

not enough time for knitting

One work obligation that I look forward to each year is teaching transitional ministry ideas and skills to potential and new temporary/interim pastors. It's fun to teach, I teach with amazing colleagues who have become friends over the years, and it's in a stunning location - [Zephyr Point Presbyterian Conference Center](#) - right on the lake on the south shore of Lake Tahoe.

My first evening it looked like this:



Yeah, hardship location.

This year we had a couple of bumps in our planning. One of our team had to drop out, and we had new staff from the center's site who were on a learning curve. But by the time we gathered for our final planning session it was looking really good - calm waters ahead. I, as the team leader, felt calm, so calm, in fact, that I remarked on this to the team and center staff. I said something to the effect of, "Gee, this is too easy, I'm getting a little worried that something will happen." We laughed.

Then came Sunday evening. We had a few hiccups in registering folks, but then, WHAM! a storm broke over the camp, with pounding rain. Folks coming to our event from Nevada told us they battled hail on the road. And then, because, **all the lights went out**. Not just in our building, not just in our conference center, no, the whole of South Lake Tahoe was experiencing a power outage.

It was a scramble, as many folks were trying to get into their rooms, bringing in luggage when the elevator was out. One woman was trapped in the elevator; she was plucked out by folks who heard her pounding and calling.

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But you know what? This is a bunch of pastors and their spouses, and trust me, our definition of a crisis looks a lot different from some people. A crisis is when someone beloved has died, or someone has received a bad medical diagnosis, or someone has broken off a relationship in the family, or someone who you care about is in jail for something you could never imagine they would do. Crises come in a lot of colors, but a power outage (even when the emergency lights go out but it's still light) is not one of them, at least not in the early hours.

That's not to say we didn't feel pressure - we had over 100 of us to feed, start something in our program, and get back safely to their rooms before it got dark. These folks needed us to step up as the leaders.

Our team was phenomenal. They strategized and brainstormed how to keep going that evening when we had planned to have power for the meal and the program. We had a "two-course" dinner - with a first course salad bar in the dining hall to a brilliant sunset (clouds are GREAT for sunsets), and after our revised evening session, the second course pizza from over the hill as it got dark. It felt like college in a way, eating pizza with strangers now friends helping one another through darkened hallways to rooms and sleep.

And truly, as we rode the wave of coping with an entry not of our own choosing, we perhaps taught more to our participants than anything we said during the week. Because it is how we act under pressure in the "not as planned" moments that folks will understand we mean what we say when remaining calm can help a situation. Hopefully, by *how* we acted, *what* we said will have mattered a little bit more.

The rest of the week was a cinch compared to that first night. Here you can see our relieved faces at the end of a good week together, with the perfect Lake Tahoe weather shining in back.



But I will say, there was not enough time for knitting!