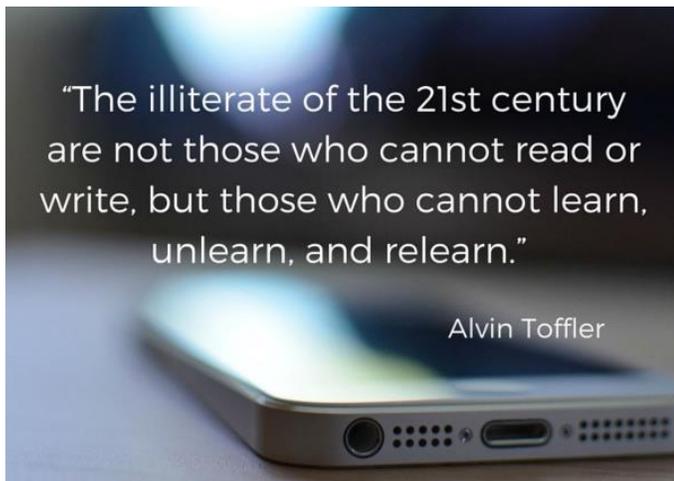


**First
Presbyterian
Church**
of Waynesboro, Virginia

The Columns -Online.

November 10, 2021 | Waynesboro, Virginia | a newsletter supplement.



People assume intelligence, experience and conviction are the keys to being effective. But, in “Think Again,” organizational psychologist Adam Grant asserts, “In a turbulent world, there’s another set of cognitive skills that might matter more: the ability to rethink and unlearn.”

Rethink. Unlearn. Or as Alvin Toffler is credited with saying, the cycle of “learn, unlearn and relearn” is the key to making wise choices in a rapidly changing and disrupted world. And that process itself is, for many of us, highly disruptive.

In the week following March 13, 2020, I had 15 speaking engagements canceled. In the following year, I would learn how to teach and speak using Zoom – and would conduct more than 150 webinars. This learning meant that I also had to unlearn some assumptions about teaching and communication.

continued below

COVID average Incidence Rate per 100,000
from the Virginia Dept of Health.

Augusta County:	22.3
Harrisonburg	10.6
Rockingham	12.0
Staunton	18.3
Waynesboro	23.4
Average/100K	17.32

Level of Community Transmission

High

Substantial

Moderate

Low

This Week in History.



Bolsheviks overthrow Russian Provisional Government
November 7, 1917



L. Douglas Wilder elected governor of Virginia
November 7, 1989



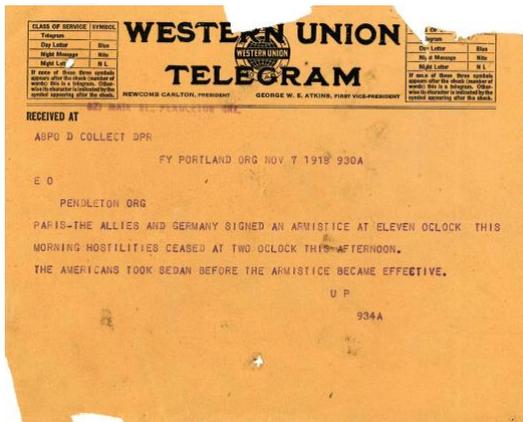
The Great Blackout of the Northeast
November 9, 1965



Berlin Wall opens
November 9, 1989



Grace Kelly born
November 12, 1929



Armistice signed, ending World War I
November 11, 1918

On Sunday, March 15, 2020, every church that I knew, consulted, coached and served would shut down their sanctuaries and go online. Almost overnight they learned that they could launch really creative ministries. But soon, most of these same leaders were exhausted. They would have to unlearn the habit of just adding more ministries to an already packed calendar.

In the past year of speaking to, consulting with and coaching the leaders of churches across the country, I have learned, unlearned and am relearning some critical concepts of life and ministry. And if Adam Grant and Alvin Toffler are right, then that pattern of learning, unlearning and relearning may be even more important than we think. So let me make a few observations about what good leaders are learning, unlearning, and relearning because of this pandemic.

Many of us *learned* we could change quickly if we really need to. We need to *unlearn* that “quick fixes” will ever solve our greatest challenges in an enduring way.

I have marveled at the way that so many churches became remarkably nimble and creative literally overnight. Churches that haven’t changed a thing in a generation rethought their entire ministry in a weekend. A crisis like a complete shutdown of all gatherings created the conditions for focusing our minds and wills in new ways.

But it is important to understand that crises don’t cause problems as much as they reveal them. They bring to the surface underlying assumptions and “legacy practices” that we haven’t had the will to confront before. In the words of Ronald Heifetz and his colleagues from Harvard University, crises give us the opportunity to “hit the organization’s reset button.” Wise leaders “use the turbulence of the present to build on and bring closure to the past.” Adaptive leaders don’t just make changes, they also become reflective to address some of the deeper underlying assumptions necessary for long-term change. For most churches, these underlying issues have been areas of challenge for a long time: Adult discipleship, to have let go of some things from the past. And that leads to...

It is important to understand that crises don’t cause problems as much as they reveal them.

We *learned* that many churches and almost every pastor are caught in the crossfire of people with deeply divided views on almost everything. We need to *unlearn* that we can ever make everyone happy.

One of my coaching clients said to me: “Tod, my inbox is a terrible place to be. No matter what I do, someone is mad.” Others told me of how sisters and brothers who both read the same Bible are divided by what news program they watch. While many congregants went out of their way to be more flexible, more caring and more intentional about loving their neighbors, far too many pastors found that their congregants were more concerned about their own comfort and routine than they were about extending the love of God to neighbors and friends feeling the impact of the virus.

When I was researching my most recent book on leadership, I found that for most pastors the most difficult thing was not the challenge of a changing world, but the resistance of the congregation when leaders tried to mobilize them to make a difference. And far too many leaders fall into the trap of thinking that if they please everyone, then they can lead everyone. They try to change their churches for their members, but the gospel requires that our membership be transformed for the mission of God in the world. And even Jesus discovered that not everyone is happy with that.

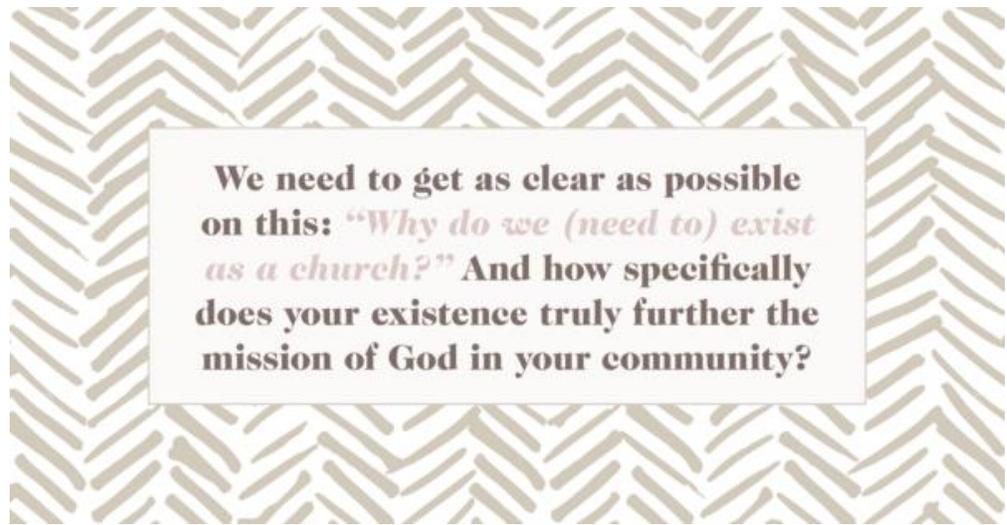
From unlearning to relearning

If the key is learning, unlearning and relearning, are there any enduring lessons we can relearn from this pandemic? Let me give you the most important relearning from the pandemic of 2020: A thriving church is crystal clear on a compelling, missional reason for being.

Many of us spent the pandemic asking ourselves some of the deepest questions of our lives, and a significant number of people are rethinking everything they assumed to be true about their jobs, their relationships, where they would live and what they wanted to spend their time doing. And church leaders should do no less.



A crisis gives us an opportunity to ask the biggest question of all. It gives us an opportunity to hit the organizational reset button around a real reason for being. Many, many churches need to relearn this in this moment where we don't know what the future brings. Survival is not enough. We need to get as clear as possible on this: "Why do we (need to) exist as a church?" And how specifically does your existence truly further the mission of God in your community?



Let me give you the most important relearning from the pandemic of 2020: A thriving church is crystal clear on a compelling, missional reason for being.

And if your answer is "To ensure a Presbyterian witness survives in this town," I encourage you to think again. As one senior leader said to me once: "Tod, nobody cares if your institution survives. They only care if your institution cares about them."

Relearning and relationships

A worldwide pandemic triggered me to think again about my own resistance to change. But, perhaps the most important lesson I relearned in the pandemic was from my son. As I was struggling to accept how disruptive the pandemic would be to the plans for my team and me to carry out our responsibilities, I spoke to my son from the last Uber I would take for almost a year. As the driver took me to the Los Angeles airport, I told him about the conversation in the President's Council and how I couldn't believe we would be disrupting our travel because of this virus. This could be the last trip I make for a while, I told him.

My son, who lives in Seattle and whose girlfriend works as a social worker in a convalescent home in Seattle, said to me: "Dad, this thing is real. People have already died up here from it. Please be careful when you are traveling."

That was when I began to question some of my assumptions. That was when I began to ask myself questions about what I thought I knew about this virus, and my team and the work that we needed to do. I trust my son, and I know he is thoughtful, intelligent and steady. And I know that he loves me, too. So, that was when I began to think again.

To be a disciple is to be a learner. And the church is meant to be a learning community based on the love we have for each other and for our Lord (John 13:34). Loving relationships don't just give us support, they help us open ourselves to the lessons we are often missing in our anxious moments. The lesson I relearned at that moment is that everyone - including leaders - needs to have people they love to help them learn. And unlearn. And relearn. *Excerpted from the Presbyterian Outlook.*

Tod Bolsinger is the executive director of the Church Leadership Institute at the De Pree Center for Leadership (depree.org/church) and an associate professor of leadership formation at Fuller Seminary in Pasadena, California.



2 Sundays for the Future

November 14 and 21, we will again celebrate our common life and talk about the future of FPC.

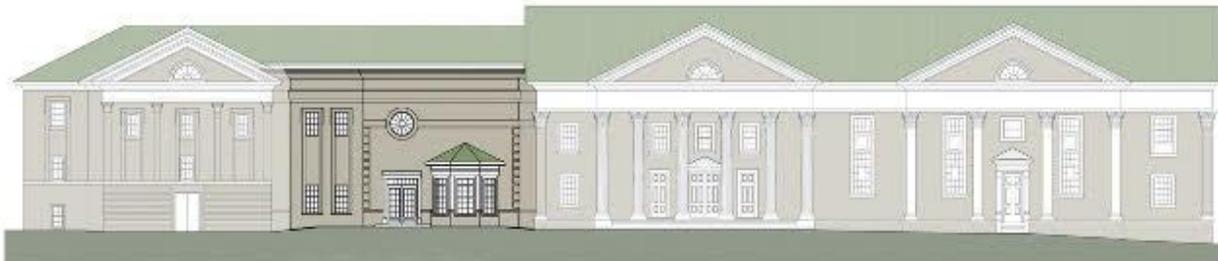
Following worship we'll adjourn to the Fellowship Hall, where lunch will be provided.



The first Sunday will focus on **Finances** - one of the most important, yet misunderstood facets of the church's ministry. We will examine the challenges and opportunities of the current situation.

The second Sunday we will discuss the direction of our mission and ministry for the future.

If you care about FPC, then plan to attend both Sundays.



Music Notes for this week.



Croft.

The hymn that closes this week's service is known as *St. Anne*, with music written by William Croft (1678-1727). The English composer spent most of his life in the Chapel Royal, as a child chorister, a Gentleman and organist. In 1708, Croft was appointed Organist of Westminster Abbey and Master of the Children and Composer to the Chapel



The Organ, Westminster Abbey.

Royal, positions he held for the rest of his life. He wrote scores of works, including pieces for the funeral of Queen Anne (1714) and the coronation of King George I (1715). His most enduring work may very well be the hymn tune *St. Anne*.

Other composers have incorporated the tune into their own pieces. Johann Sebastian Bach used the melody for his Fugue in E-flat, BWV 552, George Frederick Handel incorporated the melody into the anthem *O Praise the Lord* and Sir Charles Hubert Hastings Parry used the melody in his *Coronation Te Deum* (1911).

Our Worship Channels

click on the logos



Bookmark, like and subscribe!

