

Hello from Harvey...



QUESTIONS [HARVEY] HAS BEEN ASKED RECENTLY - PART 2

January 23, 2018

This is the second of a brief series caused by the questions folks asked me when I met with pastors individually (which I'm still doing) over the past 3 months. Last week I talked about prayer and my spiritual life because I was asked about them and asked to share my answer. This week, I am going to talk about how I use my time. The person who asked the question was curious about the differences in a DS' ministry since we have transitioned from 12 districts to 8; the pastor asking the question thought I should share my answer so here we go:

Confession right off the bat: I have always held two statements about how to use your time in ministry in tension with each other. Francis of Assisi said that you should "spend time like an endless gift, pour it out." John Wesley said that you should "not trifle away time, spend no more time in any one place than necessary." While those sentiments are not necessarily in direct conflict all the time, I sure generally experience them that way.

In terms of how I spend my time, I, like all pastors, have to work to make sure my time investments actually mirror my values and goals. I am to be the District's Mission Strategist and so I spend a fair amount of my time, regardless of what I am doing, trying to keep outreach, mission, growth, and vitality - all interrelated values if what I understand Jesus wants the church to be and to do - in the forefront. I spend about two-thirds of my time in direct dialogue with pastors and lay leaders in various offices in all the churches of our district. That's direct face-to-face time, indirect time such as writing newsletters (!), and preparing sermons, lessons and in discussion to clarify goals, sometimes in formal meetings, oftentimes in more casual ways. There are 112 separate communities in our district now with over 150 pastors so it is a varied and fun thing to try and keep up!

I spend about a third of my time in connectional and administrative matters: meeting with the Bishop and Cabinet, meeting with the various district committees on which I serve, meeting with NC Conference-related boards. Keeping my same values and goals centered there is just as important as in the other more direct local church focused work I wrote of above.

I spend some time on general and jurisdictional business because I have the honor to serve there, but, in the course of a usual year (which 2019 might not be), probably something like 10 percent of my time. I also try to spend some time doing something to help me grow: reading occupies a part of each day usually, as well as, occasional forays into Ted-Talks, webinars, and training videos.

The most unpleasant ways I use my time are that I make myself watch and listen to myself preach and publicly pray. I learned while in divinity school that doing so was a "best practice" and while I sometimes don't enjoy the experience I do try to make it a point to do so several times a year. (My goal is quarterly.) In honesty I shudder to think of the habits and mannerisms I might still have if not for that work; I know that I have a long ways to go still, so don't worry, give me your critique and be assured I will keep watching.

The reasons for all this disclosure: to answer the question about what does a DS do, to invite you to clarify your own values and goals in how you use your time, to assure you that I am always available for you, and to ask you to pray for all the contacts I make, that the joy of Jesus would be known in them. I confess to not always be good at work-life balance but I work on that too. Keep me accountable!

Speaking of: It's time to let you go.

Bless you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Harvey Gray". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with some loops and flourishes.

[Harvey] Gray

Next week: The future of the church in the USA?