

GUIDELINES FOR CHURCH TRANSFORMATION

Congregational Health and Growth Team

Foothills Presbytery

April 2005

I. Theological Basis

“Do not remember the former things,
or consider the things of old.
I am about to do a new thing;
Now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?”

This quote from Isaiah 43:18-19 (NRSV) provides a clear reminder that God is constantly working in new ways in our midst. Today we find this passage comforting as we hear God calling the church to move beyond our boundaries, not to rest on past successes or dwell on past failures, but to be constantly challenged in mission to the world around us. Our Presbyterian form of government with its emphasis on order also calls us to live on the edge, admonishing the faithful “to a new openness to the presence of God in the church and in the world, to a new openness to its own membership, by affirming itself as a community of diversity, to a new openness to the possibilities and perils of its institutional forms in order to ensure the faithfulness and usefulness of these forms to God’s activity in the world” (G-3.0401 a.-c.) and “to undertake this mission even at the risk of losing its life, trusting in God alone as the author and giver of life” (G-3.0400). New things are happening around congregations in Foothills Presbytery as the population grows and shifts. Great opportunity awaits some of our congregations.

II. Definition

Congregational Transformation is a team effort among the pastor, the Congregation, and at times the Presbytery to redirect a congregation’s ministry in light of significant changes among its membership, in the community to be served, or both. It is a planned intervention in the congregation to stimulate the dynamics needed to enable the congregation to reorient its ministry. (adapted from the PCUSA booklet, *Living the Vision for Congregational Transformation*).

III. Process

The Congregational Health and Growth (CH&G) Team will follow the process outlined below for supporting congregational transformation in Foothills Presbytery.

The Team will conduct an annual review of all congregations in the Presbytery to identify those that are ripe for transformation and those that are almost ripe. The review team will include members of the CH&G Team with a liaison from the Committee on Ministry (COM).

After initially identifying potential congregations, the CH&G Team will enter a period of due diligence in which they verify the criteria for each congregation by meeting with the session, attending worship, checking demographics and congregational growth and giving trends, and so forth.

If due diligence verifies that this is indeed a potential transforming congregation, the CH&G Team will draft and sign a five-year covenant in conjunction with members of the Session. The covenant will detail expectations of the congregation and of the Presbytery. Elements that might be included in a covenant are included in Appendix B.

The Session will choose two or three elders to serve on the CH&G Team during the period of the Covenant to give guidance to the transformation process. The CH&G Team with the Session will conduct an intense study (exegesis) of the cultural context of the congregation to gain insights into the appropriate mission, ministry and worship of the transforming congregation.

The CH&G Team will conduct training sessions in church transformation with the congregation. The Team may bring in consultants to assist with this. Training may include sessions in basic church transformation thought supplied by the PC(USA), training in missional congregational thought, in Natural Church Development, keys to an effective church, etc., including emerging transformational thought.

The CH&G Team will assist the congregation's Pulpit Nominating Committee (PNC) in drafting a Church Information Form (CIF).

With the approval of the CH&G Team, the Committee on Ministry will send names of acceptable designated transformation pastors to the church's Pulpit Nominating Committee for them to nominate a pastor from among those names. The CH&G Team will have one or two liaison persons on the PNC. The pastor will be a designated pastor. The PNC will make it clear to the pastor the opportunities and expectations of his role, including accountability to the CH&G Team. The Team will provide opportunities for training the transformation pastor as needed. A designated pastor is one called to serve for a definite period of at least two and no more than four years. He or she may be elected pastor following certain procedures (see Book of Order G-14.0501e).

The CH&G Team will review monthly, or more often as needed, the progress of the transforming congregation. The Team will give full support and guidance to the transforming pastor and congregation in this effort.

IV. Financing:

Congregational transformation will be financed through Unified Funds, the Revolving Loan Fund (to be called the Congregational Transformation Fund), and proceeds from the sale of closed churches. In general, Unified Funds will be used for initial surveys and ground work, the Revolving Loan Fund (to be called the Congregational Transformation Fund) will be used as grants or loans, for transformation program support including pastor's compensation, and funds from the sale of closed churches will be used for land and buildings. These funds may be used interchangeably when necessary.

V. Models:

Models for transformation will include, but not be limited to, the following: designated pastor, designated pastor and expanded staff, designated pastor and new/renovated building, designated pastor and new location, partnership with stronger church, cluster, multiple-church parish, satellite, nesting, mission host, or other creative model.

Appendix A

Criteria for Transforming Churches

1. Growing area demographics;
2. Empty pulpit;
3. Adequate congregational finances;
4. Adequate congregational energy level;
5. Willingness to covenant with Presbytery for five years;
6. Willingness to have designated pastor with Congregational Health & Growth helping choose the person;
7. Openness to invite and receive new people and to embrace their leadership; this may include people of varying social-economic levels;
8. Willingness to take training in church transformation;
9. Willingness to explore new styles of worship and ministry;
10. Willingness to develop a 5-year ministry plan which includes ministry goals, objectives, and a specific action plan for an accomplishment of the goals;
11. Willingness to consider relocation.

Appendix B

Elements of Covenants with Congregations & Designated Pastors

The Session/Congregation:

Has energy and initiative for transformation;
Agrees to pray for and support the transformation process;
Agrees to enter into a five-year covenant with Presbytery;
Agrees to develop a five-year ministry plan including mission goals and objectives and a specific plan and time-line for accomplishing these goals;
Agrees to be open to change and to explore new styles of worship and ministry appropriate to reaching persons in the community;
Agrees to receive new members and have new leadership from them;
Agrees to allowing members of the CH&G Team to serve as liaison with them on the Pulpit Nominating Committee and to calling a designated pastor (G-14.0501e);
If appropriate and feasible, the congregation agrees to work with Presbytery to plan relocation to a new site;
Agrees to consider different models of pastoral leadership, if needed, such as tent making, Commissioned Lay Pastor, part-time pastor, parish, cluster groups, etc.;
Agrees to seek loans or grants as required for completion of the transformation;
Agrees to seek to become self-supporting within a specific number of years as agreed upon with the CH&G Team;

The Designated Pastor:

Agrees to be accountable to the CH&G Team and the Session/Congregation.

The Congregational Health and Growth Team:

Agrees to pray for and support the transformation process;
Agrees to work in partnership with the Congregation and enter into a five-year covenant with them;
Agrees to receive as liaison members of the Session on the CH&G Team;
Agrees to fund the transformation effort with a specific dollar commitment, with Presbytery approval;
Agrees to provide transformation training for congregation, session and pastor;
Agrees to support and guide the transformation pastor and congregation;
Agrees to guarantee PC(USA) or commercial loans up to \$400,000 as the Presbytery finances allow, with Presbytery approval;
Identify funds to use in supporting specific transformation efforts.