

First Presbyterian Times August, 2013

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Out of My Mind ~ for August 2013
ponderings from Pastor John



*Everything I need to know about ministry ...
I learned from fly fishing.*

“Follow Me and I will make of you soul-catchers!”

Matthew 4: 19, ORNSV*

Recall last month I wrote about the congruence between fly fishing, which both Lucia and I love ... and evangelism. To be a joyous and effective angler, a person needs some **equipment**, such as a rod, line and flies, and the **skill** to use them effectively. I believe that we Christians also need to be ‘**equipped**’ for ministry: the Holy Spirit equips us with gifts, attitudes and motivation to become better ‘soul-catchers’ for Jesus. The Bible, our community and, especially our personal stories, grounded in love, are our equipment for soul-catching. And, we need to **practice** using our equipment!

One of the most frustrating and/or wonderful parts of fly fishing is called ‘**matching the hatch**’ which is when the angler comes into harmony with what is happening in the stream, and invites the fish to respond to what the angler is doing. For the soul-catcher authentic harmony is about the relationships we build with the people the Holy Spirit brings near us. We move toward others motivated by true love and our enthusiastic delight in our church and our growing relationship with God, in and through Jesus Christ.

This month, I want to make another connection and conclude with some reflections.

Fourth parallel: One must get into the river!

Where does one go to catch fish? Where the fish are!

And, anglers go to the places where fish are ... in order to ... catch fish!

I was fishing the Current River, downstream from Montauk Park recently, one of the hot days, and as I fished upstream, not quite a fleet, but certainly a flotilla, of young folks in inner tubes came laughing and splashing down this little river. They were not fishing ... I was ... and that's a spiritual problem for me that I might discuss with you at another time ...

What I want you to notice is that they went to where the fish are, but not to catch fish!

Where are the people God loves and wants to connect with? And, how do we get with them? And, how do we 'fish' for them?

My deeper point: I know of a number of 'fishermen' who will use only one method, or even one fly no matter when or where they are ... not surprisingly, they catch few fish.

When one is fishing, and *not catching* any fish, particularly when one sees or knows the fish are there and are feeding ... one might think that what one is doing is *not* coming into that authentic harmony which invites the fish to hook up with one ... yes?

So, if what we are doing presently is not working, it might make sense to look carefully at where the fish are, and what the fish are 'feeding' on, and how to present our story in such a way as to allow the 'fish' to respond to us ... possible?

How might we go about that? What do *you* think?

"Matching the hatch" evangelism is much like mission work. Now, my mother's side of the family came from 8 generations of Scottish Presbyterian missionaries, who left Scotland and located in northwest India, near the present Pakistan. My 8-great grandfather, Andrew Gordon, founded India Inland Mission. Gordon College is still operating in that part of India, and I've met some graduates of that school.

When the Scot Presbyterians went to a new land to 'catch souls for Jesus' they came with true love and devotion, learned the language and culture, brought medical care, and education, wherever they went. Their practice was very far from the cultural imperialism so vividly portrayed by James Michener in some of his work.

There were stories told, repeatedly from different locales, about my Grandfather, Andrew Walker Gordon, to the effect of: an Indian man, walking up to a house or place of business, would hear two people talking in Hindi. When that man came into the room, he would see one of his fellow countrymen and my grandfather, and ask, "Where did the other man go?" You see, Walker [how he was called] had learned their language so well, that he sounded like a native speaker. He also researched and learned their cultural stories and jokes, in many cases better than the native speakers knew them.

My point is that he not only got into the river, but also was matching the hatch very well.

To do effective, respectful evangelism we must not only go to where the ‘trout’ are, but we must go beyond merely using one fly or technique. The Scottish [and then American; they moved their family home to the US sometime in the early 1900’s] Missionaries did not merely set up camp on a ‘corner’ and preach the Gospel, they brought a genuine love and met the educational and medical needs in their neighborhood, and so earned the right to speak about their faith and belief in Jesus Christ.

For us, what might this mean?

Most of us live in a kind of Christian ‘ghetto’ ... the stream we are already standing in has trout already devoted to Jesus, attending their own churches.

Perhaps we can get creative in figuring out where the other ‘streams’ are in our community and go there ... and, once there, we, motivated by true concern for the people we encounter ... we could listen and learn about what concerns them. At that point, we would be attempting to ‘match the hatch’ around us, attending to the folks’ attitudes, language, needs and perspectives.

If they can experience our genuine care for them, the time will come when the Holy Spirit leads us to speak about our faith, love of Jesus, and delight in our church. If we ‘ring true,’ our words will be backed by our practice of loving attention and responsiveness, and our words will find a place to take root in the souls of those we are led to. I’ve seen it happen; I’ve been part of it, and what a joy it is to help someone come closer to God!

So, I’m wondering: Shall we really go fishing, or just stand in the water waving a stick ... ?

Jesus said to Peter, *“From now on you will be catching people!”*

Jesus really expects us to do effective evangelism, not just ‘go fishing.’
I’ll close with a final question about our motivation.

In fly fishing we have two responses to the fish we actually catch. One is ‘catch and kill’ and the other, which Lucia and I like, is ‘catch and release.’

Churches have the same two options, and many opt for the ‘catch and kill’ approach, perhaps because they want to take home a trophy, or simply because they like to eat fish. This translates into our church work something like this: we may, at some deep level want to catch these lovely ‘fish’ for our own benefit, our own use. We want to catch more people because we need more money to fund our enterprise, or we need more teachers, or more ... whatever ...

Many churches have this hungry kind of feel toward new visitors. I actually heard one person comment about a visiting couple, with a grin, “Ah, fresh meat!” Also, some kinds of evangelism have a predatory feel to them, and I believe that is why many of us, rightly, avoid even using the ‘e-word.’

This is not the kind of soul-catching Jesus invites us to participate in!

The kind of fishing Jesus wants us to practice, I believe, is catch and release! Note in the Matthew 4 Text, that the word Jesus uses with Peter, most often translated 'catching,' literally means 'to take them alive.' Catch and release ... reel them in for Jesus Christ and God's Shalom, and then set them loose to become what God has in mind for them to be and become!

Our job is to attract people to Jesus and help them move to their next level of connection to God. Each person is unique and deeply loved by God. Each person has a special and specific calling from God. Someone said that we don't want to force people into molds, because all we then get is moldy Christians ... [ok, you know I love puns]

Seriously, it is risky business to help draw people to Jesus, because they may not become what we want them to become, and perhaps not be available to fill our ministry needs. I've seen it happen that new fish create new ministries that were not thought of yet by the old school ... [yup, there it is again, sorry] ... the new fish may even learn and grow with us for a bit and then move on to a different church ... humm ... would that be OK with you?

Nonetheless, I do believe that the 'great end' of fishing is catch and release. Our fish may not turn out to be what we think we need, but they will become what God is leading them to become ... and we will too!

So, please think about this, and be constant in your prayers for us and our congregation, and those near at hand, who need our particular style of Christianity!

Love and prayers, ~~Pastor~~ John, Chief Steward

Work for our common good; love openly; and, get to know God better this month!

*ORNSV is "Oerter's Revised Non-Standard Version"

The Celebratory year is upon on us ... "Continuing the Journey"

Mary Kwantes

There are many opportunities to participate. We have some lunches that will need kitchen help, decorating help, and clean-up help. There is typing work to be done, addressing envelopes, perhaps some creative help with other projects. Please look over this calendar and let me know what dates work for you to participate. I am sooo appreciative of those folks who have already stepped up and volunteered to do huge jobs. So far my Committee includes these folks and their areas of focus; Pat Look-oral histories and weddings from the past; Fredi Zobrist-fundraising Cookbook; Barb Ford-the Commemorative Booklet, Jan Roberts-the Commemorative Banner and the Art Fair; Cynthia Hobart-research and publicity; Michael Wilbanks-Missionary Map; Mary Williams-photo organization (this is huge and she will need help); Eleanor Van Horn-50 year member and Veteran Honors; Rhonda Kimball-Boy Scout research (Eagles and Leaders from the past).

EVENTS:

September 8 - Kick-off lunch with honoring the 50 year members
October 20 – Reunion Mass Choir during worship
October 23 – 26 – Pictures will be taken for new Pictorial Directory by Life Touch
November 3 – Heritage Hymn – sing possible reception at Olive Street Church
January – (All Month) – Gather dreams in dream-catcher in Fellowship Hall
February 2 – Boy Scout history
March – (All month) – Celebrate Musicians and Artists / Art Fair all month
March 9 or 16 - Benefit concert in Sanctuary
April 27 – Historical Hat day during worship
May 4 – Historical Communion Service / Location TBA
May 15 – Anniversary – Reception at Church 6-8 pm
May 18 – Remembrance Sunday and Church Picnic
June – (All month) –Honor all couples married in church, chapel or by Presbyterian Pastor
June 21 – Block Party 5-7 pm

Membership Jonathan Kimball

First, I would like to welcome our three new members. If you haven't already met Bob, Jackie, and Judy, please introduce yourself. They're great people, and I'm glad to have them as part of our church family.

Our next event is a float trip, scheduled for August 24. The tentative plan is to float the Big Piney. Rich's Last Resort offers canoes, kayaks, and rafts, although kayaks and rafts are in limited supply. They will also haul personal canoes or kayaks for a fee. Please contact Jonathan Kimball, jonathan.kimball@gmail.com, if you would like to attend. There will also be a sign-up sheet posted. Be sure to identify how many people are in your group and what kind of watercraft you prefer. Feel free to invite friends, too! Watch the bulletin for more details as the plans firm up.

There will be many events this fall and next spring associated with our celebration of our 150th anniversary. As we see visitors, whether new friends or old, please be sure to extend a warm welcome. Let's celebrate our anniversary with the love and joy of living together in Christ!

Memorial Garden News Cynthia Hobart

The six recently ordered Memorial bricks in memory of Shirley Andrews, John Cole, Harlan Creighton, Jane Legate, William Neely, and Frances Wallen are now displayed on the table in the hall opposite the church office. Later this summer or fall Bud Pumfrey will place the bricks

in the Memorial Garden. Dedication of the bricks will take place after the worship service on All Saints Sunday, November 3rd.

Mission Frank Jessop

Are you aware of what our Church does for Mission? The following is a list of our current Mission projects.

1. GRACE, Russell House, Presbyterian Manor, and the “Backpack Program”.
2. Church has linen closet for GRACE.
3. Congregation serves on the boards and volunteers for Backpack Program, and GRACE for Christmas.
4. The church supports the “Back to School Fair” that helps children in Rolla, Newburg, and Edgar Springs with school supplies.
5. Helps Camp David with school supplies and financially.
6. Church donates household cleaning supplies for Russell House, and paper supplies and canned goods for GRACE.
7. During Thanksgiving and Christmas the church adopts families. At Thanksgiving we give food, and at Christmas food and presents.
8. The Presbyterian Pre-School gave out ten scholarships to children who fall through the crack for Head Start.
9. The church is supporting a youth from our church that is going to intern for Campus Crusade for Christ in Southwest Missouri.
10. The church sponsors Boy Scout Troop 83 for over 50 years.
11. The church sponsors Men’s AA on Wednesday and Women’s AA on Saturday.
12. Participate in the Festival of Sharing.
13. For our World Mission the church is planning to adopt a Presbyterian School in Kenya. Four members of our church visited that school this year.

The Mission Committee is always looking for new projects that will help spread the word of the Gospel of Jesus Christ in the world. Thank you for all of your faithful cooperation.

Nominating Committee Ming Leu

Request for Recommendation of Elder and Deacon Candidates

The Nominating Committee is in the process of identifying members of the First Presbyterian Church at Rolla to nominate to serve as Elders, Deacons, and Trustees for 2014. We would like to ask the congregation to recommend names to invite to serve as elders and deacons.

Regarding serving, the Scripture has an inspiring statement from Jesus in Matthew 20:28 “Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

According to the Book of Order of the Presbyterian Church (USA), the ministry of deacon is one of compassion, witness, and service, sharing in the redeeming love of Jesus Christ for the poor, the hungry, the sick, the lost, the friendless, the oppressed, those burdened by unjust policies or structures, or anyone in distress. Persons of spiritual character, honest repute, exemplary lives, brotherly and sisterly love, sincere compassion, and sound judgment should be chosen for this ministry.

Also according to the Book of Order, ruling elders are the ministry of discernment and governance. They exercise leadership, government, spiritual discernment, and discipline and have responsibilities for the life of a congregation as well as the whole church. Accordingly, congregations should elect persons of wisdom and maturity of faith, having demonstrated skills in leadership and being compassionate in spirit.

For both deacons and elders, the main qualifications are that those who undertake the ministries should be persons of strong faith, dedicated discipleship, and love of Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Their manner of life should be a demonstration of the Christian gospel in the church and in the world.

If you would like to recommend any member of our church who you think is suitable to serve as a deacon or elder, or if feel that you are called by God to serve and like to nominate yourself, please give the name(s) to any of the Nominating Committee members including Ming Leu, Carol Bennett, Dixie Finley, and Marian Pruitt, or you can provide names through Pastor Oerter or secretary Betti Jo. You can obtain the contact information of the Nominating Committee members from Betti Jo.

**Presbyterian Women
Christine Rueff**

Circle IV will sponsor the annual Rummage Sale to be held October 5, 2013. Items may be dropped off at the church October 3 and 4; (no clothing please). More details to follow.

**State of the Church, Mid-Year, 2013
Barb Ford**

The first six months of 2013 have been a time of transition for our church. Thanks to God’s special blessing last fall, we were able to give \$10,000 to local missions; and \$20,000 to the Presbytery in January. We have fully paid all our past due per capita and contributed to shared missions of the Presbytery as well. The bequest blessing was also used to meet the cost of severance for Pastor Lee, amounting to \$30,100, and other interim costs for worship and reconciliation during this interim period.

Our regular budgeted income through June 30, 2013 was \$98,971. Our budgeted expenses were \$102,865. This expense amount includes the cost for the new sound system and added insulation in the roof of the preschool wing, approved by session and paid from reserves (\$3,600) and remaining renovation money.

Heartfelt thanks go out to our members who have contributed both money and services as we travel through this transition period. I am preparing mid-year contribution statements to be made available in early August. If you find an error, please let me know so I can correct it. I continue to pray for the future of our church, our families, our community, and our world.

Respectfully submitted, Barbara Ford

Prayer Requests

Please remember our members and friends in your prayers. As you all know Reverend Gary Stratman is currently hospitalized in Cox South in Springfield. As of Thursday morning his condition has improved. Please keep him, Deb, and their family in your prayers. If you would like to send them a card, their address is 2755 E. Imperial Circle, Springfield, MO 65804.

From the Church Office
Betti Jo Pyatt, Office Manager

Just a reminder, school will start on August 14. Don't forget to donate to the Back to School Fair coming up August 7.

The container remains in the foyer of the church where you may place your new or gently used shoes for the Salem Avenue Baptist Church's Shoe Closet. They gave out over 200 pairs of shoes in July. There is a great need for this ministry.

Deadline for September Newsletter articles will be Wednesday, August 28, 2013.