

What is the purpose of the  
church?

What is my responsibility as a disciple  
of Jesus Christ?

# It is such an honor to be here.



Cam Harder



Joyce Sasse



John Young



You.

There is probably no finer group of Christians than our town and country pastors and lay leaders. Heroes.

# This is Canada. (you know that)

I cannot claim to know your context. In preparation for this event, I have read statistics and done some homework, but I am under no illusions.

Please consider my geographically challenged origin to be an occasion for comparison and contrast, for letting the Spirit help us discern the work of ministry.

# Here's what I thought.

This afternoon I would do what was advertised that I would do. Surprise!

That is, talk about what the trio of authors who are writing on Practicing Care in Rural Congregations and Communities are finding.

# Then, depending on what you want:

I am prepared to talk about:

- The process of building on our strengths (asset mapping and Discovering Hope).
- Global hunger and how it detracts from or contributes to happiness.
- Transformation.
- Alcoholism, aging, and surrendering.

# BUT....

You tell me what you want for our second presentation.

# PLEASE

# I have a text and it is an important one.

Psalm 90 --

1 – Lord, you have been our dwelling place in all generations. 2 Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God.

10 – The days of our life are seventy, or perhaps eighty, if we are strong..... They are soon gone, and we fly away.

So, we are not finally and ultimately responsible for God or the Body of Christ.

Indeed, we do not carry the church on our backs.

As a matter of fact, it borders on a deficiency of faith to consider the church our responsibility or that we could revitalize it. Only the Spirit.

Now this is something that I tell myself and maybe you don't need to hear it.

# New Testament: Matthew 25: 14-30.

- Parable of the talents.
- Who are we in this story? Maybe we are all of the individuals.
- We all have talents to use. The Lord has given us abundantly, and the real tragedy of the man who buried his talent was what happened to him. He had thrown himself into outer darkness.

# God is the extravagant hostess.

- Story of college choir tours.
- The generous hostess.
- The grateful breakfaster.
- Those who were stuck with .....
- Who gets our stuff out there – where do we invest our time and effort? We are facilitators, hostesses. We bring healing and wholeness. The only requirement is ---

That we give away what has been  
entrusted to us. That  
We bring God's gifts to others  
As best we can. BUT we leave  
the results to



God.

# Those are the texts for today.

You may not need to remember those texts.

But I do....

In light of them, what is the purpose of the church?

What is our responsibility as disciples of Jesus Christ?

I trust that that is a word of grace.



**For You as it is for Me.**

# Back to the New Shoots from Old Roots.

Story of how Jeanne Hoeft, Joretta Marshall,  
and I came to write this book.

Jeanne – city girl.

Both of them are in pastoral care. My  
antiquated understanding of p.c. ~~ now  
extended to include community.

Selecting exciting rural ministers.

Process of consulting.

# There are eight chapters.

- Introduction.
- Four themes that emerged over time.
  - Pastoral care is shaped by the place of town and country locations.
  - Community is integral to care. Hard to imagine in t&c locations without the interpenetration.
  - Care seeks to respond to multiple diversities in community/t&c locations.
  - Pastoral care and public leadership intersect.

# Final three:

- Time after time there were three issues that arose that we felt lead to address:
  - 1. Economic instability and poverty. (Chapt 6)
  - 2. Health care and the difficulties of accessing good mental and physical care in t&c locations. (7)
  - 3. Violence, both domestic and public. (8)

So, let's see how those categories play out in your experience.

- Place matters.

example: Paul Gruchow, local knowledge.

yours.

Where is God? What is God doing in our places?

# Second theme

- Community is integral to care/mission.

--- example: young beginning farmers in the U.S. (**NYTimes**, Sunday): “It was just the two of us, every job we did together,” Ms. Oakley said. “It’s intense. We could gladly trade a little competition for more community and collaboration.”

--- your example.

What is the purpose of the church? Why is community important theologically?

# Third theme:

- One of the toughest. Hard to say that rural peoples cherish diversity. And yet.....
- Care seeks to respond to the multiple diversities in community.

---- example: fastest growing population in U.S.  
(accounts for 50% of natural births 2000-2010.) is  
Hispanic.

---- your example.

Is this more than a pragmatic question for church  
growth? Why is this an issue at the heart of  
discipleship?

# Last theme:

- Pastoral care and public leadership intersect in town and country locations.
  - example: here the church is or can be a major player: Dilworth and the school district.
  - your example.

What makes pastoral (includes lay leaders) leadership different? Any connection to the parable of the talents?

# What themes would you add?

- Shape of doing church in your community?
- How does the Canadian context change the shape of ministry?
- What is the pastor's major role? What do pastors do that is not needed? What would you like to see done that is not? What sort of role: guide, spiritual director, facilitator, decision-maker, priest, preacher, public theologian, what?



# Return to questions.

- What has this little presentation made you think about:
- In regard to the purpose of the church?
- In regard to your discipleship or the discipleship you would like to see manifested in your congregation/community?