

The Fellowship of the King

At our presbytery meeting last month, I showed a video clip from the movie the Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring. The video clip showed the Council of Elron, when the leaders of middle earth gathered together to decide what to do with the ring of power. They formed a fellowship to begin the necessary, dangerous, impossible journey of taking the ring back to fires of Mount Doom to destroy it. I said that this is picture of us. We are like this fellowship: a diverse group of people, united by an essential missional journey that we feel compelled to embark on together. We have come through our important Holy Week season, and now it is time for us to begin moving forward as the Fellowship of the King. What does this mean? What does this look like?

We approved a resolution stating that we have been a governing body in the past, we are now a relational community, but we are hoping to become a mission agency. How do we begin this journey together? We presented, and you approved, a series of missional experiments that we believe will help us get started on this quest. Here is where we will begin:

- 1) We are looking for 5-6 congregations to be a part of a Pilot Missional Church Project, that will invest up to 18 months going through the mission-shaped church survey, a series of small group interactions, and the formation of a missional experiment to deal with an adaptive challenge that the church is facing, for which there is no current solution. Let us know if you are interested.
- 2) We are looking for 5-6 pastors to be a part of a Pilot Missional Pastors Project, that will invest up to 12 months going through a mission-shaped pastor leader survey, conversations, the writing of a leadership story, and a personal development plan to address skills, capacities, and habits to enhance the pastor's ministry. Let us know if you are interested.
- 3) We are looking for numerous church members, elders, staff, and pastors to join us once a month for leadership gatherings. We will gather around God's Word, pray together, and discuss resources to help us learn from one another and become missional together across our two county area. The first leadership gathering will be Wednesday, April 16, from noon – 1:30 pm, at the Solana Beach Presbyterian Church. The cost of the lunch is \$10. Please call the church or register online. We hope to start an evening gathering also, for those who cannot attend a lunch meeting. Let us know if you are interested.
- 4) We voted to affiliate with the Presbyterian Global Fellowship (PGF) as a presbytery. This is a movement within our denomination to transform mainline congregations into missional communities.

5) As a part of this, we are encouraging sessions to affiliate with PGF, and for church members, staff, and pastors, to register to attend the PGF Inside Out conference in Long Beach from August 14-16. This event brings together a thousand Presbyterians who are trying to figure out how to be missional in their communities. It is a great time to learn from others and to share what you are doing with them. Let us know if you plan to go.

6) And lastly, we will be looking at re-designing our presbytery meetings to create a culture of celebration, missional transformation and learning, centered around God's Word, prayer, missional stories, and hoping to draw in younger members and leaders.

This is not a program. There is no guarantee that this will work. But this represents our best guess at this time about how we can begin to move forward on this missional journey. We embark on these experiments with humble conviction, believing that this will cultivate an environment that will fertilize our missional imagination, realizing that we can't know everything before we begin the journey. Some things can only be learned after the journey has begun. Thus, we must step out in faith, trusting in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ to lead us, to teach us, and to guide what steps and course corrections we will need to make along the way.

What will this journey do to us? It will bring out the best and the worst in us. It will bring out the best in us because we will be challenged to be adaptive, creative, and innovative. We will be stretched to do things we never thought we could do. And that will be exciting. But, it may also bring out the worst in us. The more we move out of our comfort zones, the more our anxiety level will rise, the more we will get on each other's nerves, and the more our doubts will surface. Our goal is not to create a conflict-free presbytery. That is unrealistic. That will never happen. In fact, the level of conflict may actually increase for awhile. Our goal is to learn from our conflicts. Our goal is to grow through our conflicts, to learn things we could never learn without them. Our goal is to learn how to treat each other with respect and Christ-like love in the midst of our conflicts. Being a Christian is not easy. Being a Christian in a world of discontinuous change is even more difficult. But, we can rise to the occasion.

None of the Council of Elron honestly thought that Frodo could be successful in scaling Mount Doom and destroying the ring of power in its fires. Perhaps you don't think that others in our presbytery will ever be successful in scaling the mountainous obstacles that stand in our way. But you know what? You never really know unless you try. So, we are going to try. And we will see what happens.

You are invited to travel with us on this quest.

You are invited to learn with us as we go.

You are invited to be an important member
of the Fellowship of the King.

So, what are you waiting for? You've been invited. Let's go.

Clark Cowden