

**NEXT STEPS:  
RECOMMENDATIONS  
FOR CONTINUING  
THE MISSIONAL TRANSFORMATION OF  
CINCINNATI PRESBYTERY**



Presented for Discussion  
to the Presbytery of Cincinnati  
by the Transformation Team  
01/20/07

## INTRODUCTION

*“As we enter this era known as post-Christendom, in which both the culture and the church are experiencing tremendous changes, we have both the opportunity and responsibility to discern how the presbytery may most effectively conduct its missional enterprise in concert with its congregations.”*

(Stanley Ott)

In September, the Transformation Team presented a proposal, *“What if Our Presbytery Looked Like This?”*, which included snapshots of what a mission-shaped, permission-giving, outcome-oriented Cincinnati Presbytery might look like. In November, the Transformation Team provided responses to the FAQ’s that came out of forums and discussions throughout the Fall. By engaging us and each other in that challenging and thoughtful dialogue, you are already changing the shape and culture of our Presbytery! We are convinced that Cincinnati Presbytery is already being “transformed by the renewing of our minds” (Romans 12:2).

Now it is time to take the next steps. We believe that the following strategic actions will energize and move our Presbytery’s transformation forward. There are two important observations about these proposals. First, they are *proposed recommendations*, which may be further shaped through the presbytery’s discernment together. And second, this is certainly not all that needs to happen. Transformation is an ongoing process, “a continuing conversion,” as Darrell Guder would say. We offer these initial proposals as ways to continue to release the transforming work of the Holy Spirit in our presbytery.

What’s next? The Transformation Team will carefully reflect on the discussion at January’s Presbytery meeting. We also welcome additional comments on these recommendations (which you can e-mail or send to us. In February, the Transformation Team will present it’s final set of recommendations to Presbytery Council. Council will then determine what recommendations to bring before the Presbytery for action.

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## RECOMMENDATIONS

### ❶ Transform Presbytery Meetings

- ◆ 4 Presbytery Meetings (Sep, Nov, Feb, May)
  - consent agendas for business where possible
  - emphasis on worship and celebration
- ◆ 2 Presbytery Days (Mar, Jul)
  - featuring mission projects and special events open to all Presbyterians
- ◆ 4 Presbytery Cluster Gatherings (Jan, Jun, Oct, Apr)
  - for fellowship, brainstorming new ideas, providing feedback for proposals under consideration

One of the questions we have raised in transforming the life of the Presbytery of Cincinnati is: What is our reason for being?

Certainly one “reason for being” is to fulfill constitutionally-mandated responsibilities. No matter the shape of our life together we will always vote on proposed overtures, approve an annual budget, elect commissioners to meetings of the Synod and General Assembly, elect our own officers and establish and revise by-laws. These and other responsibilities contained in the Book of Order will remain with us no matter what shape our transformation may take.

A second “reason for being” which is at the center of transformation is the building of community. How best to do that? How to celebrate with one another, share one another’s sorrows, lift up wonderful ministry being undertaken across the landscape of the presbytery, hold one another up? By transforming how we gather together as a Presbytery. By learning to be relational and not just connectational.

Together—in meetings of the Presbytery as a whole and in clusters of congregations—we will continue to discover where the Spirit is leading us.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### ② Adopt a New Budget Formation Process

- ◆ Nov: Mission Priorities Discernment Process
- ◆ Mar: Adoption of Mission Priorities
- ◆ Apr: Budget Conference I to Receive Proposals from Mission Teams, Committees, and Congregations
- ◆ May: Adoption of Preliminary Budget
- ◆ Jun: Feedback from Churches on Budget
- ◆ Oct: Budget Conference II
- ◆ Nov: Adoption of Budget
- ◆ Jan: Presentation and Dedication of Church Pledges

Part of the transformation work of the presbytery involves a new budget process. The Transformation Team believes that for the presbytery to be truly missional the budget and the budget process must reflect WHO we are and WHY we are.

The Transformation Team recommends that the presbytery not set its budget based on the phrase, “we have always done it that way,” but rather on developed and adopted mission priorities. It is more in line with missional theology to let our mission drive the budget, rather than having our budget determine our mission.

To that end, the Council has approved and will begin to implement a new budget process for crafting the 2008 Mission Budget for the presbytery. This process will be more transparent and more inclusive of new mission and will include more input from committees, congregations and stakeholders. There will be mission priorities that are agreed upon and communicated to the presbytery.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### ③ Re-Form Presbytery Committees

- ◆ Retain and develop the following committees:
  - Board of Trustees, Ministry, Preparation for Ministry, Council, Representation, Nominating, PJC, Personnel, Ecclesiastical Affairs.
- ◆ Thank and dissolve other standing committees of the Presbytery by the beginning of January, 2008.
- ◆ Encourage birthing of new Mission Teams, which:
  - are formed by 'sounding a call' throughout the Presbytery for other likeminded folks to join in their specific mission.
  - provide Council information regarding the purpose, membership, tasks, delivery system, and evaluation process of the team.
  - are public, not private, ie. 'advertised' within Presbytery.
  - are open to churches and individuals for their outward journey of the life of faith and for the living out of our connectional system.
  - may request resources from the Presbytery.
  - may be limited for a specific amount of time.

It is becoming increasingly difficult to find volunteers in sufficient numbers to staff all the committees now in existence. Also, many times, a member of a committee who has been recruited by the Nominating Committee does not have the passion for that work. We believe that having only the mandated committees and Ministry Teams will help people find the place of their passion and giftedness, rather than the duty bound serving. This structure uses 'people' resources in better ways rather than using the same people over and over again, leading to burn out and non-interest.

The Council may also, from time to time, establish short term 'ad hoc' teams or Mission Teams in order to complete a specific task.

During 2007, we will refine this process and begin to put in place Mission Teams which are being birthed among us. The common denominator of all the Mission Teams would be 'missional' and 'permission giving'.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### ④ Provide for Spiritual Formation and Care of Clergy

- Conduct support programs for newly ordained and newly installed clergy in the Presbytery.
- Provide ways each clergy member of Presbytery can participate in a small group for encouragement and accountability.
- Establish norms and expectations for clergy sabbaticals, continuing education, training events, and other avenues for spiritual refreshment and learning.
- Develop a system for clergy coaching or mentors for transformational leadership -- working one-on-one or with small groups.

A consistent theme in feedback throughout the transformation process pertains to the nurture and development of clergy. Clergy face some unique challenges, and these recommendations take seriously the premise that an effective, growing mission requires leadership that is strong spiritually, emotionally, cognitively, and functionally. As a Presbytery we have frequently responded to crisis situations for clergy and attempted to care for the care-givers. We need to go beyond that by cultivating an environment which attracts, empowers, and sustains outstanding, well-fitted leadership for God's work in this Presbytery.

### ⑤ Rename the Presbytery

- ♦ Commission a team to recommend a new name for the Presbytery that better reflects who we are.

Urban? Rural? It's clear our Presbytery comprises more than the city of Cincinnati, and more than Ohio. If you drove between the farthest compass points of our presbytery, you would travel through three states and eleven counties. You would cross four major rivers, including the Ohio, and pass through two time zones. You would drive over 100 miles in two hours.

Renaming the Presbytery can reflect our bigger picture. If our name describes WHO we are, rather than WHERE we are, it will emphasize what we have in common. For example, we have our history in common: the roots of the Presbyterian church run deep on both sides of the Ohio. Some of our churches go back to the first white settlements in the area. Many were involved in the Underground Railroad. We also have our mission in common, from Make a Difference Day to Katrina and Guatemala work trips. It's time we declared that we are more than the Presbytery of "Cincinnati." What more could we be?