

### **III –Congregational Life** **Presbytery of Susquehanna Valley**

#### **Resource: Conversation Starters**

Note: This is a resource, not a script. Use relevant items as they apply and time allows.

#### **Getting to Know You**

How long have you each been a member of this church and how did you first get involved?

What do you like about your church and what do you feel is going well?

How is your church organized and is it working well?

*(i.e. unicameral / bi-cameral; committees; teams)*

What is your average worship attendance?

Have there been significant community changes in your area?

If so, how has this impacted your congregation?

Churches are different from other organizations.

How would you define that difference in your case?

How does your congregation relate to and participate in witness and ministry in your surrounding community?

Every church has its own identity.

How do you describe your congregation?

How would people in the community describe you?

What makes your congregation unique?

Every congregation dreams. Are your dreams about the past or the future?

What are some of the dreams (big or little) you have on the drawing board or which are starting to take shape?

How do you build your spiritual life as a congregation?

*(i.e. to be stronger, healthier, and more faithful to the gospel)*

When was your last Baptism?

When did you last ordain new elders and/or deacons?

Every church experiences occasional difficulties and problems. What area or areas of congregational life (or event or situation) give you the most concern?

What are your mission projects beyond the congregation?

Do you participate in any of the PC(USA) Special Offerings *(i.e. One Great Hour of Sharing, Pentecost Offering, Peace & Global Witness, and/or Christmas Joy)*?

If a gift of \$500,000 suddenly came to Session -- what would you do with it?

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**Elder and Session Development:** Being an elder can be real work. It can also be one of the most rewarding faith experiences we have.

What has been your greatest joy as an Elder -- given you the greatest sense of satisfaction?

Have you been helped and supported in your ministry as an Elder? If so, how?

What are your goals as a session and congregation -- short term and long term?  
Do you have plans for attaining them? And, can you share them with Presbytery?  
(*ex. membership development, mission, outreach, capital improvement*)

Do you have an intentional strategy for developing new leadership?  
(*ex. your own leadership training program(s), opportunities or ideas from Presbytery*)

What are your expectations of your pastor, Session, and congregation?  
Are they being met? Are they reasonable?

How do Session and pastor cooperate and support one another in ministry?

Is Session sensitive to the financial needs of the pastor?  
Is the congregation providing at least the Presbytery minimum compensation?

How do you plan for major maintenance costs?  
Are you familiar with the Presbytery's Revolving Fund for capital improvements?  
(*Be prepared to answer questions about this.*)

**Presbytery Relationship:** Presbytery exists to serve local congregations.  
(*COM Rep. is to encourage greater connection and participation with Presbytery.*)

**Have you benefited directly from Presbytery and/or the PC(USA)? If so, how?**  
(*Be prepared to suggest ways they may have benefited, such as support with a PNC; a grant from PDA after a flood; Presbytery Review of Records to help Clerks of Session with minutes and record keeping; assistance from Presbyters outside their congregation -- and YOU as a COM Rep.!*)

**How can Presbytery be of assistance to your congregation now or in the near future?**

**Are you aware of available Presbytery and PC(USA) resources?**  
(*Be prepared to offer examples of resources, such as Thursday Thoughts, website...*)

**Do you send a Commissioner to Presbytery Assemblies and hear a report at Session?**  
(*If yes, ask if this is helpful. If no or not clear about how Presbytery Assemblies relate to congregations, be prepared to respond. Recommend "Minutes in Seconds" as a resource and how to find them.*)

**Are you aware of how the Presbytery Unified Mission and Per Capita are used?**  
(*Be prepared to explain and encourage participation in paying these to help keep our resources and connectionalism available to all congregations.*)

**What would you most like to see Presbytery do in the next three years?**