

DISCERNMENT TASK FORCE

FIRST REPORT – MAY 31, 2014

Foothills Presbytery adopted a new manual of operations with complete structure of ministry teams and priorities in the year 2003. It was adopted for a Presbytery with more than double our current budget of \$675,000. So much has changed, not only in our denomination but in all denominations, in the last decade, that it was clear to the task force when we began meeting that a tweaking of the current structure was not at all what was called for.

We have determined not to do this Chicken Little style, but decently and in order. We have made ourselves be still and patient rather than determined to finish the task as quickly as possible. We covet your patience and prayers, and we will soon be soliciting your participation.

We are approaching this as a rare opportunity to start from the ground up in developing a Presbytery program and structure that fits the realities on the ground of this new day rather than being determined to do things the way they were done the last half of the 20th century.

We decided the place to start was with the question: “What is the bare minimum required in order to have a presbytery that carries out its required functions? You will find our answer to that question in the supplemental report on the page which has financials. It assumes a full time person to serve as stated clerk and presbyter, a full time office administrator/bookkeeper, and an administrative assistant. These positions along with upkeep of the office and grounds, phones, copiers, and all the other basic operating expenses amounts to \$291,000. At the bottom of the page you will see what it would cost each member of our churches to support the presbytery at this level: 37cents a week, \$1.59 a month, \$19.06 a year.

The next question is: “Okay, if that is what is required to run a bare bones Presbytery, what are the things that are so important to us that we are willing to make a shared commitment to making them happen?” Is it important for us to have a Christian Educator on the Presbytery staff, or a camp administrator? Will we continue to fund campus ministries and the summer camping program in the same way we have in the past? Will we provide assistance for small churches or scholarships for seminarians? Are there local or international missions that we want to do together, or do we prefer doing that at the congregational level? Do we want to be involved in starting new worshipping communities, and if so, what will that look like?

Speaking against funding any of these is like taking a stand against Mom and apple pie, but we need to come together around doing a few things well rather than a lot of things half heartedly. One might also hope that going through this process together and coming to agreements about priorities might motivate sessions and congregations to increase our support of the mission and ministry of Foothills Presbytery.

This year Central Church has been reflecting on the theme: “Gathered by Grace... Connected by Love... Sent to Serve.” It would be a wonderful thing if we could reclaim that kind of feeling about our shared life as a Presbytery. Anyway, we hope you will take time to look over the materials provided today, will pray for the continuing work of the task force, and will be preparing to participate with us in the discernment process this fall. Thank you.

Submitted by David Bailey
Member of the Discernment Task Force