

MVP Mission Update

God became who we are, so that we might become what he is.

~Irenaeus

The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighborhood. ~John 1:14, The Message

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Living Incarnationally

Debbie Rundlett, general presbyter

There is much talk these days about the need to move beyond decline. There are many who believe the mainline church is at a crisis point. The plethora of training materials and tools available reflect a deep desire to do something... to do anything... to stem the tide of decline. Yet for all the “doing,” little is changing... or is it?!

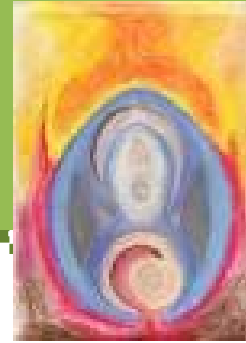
I see pockets of transformation not only across this presbytery, but our denomination and beyond. There is new life all around us inviting us in to living incarnationally. At the heart of this renewal is an understanding that “God became who we

The Gospel Call

The Gospel simply stated is this: “Become like Jesus.”

~Henri Nouwen

Make Disciples--Meet Human Need--Glorify God



Living Incarnationally (continued)

are that we might become what he is.”

And so it is that we see congregations like *First Presbyterian Church, Wooster* partnering with the Wayne-Holmes Mental Health Coalition to start MOCA (Manse on College Avenue), a recovery facility for people who are coping with mental illness... *Reedurban*, who no longer sees a traditional bible school as effective outreach,

hosting annually a weekend celebration that includes a discipleship carnival for kids, community dinner and concert, as well as outdoor worship... *Brighton* providing a Tea Room for neighborhood residents to gather with local politicians to partner together for the transformation of their community ... *Unity* seeking to reach at risk youth in their community through tutoring,

a partnership with Children's Services of Gurnsey County, a vision for a concert on the green, and camp scholarships for 100 kids.

These four churches are experiencing the joy and the challenge of living incarnationally as they seek to meet human need and bear the face of Christ. As they will tell you, incarnational living is messy. It challenges old understandings of what it

And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.. ~II Corinthians 3:18

means to “be church.” It forces new priorities. It can make for uncomfortable moments. Yet through it all, God's healing and transformation are made known.

As for the pastors, leaders,

and people themselves? Well, as we all know, when we dare to venture out, we never come back the same. God changes us and we too find ourselves transformed through the process. Such is the gift of living incarnationally.

Becoming like Jesus is an audacious act. Yet it is the Gospel way.

I thank God for you all!

With deep love in Christ,

Debbie Rundlett

First Love

Report of the Stated Clerk

O God, light of the minds that know you,
 life of the souls that love you,
 strength of the thoughts that seek you:
 Help us so to know you that we may truly love you,
 so to love you that we may fully serve you, whose
 service is perfect freedom;
 through Christ our Lord. Amen.
 ~Book of Common Worship

<u>Church Membership and Attendance, 79 Churches Reporting (2008 in parentheses):</u>			
Active Members:	10,196 (10,596)	Professions by Youth:	56 (64)
Attendance:	4,627 (4,514)	Professions by Adults:	153 (115)
Baptized Members:	1,217 (1,006)	Gains by Transfer:	78 (79)
Inactive Members:	2,059 (2,524)	Other Gains:	98 (17)
Total Adherents:	13,770 (14,228)	Losses by Transfer:	98 (118)
Infant Baptisms:	121 (74)	Losses by Death	244 (232)
Adult Baptisms:	32 (27)	Other Losses:	443 (529)

<u>Congregations:</u>	
December 31, 2008	93
Congregations closed	2
Congregations merged	4(into)2
December 31, 2009	89
<u>Minister Members:</u>	
December 31, 2008	109
Received from other presbyteries:	2
Transferred to other presbyteries	2
Deaths	2
Removed from the rolls	1
December 31, 2009	106
<u>Redress of Imbalance Between Ministers and Elders:</u>	
Minister members	106
Elders	105
Elder commissioner from each church	89
Additional Elder commissioner > 500 members	1
Commissioned Lay Pastors with vote	12
Elder officials	3
Imbalance	+1
<u>Inquirers and Candidates:</u>	
Inquirers	5
Candidates	1
Certified ready to receive a call	2
Removed	1
Candidates under our care ordained in 2009	1

*Yet I hold this against you:
 You have forsaken
 your first love.
 ~Revelation 2:4*

The numbers on page 3 need little interpretation. Muskingum Valley Presbytery's membership declined 3.3%, very nearly the same loss as the whole denomination. In our presbytery's thirty-six year existence we have posted losses every year and have gone from over 30,000 members to a little more than 10,000. By virtually any measure we may apply we're not keeping up, much less growing.

There are a number of ways we can react to these facts. We can look for someone or something to blame. We can get depressed. We can enter survival mode. Or, we can try to do something about our situation. I vote for the latter.

In my nearly thirty years in ministry I've seen a lot of attempts to frame the solution and an almost endless list of terms: church growth, revival, renewal, purpose-driven, to name a few. Today we hear the word transformation. They're all good terms, and many different approaches have borne fruit. But there is no

gimmick or gizmo that will make it all work.

So where do we go? I know of only one place to start. Jesus said to the Church at Ephesus, "But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first" (Revelation 2:4, NRSV). Can we honestly say that we love our Lord as the church in the Book of Acts did, or that we love one another as Jesus commanded us? If that's the case, why should those outside the church believe that we love them? It's little wonder that the world stays away in droves. It all begins, then, with each of us. We come to Christ in repentance, asking for bread and trusting the promise that He won't give us a stone instead.

We look first to Christ, then at ourselves and finally at our situation. While the Gospel is timeless and Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever, that is not the case with anything else in our lives. We grow, mature, age and die, and our churches have a similar life cycle. As

individuals we cling to the promise of eternal life in Christ Jesus, and as a church we stand on His promise that the gates of hell shall not prevail. Our churches can experience resurrection and new life, and we can help the Spirit to birth new churches in our midst.

Muskingum Valley Presbytery wants to partner with you to lay hold of this new life. The Acts 16:5 Initiative opened our eyes to a new way of being the church. Pastors are learning how to lead change in transformational cohorts, and we're training Commissioned Lay Pastors for the challenges of ministry in the 21st Century. Now we're entering into a coaching relationship with George Bullard. After a season of prayer we'll be writing out the future story of where God is taking us. By God's amazing grace we hope for better days ahead!

In Christ,



Mission Coordinating Council

In last year's report on the Council's activities, I highlighted our work in 2008 as leading in the transformation of the Muskingum Valley Presbytery into "...a missional governing body, committed to training and equipping clergy and lay leaders with the skills and resources needed to build strong and healthy congregations that can joyfully and effectively respond to God's call to make disciples and serve the needs of their communities." I repeat those words in this report because **transformation** continued to be the operative word on the Council's agenda in 2009.

No one expected that our work would be concluded by the end of last year. Isn't God always at work both in our personal and corporate lives moving us forward, ever forward, so our living more fully reflects God's will for us? One of the most obvious signs of change last year was the reconfiguration of office and meeting space at the MVP Mission Center in New Philadelphia. A warm and welcoming entry area, meeting rooms with updated audio-visual capabilities, a sacred space for meditation and worship, enhanced security for the computer system and essential records—these are some of the visible improvements that enhance the work of our mission staff and lay leaders.

Some things don't change much from year to year—each meeting docket contained the usual reports, issues and situations that required action by the Council. Council members endeavored to spend major portions of each meeting on discerning God's call for the presbytery. Study of God's word, reflection and prayer were significant parts of each meeting.



Finding Your Hedgehog

Leadership
Passion
+
Congregational
Gifts
+
Needs of
Community
=
Vision

Central to the Council's work throughout 2009 was **"working our hedgehog."** This is not some way-out strategic planning process. The Hedgehog Concept is the result of extensive empirical research by Jim Collins and colleagues on the process by which "good" organizations become "great" organizations. An ancient Greek parable tells of the fox, who knows many things, and the hedgehog, who knows one big thing. The fox knows how to hunt, how to run, how to avoid its enemies. It is clever and fast, and spends much time figuring out many ways to sneak up on and attack the hedgehog. The hedgehog is small and slow, a creature whose existence is focused on finding food and caring for its den. It knows one big thing very well—how to protect itself against attack. When the hedgehog wanders into the path of the fox, it triggers a lightning fast response from the fox. But as soon as the hedgehog senses danger, it simply rolls up into a perfect ball of sharp spikes that point out in every direction. Once again, the fox is stymied and has to retreat to plan yet another attack. This goes on, day after day, with the same result: the fox always loses and the hedgehog always wins.

What does this amusing story have to do with Muskingum Valley Presbytery? MVP is made up of 89 congregations that are diverse in size, location, theological orientation, institutional history and culture, and relationship with the presbytery. We have a mission statement that articulates in broad terms God's call to the presbytery. How do our mission staff, congregations and clergy and lay leaders translate those words into focused and fruitful ministry? How should the resources of the presbytery be allocated? What are our leaders passionate about? What is God up to in our communities? These are but some of the questions with which the

Council will continue to wrestle this coming year. This is our **hedgehog work**: discerning how, with God's help, this presbytery can move from being **good** to being **great** in simply, faithfully fulfilling God's mission for us in these challenging days.

The Mission Coordinating Council is not engaged in an esoteric planning exercise that will be printed in a glitzy report that will be put on an office shelf, where we know many strategic plans gather dust. This is a living and dynamic concept, one which will require regular review and adaptation, whenever and wherever needed. It is our expectation that, as it is refined, the **MVP hedgehog concept** will inform every aspect of our presbytery's activity and, we hope, percolate into each congregation that takes on the challenge of moving from "good" to "great."

The work of Council could not have been accomplished without the active participation of our gifted Mission Team and the dedicated clergy and lay leaders who gathered around the Council table with me at our monthly meetings these past three years. As I conclude my term as Council chair, I thank God for each one of these colleagues and for the energy and wisdom that Council's incoming chair, Reverend Jeff Paschal, will bring as the Council's work continues in 2010.

Please hold your Council and each member of the MVP Mission Team in your prayers during the coming year.

May God's grace and peace be yours,

Paula Gill Lane,
MVP Council Chair

Fiscal Report

The Presbytery office continued our journey in 2009 to transition our fiscal accountability and structure to relate to a Missional Presbytery. We continue to align our reporting systems, revenues and expenses to reflect our direct correlation to the Mission of our Presbytery.

The staffing model reflected our transition as well in 2009 with the deletion of the Business Administrator and the addition of an Associate General Presbyter. While eliminating the Business Administrators position we added a contract Treasurer who will mentor our Financial Assistant while implementing accounting expertise by a Certified Public Accountant. Rea and Associates is now providing fiscal oversight and advice to the Administration committee and working hand in hand with out Financial Assistant. This step forward is a giant leap in our transition!

Our financial markets have recovered during the last year in a large way. However we are still not at 2007 levels in our Covenant fund investments. The Covenant funds have not been used for any ministry over

the last two years thus allowing for our investments to return much of the depreciation we experienced in 2007 and 2008. These funds are also being reviewed by Rea and Associates to assure proper investing of Kingdom resources. All expenditures in 2009 were directly taken from income and unallocated funds held by the Presbytery.

The Mission Center is the largest change in 2009. The out dated building had structural changes, cosmetic changes, and communication upgrades that make your Mission Center “state of the art!” Your Mission Center is now more user - friendly and welcomes all who come to use this beautiful building.

Here is a snapshot of 2009 funds used as it relates to budget, and actual income as it related to projected income:

2009 MVP expenditures were \$143,714.27 less than budgeted

2009 total revenue was \$31,661.16 less than 2008

2009 Synod per capita was \$3,982.67 less than 2008

2009 G.A. per capita was \$10,3156 less than 2008

2009 Presbytery per capita was \$20,551.82 less than 2008

2009 Mission giving was \$14995.95 less than 2008

So, in reflection of our fiscal situation 2009 saw about \$35,000 less available funding to do the work of Presbytery! Our economy has created this situation along with dwindling membership. I'd like to conclude this Mission Report from your 2009 Treasurer with a challenge. We can dig a hole and put our heads in it and say, “Poor me,” or we can challenge our congregations to “become something new!” During the Lenten season I believe God is calling us to become something new! Let us focus on transition into transformation. Let us sing a new song and reach out to community. Let us use our resources to build the Kingdom and I pray our 2010 Mission update will show an increase in members, an increase in giving, and most of all an increase in how we reach out to make disciples.

Jim Spain
2009 Treasurer

We have worked hard over the last four years to lay a foundation upon which to accomplish God's mission of making disciples and meeting human need. As of this present moment:

- Fourteen congregations are participating in cohorts.
- Close to a dozen congregations have begun new lifecycles.
- A transformation track has been developed to train and equip lay pastors.
- Another team is exploring an in ministry transformation track with Ashland Theological Seminary.
- A group of committed disciples is in discernment as to whether God is calling them to plant a church.
- A Small, Strong Congregations cohort has been started.
- Over 20 Healthy Congregations Facilitators have committed to working with pastor-leader teams to lay a foundation of health.
- Through the help of consultants from Rea & Associates and Growing Healthy Congregations, the shift from operating as a regulatory agency to a mission-driven ministry is taking place.

Clearly, God is a work in our midst.

Committee on Ministry

The Committee on Ministry is a mandated committee with the assignment "to serve as pastor and counselor to the ministers and Certified Christian Educators of the presbytery, to facilitate the relations between congregations, ministers, Certified Christian Educators, the presbytery, and to settle difficulties on behalf of presbytery when possible and expedient." (G-11.0501). Twenty-eight people organized into seven subcommittees carry out this work in MVP. There are: four geographically oriented area subcommittees of six members each providing individual liaisons to churches and pastors and three presbytery-wide subcommittees. The presbytery wide subcommittees are: Specialized Ministries working with pastors in para church roles and those who are retired, Lay Pastors working with the training and support of lay pastors and Leadership Essentials supporting churches and leaders with training.

While continually working across the full range of our assigned duties, COM strives to make improvements in selected activities each year. This year we have delegated more responsibility and authority to our subcommittees with good results. Routine work is carried out more quickly and efficiently. The subcommittee chairs meet monthly to share reports of their activities, to provide mutual support and to act on issues requiring broad representation. The entire committee meets at least four times a year for training and action on the most challenging issues and those issues that require a vote of the entire committee.

Some procedures have been streamlined. After a period of experimentation with several methods we have settled on an excellent procedure for review of minutes and rolls that has been well received by both Clerks and COM liaisons. This procedure will be used presbytery wide for the next round of reviews. We are

conducting a similar review and process improvements across the full range of our routine activities. As this work is completed procedures and related forms and instructions are being made available on the presbytery web site.

Members of COM work hard on their own continuing education so that they might serve pastors and churches as they encounter less frequently occurring tasks such as transitions on leadership or resolution of disputes.

Leadership development is an emphasis this year and will continue to be a focus in the future. The Leadership Essentials subcommittee is conducting a pilot program aimed at providing training in emotional system theory to leaders throughout the presbytery. This program called Healthy Congregations will be ready for presbytery wide use in the coming year.

Larry Amstutz
Chair

Preparation for Ministry

There are a variety of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord . . . ~1 Corinthians 12: 4,5

The Committee on Preparation for Ministry helps Presbyterians examine and confirm their sense of call to the ministry of Word and Sacrament. On behalf of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and presbyteries, Committees on Preparation for Ministry guide, support, and prepare future ministers of Word and Sacrament for their ministries. If taken under CPM's care, would-be ministers test their sense of call and academic proficiency during the inquiry and candidate stages, looking for affirmation of gifts and call within themselves, within their seminaries and field work communities, by their CPM's, sessions, and presbyteries. Aware of their gatekeeping responsibilities, on occasion CPM's will direct would-be pastors to a different call within the denomination; but mostly those with a personal sense of call have their gifts and calls affirmed and are sent out to serve.

Inquirers

Alex Becker
Ben George
Jack McClelland
Dan McCurdy
Cheryl Miller

CPM Liaison

Barbara Morrison
Betty Shull
Larry Lalama
Rick Boyer
Don Rhamy

Candidates

Chris McCurdy

David deVries

Certified to Seek a Call

Patrick Bracken
Cheryl Hubbard

Cathy Piekarski
Cathy Piekarski

Accepted First Call

Mark Mong

Mowrystown Presbyterian Church

Nominating

“IS GOD CALLING YOU” – SELECTING LEADERS FOR MUSKINGUM VALLEY PRESBYTERY

Over the last two years we have been using a new process for nominating leaders of the Presbytery, specifically trying to “discern whom the “Spirit of God” is calling into service. We find that we are still exploring this role of the “Spirit” and the “us” as we attempt to nominate these leaders. We are still expecting that the more we try to discern the Spirit of God, the more we listen for what seems to be pleasing to God and the more we engage in the selection of leaders together as a Presbytery the more likely it will be that we will hear God's call.

Over this past year we worked to increase the awareness of this new process by making the brochure “Is God Calling You?” available on the web site of the Presbytery. This brochure describes the nominating process and provides a description of the Presbytery organization and its work. We believe that it should be very helpful in describing the various roles of committee's, what they do specifically, and when they meet.

A training session on the process was conducted at the October Presbytery meeting and we have offered training sessions for any congregation that would be interested in considering using this nominating process locally. We have invited all congregations to help us search for possible candidates by offering candidates names for consideration. We truly believe that this process will help us all to discern the calling from the Holy Spirit of officers both locally and at the Presbytery level. If we are listening we might here that call.

Presbyterians have a special relationship between the churches of the presbytery, One of the ways that special relationship becomes valuable is when we develop relationships that become mutually beneficial between congregations and among each other. **In our shared mission we seek to “Journey with Jesus to touch the world- Empowered by the Spirit to: make disciples, nurture our faith, and serve the needs of the community”.** As we work together to find leaders for our local congregations and as leaders of the joint efforts at the presbytery level we hope that we will be more likely to be selecting those leaders whom God is calling into service. We believe that leadership is the key to accomplishing our shared mission with God's help. We invite all in the Presbytery to join us in this search for those leaders, both in suggesting candidates and in the discernment process.

We want to thank all of you for your efforts in assisting us in this past year. Bob Porter, chair, Nominating