

Meeting of Foothills Presbytery — February 19, 2019 — Special Event

***Foothills Presbytery in the 2020's***

***The Continual Discernment of Our Calling In Christ***

Rev. Dr. Michael Hoyt, Chair of Council

[This Special Event is going to involve me doing a bit of talking, and you doing a bit of listening. I've put together some slides here so that my droning on is a little more interesting. If you have questions, please make a note of them and we'll have a little time at the end, as well as time over lunch, as well as time over the next year, to discuss what I'm about to show you.]

In the early decades of the 20th century, H. Richard Niebuhr was annoyed.

He was annoyed because he looked out at the American church and saw a reality that was falling far short of the New Testament vision of the Body of Christ.

Niebuhr defined the true church as not an *organization*, but the *organic movement* of those who have been 'called out' and 'sent' to proclaim the kingdom of God.

*In order for the actual church to be the true church in the world,*  
Niebuhr believed,  
*the church must undergo a continual conversion from what it actually is to what it is called to be.*

Niebuhr's words, written over 80 years ago, could have been written yesterday:  
*In order for the actual church to be the true church in the world,*  
*the church must undergo a continual conversion from what it actually is to what it is called to be.*

Much of what we consider in the next half hour will sound a lot like organization-speak. It will sound like that because it is — organization-speak.

But my hope and prayer is that — as we reflect on our *organization* as a Presbytery — we will see more deeply the *organic movement of the true church*; that as we consider the joys and struggles, victories and losses, and the ongoing challenges of being Presbyterian Christians in Upstate, SC, we will perceive the continual conversion of a community *called out and sent* to proclaim the sovereign love of God made known in Jesus Christ.

## SLIDE 1 –

While this Special Event in the docket has been titled simply

“Where We Are / Where We Are Heading”

I’d like to give it a bit longer title:

*Foothills Presbytery in the 2020’s: The Continual Discernment of Our Calling in Christ.*

In other words, I am NOT here to tell you “where we are,” let alone “where we are headed.”

It is important for me to say that,

since I’m standing here in my role as the current Chair of Council,

that the matter of where we are and where we are headed

is still — and will always be — a question for US to discern prayerfully together.

## SLIDE 2 –

As we consider where we are, or where we may be,

it will be helpful to review where we have been over the last several decades...

## SLIDE 3 –

The national trend among mainline churches in the 1990’s

was to continue the decline we had been experiencing since the 1960’s.

However, since Upstate SC tends to lag behind most national trends (for better or worse)

we actually enjoyed some stability and even some growth during that time,

somewhat due to an influx of population from the Northeast and Midwest to our region.

The surge in numbers and resources we experienced

led to the growth of a certain style of Presbytery organization

a style we might call a corporate or “corporation” model,

that employed more and more staff in support of more and more programming,

such as, NCD, Outdoor Ministry, Campus Ministry, Educational Ministry,

Youth Ministry, and so on.

Given our resources and the trends at the time, this all seemed to make sense.

## SLIDE 4 –

Nevertheless, change was coming to the Upstate, too

and by the 2000’s we began experiencing more of the tumult

already underway in the rest of the country.

Sharp divisions over human sexuality and biblical interpretation

became more and more consuming.

Cultural change and decline in church attendance began to affect us

like the rest of the country,

and as a result,

we faced tighter budgets for congregations and thus, for Presbytery.

And as we well know,  
several of our congregations began to develop strategies to leave the PCUSA.

#### **SLIDE 5 –**

The plans of these departing congregations began to come to fruition in the 2010's  
and we developed a "Gracious Dismissal" process for these congregations.  
Also during the 2010's  
we experienced the failure of several of our New Church Developments,  
even while some of our enduring NCD's were falling short of our goals for them.  
The long beloved Ghana partnership became no longer viable  
due to nationalized healthcare in Ghana which eliminated the focus of that mission.  
The Presbytery as a whole also became painfully aware  
that both Camp Buc and Campus Ministry were financially unsustainable ministries,  
the way we were doing them, resulting in large annual deficits.

#### **SLIDE 6 –**

In order to bring these changes into prayerful focus and seek a way forward,  
we appointed the Discernment Task Force in 2013,  
to lead us in responding to...

#### **SLIDE 7 –**

...Two guiding questions:

"What must we do together to practice our Reformed and Presbyterian polity?"  
That is, what *MUST* we do together to meet our responsibilities  
under the Presbyterian Constitution.

And

"What do we need to do together that we cannot do (well) separately?"

In addressing this second question there was a wise awareness  
that the answer could not be  
"everything we've always done, just the way we've always done it."

#### **SLIDE 8 –**

After more than three years of careful and diligent service  
the Discernment Task Force came back to the Presbytery with a recommendation,  
in the form of a new structure.

Again, this may look like mere organizational rearranging,  
but I invite you to consider

how **the organic movement of the true church**  
is at work in and through these structural changes,

That is,  
how these changes were and are a response to  
what the Spirit is saying to the church.

We adopted the new structure  
at the 100th Stated Meeting of Foothills Presbytery in November of 2016,  
with plan to implement the change from 2017–2019  
and with the intention of assessing the changes in 2019  
(which you will note, happens to be THIS YEAR— more on that in a bit.)

The new structure was to be built around Three Core Committees,  
two familiar and one new: COM, CPM, and CSM.

### **SLIDE 9 –**

The task force also recommended the formal conclusion of several ministries:  
NCD (freezing the funds on hand from the sale of the Riverside property  
until such time as we had some clarity about our path forward)  
Also, Ghana, Hispanic Ministry, Outdoor Ministry Team (selling Camp Buc)  
and the Campus Ministry Team.

In short, the recommendation was to...

### **SLIDE 10 –**

...DOWNSIZE the Presbytery structure,  
with a Target Presbytery Budget of only \$525,000 annually.

### **SLIDE 11 –**

To give a sense of this change,  
consider the Presbytery structure as recently as 2005.

- In that year, we had 67 congregations, with a membership of 22,216
- Our Presbytery model: Corporation Structure, Programmatic Operation, Executive Staffing
- There were 26 committees, teams, and council
- And 10 members of the Presbytery Staff
- Requiring a budget of nearly \$1.2 million

### **SLIDE 12 –**

With the implementation of the new structure in 2017

- First of all, we recognized that we were serving only 58 congregation,
  - with a total membership of 14,042

- The new Presbytery model:
  - Constitutional Structure (first of all focused on meeting our constitutional responsibilities)
  - Connectional Operation (that is, helping congregations work with each other rather than simply employing staff to crank out programs for congregations to participate in)
  - Stated Clerk Staffing (again, more focused our constitutional work and keeping Presbyterians connected in mission and ministry)
- We reduced to 14 Committees & the Coordinating Council
- And to only 3 and a half Presbytery Staff
- Requiring only half the budget from 2005 – \$595K

### **SLIDE 13 –**

In addition to the Coordinating Council Committees  
 Worship, Finance, Personnel, Bills & Overtures, Nominations,  
 Representation & Review, and the Racial Ethnic Cabinet,  
 the three core Ministry Committees are key to our shared work:  
 COM, CPM, and CSM.

### **SLIDE 14 –**

COM: Triennial Visits, Pulpit Supply, Work of the Minister and Terms of Call,  
 PNC Training and Liaisons, Examinations Commission, CREs, Certified CE's,  
 Sexual Ethics and Child Protection, and the Small Church Working Group.

### **SLIDE 15 –**

CPM:  
 Caring for, Supporting, Guiding, Challenging women and men who sense the call to the  
 Ministry of Word and Sacrament. Liaisons to Session and Students, Overseeing Education,  
 Administering scholarships, Facilitating Ordination Exams

### **SLIDE 16 –**

The new CSM, takes under its purview many areas formerly under separate committees:  
 Leadership Development, Mission Outreach, Pastoral Support & Peer Groups,  
 Technology, Communications, Curriculum and Resources, Outdoor Ministry,  
 Youth Ministry, including PYC, Campus Ministry, Safe Place, Presbyterian Women...

So we have three VERY hard working core Ministry Committees  
 keeping us connected around vital aspects of our life and mission.  
 If we care about being a distinctively Presbyterian church in the Upstate,  
 it is hard to see how the responsibilities of these ministries can go away  
 without our churches losing significant support and accountability.

## SLIDE 17 –

After recommending the new structure,  
the DTF identified two remaining issues that needed to be addressed:  
Seminary Scholarships and Campus Ministry.

## SLIDE 18 –

In response, the Council appointed task forces to address these two issues,  
and added a third task force, for Youth Ministry,  
recognizing that the new structure would eliminate the staff person for Youth Ministry,  
and a strategy would need to be developed to deal with that change.

These Task Forces worked hard and came back to Council with recommendations  
about how to proceed in new ways in the areas of  
Seminary Scholarships, Campus Ministry, and Youth Ministry.

## SLIDE 19 –

Stepping back from the recommendations of the Discernment Task Force,  
it is helpful to look at some numbers during this time...

## SLIDE 20 –

...from the three years of discernment,  
and the subsequent three years of implementation  
(we are in the third year of implementation now).

Membership in 2013, 15,070  
Declined in 14,042 by 2017  
(No figures for 2018 yet)

Unified budget gradually reduced from \$737,061 to \$513,142, last year  
more than reaching the goal to reduce the budget to \$525,000.

However, note the deficits that began in 2015,  
and that significantly increased in 2017 and 2018,  
to \$82,289 and \$81,159, respectively.

**Red Circle:** You may ask, how did we fall \$81,159 short in 2018?  
Gracious Dismissal settlement funds gradually went away.  
and our churches gave less to the Presbytery.

**SLIDE 21 –**

[Note sizes, percentages, and amounts]

Note that 84% of the budget is funded by 15 churches.

You can see the specific breakdown of giving by congregation in today's supplement.

**SLIDE 22 –**

If our 2019 giving to the already greatly reduced Unified Budget does not improve over our 2018 giving,

we will see a **\$102,159 deficit in 2019.**

This will need to be taken into consideration, obviously, by the 2019 assessment called for by the DTF.

**SLIDE 23 –**

Even as we continue to assess and discern what a realistic annual budget looks like, we are at the same time **blessed** with other **resources**.

Our current financial challenges make the strategic use of these resources a vital matter of our continuing discernment.

In addition to the question of the annual Unified Budget, the numbers we are about to consider

constitute a significant focus of our question: *Where Are We Heading.*

**SLIDE 24 –**

[Walk through]

**SLIDE 25 –**

How to use \$2.8 Million?

Now at this point, let me say again as clearly as I can.

I am NOT here to tell you “where we are headed” or how we are going to use these resources.

The matter of where we are and where we are headed

is still — and will always be — a question for us to discern prayerfully together.

But for the sake of our shared imagination, and discussion,

I'm going to throw out some ideas that have been tossed around,

one of which has already been proposed, in part, by Council at last November's meeting.

**SLIDE 26 – 30**

[Walk through... small & strong...look out at congregation...all points across life cycle...

triage...some need palliative care, some already strong, some would benefit from intervention]

### SLIDE 31 – 34

So, back to this plan to Assess our progress under the new structure that is to happen in 2019.

A group is gathering to do just that.

We are sort of informally calling it the **Target 2020 Transition Think Tank**.

Consists of folks from a variety of areas. Folks who know Foothills Presbytery.

If you want to give input to this group, look at these names. Contact someone.

### SLIDE 35 – 36

Meanwhile, Debbie Foster

has pulled together and published to us a rather remarkable list

of all the ways we are engaged in Mission in Foothills Presbytery:

Locally, Nationally, and Globally.

As we continue to discern our calling in Christ, we are not simply sitting around thinking,  
we are discerning as we serve.

God is at work among us. The Spirit is moving among us and through us.

So we have to pray as we work, and...

### SLIDE 37

...and prayerfully ask...

It is to this question that I invite your Spirit-filled imagination in 2019,  
as we continue to discern what God wants for Foothills Presbytery in the 2020's.

Thank you.

And Thanks be to God.

A little time for questions...