

Webinar #2

Financial Future of the Presbytery: Options for Staffing and Structure

Post Webinar Email Feedback sent to the Panelists:

Lois Wilson

Albany Westminster

Dear Kim,

I really appreciated the opportunity you provided through this webinar to learn more about the fiscal choices facing the Presbytery and how carefully leaders are exploring the staffing choices.

Strong Presbytery leadership is, in my opinion, very important for the community.

With my best wishes to all who are directly involved.

Lois

Lynn Brown

Spencertown

Re financial projections - What is being considered on the income side of the equation? Why has per capita decreased to \$40 with the other \$3 being "optional?" Why is it a stated assumption that we won't raise the per capita amount beyond \$43? With ongoing annual membership decreases, this simply means that we are "starving the beast" and will need to contract year after year when many congregations are looking for more resourcing, not less. Is there some work being done to interpret to the congregations what the effect of the shift from Shared Mission/Apportionment to Shared/Basic Witness has been? From my limited experience, I don't think sessions/congregations understand what the new terminology means and I think that has made a significant contribution to the decreased income over the past 2-3 years.

Pam Woodman

Malta

Feedback for Webinar 2:

1) Following Kate's question about the funds from church properties that were sold, what is happening to the funds from the sale of Camp Hebron property? Can't some of that money be used to keep the presbytery afloat?

2) How many presbytery meetings? I am in the group who want business only meetings. Have separate learning meetings for those who want them.

Mistrust: I don't believe it is miscommunication. I've been a member of this presbytery for over 20 years. Mistrust stems from then when things were done behind closed doors with just a few people. At least that was the impression the rest of us had gotten. Once trust is broken, it takes many, many years to mend, and churches have long memories.

Thanks to everyone who took part in this webinar.

Peace,

Pam

Laura Rogers

COM / FUPC, First United Pres in Troy

Kim,

I misspoke this a.m. and wish to correct what I said.

Presbyteries always have the right and responsibility to examine and ordain TEs. What some presbyteries have chosen to do is give the authority to commissions to approve the transfer TEs into the presbytery and to install TEs in a new call rather than those actions coming to the presbytery as recommendations for the body to act upon.

Please see that this is entered into the feedback -- this was the quickest way I could figure out how to do it before I forgot!

Many thanks for all your work,

Laura

Susan Strang

Christ's Church of the Hills

Kim,

I listened with interest to the second webinar conversation about the future of the Presbytery. No doubt change is the order of the day at every level. I appreciate those who have taken this on as it is incredibly hard work.

In a search for the way forward, when no one knows exactly the path, and where we will have to shift courses many times, it is essential in my view that an organization of any size has a strong foundation of trust. We are not there in Albany Presbytery. It isn't just the Holy Cow study that says so. You simply have to listen to any substantive discussion at a Presbytery meeting and it is clear we do not trust each other.

Structure and trust have to be worked on at the same time. Clearly thought out and openly discussed shifts in the structure will help build that trust as they include new voices, and as the different and brave ministries current and yet to be dreamed are supported by relationships in our Presbytery. In other words people will trust when they see you mean it.

We can't have it all. We will have to sift through all the good ideas to put into place only those we can afford, but once we achieve trust we can always have that. Such a change cannot be legislated, but once folks decide it is a goal it can be fostered.

Again thank you for taking on this work.

Bob Clark

Brunswick Church

Today was my first webinar. Good presentation! In a world of shrinking resources, this seems to be a very cost-effective way of communicating and conducting a "virtual" meeting. Great vehicle to broaden the base of participation in Presbytery matters. The financial information presented on the Presbytery reflects what we at the congregational level are experiencing. We need more "cross-pollination", if you will, within the Presbytery and congregations to address the

financial and demographic issues being faced by all of us. Collectively, we all need to approach these issues creatively, just as our Lord did in spreading the Good News. Keep up the good work. Keep the conversation going.

Bob Clarke

Brunswick Church

Terry Diggory

New England Congregational Church

In Webinar II, I asked the question whether presbyteries are more essential for TE's than for RE's/congregations. TE McKinney gave the proper theoretical answer: Presbyteries are supposed to be composed of TE's and congregations. I don't think this recognizes the practical reality and the extent to which structure determines function. The structure is that RE's belong first to congregations, and are only "commissioned" to presbytery; whereas TE's are members of presbyteries. This differential structure leads to very different types of allegiance. Unless we face up to the difference between theory and practice in this respect, we are not likely to come up with practical solutions to current problems.

N.B.: Although a principal function of presbyteries is to "support" congregations, one of the ways this is done is by supporting TE's. So facing the practical reality, I am pointing out here does not necessarily undermine the support function.

RE Terry Diggory

Scott DeBlock

Brunswick

Thanks everybody, and wish we had more time!!

For whatever it's worth as a "new hire", here are some thoughts in addition to my comments shared in chat---

- in a time when we need more connection, and more relational activity, going solely administrative will not suffice.
- to that end, I liked the one staff suggestion of maybe a half time clerk and full time presbyter who will work with congregations in fulfilling their ministries could even share that presbyter with surrounding presbyteries as Dave mentioned...
- using 2/3 of income for staffing is OK. If we tithe income to go out in mission, we can cover it I think...

- we can meet less as a presbytery if can free up staff to be out there assisting congregations!
- disconnection leads to mistrust. The more congregations see that the role of presbytery is that second bullet listed under the responsibilities of a presbytery, the sooner the mistrust will disappear.

This was fun!
Joy and Peace,
Scott DeBlock

Dennis Maher
Honorably Retired

Regarding Albany staffing and budget:

Budget spending reserves each year was a terrible mistake. It is always a mistake, unless it is needed in an unusual year (the rainy day) and involves a small withdrawal. There are congregations in the presbytery doing this, too, and they will reach an end where there will be few acceptable choices. (My experience was with New Covenant in Albany.) Money from the sale of closed church buildings should be partly restricted for new, and future ministries in that county.

The key question that was asked was: "What is a presbytery?" Unfortunately, changes in the Form of Government over the past two decades have enlarged the idea that presbyteries exist to serve congregations. This was not true in the past. Traditionally, the purpose of presbytery was to establish and close churches, care for candidates for ministry, and manage calls to ministry within the congregations. It was implied that pastors would train ruling elders, but this was possible only when ruling elders served for many years, creating sessions that knew what to do and how to do it. (Bear with me; I am moving to my answer to this.)

I think people haven't seriously tried the volunteer option, but also I realize that we live in times where this probably cannot work. However, my first years in ministry were in a presbytery in Minnesota (Mankato) BEFORE most presbyteries had staff. We paid a pastor to be part-time stated clerk. Everything else was volunteer. Churches were spread more than 150 miles from one end of the presbytery to another. Newly ordained, I was asked to be secretary to a

“relationships committee” with a broad variety of responsibilities. All of this worked because issues were presented to presbytery and DEBATED. We also spent lots of time in workshop settings during presbytery meetings, studying and discussing large issues. Many of us pastors ASSUMED that we owed 2-3 days per month to presbytery. Today COM’s need to insist on this with TE’s and sessions when TE’s come into the presbytery.

We didn’t know what having staff would be like. In places like Chicago in ‘72, the only staff was placed there from outside by the Boards of National Missions and Church Extension! These outsiders were welcome because they brought money. When staff were introduced in the new Synod of Lakes and Prairies, they were “Mission Consultants,” helpers with no authority. Also, we had what must have been a Scandinavian ethos about organization: Every committee meeting ended with a plan, and with responsibilities given to and accepted by every member. Later, when I moved to New Jersey, I was shocked that this was not the practice.... The times were different, too.

My D.Min thesis was on bringing churches together to do urban ministry in Trenton. The conclusion was that pastors are too concerned with turf and status issues, and are too much in competition rather than cooperation with each other. Pastors are too individualistic. A true “Company of Pastors” was missing.

For four years I was a combination EP and SC. I hired a fundamentalist baptist administrative assistant who learned to do all the SC paper work. This system works – except – pastors have no EP with whom they can be honest, when the EP is also the SC who can bring charges against them later. The system works when there is NO presumption that the EP is pastor to pastors. If instead, the presbytery defines the EP’s position as coach to pastors and sessions, sort of an assistant pastor to every congregation and to presbytery council, it can work. Systems for care of pastors, and helping congregational transformation efforts, without staff have to be put together. I saw my job as promoting virtue and restraining evil, and not allowing pastors to hurt congregations or congregations to hurt pastors.

The one thing that prevents Albany and other presbyteries from solving staffing and budget issues is the notion that presbytery can save failing congregations. In Chicago we had so many requests for help from so many congregations, we settled on triaging congregations (but we never told the churches!). The healthy churches will survive and even thrive without help, and people who can help other congregations are often found there. Churches that are failing will fail

no matter what presbytery does. Most presbyteries spend 80% of their efforts on the 20% of congregations that will never change or grow. Therefore, presbytery can focus on the few congregations among those in the middle that show promise. I learned not to give time or money to congregations that did not present plans or passion for plans they had devised to do new things that would further the health of the congregation and community. All those projects will not succeed, but they are worthy of the effort.

1. Presbyteries try to be too many things to too many people; churches expect too much from presbyteries.
2. Executives are paid too much.
3. Pastors need to have skills they can use in the secular world, and presbyteries should seek part-time pastors who will have permission to establish new churches (or worshipping communities?) in growing areas, without much help.
4. Presbyteries expend too much effort in maintaining structures and what is old, rather than experimenting with new things.

Denny Maher

Denice Gibson

Malta

Hi Kim,

So I have been giving the two sessions some thought and prayer and started to write. I have facilitated various groups to learn, share, grow, etc. and after a few hours combined with inspiration and just a small amount of research, I came up with this rough draft of a possible learning experience.

It could be used for the team before Silver Bay, for the participants at Silver Bay or where ever the presbytery thinks it would be effective.

The point is, there is a great spread of understanding, history, and beliefs. The people involved seem to be holding onto what they "know". There are many common thoughts, beliefs and values with the Bible as our guide and God and Jesus as our inspiration. I feel that we should start with what we have in common before the difficult conversations and decisions are tackled.

These exercises are designed to create passion, build relationships, discover truth, encourage movement, creativity and inspiration.

Take a look and share as you feel helpful. As always, I am available for questions, suggestions and conversations.

Praying for you and the team as you tackle this vital challenge and as I was reading in my Bible study this morning I want to encourage you and team also; “The kingdom of God is not just about the conversion of individuals, but about the transformation of society.”

Blessings,
Denice

Preparing for Transition

A session to examine your thoughts and heart

Statement of faith – I believe (Top page in packet, like an exam book- “Do not turn the page until you are told to do so.”

- God is: weaker the same stronger than he use to be.
- People need God: less the same more than biblical times.
- I need God: less the same more than I use to.
- God equips each of us: to learn as we go have the skills Learn the skill before we take on the challenges of life.

Can we agree that God is, was and will always be?

* Song

Can we agree that God created all people with the desire to learn and to be loved?

* Song

LifeKeys mini Spiritual Gifts assessment and statement of truth.

What should we focus on: Put a post-it above the statements you feel should be the priority for the next year. (each person gets 3)

- Increase attendance for services
- Increase membership in church
- Increase attendance for Bible Studies
- Increase attendance for Sunday School
- Increase community services- ie. feeding the hungry
- Increase equipping disciples
- Increase equipping pastor candidates

- Increase pastor skills in counseling
- Increase presence in community meetings
- Increase presence in Social Media
- Increase presence in Print Media/TV
- Increase support for World Missions
- Increase influence on governing our country
- Increase influence on social injustice
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Assessment of Facts – True or False Vote by showing green side of straw for true, red for false

20 % of Americans regularly attend church for services on Sunday
 Churches have more inactive “members” than regular attendees
 Church attendance numbers have stayed about the same from 1990 to 2004
 Population growth in our communities is on the increase
 The Protestant Church is losing ground in attendance where other faiths are not
 People are less interested in Faith
 People are increasingly occupied in solo activities.
 A majority of the American population has become more independent and self-

serving

America continues to be a growing melting pot of cultures
 More people of every age are attending higher education institutions
 “Busy” is a inference for high status (in high demand) and a goal for most Americans
 Frugality remains prevalent in most households
 Diligence and hard work are values that parents teach their children.

Discovery of Needs – What brings people into the Sanctuary? As each answer is presented give that person a sign to hold up. Examples below if needed

- Tradition
- Music Ministry
- Seeking God
- Parental pressure/guilt
- Hunger for God
- Sorrow
- Hopelessness
- Need of services – wedding, funeral, baptism, etc

After there are enough suggested so that each reason will have 3 to a group. Stop.
 Have everyone move to a sign that they are being drawn towards. No more than 3 to a group. Now have them spend 15 minutes coming up with an executable plan to address the need of that person entering the church.

Here and Now – What does God want the church to be actively doing?

How should I be spending my time as a disciple of Christ?
 Where should I be spending my time as a disciple of Christ?
 When should I spend my time as a disciple of Christ?

Why should I spend my time as a disciple of Christ?
Who should I be spending my time with as a disciple of Christ?

Bringing the message to the people – The people have redefined “Going to Church” as worshipping in their own way; small groups, meeting in homes, watching broadcasts on various media, hiking in the forest.

How do we get a person who is walking into the church to share what they are searching for? Turn to the person you are sitting next to and share ideas. Report out by role playing with volunteers who are sharing what the person next to them said.

Conclusions – Ask participants to write their conclusions on the “Conclusions” paper and they will be posted in the dining area.

There are not less Christians now than there were 30 years ago.
The calling of Christ - for each of us to be his disciples hasn't changed.

True/False

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jon-jachimowicz/being-busy-as-a-status-sy_b_6130220.html

To what extent is busyness driven by need or by choice? Need to distinguish oneself from lower social classes

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Society_of_the_United_States Currently the US we are growing in diversity, pluralism and the image of a salad bowl.