

Per Capita Task Force
Report to the Presbytery of New Brunswick Central Leadership Team
8/29/2018

Members of the Per Capita Task Force: TE Molly Dykstra (Covenant), TE Bob Tomlinson (Executive Director), RE Jeff Mascoll (Witherspoon), RE Doodie Meyer (Nassau), RE Kris Schmidt (Titusville), RE Jean Woodman (Hamilton Square)

Goal as stated by the Central Leadership Team

*A special task force of 6 individuals be assembled to gather information about the per capita giving of our membership churches, with **the purpose of building understanding of their ability and/or willingness to contribute so as to enable presbytery to plan for its future as it pertains to finances.** The task force is to determine its own methodology of approach. The task force is to be peopled by representatives of several of our standing groups including the CLT, Trustees, Stewardship of Property, COM and some members at large.*

Methodology

We decided to invite congregations to send representatives such as a pastor, treasurer, and or stewardship committee person, to the regional meeting of their choice for conversation. The presbytery office emailed an invitation to each pastor and clerk of session. (Exhibit 1). Task force members followed up with phone calls to each church office. The invitation was broadly distributed via the weekly *Monday in Ministry* email.

Conversations with Churches

We conducted five conversations with church representatives. (Attempts to hold one or two pilot conversations before Easter were thwarted by March snowstorms.) A total of 20 churches were represented at the conversations, although at least 2 were represented only by a pastor.

- May 14 at Dayton, attended by Dayton and Grace
- May 16 at Kingston, attended by Dutch Neck, Kingston, and Witherspoon Street
- May 22 at Lawrence Road, attended by Covenant, Hillsborough, Lawrenceville, Lawrence Road, Pennington
- May 24 at Lambertville, attended by Bound Brook, Flemington, Hopewell, Lambertville, Mt. Airy, and Somerset
- June 12 at New Brunswick Theological Seminary, attended by Ewing, Frenchtown, and Westminster
- August 12 at Hamilton Square (Sunday morning adult class)

Conversation Format

We used the same outline for each conversation. (Exhibit 2) Following introductions, we sought to engage participants by asking open-ended questions about their outreach ministries and congregational challenges.

The questions were followed by a brief introduction of per capita and a game. Participants were grouped into two teams by where they were seated. Using PowerPoint, we presented questions in a multiple-choice “Who Wants to be a Millionaire?” format, with participants from each team given the opportunity to answer questions in turn. The correct answer was briefly presented and discussed. If participants had trouble understanding the correct answer, we waited until the end to discuss the question in more detail.

Participants were invited to look at an Office of the General Assembly brochure on per capita (Exhibit 3) and discuss what per capita is, what their congregation’s understanding of per capita is, and how their church communicates about, collects, and remits per capita.

All conversations were opened and closed with prayer.

Observations

Programs that Excite Congregations

- Ministry to Members
 - Youth groups
 - Music programs
 - One-month sabbatical for pastor every 3 years
 - Broadcasting their sermons live via the internet
- Community Programs and Events
 - Hosting Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts
 - Hosting a gospel brunch
 - Gym for community programs
 - Wellness center
 - Blueberry festival
 - Hosting CROP Walk
 - Men’s group hosts a golf outing that’s a fundraiser but also an outreach
 - Rummage sale – church distributes funds to missions
 - Renting facility to Hindu groups for school
 - Providing space for ESL – “English as a Second Language” - school
- Facility as Landmark
 - Church is a Historic Register tour stop
 - Constructing new church building
 - Paul Robeson House
- Local Engagement and Mission
 - Food pantry, food bank
 - Food pantry partnership of two congregations in our presbytery
 - Free community dinner on the last Saturday of the month
 - Trenton Area Soup Kitchen (TASK)
 - Health Fair
 - Hosting Family Promise 5-6 weeks per year with help of other churches
 - Working with a halfway house for unwed mothers

- FISH network (people go from building to building)
- “Church Has Left the Building” in November
- Presbyterian Women make cookies for displaced children in the area.
- Work with Princeton University students
- Hosting job training program for recently incarcerated people
- Women’s shelter “Safe & Sound”
- Outreach to Muslim community
- Free movies on the lawn
- Sponsoring Girl Scout and Boy Scout troops as outreach
- Get Set after school tutorial program
- Visiting and providing transportation to shut-ins
- National/International Mission
 - Youth volunteer mission program to Maine (40 years)
 - Mission trip to the Appalachian area – community members also go
 - Guyana mission trip
 - Congo mission
 - Living Waters for the World
 - Annual mission trips that enable youth and adults to work together and learn from one another – and learn from the people they help.

Challenges

- Membership
 - Declines in membership
 - Members not living in the neighborhood
 - Aging membership
 - Ethnic diversity or change in ethnic majority
 - Change from cradle-to-grave Presbyterians to non-Presbyterians joining the Presbyterian Church
 - Newer members not understanding the connectionalism in Presbyterianism
 - Uncertainty and reduced programming during pastoral transition make it harder to attract and retain members.
- Financial support
 - Churches need the financial support of groups that use the building
 - Budget impact as members age and big givers die
 - Younger members appear to give less
 - Churches not having endowments
- Expenses
 - Capital campaigns on top of operating budgets
 - Cost of owning and maintaining a building
 - Updating older buildings to make the handicapped accessible
 - Pastoral transitions – current or anticipated – can strain the budget even more than a full payroll because giving declines.
 - Staff transitions – looking for a new music director

Understanding and Value of Per Capita

- Clear understanding that per capita funds the presbytery office
- High value placed on availability of Office Administrator Ilene Black when people have a question.
- Enables connections, relationships, having someone to call for counsel or advice
- Congregation knows per capita supports the branches of the PCUSA, even if it does not know what those branches do.
- Mixed awareness among participating elders of what presbytery and synod are, what they do, and how they are funded.
- Participants understood these conversations were unrelated to the proposal to increase the GA portion of per capita to \$11.45 by 2020.
- Collection and Remittance
 - All but one of the participating churches solicit per capita contributions from their members.
 - Some sessions remit the full assessment, but most remit only what members contribute.
 - Until now, some participants did not realize that per capita remittance is the responsibility of the session, not the member.

Critique of the OGA Brochure

All groups offered a critique of the Office of the General Assembly's brochure on per capita. Although this was not part of the task force's charge, we think it would be useful to communicate the reactions to the Office of the General Assembly.

- Even if the cost, per piece, is \$1, this is a significant percentage of GA per capita for each person who receives a copy.
 - Is it worthwhile to have this brochure printed or would a website download be more efficient? (Later, the task force learned the brochure is available online.)
 - Who needs another bookmark in the 21st century?
- Everything in the brochure looks clean and modern. Is GA in touch with the concerns of congregations, particularly those with old buildings and no pastor?
- References to judicial commissions in the word cloud made some wonder if per capita funds (and thereby promotes) litigation over ministry.
- Others liked the brochure. They found it attractive and thought it might be a useful tool for communicating what per capita supports.

Per Capita Payments

- Of the 20 participating churches, 19 stated they paid all or part of their per capita in 2017. One stated it does not pay per capita.
 - Some representatives stated their church contributed at least some per capita, seemingly unaware they had not actually remitted any per capita for 2017.
- Most churches offer a per capita envelope.
- People who attend and participate pay their per capita. Some members pay extra.
- Many churches are in arrears and are aware of it. They wait until they have the funds.

- In the past, churches had a concentration of wealthy members. Now, churches in this presbytery increasingly consist of poor-to-middle-class members, without even a small number of wealthy members to contribute a significant portion of the income.
- Roll Revisions
 - The cost of Presbytery, Synod, and General Assembly remains the same, so if churches remove members from their rolls, the per capita assessment increases to meet the cost.
 - Roll revisions are trending downward, not upward, so a lagging per capita gives the (negative) impression of “paying for members we don’t have.”
- Remittances to presbytery
 - Some churches remit the full assessment.
 - Some churches remit only what is collected from members.
- Some participants were surprised to learn that minister members are not assessed for per capita, nor are seminaries, worshipping communities, or non-congregational ministries.

Suggestions for Per Capita Collection

- Presbytery could send envelopes directly to churches.
- Presbytery could set up e-giving so members could remit directly to the presbytery.
- Would collection improve if we characterized per capita to members as “dues” or does this interfere with the intention of per capita?

Conclusion

Churches are willing to contribute per capita, but are finding it increasingly difficult to do so. We believe the per capita funding model is no longer sustainable.

Recommendations

The task force recommends the following to the Central Leadership Team for action or delegation.

1. Form a strategic working group to explore other forms of income, such as:
 - a. Grants (particularly Lily Foundation grants) to fund operating costs and/or specific ministries and missions
 - b. Voluntary contributions from
 - Individuals, both church members and minister members
 - Churches
 - Seminaries
 - Non-congregational ministries within our bounds
2. Communicate expectations and responsibilities regarding participation in presbytery.
 - a. Include mission partnerships, presbytery grant opportunities and per capita funding in leadership training.
 - b. Develop consistent leadership training for sessions.
 - c. Remind churches to remit per capita contributed by members promptly, thereby honoring the intent of the donors.

Exhibit 1: Invitation



You Are Cordially Invited to Conversations with
the Presbytery Per Capita Task Force and
Other Churches in Our Presbytery

Why are we inviting you now?

In our changing times, the Central Leadership Team wishes to know how your congregation is doing and how to better understand your views of per capita

What will we do?

We'll explore the following topics:

- *what excites each congregation,*
- *hearing about each congregation's missions and concerns,*
- *refine each congregation's understanding of the purpose of Per Capita, and*
- *how Per Capita can assist your congregation in reaching its goals.*

What are the steps?

Step 1: Pick your place and day to arrive a little before 7:00pm

- *Monday, May 14 at Dayton PC*
- *Wednesday, May 16 at Kingston PC*
- *Tuesday, May 22 at Lawrence Road PC*
- *Thursday, May 24 at Lambertville PC*
- *If you can't find a time that meets your schedule, also go to Step 2*

Step 2: Contact Ilene Black at the presbytery office to let us know your selection

iblackpnb@gmail.com or 609/882-9521

Step 3: Select 2-3 church leaders (pastors welcome) - arrive a little before 7:00pm



We look forward to being with you,

Per Capita Task Force: RE Jean Woodman, Hamilton Square; RE Kristine Schmidt, Titusville; RE Doodie Meyer, Nassau; RE Jeffery Mascoll, Witherspoon Street; TE Molly Dykstra Covenant

Exhibit 2: Outline of Per Capita Group Conversations

- A. Welcome, Friends!
 - a. Jesus said, “I don’t call you servants any longer.... Instead, I call you friends....”
John 15:15 Common English Bible (CEB)
 - b. Introductions
- B. Discussion Questions
 - a. What outreach program or other program is your congregation most excited about?
 - b. What challenge is your congregation facing in the near future?
- C. The Per Capita Quiz Show!
- D. Per Capita Resources Poster
 - a. What words or terms catch your attention on the poster?
- E. Questions for Our Discussion
 - a. What does your congregation value most about being a part of the presbytery and why?
 - b. Has your congregation ever received assistance from the presbytery? If so, what happened and why?
 - c. What is your Session’s understanding of per capita and its purpose? Your congregation’s understanding?
 - d. How does your congregation pay its per capita?
 - e. How do you educate your officers/members about the meaning/purpose of per capita?
 - f. If your church does not pay part or all of its per capita, why not?
- F. Closing
 - a. Thank you for joining us.
 - b. Unison prayer

*Dear Lord – In everything we give you thanks!
Thank you for all the marvelous things you have done for us today. Thank you for everything we have learned today. Thank you for the fellowship, the fun and the joy we have had today. Thank you for opening our hearts and minds to what strengthens us as a community of Presbyterians today.*

And as we leave this place, guide us, protect us, and keep us until we meet again. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are forever yours. Amen.

Direct us, O Lord,
in all our doings with
your most gracious favor
and further us
with your continual help,
that in all our works begun,
continued, and ended in you
we may glorify your holy name,
and finally, by your mercy,
obtain everlasting life;
through Jesus Christ
our Lord.



Per Capita

Providing the means to strengthen
the connections of our work, and
build lasting relationships to help
all Presbyterians share God's love
through mission and ministry.



Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
Office of the General Assembly
100 Witherspoon Street
Pittsburgh, PA 15264

What is **Per Capita**

Per Capita is a fundamental way in which all of the nearly 10,000 congregations and mid councils of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) connect, participate and share in the work of the wider church. Per capita is the primary source of funding for the Office of the General Assembly, and is how Presbyterians mutually and equitably share the costs of coming together to discern the Spirit's leading for the future.

- ◆ It is how Presbyterians are trained to become better ruling elders, teaching elders and deacons, and ministers.
- ◆ It is how Presbyterians are helped to discern God's call in their lives.
- ◆ It is how Presbyterians participate in the life of the wider church by serving on General Assembly committees and commissions, regardless of distance or financial resources.
- ◆ It is how Presbyterians participate in the life of the Church universal as we commit ourselves to work and live in fellowship with "all persons in every nation" (Book of Order, G-4.0101)

All Presbyterians are called to take part in the ecclesiastical and administrative work shared by the whole church through per capita giving. The annual rate is a per-member apportionment that is assessed biennially by the General Assembly. (Book of Order, G-3.0106) All congregations — large and small — are encouraged to participate, either through an annual budget item or through a special direct appeal to their congregations.

Presbyteries are asked to remit
their Per Capita payment to:
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
Office of the General Assembly
P.O. Box 643683
Pittsburgh, PA 15264-3683
Or online using Payer Express.



PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (U.S.A.)
Per Capita