

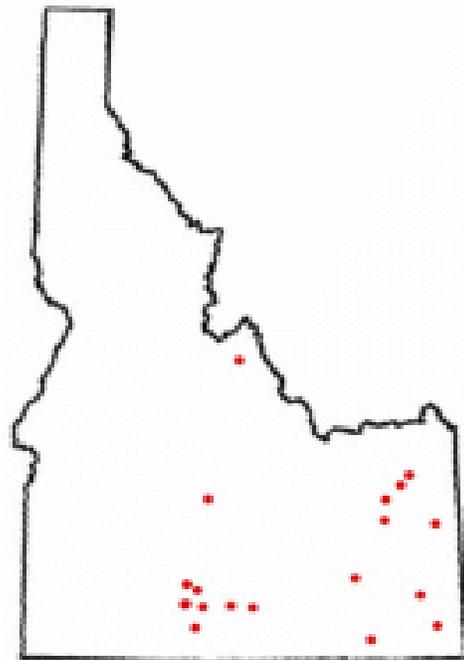
THE KENDALL CONSTELLATION

A Newsletter of Kendall Presbytery

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*Be Thou my vision, O Lord of my heart;
Naught be all else to me, save that Thou art;
Thou my best thought, by day or by night,
Waking or sleeping, Thy presence my light.*

Last month, I reported on opening discussions in the “visioning” process at the 2014 Presbytery retreat held in late October at the Monastery of the Ascension in Jerome, Idaho.

One of the first observations made was that religious language often obscures and interferes. Words like outreach, missional (my computer spell check underlines this word as unrecognizable in its dictionary), and visioning are not easily defined and quickly become catch phrases for concepts and perspectives that we prefer whether we are able to clearly define them or not.

For our visioning exercise, following the guidance of Phil Bergey (a consultant who is active throughout the PC(USA) these days for this purpose), we began by seeking to define our core purpose and our core values (behaviors we seek to model).

As discussed last month, a complete statement of “vision” will also seek to describe our identity and our motivation and, recognizing that our particular time and place (setting) is always a part of God’s call to us, we hope to identify some contribution that we are uniquely positioned for making in the ongoing story of God’s redeeming work in the world.

This five-part statement will hopefully employ language sufficiently elevated to be useful in worship as a litany of commitment and promise. All organizations that fail to do so are inevitably subject to decline and dysfunction, a phenomena known as Parkinson’s Law.

An example of how a simple exercise can make such an important difference is revealed in what Americans identify as the most important thing in forming their sense of patriotism and civic responsibility: The simple 8:00 AM school homeroom exercise of reciting the Pledge of Allegiance together at the start of each school day. Together with the singing of the national anthem at the start of sporting events (a seemingly meaningless exercise at times - nonetheless strangely moving at times), everyday Americans receive an important sense of national identity and loyalty.

Since last month's newsletter article, I have received input through sent communication and personal conversations which have already helped to advance this work.

For our identity, we must begin by the using name by which we are known to the world: "The Presbytery of Kendall." Added to this are words that define what this means to us. This is actually the most important part of this entire work because, even more than our sense of purpose and our core values, how we see ourselves ultimately does more to keep us on course and growing in best direction than anything else we can do.

To illustrate the potential power of giving consideration to our sense of identity, let us contemplate the difference between what is conveyed to the mind and heart by our simple legal name: "We the Presbytery of Kendall" with that same statement augmented by comments and suggestions I have received during the last month: "We, the Presbytery of Kendall, *are followers of Jesus Christ, sinners saved by God's grace, and heirs of the Protestant Reformation residing in Eastern Idaho.*" The former

has virtually no power to move us to faithfulness, the later reminds us of the awesome privilege and responsibility that we bear.

Input received since the last edition of the newsletter has also begun our efforts to identify our sense of motivation: *“Moved with gratitude for God’s gracious gifts, inspired by the Holy Spirit, and compelled by Christ’s commands to love one another and to make disciples of all nations ...”*

Other conversations have served to advance our sense of purpose identified at the retreat, “to build relationships of integrity among our ministers, preachers, and among our congregations,” by adding important refinements: *“in response to God’s call, in reliance upon God’s help and grace, and in partnership with our sisters and brothers in the Presbyterian Church (USA), we commit ourselves to providing spiritual and tangible support to our member churches in their pursuit of the Great Ends of the Church, and building relationships of integrity among our ministers, preachers, and among our congregations.”*

A starting proposal for our overall statement of vision and purpose in this early stage of the process could be summarized as follows:

- 1.(identity) We, the Presbytery of Kendall, are followers of Jesus Christ, sinners saved by God’s grace, and heirs of the Protestant Reformation living in Idaho.
- 2.(motivation) In grateful response to God’s grace, inspired by the Holy Spirit, and compelled by Christ’s commands to love one another and to make disciples of all nations,

3. (purpose) we commit ourselves to provide spiritual and tangible support to our member churches in their pursuit of the Great Ends of the Church and foster relationships of integrity among our ministers, preachers, and congregations.
4. (core values/behavioral ideals) We promise to speak and act with respect and Christ-like humility and,
5. (theological response to our setting - time and place) united together, we strive to be a faithful and effective witness to the Trinitarian faith in Idaho.”

I wish to thank all of you who have engaged in this process thus far and I encourage all of you to give further thought and prayer to our sense of identity, motivation, purpose, core values/behavioral ideals, and theological response to our setting (time and place). I invite your additional response and I look forward to visiting with you about this individually in the coming months and to further discussions at presbytery gatherings. May the Holy Spirit guide us as we seek to serve God’s call ...

In Christ our Lord,

Ron Lavoie

SC/EP Kendall Presbytery