

**APPENDIX B  
COMPLETE FOCUS GROUP NOTES**

**Focus Group # 1**

**WHAT ARE SOME OF THE CHALLENGES YOUR CONGREGATION FACES?  
WHAT ARE SOME OF THE BARRIERS THAT KEEP YOUR CONGREGATION  
FROM BEING AS EFFECTIVE IN MINISTRY AS IT MIGHT BE?**

1. lack of a common, unified, Christ-centered vision (1)
2. missing a critical mass (1)
3. racism – real but not overt
4. burned out lay people (1)
5. bridging various gaps
6. maintenance mentality (1)
7. new folk bring more needs than gifts
8. bureaucracy
9. difficulty in enlisting talents
10. lack of follow through on part of recruited leaders
11. worship wars (1)
12. upper judicatory activity: publicity on GA or Synod actions causing stress on congregations: making lay folks mad, or confused, or both
13. not enough money – cost of running the church (large buildings etc) (1)
14. design of building not suitable to today's needs for ministry
15. one hour on a Sunday syndrome
16. competition from the culture on Sundays
17. neighborhood perceived as dangerous
18. over-churched (other Presbyterian churches, esp. new ones, too close)
19. memory of the 1950's (2+)
20. need for more deeper empowerment of the laity (2)
21. atmosphere of fatigue (2)
22. connectionalism not felt
23. smaller church feels like presbytery just wants their land
24. ineffective communication (1)
25. new members not Presbyterian in background – not familiar with ethos, polity etc.
26. being Presbyterian – or main line (1)

**WHAT ARE THE THREE ITEMS YOU THINK SHOULD BE GIVEN THE GREATEST PRIORITY?**

(votes in parentheses above)

1. summary comment after the vote: lack of missional focus and captivity to the past

**WHAT DO YOU THINK ARE THE THREE MOST IMPORTANT ROLES FOR A PRESBYTERY?**

1. provide vision (clear, inspiring) for ministry in our area or for being the church together

2. supervising its own membership – setting boundaries (i.e. acceptable range of theological discourse for ministers)
3. cultivate / nurture leaders
4. care for / encourage churches
5. pastoral care to pastors and other church professionals
6. area and regional publicity
7. promote community – foster connections and networking
8. oversight of churches and the relationship with professionals
9. everything related to candidacy: ordination / calling / hiring / clergy, CLP's etc.
10. strategic decisions re ministry of congregations (e.g. location)
11. fostering healthy spiritual environment
12. educating who we are
13. provide resources for congregations
14. leadership development for congregations (put resource center on the road)
15. maintain a talent bank

**WHAT ARE SOME OF THE STRENGTHS OF THIS PRESBYTERY AS IT WORKS W/ CONGREGATIONS?**

1. superb stated clerk (strong constitutional and parliamentary help)
2. strong elected officers
3. resource center – responds to requests for help; responsive to requests for new resources to get
4. financial staff
5. fostered clusters: i.e. Eastern Area, Council of Urban Churches
6. blue ribbon panel – keeps us informed and gives feedback
7. administrative commissions effective in crisis situations

**WHAT ARE SOME OF THE CHALLENGES OR BARRIERS THIS PRESBYTERY FACES AS IT WORKS WITH CONGREGATIONS?**

1. need EP time for pastoral care
2. lack of trust (churches of presbytery, also between churches, and between churches and church professionals)
3. no sense of relevance of presbytery
4. people expect too much of presbytery: unreasonable expectation
5. lack of confidentiality: have been significant breaches with administrative commissions:
6. i.e. info about a pastor circulating PIF got out
7. sarcasm / harshness / skepticism heard at presbytery offices sometimes; sometimes from all of us
8. how to negotiate theological diversity
9. going through the motions, not really caring
10. where do I turn for help?
11. lack of a strategy for pastoral care / nurture
12. lay leader and pastoral fatigue
13. ineffective EP leadership: person and system
14. not enough money to do all that is needed doing

**LOOK BACK OVER LIST OF ISSUES YOU SUGGESTED SHOULD BE GIVEN PRIORITY FOR LOCAL CONGREGATIONS. AS YOU THINK ABOUT THE ROLE OF THE PRESBYTERY, WHAT SUGGESTIONS CAN YOU MAKE AS TO HOW THE PRESBYTERY MIGHT HELP LOCAL CONGREGATIONS WITH ANY OF THESE ISSUES?**

1. restructure, at least have the conversation: for what? how do it?
2. defining and buying into a mission/vision for the presbytery
3. to know why it exists
4. put a vision in writing: but sometimes, vision statements are meaningless.
5. resource center road show – intentionally going out to the churches
6. connecting the haves and the have nots (church to church)
7. full time staff person to work with COM for equipping and pastoral care
8. need early warning system for troubles in churches
9. find a way to get pastors/elders talking about Jesus
10. create renewal opportunities for pastors (without agendas)
11. meet less often; meet sometimes on Saturdays or during weekday? try a variety of days and times
12. sit down at tables together

**ARE THERE ANY OTHER CONCERNS, ISSUES, OR DREAMS YOU WOULD LIKE TO TELL THE COUNCIL ABOUT?**

1. how does presbytery reflect the leaders / pastors / churches?
2. have we been unfair in trying to be fair?
3. some feel squeezed out
4. conservative pastors feel they don't have access to leadership positions
5. not a balanced with conservative / liberal in leadership
6. seek a clear strategy for urban ministry
7. pastors don't really see themselves as members of the presbytery
8. need a mentoring system for new pastors

**Focus Group #2**

**WHAT ARE SOME OF THE CHALLENGES YOUR CONGREGATION FACES? WHAT ARE SOME OF THE BARRIERS THAT KEEP YOUR CONGREGATION FROM BEING AS EFFECTIVE IN MINISTRY AS IT MIGHT BE?**

1. no first time visitors (1)
2. attitude / perspective toward visitors: kept at arm's length and on outside edges (1)
3. stretching staff beyond reasonable expectations
4. big back door – people leave with no follow up (1)
5. cycle of not having enough money to pay staff that were volunteers (larger burden on budget which has increased cost)
6. less volunteer time (2 income family or single parent family leads to shrinking time to volunteer and be involved)
7. changing community – socio-economic change (1)
8. decline in the schools

9. 'we have a lot of old people' excuse
10. aging stewards – major contributors are in the traditional service (3)
11. growing community but church not getting its share
12. very good but very tight leadership core (80-20 rule incarnate): closed group, not expanding
13. building an albatross – not easily modified and not getting attention needs – needs adaptations and not suitable for today
14. debt service is 30% of budget – but still not all we need
15. hard to start and maintain small groups (2)
16. changing culture of participation

**WHAT ARE THE THREE ITEMS YOU THINK SHOULD BE GIVEN THE GREATEST PRIORITY?**

(votes in parentheses above)

**WHAT DO YOU THINK ARE THE THREE MOST IMPORTANT ROLES FOR A PRESBYTERY?**

1. promote / oversee missions
2. help congregations – share information, resources
3. break down congregational isolation
4. support clergy
5. gate keeping on clergy and candidates
6. minimize to basic work: what must presbytery do? self-examination needed
7. area witness – moral discourse takes place and moral message given
8. become transparent: money and activities

**WHAT ARE SOME OF THE STRENGTHS OF THIS PRESBYTERY AS IT WORKS W/ CONGREGATIONS?**

1. compact geographically
2. staff and volunteers
3. ethnic concerns taken seriously
4. most meetings reasonably stress free? too tired?
5. 60% of the churches care
6. email communications

**WHAT ARE SOME OF THE CHALLENGES OR BARRIERS THIS PRESBYTERY FACES AS IT WORKS WITH CONGREGATIONS?**

1. culture is driving us to congregationalism
2. interaction between congregations and presbytery infrequent and only at times of stress
3. finances that restrict our mission
4. dearth of ideas about mission
5. low energy – tired
6. too few people wearing too many hats
7. ongoing commitments to certain programs without money from presbytery would die – how choose? how cut off? how continue?
8. don't know how to start congregations cheaply

9. history of distrust leads us to look at everything now with a questioning eye

**LOOK BACK OVER LIST OF ISSUES YOU SUGGESTED SHOULD BE GIVEN PRIORITY FOR LOCAL CONGREGATIONS. AS YOU THINK ABOUT THE ROLE OF THE PRESBYTERY, WHAT SUGGESTIONS CAN YOU MAKE AS TO HOW THE PRESBYTERY MIGHT HELP LOCAL CONGREGATIONS WITH ANY OF THESE ISSUES?**

1. recall past program leadership day – sharing, training, networking
2. train stewardship committee / pastors to talk about money
3. training session on visitors – how to get them, how to keep them
4. mission as an opportunity to engage and invite
5. presbytery mission work day – witness and serve
6. cheerleader for where there are good things happening
7. communications
8. affirm the goodness of small congregations

**ARE THERE ANY OTHER CONCERNS, ISSUES, OR DREAMS YOU WOULD LIKE TO TELL THE COUNCIL ABOUT?**

1. attitude – I'm here to help, not just make you jump through hoops
2. we aren't who we were 25 years ago – let's acknowledge it
3. want to feel good about being Presbyterian
4. trust is not there between those who are pushing for greater diversity in ordination and broader interpretation of scripture and those who are satisfied with the status quo
5. program issues become staffing issues – must deal with this: trying to staff the GP a real thorn
6. study needs to be as broad as possible – not rushed – with regular updates and call to prayer
7. how do we get churches interested in / passion about a common idea / program / initiative so that we can work together on it and so we can know each other better?
8. can we learn from other presbyteries?
9. most folks in congregations would say, 'just don't make things hard for us.'

**Focus Group #3**

**WHAT ARE SOME OF THE CHALLENGES YOUR CONGREGATION FACES? WHAT ARE SOME OF THE BARRIERS THAT KEEP YOUR CONGREGATION FROM BEING AS EFFECTIVE IN MINISTRY AS IT MIGHT BE?**

1. church 'my way'
2. outreach – must grow because people dying with no replacements (transition and turnover), must grow numerically (huge debt to serve) (6)
3. geography – hard to attract clergy because there are no other things to do
4. attendance sporadic means lack of consistency in Sunday school
5. history of congregation – old conflicts continue to define personality and spirit of congregation (1)

6. growth of Vineyard churches etc makes PCUSA look boring and irrelevant – competition is stiff – missing the wave of the spirit
7. cultural difficulty in making church connectional – attitude of ‘what are they going to do for us’ and ‘what have they done for us’ (1)
8. sense that you should lay on a new organization (1)
9. self-image is poor – question why they are not doing what others are (1)
10. dearth of 18-35 year olds
11. conflict between own desires – double message: want kids but not the way they dress
12. on-going discussion regarding ordination standards
13. pulling independent minded people together – ignore presbytery, question whether they should be Presbyterian
14. small church used to yoke, but now don’t want to – can’t work together or survive alone
15. spiritual longing – transformation and growth and equipping for ministry (4)
16. spiritual and numerical growth
17. difficult being connectional (2)

**WHAT ARE THE THREE ITEMS YOU THINK SHOULD BE GIVEN THE GREATEST PRIORITY?**

(votes in parenthesis above)

**WHAT DO YOU THINK ARE THE THREE MOST IMPORTANT ROLES FOR A PRESBYTERY?**

1. leadership
2. ministry development – enable and encourage and develop ministry (drop theological agendas)
3. listen to concerns and meet needs
4. be invisibly effective
5. be supportive
6. train churches in spiritual growth
7. healing wounds (theological conflicts to ministering to pastors)
8. develop structures that move beyond ongoing conflicts – build joint belief and practice
9. facilitating not impeding connectionalism – including urban, rural, city, country
10. encouraging when churches do something well
11. coordinate mission

**WHAT ARE SOME OF THE STRENGTHS OF THIS PRESBYTERY AS IT WORKS W/ CONGREGATIONS?**

1. wonderful people – staff / lay / clergy
2. friendly and exciting
3. striving hard to do God’s will and the right thing
4. desire to glorify God
5. team oriented
6. diversity – theological / geographical / numerical
7. connecting with people I know
8. worship well together
9. staff is accessible

10. permission-giving
11. currently being open to transition process
12. love for Presbyterian way of doing things

**WHAT ARE SOME OF THE CHALLENGES OR BARRIERS THIS PRESBYTERY FACES AS IT WORKS WITH CONGREGATIONS?**

1. to revisit who we are and where we're going (self-study)
2. understaffed / people in wrong positions / staff need training
3. not a lot of resources
4. beyond damage control
5. develop leadership team to redefine direction – able to face challenges
6. diversity – extremes make it harder
7. lack of respect and courtesy
8. lay leadership 'tapped out'
9. too much organization (scrap and start again)
10. non-involvement
11. independent spirit (esp. eastern area)
12. larger churches have the resources
13. meetings averse
14. fatigue
15. some never interested
16. lack of support
17. controversy
18. busy
19. dissatisfaction from previous involvement
20. distance
21. frustration
22. can we be open to deep change?
23. 2 denominations in one
24. do we know who we are and why we are?

**LOOK BACK OVER LIST OF ISSUES YOU SUGGESTED SHOULD BE GIVEN PRIORITY FOR LOCAL CONGREGATIONS. AS YOU THINK ABOUT THE ROLE OF THE PRESBYTERY, WHAT SUGGESTIONS CAN YOU MAKE AS TO HOW THE PRESBYTERY MIGHT HELP LOCAL CONGREGATIONS WITH ANY OF THESE ISSUES?**

1. parish idea – develop new models of resourcing – enabling people in ministry – not top down
2. those working with local churches should be bridge builders (with good skills and personality for it)
3. nominating process
4. don't have large church leaders telling small churches what to do – need small churches part of the decision making
5. make structure representative of our diversity
6. rename presbytery
7. excitement and new ideas

8. listen to needs of congregations and their leaders
9. study what other presbyteries have done right
10. communicate between various parts of presbytery structure
11. best communication delivery systems possible
12. clear cut and focused priorities made known (not shot gun)
13. revisit mission and purpose – help us evaluate
14. streamline the system
15. historical study of how we did things
16. need redundancy in communications (eastern area more verbal than written)

**ARE THERE ANY OTHER CONCERNS, ISSUES, OR DREAMS YOU WOULD LIKE TO TELL THE COUNCIL ABOUT?**

1. challenge of litigation
2. need for reassurance
3. fear
4. how to develop question process for ordination – both sides treated fairly and civilly
5. grieving over loss of Sam – 10 year presence
6. staff speaks ‘ex-cathedra’ – perception that they speak for presbytery
7. sense among many that staff is the enemy and vice-versa
8. elephant in the room – speaking of these issues
9. no common authority / language

**Focus Group # 4**

**WHAT ARE SOME OF THE CHALLENGES YOUR CONGREGATION FACES?  
WHAT ARE SOME OF THE BARRIERS THAT KEEP YOUR CONGREGATION FROM BEING AS EFFECTIVE IN MINISTRY AS IT MIGHT BE?**

1. sense of being ‘too small’ – defeated by their size
2. tired of being one issue church (1)
3. lack of energetic leaders – tired out
4. think they don’t have the money they need – leads to want more members to get their money
5. congregation a loner
6. nothing for the few teens and no idea how to do ministry with only a few
7. mesmerized by entertainment – competition with sports (1)
8. no interest in mission beyond themselves
9. no focus for interest in missions (1)
10. fear of talking about volatile issues – do big, so divert our attention to other matters (4)
11. highly educated congregation is a poorly educated area (gap between congregation and town in culture, money, theology) (1)
12. unspoken mission is institutional survival (2)
13. rate of cultural change is so great, that people need a place where they can be in control (1)
14. perceive selves to be old and graying
15. limited by land locked building



16. alcohol and drug abuse
17. busy lives, dispersed members – setting times for meetings is difficult (1)

**WHAT ARE THE THREE ITEMS YOU THINK SHOULD BE GIVEN THE GREATEST PRIORITY?**

(votes in parenthesis above)

**WHAT DO YOU THINK ARE THE THREE MOST IMPORTANT ROLES FOR A PRESBYTERY?**

1. invigorating spirit – enrich spiritual lives of those who participate in it
2. establish and maintain solid contact with and support for congregations and their clergy
3. encourage discernment and not just debate – not as simple as either/or, divisive, win-lose, argumentative
4. provide resources to congregations – education, stewardship, mission support
5. modeling transformed values
6. provide broader context of both presbytery and national church
7. communication
8. mission effort – continual, present engaged mission focus

**WHAT ARE SOME OF THE STRENGTHS OF THIS PRESBYTERY AS IT WORKS W/ CONGREGATIONS?**

1. training lay pastors
2. always nice on the phone – responsive
3. well organized staff
4. not well organized staff
5. COM liaison worked well and was helpful
6. EAC – know one another
7. multi-cultural staff – good modeling
8. good staff contact with committees
9. if you ask for help, good resources available
10. use of electronic information

**WHAT ARE SOME OF THE CHALLENGES OR BARRIERS THIS PRESBYTERY FACES AS IT WORKS WITH CONGREGATIONS?**

1. distance (geographical)
2. more focus on urban than rural congregations, more focus on suburban than on city urban
3. financial challenge: per capita and giving
4. helping people know what resources are available – communication
5. more re-active than pro-active – don't challenge status quo or deal with problems openly)
6. passive-aggressive behavior
7. trust challenge (lack of trust) between churches of all kinds and sizes
8. fear of talking about volatile issues
9. being pastoral to pastors and congregations – not happening consistently
10. spiritual formation resources – not part of any staff job description
11. sense of we're there

**LOOK BACK OVER LIST OF ISSUES YOU SUGGESTED SHOULD BE GIVEN PRIORITY FOR LOCAL CONGREGATIONS. AS YOU THINK ABOUT THE ROLE OF THE PRESBYTERY, WHAT SUGGESTIONS CAN YOU MAKE AS TO HOW THE PRESBYTERY MIGHT HELP LOCAL CONGREGATIONS WITH ANY OF THESE ISSUES?**

1. articulate 'who we are' as presbytery, denomination in 21<sup>st</sup> century
2. listen to congregations and pastors
3. encourage / enrich pastors – help them grow spiritually as they participate
4. organize to function as spiritual director
5. network of communication – dialogue flow
6. expand Cin-Miami Pastoral Institute (more frequent) – pastoral care, cultural change learning, theological exploration
7. someone who has understanding of education in all functions / roles
8. encourage experimentation with all models of worship, ministry, education etc...
9. meet outdoors

**ARE THERE ANY OTHER CONCERNS, ISSUES, OR DREAMS YOU WOULD LIKE TO TELL THE COUNCIL ABOUT?**

1. very encouraged by these meetings – start of process – need to encourage people to be patient
2. focus on spiritual discernment
3. stop using disposable cups and stuff
4. have the freedom to fail in the process – don't tip toe so much that can't risk
5. maybe we learned from last time!
6. we will hold 'them' in our prayers – encourage them to have 'spiritual strength' as a priority for any hiring

**Focus Group # 5**

**WHAT ARE SOME OF THE CHALLENGES YOUR CONGREGATION FACES?  
WHAT ARE SOME OF THE BARRIERS THAT KEEP YOUR CONGREGATION FROM BEING AS EFFECTIVE IN MINISTRY AS IT MIGHT BE?**

1. neighborhood demographics – changing as people move out – many older members left in while younger members move out for better schools (1)
2. missing generation in church (20's-30's) (3)
3. leadership – do not know what it means – both lay and clergy (4)
4. expanding programs with strategic plan
5. mobilizing the laity is difficult work (Cruise Ship analogy and 20-80 rule) (1)
6. connecting with developing religious culture in America – 'cafeteria style'
7. church as refuge from culture – place of stability (1)
8. inward focus instead of outward focus
9. money – financial resources
10. old building cost escalating to maintain and improve
11. implementing vision and not having unifying purpose (3)
12. church need to be able to say no to some programs – trying to be everything to everyone

13. aging congregations – less energy and higher pastoral load
14. increasing dysfunction and internal disagreement in leadership
15. level of distrust with governing bodies
16. traditional committee structure hung upon the system (1)

**WHAT ARE THE THREE ITEMS YOU THINK SHOULD BE GIVEN THE GREATEST PRIORITY?**

(votes in parenthesis above)

**WHAT DO YOU THINK ARE THE THREE MOST IMPORTANT ROLES FOR A PRESBYTERY?**

1. support churches: strengthen and nurture pastors and congregations
2. leadership training and development (why not like Willow Creek Association?)
3. clearing house – churches, support, resources etc
4. holistic stewardship of resources – people, money property
5. focus on enabling the reaching of the unchurched
6. develop vision for presbytery – help congregations develop their own vision
7. mission clarification in a dynamic way – changed with changing needs
8. excellence in theology and worship – know where resources for today's works are – teach and direct
9. traveling road show

**WHAT ARE SOME OF THE STRENGTHS OF THIS PRESBYTERY AS IT WORKS W/ CONGREGATIONS?**

1. willingness to tackle difficult issues (not all agree on this)
2. Yvette
3. all staff – helpful, accessible, friendly, supportive
4. COM – thoughtful
5. diversity – theological, size, geography, communities
6. polity
7. committees – some very effective ones

**WHAT ARE SOME OF THE CHALLENGES OR BARRIERS THIS PRESBYTERY FACES AS IT WORKS WITH CONGREGATIONS?**

1. too many committees
2. diversity
3. trust
4. lack of common goals
5. lack of understanding re connectional system
6. wearying conflicts
7. small and declining churches – churches on life-support
8. resources tied up in buildings – stewardship
9. leadership
10. major division in theology
11. demographic challenge in the changes
12. what does a presbytery do – why does it exist?

13. mission within the bounds of the presbytery – need to refresh our mission
14. what are we doing and who are doing it with?
15. camp and conference issue
16. where to go to hear a service in Spanish?
17. pastor independent, won't work together – lack of teamwork and collegiality
18. culture of lack of support for pastors

**LOOK BACK OVER LIST OF ISSUES YOU SUGGESTED SHOULD BE GIVEN PRIORITY FOR LOCAL CONGREGATIONS. AS YOU THINK ABOUT THE ROLE OF THE PRESBYTERY, WHAT SUGGESTIONS CAN YOU MAKE AS TO HOW THE PRESBYTERY MIGHT HELP LOCAL CONGREGATIONS WITH ANY OF THESE ISSUES?**

1. list what must do (book of order requirements) – need administrative tools to do, all the rest have some choices
2. model of accountability for pastors in the context of leadership – how are pastors accountable to pastors
3. pastoral care for pastors – more formal ways to connect and support pastors – put staff for this back in the structure?
4. pick one thing on congregational challenge list and focus on it – don't try to do it all – whatever it is, really tackle together
5. task force focus on small church churches, plateau suburban churches, ministry to other cultures
6. have churches mentor other churches that face similar problems
7. clearing house for ideas – skills availability across the board – internal consultancy
8. leadership development

**ARE THERE ANY OTHER CONCERNS, ISSUES, OR DREAMS YOU WOULD LIKE TO TELL THE COUNCIL ABOUT?**

1. council structure – huge disconnect on presbytery level – related to council set up (at large versus committee chairs) – need more input to council by committees
2. meetings: need to do something – not sure what is the purpose – use consent agenda, need a break for fellowship, has become a place of last resort for influence
3. need a focus on communications
4. resource center – we don't all know what is in there – is not being used
5. Sabbath day for pastors and elders
6. presbyteries to check out: San Joaquin and Shenango

**Focus Group # 6**

**WHAT ARE SOME OF THE CHALLENGES YOUR CONGREGATION FACES? WHAT ARE SOME OF THE BARRIERS THAT KEEP YOUR CONGREGATION FROM BEING AS EFFECTIVE IN MINISTRY AS IT MIGHT BE?**

1. budgetary restraints
2. growth – its happening and bringing challenges (like expanding into a new building) (1)
3. locked in community – 95% of members live in our town – how reach beyond to county

4. mission: don't have one, clear mission are e enthusiastic and supportive of (lots of smaller ones, all over the place)
5. so busy running the church, aren't being the church
6. time: people so busy, are 'fitting church in,' hard to get volunteers (4)
7. youth, can't keep them interested or involved – if have them, they move on (1)
8. hit a ceiling after certain amount of growth (1)
9. getting former mega church people
10. also have long timers from smaller days
11. people want small church feel but large church programs (1)
12. still feeling effects of trauma in past
13. lower numbers in lower grades
14. impact / reverberation of publicity over fights on ordination
15. lack of connection church to church

**WHAT ARE THE THREE ITEMS YOU THINK SHOULD BE GIVEN THE GREATEST PRIORITY?**

(votes in parenthesis above)

**WHAT DO YOU THINK ARE THE THREE MOST IMPORTANT ROLES FOR A PRESBYTERY?**

1. administrative – statistics, paperwork, record keeping, insurance, legal matters, property matters (group disagree if this important)
2. provide written and human resources
3. conduit through which we connect: people to people, church to church, people to resource etc.
4. support for pastors: cultivate and nurture them
5. work with the congregations to help them grow and prosper – provide guidance when needed
6. opportunities for mission, training, rallies etc that some churches can't do on own

**WHAT ARE SOME OF THE STRENGTHS OF THIS PRESBYTERY AS IT WORKS W/ CONGREGATIONS?**

1. geographically compact compared to some
2. some awesome people – gifted, talented
3. organizational foundations

**WHAT ARE SOME OF THE CHALLENGES OR BARRIERS THIS PRESBYTERY FACES AS IT WORKS WITH CONGREGATIONS?**

1. very difficult to find people to serve on committees (long meetings, not productive meetings, not effective, long commitments, busy at own church, people stretched just doing multiple administrative commissions)
2. tried to be pro-active and cutting edge, but has hit a lot of resistance
3. no education committee or staff responsible for that area – stuff happening ad hoc
4. money??!!
5. making choices regarding staff patterns
6. are we too heavily committee-ed (i.e. too many committees?)

7. confusion over who accountable for what

**LOOK BACK OVER LIST OF ISSUES YOU SUGGESTED SHOULD BE GIVEN PRIORITY FOR LOCAL CONGREGATIONS. AS YOU THINK ABOUT THE ROLE OF THE PRESBYTERY, WHAT SUGGESTIONS CAN YOU MAKE AS TO HOW THE PRESBYTERY MIGHT HELP LOCAL CONGREGATIONS WITH ANY OF THESE ISSUES?**

1. not sure how help with time problem – maybe things we can learn about it
2. organize resources: strong resource center and staff who administers or connected to training

**ARE THERE ANY OTHER CONCERNS, ISSUES, OR DREAMS YOU WOULD LIKE TO TELL THE COUNCIL ABOUT?**

### Focus Group # 7

**WHAT ARE SOME OF THE CHALLENGES YOUR CONGREGATION FACES? WHAT ARE SOME OF THE BARRIERS THAT KEEP YOUR CONGREGATION FROM BEING AS EFFECTIVE IN MINISTRY AS IT MIGHT BE?**

1. music programs can take a lot of energy
2. changing demographics in the community and church (2)
3. competition from other organizations and sports (2)
4. setting priorities – too many people with different ideas (1)
5. maintenance ministry for two generations (1)
6. the building (2)
7. tenants or lack there of (2)
8. location (1)
9. difficulty of getting new people in – keeping pace with turnover and incorporation of new people (3)
10. finances / money – limitations (2)
11. technological society
12. competition with other churches, esp. mega churches and non-denominational churches
13. being ignored or ostracized by the presbytery
14. conflict in the church around homosexuality (1)
15. so many administrative commissions, using of resources
16. communication (1)
17. lack of children's ministry
18. aging congregation (1)
19. cost of doing church
20. finding staff
21. not having mutual relations with other churches in community
22. declining membership
23. not a lot of excitement (1)
24. presbytery processes – how long it takes

25. something missing in what we are offering – are we just baby-sitting our congregations?  
(5)

**WHAT ARE THE THREE ITEMS YOU THINK SHOULD BE GIVEN THE GREATEST PRIORITY?**

(votes in parenthesis above)

**WHAT DO YOU THINK ARE THE THREE MOST IMPORTANT ROLES FOR A PRESBYTERY?**

1. resource for congregations (provide for ministry of congregations)
2. mutual building up
3. vision and enthusiasm
4. empowering individual congregations
5. nurturing pastors and leadership
6. where all congregations come together on common ground
7. regional worship
8. a place for potential ministries of presbytery – what can do better together rather than alone – sort that out
9. partnership
10. marshalling energy of all the churches
11. trusted place to talk
12. political statements
13. oversee the big picture
14. think through how might need to help congregations leave / die / merge etc

**WHAT ARE SOME OF THE STRENGTHS OF THIS PRESBYTERY AS IT WORKS WITH CONGREGATIONS?**

1. leaders (lay and clergy) serving at all levels of denomination
2. promotes dialogue or at least debate
3. huge number of extremely caring and motivated people
4. Yvette and her involvement in churches – she cares
5. Carol, office folk: good experiences
6. partnerships
7. office facilities
8. have gone from calling names to more respectful process (not everyone agrees on this: some say no progress at all)
9. somewhat progressive in some areas (i.e. CLP program)
10. move forward on priority of youth
11. wonderful group of intense people
12. untapped potential

**WHAT ARE SOME OF THE CHALLENGES OR BARRIERS THIS PRESBYTERY FACES AS IT WORKS WITH CONGREGATIONS?**

1. changing demographics of the whole presbytery
2. side-lining of the main line
3. variety of churches: rural, urban, suburban, large, small

4. small churches in survival mode and not knowing what to do
5. how much more energy we are using to preserve the institution
6. Yvette and offices: seen by some as not helpful or great
7. contemporary issues, community problems, lack of ideas
8. no support or care for those who are evangelical and conservative – put down and discounted
9. liberals feel put down and discounted, not by staff but by system
10. can't figure out how to live oneness in Christ and our diversity
11. council was downsized to enable it to be creative and innovative, but it has not been
12. cumbersome administratively
13. lack of leadership – don't know who to go to
14. can't get past history
15. fear of setting precedents
16. no trust
17. if social justice were good, we would be starved (could not staff social justice committee and stuff is happening elsewhere)
18. no support for evangelism
19. money / budget
20. church starts, what are we doing? not much
21. communication
22. finding pastoral leadership
23. don't have an understanding of what we want to look like in 10 years
24. office building
25. inclusiveness – not very inclusive

**LOOK BACK OVER LIST OF ISSUES YOU SUGGESTED SHOULD BE GIVEN PRIORITY FOR LOCAL CONGREGATIONS. AS YOU THINK ABOUT THE ROLE OF THE PRESBYTERY, WHAT SUGGESTIONS CAN YOU MAKE AS TO HOW THE PRESBYTERY MIGHT HELP LOCAL CONGREGATIONS WITH ANY OF THESE ISSUES?**

1. agree on a purpose for presbytery (dump the drawer out and only put back what is needed)
2. make meetings more interesting and helpful
3. identifying leaders – training, nurturing, use presbytery leader roles to develop leaders rather than 'pay off'
4. get a real nominating committee
5. don't let go of good leaders – use moderators in other ways more often
6. empowerment of churches, to accomplish what they can – resources, training
7. leverage the larger scale to benefit the smaller scale
8. fire anyone who receives a paycheck, replace with due process
9. create community among pastoral leadership
10. pastoral care for pastors
11. worship and sing together, more preaching, balanced representation of convictions
12. candidates preach
13. examine ministers who come on the floor



14. condense the business at meetings (use omnibus motion) and make reason together around mission facing part of the community
15. develop trust so we can empower committees to do a lot more
16. build up the body while together

**ARE THERE ANY OTHER CONCERNS, ISSUES, OR DREAMS YOU WOULD LIKE TO TELL THE COUNCIL ABOUT?**

1. don't have a lot of hope for this
2. council be open – tell us what you are paying the consultant – tell us more
3. tell us about administrative commission reports
4. think outside the box
5. set aside the GP search committee
6. trying to do things at once – search for an EP and transform – get transformation done first
7. get consultation from synod and other presbyteries
8. wouldn't let a church do this
9. if nothing comes out of this, let's not do it again

**Focus Group # 8**

**WHAT ARE SOME OF THE CHALLENGES YOUR CONGREGATION FACES?  
WHAT ARE SOME OF THE BARRIERS THAT KEEP YOUR CONGREGATION FROM BEING AS EFFECTIVE IN MINISTRY AS IT MIGHT BE?**

1. have 2 diverse worship styles without creating a divided congregation (2)
2. leadership weak – doesn't understand Presbyterianism – and looking inward
3. growth limited by isolation
4. growth fast as community grows – challenge of integrating new people
5. aging membership (2)
6. members don't want change
7. high activity level without financial support (2)
8. demands of old building (1)
9. limited pastoral function (marriage, sacraments) (1)
10. congregation tired and weary
11. changing neighborhood demographics
12. mindset about ministry – who is there to serve? (1)
13. social pressures and priorities versus church priorities (1)
14. presbytery – them versus us (2)
15. low sense of empowerment
16. leadership corps have been around too long – time for newer younger leadership
17. young people don't want to do presbytery (1)
18. size is larger than current model of operation (2)
19. don't understand how to transform themselves (2)
20. keeping all ages and families included (3)

**WHAT ARE THE THREE ITEMS YOU THINK SHOULD BE GIVEN THE GREATEST PRIORITY?**

(votes in parenthesis above)

**WHAT DO YOU THINK ARE THE THREE MOST IMPORTANT ROLES FOR A PRESBYTERY?**

1. new church development in growing areas
2. oversight of pastors and congregations
3. proactive in explaining presbytery role to people in the pews
4. serve the congregations
5. connect
6. support congregations
7. educate
8. energize / encourage
9. connect with synod / GA – positive denominational connection
10. centralized resources - communication

**WHAT ARE SOME OF THE STRENGTHS OF THIS PRESBYTERY AS IT WORKS W/ CONGREGATIONS?**

1. talent – lots of talented clergy and lay people
2. strong CPM – works well with candidates: timely, proactive, responsive
3. strong COM – gets involved when needed, uses administrative commissions well (not all agreed on this)
4. friendly – in places (not all agree)
5. staff – good, dedicated, do a good job although stretched too thin
6. older leaders sticking in there
7. keeps plugging along
8. younger clergy coming in having good ideas

**WHAT ARE SOME OF THE CHALLENGES OR BARRIERS THIS PRESBYTERY FACES AS IT WORKS WITH CONGREGATIONS?**

1. reluctance of people to serve at presbytery level
2. financial resource limitations
3. COM structure
4. communication
5. small section of presbytery at this meeting
6. not serving youth / children
7. put people in boxes
8. lack of trust
9. size geographic boundaries (long and thin)
10. whole structure not filled
11. wide spectrum of church sizes makes serving them difficult
12. theological differences
13. accessibility to presbytery office
14. knowing what resources are available
15. presbytery committee meetings times

**LOOK BACK OVER LIST OF ISSUES YOU SUGGESTED SHOULD BE GIVEN PRIORITY FOR LOCAL CONGREGATIONS. AS YOU THINK ABOUT THE ROLE OF THE PRESBYTERY, WHAT SUGGESTIONS CAN YOU MAKE AS TO HOW THE PRESBYTERY MIGHT HELP LOCAL CONGREGATIONS WITH ANY OF THESE ISSUES?**

1. leadership training
2. working together to do youth ministry
3. become more of a partner, less us versus them
4. be more congregational focused
5. help congregation to link to each other
6. flexible in meeting congregational needs
7. thinking long- term
8. keep resources up to date and promote them
9. promote togetherness at presbytery meetings
10. find other ways to connect (i.e. urban, small, EAC)
11. celebrate
12. educate congregations on what presbytery is / does
13. train in conflict resolution
14. technological support

**ARE THERE ANY OTHER CONCERNS, ISSUES, OR DREAMS YOU WOULD LIKE TO TELL THE COUNCIL ABOUT?**

1. council seems to be looking inward – need to look out at the community
2. look for leaders who think strategically
3. not just the flavor of the month
4. don't stop forward progress while we wait for a big final report
5. find way to commission CLP's when there is no school
6. need healing (role of Wildwood)
7. go after forward thinking effective leaders
8. glad this is being done – last time was botched badly
9. find ways to make this process
10. clear communications about this process
11. council structure – relationship to committee chairs

**Focus Group # 9**

**WHAT ARE SOME OF THE CHALLENGES YOUR CONGREGATION FACES? WHAT ARE SOME OF THE BARRIERS THAT KEEP YOUR CONGREGATION FROM BEING AS EFFECTIVE IN MINISTRY AS IT MIGHT BE?**

1. attract and retain minority population in community (2)
2. tradition (1)
3. intramural communication (within congregation itself) (1)
4. staffing needs (1)
5. gap in generations (esp. young singles) (1)

6. balance between excellent music program and money for other stuff
7. small sanctuary / multiple worship services
8. crossroads type ministry – how to meet young people where they are or want (4)
9. associate with PCUSA – curse or blessing (members leave because church is part of PCUSA) – when PCUSA is in the news, lose people (4)
10. congregation and presbytery (not the presbytery staff)
11. not embracing the 21<sup>st</sup> century (1)
12. funding – not thinking beyond congregational pool
13. human sexuality / homosexuality issues (5)
14. commitment to God needed – members go for so many other reasons (3)
15. ministry within more diverse and complex religious scene (including marriages between different faiths)
16. catching unified vision of mission (1)
17. lack of biblical literacy (4)
18. meeting what is in books like DaVinci Code

**WHAT ARE THE THREE ITEMS YOU THINK SHOULD BE GIVEN THE GREATEST PRIORITY?**

(votes in parenthesis above)

**WHAT DO YOU THINK ARE THE THREE MOST IMPORTANT ROLES FOR A PRESBYTERY?**

1. meeting ground for diverse church people (large versus small, rural/urban, minorities etc)
2. uphold PCUSA constitution
3. provide resources for evangelism
4. resource for local congregation and its ministry
5. provide connection to large body (synod) back to churches
6. be a resource – to serve and not be served
7. mediate and go-between to link churches to develop program and ministry
8. forum and support for clergy
9. assure smooth functioning of calls / ordinations / transitions
10. unique ‘to be a presbytery’ – sum of local congregations is greater than simple sum
11. prophetic voice
12. standardization of processes
13. fair and impartial mediator
14. ‘big prayer circle’ – a way to be in communion with each other
15. be a growing edge for people – participation in worship for instance
16. overseer or all property
17. cultivation of encouragement to consider call to ministry

**WHAT ARE SOME OF THE STRENGTHS OF THIS PRESBYTERY AS IT WORKS W/ CONGREGATIONS?**

1. caring people
2. excellent staff personalities – more responsive than before
3. its very existence – representative nature and calling of God
4. capacity to be much better than we are

5. good at respecting other's viewpoints even if we disagree
6. assets of what presbytery has to work with – investments and buildings
7. trustees take responsibility seriously

**WHAT ARE SOME OF THE CHALLENGES OR BARRIERS THIS PRESBYTERY FACES AS IT WORKS WITH CONGREGATIONS?**

1. lack of trust
2. homosexuality and same sex marriages
3. communion for non-professing Christians
4. diversity and inclusive
5. old congregations that can no longer support ministry
6. honest interpretation of scriptures
7. how to maintain integrity of theology and faith with power of dominant cultural trends
8. demise of main line denominations – need for reinvention
9. lack of volunteers for presbytery work
10. Christians needs to say either that we are the only way or we are one of other ways (settling debate over universalism)

**LOOK BACK OVER LIST OF ISSUES YOU SUGGESTED SHOULD BE GIVEN PRIORITY FOR LOCAL CONGREGATIONS. AS YOU THINK ABOUT THE ROLE OF THE PRESBYTERY, WHAT SUGGESTIONS CAN YOU MAKE AS TO HOW THE PRESBYTERY MIGHT HELP LOCAL CONGREGATIONS WITH ANY OF THESE ISSUES?**

1. create 'crossroads' type of church
2. pairing of diverse churches to build relationships between diverse places
3. develop rationale for evangelism
4. disappear – presbytery should have very low profile – doing only things presbytery can do
5. fewer meetings
6. help refer to GA
7. stop funding synod
8. encourage campus ministry more
9. unified resources for junior and senior high kids (training, resources, info)

**ARE THERE ANY OTHER CONCERNS, ISSUES, OR DREAMS YOU WOULD LIKE TO TELL THE COUNCIL ABOUT?**

1. computer / internet contact for every church – reinstitute monthly report
2. need line item budget and audit report from presbytery (not seen one in 7 years) – on Meet You At The Table and matching grants too
3. ministers and clerks get info – not always who needs it
4. lift up a circle of prayer
5. are we still contemplating role of presbytery in outdoor education need to settle
6. have pictorial directory
7. new phone system – don't like it – need real live person
8. check with other presbyteries
9. big C church – communication that needs to happen with other churches

10. lifting up the name of Christ in pronouncements and programs

### **Focus Group # 10**

**WHAT ARE SOME OF THE CHALLENGES YOUR CONGREGATION FACES?  
WHAT ARE SOME OF THE BARRIERS THAT KEEP YOUR CONGREGATION  
FROM BEING AS EFFECTIVE IN MINISTRY AS IT MIGHT BE?**

1. staffing (paid and volunteer) – cost, quality, quantity (4)
2. split in age groups
3. attracting new members from neighborhood (5)
4. resisting change (3)
5. changing neighborhood (1)
6. big old aging building
7. location (20 miles from no where) (1)
8. giving – not enough money – stewardship (3)
9. declining membership (4)
10. struggle with not enough people to keep up 2 campuses (2)
11. struggle to recognize we are the church (1)
12. how to relate to changing community by members who live elsewhere
13. division of economic status of members
14. catholic church (1)
15. keeping new and old members (1)
16. aging membership / leadership (3)
17. young leaders not stepping up (1)
18. rear view mirror dreaming
19. lack of focus (3)
20. pastoral leadership issues take up lots of time
21. communication (3)
22. inward focus (2)
23. scarcity mentality

**WHAT ARE THE THREE ITEMS YOU THINK SHOULD BE GIVEN THE GREATEST PRIORITY?**

(votes in parenthesis above)

**WHAT DO YOU THINK ARE THE THREE MOST IMPORTANT ROLES FOR A PRESBYTERY?**

1. support for pastors
2. enabling joint mission
3. gate keeping for new pastors
4. getting grant from GA
5. bring churches together
6. vision
7. resourcing congregations
8. sharing types of ministry ideas

9. addressing situation within city and its effect on local congregations
10. represent our region to press
11. train leaders
12. facilitate learning outside congregation
13. fostering relationship between pastors and congregations
14. triennial visits finding problem before they develop into crisis
15. crisis management
16. stewardship of presbytery property / assets
17. focus the money from per capita on regional and local issues
18. providing creative worship together
19. nurture and support of candidates for ministry
20. new church development
21. church transformation

**WHAT ARE SOME OF THE STRENGTHS OF THIS PRESBYTERY AS IT WORKS W/ CONGREGATIONS?**

1. not paying rent on building
2. formal body this presbytery reports to
3. proximity – compared to some presbyteries – though to some feels spread out
4. intend to be inclusive
5. great talent
6. communications are available
7. fiscally sound (disagreement on this)
8. personable staff – staff efficient and responsive
9. leaders are committed
10. history
11. mentoring of leadership (has been stronger though)
12. theological diversity
13. working to understand generations

**WHAT ARE SOME OF THE CHALLENGES OR BARRIERS THIS PRESBYTERY FACES AS IT WORKS WITH CONGREGATIONS?**

1. theological diversity
2. ministers tend to dominate
3. lack of leadership at all levels
4. difficulty in getting congregation to be involved
5. communication with people in the pews
6. basic mistrust of presbytery
7. history – resistance to change
8. reactive to constant barrage of problems – witness no of people in administrative commissions
9. inability to get on top of crisis and be proactive
10. lack of involvement, apathy
11. congregational chauvinism
12. people too busy
13. reaching new people to volunteer for presbytery work

14. need mentorship – don't have enough leaders
15. lots of people not originally Presbyterian
16. churches withholding per capita
17. not attracting younger leadership
18. not able to commit to something that is dying (loss of hope for younger people)

**LOOK BACK OVER LIST OF ISSUES YOU SUGGESTED SHOULD BE GIVEN PRIORITY FOR LOCAL CONGREGATIONS. AS YOU THINK ABOUT THE ROLE OF THE PRESBYTERY, WHAT SUGGESTIONS CAN YOU MAKE AS TO HOW THE PRESBYTERY MIGHT HELP LOCAL CONGREGATIONS WITH ANY OF THESE ISSUES?**

1. more teaching about generations
2. annual or biennial mission fair
3. visit congregations; sessions visit other congregations
4. leading rather than reacting
5. make triennial visit a higher priority – with staff follow up
6. show we are spiritual, not just business and political
7. presbytery staff a part of congregation
8. study what growing churches are doing
9. more aware of impact that community problems are having
10. full time staff position for church development / transformation
11. full time staff for COM
12. listen
13. organize a youth ministry – revitalize
14. regular adult events
15. leadership training day
16. provide good candidates for ministry
17. help churches realistically and strategically
18. help churches to get grants from GA
19. more local mission by money and people to help mission churches
20. catch churches doing good
21. give CLP the vote
22. innovate worship and spiritual nurture
23. small groups for spiritual nurture

**ARE THERE ANY OTHER CONCERNS, ISSUES, OR DREAMS YOU WOULD LIKE TO TELL THE COUNCIL ABOUT?**

1. do something with this
2. confused about who does what on staff – people need to know
3. what does the EP do? good clear job description
4. council need to be fully aware of diversity
5. examination of nominating process



### Focus Group # 11

**WHAT ARE SOME OF THE CHALLENGES YOUR CONGREGATION FACES?  
WHAT ARE SOME OF THE BARRIERS THAT KEEP YOUR CONGREGATION  
FROM BEING AS EFFECTIVE IN MINISTRY AS IT MIGHT BE?**

1. aging membership
2. lack of children (1)
3. isolated campus – location and visibility
4. so many children and young families but they are over committed (1)
5. mindset that church just happens (2)
6. need for more disciples (3)
7. need for spiritual growth – looking for deeper roots (1)
8. aging and inflexible facilities
9. disconnect from presbytery / denomination
10. money – not enough (2)
11. large mortgage
12. church not a priority in people's lives (1)
13. ineffective pastoral leadership (diminishing available of people with right gift mix) (2)
14. fear of speaking one's own truth so avoid disagreement (4)
15. too small
16. high percentage of Roman Catholic population
17. limited socio-economic appeal (4)
18. lost respect for pastors
19. how are growing churches doing it?
20. in this shadow of larger church – competition
21. value selves by comparing (2)
22. being Presbyterian – what does it mean? (5)
23. bringing the justice of God to the socio-political reality of the world (3)
24. less connectionalism (1)
25. what is God's mission for the church (7)
26. number of expectations on pastors becoming impossible (1)
27. fear of change

**WHAT ARE THE THREE ITEMS YOU THINK SHOULD BE GIVEN THE GREATEST PRIORITY?**

(votes in parenthesis above)

**WHAT DO YOU THINK ARE THE THREE MOST IMPORTANT ROLES FOR A PRESBYTERY?**

1. linking congregations
2. pastoral to churches and leaders
3. support
4. accountability
5. understanding and valuing each congregation
6. offering combined wisdom to congregations
7. quality listening for churches needs

8. bringing people together with different ideas (enabling exposure of rich diversity of congregations)
9. conflict resolution facilitation
10. fiscally responsible
11. resource for ministry
12. do collectively mission individual churches can't do
13. lifting up Christ – inside and outside
14. transparency
15. primary teaches about our form of government
16. visionary function
17. place to experiment being something larger than self
18. conduit – mother church

**WHAT ARE SOME OF THE STRENGTHS OF THIS PRESBYTERY AS IT WORKS W/ CONGREGATIONS?**

1. size – not a small presbytery – a good size
2. compact geography
3. diversity
4. some caring personnel
5. administrative staff efficient and helpful (disagreement on this)
6. nice office facilities and location
7. growing mutual respect, esp. pastor to pastor
8. churches of presbytery by and large are cooperative (some disagreement on this)

**WHAT ARE SOME OF THE CHALLENGES OR BARRIERS THIS PRESBYTERY FACES AS IT WORKS WITH CONGREGATIONS?**

1. understanding and adopting formula of agreement – revive ecumenism
2. no structure to support individual pastors
3. COM's role hard: police and pastor
4. lack of communication device from presbytery out (i.e. newsletter gone)
5. lack of trust, also lack of respect
6. lack of organization – does not function in efficient way
7. as 'bishop' – afraid to share convictions
8. not decisive
9. not inclusive – some voices not heard
10. impossible to find who is responsible for what
11. not transparent
12. how to make presbytery meetings more interactive
13. how to make presbytery meetings important – too much trivial stuff
14. no 'Plan B' when EP leaves – what is Plan A?
15. need to 'reboot'
16. lack of commonality and desire to come together – diversity
17. lack of competent pool of executive leaders at presbytery level
18. how to structure working groups to accomplish task at hand
19. how to be proactive rather than reactive, with pastors and congregations
20. relationships with congregations – visibility – them versus us

21. experience of presbytery meetings – masochism is dead so motivation to go is gone
22. identify what presbytery really is

**LOOK BACK OVER LIST OF ISSUES YOU SUGGESTED SHOULD BE GIVEN PRIORITY FOR LOCAL CONGREGATIONS. AS YOU THINK ABOUT THE ROLE OF THE PRESBYTERY, WHAT SUGGESTIONS CAN YOU MAKE AS TO HOW THE PRESBYTERY MIGHT HELP LOCAL CONGREGATIONS WITH ANY OF THESE ISSUES?**

1. be less dogmatic
2. develop effective communications
3. short term – written and verbal and visible communication about this process
4. organize and design an effective COM, related staff and other committees
5. pastor to pastor and any related shepherding program
6. figure out role of EP
7. nurture and challenge our churches
8. how nurture partnerships for missions rather than presbytery doing it
9. hard look at what we really need to do, what not, get rid of it – discern focus
10. be lean and mean – basic structure not just ‘play church’
11. some way of changing perception of presbytery on congregational level
12. re-evaluate staff’s role
13. worship at presbytery level – move from particular agendas of individual leading to corporate expression – become inspiring not just topical

**ARE THERE ANY OTHER CONCERNS, ISSUES, OR DREAMS YOU WOULD LIKE TO TELL THE COUNCIL ABOUT?**

1. answer isn’t reorganization
2. be attentive to our own resources and skills here
3. proceed with wise speed
4. clearly communicate configuration of staff in the interim
5. fiscal issues – clear info on this

**Focus Group No 12**

**WHAT ARE SOME OF THE CHALLENGES YOUR CONGREGATION FACES? WHAT ARE SOME OF THE BARRIERS THAT KEEP YOUR CONGREGATION FROM BEING AS EFFECTIVE IN MINISTRY AS IT MIGHT BE?**

1. How to connect w/ young adults <30 years old. (1)
2. Help connect w/ other congregations to identify what we have in common rather than what separates us. (4)
3. Desire to maintain small church feeling in spite of community/church growth.
4. Relationship to the neighborhood (or lack thereof)
5. Budget constraints and capacity. (7)
6. Lack of biblical knowledge. (3)
7. In over-churched neighborhood—how to stand out
8. Dichotomy/division of age groups. (1)

9. tension between mission/benevolence and staffing. (2)
10. Building. Too small or too large. Inflexible, inaccessible. (4)
11. aftermath of staff conflict. (1)
12. changing neighborhood. (3)
13. multiple use of building. (1)
14. large % of members not from Presbyterian background—don't know system or language.  
Also many want to be congregational.
15. Being PCUSA: issues/stands/actions on upper levels have effect on what happens in congregations. (6)
16. Death by committee.
17. People put into too many places—leader burnout. (4)
18. Crime in communities. (1)
19. Competition w/ culture/sports. (2)
20. availability of pastoral leadership

**WHAT ARE THE THREE ITEMS YOU THINK SHOULD BE GIVEN THE GREATEST PRIORITY?**

(votes in parenthesis)

**WHAT DO YOU THINK ARE THE THREE MOST IMPORTANT ROLES FOR A PRESBYTERY?**

1. Communication, up and down.
2. Community relations. What PCUSA churches are doing in mission.
3. Maintaining standards for ordination of clergy, certifying leaders.
4. Adhere to what constitution says.
5. Doing the work of Christ. Dynamic quality.
6. Pastor to the pastors.
7. Help w/ conflict.
8. Helping people pray and work through issues.
9. Resource congregations. Assist congregations to expand resources, help grow into own vision. Evaluation, training.
10. Establish equity of resources and presence in every neighborhood where there is a congregation.
11. Help churches all feel we're in this together. Connecting w/ one another.
12. Connect w/ other mission groups.
13. Foster youth and young adult leadership.
14. Leadership training. Common resources.
15. Encourage more young people into the ministry.
16. Doing mission regionally.
17. Sponsor outdoor ministry.
18. Have place for retreats, etc.

**WHAT ARE SOME OF THE STRENGTHS OF THIS PRESBYTERY AS IT WORKS W/ CONGREGATIONS?**

1. Resources. People, library.
2. Talent and depth of capability of commissioners and congregations.

3. Approach to the future in this consulting process.
4. Willingness and attitude to be helpful on part of staff.
5. Connection available for information.
6. Hanging in w/ diversity so far.

**WHAT ARE SOME OF THE CHALLENGES OR BARRIERS THIS PRESBYTERY FACES AS IT WORKS WITH CONGREGATIONS?**

1. Lack of common vision. Lack of vision for future.
2. Inertia.
3. A lot of diversions, e.g. changing of doxologies. Older members don't understand.
4. Theologically so broad we fail to have sense of identity.
5. Organizationally dysfunctional.
6. How to work out honoring the past *and* move toward the future.
7. Lack of excitement/apathy.
8. Lack of commitment and follow through.
9. Lack of common evangelism.
10. How to live and work w/ our differences.
11. If you don't have a problem, the presbytery doesn't pay attention to you.
12. Zombied—not alive.
13. No structure in place to become life-giving. Even squelches some life.
14. Money.
15. Profound amount of distrust.
16. Committee work not interesting or challenging.
17. Find something other than committee system to do Christ's work.
18. A lot of time spent of repairing damaged relationships—commissions, sexual misconduct. Reactive.

**LOOK BACK OVER LIST OF ISSUES YOU SUGGESTED SHOULD BE GIVEN PRIORITY FOR LOCAL CONGREGATIONS. AS YOU THINK ABOUT THE ROLE OF THE PRESBYTERY, WHAT SUGGESTIONS CAN YOU MAKE AS TO HOW THE PRESBYTERY MIGHT HELP LOCAL CONGREGATIONS WITH ANY OF THESE ISSUES?**

1. Better outreach/communication on what is happening in mission.
2. Stewardship training.
3. Cluster gatherings—churches together sharing and learning, training.
4. Cut into 2 or 3 parts—divest of office and staff. Go to all volunteers. Discuss or vote in clusters.
5. Alternative ways of doing presbytery.
6. Communicate needs of individual congregations to others in case of help. Help each other without stigma.
7. Use website better.
8. Broker needs. Getting people w/ needs and people w/ resources together.
9. Presence in Cincinnati.
10. Presbytery needs a "face." Personal relationship with congregation.
11. Lower number of committees and number of people on committees; need flexible meeting schedule for committees.

12. Experiment with more effective plenary meetings.
13. Continue clerk of session training.
14. Summer seminars—resources on worship, preaching for high seasons.
15. Wealth of resources here. (D.Min trained people) Need to use. Also, as community resources.

**ARE THERE ANY OTHER CONCERNS, ISSUES, OR DREAMS YOU WOULD LIKE TO TELL THE COUNCIL ABOUT?**

1. Need a more representative Council, not hand-picked by staff.
2. Quality control. An EP who understands our system, works with it, helps it be the best it can be. Help use our placement system better. Find healthy pastors for our congregations.
3. What are some constructive models for the ending of long-term pastorates?
4. Concern over policy re. retired pastors. Too unilateral?
5. Be prepared for what comes out of GA this year re. G-6.0106b.
6. Phone system, not helpful. Communication in general.

**Focus Group Questions**  
**Cincinnati Presbytery**

**INTRODUCTION, WELCOME AND BREAKING THE ICE.**

First, to get us started, I'd like each one of you to tell us your name and the name of your congregation.

(Go around the room, one by one).

If your congregation were a car, what kind of car or other vehicle would it be?

(Go around the room, one by one).

For the rest of the questions, I won't go around and ask each of you one at a time. Just feel free to respond in any order, to any question.

**Your Congregations**

Now I want to give everyone a chance to brag on their congregation.

**As you think about your congregation, what is the one thing your congregation does really well? Or, put another way, what is it you are most proud of about your congregation?**

Now, I'd like you to shift your thinking a bit.

**WHAT ARE SOME OF THE CHALLENGES YOUR CONGREGATION FACES?  
WHAT ARE SOME OF THE BARRIERS THAT KEEP YOUR  
CONGREGATION FROM BEING AS EFFECTIVE IN MINISTRY AS IT  
MIGHT BE?**

Jot down 2 or 3 items on the paper provided.

Can someone begin by telling me on of the items on their list?

*(Use flipchart. Continue putting items on flip chart, numbering them as they are listed.)*

Is there anything else someone might have on their list that we don't have up on the chart yet?

I'd like you to look through the entire list of items on the chart and I'm going to give you a chance to think through the greatest challenges facing local congregations (not just your own).

Jot down on your paper:

**WHAT ARE THE THREE ITEMS YOU THINK SHOULD BE GIVEN THE GREATEST PRIORITY?**

*Record votes on flip chart. Identify the top issues (3 to 5) facing local congregations.*

Does anyone have any comments about our list of challenges?

**Presbytery**

Now I'd like to change gears and ask you to think about the Presbytery of Cincinnati. I recognize that we are different in how much we know about the presbytery or how involved we have been with the presbytery. But, I know something pops into your mind when you hear the word 'presbytery.' **Quickly, what words or phrases immediately come to mind when you think of 'presbytery'?** We won't record them, just call them out.

**WHAT DO YOU THINK ARE THE THREE MOST IMPORTANT ROLES FOR A PRESBYTERY?** Please take a few moments and jot down several roles the presbytery should be striving to play during the next several years.

Let's put your ideas up on the flip chart now.

*Use flip chart. Record items until all ideas are listed.*

I'm giving each of you a sheet to complete that has two matching grids. On one side are words that might describe the Presbytery of Cincinnati. Place a checkmark somewhere in the spaces between each pair of words that represents how you feel the presbytery is NOW. Move quickly through the list. Do not spend much time thinking about any single item. After you complete the left side, go through the list on the right side. This time use the spaces to describe how you think of the Presbytery of Cincinnati SHOULD BE.

After most people have completed the grid:

Now would you look back over the grids. Where are the largest gaps between NOW and SHOULD BE. Let's hear a few of those gaps.

**WHAT ARE SOME OF THE STRENGTHS OF THIS PRESBYTERY AS IT WORKS W/ CONGREGATIONS?**

**WHAT ARE SOME OF THE CHALLENGES OR BARRIERS THIS PRESBYTERY FACES AS IT WORKS WITH CONGREGATIONS?**

Let's look back over the list of issues suggested should be given priority for local congregations.

**AS YOU THINK ABOUT THE ROLE OF THE PRESBYTERY, WHAT SUGGESTIONS CAN YOU MAKE AS TO HOW THE PRESBYTERY MIGHT HELP LOCAL CONGREGATIONS WITH ANY OF THESE ISSUES?**

**ARE THERE ANY OTHER CONCERNS, ISSUES, OR DREAMS YOU WOULD LIKE TO TELL THE COUNCIL ABOUT?**