CLUSTER EVALUATION TASK FORCE
MANDATES and RESULTS
January 28, 2008

Done	**1. Review the ReVision plan, and in particular, the centrality of clusters.** (See attachment with ReVision section on Clusters.)
Done	**2. Find out what clusters have been functioning, how they were formed and how they function; ask for feedback regarding how the Presbytery might support the development of and on-going functioning of clusters including positive feedback.** Contact was made with the churches through a survey to each pastor or Clerk of Session with a high rate of response (>80%). We found that clustering is happening throughout the presbytery, informally and ecumenically, which leads us to make the following recommendation. **RECOMMENDATION TO REDEFINE "CLUSTER":** *A 'cluster' is defined as two or more Christian congregations, at least one of which is PC(USA), joining cooperatively to do ministry or mission. When funding is requested from the presbytery, the governing boards of each congregation must formally endorse the cluster's purpose. The projects need to be purposeful and reflect the mission of the Church to share the hope of Jesus Christ by bearing witness and addressing the needs of the community.*

Done	**3. Study the Administrative, Financial, and Personnel systems of the Presbytery and seek consultation of professionals in each area to determine the best avenues for the administrative, financial and personnel support of clusters.**
	 A gathering was held in October with representatives from these areas. Much discussion ensued, but we did not determine any Administrative, Financial or Personnel directives.
	
	 THOUGHTS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS:
	 1. To hire a staff person at the presbytery level whose primary purpose is to promote and facilitate clusters is not currently financially feasible and continues to foster a top-down model.
	 2. If a cluster's ministry requires paid staff, they should generally be hired at the local level instead of by the presbytery. This avoids the potential for negligent supervision according to the NYS Department of Labor and other liability issues including termination of employment. It also encourages the grass roots initiative of clusters and still allows for the possibility of funding from the presbytery and beyond.
	 3. Encourage staff and other leaders to use their current roles and knowledge to support clusters (i.e. plant "seeds") without making additional demands on their time. Examples:
	   - Build upon current "clusters" of clerks who gather each fall.
	   - Build upon opportunities for ideas and support that arise as (I)EP or COM members are out among churches.
	 4. Presbytery Council should encourage and celebrate clusters, communicating that this is a viable means of doing ministry. Council should provide fiscal oversight of Presbytery funds allocated to clusters, but it is not the Council's responsibility to facilitate clusters.
	 5. Expand funding opportunities to ecumenical clusters that *include* a Presbyterian church, as well as clusters *of* Presbyterian congregations.

Done	**4. Consult with congregations and sessions within the regions of the Presbytery, soliciting feedback relative to how the Presbytery might best nurture clusters without appropriating a top-down approach.**
	    A survey was sent to each church, with a 25-30% return. The information received
	     was helpful in that it confirmed the earlier information gleaned from pastors/clerks of session.
	
	    <u>**SUGGESTIONS TO CELEBRATE CLUSTERS AMONG CHURCHES:**</u>
	    1. Share success stories – at presbytery gatherings, website, etc.
	    2. Encourage clusters to be open to offer experience/expertise to others seeking to do the same.
	    3. From the surveys, a list of Ideas for Clustering has been put together that can be shared via the website or through other means. (See attachment)

Done	**5. Consult with other presbyteries that have developed a cluster (or district) focus.**
	    The IEP and our Task Force Chair both pursued this information. We received only two
	    responses, neither of which provided helpful information.

Done	**6. Propose a process for providing as much freedom at the lowest level possible in clustering, while maintaining appropriate accountability to the presbytery at large.**
	    <u>**RECOMMENDATIONS ABOUT FORMATION OF CLUSTERS**</u>
	    • Clusters are free to form as they choose and as they need; all that is necessary is one congregation inviting another congregation to share in some form of ministry/mission.
	    • We recommend the attached Funding Application Form for use when clusters seek presbytery funding.
	    <u>**RECOMMENDATIONS FOR APPROVAL PROCESS**</u>
	    • Funding requests from clusters composed solely of PC(USA) churches and clusters that include other Christian congregations shall be given equal consideration as to their programmatic merit. <u>All clusters are created equal!</u>
	    • Up to half of the funding available for clusters may be allocated from January to June, with the remaining half and any unused funds from the first part of the year available for allocation from July to December.
	    • Council is encouraged to be creative in allocating resources from appropriate Presbytery Funds. For example, if there is a designated Presbytery Fund that corresponds with a cluster's purpose, then it may also be considered as a source of funding in addition to the budget line item for clusters. In other words, all possible resources should be sought and used for the ministry of the clusters (i.e. Hunger Fund, Transformation, Peacemaking, etc.).

Done	**7. Outline what is expected in quarterly reports from clusters to Council, highlighting celebrations of ministry as well as appropriate accountability.**
	    <u>**THE ATTACHED CLUSTER REVIEW FORM IS RECOMMENDED FOR ADOPTION.**</u>
	    • This form can be used whether or not funding has been requested.
	    • For those clusters not receiving funding, the form is a suggested means of sharing the outcome of the cluster with the rest of the Presbytery, to celebrate the ministry and to inspire other future clusters.
	    For clusters receiving funding, the report should be submitted to Council within 30 days of the end of the project, or quarterly for projects lasting more than 3 months.

	8. Report back to the Council by its October meeting.
	    The date was postponed. The report will be sent to Council to discuss at its
	    February 20, 2008 meeting.

Re-Visioning the Presbytery of Susquehanna Valley
Final Report of the Re-Vision Team *February, 2005*

II. BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS/STRENGTHENING CONGREGATIONS

A. CHURCH CLUSTERS: JOINING IN CHRIST-CENTERED COMMUNITIES
Geographical, historical and cultural factors in our Presbytery invite a decentralized approach to connectional ministry. This was very evident in the listening sessions held last spring. Further discussion by the Re-Vision Team expanded this concept, suggesting that clusters become the central organizing principle in the Presbytery for building relationships and for strengthening our congregations for ministry and mission. The Re-Vision plan proposes an opportunity to test these questions: Can clusters help us live our Presbytery mission statement more effectively in the 21st century? Can we develop clusters not as another layer of bureaucracy but rather as a flexible tool promoting more effective shared ministry and mission by congregations?

Purpose of Church Clusters
What purpose would clusters serve that would give them an advantage over our current system?
> • **Serving congregations.** The closer the leadership of clusters is to the local churches, the better able they will be to serve the congregations within the clusters. The smaller numbers of congregations in a cluster will allow the Presbytery leadership to be more intimately familiar with the needs of each church.
> • **Encouraging congregations.** Too many of our congregations are discouraged because they are in survival mode. Vital mission gives life. Clusters of churches sharing vital mission and ministry opportunities will look beyond survival and be encouraged.
> • **Seeking to be faithful to our calling in Jesus Christ together. "Together" is the key.**

> Our churches are stretched to the limit when it comes to our financial and people resources. Sharing in worship and prayer together brings with it inspiration. Sharing in discipleship could bring together the resources needed for training of elders and deacons, confirmation classes, student ministries, and speakers who can help us grow in faith and develop skills. Sharing in ministry together would provide a broader base of support for the Committee on Ministry's resourcing to congregations, among other things. Sharing in mission together encourages even the smallest of our churches to see and participate in our vital common ministry.
> • **Enhancing mission and ministry.** Clusters will engage in activities that have discerning God's will as their origin and making disciples as their goal.

Structure of Church Clusters
With the assistance of the Interim Pastor to the Presbytery (IPP), churches are free to develop clusters to meet their needs and mission goals. Clusters will evolve over time. Here are some ideas, possibilities, and issues that might form the seed for starting cluster and to strengthen them as they grow:
> • **Overall Vision/Mission**: How each cluster fits into the mission/ministry of the individual church and the Presbytery in general;
> • **Cluster Vision/Mission**: A clear view of God's plan for each cluster, discerned and pursued by each cluster;
> • **Structure**: How many clusters; what geographic boundaries; what makes sense to the parties involved;
> • **Communication**: Organized way in which the clusters communicate with Presbytery and each other;
> • **Leadership**: Suggestions regarding how leadership could be developed and used; and
> • **Accountability**:

What happens if things go really wrong in a cluster
How Presbytery, Synod, GA support (resources, ideas, opportunities) gets
transferred to the cluster and among cluster churches
How clusters support each other in organized or serendipitous ways

Keeping in mind that, ideally, structure should flow from function and purpose, we foresee two types of church clusters evolving:

• **Geographic Clusters**: The primary function of these clusters is to do the mission and carry out the ministries that they feel called to, individually or in partnership with other nearby churches. Individual church ministries can expand to include other churches in the cluster or can be re- shaped into ministries in a wider region. New ministries can be developed by two or more churches and supported secondarily by the whole cluster. There will be some formal connection made to Presbytery Council and to other clusters. Yet this still leaves almost complete autonomy in terms of going out and making disciples.

• **Mission Clusters**: These might include small, mid, or big church clusters and may be geographically scattered, centered around a specific mission, and of limited duration.

Launching clusters will require considerable work and organization at the outset as well as ongoing evaluation by all involved. For that reason, Council, the Presbytery Pastor and the Presbytery staff will give priority to these efforts.

Examples of Clustering

Possibilities we as congregations might do better together than alone.

Governance
Share a Pastor
Joint Session Meetings
Elder, Deacon &/or Officer Training

Mission
CROP Walk
Kitchen Cupboard
Chow for Children
Meals on Wheels
UNICEF Collection
Mission Trips
Countryside Care Center
Community Mission

Christian Education / Youth
VBS, Vacation Church School
Youth Activities: bowling, roller skating, etc.
Confirmation Training and Classes

Discipleship
Weekly Community Prayer Service
Weekly Pastors' Lectionary Study
Bible Study
Special Speakers

Worship
World Day of Prayer
Christian Unity Week celebrations
Men's Palm Sunday Breakfast
Memorial Day Service
High School Graduation Baccalaureate Service
Communion
Children's Wednesday Night Church
Easter Service
Thanksgiving Service
Maundy Thursday Service
Good Friday Service
Holy Week events and services
Joint Services
Lenten series
Lenten Dinners

Fellowship
Community Dinners
Fund Raising Dinners
Special Celebrations (Church Bicentennials)

Special Resources
Sharing Music Resources
Special Music Events
Covenant Players

SVP Cluster Funding Application

Purpose of the Cluster:

_____

_____

Details:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Churches Involved:

Church Name:	Location:	Date of Governing Board Endorsement:
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Funds Requested from the Presbytery: $_____

     Overall Budget of the Project $_____

     If this cluster contains non-PC(USA) congregations, have you ☐ requested or ☐ been granted funds

     from another source? $_____ requested $_____ granted.

     From what source: _____

How will the money be used?

_____

_____

_____

How will you evaluate or measure the effort?

_____

_____

_____

Are you willing to share with the Presbytery the successes and failures of this endeavor? YES / NO

SVP Cluster Review Form

*"The Presbytery of Susquehanna Valley lives to serve and encourage congregations
as we together seek to be faithful to our calling in Jesus Christ."*

*A 'cluster' is defined as two or more Christian congregations, at least one of which is
PC(USA), joining cooperatively to do ministry or mission. When funding is requested from the
presbytery, the governing boards of each congregation must formally endorse the cluster's
purpose. The projects need to be purposeful and reflect the mission of the Church to share the
hope of Jesus Christ by bearing witness and addressing the needs of the community.*

Purpose of the Cluster:

_____

_____

Churches Involved: Church Name: Location:

                                        _____   _____

                                        _____   _____

                                        _____   _____

                                        _____   _____

Was the Project Worthwhile?   _____
What would you celebrate from this experience?

_____

_____

_____

Would you do it again?   _____

What did you learn?

_____

_____

_____

What would you do differently?

_____

_____

_____

For Clusters Receiving Funds from the Presbytery:

*Cluster Reviews must be given to the Presbytery Council within 30 days of the end of the project or
quarterly for projects going beyond 3 months.*

Please give a summary of how the money was used?

_____

_____