

4/24/16

DISCERNMENT TASK FORCE

INTRODUCTION to the

REPORT TO PRESBYTERY

The report and rationale for the report of the Discernment Task Force can be found on pages 6-12 of your presbytery packet. My name is David Bailey and I serve as pastor of the Central Church in Anderson. I am joined by other members of the task force: Lin Dearing of the Fort Hill Church in Clemson; Lindsay Hatch, pastor of the Mt. Zion Church in Sandy Springs; Rob McCormick of the Nazareth Church in Moore; Susan Tompkins, DCE of First Church, Greer; and also on the task force but unable to be here today is Lud Weaver, pastor of the Westminster, Greenville Church. This has been a dedicated group with whom it has been a pleasure to work for the past 2 ½ years. We did not have a chairperson or structure as such, so I guess it is ironic that we were working on structure.

I hope that you have taken the time to read the reports, or that if you have not you will do so after the meeting. There is not a vote on adopting this report today, so you have time between now and the August meeting to digest it and discuss it and ask questions. Clearly with seven full pages in the report I am not going to go through it in great detail orally.

4/24/16

In reflecting on this journey, there are two things that it seems to me we have tried to accomplish. First is the step of helping Presbytery move to the stage of acceptance of the new normal. When the last structure was put in place 12-15 years ago, the Presbytery's budget was double what it is today. As that has steadily decreased we have gone from year to year cutting by percentages based on last year's giving and figuring out how to equitably cut various programs while keeping everything intact. Staffing has steadily decreased, but we have had the same number of committees, teams and ministries that need staffing.

Acceptance of the new normal means no longer bemoaning our inability to fund the old structure, staff and program. It means accepting the fact that churches are preferring to spend their money locally to support missions and ministries they know and are connected to. It means realizing that many of our congregations are very small, and that many of our larger churches have lost members and dollars in recent denominational polity battles and are working hard to level out. Our hope is that the structure we are proposing is one we can grow from rather than continue declining in.

Which leads to the second thing it seems to me that we are hoping to accomplish, which is to create space for a new future. We are proposing a streamlined structure which has eliminated some functions and consolidated others. Some of this had already begun, particularly with the expansion of the

4/24/16

Equipping the Saints committee. Our thinking is that if there is something missing that is critical, the need will become obvious and it can be added. If one of a committee's work areas becomes too big, it can spin off. It is easy to add a committee to a structure, but it is very difficult to eliminate any part of a bureaucracy once it is in place.

We are proposing streamlining finances by setting a budget goal of \$500,000, down \$146,000 from this year. The place we are not streamlining is by recommending that the positions of Gordon Raynal and Debbie Foster both be full time positions and that they be hired for a three year term. Gordon's position will focus on the administrative and constitutional responsibilities of the presbytery, and Debbie's will focus on the ministry and relationship building aspect of the life of the presbytery. We are proposing there be three regional clusters within the presbytery with the idea of building relationships and partnerships with fellow Presbyterians in local communities, and are counting on Presbytery staff to help organize those and help them become successful. We are not trying to micromanage the structure or purpose of these clusters, and they may all operate differently and have different emphases. Our hope is that reducing required leadership for Presbytery teams and committees will allow some to dedicate their Presbytery service time to leadership of the clusters.

We are proposing reducing budgeted funds for campus ministry and seminary scholarships, and hope that will create space for those programs to

4/24/16

tap into the desire of churches to give locally to things they believe in. Campus ministry programs may want to pair students with congregations in their cluster to increase visibility and sense of partnership, or consider asking for an annual special campus ministry Sunday in our churches with an offering received on that day. The Committee on Preparation for Ministry might want to start a seminary scholarship fund or match students with two or three congregations and encourage them to provide financial support.

After 25+ years of our Presbyterian “connectionalism” being practiced by debating and voting on polity, we would like to see our presbytery make a concerted effort to practice a different and much more positive style of connectionalism by building relationships and partnerships and doing ministry with each other on the local level.

Thank you for your patience and attention, and we are now glad to attempt to respond to questions.

The Rev. Dr. David Bailey