



**WE ARE THE PRESBYTERY
OF WESTERN COLORADO**

Pressing News

May June 2012

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS ON PRESBYTERIAN UNITY

By Jim Cory

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I am a big supporter of Presbyterian Unity and feel that our connectional system reflects what scripture wants us to do and be as described by the Apostle Paul in I Corinthians 12:12—13:13. All parts of the body are needed and should respect one another and not divorce themselves from each other.

I support this belief with a family illustration. I married into a family that is loaded with Presbyterian ministers. They cover the theological spectrum. One of my wife's uncles served as a professor at Union Seminary in Richmond, served on the Board of Christian Education in the PCUS, served eight years on the World Council of Churches' staff in Geneva, and retired as a professor at Union Seminary in New York. My father-in-law served twenty-six years as an associate pastor at Highland Park Presbyterian Church in Dallas. These two brothers were at different ends of the theological spectrum of the Presbyterian Church. Although I didn't always agree with either one's theological perspective, I enjoyed hearing their viewpoints. They were not only family members but also part of my larger Presbyterian family. I never would consider not speaking or listening to them. Family divorce was not an option.

As in a marriage, the bonds that hold relationships together are based on **trust, understanding, and love**. If you want to know what has caused the decline in our denomination, just consider these three words—especially the word **trust**. We live in an age where **distrust and fear** are being preached to us daily as a result of all the dangers that exist in this world. Rightly, children are taught not to trust strangers. Adults are advised not to pick up hitchhikers. We are encouraged to protect ourselves by keeping our doors (literally and emotionally) locked against the dangers outside. With corporate buy-outs, job loyalty and security no longer exist. Broken promises on the part of our political, corporate, and spiritual leaders make the headlines daily. Unfortunately bad news sells and good news seems to be boring. As a result when we read or listen to the news, the messages come through loud and clear—**Be careful! Don't trust anyone! You may get hurt!**

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How do we build trust in a climate of distrust and fear? We can only build trust by being trustworthy. We have to do what we say we will do. We have to keep our promises. And when we fail, we must admit it and ask for-giveness not only from God, but also from whomever has been hurt. Repentance (personal, corporate, and public) is needed to restore trust. Most importantly trust comes with time by getting to know each other and experiencing one another as being trustworthy. What helps in the trust-building process is for us to share our histories together and to see where we have things in common. What binds people together is finding things in common rather than focusing on the things we don't have in common. Of course the rest of the story of building deep trust is to spend large quantities of time together. The more time we spend together, the better we get to know each other as a result of our sharing and building a common history together.

Understanding is the second word that brings unity to a marriage relationship; while misunderstanding only divides and causes separation. For years, splits in marriages and the church have resulted from misunderstandings. Within the church, the major divider has been how the Bible is to be interpreted and what authority is given to scripture. Simply said, the two major interpretations that have caused division within the church are the **literal interpretation** versus the **contextual interpretation** of scripture. Fortunately, I have learned that God speaks through scripture and shapes our lives either way we study it. The most important thing is for people to read and study scripture and to let Jesus' life and teachings be the interpreter of scripture and our lives. For me, the Presbyterian Church exists under a broad umbrella that allows for differences in interpretation of scripture and theological emphasis based on which part of the corporate body is being addressed and served. It is only when we limit our interpretations and won't listen to each other that we become divided and start separating.

I have also learned that **agape love**, as described in I Corinthians 13, is the ultimate key that will hold a marriage and the church together. Without it, we are lost, for only this kind of love will help us to understand, trust, and forgive one another for our narrow ways of thinking and living. I'm reminded of the mother I knew who had a teenage son who was always lying to her and doing things that got him into trouble. I asked her one day how she could trust anything that her son said. She responded by saying, *"I have to trust what he says. Otherwise my life would be a living hell!"* When we don't learn to trust and love one another, it does make our lives a living hell. How right she was. . . . and is!



Presbytery Meeting
Highlights

Presbytery in Brief

At our May 16-17 meeting at the Montezuma Valley Presbyterian Church of Cortez:

- Received Inquirers Jennifer McKenzie and Sharon Jensen as "Candidates" for Minister of Word and Sacrament.
- Dissolved the First Presbyterian Church of Ouray. (Officers of the Presbytery had previously signed the "separation agreement" with the congregation which is now the Ouray Christian Fellowship, part of the Evangelical Free Church Association.)
- Spent time in our cluster groups and in a plenary session discussing how we can best serve the communities in which we find ourselves given our somewhat limited resources. The emphasis was on **service** not **survival**.
- Heard a report from Steve Gammill on our Presbytery website. It should be up and running by mid June.
- Heard a report from David Ezekiel (our Synod Exec.) on the changes taking place at Synod. There is no longer a physical Synod office. The Synod "office" is located wherever the laptop and cell phone happen to be. David also informed us the funding for the Western National Leadership Training Conference is in place for at least the next 5 years.
- Heard a report from the Revs. Alisa Secrest and Steve Nofel on the Board of Pensions. They discussed the Board's action to cover "domestic partners" beginning on Jan. 1, 2013, and the reason that there is no immediate "relief of conscience" available for this coverage. (It is still uncertain how many, if any, persons will qualify for this coverage.)
- Heard a report that the Mission Budget for 2012 had a deficit of \$10,091 (through March), and that the Ecclesiastical Budget showed a surplus of \$3744 (through March). It was also noted that the Synod will (if approved at the Synod Assembly) disburse funds from the sale of its former office property to the presbyteries. Our share would be about \$21,000.

Elected the Rev. Dan Straw Synod Commissioner for 2012 to fill the vacancy created by the Rev. Max Kendrick's death. The Rev. Jim Cory was elected as alternate. (The Rev. Sandy Newman is the other Teaching Elder commissioner.)

The next Presbytery meeting will be Sept. 21 & 22 (Friday and Saturday), 2012, at the Covenant Presbyterian Church in Grand Junction.

THE PARISH PAPER

IDEAS AND INSIGHTS FOR ACTIVE CONGREGATIONS

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

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How to Turn Bystanders into Active Disciples

Every congregation faces the same challenge—a fraction of the members carry the majority of the load. These loyal few attend services weekly, participate in church programs, support the church financially, take on leadership roles, and volunteer for mission and outreach activities.

Is it true that a mere 20 percent of the congregation's members do far more than the other 80 percent? What can leaders do to encourage spiritual growth and discipleship among the other 80 percent?

Testing the 80/20 Rule

Researchers Scott Thumma and Warren Bird put this 80/20 notion to the test in *The Other 80 Percent: Turning Your Church's Spectators into Active Participants* (Wiley Press, 2011). They found that the statistic varies widely but every church's membership list reveals uneven levels of involvement.

Yet some congregations find ways to shrink the numbers of those who observe church life from the sidelines. The remedy for converting bystanders into highly involved participants engaged in meaningful ministry depends on the type of nonparticipant—each spectator type requires a different strategy for reengagement.

Types of Bystanders

Thumma and Bird's research reveals several distinct groups of spectators:

The underinvolved member. This category describes those who are minimally active. Their worship service attendance may be steady, but they are rarely spotted at anything else that happens at church. They do not participate in a small group—such as adult education, prayer groups, or Bible studies. They have never taken on any kind of lay leadership role—chairing a committee, working on a mission project, teaching a class, or sponsoring a youth trip. Their financial giving is occasional and typically modest. However, the reasons behind their lack of involvement remain a mystery.

The decreasingly involved member. This category describes those who were once active members, but who slowly become less and less involved. Many times this decreasing involvement stems from complications at home—a husband who loses his job and continues to look for employment or a wife's declining health.

Changes in work or health, new family responsibilities, or other challenging personal circumstances take their toll on the once active. Others curtail their involvement for other reasons: a negative church experience such as a change in the worship service, a pastor or staff member who failed to meet their expectations, or a sense of disillusionment resulting from continuing church conflict.

The waiting to be asked member. Church leaders often overlook members in this category. Newcomers to the church, especially first-time church members or denominational switchers, need special attention to help them figure out the mechanics of involvement. Because they wait to be asked, a sign-up sheet or self-nomination strategy rarely works for them. Introverted members or those uncertain about taking on a new role need targeted encouragement too.

The disconnected member. One church expert refers to this group as "mental members."¹ Those missing in action think of themselves as church members, even though they have not attended in years, and have yet to meet the current pastor.



"...AN INTERESTING CASE...
THEY ALL SHARE THE SAME SYMPTOMS,
BUT GIVE AN AMAZING VARIETY OF EXPLANATIONS..."

These paper-members receive some reward for their loose affiliation—such as connecting them to memories or family history, secure reservations for future weddings or funerals, or an easy way to maintain a Christian identity.

The virtual member. These attendees may be regular participants but they have never officially joined. However, in their heads and hearts, they are members. Their lack of involvement may stem from their uncertainty about what roles nonmembers can legitimately perform.

Strategies for Creating Greater Participation

The multiple reasons for nonparticipation require multiple strategies for reaching the 80 percent. Because every church has a unique profile of lightly involved members, the first task involves identifying your congregation's participation profile. Find out:

- What percentage of your church's membership is highly involved?
- How are these actively engaged members different from other members?
- What percentage of your church's membership is less involved?
- What types of bystanders do you observe in your church?

Thumma and Bird recommend that after leaders answer these questions they should follow a three-part strategy:

1. Listening to bystanders. The listening team interviews two or three members that fit the profile of each bystander category. The conversations with nonparticipants focus on three questions:

- How do they grow spiritually?
- What are their gifts and passions?
- What would increase their involvement?

Remind team members that there is only one goal: *listening to the member's story*. Coach interviewers to reign in any defensive responses.

2. Learning from bystanders. The team's second step involves reviewing and discussing what they learned from those conversations. For example, the researchers found in many congregations that the underlying conditions and circumstances for decreased involvement seemed to have more to do with *spiritual* issues than it did with circumstantial issues (such as work demands) or experiential issues (like feeling neglected during or after a personal tragedy).

According to responses from the least involved, they would be reengaged if the church strengthened three spiritual aspects of the church: meaningful worship; pastoral care; and ministry to the sick, shut in, and bereaved.

3. Engaging bystanders. Building the spiritual life of the other 80 percent should be the motivation as leaders creatively accelerate their efforts to reach by-

standers. Too few churches offer vigorous programs for helping people to develop a life of faith. Many congregations have discontinued any form of adult education or have greatly diminished it. Leaders should review every church ministry and ask, Does it make disciples?

More Strategies For Making Disciples

Additional action steps boost participation for all groups in the church:

- Create ministry teams to replace committees.
- Train leaders to make every group's experience spiritually formative.
- Encourage experienced leaders to recruit and mentor a less-experienced co-leader.
- Help members find their spiritual gifts and celebrate their contributions.
- Start new ministry teams and groups often.
- Hold a ministry fair to connect people with groups and ministry teams.
- Invite people to participate in a single-day ministry project.
- Provide opportunities for families and friends to do ministry projects together.²

The Bottom Line

Take comfort in the fact that no church engages 100 percent of their members at a 100 percent level. Keep a balanced focus on the church's entire ministry. "Do not neglect the team on the field (present active members) and the potential team on the bench (prospective active members) by focusing all of your attention on the ex-team that has retreated to the bleachers (inactive members)."³ If some members choose to return as active disciples, welcome them. If they choose to remain on the sidelines, love them anyway.

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1. C. Kirk Hadaway, *What Can We Do About Church Drop-outs?* (Nashville: Abington Press, 1990), 35.
 2. Visit the Center for Church Leadership Web site (http://www.churchleadership.com/resources/50_ways_to_build_strength.htm) to download materials from the "50 Ways to Build Strength in Participation" series.
 3. Herb Miller, *Church Effectiveness Nugget, Volume 6: How to Shrink Your Church's Inactive Member List*, 24. Download free at www.TheParishPaper.com/free-resources.

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percentages of male worshipers, based on region, are in the South (an average of 43% male attendees in this region compared to 39% nationally).

6. Okay, but aren't there *some* churches with more men than women? Nationally, eight out of ten churches are “gender-gapped”—where the percentage of women in the pews exceeds the male percentage by more than 10 percentage points. Two out of three (66%) conservative Protestant churches are gender-gapped. The numbers of gender-gapped congregations are highest for mainline churches (86%) and Catholic parishes (93%).

Only 2% of all congregations attract more men than women. If a church or parish achieves a 50/50 ratio, this gender balance places them in the top 98% of all congregations in their ability to connect with men.

7. But this gender imbalance is something new, right? Isn't there an ever-widening gap between the number of male and female churchgoers? As far back as we have records, this is not new. Gender ratios hover around 60% women to 40% men for church participants. For at least the past 700 years observers have noted the lack of men in church.³

What Can Be Done?

David Murrow (*Why Men Hate Going to Church*, Thomas Nelson, 2011) offers some thought-provoking reasons for why many men avoid church. He asserts that often churches devalue male strengths and ignore their needs. His other insights include these observations:

The modern church culture is built to reach women, children, and seniors. Murrow believes that the development of children's ministry bolstered women's commitment to the church. A parallel ministry draw for men does not exist. Interestingly, as more women and fewer men attend, churches cater even more to women's needs and desires. Then, even fewer men attend. Yet he does not recommend starting a men's ministry program—but re-thinking existing ministries to make them more male-friendly. In effect, he calls for small changes rather than an extreme church makeover.

Murrow advises leaders to consider men's needs when planning any event or activity. Create opportunities for men to gather without women present. Recruit men for projects that make use of their gifts and skills. Finally, he recommends steering clear of any hint of feminine spiritual superiority.

Men find worship services boring. Research reveals that men who attend worship services experience more frustration and boredom than women attendees. Fewer men say they feel God's presence, or find inspiration or joy. Murrow lists possibilities for making worship more interesting for men: use humor, laughter, appealing music, and masculine imagery; keep it short; do some-

thing unexpected; make it challenging; use language that denotes strength; start and end on time.

He feels that most changes should occur in the background. “Churches that create a healthy masculine environment do not become heavily male.”⁴ Murrows asserts that as churches make men feel more welcome, they attract women as well.

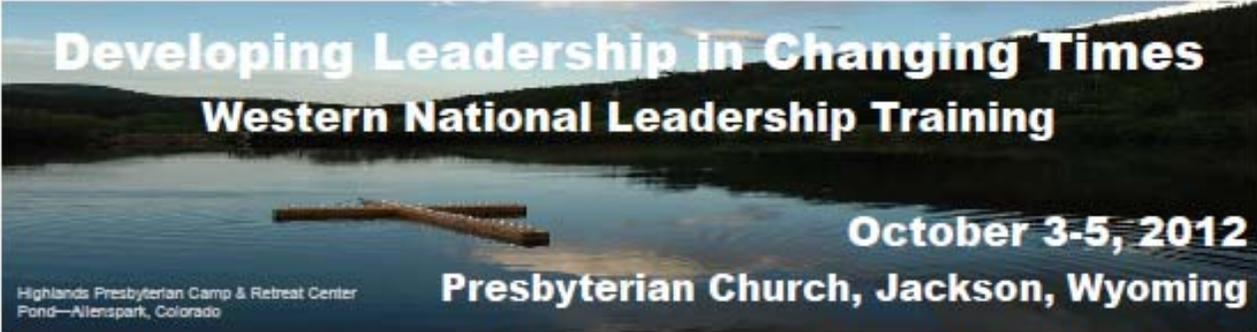
Churchgoers tend to be verbal, studious, and sensitive. Murrow argues that the average woman tends to develop the skills that match church culture. Obviously many men excel in these ways too. But most church activities require mastery of these abilities for participation (for example, Bible study, praying aloud, talking in small groups). Anyone—male or female—required to devote themselves to things they're not good at, will find a way to escape.

Drapes, doilies, and other feminine decor deter men. Imagine the gendered decor of a hair salon frequented by women vs. the very masculine barbershop. Where does your church decor fall along that continuum? Murrow suggests that leaders create an imaginary male character who tours your church. This male figure doesn't have to be a John Wayne type who exhibits rugged masculinity. An unchurched male relative, neighbor, or coworker will work. Examine everything the church does. Would this male be interested, intrigued, feel welcome and comfortable?

The Bottom Line

Is it possible for more churches to connect better with men? *Yes*—and some churches are already doing so. Just as warnings of “mind the gap” alert British passengers to exercise caution as they step from the platform into the train car, churches need to heed the warning to mind the gender gap.

1. Statistics cited from Cynthia Woolever and Deborah Bruce, *A Field Guide to U.S. Congregations: Who's going Where and Why*, 2nd ed. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2010). And Cynthia Woolever, et al., “The Gender Ratio in the Pews: Consequences for Congregational Vitality,” *Journal of Beliefs & Values*, 27, no. 1 (April 2006): 25-38.
2. David Murrow, *Why Men Hate Going to Church* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2011), 14.
3. Roger Finke and Rodney Stark, *The Churching of America, 1776-2005* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2007), 36-38.
4. Murrow, *Why Men Hate Going to Church*, 174. Discussion questions are free at www.churchformen.com/guides.



Developing Leadership in Changing Times Western National Leadership Training

October 3-5, 2012

Presbyterian Church, Jackson, Wyoming

Highlands Presbyterian Camp & Retreat Center
Pond—Allenspark, Colorado

Developing Leadership in Changing Times is the theme for this year's Western National Leadership Training. This leadership training will include leading in changing times, rural ministry leadership, leading change from the public venue, leading in times of loss or transition, reaching out to diverse populations, and more.

Some of the highlights include:

M. Rex Miller, author and featured plenary speaker

The author of *The Millennium Matrix*, Rex is also a theologian, futurist, communications expert, and blogger. He is the winner of the CoreNet Global Innovator of the Year Award and regularly leads groups and organizations through an innovative process called *Mindshift*. In his book, *The Millennium Matrix*, Rex explores the major paradigm and worldview shifts over the past two thousand years and provides practical suggestions on how Christians can successfully navigate the rapid cultural changes that are occurring and that will continue to occur over the decades to come. A full bio can be found at <http://rexmiller.net/bio/>.

Cynthia Bolbach, Moderator of the 219th General Assembly & Gradye Parsons, Stated Clerk of the Presbyterian Church (USA)

Cindy and Gradye will further stimulate our thoughts by offering suggestions springing from Rex Miller's provocative plenary sessions. They'll address particular ways the PC (USA) can positively respond to such massive change. Gradye has also been asked to present his popular course on "Dangerous Elders."

Commission Ruling Elder Track

A CRE track is being offered in polity, led by Bill Ailes, retired Executive Presbyter from Inland Northwest Presbytery (Spokane) and instructor at Whitworth College. The course will offer at least 6 hours of contact time which meets the requirement of polity training for many of the presbyteries in the Synod of the Rocky Mountains and will apply toward the CRE work required by Whitworth College or Dubuque Seminary. Be prepared for work both in advance of the session and as a follow-up to fulfill this credit.

Also offered will be a spiritual direction workshop, a Dwelling in the Word Bible Study, great music, fellowship time, worship and communion together. The highly requested National Park geological tour will also be offered again this year.

Please mark your calendars for October 3rd - 5th in Jackson. This stimulating, thought provoking leadership training event is not to be missed. More information will be coming to your churches and the Synod website soon at <http://www.synodrm.org/>.

Presbytery of Western Colorado

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The Newly Remodeled Website will be online

We have been working diligently on The new Website Communications center and we are praying barring any unforeseeable circumstances that the website will be up and active from the middle of June to the end of June just check once in a while. The site is www.wcopresbytery.org.

Beth is still requesting information and pictures either about your church or any special presbytery events happening that everyone would like to have on the website. Her current email address is bethwco@montrose.net and please send pictures in jpg format.

Beth is also starting a list of anyone who is currently receiving the Pressing News via mail and would like to receive it via email. Please just send her a quick note at the above email address and she will place you on the email list. For the next several mailings you may receive both email and mailed copy but as this year comes to a close and the start of next year it is expected that the major distribution of the newsletter will be via email and the website.

This is exciting for all of us.

Blessings!!!