

# Presbytery of Coastal Carolina

## Renovation Team Final Report



This report is faithfully submitted to the staff, leadership, and member churches of the Presbytery of Coastal Carolina by the so-called “Renovation Team” in response to our charge to implement recommendations from a consulting assessment conducted by Ministry Architects in 2024.

The recommendations fell into three broad categories:

A Communication Strategy

Asset Management

A Connection Plan

Steven Fitzgerald, Samantha Jeffries, Jeremy Jinkins, Dari Rowen, Cassandra Thomas, & Randy Warner

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## Executive Summary

This Final Report from the Renovation Team serves as the cumulative findings of our team and is submitted to the Mission Cabinet in preparation for submission to the Presbytery of Coastal Carolina in the autumn of 2025.

The Appendices contain the final versions of our work in the areas of Communications Strategy, Asset Management, and a Connection Plan. In addition, the Appendices also contain any and all pertinent documentation to our process, from the organizing documents that set the parameters of our work, to redacted versions of the interview reports and questionnaire responses we received in writing, along with some of our own conversations in an effort to balance individual privacy with the need for full transparency. The lone voice we left unredacted, was Trudy Ash, as she represents the work and process of another denomination.. We have tried to organize this work in a way that is as easy as possible for readers to grasp.

This Executive Summary points out how to approach the document, the Acknowledgements point out the many who made this work possible, the Appendices are read in two parts: (1) the results of our work regarding the recommendations assigned to us by Ministry Architects and the presbytery; and (2) the materials critical to fulfilling these recommendations.

The Final Report itself stands apart. This is the lone work that stood apart from our understood “scope of work” and resulted from long discussions throughout the year as we encountered perspectives within and without our presbytery, and saw the benefits and limitations of our work with Ministry Architects. The Final Report, we hope, will result in a path forward for leaders of our presbytery to take on the project of defining a clear Vision for our future, to build on the Mission Statement and goals that drive our short-term focus.

At first read, we admit, this can be jarring; however, we trust the presbytery to take our words in a large context, to see that our work stands alongside 40+ years of solving for our size, geography, and diversity.

## Acknowledgements

We start by thanking the presbytery as a whole for trusting us to take on some of the recommendations from the Ministry Architects Assessment, delivered last summer. We pray that our work is deserving of your trust and becomes a blessing for our shared ministry.

We also thank our families and loved ones for the many hours we spent together in meetings via Zoom and GoogleMeets, not to mention the “big” Workshop Days for in-person meetings. Your support and patience made the space necessary for us to do this ministry.

Quite a few leaders in our presbytery offered perspectives and material help throughout this process. We are grateful to the entire presbytery staff for their support and participation when available, including several former staff who continue to serve in new ways. Both Kaye Bledsoe and Nancy Gladden helped in different ways as we sought staff perspectives and experiences, right alongside current staff Laura Lupton and Jerrod Lowry; Eduardo Moreno, De Scott, and Lornette McCaskill also provided support and sometimes direction through conversations at the Vision Summit and in casual communication throughout the entire process. Beyond staff, we are grateful for leaders and other stakeholders who supported our inquiries and discovery periods, were occasionally early readers of our work, and helped us reflect on translating Ministry Architects recommendations into something “real” for the Presbytery of Coastal Carolina. Rob Price, Bill Young, Hank Bellamy, Henry Cowan, Sara Martin, Jenny Meekins, Bonnie Barr, Jenny Lee, Katif Peay, Trinidad Martinez, Kathryn Dudley, Steve Plummer, Doug Cushing, Aaron Doll, Rachelle Baldwin, J. Barrett Ingram, Renee Paschal, Jay Bender, Phil Gladden, Janice Thompson, Bucky Holmes, and John Phlug were all asked for input at various times and we are grateful for their leadership and direction. We appreciate the prayer work done by the foundation of our Prayer Team, the presbytery’s Presbyterian Women. From the very earliest moments of our work, this group stood with us, holding us in the love of the Holy Spirit.

A great deal of our work as a Renovation Team had to do with the “Discovery” phase - a fancy term for asking a lot of questions and hearing the wisdom of others. None of our work, from the most basic “nuts and bolts”, to the most

challenging cultural changes would have been possible to clearly articulate without the interview and conversation responses with people both in our presbytery and without. We are especially grateful for the following members of the Presbytery of Coastal Carolina who helped us understand how we came to the systems and processes we have been using, who gave perspective on how some of our challenges came to be, and celebrated with us so much that has been right with our regional church. In particular, we thank Bill Reinhold and Steuart Link for providing background on how the presbytery came to be from the merging of several groups during reunification. We thank Nancy Gladden (again) for helping us understand the strengths and weaknesses of the regional mission coordinator roles, and the connectional demands that drove the need for the original positions. We are so grateful for some of the “natural connectors” who gave us their perspectives as we listened for how presbyteries could work differently going forward, including Jenny Lee, Katie Harrington, Ron Parks, Cathy Swindell and Elizabeth Doolin. We are thankful for the leadership of Brownson Presbyterian Church for holding a listening session with a member of our team, who was able to ask questions and received deeply thoughtful responses. We are also grateful for some of the anonymous voices who were willing to share with us some of the more painful aspects of our presbytery’s *life together*, coming from places of pain from across the theological, cultural, and racial divides.

Peer presbyteries were a major resource for sharing experiences and ideas for bolstering the ministry of presbytery with member churches. We are grateful for the conversations with Mark Sauls at the Presbytery of Atlanta, Jan Edmiston, Alice Ridgill, and Gail Henderson-Belsito with the Presbytery of Charlotte, Jana Blasek at the Presbytery of Chicago, Gavin Meek at New Harmony Presbytery, Pepa Paniague and Emily Adams at Grace Presbytery, and Daris Bultena at the Presbytery of Tropical Florida.

The Christian Reformed Church has developed a program to support member churches in both North America and Canada. Trudy Ash is one of four Regional Connectors, and introduced us to the *Connectional Mindset*, which served much of our work in the Connection Plan and the need for some level of staffing to this end. We are so grateful for this interdenominational support.

We are also grateful to the Ministry Architects Team: Sean Williams and Krista Mulhollen for their support and guidance throughout the past year.

Finally, we were blessed by the grace and hospitality of two churches. Elizabethtown Presbyterian Church in Elizabethtown, NC offered us space to hold our final in-person session; we are grateful to the congregation and staff for offering their beautiful space to us. We are also indebted to the congregation of Graves Memorial Presbyterian Church, especially to Katie Rives, Melissa Griffin, and Carl and Bonnie Barr for making the Renovation Team feel at home in their space for multiple meetings, and for hosting the presbytery for the Vision Summit. You were partners in the development of so much discernment that will bless the Presbytery of Coastal Carolina for years to come.

Thank you.



## Renovation Team Final Report

We are the broken body of Christ.

This is the fundamental identity of all followers of Christ. As individuals, church communities and as the whole presence of Christ's church in the world, we are the broken body of Christ, made an offering by God to this hurting and fragile world.

The Presbytery of Coastal Carolina has certainly felt broken recently. A sense of fragility and separation has been exacerbated by budget and staffing cuts, coupled with churches departing from our covenant community over the past several years. This feeling of distance and separation further highlights challenges that brought the presbytery to bring on Ministry Architects to guide us through a process of reflection, discovery, and action.

As a Renovation Team, we were recruited for a one-year commitment to implement plans around three broad categories of recommendations made by Ministry Architects: a Communications Strategy; aspects of Asset Management; and a Connection Plan. Over the course of our work, and through many, many conversations with members of our presbytery and peers throughout the country, we recognized a need to elevate some observations beyond the tasks originally given to us.

The Ministry Architects Assessment named that "Vision" was a challenge that this presbytery needed to tackle. The leaders of the presbytery met in the spring of 2025 to hold a Vision Summit and emerged over the following weeks with a provisional Mission Statement and Goals for the coming three years. This is important, but the question begs, what is the Vision?

A Vision Statement is a matter of "why" an organization exists. Why should such-and-such church reside in a particular town, or particular corner. How does a church (or presbytery) justify its existence, its reason for being. Our Vision Statement must be a reflection of the very identity of *who* we are as a presbytery. The Renovation Team has done a lot of work and we have struggled mightily. Right now, we believe that the core identity of the Presbytery of Coastal Carolina is that we are *broken*. That is the GOOD news.

We are broken.

Yes, we have less money than we used to. We are broken.

Yes, we have fewer staff than we used to. We are broken.

Yes, we have fewer churches in our presbytery than we used to. We are broken.

It is deeper than that. We are broken. We have churches in our community who could only afford a building or a pastor, and chose the building, and who now struggle with the idea of yoking with other churches for shared witness and ministry. We are broken.

We have churches in open conflict along the very cultural lines that harangue our society. Member pitted against member, brother fighting sister, the most central identity tied to political leaning rather than baptismal vows. We are broken.

We have members - even whole church communities - who have been hurt by members of other churches for the color of their skin, the language they speak, or the hand that they hold. Christ's final commandment in John's gospel holds clear that, "we will be known for the love we have for each other." The entire world will know followers of Jesus for their love... we are broken.

We are broken, and this is good news! God loves a broken heart. God loves us in our fragility. God calls to us when we are not enough, and God makes us a gift because of our brokenness. Our identity is the spilled blood of the innocent and the broken body of our Lord. Communion is the moment in which we are made at one with the Creator of all that is, seen and unseen, through this blood and crumpled, torn body. In communion God takes us, just as we are; blesses us, just as we are; breaks us, just as we are; and gives us, now transformed as a gift, to a world in need.

We are broken. We each have hurt others and we have long held onto hurts, licking our wounds until they become close friends. We are people and we screw up. We break things in our lives and too often we don't know what to do about it. Our own shame and fear drive us to judge others, keeping us

from loving as Christ calls us to do. We need forgiveness, we need reconciliation, we need Jesus.

The Renovation Team has spent the past year working through a process of reflection, discovery, collaboration, and creatively addressing recommendations offered by consultants. We have delivered those processes and plans. But that is not what we really have to say.

We learned that in the early 1980s (sounds recent until we realize that it is almost half a century in our past) this current iteration of presbytery was stitched together during the reunification of northern and southern Presbyterians. Several presbyteries, representing people who thought of faith in very different ways, were drawn into one entity. During that time, fraught with conflict, we determined that the stress came from there being too many churches and too much geographic space. While these statements are (or were) perhaps true, the Renovation Team sees cracks in connection for PCC that go all the way back to its creation.

Our struggle for identity is tied to the conflicted feelings and nature of our beginnings - conflicts that spring from ideas around theology, yes, but also society, race, ethnicity, sexuality, rural and urban centers, and myriad other forces. Unspoken conflict has dominated the silent identity of our relationships. Regional gatherings and connections have helped, but not solved the brokenness at the core.

The work conducted with and since the Ministry Architects' assessment has been important and fruitful, but it is just the beginning. The Renovation Team concludes our work recognizing the need for a reflection by the presbytery - not the presbytery staff, but the souls that make the Presbytery of Coastal Carolina the living and breathing church in eastern North Carolina - to name an identity. We are broken; we are the broken body of Christ. How will we die to our past and rise to new life together?

# Appendices

## Part 1: **Renovation Team Fulfillment of Ministry Architect Recommendations**

- Communication Strategy, pp. 13-16
- Asset Management, pp. 17-18
- Connection Plan, pp. 19-25

## Part 2: **Supplemental Resources**

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Part 1: **Renovation Team Fulfillment of Ministry  
Architect Recommendations**

- Communication Strategy, pp. 13-16
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## Presbytery of Coastal Carolina Renovation Team

### Appendix 1: COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

*And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.*

*Hebrews 10:24-25, NIV (boldface added)*

In the *Assessment Report* by Ministry Architect, the survey interviews revealed,

*“There is a desire to strengthen the mission and connection throughout the Presbytery of Coastal Carolina to serve together in ministry and as one pastor put it, ‘to make the fabric stronger’. . . . There is a universal desire for a shared vision, clear expectations, and a path that’s strategic, to move forward together. Everyone in the listening groups and those who filled out surveys seemed to have a sense of hope and a desire to see things change.”* (Italics added, quotes from pp. 6 & 7)

**Good communication helps us to serve together in mission and ministry.** This communication strategy presents a cohesive communication plan, with elements of our technological needs, marketing needs, how Presbytery connects with constituents, and how leaders share our vision with members and mission partners. It will help the Presbytery support, care for, and connect its churches. It will promote the work, purpose, and value that comes with being part of this presbytery.

Remember: the Presbytery of Coastal Carolina is all of us – not just the Presbytery Staff. As we read, with expectant hope, these changes that spark connection and support, readers are invited to follow the icons and consider the part each group plays to effectively communicate.



Presbytery  
Churches



Presbytery  
Committees



Presbytery  
Staff

Please share any questions with the Renovation Team members.

Grace and peace,

Jeremy Jinkins, <[jeremy.jinkins@gmail.com](mailto:jeremy.jinkins@gmail.com)>; Steven Fitzgerald, <[drsfitzgerald@gmail.com](mailto:drsfitzgerald@gmail.com)>;  
Samantha Jeffries, <[sljeffries@windstream.net](mailto:sljeffries@windstream.net)>; Dari Rowen, <[pastordari@gmail.com](mailto:pastordari@gmail.com)>;  
Cassandra Thomas, <[chcothomas@gmail.com](mailto:chcothomas@gmail.com)>; & Randy Warner, <[rw4music@gmail.com](mailto:rw4music@gmail.com)>

## WHY ... do we communicate?

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- To strengthen connectional mission and ministry for PCC.



## WHO ... communicates?

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- A full-time Presbytery Connection Coordinator. Our communication needs are too great to be carried out by part-time staff.



- *The Presbytery Connection Coordinator shares our stories of who we are as a presbytery, stores our information and where to go for it, and keeps our website up to date so that our research is fruitful. This will go far to equip, empower, and encourage our churches.*
- *The Presbytery Connection Coordinator serves as a resource to our individual churches. Ones struggling to use technology, communicating through technology, and seeking to promote and market their church by means of technology. Over time, this will ensure that no one in our presbytery “falls through the cracks” in communication.*

- Presbytery staff and committees engage with Pastors, Clerks, and Support Staff at churches.



- *Develop relationships with churches before conflicts and/or problems arise. Create a detailed process and put it into action to reach out to the people and communities through the Presbytery. This communication strategy and Presbytery Connection Coordinator will aid in extending welcome, love and inclusion to all people Presbytery reaches.*
- *When it fits the situation, capture the meetings and events digitally; use captions and/or “articles” of less than two hundred words; make sure to include the “Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How.” Send it to the Presbytery Connection Coordinator to put in the eNewsletter.*
- *The Presbytery Connection Coordinator will implement a “feedback loop” as presbytery groups plan events to ensure that video and/or photos from events are returned to the Presbytery for inclusion in future media and communications.*

- Group/Partner cohorts by church size, geography, missions, or interests



- *Develop further in our Connection Plan; need “point persons” to organize*

## WHERE ... do we communicate?

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- The Internet: Website, eNewsletter, some Social Media presence
  - *Our website will hold Presbytery government resources, Presbytery missions and ministry resources, church shared “good ideas” and resources, and archived Presbytery eNewsletters. It is our main source of information and for this reason it is kept up to date.*
  - *Our website will show all staff, title, and contact info—including the point persons of our three communities.*
  - *Our website will give each staff member a page with contact information, definition of their position, an area that highlights, “You should be here if you need advice.../if you are seeking.../*



*if your church wants.../if you need ideas for...” and links to resources and examples. Making it clear who to contact and how, when churches and individuals have concerns, questions, or needs. (See <https://gracepresbytery.org/> for example)*

- Our eNewsletter will be issued weekly and use a consistent format to help Presbytery church members and attenders keep up with relevant events, news, updates, needs, etc.
- Do eNewsletters well first, then work on social media sites. Current frequently used social media sites are FaceBook and YouTube. Younger generations use Instagram.
- Our churches can also upload directly onto the PCC FaceBook page.

## HOW ... do we communicate?

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- Respond to inquiries in a timely manner.
  - We respond to emails within 24 hours. This is a business standard and develops trust.
  - We let senders know that their email has been received, read, and what action to expect. Since we are connected, it seems appropriate to offer a simple reply rather than leave the sender hanging, wondering why there is no response.
- Well timed and accurate information; clear wording; and clean, easy-to-follow formatting. (Share events thirty to ninety days ahead; a day before, a week before, may not be timely.)
- To provide large amounts of information without exhausting the reader, use a picture “button” for each category, for example “Job Postings.” Click it and find a list of job opportunities, each position with a picture, a several line description, and a “read further” button to click for the rest of the article. (See <https://chicagopresbytery.org/> and <https://buckheadchurch.org>)
- Presbytery Connection Coordinator is responsible for “pushing out” our information to the churches. Churches are responsible for designating a point person (Clerk of Session?) who will receive and share it with the congregation. Churches also give the point person’s contact information to the Coordinator.
- The Presbytery Connection Coordinator will work with the Communication Team in Presbytery to review the current website and logo to ensure that the new Vision and Mission, and goals of the Presbytery are clearly communicated through all elements of our shared ministry.
- The Presbytery Connection Coordinator will work with the Communication Team in developing a style guide to preserve the ways in which fonts, colors, images, logos and other communication assets are used in a standardized format for consistent messaging.





- When asking for input and scheduling Presbytery Meetings, offer multiple in-person connection points and connection times during the work day. Saturday gatherings are not accessible for full-time pastors and pastor-parents. Plus, it is less likely for members to travel two hours for a meeting on a Saturday.
- While we prefer face-to-face communication and events, embracing technology matches the reality of being functional in this time and across the broad geographical area that is our Presbytery. Especially when the absence of technology excludes our people.
  - *Hybrid meetings (when members attend either face-to-face or by video conference) will become the default for our Presbytery so that members may attend Presbytery and committee meetings near or far.*
  - *The Communication Team is responsible for developing a list of churches across the presbytery that are able to provide hybrid meetings with tech help.*



## WHEN & WHAT ... do we communicate?

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- When Presbytery and church events of governance, ministry, mission, education, and fellowship occur, we share it. God is doing good work among us. Thanks be to God! Let us celebrate!
  - *Presbytery Connection Coordinator is responsible for sharing our information. Presbytery committee and church members are responsible for getting information, articles, and pictures to the Presbytery Connection Coordinator.*
- When a church has a need for, or abundance of, resources we make it known. (Examples: hymnals, curricula, VBS supplies and scenery, microphone, risers)
  - *Churches can also upload messages directly onto the Presbytery FaceBook page.*
- When defining the work of Presbytery and when featuring members of the Presbytery Staff, we report it with gratitude.
  - *"Sharing the Vision" becomes a part of the weekly eNewsletter. The General Presbyter and Stated Clerk writes this piece sometimes defining it, sometimes sharing when it happens, sometimes reminding us of God's grace for the journey. This one step will market, equip, encourage—and especially—connect the Presbytery.*
- When special topics require a special eBulletin to go out (for example a New Vision Statement or the Presbytery is awarded a huge grant), it goes out.
- When there is news to share on a Presbytery member (e.g.: pastor deaths, awards, installations) an eBulletin goes out within 24 hours of Staff receiving it.





## Presbytery of Coastal Carolina Renovation Team

### Appendix 2: ASSET MANAGEMENT PLAN

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*And **let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds,** not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but **encouraging one another**—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.* Hebrews 10:24-25, NIV (boldface added)



Presbytery  
Committees

Remember: the Presbytery of Coastal Carolina is all of us – not just the Presbytery Staff. This Asset Management Plan is addressed to the Presbytery Finance and Property Committee.

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#### FINANCIAL STABILITY

In our “Progress Report” shared broadly with the entire presbytery in June, the Renovation Team shared that we had been able to work closely with leadership in Finance & Property. Our findings were that the team, and Mission Cabinet by extension, had a suitable game plan for addressing financial stability through a combination of limiting expenses, responsible management of income-producing assets, and identifying the possibility of future income generating avenues. We named in the Progress Report an action item to help support Finance & Property, namely, to have SPOR work with Finance & Property to ensure that grants from the presbytery align with emerging presbytery goals. This connection has been established, and the Renovation Team identifies that, for the time being, the presbytery’s financial stability is being appropriately managed by our leaders.

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#### FACILITY EVALUATION

In the Ministry Architects Assessment of the presbytery, they named the need for a team or task force to evaluate the condition of its facilities. It was understood that this is first and foremost in regards to facilities that fall under the direct responsibility of the presbytery: the presbytery office, any cemeteries that have come under the care of the presbytery, along with church buildings from closures and other causes.

The Renovation Team responded in two ways: (1) we have identified a solution to copy from another presbytery; and (2) we have expanded how the presbytery can be a resource and support local congregations.

1. *The Presbytery of Tropical Florida set up a separate corporation to manage its properties. In a conversation with one of our team members, a leader shared how this has helped that presbytery identify better means of property management, along with long-term asset management of its facilities;*
2. *One of the short-term goals that came out of our Vision Summit included producing an annual facility maintenance resource for all of our churches. The Renovation Team identified two resources (included in the second section of our appendices), which we submitted to Finance & Property in the development and advancement of their work.*

Please share any questions with the Renovation Team members.

Grace and peace,

Jeremy Jinkins, <[jeremy.jinkins@gmail.com](mailto:jeremy.jinkins@gmail.com)>; Steven Fitzgerald, <[drsfitzgerald@gmail.com](mailto:drsfitzgerald@gmail.com)>;  
Samantha Jeffries, <[sljeffries@windstream.net](mailto:sljeffries@windstream.net)>; Dari Rowen, <[pastordari@gmail.com](mailto:pastordari@gmail.com)>;  
Cassandra Thomas, <[chcothomas@gmail.com](mailto:chcothomas@gmail.com)>; & Randy Warner, <[rw4music@gmail.com](mailto:rw4music@gmail.com)>



## Presbytery of Coastal Carolina Renovation Team

### Appendix 3: CONNECTION PLAN

*And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but **encouraging one another**—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.*

*Hebrews 10:24-25, NIV (boldface added)*

In the *Assessment Report* by Ministry Architect, the survey interviews revealed,

*"There is a desire to **strengthen the mission and connection throughout the Presbytery of Coastal Carolina** to serve together in ministry. . . . There is a universal desire for a shared vision, clear expectations, and a path that's strategic, to move forward together."* (Italics added, quotes from pp. 6 & 7)

The words "connection" and "relationship" are synonyms. But, are they really? For example, are connections enough to "strengthen the mission" of our Presbytery? Maybe the answer is both "yes" and "no." Technology has given us several new ways to connect; so that's a yes. But connecting doesn't create trusting relationships; so that's a no. Relationships grow the same way they have always grown: with repeated, meaningful sharing, and careful listening. Trusting relationships develop with respect, reliability, and follow-through. **To "strengthen connectional mission and ministry" requires trusted relationships. In fact, it is all about our relationships.** This Connection Plan, with the Communication Strategy, presents a cohesive connection strategy, with elements of our technological needs, marketing needs, how Presbytery connects with constituents, and how leaders share our vision with members and mission partners. It will help the Presbytery support, care for, and connect its churches. It will promote the work, purpose, and value that comes with being part of this presbytery.

Remember: the Presbytery of Coastal Carolina is all of us – not just the Presbytery Staff. Readers are invited to follow the icons and consider the part each group plays to build strong connections.



Presbytery  
Churches



Presbytery  
Committees



Presbytery  
Staff

Please share any questions with the Renovation Team members.

Grace and peace,

Jeremy Jinkins, <[jeremy.jinkins@gmail.com](mailto:jeremy.jinkins@gmail.com)>; Steven Fitzgerald, <[drsfitzgerald@gmail.com](mailto:drsfitzgerald@gmail.com)>;  
Samantha Jeffries, <[sljeffries@windstream.net](mailto:sljeffries@windstream.net)>; Dari Rowen, <[pastordari@gmail.com](mailto:pastordari@gmail.com)>;  
Cassandra Thomas, <[chcothomas@gmail.com](mailto:chcothomas@gmail.com)>; & Randy Warner, <[rw4music@gmail.com](mailto:rw4music@gmail.com)>

## WHY ... do we connect?

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- To do mission and ministry for our Presbytery of Coastal Carolina.
- To share our celebrations and needs and to encourage and support each other as we serve Christ together (rather than alone and disconnected).



## WHO ... connects?

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- A full-time Presbytery Connection Coordinator. We have staff to guide the governing aspects of our Presbytery. We need staff coordinating the supporting, relational pieces of it (compares to the wisdom of our churches having both Elders and Deacons).
  - *The Presbytery Connection Coordinator initiates conversations with church and presbytery staff and committee members, listening deeply to encourage, support, and resource them. If the person is familiar with, and to, the presbytery relationships grow and ministries develop faster. When that happens, add, recruit volunteers to this list.*
  - *From the listening, the Presbytery Connection Coordinator coordinates—either personally or as a consultant—opportunities for: **Conversations** about what is going well in other churches and available resources; **Creating Space** for churches to listen to each other and learning events; **Cohorts** where interested church leadership and members gather regularly, share and discuss, and connect with resources regarding particular topics in ministry; and **Coaching** walking with church leaders as they explore resources concerning specific opportunities or challenges in ministry. (Adapted from a Connections Project article by Trudy Ash)*
  - *The Presbytery Connection Coordinator extends welcome, love, and inclusion to all people the Presbytery reaches; connects our Presbytery through effective use of technology (e.g.: emailing eNews and eBulletins, text messaging, and keeping our website up to date); and serves as a technology resource to our individual churches. For more specifics, please see the Communication Report.*
- Presbytery staff and committees connect with Pastors, Clerks, and Support Staff at churches.
  - *It is all about relationships. Reach out to our presbytery faith communities just to say, “Hi! I just came to say hello and worship with you today.” In Texas, Grace Presbytery organizes their staff so that every church gets a visit from one member of the staff once a year. Our staff is small. What kind of intentional—maybe Presbytery Staff and Committee Leaders—plan can happen; especially now?*
  - *See the Communication Strategy for additional ways the Presbytery Staff, Committee Members, and Churches can work together to market, connect with their constituents, and celebrate the good work that God is doing through our presbytery.*
- Presbytery COM members are points of contact for our churches.



- *Each Presbytery Community has a COM. Each commission member has four to five churches to contact. Another strength of this system is that commission members are mostly familiar with, and to, the church members.*
- *Two direct paths of ministry connection are: Pastor to COM liaison and Pastor to Presbytery Connection Coordinator; the first path happening more frequently until the Connection Coordinator becomes familiar to the church leaders.*
- Presbytery Community Volunteers that support the Presbytery Connection Coordinator to carry out Conversations, Creating Space, Cohorts, and Coaching.
  - *The Presbytery Connection Coordinator recruits and trains the volunteers with the help of Presbytery Community Leaders (Community COM or Steering Team Leaders?).*



## WHERE ... do we connect?

- Internet Connections and using technology.
  - *COM members collect information from EVERY church in the presbytery that is struggling with technology issues (e.g.: access to tech devices, knowledge and skills to use the technology, have internet access but haven't adopted email, websites, and other similar tools).*
  - *The Presbytery Connection Coordinator then connects, listens, assesses, and responds appropriately. For example: shepherding the church through the presbytery grant process to acquire the funding to purchase needed tech devices; supporting and training church people to use the technology.*
  - *Churches with no access to internet will be brought into this process as the state enables accessibility. Until then, sometimes connect using the the closest church with internet.*
  - *Speaking of technology and connecting, get to know a bit about a church by using their website, FB page, streamed worship services, and worship bulletins. You will see what is happening there.*
  - *See the Communication Strategy for more ideas that utilize the Internet to connect.*
- Major Events like Presbytery Meetings and Community Gatherings.
  - *Presbytery Connecting Coordinator and/or volunteers, ask for five to ten minutes on the agenda, state your role, introduce relevant resources (from your listening). When getting on the agenda isn't possible, "work the room." Get to know the people; be curious about them. Let the people get to know you. Get your face and information of what you do out there with a card or pamphlet. Get the message out, "You don't have to do this by yourself and you don't have to reinvent the wheel." Ask, "Who else in your community is there to partner with (including churches of other denominations and non-faith organizations)? Follow up with a brief email of "thanks for taking the time to..." and invite them to contact you if there is any way that you can support their ministry. Follow through if you offered a resource.*
- Get people out of their buildings and have some fun!
  - *Charlotte Presbytery said, "Try new things. Don't be afraid to fail!" The Presbytery of Chicago did that and held one Presbytery Meeting at a brewery owned by a member at large. They are planning a meeting in a park setting and after the "business" meeting break open some family*



*games and activities. When a Presbytery Meeting has to be scheduled on a Saturday, supporting families with active games and thought-full activities during the meeting time might make it more appealing to attend.*

- *Play a game within a meeting to infuse joy into our work and relationships. Jerrod Lowery played a version of Jeopardy™ and it was a blast!*
- Literally everywhere, everyone can celebrate congregational successes!
  - *Churches are doing great work in a variety of ways. Create space to lift up this work in our regional and larger presbytery meetings, regular emails, eNews submissions, and communications on FB from Presbytery Staff.*



## HOW ... do we connect?

- Review the Communication Report for how communicating facilitates connection and notice the “who-does-what” to make it happen.
- We OVER COMMUNICATE. It feels weird to us, but say things, print things, write things multiple times in multiple formats.
- We believe the Connection Mindset, a practice that Trudy Ash teaches from the Christian Reformed Church, needs to become instinct for all presbytery leadership: staff, committees, COM liaisons, and Connection Volunteers.
  - *Listen as if sitting around the table as a family (with curiosity, not as an expert).*
  - *Respect the specific context, identity, and vision of each local congregation.*
  - *Think, “Who else could contribute to this conversation for the benefit of this congregation?”*
  - *Find, develop, share, and collaborate on resources that might be of help to the congregation.*
- Four main ways of connection (with examples):
  - **Conversations.** *Listen, ask questions, get to know the church leaders so that they begin to talk openly and share deeply. Ask, “How can I support you? (Not, “How can I help you.”) When you are clear, maybe connect the person with an article, a book study, a resource that they can “make their own.” Maybe connect them to another church or peer-learning group with similar concerns/needs. Speaking of connection, can you find the Connection Mindset applied in this structure?*
  - **Creating Space.** *Call to check in with Pastors, Office Administrators (especially if the church has no Pastor), Elders (particularly if the church is without a Pastor), Presbytery Members serving outside of congregational settings. Get your name in their minds. Ask, “How are things going?” or “Tell me about your church. What’s going really well?” If the person gets going, soon she or he gets to the “what they need.” Listen and encourage. People need support. Then follow up with possible resources (see above).*
    - *Innovator Gatherings are a rather open-ended group space that, Pepa Paniagua from Grace Presbytery, puts together. She hosts these gatherings in person and on Zoom once a month, moves the gathering to different areas, and begins with open-ended questions like, “Where do you see God at work?” “Where do you feel God is calling you to do something?” “What brought you here?” “How can I support you?”*
    - *Create Space for*





learning events. Host a Regional Zoom meeting for Church Administrators. Get them to know you, each other, and then share about their work and listen for possible resourcing. • Create Space for Support Groups. Based on need, Paniagua might host an event with a speaker (expert) on the subject/need. After one or two events, identify one or two people to launch cohorts or maybe a retreat. • Set up workshops/trainings at churches, workshops/trainings online (both recorded and live). Presbytery topics already discussed are: professional development for Clerks, leadership development for Elders, intergenerational church life, and working with volunteers.

- **Cohorts.** Ash shared this cohort structure. Connection Coordinator and/or Connection Volunteers are hearing a need pop up (perhaps in the area of intergenerational growth and connections or COM liaisons training). They do the administrative work set it up, coordinate the planning of the meetings, and lead the group through the meeting. Three or more churches are involved, each church has 3-4 persons on their committee. Participants receive the lesson, share their experiences together, and work on projects with their church. They meet every other month. On the off months, the Connection Coordinator or Volunteer contacts each church and moves them through a series of questions. Cohorts meet in person at the beginning and ending of the cohorts. Cohorts continue to be supported through newsletters.
- **RELATIONAL CAPITAL IS HUGE!** If you are familiar to that part of the presbytery, that may get your foot in the door to listen. You are there to support, not evaluate and prescribe. If people find that you respect them, you are reliable, and that you follow through, that creates trust. A trusted relationship is filled with Spirit Fruit and has "get things done" power! Someone said, "All change can only go at the pace of relationships."
  - *Enough relational capital might give you the permission to encourage change. Flip the narrative and suggest that experimenting is HOW you learn. "We will connect you to the resources. You aren't in this alone."*
  - *Enough relational capital has the power to change the relationship where the church leaders are coming to you and making the requests.*



## WHEN ... do we connect?

- Essentially, when listening reveals a need.
  - *For example, a member of the Renovation Team related how liaisons from COM often face significant challenges. The Renovation Team recommends that members of churches in the presbytery (likely regional community by regional community) be identified for profession skills. This could include counselors, attorneys of various disciplines, real estate personnel, and others whose wisdom and experience cannot be held by any single individual. These human resources once known at COM could be profoundly helpful to the liaison before church challenges become crises.*
  - *Another example comes from the same conversation. The Renovation Team also recommends developing a budgetary line item to have the Lombard Mennonite Peace Center provide*





*annual clinics with our COM members to maintain the knowledge and skills for facing tension and conflict within congregations. This training in conflict management would serve as a direct form of healthy connection as a presbytery to our members.*

- When churches or camps can be utilized as a resource.
  - *A resource church can be defined in a number of ways: financial, staff size, facility space, internet connection and tech staff, etc. However, recognizing this abundance of resources and a willingness to share them in some way with one's neighbors is the key. (The icons show that we all might take part in identifying resource churches and the gifts they have to share.) For example, a church with an Associate Pastor for Christian Education may have written an elder training resource (e.g. Von Clemans in his tenure at Myers Park PC in Charlotte) that can be put in a Resource Folder on our website and shared within the Presbytery. Another example could be a church with plenty of space lending it so that a regional cohort of church administrators can meet to share resources and solutions to common ministry challenges.*



## WHAT ... do we connect?

- We connect church leaders to church leaders, churches to churches who have like needs to form joint learning, ministry, and mission opportunities. Often they will be in close geographic proximity.
- We connect ministry leaders and churches to resources. Perhaps the easiest is sharing resource files on our website. For example: policies, sermon series, curriculum.
- We connect church leaders and churches to resource churches.
- We connect ourselves to our constituency.
  - *It is about relationships. It is also about ease. Make it as easy as possible to contact you. Have your contact info on everything that is sent out from you: Name (your/pronouns), Title, Office: telephone number, Office Hours: Days and Times (maybe include if you are at a specific office on some days and work from home on other days, Scheduler link (Calendly? Google? So cool!).*
  - *Have a scheduler link so that you can choose the times you are available to meet and others can see and choose from them. They also make it easy to set up Zoom meetings.*
  - *Leave a message on your phone saying if you are available or not. It lets people know whether they can expect to hear from you and when to try again.*
  - *Have your contact info on the website right next to your nice, warm, colorful photo.*
  - *Get back in touch with people within 24 hrs (no later than 48 hrs), even if it is to say that you can't respond until such-and-such a time.*
  - *If you are not meeting in an office, arrange where to meet you before ending the conversation.*
  - *Another "point of contact" Presbytery Staff might include is the contact information for the Executive Assistant to contact you in case of emergency.*





## Part 2: **Supplemental Resources**

- Renovation Team Organizing Documents
  - Workshop Packet 1 (including organizing documents), pp. 27-43
- Materials and Resources for Development of Communication Strategy
  - Peer Presbytery Interview Guide, p. 45
  - Peer Presbytery Interview Reports (Redacted to preserve as much anonymity as possible), pp. 46-53
  - PCC Interview Guide with Embedded Results from Presbyterian Women, pp. 54-65
- Materials and Resources for Development of Asset Management Elements
  - Asset Management Responses from Peer Presbyteries, pp. 57-58
  - PCC Building Maintenance Seasonal Checklist Submitted to PCC Finance & Property Committee, pp. 59-60
  - United Kingdom Church Physical Maintenance Checklist Submitted to PCC Finance & Property Committee, pp. 61-71
- Materials and Resources for Development of Connection Plan
  - Workshop 2 Packet, pp. 73-115
  - Workshop 3 Packet, pp. 116-118
  - Connection Plan Narrative Document, pp. 118-138

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# Presbytery of Coastal Carolina

Renovation Team Workshop

October 18, 2025

Graves Memorial Presbyterian Church, Clinton, NC



# Agenda

10 am	Gather, Bible Study, Prayer
10:15	Review the Packet
10:30	Recommendations Game
11am	Recommendations Alignment
Noon	Lunch Break
1pm	Organize Work Teams
1:30	Identify Teammates and Process
3pm	Depart

## Bible Study - Abraham Receives Angels (Genesis 18)



"The Hospitality of Abraham" by Andrei Rublev

### **Prayer**

Holy one in three, open our spirits to your wisdom in this time together. Give us patience to hear each other and the strength to rely upon each other. Give this time your sacred touch, that we may leave with the guidance to lead others, and bless many. Amen.

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# “Baby SWOT” from Ministry Architects

## **Organizing around our ASSETS –**

*Presbytery Staff*

*3 Communities*

Strong Presbyterian Identity

Hispanic Communities

Join Mission Work

New Church Development

Resources

## **Understanding our CHALLENGES –**

Fuzzy Vision

Financial Concerns

Small Church Challenges

Technology Challenges

Communication Improvements

*Staffing Clarity*

More Connections and Offerings

Managing Facilities

*Deep and Wide*

Congregational Awareness

Perception Problem



# Recommendations

- **Reframe the next 12 months** as a time of building a long-term unified vision for the Presbytery, understanding that significant and immediate momentum will be built throughout the process. Work will begin on mission and vision in the fall of 2024, setting the course for forward movement with alignment in a deliberate way.
- **Establish a Prayer Team** to undergird this strategic process.
- **Create a Renovation Team** (or select an existing team/committee to serve in this role) to take responsibility for implementing the recommendations in this report. These non-anxious, goal-oriented people will free up the staff to focus on providing day-to-day ministry.
- **Host a Vision Summit:** Invite leaders to participate in a multi-session, in-person, process of envisioning the future with Ministry Architects, resulting in the following documents which will direct the Presbytery toward a unified vision:
  - A Mission Statement
  - Defined Core Values
  - A Set of Three-Year Revolving Goals with One-Year Benchmarks
- **Build a Communication Plan:** Document the rhythms and methods for effective and timely communication with staff, pastors, leaders and churches throughout the Presbytery, utilizing as many forms of communication as possible including the Presbytery website, social media, mass texting, mail, e-mail, etc. Determine what is and isn't working, make any changes/additions needed, and launch a clear, targeted communication plan for the Presbytery.
- **Develop a Strategic Staffing Plan:** Considering the recent changes to the Presbytery's staff, develop a sustainable staffing model that aligns with the Presbytery's current and anticipated resources and needs while preparing the churches for the next iteration of ministry and leadership in the Presbytery of Coastal Carolina.
  - Write or review written job descriptions for all paid staff positions in the Presbytery. Work with staff to ensure the job descriptions accurately match the work they are currently doing (both documented and undocumented). Identify tasks that can be potentially handled by trained volunteers.
  - Gather an existing or new team, along with Ministry Architects consultants, to evaluate the current staff job descriptions and gather feedback, and design an overall staffing strategy that:
    - leverages current staff
    - identifies the holes that need to be filled and priorities for the future
    - takes into account financial realities and results of the visioning work

- Present recommendations to Presbytery leadership to review and finalize a new staffing structure.
- Finalize and approve job descriptions and determine the timeline for conducting a search for new staff.

### **Clear Strategies and New Initiatives Developing**

*Once the foundation is laid, the Presbytery will then need to shift its focus to establishing clear strategies and developing new initiatives such as (and in no specific order):*

- **Presbytery Support for Small Churches:** Set up a structure to get to know these churches and report back to the Presbytery to determine the best ways to support them. This includes how the Presbytery can use its funds to support churches that are struggling financially, experiencing challenges with technology, and needing pastoral/staffing and admin support. Be sure to include the following communities:

- Hispanic churches
- Rural churches
- Urban churches in decline

Focus on building relationships, and re-building trust, with these churches,

celebrating the good work and ministry they are doing, and helping them connect with other churches and more easily and fully participate in the life of the whole Presbytery.

- **Technology Support and Decisions:** With the awareness of the technological challenges that exist for some individuals and churches in the Presbytery, and the desire from a substantial number of members of the Presbytery to move back to more in-person meetings and gatherings, decide what offerings of the Presbytery will be in-person moving forward. For those unable to attend in-person, determine what technology will be needed for these individuals, and dedicate time and energy to help setup and train these individuals with the technology required to participate.

- **Build a Strategic Connection Plan:** Implement a plan that documents a variety of ways - current and new - that the Presbytery will offer to be intentional about building connections amongst its churches. Consider opportunities for connections in local areas of churches, in each community (or another structure, if changes are made), and in the Presbytery as a whole. Include offerings that focus on one or more of the following: education/training, worship, business, fellowship, and support. Also take into consideration the geography of the Presbytery and the distance between its churches; account for travel time and expense, and any technology that might be required, to help churches participate.

- **New Church Development Plan:** Create a plan that will outline the priorities of the Presbytery in creating new faith communities over the next five to ten years. Consider location, setting, audience, leadership, worship style, mission and outreach possibilities, funding, and timing. Meet with leaders and participants

of churches that have launched in the Presbytery over the last 5-10 years to learn from their experiences, successes, and challenges. Determine if a task force or existing team/committee will oversee these efforts moving forward.

- **Promotion of the Presbytery:** Establish processes for congregants to become more educated on the work and purpose of the Presbytery. Formulate a plan to periodically visit churches and regularly communicate news, updates, needs, etc. that are relevant to the members and attenders of the Presbytery's churches. Be clear about the "business" of the Presbytery but stress the importance of the role of the Presbytery to support, care for, and connect its churches, making clear the immense value that comes with being part of the Presbytery.

- **Develop a Marketing Gameplan:** Create a detailed process to reach out to the people and communities throughout the Presbytery of Coastal Carolina with the message of welcome, love, and inclusion. Determine how the Presbytery will celebrate the good work God is doing within and beyond the walls of its churches and as an organization as a whole. Create an intentional strategy that is consistent with marketing approaches (logos, graphics, etc.), and develop a brand that the Presbytery is proud of sharing with others.

### **Building Infrastructure and Stability**

*In building a ministry there are key pieces to creating a solid foundation. Those key pieces to building infrastructure and stability are the following items:*

- **Sharing the Vision:** Upon completion of the long-term vision and goal-setting process, create a game plan that will outline the best ways to communicate the vision, values, and goals of the Presbytery (informational sessions, sermon series, guidebooks, small group curriculum, etc.).

- **Facility Evaluation:** Work with an existing team, or recruit a task force, to focus on an evaluation of the Presbytery's buildings and properties, review recent/current challenges regarding facilities, detail potential needs and issues that might arise in the next 5-10 years, determine best ways to plan for and fund any work that might be necessary, and develop a clear gameplan, which is shared with churches in the Presbytery, for how the Presbytery will handle facility issues, changes, needs, etc. moving forward.

- **Long-Term Financial Sustainability:** Lay the groundwork for achieving a solid future by adopting more effective practices to accomplish the work of the Presbytery.

- o Evaluate the current process of creating, approving, and sharing the budget with the Presbytery. Do the (even harder) work of evaluating the budget within the context of income (from all sources), expenses, ministry priorities, and vision casting.

- Create a task force to investigate building and grounds options as well as to investigate alternative sources of one-time and ongoing supplemental revenue (income) streams.

- Create a plan to address any deferred maintenance. Identify the needs of the offices and churches and Presbytery's properties, provide estimates and timelines of projected costs, and allocate needed expenses in the coming months/years.

### **Developing and Nurturing Leaders, Clergy, and Staff**

*As the foundation is built, the Presbytery will need to assess the staffing structure that will best serve the ministry as it moves forward. The Presbytery will also need to ensure it is engaging and equipping the leadership.*

- **Staff Development:** Provide mechanisms for ongoing education and coaching for Presbytery staff including coaching, reading, and continuing education.
- **Leadership Evaluation:** Provide mechanisms for ongoing evaluation for all Presbytery staff members. The process should include space for self-reflection, supervisor feedback, and requests from the employee about how the Presbytery can help him or her succeed. It should be done in a way that leaves leaders feeling supported, encouraged, and positively challenged.
- **Sustainable Pace:** Help each Presbytery staff member develop a “rhythmic week” including a Sabbath and “balcony” time (that is, time to look at the big picture and make strategic plans).
- **Affirm Staff:** Continue to ensure all staff members have been affirmed and encouraged in their roles through acts and/or events of appreciation throughout the year.

# Recommendations Reorganized

## Immediate Concerns:

- Prayer Team

- Vision Summit - March 15, 2025

- Communication Plan - See related Recommendations

- Strategic Staffing - Ministry Architects Led

## A Path Forward - [this is ONE way to pull the recommendations together]

- Infrastructure

  - Property/Facility Evaluation

  - Finance/Budget Process Review

- Strategic Communications

  - Broad Communications Plan

  - Marketing Gameplan

  - Sharing the Vision

  - Technology

  - Presbytery Promotion

- Connection Plan

- New Church Development - Ministry Architects Led

- Small Church Support - Ministry Architects Led

# Our “Cast of Characters”

The Renovation Team

Prayer Team

Ministry Architects

Committee Chairs (and future chairs)

African Am. Ministries	Committee Chair: Katif Peay (1/1/23 - 12/31/24)	katifpeay@gmail.com	(910) 733-0697
Bills and Overtures	Committee Chair: Barbara Hagar	attorneybarbarahager@gmail.com	(203) 336-1874
Commission on Ministry	Committee Chair: Jay Bender	jaybender@ec.rr.com	(252) 636-9131
Central Commission on Ministry	Committee Chair: Dari Rowen	pastordari@gmail.com	(910) 774-6239
Central Commission on Ministry	Committee Chair: Jenny Meekins	kjem82@hotmail.com	(910) 840-3218
East Commission on Ministry	Committee Chair: Philip Gladden	gladdenphilip620@gmail.com	(910) 284-6563
West Commission on Ministry	Committee Chair: Janice Thompson	gajgthompson@windstream.net	(919) 499-8247
West Commission on Ministry	Committee Chair: Bucky Holmes	onthehill11@gmail.com	(202) 262-0878
Elder Ministry Committee	Committee Chair: John Pflug	jr.p.wilmington@gmail.com	(910) 617-5200
Latino-Hispanic Ministries	Committee Chair: Trinidad Martinez	trinidad@galatiachurch.org	(910) 229-7861
Mission Cabinet Executive Committee	Committee Chair: Timothy Havlicek	pastor.havlicek@gmail.com	(252) 342-2202
Mission Cabinet	Committee Chair: Marie Cone	marie.cone@kitepipe.com	(610) 659-3064
Mission Cabinet: Finance & Property Sub-Committee	Committee Chair: Renee Paschal	reneepaschal@embarqmail.com	(919) 548-4096
Mission Cabinet: Personnel Sub-Committee	Committee Chair: Jenny Meekins	jkem82@hotmail.com	(910) 840-3218
Mission Cabinet: Special Offerings & Partnerships	Committee Chair: Eric Stewart	ericstewart1959@yahoo.com	(919) 623-3939

Sub-Committee			
New Church Development	Committee Chair: Doug Cushing	52drdoug@gmail.com	(864) 590-5527
New Church Development	Committee Chair: Aaron Doll	aarondoll@frontiernet.net	(910) 619-3044
Nominations	Committee Chair: Kathryn Dudley	pastorkdudley@gmail.com	(919) 935-7221
Nominations	Committee Chair: Steve Plummer	stanplum76@gmail.com	(910) 658-2436
Preparation for Ministry	Committee Chair: J. Barrett Ingram	ingraj2@aol.com	(936) 661-3889
Preparation for Ministry	Committee Chair: Patricia Ramsden	p.ramsden269@gmail.com	(269) 362-1332
Representation	Committee Chair: Robert "Bob" Fry	bmry@msn.com	(910) 619-1184
Response Coordinating Team	Committee Chair: Robert "Rob" Price	lawpricenc@gmail.com	(910) 733-8052
Self-Development of People	Committee Chair: Rachelle Baldwin	rbaldwin914@gmail.com	(910) 318-5414
Strategic Planning and Organizational Review	Committee Chair: Stephen Fitzgerald	drsfitzgerald@gmail.com	(252) 259-1269
Central Steering Team	Committee Chair: J. Barrett Ingram	ingraj2@aol.com	(936) 661-3889
Central Steering Team	Committee Chair: Henry Cowan	hgcowan407@gmail.com	(910) 583-7034
East Steering Team	Committee Chair: Hank Bellomy	hankb812@gmail.com	(910) 987-2689
West Steering Team	Committee Chair: Sara Martin	sara.martin@edgewoodpres.org	(919) 770-5791
Permanent Judicial Commission	Committee Chair: Sylvia Goodnight	sylviagoodnight@gmail.com	May not be active committees
Synod-Jubilee	Committee Chair: Teresa Page	cpageg@bellsouth.net	
Synod-PJC	Committee Chair: Bill Reinhold	billreinhold1970@icloud.com	
Synod-Representation	Committee Chair: Matlynn Yeoman	mbyeoman1230@gmail.com	
Synod-Commissioners	Cassandra Thomas & Chip Stapleton	<a href="mailto:chcothomas@yahoo.com">chcothomas@yahoo.com</a> ; <a href="mailto:chip.stapleton@gmail.com">chip.stapleton@gmail.com</a>	
Synod-Nominations	Committee Chair: George Wilson	mrghwilsonjr@gmail.com	

## Renovation Team Charter

**Team Purpose** – The Renovation Team oversees the process of implementing the vision and addressing recommendations for the Presbytery of Coastal Carolina, following the Presbytery-wide assessment and Vision Summit with Ministry Architects.

The team:

1. serves as a non-anxious presence in this time period;
2. addresses the immediate pressure points facing the Presbytery;
3. affirms a consensus for the direction of the Presbytery;
4. works on accomplishing goals and implementing the mission statement and values; and
5. helps create any infrastructure needed to support all of this work.

**Scope (in scope / out of scope)** – The Renovation Team’s scope of work is defined by the recommendations provided in the “Assessment” delivered to the Presbytery of Coastal Carolina. In order to complete the work, the team will work with Ministry Architects, the presbytery staff, along with any presbytery committees, work groups, or other bodies called upon to live out the new vision and mission being developed.

**Duration and Time Commitment** – The timeline for the project is one year.

### Members

- Stephanie Corona (withdrew)
- Steven Fitzgerald
- Roderic Frohman (withdrew)
- Samantha Jefferies
- Jeremy Jinkins
- Dari Rowan
- Cassandra Thomas
- Randy Warner

### Governance and Committee Structure

**Governance** – The Renovation Team will report to the Presbytery of Coastal Carolina on an ongoing basis, and is accountable to that body. All other committees, teams, or other groups will work in collaboration with the Renovation Team, and will maintain both regular communication *and* reporting to these teams as our work progresses.



### Committee structure –

- The Convenor/Chair will be responsible for establishing and maintaining the meeting schedule, checking in with teammates, and providing assistance when necessary for the completion of each recommended action, maintaining the inventory tool, and moderating meetings;
- The Vice Chair will act as Convenor/Chair in the absence of the Chairperson, will act as the Secretary for all meetings, will maintain record of the team's work through ai-supported minutes, and will include regular updates to the presbytery as laid out in the Renovation Team Communication Plan;
- The Renovation Team [apart from the roles specified] will operate as a flat organization. Each team member will be responsible for assigned recommendations, and will report weekly to the team on:
  - What has been accomplished;
  - What is being worked on;
  - Where help is needed.

Team decision-making – we operate by consensus most of the time but if needed take a vote, and if needed clarify the vote for a super majority, 2/3.

**Desired End Result** – The Renovation Team will have accomplished its object when all recommendations have been fully implemented by the presbytery committees and/or staff who will need to be responsible for them long-term. This includes the design of solutions, process development, identification of resources – including personnel (staff or volunteer), along with the needed systems to make implementation sustainable. In order to reach this desired end result, it will be critical that the team **not** design or develop solutions solo, but begin in relationship-building and problem-solving with presbytery committees and staff from the beginning of our work. We exist to partner with **them** in this work, not to impose a system upon them.

**Deliverables** – The primary deliverable is a sustainable set of ministry programs and support processes that directly relate to the [as yet to-be determined] Vision and Mission of the Presbytery of Coastal Carolina.

**Supporting Resources and Links** – The team itself is a deep resource, pulling together the talents, experiences, and perspectives of a diverse set of talented leaders. In addition, the team will have the benefit of reaching out to presbyteries and churches throughout the country for new ways to problem-solve, the backing of the presbytery staff, and Ministry Architects.

### Strategy and Tasks:

1. Discovery
  1. Collect and update existing representations of the current and historic presbytery systems and models named in the recommendations; in short, how *have* we done this?
  2. Research model options that have been put in place by churches and presbyteries around the country.
    - a. Create a list of churches and presbyteries to be interviewed
    - b. Create an interview guide

- c. Assign churches and presbyteries to be contacted to committee members
    - d. Create and manage a data sheet for the capture and analysis of data captured.
  - 3. Extract a clear articulation of “who we are” based on the Vision Summit – to be implemented in Oct./Nov.
  - 4. Create a prioritized list of critical functions and “low hanging fruit” to comprise early work (so-called Sprint Tab in the inventory tool).
  - 5. Identify the “Gap” between the assessment and the outcomes of the Vision Summit.
- 
- 2. Develop a communication plan (Action Complete)
  - 3. Discuss recommendations, build the timeline, assign recommendations to team members  
(To be carried out a yet to be determined team workshop in October or early November)

## **Renovation Team Communication Strategy**

Purpose: This lays out how the team will relate our activities to all stakeholders (key and broad) as the project goes on.

### **Part 1: Key Stakeholders**

Who - (1) Presbytery Staff

(2) Ministry Architect Team

(3) Chairs/Leads of all committees and their successors

When - At the beginning of each week when news is available

How - Email. Construct a standard email list that can be dropped into the bcc line in the emails in order to quickly get the message out with confidence. Messaging will be determined between author and Jeremy via basic agreement of what has been accomplished in the prior week. Each email Subject will read: Renovation Team Update {Date}

What - The email itself includes all available updates at the time of sending; this will become more organized and important as the team begins to take on disparate projects affecting different committees/staff in the presbytery. The email update will also provide a sneak peak into what is being communicated in summary to the broad stakeholders.

### **Part 2: Broadstakeholders**

Who - This group is less defined, but includes church communities, pastors, and elders in the presbytery, along with partner organizations and others.

When - Periodically; likely quarterly.

How - Email.

What - A brief narrative (with occasion graphs or appropriate imagery) will be given to broad stakeholders to demonstrate where the team is and what has been recently accomplished (e.g. the past several weeks accomplishments should be included as a narrative: we were nominated by people all over the presbytery; we had a meet and greet, we met Sean and covered the assessment along with the tools Ministry Architects use for success, and we have begun organizing the work in an orderly fashion); (1) where we have been; (2) what we have put into action with our partners (this is a moment to cheer-lead the hard work of the committees), and what is on the horizon.

N.B. 1 - With this, we will have an evergreen request/invite for those who get excited by what we are doing to help out. I see this as being a “call to action” with a link that kicks off an email to one of our team members. The degree of invitation needs to be discussed by the team, but having a call to action is important when doing significant system change as it helps leaders identify legitimate concern, along with knowing who has concern, and serves as a channel for some to step in and be a part of the change. The challenge is with those committed to preventing change.

N.B. - 2 It is also often a good idea to have a tab that sends people to a history, or background, tab. This practice allows for people who missed six months of work, to see how it all started, and why our work matters in the first place.

## **Materials and Resources for Development of Communication Strategy**

- Peer Presbytery Interview Guide, p 44
- Peer Presbytery Interview Reports (Redacted to preserve as much anonymity as possible), pp. 45-52
- PCC Interview Guide with Embedded Results from Presbyterian Women, pp. 53-54

## **PCC Communications Plan – Peer Presbytery Interview Guide**

Intro – get to know each other for about 5 minutes, say thanks for the time and set expectations that you have \_\_\_\_\_ questions, and want to be respectful of their time.

### **The Questions**

- (1) What communication vehicles, or tools, do you use (e.g. email, mailers, contacts with churches, in-person events, other)?
  - a. What seems to be the most effective, and what new forms of communication are you considering?
- (2) What technological barriers have you come across?
  - a. Staff development issues
  - b. Recipient engagement/disengagement
- (3) What communication schedule do you use, and how was it developed?
  - a. Would you be willing to share?
- (4) Do you have a style guide for branding?
  - a. If so, how was it developed?
  - b. How do you enforce it?
  - c. Are the elements distributed to committees, or is everything centralized to a staff person?
  - d. If you do not, how do you maintain consistency of both messaging, and corresponding imagery?
- (5) What are the biggest communication challenges you have had to overcome in the past 5 years, and what did you do to adjust?

At this point you may not have finished all the questions, and you will likely have run out of time. Keep the conversation to 30 minutes, and say, “I am so thankful for everything you have provided. Would it be possible to follow up in an email with any other questions we may have?”

If you finish ahead of time, say thanks, and let ‘em go!

## Interview 1:

### **What Does Communications & Media Cover?**

We provide weekly newsletters and a variety of e-news bulletins throughout the year. Our department is responsible for updating and maintaining the [REDACTED] Presbytery website and managing social media channels.

### **How Can Communications & Media Support Our Congregation?**

If you have any questions related to online or communication issues facing your church or committee, we are here to help. Think of us as your "phone a friend" resource. We look forward to connecting with you.

### **LOVE the way this website is set up!!! Look at the tabs to direct users to help!!!**

There are many how-to articles. I shared that smaller, older churches might be overwhelmed by all of the information. That's when she shared how she's been the "phone a friend" resource for tech questions in the presbytery.

In this position, the recipient sometimes answers questions (Can you audit our site? Are we doing this right? Suggests improvements and ways to connect), sometimes resources by creating the product (templates) [I think that this is BIG and is what would be helpful to our presbytery.]

This presbytery's goal is for churches to see staff as support rather than focusing on the governance

The position is 30 hr per week.

I asked how the position was funded and the recipient is 99.9 percent sure that the salary check comes from the presbytery and not from a grant.

Jeremy created a set of questions to use for the interviews. Some are left blank, some are blank because they are answered elsewhere.

- Post Quarantine Church by Thom Renir The changing demographic of membership posts COVID how to normalize that everything is changed and how to accept the entire difference of the church.
- *Design for Belonging*, Stanford University  
<https://www.amazon.com/Design-Belonging-Inclusion-Collaboration-Communities/dp/1984858033>
- Email List: [SacredPlaces.org](https://www.sacredplaces.org) Match Made in Heaven, artist using unused church spaces

## Interview 2:

I called someone today who is a leader in a southern presbytery. He was apologetic about not getting back and was willing to answer questions for us in the future. I found him to be very helpful.

(1) What communication vehicles, or tools, do you use (e.g. email, mailers, contacts with churches, in-person events, other)?

- Main two: their website and their digital mailer (**Constant Contact**),
- After that: in person events, hybrid stated meetings,
- Some Social Media [FB, Instagram, YouTube (to a lesser degree)]
- Hardly any mail mailers (maybe two times a year)

a. What seem to be the most effective, and what new forms of communication are you considering?

- **Website is primary hub of information**, the website needs to be clean and up to date; other communications point you back to website.
- **Constant Contact is how they do their email**: send out twice a month, other groups (like New Worship Community follows a different schedule). **Pastoral Email** goes mostly to pastors and can go to interested others, includes prayer chain info and “pastoral stuff.” **General Newsletter Email** includes upcoming and celebrates previous events.
- For Presbytery Committees, they use \*\*\***Microsoft Share Point**, create document libraries, each committee has a cloud space which survives turn over (\*\*\*might need a professional to manage, it’s almost too much). Before that they used **Google Work Suit** which can do almost everything. Give oncoming Clerk of Session a tutorial the month before going in.
- Not sure how much engagement there is on social media—use it mostly for the younger population.

(2) What technological barriers have you come across?

- Lack of continuity in committee roll over; keep your files stored online; solution is cloud platform

a. Staff development issues

- When we get a new software, do training, when key people get comfortable then train rest of the staff.



- A resolute staff person is needed to keep volunteers equipped and positive.
- Committee chairs are in charge of keeping it going;
- Hybrid meeting conversations are somewhat problematic; committee chairs and trained and in charge of Zoom; hard task to do with excellence; intensive on volunteers
- Microsoft Share Point keeps the WWW out.

b. Recipient engagement/disengagement

- Don't have a big way to monitor—our communication platform—the metrics are on Constant Contact, you can see which have used and open; Presbytery doesn't look too much.
- Try to keep email newsletters to a two minute read; it might include videos and pictures as well as text.
- Keep "articles" less than two hundred words; make sure to share why the info is interesting to us and how to participate; pictures can be used as storyboard to connect the information to.

(3) What communication schedule do you use, and how was it developed?

- Newsletter once a month; social media once a week mostly; newsletter is time intensive there's not a whole lot of material; takes the whole staff

a. Would you be willing to share?

(4) Do you have a style guide for branding?

- No. They have a logo with an abbreviated mission statement

a. If so, how was it developed?

b. How do you enforce it?

c. Are the elements distributed to committees, or is everything centralized to a staff person?

d. If you do not, how do you maintain consistency of both messaging, and corresponding imagery?

- If we create a graphic, we don't change them that much; sometimes we refresh a graphic

(5) What are the biggest communication challenges you have had to overcome in the past 5 years, and what did you do to adjust?

From in-person to Zoom primarily. That allows, people to attend from wherever they are.

- Different language groups cluster themselves; Different language group staff employees take care of getting the info out; pastors seem to be bilingual; new worshipping communities have more diverse needs; find someone committed to make the contacts.
- Because the presbytery almost all work from home, cell phones are used throughout the presbytery; they use the Zoom Phone app on their phone; when a call is received from that number then it rings and comes up as a Zoom call; answer to ATT bill; cost saving, cheaper to just add this; took a longer time to train. Side note: when people call and presbytery staff doesn't answer it kinda ticks off the caller.

Anywhere the local electrical company is offering fiber, jump onto it; better price; might be able to use: 501C3 status.

## Interview 3:

The Presbytery of [REDACTED] has seven committees. These committees are COM, COP, Administration, Counsel (oversees the work of all of the committees), COR (Representation), and MRC. (Prior to 2018, the presbytery had lots more.)

This presbytery is broken down into clusters: north, south, east, west.

The most effective communication tool currently used is a weekly e-blast. This shares what churches are doing. This information is also shared on the presbytery Facebook page. Also, lots of programming and resources are done virtually on ZOOM. These e-blasts are sent to all Clerks also.

The Ministry Resource Committee (MRC) is the connectional committee that's purpose is to connect churches to one another. This is not a programming committee. This committee has a robust grant program that encourages churches to partner with one another (even churches of another denomination). MRC helps churches find creative ways to work together. Early on in the development of the MRC, they tried having committee members ("connectors") who would visit churches in hopes of getting churches to connect or partner with one another. This did not work for them.

In addition to presbytery meetings, the Presbytery of [REDACTED] hosts "Nuts and Bolts" twice a year. This is training for Clerks and on the Book of Order.

One suggestion that was shared was making signing up to receive e-blasts easy (i.e., sign up sheets at Presbytery meetings, tab on website).

## Interview 4:

Tonight, I had the pleasure to be a part of a ZOOM meeting with the Pastor, the clerk of Session, an Elder, and the church administrator. Following introductions, I asked each of them to share what brings them joy about their church. Here is the list:

- The community of the church
- Sitting at the front of the church once a month to serve communion because I am right behind where the children are during the children's message and seeing their faces
- Serving
- Connection
- Preschool children

This is a large church. They have good systems and processes in place. The best communication method for them is email. The church administrator shared that the open rate for their emails is 65-70%.

The Presbytery emails are helpful and have lots of information.

The clerk explained that his exposure to the Presbytery happened due to his role. He indicated that many members are not aware of the resources and opportunities of the Presbytery.

Improving the process.....so many good responses.

Simplify

Streamline

Letting go of things that worked long ago

Create networks of churches (by region, member size, etc)

Do less....but do it WELL

Have better processes

When asked what didn't work....

Lack of responsiveness

Calendar not being current

Lack of complete information

This group recognizes the geographic size of the Presbytery of Coastal Carolina and the large percentage of churches with smaller congregations.

## Interview 5:

### COMMUNICATION

It seems like the Presbytery has no center—it's not clear where to go for information. So, our General Presbyter, Jerrod, has become our center, our "go to" for information. Any questions we have to be answered we go to him. We don't need to go to him for all of the questions. Plus, he doesn't have time to answer everything. (Maybe use an auto email response.) At the same time, there needs to be better communication and followup strategies—all across the board—including the treasurer (billing incorrectly, giving inaccurate info). Can contact staff and not receive a response—even when the issue is serious.

We haven't set up our Presbytery or Presbytery Staff well. Make the website more clear about who to see for what. "What is Laura's role?" "We go to her for . . . ?" and all the other staff. We are short staffed. Because there is not enough staff don't duplicate staff presence. How can we start parceling out what someone else can do? What might improve the process? How can we use some of the retired members that still have energy effectively? Could COM be a liaison to/for the churches? Some ways to involve more and strengthen communication within the presbytery include:

- Alternate two Tuesdays a year and two Saturdays a year or some variation that works for us. Only Saturday gatherings are not accessible for full-time pastors and pastor-parents.
- When asking for input offer multiple in-person connection points and connection times during the work day. It's less likely that folks are going two hours away on another Saturday.

### BIG CHURCHES

Because large churches have many resources, there is a strong sense of responsibility to share them with Presbytery. How/where can those needs be communicated? For example, if it's another microphone, a large church might have one sitting around unused that would be an answer to prayer for a church with fewer resources. Associate Pastors could preach at other

churches sometimes.

Might be helpful to have persons within the presbytery to bring groups together. For example: How can large churches support each other in their unique challenges? We want to meet with “like” church communities.

Plus, reporting back to Jerrod and Laura would help them know what’s going on. Sid Batts, Consultant, Tim Havlicek, Jerry Braun might be helpful consultants to this group, meeting during the work day.

Presbytery of Charlotte went through a season of renovation. Start with Tamara Williams, the current stated clerk and administrator of the Presbytery of Charlotte! Maybe contact Betty Meadows, retired transitional presbyter of the Presbytery of Charlotte.

## PRESBYTERY OF COASTAL CAROLINA RENOVATION TEAM COMMUNICATION INQUIRY FORM

Greetings in Christ Jesus,

The Presbytery's transformational work identified by Ministry Architects in August 2024 is being led by the Renovation Team in partnership with Presbytery staff, committees, and churches. At this time, we request your feedback on effective and ineffective ways communication comes from the Presbytery to your committee and represented congregations. Your input is vitally important to improving communication and community of the Presbytery.

If you will kindly do so, please take a few moments to answer the below items and return your response to Cassandra Thomas, [chcothomas@yahoo.com](mailto:chcothomas@yahoo.com), by Friday, November 29, 2024. Please reach out to her (910-988-1369) for any questions or concerns you may have about this request. Thank you in advance for your response and support. Blessings and Peace in Christ Jesus!

Name of Organization/Committee/Church: **Presbyterian Women**

☐ Please identify helpful communication methods that Presbytery offers to you and your group and share what makes the methods effective:

- **Website, Emails, and Social Media – an accessible, convenient source of information**
- **Committee leaders/members – direct communication via email, text or phone calls**

☐ Please share Presbytery methods that are not helpful in communicating to you and your group and make suggestions on ways to improve those communication methods:

- **Post Office mail**
  - **Use or make available other ways of receiving**
  - **Post office should be secondary**
  - **Where is a list of all churches' email addresses?**
- **Paper**
  - **Use of smartphones with QR codes/links**
  - **Use paper for formal official signatures or there are even electronic signatures**
  - **Word documents or typed-in emails (this communication/form)**

☐ Please share any publication processes and deadlines that your group follows for communicating within your group.

- **Newsletter, Handbooks**
- **QR Codes (attempted once to capture evaluation/feedback)**

- **Gmail accounts for continuity – as leaders/members change, the email should not only change the password. (working on it)**

□ Please share any other thoughts or suggestions that you have for the Renovation Team.

- **All forms should be available electronically. JOT forms and Google forms streamline information and keep it at our fingertips.**
- **All Presbytery committees and organizations should have access to build their forms instead of individuals trying to buy their own applications (adobe, JOT, Google) or figure it out.**
- **To receive this inquiry via email does not provide ease or convenience for the responder or collector – Google forms would result in a spreadsheet of responses at a glance and categories if set properly. It allows a link to go out via email and be accessed anywhere to respond and submit. I forgot to send and had to return to my office to complete and send.**
- **QR codes at Presbytery meetings for programs, etc., instead of printing – control cost**
- **ZOOM accounts for Presbytery organizations to use or be assigned for use (some organizations have multiple accounts that can run simultaneously if needed)**



## **Materials and Resources for Development of Asset Management Elements**

- Asset Management Responses from Peer Presbyteries, pp. 56-57
- PCC Building Maintenance Seasonal Checklist Submitted to PCC Finance & Property Committee, pp. 58-59
- United Kingdom Church Physical Maintenance Checklist Submitted to PCC Finance & Property Committee, pp. 60-70

## Presbytery Asset Management Responses

### Interview 1:

Hi [REDACTED] -

We do not now have a policy, but we have a Vision 2030 team that will be working on one. As you probably know, Mark Elsdon has predicted that 100,000 churches (in all or no denominations) will close by 2030.

Generally speaking, we don't keep buildings for long after congregations decide to close. Over my tenure, three congregations have closed, and we sold two properties and land leased the third. I suspect as many as 15 churches could close by 2030.

Please check back in February 2026! Our Vision 2030 Team will have their report by then.

### Interview 2:

Hi [REDACTED],

Property is a weird thing here in that every property has significant value. We end up really working hard at helping congregations to leverage their property for highest and best use, and we aren't afraid to talk about value.

In my tenure we have now closed 3 congregations (8 years). One property we sold, one property we are moving another of our congregations into the property, and the other property we are developing for an events center and offices for the Presbytery and the Vibrant Together Development Corporation.

Your specific questions have to do with asset management. Yes. We have an articulated Investment Policy that the investment committee is required to meet for not only Presbytery assets but also for those assets we hold on behalf of congregations. If a congregation sells property, for example, that money is managed under the IPS of the Presbytery but accounted for separately and appears as "Banking for Others" on our Statement of Financial Activities.

As for what to do with a physical property that comes into the hands of the Presbytery, that would fall under the auspices of the Development Corporation. As cited above, we don't have a whole lot of experience with that, as we have not closed that many churches.

We also eliminated our Gracious Separation Policy in 2017, so our view is that it is no longer possible to depart with property, and even no longer possible to depart. In the case of a church considering such, we would declare a schism, identify the true church, assume original jurisdiction, etc. Our presbytery had the first and largest departures. The bulk of the leadership of ECO came from here, so the leaving is long done.

Were I to design a perfect system (I sure haven't done that, but dare to dream a bit), I would create a Property Task Group (or Committee) under the Leadership Council of the Presbytery. Property is a tool for ministry, and as such that tool should be employed to fulfill the vision/mission of the Presbytery. For us the body responsible for keeping the main thing the main thing is the Leadership Council.

### **Interview 3:**

The only assets [REDACTED] has is the presbytery office and property of dissolved congregations. When a Session contacts us to dissolve them, we form an AC with the pastoral leaders as moderator and the clerk as a member with three from the presbytery at large. The AC commission includes selling the building and recommending where the assets go, always giving a non-majority portion to mission the congregation supported and the rest to either [REDACTED]'s non restricted Funds or the fund for small congregation's redevelopment. If we don't sell there's usually a process.



## PCC BUILDING MAINTENANCE SEASONAL CHECKLIST

Foundation for this list provided by Mr. Handyman™

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### Spring Maintenance

- ☐ Inspect HVAC ducts for debris and dust buildup.
  - ☐ Replace HVAC Filters
- ☐ Service AC units and clean coils.
- ☐ Clean and prep the landscaping.
- ☐ Trim trees and shrubs.
- ☐ Mow, aerate, and fertilize the grass.
- ☐ Clean debris from garden beds and landscaping.
  - ☐ Apply mulch/pine needles
- ☐ Check the irrigation system and establish a watering schedule for grass/plants.
- ☐ Clear drains and gutters.
- ☐ Pressure wash hardscapes, walkways, and building exterior.
- ☐ Inspect outdoor lighting for damage.
- ☐ Check backup electrical/power systems (if applicable).

### Summer Maintenance

- ☐ Replace HVAC Filters
- ☐ Clean debris from the roof and check for damage.
- ☐ Confirm that the trash and recycling area is in good condition.
- ☐ Inspect the windows for proper operation and proper seal.
- ☐ Inspect structural materials for rot, peeling paint, rust, and more.
- ☐ Inspect the condition of the parking lot, asphalt striping, and signage.
- ☐ Inspect the grounds for water run-off or erosion issues.

### Fall Maintenance

- ☐ Replace HVAC Filters
- ☐ Rake and remove debris and fallen leaves.
- ☐ Service the furnace/boiler and inspect filters.
- ☐ Winterize the irrigation lines.
- ☐ Mark the streets/driveways with stakes for snow plows when applicable.
- ☐ Check interior and exterior pipes for proper insulation.
- ☐ Check windows and doors for proper insulation.
- ☐ Inspect all plumbing fixtures for leaks.
- ☐ Seal any cracks in your parking lots or asphalt.
- ☐ Inspect heating system, vents, and thermostat.

- ☐ Confirm winter emergency plan (including snow/ice removal).

### **Winter Maintenance**

- ☐ Replace HVAC Filters
- ☐ Prepare sensitive landscaping and structures for winter weather.
- ☐ Inspect the roof and gutters for ice dams.
- ☐ Inspect the building's interior for maintenance issues (prior to Christmas!):
  - ☐ Kitchen
  - ☐ Bathroom
- ☐ Common areas
- ☐ Check for proper operation of all GFCI outlets and light switches.
- ☐ Inspect the ceiling and floors for damage (e.g., water damage).
- ☐ Hire snow/ice removal services.

### **Year-Round Building Maintenance** (Suggested Monthly Schedule)

#### First Sunday of Month (Property Walkthrough)

- ☐ Check for and replace burned-out interior and exterior light bulbs.
- ☐ Inspect door closers, latches, hinges, and locks for proper operation.
- ☐ Check the batteries in your smoke and carbon monoxide detectors (monthly).
- ☐ Inspect the property for signs of rodent or pest damage.
- ☐ Check the building for visible signs of leaks or water damage.

#### Second Sunday of Month

- ☐ Clean window glass, tracks, and all hardware.
- ☐ Replace the HVAC air filters (monthly where budgets allow, quarterly at minimum).

#### Third Sunday of Month

- ☐ Test the fire alarm (monthly).

#### Fourth Sunday of Month

- ☐ Replace the water filters (monthly).

### **Season or Periodic Scheduled Items**

- ☐ Have the fire alarm and fire suppression system serviced (scheduled with authorities).
- ☐ Have the fire extinguishers inspected (scheduled with authorities).
- ☐ Have all OSHA fall prevention devices and equipment inspected (scheduled with authorities where applicable, otherwise scheduled and noted by head of property with signatures for risk management).
- ☐ Ask your tenants/employees for feedback on issues/concerns related to building maintenance (quarterly).

# Maintenance Checklist for Places of Worship

*[Update for PCC Use Possibly—5.1.2025]*

Name of place of worship:

## An Introduction to the Maintenance Checklist

Thank you for looking after your historic place of worship. Monitoring the fabric of your building and performing regular maintenance are key to preserving these places for future generations. As the person on site, you are likely to be the first to notice changes that could indicate defects. Working with a professional advisor will allow decisions to be made on if action is needed, and when. This will help tackle defects to prevent further deterioration. Regular checks also monitor how well previous interventions have worked.

Using this checklist will help organise the time, people and the costs of maintenance tasks. It will also record observations and work that is carried out.

## Using the checklist

This document provides a checklist to assist maintenance planning for places of worship in England. Please edit this template to suit the needs of your place of worship and to meet the requirements of your insurer. For example, make a note of the months your gutters will need checking after leaf fall, and which year the rainwater goods should be repainted.

The checklist is most useful if you update it on a regular basis. Feature it as a regular item on meeting agendas (e.g. PCC, Fabric Committee, Trustees or Elders meetings) to ensure tasks are regularly carried out. Date any entries that you make and when works have been completed. We recommend that you include plans of interior, exterior, grounds and elevations (or photographs) at the end of the document as they can be useful for contractors and volunteers. These can be used to mark areas of concern for monitoring.

## **Risk assessment**

A risk assessment should be in place for all maintenance tasks, especially if carrying them out alone. We recommend that maintenance is always carried out by two people together where possible. Volunteers should not take any risks that threaten their safety.

We recommend that any person working in isolation stays at ground level (unless there is safe access to go higher), has a mobile phone with them and tells someone else about their plans to be at the church and a time for when they plan to be finished.

## **Costs**

It is important to include the cost of maintenance tasks in the plan so they can be incorporated into the annual budget for your place of worship. It may take time to receive quotes for maintenance. We recommend the checklist is updated with the cost of works as soon as they are received.

## **Useful equipment when carrying out maintenance inspections**

- gloves (disposable and heavy duty)
- a torch (flashlight)
- binoculars
- a mask (for dust or guano when going into enclosed spaces)
- safety glasses or goggles
- a first-aid kit
- a camera (or mobile phone camera)
- measuring stick and or tape measure
- clipboard (for recording your observations)
- A plan or general photograph of the building for highlighting the location of issues or where photographs are taken from.

## **Links between volunteers, professional contractors and advisors**

Places of worship often have a professional advisor, such as a qualified architect or surveyor, who undertakes a regular building inspection. This is usually done every five years and is known as a quinquennial inspection, or QI. It should be noted that a building inspection report is not a maintenance plan, but it should inform your maintenance routine.

Each place of worship is different and will have its own maintenance requirements and arrangements. Many have volunteers who can do most of the regular tasks, depending on the complexity of the building. Others employ a contractor for some or all tasks, such as work requiring access at height. A professional advisor plays an

important role and can help with advice on building related issues, including hiring a contractor, or tasks which might need professional guidance.

To make best use of this checklist, we recommend that you consult a professional advisor (often your Quinquennial Inspector) on certain tasks. These are highlighted with an asterisk \* on the checklist.

Please note: this checklist has evolved following discussions on maintenance with congregations taking part in the Taylor Review Pilot, Historic England's National Specialist Services and in conversation with the National Churches Trust and The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings. It may not cover all aspects of a Maintenance Plan or associated legal duties for every place of worship (including relevant consents). We hope that it will help you to look after your building and keep it watertight and safe.

**Name of place of worship:**

### Names and Contact Details (Fabric Officers/Churchwarden/Treasurer/Volunteers)

[illegible]

### **Names and Contact Details (Professional advisor and relevant contractors)**

[illegible]



## 1.1 Roofs

Ref	Building Element	Maintenance Task	Person best placed to do the task	Suggested frequency	Annual Cost \$	Q1 Jan to Mar	Q2 Apr to Jun	Q3 Jul to Sep
1.1.1	<b>Roof areas generally</b>	Inspect roof coverings from the ground and accessible high points. Note any loss / damage / heavy moss. Is a defect the cause of internal dampness / leaks?	Volunteer if appropriate and/or contractor if necessary	After stormy weather Twice per year				
1.1.2	<b>Slate / tile roofs and vertical cladding</b>	Inspect for cracked, displaced or broken slates / roof tiles. Note the need for repairs* and options to repair / replace to match existing materials	* Contractor	Annually				
1.1.3	<b>Sheet metal roofs and cladding</b>	Inspect the condition of the panels, joints and clips. Note the need for repairs* and undertake temporary repair of splits	* Contractor	Annually				
1.1.4	<b>Lead junction weathering and flashings</b>	Inspect for any unfixed lead sections or cracked mortar. Note if repair is needed*	* Contractor	Annually				

## 1.2 Rainwater Goods

Ref	Building Element	Maintenance Task	Person best placed to do the task	Suggested frequency	Annual Cost \$	Q1 Jan to Mar	Q2 Apr to Jun	Q3 Jul to Sep
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1.2.1	<b>Rainwater goods generally</b>	Inspect rainwater goods from the ground and accessible high points and report any loss / damage / water leakage. Temporary fix or minimise / divert leaking water	Volunteer if appropriate and/or contractor if necessary	A: During / after rain  B: Twice per year				
1.2.2	<b>Rainwater removal from valley / parapet gutters</b>	Clear rainwater goods of debris and ensure overflows are clear. Rod if necessary	Volunteer if appropriate and/or contractor if necessary	Twice per year				
1.2.3	<b>Rainwater goods – external inspection for cracks and leaks</b>	Inspect rainwater goods for cracks and leaks. Repair or note the need to replace in matching material any cracked / leaking sections	Volunteer if appropriate and/or contractor if necessary	Twice per year				
1.2.4	<b>Rainwater goods – vegetation, leaves and other blockages that need clearing</b>	Check and clear identified blockages	Volunteer if appropriate and/or contractor if necessary	Twice per year				
1.2.5	<b>Rainwater goods - repainting</b>	Repaint*	Contractor  * Consult with Professional advisor on specification	7 years max				
1.2.6	<b>Below ground drainage</b>	Check and clear all gullies. Repair open joints in perimeter drainage channels. Open inspection chambers and check drains run freely to soak away or drain. Check for tree roots causing damage	Surface checks – volunteer if appropriate  Underground - contractor	Twice per year				

### 1.3 External

Ref	Building Element	Maintenance Task	Person best placed to do the task	Suggested Frequency	Annual Cost \$	Q1 Jan to Mar	Q2 Apr to Jun	Q3 Jul to Sep
1.3.1	<b>External walls generally</b>	Inspect external walls from the ground and accessible high points. Note any damage, gathering information on any signs of movement or cracks. Photograph and monitor by measurement	Volunteer	After stormy weather Annually * As agreed with professional advisor				
1.3.2	<b>External walls, copings and parapets</b>	Check for loose copings. Remove any vegetation and ivy. Consult* on specification and the need for any consents to repoint any open joints / re-fix copings	* Volunteer if appropriate and/or contractor if necessary	Annually				
1.3.3	<b>Ventilation</b>	Ensure ventilation grills, air bricks, louvres etc. are clear. Maintain opening window vents	Volunteer if appropriate and/or contractor if necessary	Annually				
1.3.4	<b>Bird screens</b>	Check that birds cannot get into the tower or building through broken mesh	Volunteer	Annually				
1.3.5	<b>Leaded light windows</b>	Inspect and note any defects to window protection / rusting fixings, lead comes, deformed, loose/broken glass, rusting of support rods and wire ties. Clear condensation drainage holes	Volunteer	Twice per year				
1.3.6	<b>Non-leaded light windows</b>	Inspect windows, maintain, including minor essential repairs	Contractor	Annually				
1.3.7	<b>External timberwork</b>	Repaint/stain to match existing specification*	* Contractor	7 years max				

<b>1.3.8</b>	<b>Doors and windows</b>	Check and make secure - operation of lock, bolts and hinges. Oil if needed	Volunteer	Twice per year				
<b>1.3.9</b>	<b>Large trees near the building</b>	Note any dead branches and/or any branches touching the building and arrange pruning*	* Volunteer Avoid nesting bird season	Annually				
<b>1.3.10</b>	<b>Boundary walls, monuments, memorials and paths</b>	Inspect for stability, condition and any signs of collapse, damage or hazard	Volunteer if appropriate and/or contractor if necessary	Twice per year				

#### 1.4 Internal

<b>Ref</b>	<b>Building Element</b>	<b>Maintenance Task</b>	<b>Person best placed to do the task</b>	<b>Suggested Frequency</b>	<b>Annual Cost \$</b>	<b>Q1 Jan to Mar</b>	<b>Q2 Apr to Jun</b>	<b>Q3 Jul to Sep</b>
<b>1.4.1</b>	<b>Damp</b>	Inspect each part of the building for damp or staining, checking the ceiling and walls	Volunteer	Monthly				
<b>1.4.2</b>	<b>Ventilation</b>	Ventilate the church. Ensure carpets and furnishings are dry and fittings secure	Volunteer	Monthly				
<b>1.4.3</b>	<b>Internal spaces generally</b>	Inspect in roof spaces and all internal spaces, particularly below and adjacent to gutters. Note any evidence or leaks (see item 1.1.1)	Volunteer	After stormy weather Annually				
<b>1.4.4</b>	<b>Internal fabric and structure</b>	Inspect internal structure and fabric including roof timbers and bell frame and report any signs of	Volunteer *	Annually				

		structural movement / damp / fungus. Note and seek advice* on monitoring and the need for further investigation						
1.4.5	<b>Exposed woodwork</b>	Inspect exposed woodwork, report any beetle infestation or rot/decay. Note and seek advice* on monitoring and the need for further investigation	Volunteer *	Twice per year				
1.4.6	<b>Roof and floor voids</b>	Inspect roof and floor voids. Note any signs of vermin and any beetles or fresh wood dust to inform QI visit	Volunteer	Annually				

## 1.5 Building Services

Ref	Building Element	Maintenance Task	Person best placed to do the task	Suggested Frequency	Annual Cost \$	Q1 Jan to Mar	Q2 Apr to Jun	Q3 Jul to Sep
1.5.1	<b>Heating and hot water system</b>	Check operation. Report faults	Volunteer	Annually				
		Gas boiler (if applicable) inspection and testing	Gas Safe registered contractor	Annually				
		Oil boiler (if applicable) inspection and testing	OFTEC registered contractor	Annually				
1.5.2	<b>Water systems</b>	Check taps and pipes for leaks. Ensure insulation is in place	Volunteer	Twice per year				
1.5.3	<b>Portable Electrical equipment</b>	Formal inspection and test	Specialist contractor	Annually				
1.5.4	<b>Electrical fixed wiring</b>	Routine checks	NICEIC/ECA registered contractor	Annually				

		Periodic inspection and testing	NICEIC/ECA registered contractor	3 to 5 years				
1.5.5	Fire-fighting equipment	Service fire extinguishers	Specialist contractor	Annually				
1.5.6	Hearing amplification system (if applicable)	Check operation and security of all fittings and wiring. Report faults	Volunteer	Annually				
1.5.7	Lightning protection (if applicable)	Check condition of lightning conductor. Report faults  Periodic inspection and testing	Volunteer If there is a strike you must use a specialist lightning protection contractor or electrical contractor  Specialist contractor	After a suspected strike  Recommend every 11 months				
1.5.8	Fire alarm system (if applicable)	Weekly test	Volunteer	Weekly				
		User attention – only for systems with open-cell batteries or the use of a standby generator	Specialist contractor	Monthly				
		Professional inspection – only for systems with vented batteries	Specialist contractor	Quarterly				
		Professional periodic inspection and test	Specialist contractor	Every 6 months				
		Professional inspection and test	Specialist contractor	Annually				
1.5.9	Emergency lighting (if applicable)	Daily check	Volunteer	Daily				
		Functional check	Trained volunteer	Monthly				

1.6	Total		Duration test	Specialist contractor	£	Annually				
	1.5.10	Intruder alarm system / roof alarm (if applicable)	Service	Specialist contractor		Annually				
	1.5.11	Lift (if applicable)	Service	Specialist contractor		Annually				
	1.5.12	Legionella (if applicable)	Prevention of Legionella – Review and update risk assessment, implement any necessary preventative measures	Specialist		Determined by risk assessment				
	annual cost for occasional and regular tasks (excluding inflation & VAT)									
1.7	Total cost per year of cyclical tasks (on an interval of more than 1 year eg painting or building services maintenance) (excluding inflation & VAT)				£					

## 2 Summary of works to be undertaken (to be extracted from QI summary or equivalent)

Source (QI/other survey) and date:

	Timeframe	Date required	Description	Estimated Cost	Date Completed
2.1	Year 1 (within 1 year)				
2.2	Year 2 (within 2 years)				

2.3	Years (within 3 – 5 years)				

2.4	Total cost of works for the next 5 years (estimated))	£
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This checklist is endorsed for use by:





## **Materials and Resources for Development of Connection Plan**

- Workshop 2 Packet, pp. 72-114
- Workshop 3 Packet, pp. 115-117
- Connection Plan Narrative Document, pp. 118-137

# Presbytery of Coastal Carolina

Renovation Team Workshop

August 1, 2025

Graves Memorial Presbyterian Church, Clinton, NC



# Agenda

10 am	Gather, Study, Pray
10:15	Review of Discovery Materials
11am	Recommendations Game
11:30	Review of Vision Summit Materials
Noon	Sweet Dreams
12:45	Next Steps
1pm	Depart

## Studying Connection - Connection Mindset (CRC)

The passage below comes from Trudy Ash and the Christian Reformed Church. She contributed deeply to our Discovery Phase.

“Our current Connections (II) team defines this mindset as follows:

A Connections Mindset blesses congregations by encouraging them to embody their calling and mission more fully through active listening, holy curiosity, imagining with them their God-led future, and serving as a strategizing partner.

Our little team is committed to inviting all CRCNA staff to embody the Connections Mindset, to see it lived out in every interaction between congregations and CRC ministries as well as between the ministries themselves.

The Connections project believes living out this mindset encompasses these four shifts:

1. Listening to congregations as if we're sitting around the table as a family.
2. Always thinking “Who else could contribute to this conversation for the benefit of this congregation?”
3. Finding, developing, sharing, and collaborating on resources that might be of help to this congregation.
4. Respecting the specific context, identity, and vision of each local congregation.

The Connections Mindset is still a fairly new way of thinking for us, but the shift is well underway. After all, the need to connect is a basic human need. It helps us grow, learn, and live out our calling. As a denomination this mindset is key to walking alongside our congregations, and so assisting their capacity to thrive in their mission.”

**Where in our Peer Conversations do we see others noticing the same thing?  
How can we codify this into an actionable Connection Plan?**

## Contact 1:

Cassandra asked the recipient, *"Would you please respond to the following questions":*

*(1) what were the driving challenges that had us move from the older model to the current?*

When the presbytery was first formed (1980s) there was a conscientious effort to break down the "old" boundaries of the former presbyteries (both PCUS and UPCUSA). But given both the geographical size and the number of congregations (180+ then) some division within the presbytery was needed to enhance fellowship and deal with congregational issues at a more local level. The model that I came into was already focused around 3 geographical areas – each one with a mission coordinator (Nancy, Stuart, and Laura). We went a step farther and created 3 regional COMs each staffed (in part) by their respective mission coordinators. This soon led to regional assemblies to do some of the work of the presbytery in their areas as well to provide the fellowship opportunities that many former members had lost in the 1980s restructuring.

*(2) what changes had driven those challenges?*

It was not so much new changes that led to the formation of regional COMs and Community Assemblies as a response to what had been lost in the creation of a very large presbytery following Reunion. We made a serious effort to maintain a feeling of being one presbytery even as we sought to bring presbytery activities closer to home. COVID certainly impacted the fellowship aspect of the new formation, but that can be said about every presbytery across the church.

*(3) what new or altered values or perceived needs were identified in the decision-making process?*

Our goal in this new formal alignment was designed to honor the unity that earlier models had sought to create of being one presbytery. To have gone from the effort to unite at least 2 PCUS and several UPCUSA presbyteries would have felt like denial of the history of the predecessor presbyteries – especially the UPCUSA ones. The change we sought to make could not have been made in those early days (1990s, 2000s). A great debt of gratitude is due to those who worked so hard to create a sense of one presbytery. The felt needs to create 3 regional centers within a single presbytery were a sense of distance, a desire for closer relationships within a reasonable driving distance, and to counteract the feeling that the "presbytery" [people from way over there] were making decisions for us. It was hoped that a more regional

organization (especially in COM work) would give the sense that “we” are part of what makes the presbytery work.

*(4) what was the best part of the model?*

I can think of two:

- The facilitation of COM work in regional areas.
- The family spirit I saw in the regional assemblies – **and** the creativity that these gatherings unleashed.

*(5) were there any elements you would have changed if you were regent for a day?*

Not really.

*(6) what did you (in retrospect) take for granted?*

That people would understand that we were **in fact** trying to keep unity of the presbytery intact while encouraging regional fellowship and mission. I (we) could probably have done a better job of explaining the **dual nature** of the effort. Some of those who had worked so hard to achieve a sense of one presbytery felt that we were turning our backs on their work.

## Contact 2:

Dari reached out remembrances and was offered the following:

Would you please answer the following questions:

(1) what were the driving challenges that had us move from the older model to the current?

I think the initial driving factor for moving to a 3-Community model came from COM. Beside the obvious geographical struggles, it was very difficult to effectively care for all the congregations and pastoral voices for all (at that time) 180 churches.

(2) what changes have driven those challenges?

I think dividing the presbytery into 3 communities was a natural progression as a resulting from the combining of multiple smaller presbyteries into one.

(3) what new or altered values or perceived needs were identified in the decision-making process?

I think the 3-community model resulted in the addition of new presbytery staff in the form of Mission Coordinators.

(4) what was the best part of the model?

The congregations and pastoral voices were better taken care of as a result of a smaller focused COM.

(5) were there any elements you would have changed if you were regent for a day?

If I were regent for a day I would go fishing to clear my head and then try to figure out how to answer this question.

(6) what did you (in retrospect) take for granted?

I took for granted our membership and financial position.

## Contact 3:

Steve asked this recipient for thoughts on the development of the “current” model for connection, which has lost the funding for staff that was at the center of its effectiveness. These are the responses:

### Responses to Renovation Team questions

1. Geographical distance making it difficult to get to know people – move to at least getting to know people in your Community. Distance also making collaboration difficult.
2. Getting enough volunteers to fill all presbytery committees was difficult. 4 committees eliminated at presbytery level and moved to Community steering teams. Also, smaller churches wanted more help. Community model with a staff person to assist could connect smaller churches for shared ministry and especially for sharing resources (VBS, etc.)
3. A more “bottom up” approach. Communities given freedom to tailor ministry to suit desires/needs of its churches. See small church info above. Greater desire for building relationships across smaller geography. More support for pastors.
4. Connections and collaboration happened. Another staff person (Miss. Coordinator) to answer questions/provide information & resources alleviated many calls/requests that would have otherwise gone to the General Presbyter. More pastor support (Miss. Coordinator also functioned as pastor to pastor – not initially intended for the position, but became reality.
5. Too many responsibilities given to steering teams whose members are volunteers. Enthusiasm for serving on steering team begins to wane and fewer people want to serve.
6. Very interesting question...hmmm... That I would be trusted to do my job without being micro-managed. That the Community model was also working in the other Communities.

### Follow-up questions

1. Cultivating fruitful relationships requires a staff person who is intentional about getting to know sessions/church members across churches. This means going to churches and learning what they are doing, and sometimes actively participating with them. Making gentle suggestions to them, gentle nudges and not admonishing. Same with connecting with pastors. When the staff person learns the gifts/resources of the people/churches in the Community, facilitating connections is simple.
2. Younger pastors (under 50-55) can be less inclined to in-person gatherings which hinders getting to know colleagues and fostering ministry



collaboration. This is not necessarily a huge issue, but is noticeable. Tall steeple pastors are very busy in their own church – requires a different approach.

3. There must be a person whose responsibility is intentional development of relationships and offering pastor to pastor support. This changes the Community culture.

### **A few other comments:**

1. Since retiring, I frequently hear “We miss you. We don’t have anyone to call anymore.” My response is always to remind them that they can {contact staff}, but the reply is always “It’s not the same. They aren’t local. You know who we are.”
2. It is an impossible order to expect Laura to assist all 3 steering teams to the degree that a Mission Coordinator could assist. This puts an enormous load on the steering team chair. The steering team model will implode without good leadership.
3. Intentional pastor support is critical. One other thought... once the retreat was opened to the whole presbytery, a number of Central and West people made comments about how close the East pastors/churches were. If it was noticeable, the model must have had some merit.

## Contact 4:

**What connection “tools” do you use to cultivate mission and ministry? (e.g. how you use the internet, in-person events, the programs/approaches/procedures that increase connection)**

*\* (Samantha) remembers the recipient sharing that the goal is to create a meeting so interesting that someone who is attending on zoom would want to be in person for the next meeting.*

**a. What approaches seem to be the most effective in your presbytery?**

**b. Are there any new forms of connection that you are considering**

Below are her thoughts:

So, our last presbytery meeting was at a brewery (Burning Bush Brewery in Chicago), which is owned by one of our minister members. We had a happy hour gathering before the meeting — and 80 people showed up! And then the meeting was held in their event space (no beer allowed). It was great to see so many people fight rush hour traffic and show up early just to spend time with people. As I looked around the room, everyone had someone to talk to. It filled my heart!

For our next meeting in September, we are hoping to lean into a creation stewardship theme and meet at a park or forest preserve. We are working on building intergenerational activities into the mix. Since this meeting will be on a Saturday morning (and the first Saturday meeting we have had in many years), we want it to be family friendly. The plan is for there to be activities for youth while we are in an abbreviated business meeting — and then lots of stuff and worship that can be done together. We’re hoping for some sort of outdoor clean up /service project too. The meeting and worship will be on Zoom... the rest, you have to show up for!

In August, we’re having a lunch meet-up. We picked a place central in the presbytery and set a time, and invited all pastors to show up if they can. Hopefully this will be the first of its kind — there’s a lot of enthusiasm around the idea, but a lot of folks also aren’t available in the summer.

I’m also planning two gatherings for specialized ministers — one a coffee drop in, and the other a happy hour (probably back at Burning Bush) where chaplains and those not serving congregations can come and gather and get to know each other. The hope is also to listen to what they would appreciate having offered so we can be sure we’re meeting their needs and giving them

space to connect with the presbytery in ways that are meaningful and work with their schedules.

We did a similar lunch for church admins this spring — and that will hopefully become an annual thing.

Folks are busy and say they want more Zoom options — but then many do not show up for Zoom options. That could be people just do not need one more Zoom meeting. Or, it could be that the Zoom options aren't hitting the right note content-wise. But I do think folks are looking for ways to be in person together and are willing to show up for the right thing. I'm trying to create a balance between programming and white space for people to talk and get to know each other.

Oh - one more thing. We are not doing a presbytery retreat this year (typically we've had one every year, but the planning team is small and tired). So, we're looking at hosting a day to the museum — and hiring someone to give a tour. And then... offering gathering time before (meet early for coffee) and after (let's all go to the museum cafeteria to get lunch).

We're doing a lot of experiments and trying to learn from how they are received and what people say they want and what they'll show up for. It's all a learning process.

## Contact 5:

1) Many in the Reformed tradition are rediscovering connectional ministry for a different time and place. What are some of the lessons *you* have learned as you've considered these changes?

We have discovered what I'm sure you already know - that it's hard to figure out what works in this connectional ministry space. Especially post-Covid, it has been hard to get people to commit to attending events, even online. There are so many things and events and situations demanding their attention. And we have struggled to figure out what to do to get more people involved in this connectional ministry we want.

One lesson we have learned is to not take it personally when people don't respond to offerings we put out there. We keep trying new possibilities. Another lesson we have learned is that it can be fun to think outside the box. Don't keep repeating the same old patterns and events. The old ways aren't reaching people like they used to. So what else can we try? Another lesson we are learning is that it's okay to take breaks from trying new things. We get tired of advertising events that people don't sign up for. We get tired of reaching out to people to ask them to lead events and share their gifts - to no avail. So we take breaks too. We let time go by and see what hungers and requests arise from the members of the presbytery.

(2) Any change can be difficult, but as presbyteries become less focused on being centers of "corporate-style" leadership and "top-down" resourcing, to a more relational model, what are some of the common challenges you have seen in transition?

One of the most common challenges we face is our own inability to come up with new ways of relating. We are used to the old ways. We haven't had to flex new muscles that are more creative. But we are trying. We are open. We are hoping for new folks to join us with their new energy and ideas that come from outside of the context of presbyteries and committees and the corporate-style leadership you mention.

Another common challenge is the refrain - "but we have never done it like this before." That echoes from within us and from around us. With time and resources stretched so thin, many people simply don't have the bandwidth to dream big and pray big and then work to be the answers to our own prayers.

(2a) Follow-up, are there any lessons you witnessed that could help others navigate this sort of transition?

We are learning to be willing to get it wrong. Be willing to try again and again. Be willing to listen to the ideas that come from new voices and new perspectives.

Be willing to let others take the ball and run with it. We don't have to be the leaders of every event or even involved in every event.

(3) At the sake of feeling redundant, I would love to hear - in *your* experience - "what works?" "What doesn't work?"

What works well is being willing to be critiqued and criticized for the old ways without being defensive. We agree that the old way is how we have always done it - and we are open to change.

What works well is remaining open to failure and trying again.

What works well is being willing to invite new folks into the conversations.

What works well is being willing to let someone else, someone with a different vision and perspective, lead events in their own ways and see what works and doesn't work for them.

(4) Do you feel comfortable sharing some of the details of how you organized your approach, including how/why you named positions and ministries?

I was not involved in naming any ministries or events or positions, so I can't answer this question.

I will say that I have been on this Ministry Resources Committee (MRC) for a couple of years now, and we are constantly trying to come up with new ways to organize ourselves and our activities so that more congregations and pastors and other presbytery leaders will be willing to get involved, to connect with each other and the presbytery as a whole. Our dream and vision are to see more and more people connected with one another as church members and as congregations. One of the things we do on the MRC is offer grants to churches that make room for them to work together in pursuit of partnerships and connection.

(5) What are we missing?

I can't think of anything you are missing. I think it is great to be asking these questions. I would encourage you, at the risk of being redundant, to stay open. To keep trying. To dream big. To ask yourselves what would draw you into new connection making, what would make you want to attend an event and get involved, and then offer that to the presbytery.

I would encourage you to ask the people around you what they want and need and dream and envision for the church and the presbytery and themselves and then ask them to get involved in bringing it to pass.

## Contact 6:

I started replying to your specific questions and felt like I really couldn't, since I've only ever known the 3 community model. So maybe instead of responding to each of them with "I don't know," I'll just reply to the spirit of the questions (hopefully!).

Because our presbytery is so geographically big, it seems obvious that trying to operate in a way that includes everyone all the time would be impossible. My guess is that the three community model was created in the hope of building community and getting meaningful work done on a smaller and more manageable level. I would be curious to hear if the "old timers" think it has worked. Some challenges with the current model that I see are:

- 1) Many committees and commissions still require people from across all three communities, so having three separate communities just creates an extra layer of work for the Nominating Committee as they try to ensure volunteers are equally distributed
- 2) I would question whether the communities are doing ministry *as a community* versus just those geographically close.
- 3) Does the technology we so often use now help to overcome barriers that distance once created?

Some quick thoughts at building/maintaining connections:

- 1) peer-learning groups for clergy
- 2) elder learning cohorts (first time elder, first time clerk, small church elders, etc.)
- 3) shared resource files (literally just a shared google drive with policies and whatever else people wanted to share)
- 4) shared sermon series resources (and then Zoom Bible studies or text groups to connect people across congregations who are doing the same thing)
- 5) simple, one-day children and youth events

## Contact 7:

Thank you for your willingness to serve on this team. The relationship between our church, specifically, and the presbytery is beyond strained. I can only assume this is a problem that reaches pretty far if a team has been assembled to address the topics in the questions above. I do not know that I am the best person to reach out to about this as I have distanced myself from many of the ministries at our church recently. As you also know I have discussed with you how I am not sure that I feel my beliefs align with Presbytery and the stand the reformed church is taking on many social issues.

At a presbytery level, I am not sure what forms of connections are effective and efficient. [In my perspective] as a member of the church, I do not really see any communications from the presbytery. There is most definitely a breakdown in the delivery of presbytery information. Outside of special offering campaign envelopes, our congregation is not made aware of presbytery wide connection activities. A specific example of another break in connection would involve our church anniversary gathering. A request was made for the General Presbyter to attend our special 125 anniversary. He was not able to attend and declined our invitation. No other efforts were made to send another representative from the Presbytery to celebrate with our church. New connection avenues would be great if it would create a spark to want to connect but I feel part of the problem may be wanting to connect. Maybe "reinventing the wheel" with new avenues of connecting is not the answer but rather fixing the wheels you have now. Maybe the leaders in place should be present and available more to make quality connections happen. Barriers to church connections could be the leaders- top down may be more comfortable to them rather than relational. Simply put we do not hear from or see them at our church.

These are general observations about the Presbytery as an "corporate office" communicating with "satellite branches". Reading that sentence makes me sad but it is the simplest way to put it. On a personal level I feel the Presbyterian church as a whole has lost a purpose that makes me comfortable. While I do not have articles or data at this time I could give you to cite my argument, I feel like, especially in our local area, churches that are less focused on agendas and more focused on ministry and missions are what are drawing people to attend and engage. The denominational churches are hurting- they have gotten too large, they have an agenda and they have lost touch with their purpose.

I am happy the Renovation Team was formed and the Presbytery is entertaining these conversations. My prayer is that your work and the work of the committee is actually put into action when presented to the Presbytery.



## Contact 8:

**Brownson** is a large church. Due to its size, they are fortunate to have plenty of resources which in turn makes their need for connection with the presbytery less. [The Recipient] understands that smaller churches need more resources from the presbytery.

[The recipient] likes connection personally, and finds the community pastor lunches helpful to create relationships with others.

[The recipient] enjoys the community presbytery meetings better than whole presbytery meetings, and wishes presbytery meetings were not all on Saturdays.\*

Last thoughts....

The emails are too long.

There is a lack of clarity as to what each committee within the presbytery does.

The presbytery needs strong leadership.

\*Wasn't there a time when our presbytery had meetings on weekdays?

## Contact 9:

This recipient's job: to help support, recruit, launch communities and help congregations begin. They have been with their Presbytery since 2006. [The recipient] is a known entity—so most people come to them. [The recipient] staffs three teams of volunteers: A Church development and Worship team, a Congregational Support Committee (existing and new ministries, tech needs), and a Church Disaster Committee. Asked to go preach and be in the churches.

ALL CHANGE can only go at the pace of relationships. Go be out with the people. It might be helpful to be strategic by placing a known person with the new person to help develop connections. Be gracious when a church says, “No thank you,” and then comes to you when they have a need. Be comfortable saying, “I don’t know.” and then FOLLOW UP. Remember to be CURIOUS about what you are seeing and hearing from the churches.

There has been mis-trust, trauma, pain, in the Presbytery. [The recipient] deeply listens, sometimes apologizes for the Presbytery. “I represent the system that did this and I’m sorry.” TRUSTING RELATIONSHIP. [The recipient] KNOWS that they represent the organization so they just open the conversation; not here to evaluate and prescribe. “I’m here to wonder with you.” Wonderful moments, including healing have come from these gatherings. Sometimes only one person comes. The churches sometimes fear that the presbytery might go back to the old ways. As the system has changed, the nucleus of power has changed. There have been some VERY HARD conversations. They are starting next year with a “Covenant of Ethics” which is like our “Values.”

Staff and teams are doing a lot more listening and approaching. Every church in the presbytery has a contact person (for us it would be Community Contact Person). Every church gets a visit from one member of the Presbytery Staff once a year. “Hi! I just want to say hello and worship with you today.”

**OVER COMMUNICATE:** It feels weird to us, but say things, print things, write things, multiple times.

### **Ideas that seem to work:**

Innovator Gatherings. Because [The recipient] is familiar to the people, they are trusted.

[The recipient] knows the churches shared experience and so gets them together regarding those experiences, hosts these gatherings in person and on zoom once a month, moves the gathering to different areas; begins with

open ended questions. “Where do you see God at work?” “Where do you feel God is calling you to something?”, “What brought you here?” “How can I support you?”

At Presbytery Meetings they have a segment called, Good News. “Share something good happening at your church.” Connect at that space. Get the message out, “You don’t have to do this by yourself and you don’t have to reinvent the wheel.” “Who else in your community is there to partner with in the community (both churches of other denominations and non-faith organization)?” Get people out of their buildings.

Support Groups. Needs based. Host an event with a speaker (expert) on the subject/need. One or two events, then identify one or two people to launch cohorts or maybe a retreat.

### **RESOURCES:**

The church isn’t where we need to look. [The recipient] is looking at other companies that do creative things well. Disney has a leadership training that they hope to go to with someone; looking at corporate structures like project managers.

Creativity Inc. book by Amy Wallace and Edwin Catmull

Unreasonable Hospitality book by Will Guidara

## Contact 10:

### **Trudy Ash, Regional Connector with the Christian Reformed Church**

Trudy was a part of an experiment that began in 2016, supported by a Lilly grant. While that funding has ended, the learning and reorganizing to best serve their churches still continues. There are four regions. Each region has a person, a Connector, that is familiar with the cultures in that region, aware of and collect the regional knowledge, and, more importantly, live in that region. Their job is to resource, support, and encourage their churches.

Each church is unique. **The goal for the Connector is to figure out who they are as a church—get to know them—and support them in that way.** When connecting, remember that **you are the servants of the servants of God.** It's a ministry. We are here to serve. The biggest thing they need is support. When Connectors aren't connecting face-to-face, spending time with church FB pages, websites, and bulletins help them see what is happening and being talked about in the churches. Connectors ask themselves: What is this church capable of doing at this point in time? Are they ready for an article? Book study? resource to jump into? How to get the church to take a resource to make it their own? Churches don't like change, don't want to experiment. Sometimes you have to flip the narrative and suggest that experimenting is HOW you learn. "We will connect you to the resources. You aren't in this alone." It's hard to watch churches struggle—sometimes—not even try. But the way churches light up when you offer support makes it worth it!

**It takes a minute (it takes time)** to help the churches learn how to support each other. Connect the churches by getting them together. Congregations that learn together—there is something special that happens. **Connector's Role: not to be "the expert" but to ask questions, get to know the churches so that they begin to talk openly and share deeply, then connect them to other churches with similar concerns/needs.**

**RELATIONAL CAPITAL is huge. People have to trust you before they interact with you.**

Get to know a few people. As they learn to trust you, they refer others to you. (It was probably year three before churches began to reach back.) SAY: How can I support you? NOT: How can I help you. PUSH-PULL—not language used with the churches—but the concept is: How do we get to the point with churches that they are "pulling things," making the requests?

### **Some approaches that are working:**

At major events, Connectors ask for 5-10 minutes on the agenda, state their role, introduce relevant resources (from their listening). Sometimes there isn't enough time to get on the agenda so they "work the room" getting to know the people and the people getting to know them.

Get your face and information out there. Short emails, to the point, thanks for taking the time..., then follow up; use Facebook and FaceTime. Use the Church Bulletin: Faith Formation Tips, Announcements.

Pastor Calling Project. Call to check in with them, "How are things going," listen and encourage. This summer they are asking: What is your church passionate about? It gets the Connector's name into the Pastor's mind. The first thing you do is connect with the pastor. "Tell me about your church. What's going really well? If the pastor gets going, she or he gets to the "what they need." **THEN FOLLOW UP is huge in building trust.**

Church Administrators are the gatekeepers—especially in "vacant" churches. 4-5 years into the program they recognized how important it is to build a trusting relationship with them. They Host a Regional Zoom meeting for Church Administrators getting them to know each other AND the Connector.

Some Connectors do workshops at churches on specific topics (Intergenerational church life). Other Connectors do online workshops (Working with Volunteers).

"Vacant Churches." Due to a shortage of pastors, they've been thinking together how to raise up leaders, how to encourage full-time pastors to support a church, help them find pastors, checking in and reaching out to the Elders.

Cohorts. Connectors listen and discover a need popping up (Intercultural ministries). They do the administrative work, coordinate the planning of the meetings, and lead the group through the meeting. Three or more churches are involved, each church has to have 3-4 persons on their committee. Participants get teaching, they share their experiences together, and they work on projects with their church. They meet every other month. On the off months, Connectors (or Volunteer Coaches) contacts each church and moves them through a series of questions. This helps the Connectors become familiar with the churches and builds trust. Cohorts meet in person at the beginning and ending of the cohorts. Grant money is used to make that happen. Cohorts continue to be supported through newsletters.

#### Resources:

Center for Congregations in Indiana

How Your Congregations Learn, book by Tim Shapiro (strongly recommended)

Syd Hielema, shielema@crcna.org Was experiment leader, retired now

## Connect Team Onboarding Notes

*We are "servants of the servants of God."*

### All about Relationships

- Behind every service we provide lies a relationship, and more often than one might expect, the "service-recipient" is eager to develop that relationship by sharing joys and/ or frustrations/ struggles. Providing a listening ear (without the need to "fix" anything) is a powerful form of service. Every interaction (in person, phone, email) is a potential *koinonia* moment. There is a great deal of loneliness, exhaustion and discouragement out there in congregational leadership land.
- Dependability is a key relational trust-builder. All promises made during the interaction need to be noted and follow up on in a timely manner. Thus, we are called to be cautious with over promising and diligent in follow-through.
- The "mutual introduction" email is a lovely network builder. E.g, "You really would benefit by connecting with \_\_\_\_\_ in ministry X. I'll send both of you a "mutual introduction" email right after this which also includes the context for these introductions, inviting the two of you to continue this conversation."
- All of us have too many things to do every day. Yet, in our interactions with congregations, the experience on the other end is enhanced when the other party would never guess that

we are feeling overwhelmed. Never let on that you're feeling rushed (and to be clear, this is not an encouragement to have hour long phone calls; a 10 minute phone call can feel very relaxed). Similarly, a "task-driven" email is greatly enhanced with a one sentence personal touch of some kind.

- We never know how the Holy Spirit is working through an interaction. "Sow your seed in the morning, and in the evening let not your hands be idle, for you do not know which will succeed, whether this or that, or whether both will do equally well." (ECCL 11:6). We have all experienced the reality that what we thought was a simple 10 minute interaction at that time, turned out (we discovered later) to make a world of difference to the other party.

### *Big picture guiding questions*

As we ponder how to bless our region, keep in mind foundational strategic questions such as:

1. What do I hope to accomplish with each strategy? 2. Who might partner with me in implementing this strategy (if applicable)?
3. What will help me discern each one's impact (in the short term and / or the long term)?
4. The ABC123 rubric below may support strategic discernment.

*Discernment - determining which holy hunches to act upon (looking for A1, A2, B1)*

*A - high potential impact 1 - fairly simple to implement / low hanging fruit*

*B - moderate potential impact 2 - somewhat simple, with some challenges, to implement*

*C - low potential impact 3 - significant challenges to implement well*  
*Embodying the push - pull polarity.*

Definition: our tendency has been to “push” resources at congregations. By contrast, a

“pull” strategy invites congregations to “pull” from us based on their needs. A better term

for this would be the “listen - nudge polarity.” This requires:

1. Careful, ongoing listening
2. A nimble approach to respond to what we are hearing.
3. Cultivating mutually supportive listening practices appropriate to a “pull” strategy, “e.g. I’m hearing you say this, right? If so, you might consider....”

Such a strategy built upon listening might include:

1. Reviewing classis minutes
2. Carefully listening at classis meetings we attend.
3. Finding /creating places to share listenings
4. Identifying congregational leaders who understand their region and with whom you share mutual respect, and having short conversations with them.
5. Other?

Example of embodying a listening-first “pull” strategy:

Our conversations always begin with, “I think I’ve heard / learned \_\_\_\_\_ about your congregation. Is that accurate? If so, do you think.....” In other words, the conversational narrative is, “This is



what I'm hearing. How would you revise what I'm hearing? Your revision suggests to me that there is a need for \_\_\_\_\_. Might that be accurate? If so, perhaps we can consider / perhaps I can connect you with \_\_\_\_\_.

It's an important distinction that these practices are church or church leader centric. We don't decide for them what they want/need without their input so are therefore responding to and addressing a mutually identified matter/issue.

*The risk of love:* the "listen - nudge" polarity always involves a risk, and therefore it will often feel like an inappropriate "push." We will be an encouraging community that supports each other through these risks. Perfection is not an option; deepening trust is both an option and a reward.

### *Practices pioneered by Connections Team Members*

1. Annual Advent project of sending personal communication to a defined group just to encourage
2. sending short encouragement or "holy curiosity" emails to pastors in response to:
  - A comment they made at a classis meeting, or a brief conversation one had at a classis (or other) meeting; or something noted in the minutes of classis.
  - Something you noted on the church's Facebook page.
  - An update about that pastor or church that was learned through a third party.
  - And more....

3. Classis Playlists
4. Use a prayer list to remember particular leaders and congregations in prayer
5. Sending pastors a google form and using it as a basis for a follow up phone / zoom conversation.
6. Find a book, chapter or essay that addresses a need in your region, offer it to pastors at a subsidized price if they commit to a 1 hour conversation about it. Explain why you have selected this book and why you believe it will bless them.
7. Work with a "ministry expert" (children's ministry, worship leader, youth ministry) and set up an hour long zoom "pick your brain" conversation and invite those volunteers and leaders that work in that area
  1. Could also do this as a "we need your help" kind of conversation
8. Use an interesting resource as an excuse to send out a "did you see this" email asking for their questions and quick reflections on it.
9. As a pastor moves out or into a new region, send out "welcome" or "blessing on your new ministry" emails that introduce them to either yourself or your counterpart in the new region
10. When visiting an area, set up a couple church visits in the area asking for a tour of facilities and just ask a bunch of questions... then follow up later with pertinent resources, connections or encouragement.

11. Make allies with a trusted regional person and take them with you to events/happenings in that region.
  1. Have them speak.
  2. Have them help organize events/happenings and make personal invites.
  3. What is their take on the region and what it needs, doesn't need, strengths/weaknesses...
12. Go to classis meetings with something of value to them to give out. Pray for the Spirit's guidance and discernment on who to talk with and on what.
13. At classis meetings, look for those on the fringes, usually the ethnic minority, and women and connect with them.
14. There are congregations doing simple, creative, playful ministry ideas. How might we gather these and share them? (example of a congregation who has a "verse of the week" and they invite members to send in pictures of how they celebrate that verse every week). Principle: church ministry requires playful imaginations, and sharing such stories makes it contagious. (Could be included on a playlist)

## **Trudy Ash**

Regional Connector - US Midwest

[crcna.org/Thrive](http://crcna.org/Thrive) | **800-272-5125 ext 5118**

[Schedule a Meeting](#)



*Nine ministries have joined to equip and encourage our congregations more than ever before. [Learn More](#)*

# Recommendations Game

WARNING: IT IS A LAME GAME

## Challenges

Teammate 1:

- Aging congregations
- Tired volunteers
- Lack of leadership
- Unclear understanding of decision-making of presbytery staff

Teammate 2:

- **The large geographic area of our presbytery.**

This is a stated challenge by many. Coming from 15 years in Arkansas and synod of the Sun, the people in PCC should spend a day in Texas and further west where the presbyteries' geographic bounds stretch for what seems like an eternity. But, it's all relative.

- **Communication**

Many feel isolated and excluded from Presbytery activities and communications.

Some of the communications that are sent via email are long and too long for some to read.

More frequent communication with a particular topic would be more effective than that laundry list of every event for the next 3 months in one email is too much to read, let alone incorporate into my schedule.

More graphics or varying formats of email communications would be great. Currently, it is the same format every time and very heavy on words. More graphics and white space enhances readability and the likelihood people will read what you send.

Exclusively electronic communication and registration processes exclude the less tech savvy among us and those who do not have a computer, aren't using their smartphones as much more than a telephone, reliable internet, or internet access at all. (I know we have argued this among us, but it was a loud and strong voice at some theory gatherings with the Presbytery). I see it in my own congregation.

Teammate 3:

- Getting solo players to become team players. That's a big systems change and hard to accomplish (almost expecting personality traits to change).
- Developing trust with congregations where there is perceived major negative history.
- Getting new energy and participation from the younger generation in the midst of their anxiety and disconnect denominationally (many with organized religion altogether).
- Getting follow through with (new mission statement benchmarks) leadership at the committee level.
- To establish a system of responsibility and accountability with goals & benchmarks.

## Perceived Needs: Churches, Pastors, Church Admins, Validated Ministry Members, Etc.

Teammate 1:

- Training class Presbytery 101 to new pastors, staff, Clerks
- Identify resource churches
- Identify churches needing help with technology

Teammate 2:

- **greater connection with the Presbytery** - the perception that The Presbytery is some other entity rather than all of us comprising the presbytery. What do Jerrod and Laura do? Who is the point of contact when the churches have questions or have an issue?
- **delay in Presbytery staff returning calls and emails.** Sometimes not returned at all.
- **Failure to understand We Are The Presbytery** for congregations, perhaps at a Presbytery meeting? special workshop - community workshops? Maybe a communication theme for a year or more.
- **more opportunities for gathering and fellowship** throughout the PResbytery. 2 meetings a year aren't enough to foster relationships among pastors nor congregation members. If we meet each other, we are more likely to get to know each other. POnce we know each other, we might be more willing to engage in shared ministry or mission initiatives.

Teammate 3:

- More opportunity for joint worship, ministries, fellowship, etc.
- Shortage of funds to accomplish church and presbytery goals.
- More hands on help and assistance from Presbytery when needed by congregations.
- Lack of available and affordable clergy to fill empty pulpits and other staffing positions within congregations.

## Most Exciting Peer Activities

Teammate 1:

- Meet for fellowship only
- PW gathering
- Bible study
- Day at Camp Monroe
- Intentional service project

# Review of Vision Summit Materials

## PRESBYTERY MISSION STATEMENT

The Presbytery of Coastal Carolina is called to equip, empower, and encourage our leaders and congregations to cultivate disciples in Christ, nurture transformation, and foster intergenerational growth and connections.

## PRESBYTERY VALUES

**Inclusion:** We recognize all are valued at God's table.

**Transparency:** We communicate and welcome dialogue about the actions and ministry decisions of the Presbytery.

**Grace:** We assume good intentions and respond with warmth, empathy, and respect.

**Collaboration:** We work together and seek insights, abilities, and differing perspectives.

**Innovation:** As God leads, we respond with faith and hopeful expectation.

Presbytery Three-Year Goals and One-Year Benchmarks  
The goals are a charge to the presbytery as a whole first  
and then to our member congregations.

1) 2028 Goal - Equipping Leaders

A) We have offered 30 minutes of training at each Presbytery meeting with relevant and timely topics.

One-Year Benchmark: We have offered 15 minutes of training at all Presbytery meetings this year.

B) We have developed a training/orientation for new pastoral voices to the Presbytery.

One-Year Benchmark: A task force has been created to develop training/orientation and mentorship for new pastoral voices to the Presbytery.

2) 2028 Goal - Equipping Leaders for Small Congregations

A) We have identified and nurtured 25 ruling elders towards a pathway to pastoral leadership.

One-Year Benchmark: 25 ruling elders have been identified as potential for leadership and are connected with the Elder Ministries Committee.

B) We have offered training based on specific needs to ruling elders of small congregations.

One-Year Benchmark: A task force has determined what type of training and resources ruling elders of small congregations need.

3) 2028 Goal - Implement the Matthew 25 Plan

A) Each of the three Missional Communities has a mission in line with Matthew 25 with 50% of congregations participating.

One-Year Benchmark: Each community has identified its mission.

B) 25 congregations are committed to congregational vitality.

One-Year Benchmark: 10 congregations share at the Community Gathering the plans implemented or designed to address congregational vitality.

#### 4) 2028 Goal - Improved Communication

A) The presbytery has implemented text communication.

One-Year Benchmark: A small team has been tasked with researching the best text option for Presbytery-wide texting.

B) Every congregation submits contact information of three active ruling elders to join the Presbytery communication network and share information.

One-Year Benchmark: A plan has been created for reaching out to all active elders at all congregations in the Presbytery.

#### 5) 2028 Goal - Help Congregations Modernize Infrastructure

A) A plan to invest in infrastructure technology—appropriate for the congregation's size—has been shared with congregations across the Presbytery.

One-Year Benchmark: Accessible financial plans to invest in infrastructure technology—appropriate for differing congregations sizes—are written and ready to distribute.

B) All congregations in the Presbytery have a tool (i.e.: spreadsheet or application that includes ADA compliance) in place to make a maintenance schedule with a contact person and website links for help when needed.

One-Year Benchmark: All congregations have been given the reasons to use tools to create a maintenance schedule.

#### 6) 2028 Goal - Equipping Congregations to Use & Develop Spiritual Gifts

A) 100% of Presbytery committees have participated in training to equip and discern spiritual gifts.

One-year Benchmark: The spiritual gifts module for congregations has been piloted amongst all Presbytery committee leaders.

B) 20 congregations have participated in training to equip their congregations to discern spiritual gifts and connect to ministry.

One-year Benchmark: Training has been researched and a plan to share training modules with congregations has been developed.



# Sweet Dreams

It is time to begin pulling everything together!

**STEP 1:** Take five (5) minutes to identify the Connecting strategies we heard about from peers that are most appealing to you. Name WHY!!!

Teammate 1:

- Overshare information (why - so the info may sink in or peak interest)
- Try new stuff (why - it may attract different people)
- Make connecting easier (why - to embody a beloved community)
- Offer training (why - to identify leaders)
- Each of these can be used for both categories - whole presbytery and for smaller, regional groups

Teammate 2:

- Intentionally connect and check-in,
- create opportunities,
- start relationships with open-ended questions,
- create a space with Holy listening,
- ready to support in ways that are helpful to the church and team.
- FOLLOW-UP over and over. In time a trusting relationship occurs that take off.
- Connector lives in the area.

Teammate 3:

- More frequent PCC meetings or community gatherings with the purpose of enhancing connection and a sense of community.
- gatherings for various groups - validated ministers, retired clergy, etc in addition to the blanket clergy lunches
- meet people where they are -
- Presbytery meetings in locations other than churches
  - - restaurant?
  - - event hall?
  - - brewery?
- gather in a central location to participate in online/hybrid Presbytery meetings or community gatherings (allows for less travel, enhanced relationships among Presbyterians in a community, county, or region smaller than our 3 communities & may enhance shared ministry in the future)

- identify Resource Churches for sharing of resources, support perhaps, ideas, mentoring for new pastors proximally located
- create peer learning groups - cohort groups
  - attend continuing education events together?
  - ongoing Bible study, prayer groups
  - fellowship, social engagement
- goals:
  - - enhance connections
  - - training opportunities
  - - celebrate congregational successes

**STEP 2:** Report back to the whole group.

Teammate 2:

- Intentionally connect and check-in: Whole presbytery together and smaller regional groups
- Start relationships with open-ended questions: Whole presbytery together and smaller regional groups
- Create a space with Holy listening: Whole presbytery together and smaller regional groups
- Ready to support in ways that are helpful to the church and team: Whole presbytery together and smaller regional groups
- Connector lives in the area: Smaller regional groups

WHY? In time trusting relationships occur, connecting our presbytery and our churches like Living Water continuing to bring God's Way to the world.

**STEP 3:** Break into two small groups and split the strategies for connecting that we like into two categories: (1) strategies that unite the whole presbytery together, and (2) strategies that help smaller, regional groups feel more connected.

Teammate 4:

1. Connecting Strategies (that work)...

We can send all the emails, text messages, social media posts and update website info, but people still respond most positively with a voice and/or face to face. Thus, as New Harmony Presbytery found, having a "part time" person who can literally fulfill the job of being pastor to pastors and lay leaders, is irreplaceable. They must be remunerated some, but not exorbitantly.

In the meantime, we need a style guide that enables all written communications to always highlight the clear vision that we arrive at.

### 3. Strategies that unite the whole presbytery:

- Sharing time in smaller groups at Presbytery meetings
- Playing and working together in community gatherings (loved Jerrod doing the Jeopardy game with an item of business at a presbytery meeting)

Strategies that unite the smaller, regional groups

- Some of the same as above...
  - Regional ministry work at regional presbytery gatherings
  - Regional educational events
  - Joining in combined work at disaster sites (e.g., Topsail Pres & Sneads Ferry Pres planning a spring 2026 work week together in Western NC)
  - Joint work at Camp Kirkwood Creation Camp (first week of the summer for Camp Kirkwood)
  - Annual men's retreat at Camp Kirkwood (meet & eat on Friday night and do camp improvement work on Saturday morning through noonish)
  - Clergy lunches/Transitional Clergy lunches, etc.

**STEP 4:** Report back to the whole group.

**STEP 5:** Review as a whole group how this aligns with the Challenges and Perceived Needs from the Recommendations Game earlier. What is missing? Do we notice a pattern from previous attempts by the presbytery to overcome connection issues?

# Homework

## What are the staff roles to making this work?

Teammate 1: Being open to change; Trusting process

Teammate 2: I am on board with the **Communications and Connectional Relations positions** we have discussed as a team.

Connection is a theme that continually came up in our conversations as a team and in the greater conversations among the Presbytery. People want greater connection. They desire more **communication and various methods of communication** in order to include the most people among the Presbytery.

I would love to create 2 new positions for these roles. I realize financial constraints, but why not dream!

### **Communications:**

It seems to me that the current structure isn't working very well as far as placing communications under another position that has a vast amount of responsibilities. It gets lost. It is key to a healthy, functioning Presbytery in which people feel seen, heard, and connected.

I'd love to see it as a **full time position**, but at the very least, I think we need to prioritize communications with at least a 1/2 time position. The current 10 hours a month isn't sufficient for the Presbytery to be inclusive of all members and needs for communication.

An email blast is great, but it misses a fair amount of our constituents. It may also only go to the pastor and the clerk for a given congregation.

Many of our churches don't have a consistent pastoral voice, still others have pastoral voices who are functioning as pastors in very part time paid positions with other careers full time. There is a breakdown in the communication we are making actually getting to the churches, pastoral voices, and individuals in our congregations.

This position could also have a role to **assist congregations with their communications**. Whether it is setting up websites, or educating others how to do this, or having resources for congregations to pay to have this done. Let the Presbytery connect through assisting. with enhancing communications

both within the Presbytery and in the communities in which we serve and minister.

### **Connections**

This was a theme throughout the year. Greater connection is desired and I think essential for a thriving and vibrant ministry of PCC.

The people in our congregations need to know they matter. The churches that have been established for 100+ years and those less established all need to know that we care and that what they are doing is important whether they are serving 5 members or 5000.

A Connection person could have a priority and responsibility for connecting people and congregations to the Presbytery, but to each other as well.

I see this position being in contact and visiting with congregations through the Presbytery.

I also think there is opportunity for encouraging congregations to work together to share resources and pastoral voices.

For instance, there are funds and incentives through the Board of Pensions for small congregations to share a pastoral voice and receive financial stipend (\$10K, I think) to offset the cost of the position for the first year - possibly more. I would need to research.

- this Connection's person could "broker" some of these relationships and encourage participation perhaps on a trial or transitional basis. If a staff person is in relation with our people and our congregations expressing care and concern for them it would be better received when they come into a Session meeting and make recommendations for the life of the congregation(s). Also, there is the relationship between the staff person and the people of the congregation which would go a long way in establishing trust. The Presbytery cares rather than simply manages problems.

I foresee some potential overlap between the Communications position and the Connectional position - they don't need to be combined into one person - each needs someone's priority of attention.

Communication is key for connection and it goes the other way somewhat. The persons in these roles need to be collegial and work together to enhance connection through communication and enhance communication through connection.

### **Point of Contact**

Somehow - I haven't thought through this idea as much, there needs to be a person or persons who people can call or email on the Presbytery level who will respond in a reasonable time period - 24 - 48 hours maybe. Of course, illness and travel are understandable. When these arise, make it clear. People wonder what the Presbytery staff are doing and if they are functioning when getting in touch is challenging. I have no question about how hard and diligent Laura and Jerrod are working. Yet, not everyone is as connected into the work of the Presbytery as I am and know that. What they can't see they don't know or understand.

### **Building in E-town**

I am torn on this one. On the one hand, I think that the large building with only De inhabiting it on a regular basis - more than once a week, is a huge expense for little return on investment. Yes, it is nice to have the conference room for meetings, but we could meet in a church or other facility such as Glen Flora or Scotia Village. I don't like to see unused space with a premium price.

I'm torn, because if we dispose of the building there is even less visibility and a sense of place. Yet, virtual offices and traveling staff members work well in other Presbyteries and Synods. We could make it work if we are intentional about our communication and connections with people.

Without the building expense, we could perhaps fund one of these positions, or a good portion of the position!

I know there is talk of renting out one of the floors of the building, but is that realistic in E-town where there are already plenty of spaces available?

Teammate 3:

PLAN A: Two persons, one for each role—especially for one to two years. These two staff personnel set up the Communication Strategies and Connection Strategies as lined out in the reports. One has the extra time to get the website to function so that where to go to get what done is clear and easy to figure out. Get those systems of connection set-up and train the connection volunteers. *The Connections Person is a "familiar face." That is key to getting relationships started and connectional movement to happen.*

PLAN B: One full time person who divides their time between the two positions—as Presbytery Staff. This person sets up the Communication Strategies and Connection Strategies as lined out in the reports. *Knowing*

*fluent Spanish would be more than helpful. The Connections work, in my mind, would be more “office centered,” internet and telephone connections, setting up the Volunteer Network.*

PLAN C: Two Part-Time Persons: Part-Time Communication; Part-Time Connecting (this position recruiting, training, and utilizing a group of volunteers).

PLAN D: Two Part-Time Persons: Part-Time Communication Person (75%) moving through the Communication Strategies Report (to start); Part-Time Connections Person (75%) connecting with the pastors and churches, working through the Connections Strategies, training and utilizing a group of volunteers. The volunteers might be the COM leaders and committee members, trained, with specific job descriptions, living in the area, connected to 4-5 churches in the area, connected to each other so they have a place to go for guidance and encouragement. In other words, they aren't alone. Even the COM Leaders can work together and with the support of the Presbytery Leadership. All would have a point of contact. *Is it possible for COM to do both the business and connecting parts of their job? If given a job description and trained for it, would they connect and follow up with their assigned 4-5 churches? Also, is this a big change from current job expectations?*

Transferring these four main ways of connecting (below) to fit our Presbytery set-up I think would get the Living Water of communication and connection flowing with the starting places and support that churches need.

Connections Project teams will be reaching out and working with congregations in four main ways:

1. **Conversations:** Connections Project team members are available for conversations about what resources are available and what's working in other places.
2. **Creating Space:** Connections Project teams will host annual learning events for congregational leaders to explore whatever issues they are currently facing.
3. **Cohorts:** Connections Project teams will help organize and equip groups of congregational leaders who come together on regular basis to learn about and connect with resources about a specific ministry topic.
4. **Coaching:** Connections Project coaches are available to walk alongside congregational leaders and help them dive deeper into what resources are available about a particular ministry opportunity or challenge.

**As an “outsider” I have struggled with the simplest of needs regarding getting into the office to use the resource room (the first time was before COVID). So, regarding Concrete and/or Digital Offices, we HAVE to be present through routines and connections that work. This builds trust let alone a sense that our presbytery is functional. How do we make digital office life concrete enough to use effectively (relationships) and efficiently (few to no roadblocks)? No physical office space? How do you create a shape and a sense of presence. As I’ve been scanning the set ups of presbyteries and companies that talk about connection, I put together this list:**

**Have your contact info on everything that’s sent out from you—especially at the bottom of your email:**

- **Name (he/his)**
- **Title**
- **Work: telephone number**
- **Office Hours: the Days and the Times (might be more lined out if you are in a specific office on some days and work from home on other days)**
- **Scheduler link (Calendly? Google? So cool!)**
- **No person to person? Get your face out there and make reaching you EASY**
- **When you know you’re going to be gone, leave phone message saying so; it lets people know not to expect to hear from you and when they might try again.**



- **Get your face on the office FaceBook, FaceTime, and Zoom accounts, have something weekly in the eNews so you become a familiar sight (for sore eyes).**
- **Have a scheduler link so that you can shape times you are available for the week and others can see when you are available to meet. Make it easy-peasy!!!**
- **Have your contact info on the website right next to a nice, warm, colorful photo of you**
- **Get back in touch with people within 24 hrs, even if it's to say that you can't respond until such and such a time.**
- **When necessary, arrange where they can meet you face-to-face before ending the conversation.**

Teammate 4: No system is healthier than it's leaders. Perhaps we need to facilitate some systems training for our top staff.

## What can come from committee restructuring?

Teammate 1: Streamlined work

Teammate 2:

- - basic evidence that we have heard the voices of the Presbytery and their needs.
- We listened and we responded.
- - greater efficiency.
- - greater visibility of Presbytery staff.
- - a sharing of the load. Jerrod and Laura cannot do it all! Nor should they be expected to do so.
- - hopefully greater feelings of connection among our congregations and individuals in them. I don't like for people to feel excluded. In a large organization such as PCC we need to be intentional about connecting and communicating because the opportunity to miss someone is huge.
- - a change of focus from "doing ministry" to enhancing our relationships and communications such that we are empowered to go out and minister. An enhanced inward focus to engage, equip, encourage, and empower (an extra E word!) our people to feel confident

in reaching out in their preferred way of doing service and ministry. (feeding programs for one church with another clothing people or traveling to other countries to do missions.) A group of engaged, equipped, and empowered people will accomplish far more than another group.

- - revitalized sense of purpose and focus for all of us as the Presbytery

Teammate 4: Some committees, like SPOR, are literally being circumvented in certain areas of their responsibility. Thus, with a new mission statement, committee structures need to be reevaluated for new clarity and increased focus.

## What is purely programmatic?

Teammate 1: Presbytery meetings

Teammate 2:

- -our congregations, especially the smaller ones, need help with basic things such as **Officer training**. This is especially true for those with pastoral voices who are not Presbyterian and those without consistent pastoral support.
- The staff of PCC is willing to do this, but it tends to get lost in the shuffle. I have a congregation for whom I moderate their session who has not had Officer Training in at least 10 years. The last pastoral voice was not Presbyterian.
- Jerrod is willing to do it, and enjoys doing the training, but he doesn't have the time. Thus , they have fallen through the cracks. They need the education. Yet, it's not my responsibility! I may do it anyway.
- - PCC could offer regional Officer Training each year, or training for a group of churches. There is no way each congregation can have individual training by PCC staff, but we could encourage group training in areas where the pastoral support is not present, or is present and not Presbyterian.
- - Not only do we get into trouble, at times, without officer training, but we lose our Presbyterian identity and a sense of why we do things as we do.

Teammate 3: in response to Teammate 2,  
 “This all makes me sad! Could COM members sign-up for particular tasks, for example, Officer training, .... (what else).”

Teammate 4: Seems like some presbytery meetings can feel that way... robotic... as well as many committee meetings. I think Jerrod tries to start meetings with some connecting that makes it more personal.

## What are we already doing well?

Teammate 1: sending emails (even though they are long)

Teammate 2: PCC is fulfilling the constitutional requirements for the Presbytery Council level satisfactorily.

We have dedicated staff with a heart for the gospel and the ministry of the PCUSA.

They are stretched too thin.

Teammate 4: The three COM's... the community clergy lunches... East Community (now presbytery wide) Retreat... usually good preachers at presbytery meetings during worship...

## What about this process is frustrating you?

Teammate 1: That we may not be addressing everything. Is there an elephant in the room we are not acknowledging?

An unclear understanding of Ministry Architects role/job was.

Teammate 2:

I am not convinced that anything is going to change in the staffing structure of the Presbytery. In the meeting last week of the final discussion of the process with Ministry Architects, I felt the same emphasis on the same staff positions and the same approach to fulfilling the mission. Yet, the mission has changed, or at least shifted due to the new Mission Statement.

I am not convinced the Youth and Hispanic Ministry positions have been all that effective given their limited funding and hours. Are we serving those

populations in name only? Would it be more effective to have a more comprehensive approach to including everyone and serving everyone rather than putting particular emphasis on those 2 groups? I'm not suggesting they are unimportant, not at all. Just musing about the effectiveness of the structure currently and possible resistance to making change.

Teammate 3: in response to Teammate 2,

**"I agree! It was weird to even see the language "Final Discernment Meeting." It gave me the sense that there isn't a clue of the work to happen or an understanding of the kind of work it will take. Something is broken."**

Teammate 4: Lack of collaboration from staff and committees during this process.

## What have we missed?

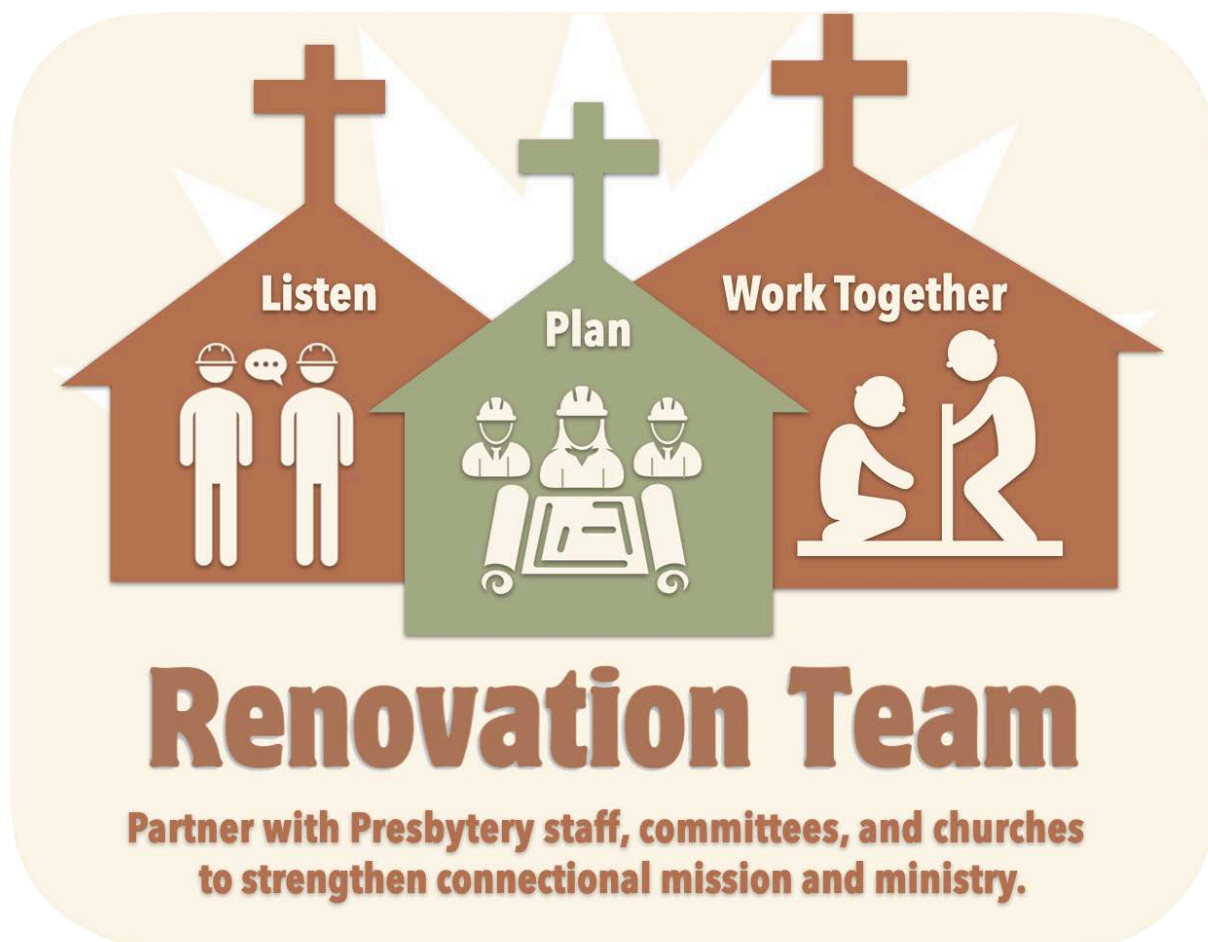
Teammate 2: not a thing! Just kidding, but I haven't come up with a specific thing we are missing.

# Presbytery of Coastal Carolina

Renovation Team Workshop

August 15, 2025

Elizabethtown Presbyterian Church, Elizabethtown, NC



# Agenda

10 am	Gather, Study, Pray
10:30	Review Ministry Architects Assessment
11am	Review Connection Plan
11:30	Implement Process
12:30	Next Steps - specifically to finalize Plan (We probably also need to identify work needed within the Presbytery to make meaningful change.)
1pm	Depart

# Ministry of Presbytery

**G-3.0301** “The presbytery is responsible for the government of the church throughout its district, and for assisting and supporting the witness of congregations to the sovereign activity of God in the world, so that all congregations become communities of **faith, hope, love, and witness**. As it leads and guides the witness of its congregations, the presbytery shall keep before it the marks of the Church (F-1.0302), the notes by which Presbyterian and Reformed communities have identified themselves through history (F-1.0303) and the six Great Ends of the Church (F-1.0304).”

## Questions

**Are we called, as a presbytery, to be a programmatic hub of participation, a resource center, a layer of church governance, local ecclesiastical courts, pastor to pastors, and source of mission for local churches?**

**If we are demanded to be “all things for all people” then how can we ever be focused enough to be effective at anything?**

**How can we “do less, better”, and how do we choose where we go now?**

Spend a few minutes silently noting (next page) what you see as indispensable ministry of the presbytery...

Prayer: Gracious and holy one, lead us in this work today. Unveil for us how to turn ideas into practice, and practice into habit for the leaders of this presbytery that this work of ours may become a blessing for the church communities of coastal Carolina. We make this prayer responding to the call of your Son, our Lord, the Christ. Amen.

## **Executive Summary**

The Renovation Team recommends a Connection Plan that intentionally draws presbytery members to (1) feel more connected to the presbytery as a whole entity, which includes the organizational aspects (staff and committees of the presbytery); and (2) feel a deeper sense of connection and community at the regional levels. This follows a study of how the Presbytery of Coastal Carolina came to be in its present form and how the regional groups have been a solution to the geographic size challenges for a few decades; in addition to reviewing our own practices, conversations with peer presbyteries were instrumental in understanding how others (including some very large presbyteries) have worked to improve connection, serve as a resource, and provide support to churches, pastors, and elders.

### **Laying the Groundwork**

The foundation of our work begins with the assessment made by Ministry Architects:

“Implement a plan that documents a variety of ways - current and new - that the Presbytery will offer to be intentional about building connections amongst its churches. Consider opportunities for connections in local areas of churches, in each community (or another structure, if changes are made), and in the Presbytery as a whole. Include offerings that focus on one or more of the following: education/training, worship, business, fellowship, and support. Also take into consideration the geography of the Presbytery and the distance between its churches; account for travel time and expense, and any technology that might be required, to help churches participate.”



## **Challenges**

We began by relating the specific challenges to connection that were defined both through the work done by Ministry Architects and through the Renovation Team's own interviews and conversations with peers inside and outside the presbytery. The challenges listed below are offered in the sequence in which they were received, so that (at this early stage) primacy of importance will be avoided).

### Aging congregations

Many of our congregations are facing leadership, volunteer, and other challenges based primarily on aging membership, in many cases this has increased a sense of anxiety on the health and survival of the church itself, and a diminished sense of energy.

### Tired volunteers

Even in cases where age is not the primary driver, many of our churches (and presbytery ministries) face a challenge with having had the same volunteers in place for a long time. As these volunteers reach burn out, they find that (for myriad reasons) there is no one prepared to step into leadership to follow. This leads to volunteers feeling tired and burned out, and also very alone.

### Lack of leadership

The Renovation Team has recognized that both within many congregations, and also within the presbytery there is not a crystalized sense of self, a lack of direction, and general need for a driving force of encouragement by which members can get behind and from which they can build energy.

### Unclear understanding of decision-making of presbytery staff

The Renovation Team witnessed a lack of clarity in decision-making through this process; at times the point to which questions of governance were raised. An unclear understanding of decision-making, even when everything is working as it should, can diminish trust among member churches and other stakeholders.

### The large geographic area of our presbytery.

This is a stated challenge by many. A couple of us in the Renovation Team have spent time in the Synod of the Sun where presbyteries can be several east coast states in size (the Houston metropolitan is the size of New Jersey, for example). We have a very large presbytery, and this is a very real challenge, but we have peers that can help us, as well as previous solutions that may be able to be reworked for our current circumstances.

### Communication

Many feel isolated and excluded from Presbytery activities and communications. Our conversations revealed that some of the communications that are sent via email are long and too long for some to read. Other interviews pointed out that more frequent communication with a particular topic would be more effective than that laundry list of every event for the next 3 months in one email is too much to read, let alone incorporate into my schedule.

More graphics or varying formats of email communications would be great. Currently, it is the same format every time and very heavy on words. More graphics and white space enhances readability and the likelihood people will read what you send.

Exclusively electronic communication and registration processes exclude the less tech savvy among us and those who do not have a computer, aren't using their smartphones as much more than a telephone, reliable internet, or internet access at all. Communication is key to feeling connected; human relationships are built on communicating. While we must address the need for becoming more technologically adroit (and this must lead our efforts), we also must keep an eye on those who feel left behind.

### Ministry Silos

Getting solo players to become team players. That's a big "systems" change and hard to accomplish (almost like expecting personality traits to change). Ministry silos can happen for many reasons. Sometimes it occurs when a system enters a time of crisis; the very efforts to circle the wagons and protect the ministry can inadvertently lead to becoming separated from the rest of leadership. In other cases, there is an unclear connection to the governing board(s). In still other cases, certain leaders find themselves in a role because they enjoy having their own sphere of influence. Each of these reasons brings their own challenges, and in each, the health of the total system relies on bringing silos back into the larger shared vision of leadership.

### Trust

Developing trust with congregations where there is perceived major negative history. We, the Renovation Team, witnessed the specter of this in PCC, but also in peer presbyteries, and have seen a number of ways that this issue of trust can be dealt with positively. The Renovation Team believes that:

1. clear practices,
2. consistency,
3. improved communication,
4. and even staffing solutions can help improve trust immensely.

### Race, Language, Orientation, and Culture

While it is true that these common barriers to trust are present and can be improved upon easily, we also witnessed *broken* trust among various communities within our presbytery. A recent, racially charged incident at a presbytery meeting was not immediately and publicly addressed; as a lone marker of problems, this could be reasoned as a unique and sad moment. The Renovation Team, however, found that our presbytery still struggles to live into the Beloved Community that Christ demands of us in John's gospel - racial, linguistic, and cultural challenges continue to create a divide.

### Congregational Conflicts

This is admittedly a broad category of challenge for the presbytery, and none of it is unique to PCC. Congregations fight; full stop. Some handle conflict better than others. That said, we recognize that the broad cultural conflicts poisoning connection within American culture are present and insidiously affecting our congregations. Political identity, for too many souls under our care, matters more than religious identity - said another way, political identity *is* religious identity for too many. This connection plan cannot address this issue in "nuts & bolts" processes and plans, but our larger final report will seek to point a direction for a more holistic approach to a vibrant community for **all** in PCC's scope of care.

### Making Space for New Participants

This is related to the challenge of aging congregations. While it is true that most Christian church organizations in the United States of America are aging, and shrinking, this does not need to be a foregone conclusion. Identifying the ways in which our congregations can make a real impact in their local communities is a clear solution to becoming known, and building a connection with potential new participants. The very same is true for getting new participants at the presbytery level. Younger members in our current churches often have no sense of the presbytery - this is a problem of awareness, but also of authenticity and relevance. Getting new energy and participation from the younger generation in the midst of their anxiety and disconnect denominationally (many with organized religion altogether).

### Need for Common Agreement on Presbytery Vision and Direction

Getting follow through with (new mission statement benchmarks) leadership at the committee level. Many of our committee members and leaders in the presbytery feel overwhelmed by their current work. The idea of taking on new goals and benchmarks can be a lot. How are we letting go of some things as we take on a new direction? How might we "do less, better?"

### Lack of Metrics for Progress in Building Connections

We value what we measure. It is vital for us to establish a system of responsibility and accountability with goals & benchmarks, which align with our new priorities.

### Lack of clear identity and purpose

Beyond the constitutional requirements of a presbytery, PCC is currently struggling to name who it is, and why that matters. This is a challenge to making an authentic relationship with member churches, especially where the relationship is not already a close one.

### Shortage of funds to accomplish church and presbytery goals

Funding issues are a very real challenge in the presbytery, and creative solutions will increasingly be needed. The presbytery will need to sharpen focus in order to prevent being spread too thin.

### Failure to understand “We” Are The Presbytery

The Renovation Team repeatedly encountered a sense that there is a presbytery - a separate entity “out there...” At times this was reinforced in meetings with presbytery staff and other leaders. While unintentional, the theological affirmation at the heart of our faith that God speaks most clearly in community - and *this* is why we have elders in parity with pastors, and thus Sessions, the presbytery instead of bishops, etc... - is undermined. This particular challenge may need to be picked up and dealt with as an initiative for congregations, perhaps at a Presbytery meeting? Or as a topic for a special workshop - community workshops? Maybe a communication theme for a year or more. It contributes to the connection issue we wish to overcome.

### Children and Youth

A few churches in the presbytery have vibrant youth ministries, defined by large groups of kids, paid staff, and high degrees and scale of programming. Others do not. The Renovation Team discussed the origin for presbytery staff support to churches with youth, but lacking resources for broad programming. Our connection plan points a direction for resourcing that takes into account data-driven best practices.

## **Perceived Needs**

Perceived needs can sometimes read as a challenge to be overcome, however, the team discovered while listening to different parties, a series of needs that we feel must be met; on occasion these are named by members and member churches, while in other circumstances we realized an unmet need for the presbytery by witnessing what has worked for peer presbyteries.

### Training class Presbytery 101 to new pastors, staff, Clerks

Training and leadership development is a key issue for a lot of churches, especially those without a clear pastoral voice. There are several ways the presbytery can/could provide resources for this.

### Identify resource churches

Defining a “large” church is somewhat bound region to region across the country, and further defining what churches could serve as a resource churches is even more subjective. However, the Renovation Team recognized in this study that there are a number of churches in our presbytery that could provide preaching resources, space for meetings and training, a central location for regional meetings that address the technological challenges of other churches, educational materials, and more. We recognize that some potential resource churches may decide they are not in a position to help others, but the initiative is held as a perceived need for connection in our presbytery.

### Identify churches needing help with technology

Coming from the recognition that many churches do, in fact, have technological difficulties that contribute to faltering connection, the Renovation Team understands that we need to know exactly who these churches are. We also need to know what sort of tech challenges each faces.

### Greater connection with the Presbytery

Many of our churches want the support and relationships to collaborate, but do not know where to start. They also lack an understanding of who is on the staff of the presbytery, who our committees are, and the support resources that are available. This is an awareness issue, on one hand, but points to a deeper need that we can help fulfill.

### Need for timely response

One communication need that was named clearly several times, and points to a pattern addressed in the communication strategy, has to do with email and phone requests taking a long time to be responded to... sometimes not returned at all. In many cases this was met with mild bewilderment, but in

other cases issues of some conflict arose as churches in need felt let down. This undermines a sense of connection to the presbytery, and solidifies the sense that the churches are “on their own.”

More opportunities for joint worship, gatherings, and fellowship

Multiple members of the Renovation Team reflected that holding two meetings a year contributes to the unintended consequence of diminished relationships among pastors and congregation members. If we meet each other, we are more likely to get to know each other. Once we know each other, we might be more willing to engage in shared ministry or mission initiatives. This is true at the whole presbytery gatherings, but could be extended to regional gatherings, which some of those interviewed mentioned far more positive perceptions of regional gatherings. There are challenges to making this a reality, but the hunger was noticed.

More hands on help and assistance from Presbytery when needed by congregations

The Renovation Team affirms that one of the strengths of our presbytery is the regional COM model. While our liaisons are able to be active and provide support to their churches, a combination of different training, and available resources (especially legal and real estate) could provide hands-on help that is currently unavailable.

Lack of available and affordable clergy to fill empty pulpits and other staffing positions within congregations

Our congregations need pastoral voices. Addressing this as a presbytery will require deep connection, deep listening, and the kind of work that lies at the heart of our Connection Plan.

## **Connection Plan**

The foundation of our Connection Plan lies in the idea of Beloved Community - warning, this part is going to sound “preachy”.

John’s Gospel begins with cosmic scale and significance; the one God, creator of all that is, seen and unseen, has determined/elected to “pitch a tent” among humanity in the person of Jesus, in Nazareth. The scale of the universe is distilled into the particularity of *one of us*. The entirety of trinitarian thought is ignited in these lines, our presbyterian point of view wrapped up in this idea, and it is realized on the evening of the Last Supper; as Jesus prepares to leave his disciples he gives them one last commandment and tells them they “will be known for the love they have for one another.”

In an era where balance sheets feel out of balance, presbytery and church income sheets are in the red, where churches are aging and shrinking, it is too easy to see the whole thing as a distressed enterprise that needs saving. What we need is Beloved Community. We will be known for the love we have for one another. The world - or at least eastern North Carolina *will* see that something different is going on with those crazy Presbyterians for the love we give.

This Connection Plan is a first draft, a first splash, into rethinking how we relate as a presbytery. What resources will we need to invest in? What staffing adjustments will need to take place? What new questions will need to be asked?

Most of you have received this early document because you hold a position of leadership in our presbytery, some have received it because you are “connectors,” people named because you naturally live in a way we want to see more of. We invite you to join the Renovation Team as we finalize our Connection Plan. Please read... ask questions... challenge us... help us shape an approach to shared ministry that aims to bless and support the ministers, elders, and churches of our broader community.

### Approaching Connection

In our conversations with peers in the church world, we met Trudy Ash, from the Christian Reformed Church. Trudy is a member of that denomination's "Connection Team", a group of four (4) leaders who focus on hundreds of churches each. Trudy teaches a practice of the so-called *Connection Mindset*. We believe that this may be an approach for us to use. Trudy teaches:

The Connections project believes living out this mindset encompasses these four shifts:

- Listening to congregations as if we're sitting around the table as a family.
- Always thinking "Who else could contribute to this conversation for the benefit of this congregation?"
- Finding, developing, sharing, and collaborating on resources that might be of help to this congregation.
- Respecting the specific context, identity, and vision of each local congregation.

We believe this notion needs to become instinct for all presbytery leadership: staff, committees, and COM liaisons. A Connection Mindset is a point of view that creates room for relationships - effectively systematizing perichoresis.



### Unity to Whole Presbytery

The Ministry Architects assessment demonstrated that while the regional communities have been largely successful in providing a deeper sense of relational connection, the presbytery as a whole is critical in providing connectional ministry. We believe that both revisiting our practices and considering possible staffing changes may aid in this endeavor.

### Practices

#### **Communications**

The Renovation Team has submitted to presbytery leadership a Communications Strategy that attempts to clarify a number of communications challenges we face. At its heart, the strategy seeks to provide a predictable approach to communicating, build feedback loops to receive more information, and broaden the community of people we communicate with. The strategy accounts for communication channels, marketing plans, awareness strategies, and technological assets that we believe will help the presbytery deepen connection with those in our community. Please refer to that document within the appendices of the Progress Report also attached to the email you received.

#### ***Trying new ways of connecting*** *(sites for presbytery gatherings, events...)*

In our discovery phase we learned from a number of presbyteries who are trying new things. Charlotte Presbytery, for example, kept a constant refrain of “try new things” and “don’t be afraid to fail!” The Presbytery of Chicago has started holding presbytery meetings and events outside of church buildings, including a brewery owned by a member at large and is planning a meeting in a park setting with plans for family events and activities after the “business of the meeting is concluded.

#### ***Sharing time in smaller groups at presbytery meetings***

Using some of the time at presbytery meetings breaking into small groups, members and churches will have designated time to get to know each other, share what their churches are doing, and/or to discuss elements of the presbytery meeting itself..

#### ***Playing and working together in community meetings***

One member of the Renovation Team named a time recently when Jerrod introduced a version of *Jeopardy* at a regional gathering. Playing when

working is an important strategy to infuse joy into our relationships, especially when our most intense relationship building moments often occur as part of our shared work.

### ***Trainings***

We need more training opportunities for our various leaders and churches. This need has shown up time and again. Churches are asking for training to help clerks; leadership development and training for elders is another area of critical value.

This is hard to fulfill when presbytery staff is already spread thin and presbytery committees are juggling the responsibilities on their plates.

### Videos

The Renovation Team recommends the development of an evergreen (meaning that it is not bound by years or seasons) training video series that can be accessed via the presbytery website.

### Other Material

In addition to the videos, the website could hold a resources section that provides educational resources from various sources to help in everything from Session and church governance to child protection plans and other best practices. There is a lot of material that our presbytery could gather and make available without having to create.

### In-person conferences

While the Renovation Team recognizes that our staff is spread too thin to turn every teaching opportunity into an in-person event, sometimes that is what is needed. In addition to having break-out sessions at regional gatherings and presbytery meetings, we recognize that offering direct training for things like small church youth ministry, or vibrant stewardship could be extremely important.

1. For example, as mentioned in the challenges section, the Renovation Team understands that the gulf of resources for youth ministry can feel impossible to manage. It is, if the focus is on programming and staff-led offerings. However, a major longitudinal study conducted by the Youth Ministry Institute at Princeton Theological Seminary in NJ revealed a surprising reality. The study inspired a book, *Almost Christian*, by Kenda Creasy Dean (Professor of Youth, Church, and Culture); the book demonstrates that when one looks at which kids *come back to church* after college, there was one key corollary - the kids who had several

non-related adults from church take a healthy interest in the child were the ones to stay connected to church life once launched from graduating high school or college. Youth pastors and programming, attending churches with large populations of other youth, summer camps and other factors did not have a strong correlation.

We believe that providing support from the presbytery should include some reframing of what successful ministry to youth looks like in PCC. Bringing Kenda and others to work with churches could be a far more effective path than simple staffing. This will require a reframing of the perspectives of those expecting a one-size fits all approach.

### **Matthew 25 Initiative**

The PCUSA Matthew 25 ministry initiative offers several avenues for building deeper connections between communities, including congregations of different races, languages, and cultures. The Renovation Team recognizes that for some of our churches this avenue of spiritual development will feel alien, potentially even threatening. That said, we see opportunity for real growth and a deeper spiritual connection between our many churches over time through this denomination-wide practice for churches that decide to participate.

In addition to a focus on congregational vitality, the opportunities for church communities to engage in ministry to eradicate systemic poverty and to face systemic racism is a path to following Christ through acts of compassion for the vulnerable in society; that there are communities vulnerable within our presbytery who have been hurt by other persons and communities with whom we are in covenant community is a violation of our baptismal vows. Increasing participation (this may be by having more commitments to *be* a Matthew 25 community, and by simply using resources from the initiative) is one way in which our church communities can deepen understanding, relationship, and trust.

1. Educational and worship resources;
2. Awareness at presbytery meetings for the Center for Reparations and other acts (like Princeton Seminary) of Christian organizations to take on the messy work of reconciling pain in society that stems from past abuse and current prejudice;
3. In addition to the Center for Reparations with the PC(USA), the Presbytery of Baltimore has developed its *Dismantling Racism Team*;

they work under the Matthew 25 initiative and their work aligns with a lot of the already agreed upon directions for our own presbytery. This team could be brought in to workshop with a presbytery meeting.

### ***Set up Cohort Groups for different peer settings***

Rather than a pastors' lunch approach (which you will see in the regional section later), this could be for clerks or for church administrators to lean on each other in their labor, to provide/share resources. This approach could also hold for pastors of rural churches, small churches, new church developments, etc...

### ***Developing a “Human Resource” Database of Members in Presbytery***

The Renovation Team recognizes that one of the key perceived needs in PCC is more human to human support - across the board. One underrepresented area for this has to do with supporting our regional COM liaisons. Churches often need expertise that would be inappropriate to expect from a COM liaison. By building out a database of attorneys and people in real estate from different areas of focus, we may be able to recruit a group that can help answer questions on a pro bono basis, without needing to bring on professionals on a retainer basis. Similar models have worked at different times and places to support both resource churches and larger church groups.

### ***Celebrate Congregational Successes***

The famed photographer, Dewitt Jones, has an inspirational video where he talks about celebrating “what’s right with the world.” The video is about perspective. We have churches currently doing great work in a variety of ways. By telling these stories - in regular emails, special submissions, communications from Jerrod, and/or given space in our regional and larger presbytery meetings, we can lift to the surface what is working.

It is easy to focus on what we can no longer do. Sharing what others are doing can shift the focus to asking, “what *can* we do?” and even “what can we do together?”

### ***Make Technology Easier to Access***

The Renovation Team understands that one of the key technology hurdles facing some of our churches is the lack of access to stable internet in deeply

rural communities. North Carolina has a plan in place to bring high speed internet to every area of N.C. over the course of the next few years. This means that the Presbytery of Coastal Carolina can begin to focus on solutions now for churches needing access. An effective plan would include:

1. Identify EVERY church in the presbytery that is struggling with technology issues and create a matrix of which are close to resource churches who can provide space and/or technology use, which have no access at all to internet, and which churches need software, devices, and/or volunteers to function at a higher level;
2. Those who have access, but no tech devices to offer hybrid meetings, stream worship, or other similar issues will be contacted by the presbytery staff person responsible for communication and/or connection to begin a process of:
  - a. Shepherding the church through the grant process with the presbytery to acquire the funds to cover purchase of the tech devices needed;
  - b. Will simultaneously work with the church to identify and train volunteers to use the technology, making it practical for their ministry.
3. Those who have internet access, but who have never adopted email, websites, and other similar tools will be contacted by presbytery staff person responsible for communication and/or connection in order to ensure that these basic needs are fulfilled and that volunteers are identified and trained;
4. Those who already have technology devices, email systems, and other communication tools, but no knowledge of how to use it will be contacted by the presbytery staff person responsible for communication and/or connection in order to identify volunteers and set up a training schedule;
5. Those churches with no access to the internet will be brought into this process as the state enables accessibility.

### Staff

Each person already on staff does deep connectional ministry on behalf of the presbytery. Sometimes it is ex officio - simply by exercising the duties of the office - but most of the time it's just their sparkling personalities.

The Renovation Team was surprised to hear from peer presbyteries that some provide a specific person to spearhead initiative to maintain a deep connection to congregations. Several possible solutions have been identified, and none are necessarily mutually exclusive to responsibilities to other staff positions and recommendations within the staffing structure. The staffing modeling provided below comes from two different members. Their thoughts have been minimally edited to preserve the sense of brainstorming our team has been in (please keep that in mind while reading!).

"A Connection person could have a priority and responsibility for connecting people and congregations to the Presbytery, but to each other as well.

I see this position being in contact and visiting with congregations through the Presbytery.

I also think there is opportunity for encouraging congregations to work together to share resources and pastoral voices.

"For instance, there are funds and incentives through the Board of Pensions for small congregations to share a pastoral voice and receive financial stipend (\$10K, I think) to offset the cost of the position for the first year - possibly more. I would need to research.

- this Connection's person could "broker" some of these relationships and encourage participation perhaps on a trial or transitional basis. If a staff person is in relation with our people and our congregations expressing care and concern for them it would be better received when they come into a Session meeting and make recommendations for the life of the congregation(s). Also, there is the relationship between the staff person and the people of the congregation which would go a long

way in establishing trust. The Presbytery cares rather than simply manages problems.

"I foresee some potential overlap between the Communications position and the Connectional position - they don't need to be combined into one person - each needs someone's priority of attention.

Communication is key for connection and it goes the other way somewhat. The persons in these roles need to be collegial and work together to enhance connection through communication and enhance communication through connection.

### **"Point of Contact**

Somehow - I haven't thought through this idea as much, there needs to be a person or persons who people can call or email on the Presbytery level who will respond in a reasonable time period - 24 - 48 hours maybe. Of course, illness and travel are understandable. When these arise, make it clear. People wonder what the Presbytery staff are doing and if they are functioning when getting in touch is challenging. I have no question about how hard and diligent Laura and Jerrod are working. Yet, not everyone is as connected into the work of the Presbytery as I am and know that. What they can't see they don't know or understand."

### **Another member of the team spent time gathering thoughts on the big picture of what we could do...**

"**PLAN A:** Two persons, one for each role—especially for one to two years. These two staff personnel set up the Communication Strategies and Connection Strategies as lined out in the reports. One has the extra time to get the website to function so that where to go to get what done is clear and easy to figure out. Get those systems of connection set-up and train the connection volunteers. *The Connections Person is a "familiar face." That is key to getting relationships started and connectional movement to happen.*

**PLAN B:** One full time person who divides their time between the two positions—as Presbytery Staff. This person sets up the Communication Strategies and Connection Strategies as lined out in the reports. *Knowing fluent Spanish would be more than helpful. The Connections work, in my mind, would be more “office centered,” internet and telephone connections, setting up the Volunteer Network.*

**PLAN C:** Two Part-Time Persons: Part-Time Communication; Part-Time Connecting (this position recruiting, training, and utilizing a group of volunteers).

**PLAN D:** Two Part-Time Persons: Part-Time Communication Person (75%) moving through the Communication Strategies Report (to start); Part-Time Connections Person (75%) connecting with the pastors and churches, working through the Connections Strategies, training and utilizing a group of volunteers. The volunteers might be the COM leaders and committee members, trained, with specific job descriptions, living in the area, connected to 4-5 churches in the area, connected to each other so they have a place to go for guidance and encouragement. In other words, they aren't alone. Even the COM Leaders can work together and with the support of the Presbytery Leadership. All would have a point of contact. *Is it possible for COM to do both the business and connecting parts of their job? If given a job description and trained for it, would they connect and follow up with their assigned 4-5 churches? Also, is this a big change from current job expectations?"*

While SPOR, Personnel, Ministry Architects, and key staff need to work out the staff plan, we do believe that a staffing solution that accounts for our Communication and Connection needs and priorities will be critical in the next phase of our life together. We encourage you to engage at this point in the process with the strengths and weaknesses you see, so that whatever decisions are made, a variety of perspectives will be in focus.



### Connecting within regional communities

While the presbytery as a whole holds an extremely important role in providing a sense of connection and identity for our pastors, elders and churches, presbyteries of our geographic size are aided by making use of regional communities. This method has long had its own challenges, but is still of deep value. In particular, regional COMs have proven to provide strong support.

### ***Joint ministry/mission opportunities***

Our churches do a lot of different ministries, and sometimes struggle to accomplish certain goals for a want of resources, including volunteers. Joint ministry and mission opportunities offer churches a chance to pool resources and share in the success.

One way to go about this would be to have a designated place in every email, the website, and at regional gatherings for opportunities to be posted and shared (months in advance). We recognize not all churches will want to invite others into what they are doing, but as we share what is working with churches that *are* sharing in ministry, the barriers may erode.

In addition to making space for sharing what is happening, and inviting others to participate, there are paths to helping churches who are in close geographic proximity to form joint ministry relationships. This could be accomplished through COM liaisons.

### ***Utilizing resource churches and camps***

A resource church can be defined in a number of ways (financial, congregational and staff size, facility space, technology, etc.), but the key lies in recognizing this abundance of resources and a willingness to share in some way with one's neighbors. For example, a church with an Associate Pastor for Christian Education may have written an elder training resource (e.g. Von Clemans in his tenure at Myers Park PC in Charlotte) that can be shared with others. Another example could be a church with plenty of space lending it so that a regional cohort of church administrators can meet to share resources and solutions to common ministry challenges.

While the sharing of these resources is itself a blessing, helping churches recognize their abundance is perhaps the most important key for unlocking what makes them unique in an era when “what is lacking” often dominates.

***Clergy lunches (expanding offerings to church admins, clerks, presbytery members serving outside of congregational settings)***

Several peer presbyteries have expanded the offerings for relational settings to include other professionals within the church. The model we would propose would be to help get a group aware of the possibility, get a sense of the energy for the offering, determine how practical it is, and then allow those participating to take responsibility for sustaining the practice.

***Regional Commissions on Ministry***

A member of the Renovation Team related recently how liaisons from COM often face significant challenges. They are often not trained to deal with complex legal and real estate matters, and the systems theory challenges of churches can present a real problem in providing guidance. If we return to the Connection Mindset we started with, a potential set of solutions comes into view. If COM were to take on the Connection Mindset, liaisons would be placed more securely as a partner and resource, than as a representative of the governing body:

- Listening to congregations as if we're sitting around the table as a family.
- Always thinking "Who else could contribute to this conversation for the benefit of this congregation?"
- Finding, developing, sharing, and collaborating on resources that might be of help to this congregation.
- Respecting the specific context, identity, and vision of each local congregation

The Renovation Team recommends that members of churches in the presbytery (likely regional community by regional community) be identified for professional skills. This could include counselors, attorneys of various disciplines, real estate personnel, and others whose wisdom and experience cannot be held by any single individual. These human resources once known at COM could be profoundly helpful to the liaison before church challenges become crises.

The Renovation Team also recommends developing a budgetary line item to have the Lombard Mennonite Peace Center provide annual clinics with our

COM members to maintain a fresh sense of training to our leaders as they serve. Such training would be indispensable when facing tension and conflict within congregations, and would serve as a direct form of healthy connection as a presbytery to our members.