the national average of 49 percent unaffiliated?
- Compare the 2010 report to the report from 2000 on the website. Are the county's largest faith groups growing or declining in number of adherents? Is our congregation in one of the largest denominations?
- What implications does this growth or decline have for our congregation?
- In what ways does the religious makeup of our region influence how worshipers feel about their affiliation with our congregation?
- In what other ways does the religious profile of our county shape our congregation's ministries?

The Bottom Line

Each congregation's ministry occupies a niche within a specific religious landscape. Every church location holds the potential to be "a holy place because the reign of God can come anywhere. For Jesus, the holiness of a place is dependent ... on whether the signs of the kingdom's presence are there."⁶ Is your congregation called to be a local expression of the kingdom of God? What is God's intention for your congregation in this place?

1. Information in this article is from *2010 U.S. Religion Census: The Religious Congregations and Membership Study* (Association of Statisticians of American Religious Bodies: 2012). www.thearda.com/rcms2010/.
2. Cynthia Woolever and Deborah Bruce, *Places of Promise: Finding Strength in Your Congregation's Location* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008), 27.
3. In comparison, the United Methodist Church membership claims about 3 percent of the U.S. population.
4. Robert C. Fuller, *Spiritual, but not Religious: Understanding Unchurched America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).
5. Trey Hammond's "Leader Guide for Places of Promise" provides a worksheet for this exercise (<http://www.uscongregations.org/pdf/leaderguide.pdf>) 22-24. The guide has other sessions to help groups develop a local theology of place.
6. Robert M. Lamma, *Landscapes of the Soul: A Spirituality of Place* (Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 1999), 84.

THE PARISH PAPER

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Keys to Growing a Small Church

Small churches *can* grow. A recent national study found that 15 percent of small churches—those with fewer than 125 attendees—grew in worship attendance over a five-year period.¹ However, too many small congregations are like lockboxes that constrain the current size; this lockdown eventually leads to decline.

While increasing percentages of people are attending megachurches, fewer than 2 percent of all congregations attract more than 1,000 weekly worshipers. Small churches are the most common type dotting the American landscape. The nature of these churches is complex, with a more diverse profile than larger churches. They exhibit unique leadership arrangements, member relationships, contextual pressures, and growth barriers. These features make pastoral and lay leadership more challenging because one-size-fits-all strategies do not fit all small churches.²

Size-Specific Methods

Some church-growth principles are applicable to congregations of all sizes. However, size is the most significant single factor in designing effective approaches. These steps highlight how smaller churches can become bigger churches.

Step 1—Increase the church's visibility. Church-growth methods should be consistent with the congregation's biblical understanding and theology, but methods are not the same thing as theology. Methods are simply strategies. Ultimately, the message to newcomers and the community is always: we are located here, we care about you, and we welcome you. Hundreds of high-tech and low-tech tactics help spread that message.

High-tech efforts. An electronic presence enables a small church to create a billboard as large as any megachurch. New forms of social media multiply the ways to advertise for free or with minimal expense. Every small church needs a basic website and Facebook page. For help, consult *Web-Empowered Ministry: Connecting with People through Websites, Social Media, and More*, by Mark Stephenson (Abingdon Press, 2011).

Low-tech efforts. The church building and facilities need to be highly visible to foot and auto traffic by: readable and lighted signage; greeters in the parking lot and outside all entrances before and after services; attractive church exterior seasonal signs, banners, or displays; and well-kept landscaping. If the church is nestled in an area with little traffic, post directional signs at nearby major intersections.

Aggressively advertise through low-cost approaches such as windshield fliers, direct mail to all households within a designated radius around the church, ads in free community newspapers, and posts on community bulletin boards (like grocery stores or gyms). Some churches distribute yard signs for members to display, while others give gift cards for a cup of coffee at a local shop.

Members can attend community events as a group wearing hats or t-shirts bearing the church logo. If parade, walk, or run routes pass by the church, consider organizing volunteers to hand participants cups of water or other refreshments. Many churches



NO...I SAID, IN ORDER FOR OUR CHURCH TO GROW IN THIS CULTURE, WE NEEDED AN ELECTRONIC PRESENCE.

host a free event once or twice a year to get to know others in the community. Above all, look for opportunities to share church facilities with community groups.

Step 2—Increase the number of worship visitors and visitors to other congregational activities. People cannot visit your church if they do not know it exists, but knowing it exists does not automatically lead to new visitors. Today's small-membership church leaders should target a fifteen-mile radius or more around their congregation for outreach.

Younger people and new residents may do Internet research before visiting a congregation. However, the majority of people visit a congregation for the first time because someone personally invited them. Why do people return? First-time worship visitors say it is because they get a warm welcome from other attendees, enjoy the sermon message, and like the overall worship service experience.¹

Growing churches of all sizes need to follow-up with their visitors. The most effective people for personal contacts are new members who joined in the past five years or members who joined during the tenure of the present pastor.

Churches attract first-time visitors of several varieties. People with an active church relationship can become members as *transfers* (those moving their membership from another congregation of the same denomination) or as *switchers* (those who move their membership from a church of a different denomination). Another visitor variety is people with a dormant active church relationship (*returnees*) or *first-timers*. The varied faith background of potential visitors calls for more diverse methods to ensure more results.

Step 3—Customize methods for your community. Glen Daman in *Shepherding the Small Church*² suggests that knowing the predominate community values steers leaders to strategies and programs that work in context. How would you describe your community?

- Active vs. sedentary: Are people's lifestyles filled with activities or do they spend their leisure time indoors? If active, be represented at sports and outdoor events. If sedentary, use windshield flyers or free newspaper ads.
- Family- vs. career-focused: Do people form goals based on their careers or on their family relationships? If family-focused, host a family picnic or offer daycare for a Parent's Day/Night Out. If career-focused, offer evening programs.

- Stable population vs. mobile population: Does the population exhibit a high turnover rate, or is it generally stable? What factors contribute to the turnover rate? If the population is stable, reach out through family and friend networks. If the population is mobile, invest in an electronic presence and direct mail.

Step 4—Build on the unique strengths of small churches. Small churches excel at nurturing members' spiritual growth and training young people to become future church leaders. The best small churches know how to help newcomers feel a strong sense of belonging. To produce the needed changes for growth, do so by addition rather than by subtraction. For example, start new groups and ministries for eighteen- to forty-four-year-olds. Look for ways to change the single-cell church, which operates like one small group where everyone knows everyone else, to a multiple-cell church. The latter adds its sense of mission, leadership, tradition, and location as bonding agents. Also, see *Small Membership Congregations* (http://www.centerforcongregations.org/system/files/Small_Membership_Congregations.pdf).

Step 5—Become a learning congregation. Try new strategies and evaluate them. Learn from what does not work. Rework your methods and try again.

The Bottom Line

Anthony Pappas has said that a small church is like a loaf of French bread. The aroma and taste are great, but what a thick crust it has! Small churches are tough!³ Read the above paragraphs with the church's leadership group. Underline the phrases that you feel are true of your church right now and the methods worth considering. What are the next steps to break open your small church?

1. U.S. Congregational Life Survey (www.uscongregations.org).
2. Download the free resource, *Church Effectiveness Nugget, Vol. 14: 25 Turnaround Strategies for Small-Membership Congregations* (www.TheParishPaper.com).
3. U.S. Congregational Life Survey (www.uscongregations.org).
4. Glenn Daman, *Shepherding the Small Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2008), 34-36.
5. Anthony G. Pappas, ed. *Inside the Small Church* (Herndon, VA: Alban, 2002), 125.

GENERAL PRESBYTER PRESBYTERY REPORT

September 21-22, 2012

When I interviewed in April 2007 for the General Presbyter position here in Western Colorado, I told the search committee that I could promise them, health permitting, five years of service. We would then have to negotiate my future service. Fortunately I have been able to fulfill my promise. Neither one of us knew at that time that a recession would hit in 2008 and that the Synod Mission Grant money that pays for my position would disappear in 2013. As a result it has provided a time to prepare for the transition of my position to a cluster model and has given me a graceful departure.

One of the old hymns that I learned as a child has a few lines that I will never forget. It goes: "*Count your many blessings, name them one by one. Count your many blessings, see what God has done.*" In my final report to Council, I want to note twelve of the many blessings that I have experienced over the past five years.

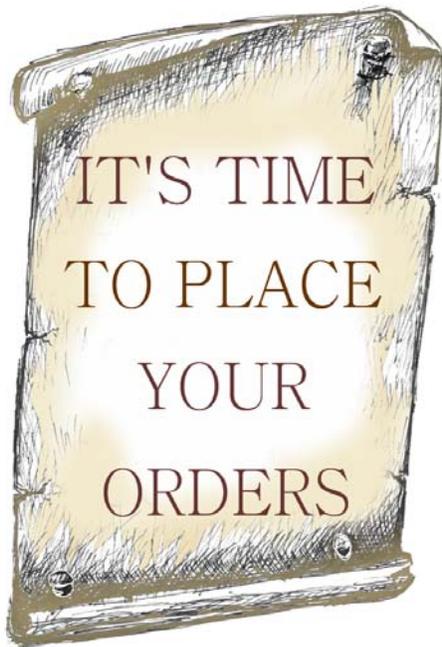
1. At age sixty-five I was invited to become your General Presbyter and had my moving expenses paid to move to Colorado, a state where I had spent most of my vacations all my life.
2. After thirty-eight years serving as a pastor or as an associate pastor in nine different churches, I was given the opportunity to do something new and different yet still stay in the ministry. As a result, I now have a new appreciation of what Presbytery Executives do that I never had before.
3. Fortunately the Presbytery Office is in the small town of Montrose which has a beautiful view of the San Juan Mountain Range. I see them out my living room window and from almost everywhere I go in Montrose.
4. I get to go home for lunch almost every day which I wasn't able to do when living in large cities.
5. I get to experience the four beautiful seasons of the year that Colorado offers as well as getting to drive over such beautiful mountains.
6. Because of the mountains, committee meetings are held during the day so people can drive home before dark. This means that almost all my evenings can be spent with my lovely wife, Cappy. Before now, I almost always averaged three or four nightly meetings a week. The downside of this situation is that we now have become hooked on a number of TV shows.
7. As your General Presbyter, I have become involved with Synod more than I ever had been before now. I have attended the annual Synod meetings in Denver and have served on the Synod Council for the past two years. I also have attended Synod Forum meetings three times a year to meet with the Synod Executive and the other Presbytery Executives in the eight presbyteries of the Synod of the Rocky Mountains. These meetings worked as a support group and gave me an additional appreciation of our Presbyterian connectional system and what goes on in our Synod.
8. Most pastors only get to attend General Assembly once or twice during their entire ministry. I had gone twice before coming to Colorado, but now have been able to attend three more General Assemblies. Although these assemblies have dealt with a number of controversial issues, they have once again given me a deep appreciation for our Presbyterian form of government and how we do business.
9. The Presbytery of Western Colorado is the second smallest presbytery in the denomination with only sixteen churches. As a result, I assumed that life might be rather uneventful for me as a General Presbyter. Much to my surprise, life here has been anything but uneventful. Over the past five years, eleven churches have had pastor turnovers. Sadly three of these turnovers were the result of the pastor being asked to leave. Unfortunately the Ouray church withdrew from our denomination. However, we added a new Union Church in Ridgeway. We also dealt with the future of the Presbytery structure in light of the current recession. Work in this presbytery has not been dull!
10. Much to my delight I have enjoyed serving in a small presbytery where everyone gets to know each other. The average attendance here at presbytery meetings is fifty. At the other larger presbyteries in which I served, the average attendance was five hundred. Since we get to know each other in this presbytery, we treat each other with respect even when we differ. This is not the case in larger presbyteries. This is by far my favorite presbytery of the ten presbyteries that I have served.
11. One of my favorite parts of my job description was to be a pastor to pastors. This meant that I talked to pastors regularly by phone and became acquainted with them, their churches, and their families. I also had the privilege of attending worship annually, hearing the pastors preach, and at the presbytery's expense getting to take the pastor and his/her family out to eat. Unfortunately this never happens in larger presbyteries since the Presbytery Executives are too busy putting out fires that are constantly cropping up.
12. My best blessing has been the wonderful new friendships that have been formed while working with the presbytery staff, the people who have served on the various presbytery committees, and the people attending our presbytery meetings. Thank you one and all for being God's blessings to me over the past five years.

Presbytery of Western Colorado
101 N. Uncompahgre Ave. #9
Montrose, CO 81401-3763

970-240-8455
fax 240-1318

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It is time to order the
2013 Mission Yearbook for Prayer and Study :
How many Loaves have You?

The *Mission Yearbook for Prayer & Study* is a daily devotional resource with 365 inspiring mission stories that come from next door and around the globe. It inspires thousands of Presbyterians daily as they uphold the mission of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) in prayer. The stories in the *2013 Mission Yearbook* were gathered around the question of Jesus to his disciples, "How many loaves have you?" from Mark 6:38. The book is filled with stories of God's abundance in the face of overwhelming needs and a scarcity of resources.

Please notify Beth in the Presbytery office how many you or your congregation would like to order by October 29, 2012 and she will place a group order to help us all save money.