



Fit As A Fiddle
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We chose to air our dirty laundry in front of specially invited guests and the press. Well, we chose the timing of the docket; we didn't think through the implications. On February 4, your cousin presbytery in Boise, where I'm also serving, held its first quarterly meeting of the year. Because we included a panel discussion on affordable housing with some of the top community experts, we also invited the press and the public. The announcement ran on the local news.

All that was fine. The mistake was in how we organized the rest of the agenda. Wanting to squeeze in a bit of business beforehand, we decided to tackle proposed amendments to the Book of Order that address church discipline. The result was that, as guests arrived and the press set up, we were debating what to do when pastors commit abuse and then try to leave the church to avoid its jurisdiction. Dirty laundry. Flappin' in the wind.

Surprisingly, some of these guests were heard to remark later how refreshing it was that the church addressed this head-on. They also respected our decision-making process in which people get a say in how we are responsibly the church together – voice and vote.

This Saturday, the Milwaukee Presbytery transitions from one mark of vitality to another during our own Presbytery Gathering. We've been living out Empowered Servant Leadership, and we're moving into Ecclesial Health. In other words, do we function as the church in healthy ways? Perhaps one way we engage the topic is allowing public scrutiny of our processes. Would we open our congregational meetings to the public? Would we dare let the press into our Session meetings?

In a close-knit congregation, it's easy to function like family...which isn't always that healthy. In fact, the transition from Empowered Servant Leadership to Ecclesial Health is a keen one. There is a line between being an empowered leader and being a bully, so we need to examine carefully our actions and motives. We've probably crossed the line into unhealthy behaviors when we start to believe:

- ✓ I'm the only one holding this congregation together
- ✓ If it weren't for me, the place would fall apart
- ✓ No one else can _____ as well as me (fill in the blank: organize the church kitchen, run the yard sale, make investment decisions, teach Sunday School, etc.)

When we start believing we're indispensable, we've probably crossed the line from healthy leadership to unhealthy power-grabbing. For me, I knew it was time to step away from a leadership role in my law firm when the needs of the office felt like a burden that only I could address correctly. Ecclesial health? Term limits!

I look forward to gathering with you again. [Meeting registration](#) is open TO THE PUBLIC (gasp!), and you can come in person to West Granville or join on Zoom. See you soon!