



Staying in our Bubble

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Rachel Yates

We excitedly packed up everything we'd need for our day away from the office. We remembered to bring our chargers and even a power strip in case the three of us had to use the same outlet. Chris Halverson brought new Presbytery directories and posters to share; I threw in a box of books authored by our May Presbytery Gathering speaker, Robin DiAngelo. We'd called ahead to make sure we could camp out in the coffee shop all day without troubling anyone. With that, we loaded into Ann Gibbs' car and headed to Beloit for our first remote office day. Only later did I realize the one thing we'd forgotten.

When we arrived at Blue Collar Coffee, one table remained that was large enough to seat all of us. It wasn't near an outlet – those tables, of course, had been snatched up earlier by people who were doing the same thing we were. Still, we settled in with a cup of something good and started the day.

Because we are a Presbytery that stretches from Beaver Dam to Beloit, it can be hard to spend time together. Your staff wants to be a tangible sign of our connection, so we've decided to have periodic work days on the road. For our first remote day, we sent invitations to the congregational leaders in the southwest part of our Presbytery to join us in Beloit. With joy, we received each person who stopped by. Some had specific questions to work through; others just came by to chat. It felt good to connect in this way.



But, as we left, I realized we'd missed something important: we stayed in our protective bubble. Yes, we were in a public space, and we interacted politely with the people around us. I doubt anyone found us bothersome. Still, we never tried to engage meaningfully with the other people who chose to be in that same space, unless they were Presbyterian. Let me give you an example: we had a delightful conversation about social media tools with Carol Taylor, commissioned pastor at United Church of Beloit. We wondered together what was new and what would come after Facebook. All around us were young people working on their computers, and it dawned on me that we didn't take time to ask them what they thought or what they were using. We stayed in our bubble and imagined what would reach those outside of it.

Similarly, I spent part of my time working on a presentation for the Small Church Vitality project. Our next session is on evangelism. As I developed strategies for participants to reach out to people, I didn't once attempt to engage the people sitting near me to test those strategies.

Contrast us with Nathan. Nathan arrived before we did and got a choice table near an outlet. He was known on a first-name basis to staff and customers alike. Nathan worked away on his computer and periodically spoke to us. In late afternoon, he asked us to look at what he'd been working on. A website developer, Nathan was revamping his own business website and wanted input. He knew naturally that the best source of that information was outside the bubble. He was excited to show us what he was working on and to get our feedback.

Getting out of our bubble as the church takes practice. We didn't get everything right on our first try. For those of you on the western edge of our presbytery, you can practice with us the next time we're on the road, May 30. Watch for the announcement of our pop-up Presbytery office and then drop by. We can't wait to connect!