



A Turning Point
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I realized today that it's been so long now that I don't remember what it's like to be with ordinary people. That is, non-churchy people. As a trial attorney, religion came into play very few times. I worked, played, shopped, and ate mostly with regular folk. I encountered my church people on Sunday and, from time to time, during the week for committee meetings. My turning point was in 2013, when I accepted full-time employment in the church.

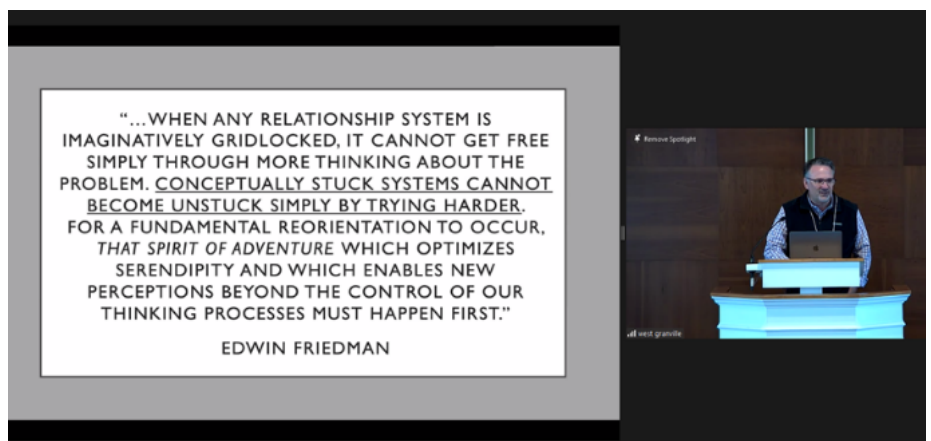
Now most of my time is spent with people in the church instead of "regular" people. I write that somewhat tongue in cheek, but not entirely. We are a particular breed, with a culture and values that don't fit the rest of society. It's not all good. Lately, I've noticed how judgmental we can be. When something is not to our standards, expectations, or liking, we can jump on it. Worse, we can jump on the person or the organization, and we've been known to be ruthless. Coupling our criticism with "bless their heart" doesn't help.

See how deep it runs? Yes, that was me being judgmental about our tendency to be judgmental. I'm also guessing that I don't even need to be specific, and you can think of an instance in the life of the church that fits this mold.

Are regular people like this? I can't remember.

So today, Ash Wednesday, is a fitting opportunity for another turning point. With our mark of vitality on Ecclesial Health for the next quarter, we have the whole Lenten season to repent – to turn – and imagine a different way of being in relationship. Instead of focusing on our individual self-improvement needs, what if we spent this season focused on the health of the whole church? Can we move beyond Lent as being our personal journey with Christ to the cross and consider the collective movement of the church?

Our Presbytery Gathering keynote speaker Tod Bolsinger had valuable reflections on leadership and ecclesial health. Quoting Edwin Friedman, he spoke of the need to develop a spirit of adventure that optimizes serendipity and gets us out of our controlled thinking. Perhaps when something is not to our expectations or our liking, we can get out of our heads and criticism to admire the serendipity of the opportunity that presents itself. Could we create a spirit of adventure based on that which annoys us?



Hmm, I going to have to work on that. I've got a good six weeks to try it. Want to join me?