

# Discernment Conversation with a Congregation

July 25, 2011

Following is a summary of a July 25, 2011 discussion with members of Session and the Pastor. Leading the discussion were Carol DeVaughan and Jerry Wilson. Lawson Calhoun was also present.

After convening the meeting, the pastor asked us to provide some background information about the Design Team and lead a discussion about expectations from members of Session. Carol made a brief presentation about the Design Team and the work that we are doing. We had provided a copy of the "Summary of What We Have Heard" but an administrative misunderstanding resulted in members not receiving copies of that document prior to the meeting. Copies were distributed at the beginning of our meeting.

Carol led the discussion and started with the following question:

"What is Presbytery to you?"

Responses to the question included:

The Presbytery is a very democratic body of governance.

Responses then evolved to focus on what the Presbytery should do:

The Presbytery should provide more support for the pastor.

The Presbytery should ensure that the perspective of young members is reflected in the product of the Design Team. The question evolved from an inquiry about the composition of the Design Team. One Elder suggested that "If we are designing a church for the future, young people should be part of the decision-making process."

The Presbytery should place an emphasis on racial and ethnic diversity in the Mission Statement that evolves from this study. We understand that this is a reference to the current work of the Dismantling Racism and Privilege Ministry Team and the belief that the Racial and Ethnic Action Plan that is in place should be continued.

Additional discussion concerning nominating process for Presbytery Committees included the question: "How are people identified; is our pastor part of the process?"

The Presbytery should make resources available to assist those that need assistance. It was understood by members of the Session that Presbytery has a full complement of resources available to help others. Thus, Presbytery should be a facilitator to connect resources with needs. There is a perception that this is not being done very effectively at the current time.

Session members observed that the racial make-up of the Presbytery should be a consideration – and the Design Team should ensure that diversity is a consideration. Inquiries were made about the racial and ethnic make-up of the Presbytery staff. For the future design, they emphasized the importance of a presence of representatives of various racial, ethnic, and age interests within the Presbytery.

At the end of the meeting with Session, participants were invited to review the document that was passed out at the meeting. If they have additional comments, they were asked to submit them to the website or member of the Design Team.