

Proposal for a Smaller-Membership Church Forum Albany Presbytery

1. What is being proposed? The Presbyterian Foundation is proposing that this Forum be established to provide a structure within which leaders from smaller congregations (usually defined as those with 50 or fewer worshippers) may gather, hear from Foundation staff and volunteers, learn from one another, and identify and model best practice approaches to the unique dynamics of small churches. Participants will be introduced to the Foundation's Project Regeneration service which offers resources to congregations whose financial sustainability may be in question.

2. How would it work? The Forum will gather for lunch (paid for Presbytery) on a quarterly basis for one year (i.e., four sessions) at the Malta Church presbytery. The Foundation provides a topic expert for a brief presentation on a subject relevant to smaller congregations. The primary focus of these meetings is to stimulate discussion around how various churches are identifying and addressing their common challenges.

3. What would it accomplish? Through interaction and conversation, church leaders with similar roles and responsibilities would become acquainted with one another, develop a network of local expertise to consult when facing a new challenge, and could receive information from the presbytery and the Foundation that may be of interest. The Forum would serve as another element of the connectional nature of the Church.

4. Who would be involved? The Forum would include congregational leaders, both clergy and laity. Clerks of Session and church Treasurers are especially encouraged to participate. One or more representatives from the Foundation facilitate the meetings, and presbytery leaders would attend as their schedules allow. Presbytery staff attending are asked to be sensitive to any possible perceptions of this dialogue being mandated vs. being offered for consideration of new ideas.

5. How does this benefit individual congregations? Individual congregations are provided with financial-diagnostic, planning, and property-related resources and information about successes and lessons learned from other churches facing similar challenges.

6. How does this benefit the presbytery? The Forum would play a role in strengthening the support mechanism provided to the presbytery's smallest congregations, thus enhancing connections, relationships, and the presbytery's overall ministry.

7. How does this benefit the Presbyterian Foundation? Much of the Foundation's work comes as a result of referral. By increasing awareness of the Foundation's capabilities and services, congregations within the presbytery may choose to establish or deepen their own relationships with the Foundation. The Foundation views the Forums to be a natural extension of its service to the wider Church.

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