

## SO WHAT ABOUT DISCERNMENT AND REFLECTION?

This plan for a simplification of presbytery is **not** a substitute for a season of reflection, learning, and discovery in the life of the presbytery. It is a simplification that makes **room** for such a season. It is a simplification that saves time and energy in order to make them available for reflection, learning, and discovery. It is a simplification that summons the whole presbytery to reflection, learning, discovery, and strategic thinking by taking care of the necessary things with fewer people in a simpler and more flexible way. This is a plan that does not designate who shall do reflection, learning and discovery **for** the presbytery, but invites the presbytery to do these things for itself through many of its people in a variety of flexible groups.

The plan is specific so that our reflection, learning, discovery, and strategic thinking can be about the ministry and mission of the presbytery and not about our structure and operations. The plan is flexible and dynamic so that new ministries and visions can be implemented quickly and efficiently.

## HOW IS THIS DIFFERENT FROM THE "SABBATICAL" WENDY INTRODUCED IN JANUARY?

This proposal does not ask the whole presbytery to enter into a time of discernment in the traditional sense. It is not a "Sabbath" per se, but a pruning of our work, so that new growth can happen. The proposal does not focus on the "interior" and "spiritual" work of a retreat or Sabbath time, instead it gives a minimalist job description to our committees and asks the members of the presbytery to step forward to move the body forward.

The structure proposed, however, is similar to what was proposed in January. We create a very lean committee structure for the constitutionally required business. It's similar, too, in that we shift our Committee on Ministry's focus from a regulatory body to act more as a coordinator of ministry teams and trainer of experts. Like the January Sabbatical, this proposal leaves the current CPM in its current form. If the CPM sees another way to do its business, we can entertain that at a later time.

This proposal does a great deal more in defining how the presbytery can function as "one church" in a permission-giving way through Working Groups. It introduces the concept of the PCCC (Presbytery Communication and Coordinating Committee) whose role is to identify and support the Working Groups. And it gives a clearer definition with a broader scope of a working group.

This proposal also begins to move us toward mutuality in ministry in the introduction of Congregational Liaisons. This is the least tested of the proposals and will take the most tweaking. The concept, though, is intended to allow congregations to be blessed as they are a blessing to their sister churches. We will consider this successful if new partnerships are formed and ideas are shared. It will not be successful if we find the work of congregational liaison to be administrative and not relational.

The work of the presbytery and the gathering of the presbytery are both addressed in this proposal. The nature of our time together is much more defined in this proposal. The spiritual focus of Sabbatical is encouraged in our gathered times ... both as a whole and in smaller groups.

## WHY A NEW PLAN NOW? AND WHY ISN'T THIS COMING THROUGH COUNCIL?

Getting everyone's input is extremely important, but the necessary back and forth and the difficulty of scheduling meetings can also slow us down. Sometimes someone needs to push ahead, crystalize our thoughts, identify the common threads, and offer a specific proposal so that we can get on with it. As your professional staff we believe it is appropriate for us, in service to the presbytery, to offer this push at this time. Between the two of us, we have heard from just about every nook and cranny of the presbytery. We have listened and considered the conversations in Council meetings, in COM meetings, in other committee meetings, in the back room of presbytery meetings and in the parking lots. We have met with individuals and groups of individuals; we have had hundreds of phone conversations and lunches and coffee. We have been privy to the conversations of the strategic vision team of council last year regarding our new vision and mission statements. This proposal takes all of that into consideration. There is a swell of discontent, which is speaking clearly: inaction is not an option at this point. We agree there is urgency over financial matters, but more importantly, there is a concern in the presbytery that we find the confidence to navigate into a future that is tenuous and frightening and critical. We believe this plan is a good compass and navigator for our voyage of learning and discovery and discernment together.

This proposal didn't come through the Council, but it is consistent with the direction of the council's conversations and decisions. Frankly, we finalized the plan at a time that didn't allow the calling of a council meeting before the presbytery meeting, and we believe it is imperative that we take specific and definitive action now.

## DOES THIS MEAN WE *ARE* OR WE *ARE NOT* WORKING WITH A CONSULTANT?

That is still undetermined. We may, or we may not, depending on the needs of the presbytery. As some have told us, there is no need to go through a long-term process in order to determine something that our presbytery leaders already have a vision on how to accomplish. We can move ahead in this work in a variety of ways. If we contract with a consultant it should be to go deeper into regenerative work or work on the healing and reconciliation that our community needs ... not to restructure or reorganize.

## WHO WILL BE ON THE NEW COMMITTEES?

It is our expectation that those currently serving on the Mission Council who wish to continue in leadership, will move into either specific leadership in working groups (like the financial oversight committee, or the property team), or serve on the PCCC or PAC. Likewise, those currently on the COM will either be elected as one of the six on the new COM or serve on the specific teams like congregational development, care of pastors, liaison training and oversight, congregational counselors, etc.

We will need to create a nominating task force to oversee who is going where during the summer, and have a fully nominated list for presbytery approval in September. We expect, then, to move into a rotation as well, if we find this structure works for us.

## WHAT HAPPENS TO OUR CURRENT COUNCIL?

(see above)

## WHAT ABOUT THE NOMINATING COMMITTEE?

The nominating committee is currently having a very difficult job functioning. This is due to a number of reasons, which we will not get into here. Part of the shift we will need to affirm is that we no longer will nominate to be “representative,” but we will nominate the best and most gifted individuals to do the work that is before us. We will no longer “fill slots” but will work to pair members of the presbytery with the work that will most fit their calling, their local congregation, and their giftedness. Not to mention their calendar and time commitments.

We are hopeful that excitement about this new proposal will create a desire to step up and be a part of the work we are doing. Because of the streamlined sense of the committee structures and the openness of the congregational liaisons, cadres of experts and counselors, working groups, and others, the opportunity is greater for ruling elders and teaching elders to step into smaller commitments and work into larger ones as their life work allows.

## WHY IS THE PLAN FOR COM SO MUCH MORE SPECIFIC THAN THE OTHER BODIES?

The work of the Committee on Ministry encompasses most of the ways that the presbytery interacts with individual teaching elders and congregations. The direction we lay out in this vision is not contradictory to any of work the COM has already begun in its conversation and current implementation. It does introduce a change in the liaison structure, but this is an idea that has been floated before as we considered ways forward. There is a great deal of anxiety in the presbytery regarding the work of the COM and this is a way to address the anxiety while still allowing for flexibility. It’s important that we make very clear how we will respond to the most urgent and important needs of congregations as we move forward.

## THIS IS A LONG DOCUMENT FOR A “SIMPLIFICATION”. WHY ISN’T IT SHORTER AND LESS PRESCRIPTIVE?

When an organization wants to encourage innovation, it needs a strong and definitive skeleton on which to flesh out its creative ideas. This plan saves our creative energy from having to build the skeleton and allows us to focus our energy, instead, on the learning and discovery we need in order to grow even more productive and faithful as the body of Christ. We could say it with fewer words, but we also needed to explain some of the concepts and visions behind the structure and to follow through with some specific implementation of the possibilities (such as the COM description). None of this skeleton, however, is built in stone. It is meant to be organic and living, so that it can adjust quickly and easily to the ministry of the presbytery as we do it and discover it. It is also not meant to be a comprehensive long-term structure, but more like the braces and scaffolding that give stability to a building undergoing major structural change. The plan needs to be articulate enough to assure us that we can experience, experiment, and exercise freely without fear of our body going limp or our foundation crumbling beneath us. Our hope is that this plan will settle the question of structure in the short-term so that we can move ahead into a season of ministry, mission, learning and discovery together.

## CAN WORKING GROUPS GET MONEY FROM THE PRESBYTERY?

Yes. But we need to think about funding in different ways as well. We want to encourage congregations and individuals to create partnerships in ministry and mission, both through the work

we are called to and the money we give. Presbytery reserved funds will be available as they have been and will be administered through the Urban Ministry Cabinet and the PAC.

### **CAN WORKING GROUPS SOLICIT MONEY DIRECTLY FROM THE CONGREGATIONS AND MEMBERS OF PRESBYTERY?**

Yes. We expect the PCCC will develop a communication process and guidance as to how this can be done most effectively and with some decency.

### **HOW DO WORKING GROUPS GET FORMED?**

This is the joy of this design. Anyone can form a working group for any purpose within our larger vision and mission together. We only require that it be two or three or more ... that is, congregations, individuals from congregations, specialized ministers, or pastors, or any combination. The working groups do not need permission from the PCCC in order to form or to carry out their mission and ministry. A relationship to the PCCC, however, will be needed in order to access funding, use the presbytery's name, and access communication avenues of the presbytery (newsletters, website, etc.).

Working Groups can also be formed at the initiation of the PCCC or any other entity of the presbytery (COM, CPM, PAC, etc). The hope is that as needs are identified there will be a way to move forward with as little bureaucracy and as much effectiveness as possible.