
An MVP Pastoral Letter

To the Company of Elders from the Mission Coordinating Council

Summer 2013



The Mission Coordinating Council

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Journeying with Jesus to touch the world!

Signs and Wonders

And everyone present was filled with the Holy Spirit. ACTS 2:4

We live in a season of new birth. From the legacy of the past, seeds of renewal take root and begin to bud as creativity bursts forth in new forms of worship, fellowship, and mission. Just as the Holy Spirit in the Acts of the Apostles showed God's people new ways of being his instruments in mission, so, too, do we experience the Holy Spirit instilling faithfulness across our presbytery. Clearly, we continue on a journey...a new holy pilgrimage... as we serve in the power of the Holy Spirit.

We see fresh ways of being church. (At the Zanesville meeting, did you hear the four testimonies explaining how four congregations are addressing hunger issues?). We also see new signs and wonders. During the four days in Michigan, forty-eight pastors, elders, and leaders gathered and experienced renewal and a unanimous realization that we can't keep doing things the same way and expect change.

Just as the Apostles on Pentecost called for a new openness, the Foundations of our Book of Order call for "a new openness." That openness is *evident* in our interactions with one another as a presbytery and across our parishes.

We are hungry to grow in Christ so that we might more effectively be Christ in the world! To do so, we believe certain mission efforts are best done together. As a Council of the church, we "exist to help congregations and the church as a whole to be more faithful participants in the mission of Christ" (G-3.101). Given that, we commit ourselves to:

- Inviting teaching and ruling elders and their congregations to "find their place" in the journey
- Gathering the scattered together to be in communion with one another as we await the new birth
- Supporting the missional endeavors arising out of the hearts of our leaders, congregations and parishes as part of the celebration of new birth
- Focusing on the birth of the new instead of the death of the old

In this time of transition, we give thanks for the work and ministry of the Parish Elders. The Committee on Ministry and Committee on Preparation remain committed to supporting the parishes. Administration, in partnership with the Presbyterian Foundation, will help us to explore new ways of developing our stewardship as well as being a resource on financial and personnel matters. The Discernment & Discipleship Ministry Team (formerly known as Nominating) looks forward to celebrating with you the ways in which God is at work in your parish, your congregation, and your life.

Our General Presbyter will continue to serve us as our *Sentinel* (Jer. 6:17) on the watch-tower, looking for ways God is coming to us and for signs of danger and obstacles to God's coming, communicating and informing the Presbytery of what she observes and discerns; our *Midwife* (Ex. 1:17) who coaches us to be healthy and engaged in the process of birth even in the face of inevitable losses that come with the transition to something new; and our *Tender of Vineyards* (in response to Jesus' call in John 15:1-17) who nurtures God's emerging work by paying particular



attention to community-based ministries that result in transformed communities as well as nurturing ways of being the Body of Christ. As in all ministry on a presbytery level, the general presbyter will continue to combine responsibility and authority with accountability.

Wait! Take time to Remember and Celebrate

But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. ACTS 1:8

Before we reflect on the process for moving forward, we thought it helpful to remember and celebrate the many ways in which God has been at work within us. We remember in order to not forget who and whose we are in Christ. We remember in order to live forward. For as no less a theologian than the White Queen in Alice in Wonderland reminds us: "It's a poor sort of memory that only works backwards."

To set our journey in context, we have looked to the book of Acts, a book Lloyd Ogilvie once called "the drumbeat of love," marching orders for Christians with a passion to feed hungry Christians with the Word of God. In particular, we have reflected on the discipleship behaviors of the early church:

1. Wait to be empowered by The Holy Spirit (Acts 1-2)
2. Depend upon God (1:8-8:1; 16:6; 19:10; and its antithesis, 5:1-11)
3. Anticipate God at work (8:1-8; 12:1-19)
4. Expect & look for divine appointments (5:16-39; 8:26-40)
5. Observe & go with what God is doing (9:1-31; 17:16-17)
6. Stand strong in the face of opposition (5:40-6:1; 7:59-60)
7. Praise God in and out of adversity (3:6-10; 16:22-30)
8. Step outside the conventional ministry box (10:1-29; 11:18)
9. Empower & release people to ministry (6:5-7:60; 13:1-3; 13:5)
10. Relentlessly witness to the power of God at work (all of Acts).

Is this presbytery ready for a new ACTS of the Holy Spirit? We believe so. We are humbled and excited, because we see signs of God's wonders (2:43) all around us—stories shared at every gathering of Presbytery, Parish, Council, and Committees.

This remains a critical time for the Presbyterian Church (USA) and, more particularly, for we who covenanted together as Muskingum Valley Presbytery. Even as our denominational identity is challenged, even as some of our sister congregations leave for other denominations (or simply go “independent”), we understand that we have been blessed to be a blessing—we exist for our communities to the glory of God. No longer are we measuring ourselves by attendance, buildings, and cash on hand; rather we are counting lives touched, partnerships formed, communities transformed as the Holy Spirit moves among us.

We have described ourselves as a presbytery journeying with Jesus to touch the world. Yet our journey of the last decade has been more an exodus into exile, than a touching of the world through ministry and mission. To be sure, ministry and mission have taken place, but in the midst of deep change that has led us to a holy place born of God's making.



The paradoxical emotions experienced on this journey must be honored, for we have experienced grief and joy, failure and possibility, a letting go that we might take hold. We have been waiting as a presbytery for ten plus years—some of us with deep intention, others of us caught up in the daily busyness of life... some of us somewhat fearful, others of us eagerly yearning the new... some of us grieving, others of us anticipating—we have been waiting for God's Spirit to break into our lives anew.

Jesus is clear that before we do anything, we must wait upon the Holy Spirit. Too often, we try to do things drawing only on our own power. The result is burnout. “Waiting time” is not empty time. Quite the opposite! The waiting time provides the context in which we become aligned with God that God might do God's work in us and through us.

In the end, that's what it's all about, isn't it? Doing God's work in the supply of the Spirit! Wait! Jesus tells us. Wait to be empowered by the Holy Spirit. And so, the disciples waited, returning to the Upper Room to pray and be in fellowship, to call forth leaders to witness to the resurrection (see Acts 1:12-26). They waited upon the Lord and in God's time, received the Holy Spirit (see Acts 2:1-14).

We, too, have waited. We, too, have come together in prayer and fellowship, calling forth leaders to witness to the resurrection. And, in God's time, we, too, have received the gift of the Holy Spirit.

The Journey Timeline

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Acts 2:42

We have been on an intentional journey of transformation. Some have felt that we have been in a holding pattern. But, as the timeline below reflects, we have been very intentional in our waiting time, as we have moved from regulatory to mission-driven. As one monastic put it: "When you're waiting, you're not doing nothing. You're doing the most important something there is. You're allowing your soul to grow up. If you can't be still and wait, you can't become what God you created to be."

- 2002 MVP enters into a Season of Sabbath in which the work of all committee and teams, except those mandated by the Book of Order, are set aside in order to discern God's will.
- 2006 MVP commits to a season of internal preparation through presbytery-wide study, training, and equipping. In particular:
- MVP Core Training**
- Healthy Congregations Training/Emotionally Healthy Church
 - Formational Prayer (with a focus on the healing of wounds)
 - Discover Your Place in Ministry
 - Discipleship Essentials & The Disciple-Making Church
 - Incarnational Leadership: Emotional & Social Intelligence
 - Managing Polarities
 - Ten Lenses for Assessing Congregational Vitality
 - Annual retreats offered by the Retreat Ministries Mission group
 - Plus individual congregational consultations.
- MVP Cohorts**
- Acts 16.5 Initiative
 - Transformation Cohort
 - Small, Strong Cohort
 - First Call Cohort
 - Living Forward... how will we be accountable to our continued growth and equipping as leaders?
- MVP Assessments & Consultations**
- Assessments used in our developing an understanding of strength-based leadership: Change Style Indicator, Emotionally Healthy Inventory, ESCI 360, FIRO-B, Gallup Strengths, Influencing Style Indicator, Kolb Learning Style Indicator, MBTI, Personal Coaching Style Inventory.
 - Consultations used with local congregations: Bridgebuilder, Healthy Congregations, Emotionally Healthy, Future Story, Mission Consultations, Formational Prayer, Faithful Listening, and the PATH.
- MVP Leader Studies (taught and/or preached)**
- 2006: Acts: Behaviors of Disciples
 - 2007: Holy Habit: Radical Hospitality
 - 2008: Daniel: A Self Differentiated Man of God
 - 2009: Holy Habit: Sabbath... An Acquired Taste
 - 2010: The Journey: Growing Up In Christ
 - 2011: Holy Habit: Generosity... First Love; First Fruits
 - 2012: Follow Me: The Cycle of Call in the Life of Peter
- 2012 Naming of our "Hedgehog" as *Equipping for Ministry in the 21st Century*
Move into intentionally distributive system through introduction of Parishes & Parish Elders
Back to Zero with Gil Rendle
Introduction of Appreciative Inquiry to Presbytery Leadership
- 2013 Lent: All Presbytery Retreat: Seek the Shalom of the Community
June: Mission Immersion, Adrian, Michigan—revival breaks out!
Three Parishes begin to use Appreciative Inquiry in their communities

In a very real way this season has been focused on preparing the soil for the seeds of the future to be planted. Even with the disruptive challenges coming from both the larger church and environment, there is a genuine sense of excitement about the future.

Depend Upon God!

They all joined together constantly in prayer. ACTS 1:14

Having received the gift of the Spirit, God is calling us to release the past into his care that we might build the new. Likewise, God is calling us to nurture the Spirit that dwells within each one of us. Just as we were called to wait upon God, so also we are called to depend upon God.

To “depend” means to place our reliance or trust in another; to exist by virtue of a necessary relationship; to be dependent. The early church depended upon God. They revealed or showed or demonstrated their trust in a variety of ways, including their prayer life (1:14, 4:24); their communal discernment (2:1, 4:6); their daily study of the Word (2:42).

They not only listened to God, but expecting direction, they also looked to God. And direction was given. In a very real sense, they had “ears to hear.” Today more than ever we need to hear from God; we need direction. Trusting God is not easy. But, unless and until we offer God our trust, God cannot grow us as disciples and thereby shape us as leaders.

Holding back is not a good option. Rather than depending on God, Annias and Sapphira for security reasons, held money back from the sale of property and then lied to Peter about their actions (5:1-11). The result was death. Seeking security in earthly terms always results in death, a sobering reality to ponder.



Upon whom do you depend? Are you willing to trust God with your church? With your ministry? With your treasure? With yourself? As a presbytery, will we depend upon God by placing worship at the center of our life together? We know that worship draws us into the mystery of God being formed in us. Worship brings our whole selves before God. So also, will we depend upon God through prayer and on-going immersion in the Word? Like the early church, will we hold nothing of ourselves back, but rather dare to follow where the Spirit leads?

Living forward, may we commit anew to nurturing the spiritual community that has been emerging over the last decade in Muskingum Valley Presbytery. We need to honor that God’s Spirit is indeed dwelling within us. This is a precious and vital gift of God. Belonging and relationship in response to God’s call precede ministry and structure. Being precedes our doing. As pilgrims on a journey, God is inviting us to:

- Delight ourselves in the Lord and in one another as we play and laugh, worship and enjoy
- Honor grief born of change and loss, knowing that joy dwells in the hollow carved out by grief
- Participate and be vulnerable as the living Christ is formed in us

The work of the Parishes and the Discernment & Discipleship team are crucial here as they call us to celebrate the movement of the Holy Spirit in our midst. As Joe Small, honorably retired director of worship for the PCUSA, reminds us: “Without the corporate engagement in biblical, theological and ecclesiological inquiry, ecclesial order is easily bureaucratized while discipline is either ignored or factionalized.”

We are reminded of Calvin’s Company of Pastors who:

- Educated themselves biblically and theologically
- Mutually encouraged one another
- Pursued joint missionary work
- Met regularly for prayer and support
- Enhanced the community’s capacity to live the faith.

Isn’t that what we have been about in our parish gatherings, while on retreat, at the Mission Immersion! As in other times of revival, our presbytery gatherings have turned over the majority of our time together to prayer, worship and fellowship (2:42). Our Company of Elders must be foundational to all that we do if we are to be a spiritual community rather than a dying religious institution. We believe that this time for boldness (4:31) comes only by the Holy Spirit.

In support of the spiritual community shaping and forming us, we also must be intentional about the institutional transformation that has already begun. It is helpful to remember that there was a second supporting body in Calvin’s time: the Geneva Consistory. It was made up of ruling and teaching elders who were responsible for church order and discipline. To that end, we propose the formation of three commissions to oversee our shared work:



- **Calling**—While we are all called into relationship and service through our baptism, the particulars of how we live out our respective calls are born of the intersection of our passions and strengths with the needs of the community. A strong underpinning of our Reformed theology understands that call, while experienced by the individual, is confirmed by the voice of the collective body.
- **Equipping**—of pastors, leaders, and congregations for ministry in the 21st century requires a different approach than that of the last century. This team will seek to identify the resources, training and tools needed for faithful, effective ministry in the context of accountable relationships.
- **Serving in Mission**—beyond the local congregation and community is part of Jesus’ call to us in Acts 1:8. This team will identify the processes by which we might discern ministry opportunities and serve in partnership together—across our parishes, country, and world.

Anticipate

The promise is for you and your children and for those who are far off--for all whom the Lord God will call. ACTS 2:39

In anticipating the work of the commissions, it is helpful to reflect on the nature of change. As we know from both the study of change and our own experience of change, the early adaptors will follow the innovators. Likewise the early majority will follow the early adaptors, and the late majority the early majority. There is a sequence to change that must be honored. It is not possible to have everyone on board before initiating change. Furthermore, those who are of the late majority must first experience change before they can “buy into” it.¹

The clear consensus articulated at the Mission Immersion is that we are at the point of institutional transformation. Yet, there was also a concern voiced for those not there. It is instructive to remember that adaptive change is a process that engages people at different stages. Put another way: change is adopted at different rates within a community.



As Reformed Christians, we profess our belief that God is in control. Yet, how many of us truly live trusting that God is in control? Following the martyrdom of Stephen, the church scattered as persecution broke out in Jerusalem. It would be easy to see how some might have concluded that all was lost. Instead, God leveraged the bad intentions of Saul and others to accomplish his purpose: the spreading of the gospel. In Acts 8:1-8, we find the apostles scattered, enabling the faith to be spread throughout

¹ Two helpful studies on change include:

a. Everett Rogers in his groundbreaking study on change, **The Diffusion of Innovations**, found:

- Innovators (2.5% of the population) initiate change.
- Early Adaptors (13.5%) keep the momentum going.
- Early Majority (34%) are the pragmatists who make change functional.
- Late Majority (34%) are the “guardians of tradition” who eventually join in.
- Laggards (16%) are the people for whom change is extremely hard, if not impossible.

b. Historian William McLoughlin in his study of *Revivals, Awakenings, and Reform: An Essay on Religion and Social Change in America, 1607-1977* found that religious renewal follows five movements:

1. Crisis of legitimacy (conventional doctrines, practices, and identity no longer work or satisfy)
2. Cultural distortion (fault finding of institution and structures, “us-they”, attempts at reorganization, even as innovation is seen as deviant)
3. Emerging new vision (breaking free of old structures and emergence of new practices)
4. Following new paths (experimentation, flexibility, exploration)
5. Institutional transformation (new paths seen as relevant, valid and applicable, allowing new structures to emerge; loss of the old is not seen as the end)

Judea and Samaria. Jerusalem becomes a “multiplying church” as new churches are born across the region. Indeed, opposition to the gospel repeatedly leads to growth of the kingdom (12:1-9). Anticipating victory means we will trust God’s perspective. When difficult times come, look hard for the Lord’s hand. Over 90% of the time, opposition arose after the preaching of Christ in the book of Acts. We should not be shocked by its presence today. Growth attracts opposition, and God leverages all of this for the transformation of people and community.

As we enter into an season of intentional realignment of ministry and mission, beginning with ourselves, we would do well to remember who is in charge. The past decade has marked a gradual letting go of many former ways of being church and presbytery, even as we have come to hold one another and ourselves accountable to ever-deepening relationships in Christ. In the last six months alone, four new pastors have come into our presbytery, the latest in over thirty pastoral transitions over the last decade.

When we truly allow God to take charge of our lives, it’s amazing to see what God can do. Anticipate God!

The gift of Change Style Indicator is that we know that we all have a role to play in change. *Conservers prefer current circumstances to the unknown. They tend to accept the structures and prefer change that is incremental. Pragmatists prefer to explore the existing paradigm in an open and objective manner. They prefer change that is functional. Originators challenge present structures and prefer change that is expansive.*

Each change style has a contribution to make on this journey. We can trust our conservers to get things done on schedule and to attend to detail. They are the ones among us who will handle the day-to-day operations efficiently. We can trust our pragmatist to address the needs of the presbytery as they arise. They will get things done, often in spite of the rules, not because of them. We can trust them to negotiate and encourage cooperation around a common purpose. Our originators understand complex problems. They bring strong conceptual and design skills and will push the presbytery to understand the system as a whole. They are the ones we can trust to serve as catalysts for systemic change, bringing energy and vision to the process that will result in transformation. As a Council, we give thanks for the Innovators (2.5% of the population) and Early Adaptors (13.5%) in our midst, who are blessed with the ability to initiate change. They are pathfinders ahead of us—like the pioneers on the frontiers of Ohio 200 years ago.

With regard to doing things, “decently and in order,” we do well to remember the context of that phrase in scripture which comes to us from I Corinthians 14:40, referring back to verses 26-35, where the Apostle Paul is providing instruction on an orderly approach to speaking in tongues! While it might be argued that adaptive change is in many ways parallel to the experience of a congregation speaking in tongues, it is important to note that we cannot structure ahead of living the change to which God calls us. Institutional transformation follows the exploration of new paths. Experimentation and flexibility precede the emergence of new structures.

A Prayer for the Journey

God help us to change. To know the need for it. To deal with the pain of it. To experience the joy of it. To undertake the journey without knowing the destination. The art of gentle revolution. *Michael Leunig, A Common Prayer*

Expect & Look Formation in Christ

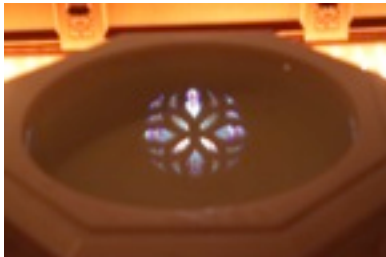
And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly.

ACTS 4:31

I labor until Christ is formed in you. GALATIANS 4:19

The Apostle Paul's entreaty to the Galatians calls us to be attentive to the formation of Christ within us. As we know, birthing is messy and takes place in *kairos* time. While we have trained up to do things "decently and in order," we need to be attentive to a process that will result in a healthy birth, lest we suffocate the new life that is emerging.

As Presbyterians, we need an iterative, non-linear journey to hold us to the process of exploration that Christ might be formed in us. While linear thinking is about sequences, the formational journey is about connections to God, to one another, to our communities. It is about connections that allow new life to be formed and to grow up in maturity in Christ (II Corinthians 3:17-18). The journey of heeding God's call begins with receiving "an invitation to wholeness, a spiritual prompting to complete the work of love we are here to do."²



We have a tendency to tackle problems, wrestling them to the ground in an attempt to solve them. Karl Jung's wisdom is helpful here: "The greatest and most important problems in life can never be solved, only outgrown." In this season, not only is a new metaphor needed, but also a non-linear approach that honors the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and the formation of Christ within us as the means by which we live into God's missional call. Please note that this is not to encourage disorganized or undisciplined thought—healthy

births are neither disorganized nor undisciplined—rather it is to hold us in a process of birth that honors God's time.

Tim Brown in *Change by Design* quotes Henry Ford: "If I'd asked my customers what they wanted, they'd have said 'a faster horse.'" This is why traditional techniques such as focus groups and surveys, which in most cases simply ask people what they want, rarely yield important insights."³ The same is true for traditional strategic process. To be sure, we need to clarify vision. But let us do so using an intentional change process that is grounded in relationship—with God and one another—and helps us bridge the gap between the ideal and the real through learning and experimentation.

² Marjory Zoet Bankson, *The Call to Soul* (Philadelphia: Innisfree Press, Inc., 1999), p. 19.

³ Tim Brown, *Change by Design*, p. 39.

Our tendency is to take a series of inputs, analyze them and then converge upon “the answer.” Our trained instinct is to press toward a single outcome. As Brown notes: “Convergent thinking is a practical way of deciding among existing alternatives. What convergent thinking is not so good at, however, is probing the future and creating new possibilities.”⁴ We need to be very careful not to recreate the past. Part of the role of “divergent thinking is to multiply options to create choices.”⁵

Chip and Dan Heath in their recent book *Decisive* call us to beware of four “villains” to decision-making:

1. Narrow framing—the tendency to define our choices too narrowly, to see them in binary (either/or) terms;
2. Confirmation bias—the selecting of information that supports our preexisting attitudes, beliefs and actions (Note: As Presbyterians, we have very set attitudes with regard to how we structure.);
3. Short-Term Emotion—that is allowing our feelings (be it about relationships, the past, the nature of change) to direct our decisions;
4. Overconfidence—thinking we know more about how the future will unfold than we do.⁶



A sobering reality is that 66% of all change efforts fail. A push toward convergence of thought as driven by the “four villains of decision-making” is a large reason for why two thirds of all change efforts fail.

Before reflecting on the emerging role of presbytery in this season, it is helpful to remember the ways in which presbyteries have defined themselves over the last fifty years:

- Judicatory—a court of the church; an assembly to reach conclusions on significant matters; a place where judgment is rendered;
- Governing Body—to direct, regulate, and manage the institution of the church; to legislate and create policy;
- Agent of Mission—to initiate, send out, fund, and otherwise support mission;
- Council—an assembly for deciding matters of doctrine.

Sadly, all of these titles refer to matters of institutional maintenance, the making of decisions, debating of issues, managing of policy, creating of legislation, and starting of programs. In order to accomplish these functions, we have had staff, programs, budgets, buildings, manuals, policies, and bylaws. Yet, they have not resulted in either renewal or transformation. Furthermore, our pastors, leaders and congregations are asking for nurture, education, fellowship, worship, witness and community.

⁴ Ibid, p. 66.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Chip Heath & Dan Heath, *Decisive: How to make better choices in life and work* (New York: Crown Publishing, 2013).

We need one another as together we study God's Word with open hearts and minds (Philip, 8:26-40). God will give some innovators and early adaptors Damascus road callings (9:1-10), and we will need to listen and act on their callings. As Jesus showed Peter, God shows no partiality (10:34). We confess that no denomination, not even our beloved PCUSA, can give us our identity since our identity comes from the Triune God. But the PCUSA can be a resource for some of our mission. Form always needs to follow function. New functions require different forms. Pushbacks and uproars will happen (chapter 11, Thessalonica). Councils will be needed to deliberate (chapter 15). Times of encouragement, farewells, and new journeys will be happening (chapter 20, Macedonia). There will be storms and shipwrecks and times of failure (chapter 27). Through it all, God will provide Safe Havens (27:8) as the Innovators get ahead of even early adaptors, and the rest of us need time to get on board.

Observe & Go Stand Strong, Praise God

Now many signs and wonders were being performed by the apostles. ACTS 5:12

We have already acknowledged the powerful reality of the emerging spiritual community that we call Muskingum Valley Presbytery. This reality has strong implications for our understanding of who we are (our shared identity) and what we do (our shared vision). While transformation is an act of God, we are responsible for creating the context in which that formation can take place. To that end, in response to your input, we seek to nurture community in our gatherings, be together in worship and prayer, continue to learn and grow, and encourage partnership in mission (a detailed calendar can be found at the end of this letter). It is our hope that the intentionality of our time together in community will then allow us to attend to our structural needs from a formational perspective.



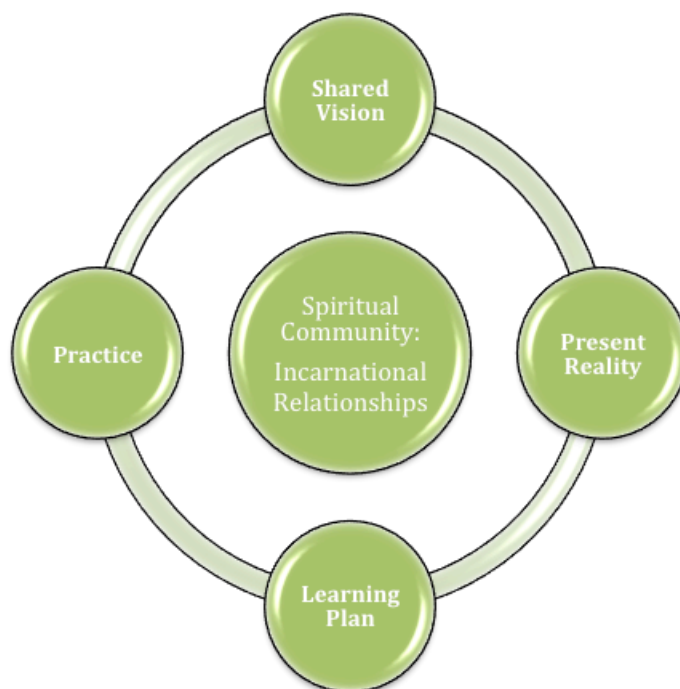
As we reflect on our “Geneva Consistory”, it behooves us to remember: “Mission determines the forms and structures for the church to do its work” (G-3.106). No longer is the Committee on Ministry or the Committee on Preparation mandated by the Book of Order. Rather, we are instructed to order ourselves in such a way as “to give effective witness in the world to God’s new creation in Jesus Christ” (Ibid). Form follows function. Structure must be in support of vision and relationship. We will need to be ever vigilant in resisting our tendency to over-structure.

Step Outside the Conventional Ministry Box

Who was I to think that I could stand in God's way? Peter, ACTS II:17

As a people who are called to be “reformed, always reforming, according to the Word of God,” we seek to heed God's call in this season by stepping outside the conventional ministry box. However, we seek to do so with intentionality and care of person, ministry team, congregation, and community.

We believe change begins with shared vision born of God's call. In response to God's call, relationships are formed and ministry is shaped. Stepping outside the conventional ministry box involves developing a learning plan and practice; it is an iterative process. As indicated by the center box, all that we do will be born out of our shared life together.



Adapted from the ICT model in Boyatzis, R.E. (2008). Leadership Development from a Complexity Perspective Consulting Psychology Journal. 60(4). 298-313.

As with Calvin's Company of Pastors, the spiritual community born of our Company of Elders stands at the center of who we are in Christ. Spiritual community and incarnational relationships in Christ inform the iterative process of deep change.

Empower & Release

Choose from among you those who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom.
ACTS 6:3

In the words of Richard Boyatzis, Annie McKee and Frances Johnston: “Leadership is a sacred act. (For us)... to engage people’s passions and dreams in service of people and the planet is to be connected to humanity’s collective past, present, and future” as we make a kingdom difference in the name of Jesus.⁷



The Intentional Change process calls us to be attentive to eight “must dos”:

1. Start with an Ideal Vision of who we are called to be as disciples and as a Presbytery. Many of us seek incarnational relationships through family, covenant groups, coaching, spiritual direction, family of origin groups, or formational prayer, that we might attend to our own growth. In this season of rebirth we claim the gift of the Spirit as a means of rebirth.
2. Leadership is a shared responsibility. As we live forward, collaboration and partnership will be essential. The journey we are called to is not that of Council, or the Parish Elders, or the Commissions alone. It is our shared journey in Christ as parishes, as sister congregations, as a company of elders, as partners in mission. Together we are the Body of Christ and individually members of Christ’s body.
3. Leadership must occur across all levels of the presbytery. Engaging the strengths and passions in response to the needs of community is a shared calling. Incarnational ministry cannot be sustained in isolation. God is calling us to nurture leadership not only on an individual and congregational level, but also on a parish, presbytery, and community level.
4. Explore the power of subjectivity. This means we must pay attention to our presbytery’s emotional health. What tacit norms are at work? What serves as a source of motivation? What gives energy? What drains energy?

⁷ Annie McKee, Richard Boyatzis, and Frances Johnston, **Becoming a Resonant Leader** (Boston: Harvard Business Review Press, 2008), p. 212.

5. Discover our presbytery's "real self." This will involve clarifying our shared principles, values, and beliefs. It will call for vulnerability and transparency as we together shape our culture as a presbytery.
6. Engage people's hearts and minds. As we know, passion precedes purpose. God calls us to serve out of our strengths. Such is the gift of being transformed by the renewing of our minds (see Romans 12:1-3).
7. Collective visioning of a future that God even now is shaping. Remembering, "Building the new is a significantly different task than fixing the old."⁷
8. Personal Accountability and Commitment. The question must be asked, how will we act on our personal and collective commitments? How will we hold one another accountable? How will we create a feedback loop that places us in an on-going iterative process attentive to the formation of Christ within us as together we seek to be agents of transformation?

We are called to testify to the kingdom of God (28:23), without knowing the outcome. Just as Paul did not know the outcome ahead of the journey, so we are called to make the journey our home. Our prayer is that God will continue to open hearts and minds with a gospel message for people we haven't even met yet. May we see Jesus clearly and embrace the mystery of how he uses each one of us in marvelous ways. Amen and amen!

Relentlessly Focus on God

So the churches were strengthened in faith and grew daily in number. ACTS 16:5

Living Forward 2013

- **August: Mission Update, Check In & Dinner** (Wednesday, 8/14, 4pm, followed by dinner at Dick and Debbie's House)
- **September: The Presbytery Gathers for Fellowship, Worship & Business** (Tuesday, 9/17, 4-8pm at JIM's Place, New Philadelphia) *Election and commissioning of Commissions; Learning Time led by the Presbyterian Foundation; Business: First Read of 2014 Budget and Westminster Overture*
- **October: All Leader Training: Intentional Change Process with Anita Howard** (Saturday, 10/19 from 9a-4p at Christ Presbyterian Church, Canton)
- **December: The Presbytery Gathers** (Tuesday, 12/3, 9a-4p at The Presbyterian Church, Coshocton): *Advent Worship, Update from the Commissions, and Vote on the 2014 Budget*

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