

Report of the Executive Presbyter

Written February 24, 2016

Sharing Together

I was visiting with one of our village leaders recently and found myself suggesting that he develop some of his thoughts about village ministry to share, and maybe even publish. He has some pretty deep thought, but needs a way to share them. Since then I have talked to others in the presbytery and have come to the conclusion that a number of us have stories that instruct (and maybe entertain), as well as some God-given insights that should not be lost.

In this time of great change, I believe we need to share some of the wisdom God has given, and some of the joy that comes in sharing our experiences in God. I believe we need to “hold fast to what is good (1 Thess. 5:21), and we need to share new ideas that we are trying out as we seek to relate the gospel to a changing society. I believe God uses such sharing for encouraging others, for “gladdening the heart,” and for inspiring one another.

I therefore invite you to send me anything you would like published in a presbytery archive. For the moment I am not putting this information into a public blog, but I would like your permission to share it what you send with anyone in our presbytery that wishes it. Perhaps after some conversation with more of you, we might decide to make some of it public, but I’m not sure of the wisdom of that just yet. But I would like to share it at least across our presbytery. Simply send to exec@pbyukon.org, or to the presbytery office. I will put it into a private online file that only allows members of to access. Melissa and I will monitor who has access.

I hope this might be a fun way of sharing stories, and of connecting better to the inspiration that the Holy Spirit has for us when we share together.

Pastoral Leadership for Our Congregations

1. 13 Churches are served by a Teaching Elder pastor at least part-time

We have two new pastors to introduce at this meeting

- a. Rev. Jack Cormack (Nuiqsut, Atqasuk and Wainwright) began in July
- b. Rev. Todd Allen (Trinity in Anchorage) began in December

One new pastor coming, Rev. Dr. Joseph Reid, coming to Utqiagvik in Barrow in April

At this point, all of our churches seeking Ministers of Word and Sacrament have one, although two are interim pastors (Rev. Reid at Utqiagvik and Rev. Allen at Trinity).

2. Three churches without Teaching Elder pastors are served by CREs
Fairbanks Korean Presbyterian, Delta Jct. Presbyterian & Lutheran, and Gambell
3. Five churches served by Teaching Elder pastors also are served by CREs
Olgonik in Wainwright, Atqasuk Chapel, Utqiagvik in Barrow, Kuukpik in Nuiqsut and Jewel Lake Parish in Anchorage.
4. Three churches have neither a Teaching Elder nor a CRE: Kaktovik, Chapel in the Mts. in Anaktuvuk Pass, and Savoonga.

Ecumenical New Clergy Orientation

The Methodists, Lutherans and Presbyterians held an orientation in October for church leaders who were new to our region. The leaders were all either Native American, plus Libby Roderick from UAA, who partnered with Ilarion Mercurieff in teaching on White Privilege. Four members of our presbytery attended. We are hoping to hold a similar training again next fall.

Pastor Care

Three clergy care groups have formed to allow pastors of churches to provide mutual care. One group, for installed and temporary supply pastors, has been operating for a couple of years. Two of these groups are new.

1. The clergy in the Interior have met twice that I know of since November, meeting for mutual support.
2. A new group formed last month in the S Central region for Teaching Elders, who are *retired* or *at large* members of presbytery, and for CREs in the region. This group is following the same *Jesus Caritas* format as the older group, to give them structure.

I still believe that something like this, perhaps using electronic methods, would be of great value for village church leaders. I would love to hear from village leaders regarding their thoughts on this.

All-church visits

The Leadership Team has been designing ways to improve our relationships and mission together. Last year we began collecting Moments for Mission from each congregation to share throughout the year. This year we will begin visiting each church annually. Two visitors have been assigned to visit your session and your pastoral leadership people. If possible, they will schedule their visit so they can also be present during a worship service, so they can connect with your larger congregation in that way. It is our desire to hear what ministry is like from all the churches, and to learn from this how to share ideas as the Spirit leads us in order to grow all our churches' effectiveness in ministry. Expect a contact call or email soon!

Finances

Our current budget projects that we will use up our reserves in 2016. It is time to discuss the changes necessary to begin living within our means. Actually, that is not the thing that spurred the discussions on restructuring that we will have during this meeting together. Even so, the discussions are about how we can do our work better together. Out of these discussions I pray that it will become clear what is most important about our work. From this we will likely see what approaches to funding make the most sense.

The Opportunities for the Church in Times of Change

A number of writings are out about how we are, indeed, in a time of great social change, and how that change brings both fear and opportunity. We know that in Christ "we have not been given a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but a Spirit of adoption," which means our confidence is in God, who has gathered us in Christ! So let's share those things that we see as "opportunity" rather than threat. Here is a link to one article on that subject. I would love to learn what you are finding. <http://www.christianweek.org/10-predictions-future-church-shifting-attendance-patterns/>