



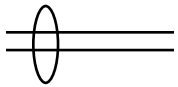
For Elders

August/2005

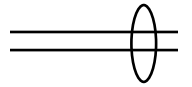
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The Presbyterian Church in Canada, 2005



Pastoral Care and Ways of Visiting



Session Starter Number 4

Prayer:

God of grace, we give thanks for this congregation of your people that has been entrusted to our care. By the power of your Holy Spirit, enable us to find effective ways to listen to their joy and sorrow, to offer words of comfort and guidance, and to reach out to them with compassion and friendship. Bless us, we humbly pray, as we meet together now, in the name and ministry of Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Introduction:

Chapter 3 of the Book of Forms deals with matters relating directly to the ministry of sessions within The Presbyterian Church in Canada.

Section 109.4 states,

The session shall assign the names of all members and adherents to the elders who shall keep a list of the names and addresses of those assigned to them, and shall cultivate a personal relationship with those persons through visiting, counselling and encouraging them in the Christian life.

This section of the Book of Forms was also quoted in Session Starter number 3 in which the reflection focused on the importance of the Elder's District. Today the focus will be on ways of connecting with the people in the Elder's District.

Scripture: (Invite an elder to read the following passage.)

One of the scribes came near and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, he asked him, 'Which commandment is the first of all?' Jesus answered, 'The first is, "Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength." The second is this, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." There is no other commandment greater than these.'

Mark 12:28-31 NRSV

A Brief Commentary: (Invite another elder to read the following commentary)

In this famous exchange, Jesus summarizes the law in the words of Deuteronomy 6:5 with Leviticus 19:18. Love for God and neighbour lies at the heart of what it means to be Christian. The second commandment helps define the first. We show our love for God when we love one another. This is a high calling and we often fall short of it. Thanks be to God for embracing grace that pardons our failures. Still, Jesus calls his followers to love neighbours by offering genuine respect, patience, kindness, support, encouragement, forgiveness and the like.

Reflection:

One of the ways elders can demonstrate love for God and neighbour within the church is by cultivating personal relationships with members and adherents through visiting. There are at least three reasons, however, why this is not always a simple task.

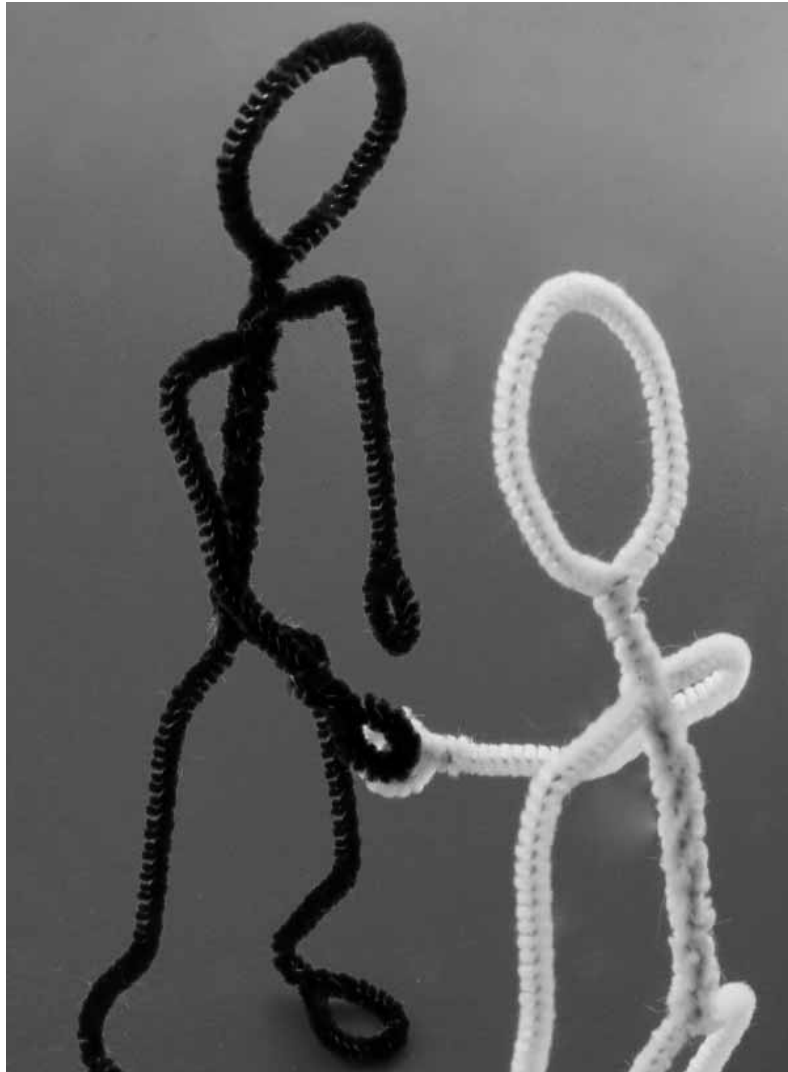
First, while there are elders who love to call on the members and adherents of the congregation, there are others who shudder at the very thought of arranging a visit. These elders tend not to contact their district and, therefore, do not get to know those entrusted to them.

Second, people seem to be busier and more active than ever. Even those elders who are pleased to make pastoral calls frequently find it difficult to arrange get-togethers. Trying to fit a visit between work and cottage, bridge club and Bible Study, hockey games and dance classes is a challenge to say the least.

Third, while some people are always glad to have company, others don't want to be visited. They might worship on Sundays and be involved in other activities in the church, but for reasons, maybe only known to themselves, they refuse to let an elder past the doorstep.

There may be little choice but to accept the reality of the third scenario, however elders need to recognize that it is important to get to know and keep in touch with the people we are leading and serving whenever possible. Consequently, it is necessary for sessions to find ways to overcome barriers to communication.

Most would agree there is no substitute for a face-to-face visit. Communication is as much a visual experience as it is an auditory one. The most effective way of building rapport is when a visit can be held in a person's home or the local coffee shop or even a park bench. Although likely less productive than a "private visit", elders can also connect with the people of their district in church or other places in the community where they happen to meet. Even one face-to-face meeting a year is better than none at all.





Telephone or email communication provides an alternate way to “visit”. A quick call to convey news of an event at the church or simply to ask how things are going, can be a helpful means of expressing interest. Many people use email regularly and might appreciate knowing they can exchange ideas and concerns with their elder this way. Some elders send out, or deliver, invitations to their members



and adherents before communion services or other special events at the church. Adding a thoughtful note to the invitation will personalize it. Sending birthday and Christmas cards is another way of keeping in touch. Elders with the gift of hospitality have found inviting members from the district to their own home for a barbecue or coffee and dessert to be a wonderful experience. It serves a dual purpose of allowing the members to get to know one another as well as developing connections with the elder.

Question Suggestions:

(Together or in small groups, invite the elders to discuss the following questions.)

1. What makes it difficult for elders in our church to visit the members and adherents in the congregation?
2. What visiting methods have worked well?
3. Why is it important for elders to cultivate relationships with the congregation?

A Vision Statement for Your Congregation/Ministry

Writers: Dorothy Henderson and Jim Czeglédi

Imagine starting out on a road trip without a map! It is possible that you will get to your destination, but the trip will be more complicated and have lots of side trips and dead ends, and you will use a great deal of gasoline. An old saying reminds us that, when you don't know where you are going, any road will take you there.

Having mission/vision/value/motto statements for your congregation gives everyone a sense of where the church is headed and how it plans to get there. These statements give overall direction and focus. Decisions and actions in the church are all made and done in light of these beliefs.

What is the difference between mission, vision and value statements?

What is a motto?

To illustrate the difference among these statements we can look to the history and practice of farming. The mission of farming (the reason for a farmer's existence) has not changed significantly in thousands of years. It is to grow crops and take them to market. However, the vision of farmers (how farmers actually farm) has changed greatly. Farmers now use machines, have irrigation, use heated greenhouses. The changing values of farmers may also prompt them to grow organic products, be pesticide-free and choose legal workers who are paid a fair wage. The farm's name may be the motto.

Mission statements are a concise one sentence statement of what the church does. Some people use the term "purpose statement." This statement expresses the basic reason for being the Christian church which has not changed in 2,000 years. It is a version of "knowing Jesus Christ and making him known," or "Every person a minister of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, or "To live, love and share together through the teachings of Jesus Christ." Laurie Beth Jones, author of *The Path*, Hyperson Press, 1998, believes that these statements need to be inspiring, exciting, clear, true and engaging. A good mission statement, she says, is one sentence long, able to be understood by a 12-year-old child, and able to be repeated from memory. A mission statement explains in one sentence what a church does.

Vision statements explain how individual churches know Christ and make him known. They can be 3-5 points or in a single paragraph. A vision statement explains in a paragraph or two how a church makes disciples.

Value statements outline the concepts and principles from which the congregation seeks to live out its mission and vision. They are core ideals and are often listed in point form. A value statement sets the boundaries in which people are free to live out their gifts for the well-being of the whole congregation.

A motto is a "snippet" of the mission statement and is useful on an outside board, in a newspaper ad, on radio/TV spots or in the Sunday worship bulletin. A motto might sound like this: "The little church with a big heart", "A community of faith and care," "Living and growing together."

The Process of Arriving at a Mission Statement

How do you do the process of visioning? And once it is finished, how is the “result” used?

Both the process and the results of the visioning process are as varied as the congregations in which they were created, but, in general, congregations seem to use this procedure:

1. There is an initial gathering of minister and church leaders (often with a guest facilitator) to explore the strengths and dreams of the congregation and the environment/community in which the congregation is housed. (This may be a retreat or a half day event.)
2. This meeting usually results in having a smaller task group work on some or all of these: a mission statement, a vision statement, value statements and a motto.
3. These statements are taken back to session for suggestions and refinements.
4. The task group finishes their draft and invites congregational table groups (with coffee and donuts) to comment on the statements.
5. The statements are voted on at an annual meeting or at an informal congregational meeting following worship.
6. The mission statement and, in some cases, the motto are used repetitively and often—as a benediction, as a call to worship, as a response in worship, on banners—until a new statement or statements are needed. These statements must be revised as ministry and times change.

Some congregations find that a simpler process works well for the direction of their congregation. For instance, the congregation at St. Giles Church, Prince George, B. C., used to have a single mission statement but now they go through a yearly “mission and ministry process” and select a specific goal for the coming year. They work toward implementing and establishing it before moving on to another goal. In the past, these goals have included Stephen Ministry, the Children and Worship program, projects in Ethiopia and Cambodia, Stewards by Design and a major renovation to the church.

Some examples

It is always a bit risky to give examples of mission/vision/value/motto statements because the value of creating these statements is in the process of having congregational members struggle to arrive at “their own.” However, the people who shared these examples freely admitted to us that they often borrowed and adapted from others as the process continued. So, with these reservations in mind, we share these examples from congregations across Canada.

Mission statements from...

Dayspring, Edmonton, Alberta

As people of Dayspring Presbyterian Church we are called and challenged to worship God, grow in Christian faith and share our gifts with a broken and hurting world.

St. Andrew's, Newmarket, Ontario

We are a caring congregation, seeking to share, show and speak about the love and joy of God.

Oakridge Church, London, Ontario

Oakridge Presbyterian Church is a congregation of caring people, prayerfully seeking to further the Kingdom of God, through sharing the love and salvation found in Jesus Christ.

Keswick Church, Keswick, Ontario

We are ordinary people learning together what it means to follow Jesus in our time.

Haney Presbyterian Church, Maple Ridge, BC

Our purpose is to glorify God and to be His Servants in our Church, community and beyond.

Beaches Presbyterian Church, Toronto, Ontario

Beaches Presbyterian Church is a community of followers of Jesus Christ, committed to glorifying God, growing in understanding of Christ's message, embodying Christ's love for all, and sharing Christ's good news with the world around us.



Haney Presbyterian Church, Maple Ridge, BC

Our vision is to help equip our church family to live and serve God day by day as we seek to fulfill the needs of others.

Vision statements from...

Keswick Church, Keswick, Ontario

We will develop a more balanced church by focusing on the following purposes:

- Stronger through worship
- Deeper through discipleship
- Warmer through fellowship
- Broader through ministry
- Larger through evangelism

Westwood Church, Winnipeg, Manitoba

We will:

- Develop a variety of programs and ministries in order to address the spiritual, social, and service needs and opportunities of all ages
- Visibly be a congregation that invites people to faith in Christ, and uses our resources to benefit others
- Develop leaders who will enable our members to become committed to seeking first the Kingdom of God
- Openly promote and intentionally provide the means by which each member and adherent can experience spiritual growth

St. John's Church, Bradford, Ontario

We will:

- Include all ages in the worship life of St. John's
 - Develop and implement the Leading with Care policy
 - Offer an annual conference for people in the community
 - Insure St. John's new building has exposure in the community
- Note: This is a yearly vision statement. This congregation then defined several strategies under each of these statements to say how they will achieve these goals.*

Summerside Church, Summerside, PEI

On our journey forward we will:

- Become more intentional in living out our mission and values; we will "walk the talk"
- Embrace changes and take risks to live by our values and principles
- Promote stewardship of accumulated resources
- Ensure that God's house is safeguarded and sustained
- Foster communication between session, committees and the congregation
- Provide ongoing faith development opportunities for all ages
- Encourage and equip individuals and groups for shared leadership
- Invite the participation of all in our church programs and activities

Beaches Presbyterian Church, Toronto, Ontario

As a community of followers of Jesus Christ:

- o We will provide a place of sanctuary, peace, prayer, healing, fellowship.
- o We will be open and accessible to all who desire to worship with us.

We are committed to:

glorifying God

We will worship God according to the Reformed tradition of The Presbyterian Church in Canada.

We will administer the sacraments and celebrate the rites of passage (birth, marriage, death).

We will discern and develop the spiritual gifts present in all members.

growing in understanding Christ's message

We will interpret the scripture as the Word of God for our day.

We will educate adults and children in biblical knowledge and contemporary moral and social issues.

embodying Christ's love for all

We will accept all persons as created in God's image regardless of gender, race, age, handicap, cultural heritage, or social and economic status.

We will provide spiritual, moral and emotional support through visitation and counseling.

We will support the caring ministries of our members in the community.

sharing Christ's Good News with the world around us

We will express God's unconditional welcome to all who come to us.

We desire to grow and to welcome change in the church.

We will encourage the growth of God's family in the Beach community.

We will share the facilities with which God has blessed us for the spiritual, physical, intellectual and moral development of children and

adults in the Beach.

We will support the world-wide mission of The Presbyterian Church in Canada.

Value statements from...

Oakridges Church, London, Ontario

We value:

- o The involvement of members, adherents and children
- o The use of our spiritual gifts in Christ's service
- o Interdependency and caring for one another
- o Sharing the good news of the gospel
- o Personal growth in faith
- o Meeting the physical and spiritual needs of people
- o The power of prayer
- o Trust and integrity

Summerside Presbyterian Church, Summerside, PEI

We value:

- o A warm and inviting church community built on mutual trust and integrity
- o Sharing the good news of the gospel
- o Accessibility to meet the spiritual and physical needs of all people
- o Spiritual growth - individually and in a community of faith
- o The promotion of mission and outreach
- o The power of prayer

Mottos from...

Keswick Church, Keswick, Ontario

Asking why? Learning how!

Knox Church, Stratford, Ontario

With God we find a way

Church Offices, Toronto, Ontario

A thinking Church with a tender heart

Knox Church, Wallaceburg, Ontario

Here we grow in Christ

Armour Heights, North York, Ontario

Discover the vitality of faith

For a resource to assist congregational leaders discern their mission, vision and values go to: www.presbyterian.ca/evangelism/congregationalawarenessstudies.pdf.

For an annotated list of resources to assist congregations in the planning process go to: www.presbytcan.ca/documents/calledtocovenant.pdf.