

COMMITTEE FOR MINISTRY PROPOSAL AND FEEDBACK WE'VE RECEIVED
Presbytery of Susquehanna Valley
MAY 2017

Brief Review of the Proposal

The proposed idea: congregations are liaisons to other congregations.

Why? The Committee on Ministry is facing the challenge of being pulled in too many directions to minister as effectively as they desire.

Currently, each COM member is assigned as liaison to multiple congregations in the Presbytery, meaning some congregations are being overlooked simply because there is not enough energy or time.

We know that *all* of our congregations benefit immensely from connectional support.
So, how do we address this challenge?

Congregations are liaisons to other congregations.

Instead of having one liaison assigned to each congregation from the Committee on Ministry, congregations spend time in discussion together—learning from one another and supporting one another.

When specific issues arrive that need more direct attention,
(ex: assistance with mediation, a time of transition, small congregation support),
bring them to the Committee on Ministry and a team will be trained and ready to help.

Feedback We've Received in Regard to the Proposal

What do people like about the proposed COM plan for evolving the format of liaisons?

- There is a general understanding that the current liaison format could be improved. Most all responders understood and had empathy for the challenges the COM is facing.
- All those who responded agreed how important it is to have an outlet for sharing what is happening in their congregations, even when things are going well.
- They also agreed that they would appreciate having an opportunity to speak with other congregations in a liaison/partnership relationship and that this might be more effective than having one liaison assigned from COM who comes and observes a session meeting once a year.

What are the concerns about this plan?

- There is concern that representatives from the congregations be committed to attending these gatherings.
- There is a sense that the representatives should be the same so that trust can be built. (Not a new representative every time—at least one should be consistent.)
- The representatives need to be key leaders from their congregations who know the mission and the life of the church well. They also need to have a positive way of communicating to others and reporting back to their congregations.
- There is a concern that there may not be ample time during a Presbytery meeting for this kind of in-depth conversation *and* speaking over lunch does not seem to be sufficient.
- There is concern that the groups be well trained on how to communicate effectively and support one another.

Initial ideas for implementing the proposal while also addressing the concerns...

- *One idea:* each congregation commissions a team of key leaders from their congregation who will represent them and then report back to them. This team will only be required to meet with the other congregations once a year at a special Presbytery meeting. If people find a lot of benefit in this gathering, perhaps these partnerships could meet more frequently.
- *Thoughts about Timing:* there is general consent that having such a discussion during a regular Presbytery meeting is not effective. They felt that a special meeting, held in a central location, would be better. There could be a break with refreshments and lunch. Perhaps a presenter could even speak on a helpful topic regarding congregational development.
On the other hand, fewer individuals responded that they would be eager to meet during the business portion of a regular Presbytery meeting—they would be willing to postpone lunch to give time for such a discussion. No one felt it would be helpful to have such a discussion over lunch.
- *Format:* the format is crucial. Some responders want to be placed with similar size congregations so that they feel more open to talk about their specific needs, but others are curious about learning how different size churches operate and gaining ideas from them. Some responded that they would be open to being paired with different congregations each time to become more connectional with diverse congregations in the Presbytery—some felt they would open up more if they were paired with the same congregations each time. Most all agreed that there needs to be a good leader at the helm of each discussion group so that every voice is heard and so that respect is maintained. One individual thought it would be helpful to have a recorder in the group, too, so people could reflect on the discussion later, when they have time to process it more fully.