

WHO ARE WE AND WHERE ARE WE GOING? (edited version 6/12/08)

A Transition to the Future Report
Presbytery of Donegal
Transition Team

WHAT WE DID, WHY AND HOW?

The work of your Transition Team (TT) was initiated by this Presbytery at the recommendation of the former Interim Executive Presbyter Search Committee (IEPSC). As that IEPSC pondered its task and charted the course for its work, it became aware that enough adequate, pertinent, and helpful information about the Presbytery of Donegal, which would be necessary to thoughtfully and accurately represent the Presbytery to candidates for the Interim position, was not available. “A view from the balcony,” the Committee reported, would be required to faithfully call any future staff, and to chart Donegal’s future (a). With that identified need for descriptive information, and with a mind to the future, the IEPSC recommended to the Presbytery that:

1. a Transition Team be put in place (the source from which this Report comes).
2. a Transition Consultant be retained to work with and for the TT, clarifying tasks and developing processes.
3. included in the TT work should be listening sessions, hearing constituents of the Presbytery talk about their perceptions of, experiences with, and attitudes toward the Presbytery.
4. the Presbytery’s mission and vision statements be revisited in light of the information collected as a result of the listening sessions.
5. a recommendation be made on adjusting the Presbytery’s organization and structure.
6. a strategic plan be developed and recommended for the Presbytery’s approval.
7. the present staff configuration be reviewed, and adjustments recommended based on the work described in 1 through 6 above.

The Presbytery adopted these recommendations, and a Transition Team (TT) was formed.

Understanding these formidable tasks, each related to the others, the TT set out to fulfill the Presbytery’s wishes. Dr. John Sharick, a former Executive Presbyter and Consultant, was retained by the retiring IEPSC, and has become familiar to many while working in the Presbytery. The TT was organized under the leadership of Dr. Judson McConnell, its chairperson. Its tasks and processes were defined. As an act of organization, and as a means of staying on course, the TT adopted a working document which included a purpose and a rationale for its work, stated values for the process it would employ, a description of desired outcomes of its efforts, and a listing of issues and situations targeted for probable exploration. Each of the TT meetings was empowered by a time of worship, focusing and directing our minds and spirits to the theological and spiritual nature of our work.

Significant to the TT’s work was the fact that the Presbytery has had in place for a period of time, a well constructed Long Range Plan. That plan is alluded to in the recommendations listed above, specifically when referring to “mission and vision statements.” The TT realized that plan had been adopted by the Presbytery and was in the process of implementation. Reviewing that plan, the TT considered it a formidable description of what Donegal Presbytery proposes to *do* in the future. The plan describes the Presbytery’s understanding of its activity of mission and ministry, which God is calling the Presbytery to

do. In the mind of the TT, what was now needed to complement this “description of doing” was information describing what the Presbytery *is*, what God is calling the Presbytery to *be*—its identity. The church’s concentration upon what God is calling it to do, and what God is calling it to be, goes back to its beginning as reported in the Acts of the Apostles.

Therefore, the TT’s decision was to focus its primary work upon the *being* of Donegal Presbytery—its identity—understood to be that which distinguishes it from any other presbytery. The TT’s focus would be upon the character, attributes, values, motivations, quality of relationships, attitudes, and beliefs of the Presbytery. These foci admittedly cannot be neatly separated from what the Presbytery does; rather, they serve in very great measure to shape and form what it does—its ministry and mission.

To be aware of *whom we are* as a Presbytery, examining and coming to know our identity is critical for our future. Twenty listening sessions with various Presbytery constituencies were scheduled by the TT, not a simple task in and of itself! These dialogues were termed Holy Conversations, because the sessions were designed to give permission to those present to speak with candor, honesty, and truth in love, this in the context of the presence of God’s Spirit, moving within and among the participants (b). A lighted candle, visible during the Holy Conversations, reminded the participants of that Holy presence.

The Holy Conversation constituencies included, among others, the Council, committees, departments, four Committee on Ministry areas of elders and pastors, theological students under the Presbytery’s care, the congregations who have recently exited the Presbytery’s fellowship and jurisdiction, retired ministers, other minister members, staff, honorably retired pastors, and youth. Response to the Holy Conversation varied in numbers, but not in enthusiastic participation. The consultant facilitated the conversations, with members of the TT present to observe and participate when moved to do so. Careful and complete notes were recorded, both by TT members and by the consultant, the latter using a public information process of newsprint recording. We are deeply grateful to those who responded to our invitation to be a part of the Holy Conversations, giving of their time, spiritual and physical energy, and insights; even on one occasion at odds with the winter weather!

It may be helpful to the reader to distinguish between the TT’s work and that of the consultant’s in producing this Report. It is the consultant who reviewed and studied carefully all of the notes of the conversations, using them as a primary source for drafting this Report. A second function of the consultant, which also contributed to the Report, was his observation of presbytery constituents as they related to one another, describing their experiences in, and their opinions and perceptions of, the Presbytery. On occasion, important information which contributed to this Report included what people did not readily say about the Presbytery. The consultant, knowing that the information was “present in the room”, by question and comment, made the way clear for it to be forthcoming in the conversations. A third function of the consultant was the use of his knowledge of and experience with that part of the PC(USA) called a presbytery, through his teaching, leadership, and consultative ministries—an important reason a consultant is retained in the first place.

It was the TT’s responsibility to caringly and diligently provide guidance and direction to the consultant from its perspective as leaders within the Presbytery who know its culture better and more subjectively than does the consultant. Members of the TT evaluated, with the consultant, each Holy Conversation, and assessed the entire on-going process. Through this evaluation, it became evident that an “inside view” (subjective) of the Presbytery provided the Holy Conversation constituencies and by the TT, and an

“outside view” (objective) offered by the consultant were equally important to the complete understanding of the information presented in the report.

Impressions, opinions, feelings, about the Presbytery of Donegal

As we worked through the many pages of data from the Holy Conversations, it became obvious that comments describing the same attributes or behavior of the Presbytery on occasion expressed opposite viewpoints. This is not surprising, nor alarming. Rather, it is an important observation about the Presbytery as “viewed from the balcony.” The information received about the Presbytery’s identity showed differing descriptions of a single Presbytery characteristic or behavior, depending on the Presbyter’s personal experience, relationships, and observations about the Presbytery. This is a reality that the Presbytery must accept as it considers all that it does as a community of faith. The acceptance of diverse understandings, even from opposite viewpoints, shaped a definition of a particular part of the Presbytery’s being. For example, one person described the Presbytery as being open to receiving and using new and different information, using it to form new ideas and providing new opportunities for risk taking, while another person declared the Presbytery is closed to new ways of thinking, doesn’t accept new information, and backs away from taking risks involving new ideas and new ways of doing things. Both opinions desire an open, risk taking Presbytery! In part, these differences of opinion, as well as the many agreements, serve to help define what follows.

As might be anticipated, major themes emerged from the information provided across the various groups to which we listened. The themes appear below as we describe what those who conversed wished the Presbytery to be. It needs to be made clear that each person wished the best for the Presbytery, its congregations, and for the relationship between the two. Our role as listeners was not to be defensive or to be challengers of comments we believed to be unfair or in error. We received what was said as each person’s understanding of truth. We did, however, intervene to ask for clarification, or to make a statement to stimulate more, greater detailed, participation.

So, what does the Presbytery, as determined by the Holy Conversations, claim it wants *to be* as God’s faithful people?

I. A presbytery that has a clearer and better defined understanding of who it is as a collective self, defined by an incarnate presence of Jesus and by service to Him.

Positive and negative opinion of the Presbytery, from different directions, pointed to this claim. Throughout the conversations there was an acute awareness that a presbytery is many things: a geographical area, a roster of its minister members, an organizational structure to do ministry, the sum of its congregations (which brought the presbytery into being in the first place), and the sum of the congregants of its churches. But beyond all of these descriptions, and their implications, there was an urgent desire for the Presbytery to be above all a cooperative, well-defined, well-behaved community of faith, living a life patterned after that of Jesus—glorifying God.

Further, just as special attention has been given by the Presbytery to forming and presenting a well thought out “mission statement” and a “vision”, quality and special time should be devoted by the Presbytery to articulating its identity. To do this will call upon the Presbytery to think openly about the various theologies resident in its members and congregations, its values, and its motivations, all related to

the diversity that exists in the one body—the Lord of the Church, Jesus Christ. The information received sometimes demonstrates a struggle between two assumptions:

1. Presbytery should be formed by unity.
2. Presbytery formation should be by uniformity.

This observation regarding identity stands first because it calls for a theological and belief-focused Presbytery, which we believe is basic to a faithful, relevant and effective future for the Presbytery and a foundation to the other description of identity which follows. As the reader continues, it will become apparent that this description of the Presbytery's identity and being, an incarnate presence of the Christ, is not always a reality within the Presbytery's communal life.

II. A presbytery that “stands along side” its congregations (and vice versa) as peers in ministry and mission, each offering the other support, encouragement, mutual assessment and edification.

Another description of a presbytery might be added to those presented above in **I**. In Presbyterian polity, a presbytery, by its roles and functions within our relational church, performs a New Testament function of *episkopos*—bishop, which means “overseer.” Unfortunately, too often in our church, the first word, “over,” is emphasized in word and deed more than the meaning of the two words combined, communicating caring, support, and nurture, delivered with grace and love.

There are, of course, times and situations when the presbytery is called to be regulatory. For example, when a presbytery is a court responsible for discipline, and must call attention to a session and/or pastor that they are drifting from the common good of our mutual Presbyterian ethos and identity. However, even these occasions stand within the description of over-sight offered above, and are to be redemptive and constructive. From the voices heard in the Holy Conversations, there is a yearning for a presbytery, by means of its entities, staff, and on-going relationships, that “comes alongside” its congregations and sessions, sharing identities, common interests, listening carefully to one another's agendas. Such a presbytery focuses on the places where mutual support and care can and should prevail, and collaborates in building effective 21st century ministry for the congregations as well as the Presbytery. When asked for a metaphor describing the relationship between the Presbytery and its congregations, one elder participant replied, “(we’re) like distant cousins; we talk to one another now and then, but never get together for a family visit.” We heard this and other such comments as a call for more relational efforts on the part of the Presbytery and congregations alike.

It was clear from our information that the Presbytery's presence is most felt in congregations at two times: (1) when there is a transition of pastors, resulting in the establishment of a Pastor Nominating Committee (PNC) and its responsibilities; and (2) when a crisis of some description, as perceived either by the congregation or the presbytery, appears, either in the presbytery or the congregation (i.e. A congregation decides to not participate in per capita payment and the Presbytery responds.) It was reported that the time of transition can be positive and beneficial to both congregation and presbytery only if the pastoral transition processes is perceived as positive by the congregation (c).

Interventions like the second example above are most often understood as meddling by the Presbytery. The point is this: any intervention by the Presbytery, if it is made in the context of an “alongside” process

and attitude, and preferably after experiences of other “alongside” interventions, will be perceived and accepted as a presence for dialogue and of mutual concern—for the congregation, the Presbytery, indeed for the common good of the whole church. It appears in our Presbytery, this understanding of what our Presbytery might become will call for different assumptions, attitudes, and processes—for both the Presbytery and for the congregations.

The Holy Conversations provided a typology of sorts descriptive of relationships between the Presbytery and its churches. First, there are congregations upon which the Presbytery may be more dependent than the other way around. These are churches, whose elders and pastors attend presbytery meetings and participate in presbytery entities, and generously support the presbytery financially. Second, there are churches which have had a less than encouraging or helpful experience with the Presbytery and have chosen to remain at an emotional distance (with the exception of the pastor). They are aware of the Presbytery but remain at a distance. A third group are the churches which have never had a close relationship with the presbytery, and see no reason to change that position. Each group, the reader will realize, will call for a different approach to “coming along side.”

III. A presbytery that collectively values all who are the congregants of its congregations, especially those who serve Jesus in and through the presbytery regardless of generation, gender, family status or theological persuasion.

Holy Conversations revealed troubling perceptions of the Presbytery’s willingness and ability to fulfill this description of being. This observation evolves from participants’ expressed discomfort, if not pain, stemming from incidents of being discounted within the Presbytery within meetings, informal relationships, and group opportunities for service. Bold and descriptive testimony was provided that women, clergy and laity, have had their work, abilities, and gender, and therefore their personhoods, dishonored, trivialized, and discounted. This occurred as they entered the community and work of the Presbytery, as well as during their times in service. Their skills, capabilities, presence, and of course, gender were identified as not appreciated with specific incidents, places, times, and people cited. While some would describe this situation as discourtesy or infrequent compared to the absence of such incidents, when one’s personhood and identity is involved, it is much more serious than that. One participant related that, after noting few women were on a committee upon which she served, and commenting to the committee that it may benefit from the participation of more women, given the role of the committee in the Presbytery, received this response from one of the committee members: “Do we want more inclusion, or do we want quality?” The question was greeted by some with chuckles, and by most with disturbing silence.

While the church generally has a long way to go regarding complete gender and racial inclusiveness and relationship, the incidents described in the conversations call for our Presbytery to emphasize awareness and inclusion. In many of the Holy Conversations, both males and females, older and younger, referred to the Presbytery as a “good ‘ol boy” presbytery and “a club”—i.e. having certain rules and norms, mostly unspoken or unwritten, established by the “in crowd.” In this case the “in crowd” is comprised of people of longer tenure and greater in prestige, older, and male. Our humble advice: we all must heed very carefully this learning from the Holy Conversation about who we are, and work diligently to change this disturbing part of our identity.

The information gathered also revealed that the Presbytery is, what one person called “ordination bound,” meaning clergy exercise the most power and authority in the life of the Presbytery. This dominant presence of the Ministers of the Word and Sacrament contributes, often unintentionally, to apprehension on the part of laypersons, and, therefore, passivity and a reluctance to participate assertively in the meetings and dialogue of the Presbytery and its entities. We are sure there are exceptions. This is not an unusual condition in the governing bodies of the church, including the Session, but one which can be corrected over time.

If clergy over function in the congregational life in a way that parishioners become less assertive and dependent upon them, parishioners realize they are being disempowered and are forced to rely upon the clergy for ideas, direction, and even decisions. That relationship is then transferred into the life of the Presbytery by both laity and clergy. We believe the response to this phenomenon is not necessarily for the clergy to lessen their participation, but rather for clergy to make the mentoring and empowering of lay persons a special part of their ministries; that they may assume their rightful and historical role in the decision-making and leadership of the church. Such roles must be initiated and supported intentionally by both clergy and laity and monitored by the Presbytery.

There is another observation about clergy participation, with an interesting twist. The Holy Conversations revealed that it is easy for our Presbytery to omit from opportunities for participation, from the nomination process, and from other parts of the life of the Presbytery those clergy we call Other Minister Members. These clergypersons report they often find themselves, through no choice of their own, out of the mainstream of the Presbytery. Whereas, in some presbyteries other minister members aggressively take their place in the work of the Presbytery, offering a different and challenging perspective from their special places and roles of ministry, such does not appear to be case in our Presbytery. We believe the “ownership” of the Presbytery is generally very low among this group of clergy, which is one of a large number.

Low “ownership” is demonstrated by lower attendance and participation than other clergy. Helpful resources, and varied perceptions of the church and its ministry from this group, are not being used to capacity. The solution to this situation, we believe, lies in a greater awareness by those in the Presbytery’s nomination process, and greater willingness on the part of the other minister members to take their rightful place in the life of their Presbytery.

Germane to this entire section is our discovery that the Committee on Representation, although it is presently being revitalized, has been dysfunctional. Representation by gender, generation, tenure in the presbytery, race, clergy and laity, geographical area of the presbytery, and guiding appropriate representation onto the appropriate entities will all be more focused and prioritized with a functional Committee. Inclusion and distribution of talented people will increasingly become central to the nominating process.

IV. A presbytery that makes an effort to understand the rapid changes taking place in our cultures that make up the geographical and sociological territories of the presbytery, within which our congregations are called to faithful witness and ministry.

Our information indicates that there is some awareness that significant changes are taking place in the cultural context in which the Presbytery relates to its congregations, and in which the congregations serve

in their respective neighborhoods. Further, there is some awareness that these changes impact the congregations and the ways they are called to do ministry. We have been reminded repeatedly by participants in the conversations that this Presbytery is made up of multiple cultures, or as some called them, “societies.” These societies are most often described as congruous to county boundaries within the Presbytery. Each county it appears is a different culture, and each with sub-cultures. This awareness of cultural complexity and change varied among those who gathered to speak and listen, with the clergy being more aware and articulate, laity remaining quiet or in a learning mode. While cultural change is recognized and affirmed, little awareness of the *speed* of the change was evident. Some congregations in the Presbytery, largely led by the pastor, are sensing the need for the church to take very seriously what is commonly called transformation (d). If transformation, based in part on changes in our culture, is not a serious consideration for a presbytery and its congregations, to the extent that it is a part of planning for the future, that future may be very bleak. One presbytery has provocatively named a transformation training event for its clergy “Deep Change or Slow Death,” “deep change” referring to transformation as defined in the end notes (d). Over stated? We think not. Let it also be said, that communal transformation (of a presbytery and/or a congregation), is always related to, based upon, and made possible by personal transformation of those who make up the transforming community.

We asked, particularly in the Holy Conversations with Area elders and pastors, “If transformation is to take place in your congregation, or in the other congregations of the Presbytery, what is the role of the Presbytery in making that happen?” An answer given, which, we believe deserves an A+ was, “The Presbytery needs to be ‘ahead of the curve.’” We do not observe that our Presbytery has been, nor is it now, positioned to be “ahead of the curve.” Congregations are learning even though they are faithfully doing everything they have always done much better than they have ever done it, membership is decreasing, stewardship is shrinking, empty space in the pews is becoming worrisome, and the status quo is becoming more and more difficult to maintain. That often translates into awareness that “deep change” (transformation) must be a consideration.

Joseph Small of our denomination’s Theology and Worship Office, in his paper entitled “Travail of the Presbytery” says Brazilian theologian Rebem Alves writes the first word in the emergence of hope is “No!”—“No” to the validity of the current state of affairs, and “No” to its continuation. Presbyteries and congregations are changing. The issue is why are they changing and how. Is it because people and dollars are becoming less and less? Is the change simply redoing or reinventing the same old organization and way of doing things? Shall we say “No” and discover hope?

The Presbytery is a source to which congregations should turn for direct assistance, counsel, support, and direction for the difficult task of transformation. If a presbytery does not have the resources to respond to congregations in the efforts to understand and implement transformation, then it must either develop them or have the capacity to direct pastors, sessions, and congregations to places and people within and without the Presbytery who can and will be helpful.

We are bold to suggest that if our presbytery is to be “ahead of the curve” with respect to culture, change, and transformation, it will become the responsibility of the presbytery to become aware of, understand and communicate new paradigms, new models for being the church today. A particularly helpful paradigm is described and applied to the history of the church by Loren B. Mead in The Once and Future Church. Particular attention to an understanding of the contrast between the Christendom and post-Christendom paradigms is called for, as well as their immediate applications and implications to the

cultures of the Presbytery, the respective neighborhoods of our congregations, and the cultures of the congregations themselves. Such an exercise will not only be historical, but theological and introspective, reflective of the context the church is in today.

V. A presbytery that has the leadership and will to make timely decisions and changes that will make it more effective, vital, relevant and faithful as a community of mission and ministry, as a governing body, and as a model to its congregation.

In most of the Conversations, Donegal Presbytery was described as one which has a difficult time making decisions. There is a tendency for the Presbytery to delay or table a decision to be made on an important issue. Sometimes the reason given was “not enough information is provided to act.” Another time, the delay occurs because the debate becomes too “heated,” and it seems prudent to the assembly and its leadership to cease the interchange lest people reach a level of an uncivil, or “not nice,” emotional discussion. One reference was to commissioners getting off track missing the issue at hand: e.g. commissioners, at the occasion of a candidate’s examination, debating their own theological differences, forgetting the immediate decision is about the candidate’s theology and service to the church.

“We will not deal with controversy,” was the explanation of one person. Another said, “The Presbytery is confused,” referring to reluctance for closure and decisions on issues, particularly those dealing with the future direction and state of the Presbytery. One person described the Presbytery as “a duck paddling like mad under the water to stay afloat and progress, while remaining calm and cool above the surface of the water.” Another explanation for hesitancy involved an unwillingness of the Presbytery to openly think and debate theologically at crucial and helpful times, which, when such is basic to a decision to be made, becomes an impediment to good decision-making.

Given the swiftly moving culture alluded to in **IV** above—how the *speed* of cultural change stresses the church’s need and capacity to make timely decisions—we believe that the Presbytery is being called to be decisive and to understand the need to take risks. In other words, the TT believes it is imperative that the Presbytery examine *how* it prepares itself to make decisions (the amount and the sources of information available), and the *means it chooses to decide* (parliamentary procedure or discernment, by open ended time or a strict time-line binding upon the decisions to be made). Also, we believe we need to ascertain the role theological dialogue plays in the practice of good and lasting decision making and to prepare to practice such dialogue.

VI. A presbytery that nurtures and empowers those who become a part of its entities of ministry through relevant, timely, and participant-designed training and orientation, honoring their service to Jesus and the church by empowering them to be increasingly competent and effective.

As Holy Conversations took place with presbytery entities, and in some cases with those to whom those entities provide service, there was a humble, yet strong, call to the Presbytery from entity members and those served by the entity, for training to provide more effective and helpful assistance to those serving through the Presbytery and better service to those whom they serve. We heard that some people receive training, others do not. There is a need for an on-going, regular, in depth, and inclusive training process thus honors the service of those involved in Presbytery ministry (e).

We believe that to whomever training is offered in the Presbytery, it should be designed—purpose, objectives, content, outcomes, methods, desired outcomes—with the participation of those to be trained, incorporating in the training a satisfaction of trainees particular needs and perceived weakness. The days of presuming we know what people desire and need, without first dialoguing with them, are over! Participation of those to be trained in planning the training is a very simple principle, but one too often ignored. It goes without saying that the more competent, trained, and spiritually aware a person representing the presbytery is, the more positive that person’s experience of service and ministry will be with a group or a congregation in the Presbytery, not to mention a satisfying a experience on the part of the group or congregation receiving the ministry. We believe following this design principle of “learner participation in planning” will go a long way to speak to another lament we heard from our Presbytery entities: “We do good planning for education of people in the congregations, but they do not come to the training.” We also believe each training event must intentionally demonstrate the Biblical and theological rationale for a ministry of an entity to be a part of what the Presbytery offers as well as for the skills, information, and competencies being presented. Such a component of training is to be designed to make people spiritually aware of what it is they are doing and why.

We just mentioned the task of making people spiritually aware. We asked persons working in the Presbytery if their service in and through the Presbytery was a source for them of spiritual growth, vitality, and faith awareness. Many did not answer, some struggled to connect their service in some way to spirituality, and some responded positively. For some it was spiritually rewarding and stimulating to be able to use the gifts given to them by God with others in and through the Presbytery. Working with others on a common task, or to provide a special and needed service was spiritually rewarding to some. Many pointed to times of devotion and worship in the Presbytery and/or entity meetings as being spiritually uplifting. Again, training and orientation offered by the Presbytery, we believe, should never neglect this spiritual and faith dimension of providing service, resource, or information. We are particularly concerned about those who seemingly could not see the connection between Presbytery “work” and spirituality. One memorable Holy Conversation message which connected service and spirituality was: “I find doing a budget, working with the numbers and what they represent, a spiritually rewarding experience.” Indeed, deciding how the fruits of people’s financial stewardship will be used, for what ministry and for what amount, is a practice of spiritual accountability.

We must also point out that the more training, growth, and orientation about being and doing church through the Presbytery, the more adequately they are equipped and empowered to minister in their respective congregations! The reverse is equally true. The Presbytery is as strong as those who come from the congregations, trained there, and serve in and through the Presbytery.

VII. A presbytery in which process (a defined means to get from one place in a task to another desired place) is used and appreciated as much as content.

The information we received often described confusion, frustration and anxiety about what is going on in the Presbytery. For example, it was reported that, at this time, the Presbytery has no defined process to determine priorities to which premium effort, time, and dollars will be assigned. “The work of the Presbytery is not focused,” serves as a summary statement from our data. Further, the amount of money for any priorities that may be identified is shrinking, which makes the matter of funding on-going ministries perilous. The situation may be described as too many ministries, without priority, and too few dollars to adequately support them. The data shows that we need planned, meaningful steps to establish

ministry priorities. For our work, we need a clear, just, and fair process for making choices. We need clarity and access to the process. We need a clear way to communicate the process to the Presbytery. The point we wish to make is that clarity and fairness of a process lessens confusion and frustration, making for less anxiety about the results.

When asked for metaphors, analogies, or illustrations that might best describe the Presbytery, persons involved in Holy Conversations responded:

- the Hebrews wandering in the desert, wanting to go back to Egypt where things were at least predictable
- a ship without a rudder or a sail with no capacity for direction and movement
- the walls of Jericho tumbling down
- being on a stormy sea, asking Jesus to do something about the turbulent situation
- a dysfunctional family, etc.

We believe that the message is the Presbytery must define clearly the processes to be used to provide increased order. Our Presbytery needs to set aside the unspoken need to do everything for everybody, and within wise and just process, establish priorities for its work and for a changing identity. We believe that understanding process, and developing the capability to use it, is one of the most important skills for leadership in the church in this new century, and a clear message to any persons who staff this Presbytery. For Presbytery, or the congregation, to accept process as being an important tool of the church, and to have clarity about how it works and what it produces, takes us to the next description of “being” and identity.

VIII. A presbytery that fosters clarity and builds trust by its positive collective attitudes, by open communication, by developing healthy relationships and by growing faith

We believe that attitude, for an individual as well as for a community of faith, impacts in great measure how it defines itself. We cannot change our past, nor can we change how others see us or act toward us. We can, however, examine our own attitudes, and change them, individually and communally as a presbytery. Our life together is a small part of what happens to us over-all, but a very large part of how we respond to what happens to us. The word “respond” is used advisedly, and stands opposed to how we “react” to what happens to us. To react is a thoughtless, irrational, and act-before-we-think way to deal with what comes our way. Reaction comes from the reptilian part of our brain located at the top of our spinal cord and is motivated by our need to survive and to be protected. To respond, on the other hand, is to behave toward another rationally, with thought, and by being in control emotionally of oneself. If we react persistently toward others, causing others to react toward us in return, we become engaged in a cycle of destructive emotional reactivity. When a presbytery is very anxious reactivity increases and can be pervasive and destructive. Some of our Holy Conversationalists recognized this anxiety, calling the emotion “fearful.”

Anxiety, and resulting reactivity, is heightened by a lack of clarity. The more we are unclear about our environment, what is going on around us and why, and how and what is affecting us, the more anxiety and fear we have. The more fearful we become, the more reactive we are with others--our attitude and behavior change for the worse. The TT wonders if the interpersonal difficulty in our Presbytery is not explained by growing anxiety and resulting reactivity. Anxiety can be produced by lack of clarity about

what is to happen in the future, even by not being clear about who we are and what God is calling us to do. Anxiety can even be caused by uncertainty about how we believe people perceive us theologically as Christians, and as human beings. The more anxious, fearful, and reactive we become, the more difficult it is to think straight and to act kindly with civility. The Presbytery is being called to examine and to reverse the chain of emotion which causes us occasionally to speak and relate with one another reactively. We can do this by clarifying what is happening and why, reducing anxiety, minimizing fear and apprehension, nurturing healthier relationships to earn trust. To do this calls for an attitude change about two important matters: how much we communicate, never assuming people do not need to know what we know, and how we relate to one another, especially as Jesus-people—responding not reacting.

Unacceptable reactive behaviors include: keeping secrets, engaging in sabotage, scape-goating, and breaking off communication. Each of these can be seen as a means of controlling others. We learned from the Conversations that secrets have been, historically, a part of our Presbytery's life, some people having important information about critical matters in the Presbytery, others do not. When nominations for committees are "rigged" to produce predicted conclusions and directions for the Presbytery, we experience sabotage of the nomination process. Relationships have become strained, we discovered.

On an occasion, following a heated debate on the floor of the Presbytery, one person was moved to speak angry words (reactivity), threatening one of the debaters, predictably breaking off communication. In each of these cases, emotional relationships are suspended, if not ended, and always severely damaged. These behaviors erode trust within the Presbytery. We believe the negative behavior described here is unacceptable in this Presbytery, and we call upon each person, when and if such behavior takes place to be accountable for "blowing the whistle and calling 'foul.'" We take seriously the perception of trivialization and discounting of persons because of gender, generation, theological position, or tenure. While leaders are most often presumed to be the ones to challenge this behavior with truth and love, in congregations as well as the Presbytery, we believe addressing such behavior is the responsibility of everyone in the community, by personally not behaving badly, and by confronting unacceptable words and actions with careful love and grace.

When information is shared completely and freely, people are honored for who they are as part of the community, by gender, generation, role and place in the church. Trust becomes a norm within the community. Our deep desire is that the Presbytery can and will become a safe place and safe space for everyone. People will become less inhibited in their participation in the Presbytery, speaking freely and carefully to the issues before the body. Faithful, healthy relationships will allow disagreements to be understood as differences of opinion, position, and conviction about an issue. We believe this matter to be fundamentally one of faith and of the Spirit, fostering a climate of forgiveness and reconciliation.

IX. A presbytery that makes real, defined, well thought-out core values a critical component of its structure, consciousness, and living life together.

As a part of every Holy Conversation, conversationalists were asked to identify what, in their minds, were core values for the Presbytery. A core value was explained as a pattern of thinking that is deeply engrained in a presbytery's consciousness that motivates and shapes its communal life, decisions, and activity. Rarely are core values written or stated, and yet they are important to be identified and known by the presbytery's leadership and participants. Core values reveal themselves through the ministries and activities to which people are most willing to give their time and energy (priorities), or which they ignore.

Places in the presbytery's life where people feel the most comfortable, or display discomfort, demonstrate core values. Policies and procedures that people support are most often signs of core values; those they reject don't fit their core values.

Core values reveal themselves in what we are for or against. Herb Miller, one of the editors of "The Parish Paper" says such values evolve from peoples' theological positions, ministry activities and experiences, those persons for whom they have respect (e.g. a professor, a parent, a pastor), and the social/cultural context of a presbytery within which it ministers (f). We must be clear that in a faith community's life there are both preferred or imagined core values, those that people think are operative, but really aren't; and values which are real and actual, and are really driving and shaping the community's thinking and acting.

We need to be clear, as a Presbytery, what our real and actual core values are. To be forthcoming, at no time in the Holy Conversations did we observe anyone call upon our Presbytery to identify its core values. The TT draws this conclusion from the broad and varied responses we received to our soliciting persons' understanding of what our Presbytery's core values are. The core values offered by those in the Holy Conversations represented an uncertain broad spectrum of various behaviors, likes and dislikes, preferred and actual, activities and programs, etc, all representative of a core value. In fact, this is not unusual, because core value identification and definition is a very difficult exercise, and takes more time than we allotted. What was offered as a core value was in some cases actually the result of deeper, underlying more fundamental core value. For example, some said "mission support" is a core value of our Presbytery (mentioned at every Holy Conversation), while others identified the core value as "pride in having such a high mission support record," not the actual mission support. It is pride that drives the mission support.

We believe, however, that our Presbytery will be guided into the future, if we search for and identify the core values which shape and form our faith community, being who we are as God's people in this place. Again, we come to this conclusion comparing the extreme difficulty we observed people having identified our core values compared to the very important role knowing them can have as we live into our future. As an example of the importance of core values, have you ever wondered why a congregation's and/or presbytery's hard work striking a vision, or developing a mission statement, followed by well articulated goals, ends up often being ignored, and after a period of time the work is discarded, and life goes on as usual? The reason is quite simple. We determine what we decide is *really* important, and that for which we will use our energy, time, and money, by our actual core values. If the vision, or mission statement, or well stated goals are not congruous with and supported by our actual core values, we simply will not respond in a sustained fashion to bring the vision to pass, to make the mission a reality, or to do the work called for by the goals. The hard work is relegated to a desk drawer or maybe the "circular file."

With all of this in mind, we call upon our Presbytery to expend time and energy to discover the core values which drive the use of our money, time, and energy, and which will help explain why we, as God's people, are passionate about some things, indifferent toward others, and that includes priorities.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE PRESBYTERY

As the result of our work, information gathered from listening to those who participated in Holy Conversations, and information and observations in collaboration with our outside consultant, we make the following recommendations to the Presbytery, in part as response to the Presbytery's directives to the TT (see Page 1).

1. PRESBYTERY IDENTITY

We recommend a small ministry team be established with the expressed tasks of reviewing and assessing the TT's following Identity Statement for the Presbytery which we believe evolved from the information presented in this Report, and determining our accuracy and emphases for such a Statement. Further, that the Statement be inclusive of important summary descriptions which are parts of the Presbytery's defining structure.

Identity Statement:

Donegal Presbytery is a geographically defined community of believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, who strive to be faithful to him through the integrity and grace of our relationships, through the way our service and ministries manifest good news, and through collaboration and mutual support with and among our congregations.

Rationale: A communal understanding of who we are as a Presbytery, acting as God's people is as important as what the presbytery does as God's people. Let us declare who we believe God wants us to be.

2. PRESBYTERY-CONGREGATION RELATIONS

We recommend a ministry team be established, drawing in part personnel from the four Committee on Ministry areas of the Presbytery, as well as other interested persons, to define and develop a process by which representatives of the Presbytery who are to serve in any way with congregations, have the ways and means to "come alongside" the congregation, establishing a partnership to fulfill whatever matter is at hand.

Rationale: There is a yearning, demonstrated by passion, caring, and a little anger, for the Presbytery to be in deeper and richer dialogue with the congregations in a peer relationship.

3. DIVERSITY

We recommend the Presbytery's Nominating Committee and the Committee on Representation collaborate on effective ways to establish diversity of gender, generation, geographical areas of the presbytery, and ethnicity, demonstrating at the occasions for nominations the results of that effort toward increased diversity. We further recommend that the Presbytery make sure that any person nominated understands that training and orientation will be provided by the Presbytery for the tasks and responsibilities to which they are to be nominated and possibly elected. (See recommendation 4.)

Rationale: There is a need to correct mistakes and misjudgments of the past and to eliminate situations that cause pain among our people.

4. PEOPLE PREPARATION

We recommend that a ministry team be established with the expressed purpose of designing, planning, and implementing comprehensive training and orientation for all who serve on the Presbytery's entities. The training and orientation process shall include skills and capabilities needed for the entities' particular tasks, the "coming alongside" strategy being developed by the Presbytery, the place of the particular entity in the total presbytery system and mission, and how the work of the entity serves the purpose of Jesus Christ. The training and orientation will be planned and designed with those to be trained and oriented participating.

Rationale: Such support and caring for those who serve Jesus through the Presbytery is wished for and expected by many and is both logical and extremely supportive of our overall ministry.

5. CORE VALUES

We recommend that a ministry team be established with the expressed purpose of identifying key core values which drive the decisions, behaviors, and ministries of the Presbytery, drawing upon data gathered from the Holy Conversations, and any other information and processes that will facilitate the task. The identified Core Values should then be set along side the mission statement, vision, and identity definition (see identity statement above) of the Presbytery.

Rationale: We will be made stronger as a Presbytery by going through this exercise to define, and from knowing, the core values that shape us. We need to know, and to dialogue about, that which we determine as basic and foundational to our life as a Presbytery.

6. STAFFING (configuration)

We recommend that any evolving staff configuration for the Presbytery follow the wisdom of "form follows function," meaning the most effective staff persons, inclusive of number, full-time or part-time, position description, tasks, and expectations, are called, configured, and matched to a clear understanding reached by the Presbytery as to what it believes God is calling it to be and to do, its functions.

Rationale: It is wise to avoid calling staff people, not knowing clearly the work and expectations waiting for them as defined by the Presbytery's identity and mission, unless someone is called to lead that identity and mission definition process, which in itself becomes the "function."

7. STAFFING (personnel)

We recommend that any staff persons called by the Presbytery have skills, competencies, and qualities to engage *both* in a ministry of affection and relationship (pastoral and compassionate), and at the same time be practitioners of administration and programming (visioning, planning, budgeting, assessment and evaluation, and consultation). The skills and capabilities of any staff person are the ones important to faithful and effective ministry in this post-Christendom new millennium.

Rationale: To have one position based on affection and relationship (e.g. pastor to the presbytery) and another on administration and functional matters (e.g. group process, policies, projects, budgeting, planning, etc.) too often results in the pastoral staff becoming "beloved," and the other staff person known as "the business person," perceived as not interested in people and thus detached. There are particular skills and capabilities emerging for church leadership necessary for the new times of a new millennium.

8. STAFFING (leadership)

We recommend that the Presbytery consider a staffing configuration that begins with the calling of an executive/head of staff as soon as possible, followed by positions defined by the ministry and mission the Presbytery wishes to accomplish. Possibilities for consideration are: an associate executive to share pastoral and administrative responsibilities, as negotiated with the executive, a stated clerk, and the engagement, for defined time periods, of skilled practitioners with special knowledge and aptitudes. These practitioners may be “contracted for services,” to provide staff resource to particular ministries as defined by emerging priorities. Any staff persons, including those contracted as temporary persons, must understand what it means to work as a team—the executive being the team leader, and functioning accordingly.

Rationale: The executive/head of staff needs to be with us as soon as possible, realizing the present “functions” in place (see 6 above) which she or he will encounter, including continuation of priority setting, budgeting with shrinking dollars, organizational and staff response to the priorities, as well as functions resulting from the other recommendations in this Report (e.g. possible adjustments to the structure of the Presbytery). We believe this staff configuration approach will focus staff resources upon places and activities of priority in the presbytery, while providing overarching staff leadership, all at less cost than multiple full-time staff persons.

9. STAFFING (currently in place)

We recommend that the present staff be retained—program and support, until such time as the executive/head of staff is in place, at which time all positions will be adjusted as per recommendation 8 above, if adopted. Any present staff person will be eligible to apply for any new open position, with sensitivity to the spirit of recommendations 6 through 8 above. A director of the camp position will depend upon the camp’s ranking as a priority of the presbytery. Support staff will be hired by the same philosophy mentioned in recommendation 6, based on the emerging functions defined by the work of the Presbytery and its staff. Support staff also needs to be seen as a part of the team and function as such.

Rationale: Current staff is important to carry the Presbytery through the remainder of the transition; they also have current and continuing transitional tasks on their ministry agendas. Any staff person currently serving the Presbytery should be eligible to apply for any new position. Any decision as to whether a current staff person’s skills, capabilities, experience, aptitudes, and work styles fit the agenda of the Presbytery at the time of future staff searches, and whether any current staff person will be compatible with the newly called executive’s team will be determined at that time.

10. STRUCTURE/ORGANIZATION

We recommend that the present structure of the Presbytery be maintained until the executive/head of staff is in place and has become accustomed to the Presbytery culture, ethos, and expectations. However, given the work we have just completed, we recommend that the Presbytery rethink the way we are currently organized, considering the following adjustments:

A Council established and organized with three sets of functions, operating as one Council through continuing communication, a common meeting, and regular mutual consultation and counsel. The three functions to be organized within the Council are:

1. Visioning and future, keeping the Presbytery current regarding cultural movements, visioning, various impacts upon the Presbytery and its congregations, and a continued perspective on the future while honoring the past;
2. Coordination of the Presbytery/ intra-Presbytery communication inclusive of congregations, consultation with the entities and mission teams (see below) of the Presbytery, and the planning, formation, and quality of Presbytery meetings;
3. Continuing planning, budgeting, priority setting, evaluation, including accountability for implementation.

We recommend the membership of the council be shaped as follows: the immediate past moderator of the Presbytery serving as moderator; the stated clerk; one representative from each committee (see below), Presbyterian Women, and any youth entity that may be formed; and two persons representing each of the geographical areas of the Presbytery. This model anticipates each organized Council function co-opting personnel, if needed, from the Presbytery at large who possess skills and capabilities for strengthening the particular function of the Council.

Committees as mandated by the Book of Order.

Ministry Teams: Other tasks, as defined by the Presbytery, including the identified priorities of the Presbytery, we recommend be managed and implemented by ministry teams, formed by persons coming together with the passion and skills to fulfill the purpose for which the ministry team is being formed. The Committee on Nominations and the Committee on Representation will add to their normal tasks that of keeping current rosters of the ministry teams as they are formed to do their special work, and are dismissed when the work is completed, and will help establish as much diversity by gender, generation, and geographical area on the ministry teams as is possible.

Rationale: We believe the Presbytery will benefit by intentional continuing work and preparation concerning the future, crucial system tasks (planning, budgeting, etc.), and relating to the Presbytery entities, while fulfilling a concern for the quality of presbytery meetings, in a centralized way, working, communicating and consulting with one another as a Council. The Council will take no actions representing the Presbytery unless empowered to do so by the Presbytery. Placing the three sets of functions in one central body, we believe, will increase useful and necessary communication. In addition, this configuration will provide a ready connection between the Presbytery's past, present, and its future, serve to relate and incorporate Council and entity work strategically into the Presbytery meetings, and provide rich and effective consultation and collaboration among the three sets of functions "around one table." We also believe such a Council will reduce confusion in the Presbytery. Further, the reduction of nominated entities may reduce costs, place people in strategic positions (ministry teams) based upon their willingness (free choice) and even eagerness (passion) to serve in particular ways using their God given grace gifts, and decrease the breadth and difficulty of the nominating function.

Ministry teams are formed in response to identified priorities and to sudden process and mission needs of the Presbytery. Satisfying the financial needs of the mission teams will be the work of the budgeting function of the Council and the Administration Committee.

What we recommend here is threefold:

1. the capacity for the presbytery to focus its work within a team focused upon a specific task and/or function;
2. not placing that task and/or function in a pre-organized group with multi tasked, multi functioned purposes for being;
3. to provide flexibility to respond quickly to emerging and timely needs, in contrast to an organizational structure that is slower in response and more mechanical, often shaped by the particular time in which it originated to satisfy the needs of that time.

Such flexibility, we believe, will assist the Presbytery to quickly and efficiently address the opportunities God places before us.

11. STRUCTURE AND ORGANIZATION

We recommend that, whether the wisdom of the Presbytery supports the suggested more focused, flexible, organic, quick response approach to doing our work or not, that the Presbytery develop the ways and means to intentionally “call” (or nominate) into the entities of the Presbytery (committees and/or ministry teams) people representing each of the four Committee on Ministry areas of the Presbytery. This will be accomplished within the Presbytery’s nominating and representation processes, for committees and council, and by over sight of the formation of the ministry teams.

Rationale: This recommendation states clearly what we have intimated several times above. One of our discoveries through the Holy Conversation process was the considerable number of persons in congregation leadership, and we presume persons who are not currently on the Session and other boards, who have viewpoints about the Presbytery, its relationship with its congregations, and vice versa, and who are very talented and capable people. These people will bring to the Presbytery entities—their dialogue and work—sensitivity to the various cultures of the Presbytery (see **IV** above) and the congregations in their respective areas of the Presbytery which need to be considered as the Presbytery seeks to be relevant its congregation and in its witness to the Lord (g).

12. VISION AND PLANNING

We recommend that attention be given to redoing the Presbytery’s vision with particular emphasis upon moving it from language about the “here and now” to a description of what God wants the Presbytery to “look like” at a given time out into the future. We believe a vision describes what can be, not what is. We recommend that the Mission Statement be reviewed, comparing it with current observations and data about the Presbytery, and making changes, if necessary.

Further, we recommend that the Presbytery, by a process acceptable to this body, establish for itself specific and well-defined Ministry Initiatives, based upon the current goals of the Presbytery, and upon new information contained in this Report; and bring the vision, Mission Statement and ministry initiatives in line with the identified Presbytery core values. We propose this process eventually to be on-going and lodged in the planning, budgeting, and priority setting section of the Council.

Rationale: This recommendation is not to call the current Presbytery Plan into question. Rather, we are aware that the best planning effort begins to be seriously dated about five years from its drafting. We

believe that it is in order to bring the Plan up-to-date using the information herewith, and other discoveries made in and by the Presbytery. This is in part a response to the call for more a more ordered and focused Presbytery, and for the establishment of clearer and more complete Presbytery structure and function.

13. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE REPORT

We recommend that the Presbytery direct the Council to form a group (see below), in response to the Presbytery's action upon our report, to implement the report, as adopted, as follows:

1. Review the entire Report from the Transition Team with careful attention to the implications for change and transformation (personal and communal) contained in the presentation of the "impressions, opinions, and feelings" coming from Holy Conversations, and to the Report's stated Recommendations.
2. Design and implement a process which will establish the means and the accountability for the implementation of the adopted stated Recommendations, as well as any other action the Group may identify from the content of the Report.
3. The group shall:
 - A) be eight persons: the Council moderator, a representative from the administration department, a member of the previous IEPSC, a person from each of the Presbytery's geographical areas, a member of the Transition Team, and the acting executive presbyter.
 - B) establish accountability for its work with the Presbytery through the Council, the Presbytery having final approval of the group's plans and procedures.
 - C) provide regular and timely reports on the team's progress be to the Presbytery.
 - D) study with care Joseph Small's paper entitled "Travail of the Presbytery," referred to in **IV** above, using Small's presentation as a context for the implementation of the recommendations presented in this report, giving special attention to the history perspective presented herein, the ecclesiology, and to other theological implications.
 - E) form and design action plans and procedures for Transition Team's work as stated in 2 above, including specific tasks: definition of the task, accountability for the completion of each task (an existing entity, a mission team, an individual, etc), a time-line indicating the proposed completion date of each task, and financial implications of each task, if any.

CONCLUSION

The TT realizes that this Report, the result of our "view from the balcony," if adopted, represents significant changes in who we understand ourselves to be as Christ's people and in how we are doing what we believe the Lord of the Church wants us to do. It will be a test of one of the identity narratives

stated above coming from the Holy Conversations: the capacity of the Presbytery to receive new and different information, process it to the advantage of the Presbytery, testing the capacity to risk, make changes, and to transform.

Ronald Heifetz, the same person who suggests an organization take time for “a view from the balcony,” also makes a helpful and important distinction concerning our work together which will evolve from this Report, both our identity discoveries and our recommendations. He describes two kinds of work in this time of rapid change: technical work and adaptive work. Technical work is those tasks to which we are accustomed, we are prepared for by our training and experience, and which are a part of our ongoing repertoire. As such, technical work is understood, expected, and performed with relative ease and less anxiety. Adaptive work is that for which we are not prepared, because it is new and unfamiliar, untried, and calls for experimentation, new training, taking us into uncertain territory. This work and its outcome is not clear and more difficult by its nature, and thus (as we said in this report) can be a source of anxiety. It is the kind of work that we are called “to live into,” not being fully able to predict the results. Because of rapid change, the volume and depth of information flow in the times within which we are living, we will, even in the church, be called more and more to engage in adaptive work.

This Report, as you have discovered, represents adaptive work, by being called to be that which we aren’t now, and to do that with which we are not acquainted. Our prayer is that our living into the unknown will be an act of faithfulness and love to the Lord of the Church, Jesus Christ. We are convinced that God will bless our adaptive work as much as our technical work. We thank you for your confidence and support as we have sought to serve the Lord and our Presbytery in the special way represented by our task and by this Report.

“I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it”
(Isaiah 43:19)

“And the one seated on the throne said, ‘See, I am making all things new.’”
(Revelation 21:5)

Transition Team Members:

Chester County—James Ash, Mark Atkinson, June Hoffman, James Nolan

Lancaster County—Edwin Aponte, Janet Boyette-Shay, Jane Kintzi
Judson McConnell (Chairperson), David Powers

York County—Chris Blackford, Mary Carr

Ex Officio (without vote)—Charlie Gross (Associate Executive & Acting Executive)

Outside Consultant (without vote)—John Sharick

Notes:

- a) “A view from the balcony” A description used by Ronald Heifetz, Harvard Business School. (Page 1)
- b) “Holy Conversations” is a description used by Gil Rendle and Alice Mann, Alban Institute. (Page 2)
- c) The pastoral transition process: (exiting and saying goodbye to the pastor, interim pastoral service or supply pastor, PNC orientation and support, new pastor selection, nomination, and election concurred with by the “bishop”). (Page 5)
- d) Transformation is not transition. Transition describes incremental change of a present situation, while transformation calls for very fundamental, long term change, a redefinition of and a shift in understanding in a congregation’s—or presbytery’s—assumptions, core values, relationships with the surrounding culture, and even identity. (Page 7)
- e) Presbytery training opportunities should involve skill development, understanding of how a particular entity fits in the total presbytery system, orientation to the entities’ tasks and their desired results, provision of necessary information, etc. (Page 9)
- f) Several participants in Holy Conversations made the point that in Lancaster County the congregations’ values are influenced by Amish, Mennonite, and Baptist beliefs and ways of doing things! (Page 13)
- g) We heard persons serving on Presbytery entities “confess” how easy it is, while sitting at an entity table, to forget the relationship between what they are doing at that table to the very congregation, its needs and condition, from which they came. Such causes, of course, a disconnect between the congregations and the decisions being made at the entity table. (Page 19)

AN EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A Transition to the Future Report

The Transition Team (TT) believes that each word of our report, along with each concept and comment the words convey, are extremely important to understanding our task, the results of our work, and their implications for Donegal Presbytery. The TT offers this Executive Summary, which we believe gives a brief presentation of the work, including the resulting recommendations.

THE TRANSITION TEAM'S MANDATE

We understood our work to be identifying and defining broad concerns and issues regarding the church (congregations, presbytery, and the denomination) and the culture in which God is calling the church to witness. We set out to discover what the identity of the Presbytery is perceived to be by those who are a part of it, as well as what we want it to be. We were asked to make recommendations to particular concerns identified by the Presbytery.

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

What Donegal Presbytery Claim It Wishes To Be

- 1.) A Presbytery that has clearer and better defined understanding of its identity.
- 2.) A Presbytery that “stands along side” its congregations as peer in ministry and mission.
- 3.) A Presbytery that values ALL who are congregants of its church, and those who serve through the Presbytery.
- 4.) A Presbytery that makes an effort to understand the rapid cultural changes occurring within its geographical and sociological territories.
- 5.) A Presbytery that has the leadership and the will to make timely and difficult decisions and changes.
- 6.) A Presbytery that nurtures and empowers those who become part of its various ministries through training and orientation.
- 7.) A Presbytery that values process as much as content.
- 8.) A Presbytery that fosters clarity and builds trust via collective attitudes and open communication.
- 9.) A Presbytery that makes well thought out core values a critical component of its consciousness and life together.

Summary of Recommendations

- Identity
 - Articulate a brief statement of identity
 - Revisit the adopted Mission and Vision Statements
 - Identify our operable Presbytery Core Values
- Congregation Relationships
 - Develop effective ways and means to “come along side” congregations
 - Establish trainee driven training and orientation for presbytery work
- Structure and Staffing
 - Assure diversity of gender, generation, ethnicity and geography via nominations
 - Organize and staff following the principle: form follows function
 - Acquire staff persons with both affectional and administrative capability
 - Call an Executive Presbyter as soon as possible.
 - Maintain current staff during transition
 - Consider realignments of Council and Committees adding use of ministry teams
- Implementation
 - Establishment of a work group with the accountability to implement this report and its recommendations as adopted by the presbytery

OUR CONCLUSION

We state the obvious in our conclusion, namely that the observations and recommendations offered in this Report will call upon our Presbytery to engage in what Ronald Heifetz calls adaptive work, rather than what he calls technical work. Technical work is that to which we are accustomed and are prepared to do by training and experience. Adaptive work, on the other hand, is that which we have not faced before, which is new and unfamiliar, and takes us into unfamiliar territory. Adaptive work is most often that which we must “live into,” and may be accompanied by apprehension, but it is work God and the times are calling us to do.

The Transition Team Understanding our mandate

Our Purpose: To identify and define broad concerns and issues regarding the church (congregations, presbytery, the denomination), and the culture in which God is calling the church to witness, which will lead to specific recommendations reported to Donegal Presbytery pertaining to its future.

Our Rationale: Donegal Presbytery's future can best be perceived and planned for, leadership formed and implanted, knowing the societal/cultural and ecclesiastical context within which we will be ministering and its effect upon the congregations and presbytery.

Our Core Values:

- Broad participation of the Presbytery's constituency
- Guidance and counsel by a Transition Team
- Understanding that the process is theological and spiritual in nature
- Being a church culture in an unchurched culture
- Making education, discovery, and reflection dimensions of the dialogue
- Good communications with the presbytery and all members

Our Desired Outcomes:

- A set of recommendations re Donegal Presbytery and its ministry which serve to shape its future and faithfulness.
- Data received from pastors, Sessions and congregations which will present a mindset(s) of the Donegal Presbytery constituency
- Constituencies which have taken another step forward in building affiliation and dialogue among themselves
- Definitions of key issues, concerns and challenges growing from the mandate for Christian witness in this new millennium
- All of the above being guidelines and motivations for the building of staff, agenda, and budgets for the future.