

Compilation of Lunch Table Discussions

1. As the curtain is drawn back, what is one weakness that you observe in the presbytery?

Congregations are not aware of what Presbytery does, & what issues are before it.

1) Do we need better training of new commissioners to help them address/inform their congregations?

2) COM is especially misunderstood and congregations think of them as the enemy.

a) The Presbytery should be more proactive in seeking new church development projects.

b) Campus ministries are an effective way to grow the church. What is the Presbytery doing to support campus ministries in local colleges.

c) There should be more support from the Presbytery for failing churches. The example raised was one of the churches in Jefferson County (Festus/Crystal City area). They were visited once by a delegation from the Presbytery and then it was dropped. (Chris James and Susan Finley visited.)

- Presbytery appears so tied to order that there appears to be no room for spontaneity or even warmth

- Poor communication between Presbytery and churches

- P.R. nightmare! Presbytery has a poor image and churches are left feeling too much like it's Us vs. Them

- Presbytery is seen as a "thing" because churches do not have much of a chance to know the people who work there

- The perception is that Presbytery has its own agenda – which is not necessarily what is important to the churches

- The Leadership Training Event has been a big disappointment. It did not facilitate communication as was hoped. It just turned out to be a chance for Presbytery to disseminate their own information and further their own agenda. Churches wanted a chance to talk to each other

- The Committee on Ministry person assigned to each church has not really served much of a function – no relationship is formed through just a letter at the beginning of the year. No personal contact unless big problems break out

- Is this Design Team just trying to follow the latest trends and the current thinking by attempting to redesign Presbytery? Didn't we just do this a few years ago? Presbytery should spend more time doing what they have already decided to do – but more effectively. Live into our current mission statement.

Not enough in it for use

Disconnect between presbytery business & pressing daily issues in congregations

Disconnect/distance in interest between larger congregations & smaller congregations

Few abilities to get to know people & share & discuss

Worship is not always very compelling or central

Train/equip people to give reports

Struggle with closing small churches
Communication between sessions & presbytery is non-existent
“lack of trust”
“bureaucracy”
Not relevant to members
Do not understand polity

Lack of a Presbytery fund to support young pastors with small congregations in pursuit of further education
Evangelism as a training focus in Presbytery

Presbyters don't know or have fellowship with folk from other churches
People in congregations don't know much about presbytery and don't know why they should care (gap in understanding)
Presbytery committees may need to meet more often. Only 4 Presbytery meetings reduces the number of times other committees meet

Not enough focus on mission—seen as an extra or after thought
Not enough opportunity to be in real dialogue about issues/commitments we Share

More focus, creating links, nurture, encourage local congregations
Presbytery be more visible
Focus
To be a resource to local churches, but not try to be the labor force
Organic connectionalism

Purpose of the various ministry teams and committees
Our emphasis on mission has become de-emphasized—Presbytery not connecting well the various missions & projects of PUCSA with congregations
Lack of identity—lack of identity as Presbyterians
Difficulty in communication
Pastoral care of pastors
Do we have a mission & strategy?
The presbytery claimed by the people (not so much right now)
Need youtube videos

Communication—not all can go on line to get it
Sometimes assistance to individual churches is inconsistent

No responses

Are we using time for Presbytery meetings well?
Specific support for CLPs who are serving congregations is lacking

Lack of diversity—it is there but minimal

Communication between Presbytery & local congregations

Coordination of calendar

Slow response to email/voicemail

Leadership in Ministry lacks clear objectives (or objectives belong to Presbytery as a whole and not a committee)—spend time discussing what to do and not getting around to action

Focus on taking care of people instead of creating systems where people can take responsibility for themselves

Every lunch at Presbytery is fried chicken (observation by 12 year old participant)

Nominating doesn't have information about what committee requires

Too many daytime meetings—eliminates working & younger from participating

All meetings don't have to be at Presbytery center

Too many meetings are requiring meals to be brought in

Unsustainable congregation/keeping in touch with those on the edges/+expenses related

"telling the story"—we do a lot of stuff but congregations don't know—how do we market our work/story

What does "post-Christendom" mean—accepting the newness of the era

So many committees, so little people and time

Concern about homosexuality

Response time for outlying churches—who do you talk to?

Hard for outlying churches to be involved—don't feel voice is as well heard

Pastoral loss—response—sorting of PIFs by presbytery

Still have some disconnect from merger of presbyteries

2. The wizard was not a "bad man" nor is everything in the presbytery "bad" (or perfect). What is working in the Presbytery? What are the current strengths? As we consider our future, what should be preserved?

Pastoral collegiality, brought about by Amy Fowler's transformation groups.

a) The website is very useful. Can the Presbytery help smaller churches with their own websites.

b) The Presbytery has a very caring staff.

c) 2nd Presbyterian in the city has several outreach programs that are tied to it by name. Some mentioned were tutoring at local elementary schools, Halloween candy distribution, food pantry, youth mission trips. Does Presbytery have a set of case studies for successful church programs that have supported church growth.

d) The group from Jeff. County was very appreciative of the opportunity to talk to a Presbytery representative. They thought more “personal” conversations with fringe (geographic?) churches would be helpful.

- This process! Intentionally using energy to seek input and conversation with members. This gives people a voice!
- Committee on Ministry – doing a good job with a very difficult task but needs to improve their image with congregations
- Congregational Development Team – Doing a great job inspiring congregations to think in new ways and providing training.
- Awesome camp program
- Providing training and support – at least for the congregations who know to ask for it

Website

Electronic newsletter

Lots of good news going on—would love to see & hear more of this electronically (brief!)

Great help for struggling congregations

Organizational system works well

---Call system—representative

Support system (proactive inquiry & intervention)

Appreciative inquiry – recognition

New church development

Church redevelopment

Good support of congregations in pastoral search process

Staff person dedicated to leadership in ministry (COM, CPM) other than E.P.

self-development of people program functions well

Current model of presbytery meetings is very good and it works (wrapping the work of presbyter within worship)

Ability of people to speak and hear diverging views

Posting issues on the web 10 days early

Committees have been well staffed & high quality

Paul Reiter & his behind the scenes activity

Staff

Mission focus (direct & advocacy) –staff support

We have a dedicated and effective staff

Has a greater level of partnership with lay leaders and churches

Nurtured a less hostile atmosphere

COM doing well, esp. with redesign & being ahead of the curve

Streamlining of meetings is a plus (but we need more opportunity for fellowship)

Weekly newsletter

Use of technology
Process of discernment & evaluation
Resource Center

Administrative Assistants & Secretaries

The presbytery (or in this instance the Presbytery) can and has been very supportive of a congregation with special needs (i.e. pulpit supply, session moderation, and resources for resolving issues)

Goodness of fit interviews for incoming pastors
Opportunities to have conversation around GA amendments (vs. just being told this is what we are doing)

Can get antsy in a lengthy service at a presbytery meeting when headed to Sunday worship **yet** feel nourished and fed by worshipful work. Finds Presbytery worship unifying.

Enjoy variety of creative worship ideas and music

Discussion of Belhar Confession was great today

Keep Judy—she is a gifted administrator and source of information

Paul Reiter ☺

Helping people in need (PDA)

People show up

Thoughtful discussion—facilitates community

Worshipful work

Open to different races

Work on website to make it more accessible and attractive

E-mail communications is a strength

Inclusion of lay workers—volunteers & clergy in leadership rolls

Presbytery Center—simple, location is good, bright

COM structure is a plus

Gifted staff—committed

Ecumenical approach & activity but may need to be shared more (keep all of these)

None are bad. For a small church Presbytery supports those groups! The personnel is very helpful.

CLP program

Resourcing

COM sub groups

3. The video ends looking forward to new ways to do and be presbytery together. What is one thing you would change or encourage the presbytery to begin?

Did not get to this question

- 1) Need transparency, especially in funding (many do not understand Per Capita nor Mission Funding).
- 2) Better communication (through e-mail was one suggestion).
- 3) Encourage congregational involvement in Presbytery.
- 4) Let people know they can be on committees at Presbytery.
- 5) Evangelism training (use another word?) for congregations to reverse the declining trends in membership.
- 6) Seek e-mail addresses for communication.

- Find a way to better embrace and encourage the enthusiasm of the congregations. Show an interest in what each congregation is doing.
- Act as a clearing house for information – provide a way for churches --o learn about each other and better communicate with each other.
- Relational Communication! Find a way to enter into the life of a congregation without a negative agenda – show up and get to know people while things are good so that a positive relationship is formed. Then when things are bad, congregations aren't dealing with "The Presbytery" – they are dealing with people who have valued them and taken the time to get to know them – so the church will believe that solutions to difficult problems are in everyone's best interest.
- Follow through with existing policies.
- Explore and perhaps alter the current policy of term limits for those serving on Presbytery committees in order to provide better balance between the need for fresh voices and continuity.
- Use the internet more effectively – develop a blog where churches can talk to each other and dialog. Example: sharing mission experiences or information – put out an "all call" for help with a particular problem

Find committee members according to passions not simply representation
Nurture relationships—which is a great way to discover each other's passion
Have assigned nametags—build sense of belonging
Regional gatherings—instead of always having the whole presbytery meet
Virtual meetings?

"Dump the Executive" (Paul was in this group)
Leadership development
Improved communication
More interaction with congregations

Major segments of Scripture read at Presbytery meetings
Get us back to our Biblical roots
Marching orders from the Word rather than the world/culture

Webcast the presbytery meetings; record meeting & post on website
Help churches collaborate i.e. mission trip

Help churches link; combine resources among churches
Get the mission of Presbytery more engrained in people's mind
Website needs refreshing & needs to be more intuitive—how can it be used to connect church & their people? Make it more 21st c. friendly. Make navigation even easier.

More emphasis on mission as foundational
More educational/informational times during presbytery meetings either during plenary session or workshops

“Sharing approaches that work” Fair—congregations have tables/booths for congregations to share

Discussion groups during presbytery meetings

Annual retreat around a topic/issue where we learn dialogue—no decision

Move more quickly to a plan of action

More education & common mission work

Major issues be discussed (pros & cons) then go home before vote (more civil discussion as brothers and sisters in Christ, followed by time and prayer)

How do we build relationship and trust?

Instead of an EP as administrator (majority of time) we need a pastor of the Presbytery

Resources in terms of position descriptions and evaluation tools

Pay more attention to Illinois churches

(Need visits from committees sent out from Presbytery as before)

More encouragement, support and promotion of shared ministry teams

Continue to work with leadership development – workshops? During meetings (or not)?

Theological discussion is enjoyable and helpful to me, I hope to others. We need to learn how to do that again in our country—peacefully and with respect

More support for immigrant ministries

Make sure to include staff in these conversations

Conversation built into meetings/value of dialogue & education

Staff person fluent in technology & social media to help congregations (& presbytery)

Consider “parish” gathering

Integration of the smaller churches into the bigger churches

Combine things—i.e. can we combine purchasing? Or teacher education programs?

How do we “save resources/improve sustainability”

More program/meetings located in the southern region of Giddings-Lovejoy

Innovation around electronic “work sessions”, etc.

Gather for worship

Would be interested in Southeast Missouri Presbytery