

The Presbytery of New York City
A Proposal For Moving Forward
June 6, 2011

MISSION STATEMENT:

The Presbytery of New York City is a Christian community and a governing body of the Presbyterian Church (USA). As disciples of Jesus Christ, and members of the Presbytery, we seek to support all of our member congregations in ministry and to partner in commonly agreed upon mission objectives.

As an instrument of mission of the Presbyterian Church (USA) the Presbytery will support all of its congregations as they endeavor to:

- Proclaim the gospel;
- Provide for the shelter, nurture and fellowship of the children of God;
- Maintain divine worship;
- Preserve the truth;
- Promote social righteousness;
- Exhibit the kingdom of God to the world;
- Support one another in prayer; and
- Share other gifts and resources in pursuit of these common ministries.

MEMBERSHIP:

- Elder Commissioners and Minister Members (Ruling Elders and Teaching Elders) from the 96 congregations currently doing ministry in the Bronx, Brooklyn, Manhattan, Queens, and Staten Island;
- Other Ministers of Word and Sacrament serving in validated ministries in New York City;
- Teaching Elders designated by the Presbytery as Members-at-Large;
- Retired Ministers and Teaching Elders in Presbytery.

Imbalance between Ruling and Teaching Elder Commissioners will be equalized by additional Ruling Elders from congregations on an alphabetized, rotating basis.

THEOLOGY OF ORGANIZATION:

We are the body of Christ. (Romans 12:5) We trust that Christ is among us and in us working through us for his purposes. (Matthew 18:20; 28:28) In this, we also confess that Christ commands that we love, trust and serve one another. (John 13:34ff). As Moses learned upon arriving at Sinai, no one can do everything. Jethro made it clear that Moses was wearing himself out, and told him it was God's will that he begin delegating responsibility. (Exodus 18:13-23).

This Presbytery embraces this biblical story as a model for its organization. It delegates responsibility to Commissions of the Presbytery and entrusts them with authority to act in order to enable congregations to fulfill their callings within their particular communities. The structure is designed to be nimble and responsive to congregational needs, and to foster creativity, experimentation, and growth in every church.

The commissions, committees and task forces of the Presbytery exist to provide resources, training, nurture and support to its congregations, their commissioners, other Ministers of Word and Sacrament, and Presbytery professional staff so they may be encouraged and strengthened for their ministry in their local communities as stewards of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

As we carry out our mission, the members of the Presbytery seek to be flexible in structure, dynamic in practice and imaginative in all things, trusting and relying on the gifts of the Spirit to equip us for service to our Lord. (1 Corinthians 14:12) We will endeavor to engage and share the many and various gifts the Spirit has given to the members of our congregations.

With the Spirit's guidance and help, we seek to be bold, faithful, decisive and mutually supportive in our decisions and endeavors. We make every effort to be fair, graceful, and evenhanded in dispensing discipline, remembering the grace and mercy our Lord has extended to us and that all discipline in the church is intended to be restorative rather than punitive. We intend to be a faithful partner with the Synod and General Assembly in mission interpretation and support.

Since it is difficult and foolish to try to do all things well at the same time, the Presbytery considers it crucially important that we regularly identify a common focus for our ministry together. This focus can and should be reevaluated regularly (every five years at a minimum).

OUR CURRENT FOCUS:

At this time the Presbytery intends (at every level of its structure) to do the following within our geographical bounds:

- Revitalize all of our congregations
- Plant new congregations
- Engage in campus ministry

Real revitalization and growth for churches, presbyteries, and, indeed, for the entire PC(USA), will require cooperation from all of our congregations. These efforts will demand courage, mutual trust, vision, flexibility, willingness to experiment—even willingness to fail—trusting the Risen Christ is present and at work in and among us, and that even out of failure comes resurrection and new life.

Recognizing this, the Presbytery places all decisions about church revitalization/planting/developing/organizing, and even dissolutions, within the hands of a Permanent Commission on Congregations which will act with the full authority of the Presbytery. As always, the Presbytery maintains ultimate authority to review and reconsider this Commission's decisions as necessary.

We trust the One who through the Holy Spirit raised Jesus Christ from the grave, and who poured the power of the Spirit upon the church at Pentecost, will continue to give us the gifts and power we need to stir our hearts to faithfulness and equip and empower us to live into new life in the Presbytery of New York City.

NEW STRATEGIC DESIGN FOR THE PRESBYTERY:

The Presbytery's primary mission will be to support all of its congregations in their ministries, and assist them to initiate, organize, coordinate, facilitate and fund mission projects and public witness that are too large for one congregation to accomplish alone, on behalf of Presbytery, or require the cooperation of two or more of its congregations.

The Presbytery will create and adopt an operations manual to structure itself administratively into commissions established to meet all the other constitutional requirements of a presbytery. Commissions, committees and task forces shall report their actions to Presbytery at its next subsequent meeting. Commissions shall be permanent. With the exception of the Committee on Nominations and

the Committee on Representation, additional committees and task forces shall be dissolved on completion of their assignment or within three years of their appointment. If a committee or task force finds that it needs more time to complete its work, it may apply to the Presbytery for a defined extension.

The Presbytery shall include:

- **Coordinating Council** for the coordination and communication of the mission of the Presbytery and its congregations;
- **Committee on Nominations** to propose nominees for all Commissions and Committees, search committees, and the Office of Moderator of the Presbytery;
- **Committee on Representation** with duties, responsibilities and authority as defined by the Form of Government;
- **Permanent Commission on Ministry** with duties and responsibilities consistent with the current Committee on Ministry and authority consistent with a commission acting on those duties;
- **Permanent Commission on Preparation for Ministry** with duties and responsibilities consistent with that of the current Committee on Preparation for Ministry and authority consistent with a commission acting on those duties;
- **Permanent Commission on Administration/Board of Trustees** to have all duties, responsibilities and authority required by law for a board of directors of a New York Not-for-Profit corporation, and to further propose annually a budget for the Presbytery and act as a committee of the Presbytery for personnel issues, with authority consistent with a commission acting on those duties;
- **Permanent Judicial Commission** with duties, responsibilities and authority as defined by the Form of Government;
- **Permanent Commission on Congregations** to have duties, responsibilities and authority, not reserved by civil law or the Form of Government to the Board of Trustees, to decide all matters within the bounds of Presbytery related to church revitalization, reorganization, new church planting/developing/organizing, and, if necessary, after consultation with the Pastor, the Session, the Commission on Ministry, the Board of Trustees any church dissolutions. All decisions shall be reported to the Presbytery at its next meeting, and are open to its review and may be reversed by a 2/3's majority vote of the Presbytery.
- **Task Forces or Special Committees** constituted from time to time by the Presbytery as necessary to enable it to address and or undertake any

special mission, public advocacy or witness related to the ongoing work and mission of the Presbytery of New York City.

Beyond these entities necessary to support the work of its congregations, all other working groups should be task forces, special committees or commissions of the Presbytery focused on a particular mission concern of the Presbytery.

MINISTRY WITH CONGREGATIONS:

After research, consultation and study with the congregations and with other entities, the **Commission on Congregations** will develop a holistic strategy for every congregation based on best practices and congregational contexts. It will communicate and interpret that strategy to the Presbytery for approval, and upon approval, interpret that strategy to individual congregations.

The focus of the Commission will be to empower congregations to make choices about their own ministry, and offer various options. The Commission will seek to foster and enable partnerships between congregations within the Presbytery.

FINANCES:

The administrative expense of the Presbytery shall be shared by per-capita giving from its congregations. The Permanent Commission on Administration and Finance/Board of Trustees shall be responsible for proposing an annual administrative budget for action by Presbytery and monitoring and regularly reporting on income and expenses.

The Permanent Commission on Administration/Board of Trustees, insofar as consistent with its obligations and authority under civil law, shall formulate a spending policy for the use of invested funds of the Presbytery to comply with the New York Prudent Management of Institutional Funds Act (“NYPMIFA”) standards regarding presumption of imprudence and shall bring that policy for recommendation to the Presbytery for action as a change to the Standing Rules at the second regular meeting of Presbytery after this proposal is adopted.

The spending policy for restricted and unrestricted funds shall comply with NYPMIFA standards and with existing donor intent, if any has been expressed. The presumption of imprudence defined in NYPMIFA shall apply on a collective basis to all invested funds of the Presbytery, and be rebuttable only by a two-

thirds vote of the members of Presbytery.¹ Management fees shall be included within the allotted appropriations of any given year; eligible management fees shall only be those direct costs incurred by the management of the invested funds.

THE PRESBYTERY OPERATION:

- Members and Commissioners meet as a Presbytery five to six times a year for worship, to receive reports from its commissions and to engage in theological dialogue and fellowship.
- Commissions, committees and task forces meet as necessary to carry out the work of the Presbytery, bringing it to the stated Presbytery meetings for review or action.
- Commissions, committees and task forces, as constituted by Presbytery, in accordance with its mission initiatives, shall do their work and bring it to stated Presbytery meetings as reports for reception or recommendations for action by the Presbytery.
- Coordinating Council meets in preparation for Presbytery meetings to set the docket and consider methods to set, coordinate and interpret mission strategy.
- Weekday Presbytery meetings shall begin at 5 pm and adjourn no later than 9 pm, Saturday meetings shall begin at 9 am and adjourn at 1 pm. Outstanding business shall be referred to the hands of its Commissions for action and report at the next Presbytery meeting, or to Committees for consideration and recommendation at the next Presbytery meeting.
- Active Minister Members shall be called to serve in a congregation within the Presbytery, in one of the Presbytery's validated ministries, or shall meet the criteria for designation as a member-at-large. Minister Members who are not called by a congregation (with the exception of retired ministers), shall link themselves to a congregation within the Presbytery as a Parish Associate, on a compensated or non-compensated basis, and shall take regular and active part in the congregation's worship, life and ministry.

¹ This presumption involves a 7% ceiling on appropriations measured by the fair market value of a fund determined quarterly over 5 years.

STAFF STRUCTURE:

This new structure will provide for the following new, paid staff positions:

- Executive Presbyter/Stated Clerk (full-time)
- Office Manager/Admin Asst. (full-time)
- Admin Asst/Receptionist (full or part time, as determined necessary by the Permanent Commission on Administration/Board of Trustees)
- Controller (part time); and
- Technology Manager (part time)

Position descriptions for these positions will be developed by the Administrative Commission on Implementation (see below).

IMPLEMENTATION:

Upon adoption of this design, a representative **Administrative Commission on Implementation** will be elected by the Presbytery to work with the Coordinator of Middle Governing Bodies (General Assembly), representatives from the Commission on Middle Governing Bodies of the General Assembly, and a representative of the Synod of the North East, to bring to the September 2011 meeting of Presbytery a plan that allows for the full implementation of this proposal by January 31, 2012.

The Administrative Commission on Implementation will develop an operating manual for the Presbytery consistent with the principles of this design to replace the current Standing Rules.

The Administrative Commission on Implementation shall present a slate of officers and commission and committee members to be considered for election at the January 2012 meeting. Until that time, the Committees of the Presbytery shall continue their work.

The Administrative Commission on Implementation in consultation with Permanent Commission on Administration/Board of Trustees shall have responsibility and authority to implement the new staff design. The position of Executive Presbyter/Stated Clerk shall be filled through a normal search process that shall commence as soon as possible. New administrative staff shall be hired by the Executive Presbyter/Stated Clerk upon installation of that position, in consultation with the Permanent Commission on Administration/Board of Trustees.