

**Program work at the Conference level – from David Allen, Conference Executive Secretary**

Background: When the Conference and presbyteries were restructured in 2009, one of the principles was that the Conference would focus on administrative work with a small staff, and presbyteries would focus on program, personnel, property and public witness. Conference paid for a staff complement in each presbytery of a full-time administrative staff person, a half-time personnel minister, and a full-time program level staff person. The last position would focus primarily on program, property and public witness. The actual priorities within each staff position were determined by the presbytery and the Executive Secretary ensured that staff position descriptions reflected the presbyteries' wishes. Presbytery structures sometimes reflected these priorities.

Since restructuring – programming: Since 2009...

1. Presbytery program and public witness work: All presbyteries have struggled to do effective program and public witness work. Sometimes there were great successes, and in other cases there has been lack of activity and/or disappointment as events were cancelled because of lack of numbers. One presbytery added staff time to do youth work, another hired staff to focus on social justice. Despite good intentions that presbytery events would be open to others throughout the Conference, practice has shown that most of the work has happened in presbytery silos. At the present time, three presbyteries are considering hiring a social justice person who would cover social justice work throughout the entire Conference by being open to participation by people from the presbytery which is not involved formally. I am sensing a greater desire to explore how we can do things together rather than separately.
2. Conference program work: The Conference responded to at least three calls for action – a focus on right relations and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, support for refugee settlement work, and responding to an invitation for partnership from the Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea. These decisions were all made intentionally and on an *ad hoc* basis. Conference had the resources and the willingness to do work that went beyond the bounds of individual presbyteries. In all three cases, Conference was responding to calls to action through the General Council (right relations and denominational partnerships) and/or the wider society (refugees) and/or activity already involving communities of faith (refugees).

Recommendation:

1. that the Executive acknowledge that from time to time it will decide intentionally to do program work in specific areas;

2. in 2017 and 2018 Conference continue to made *ad hoc* decisions through its Executive regarding Conference involvement in program and social justice work based on the following:
  - a. there will be no overlap between work done by Conference and work being done currently in presbyteries;
  - b. presbyteries will be consulted before any plan is implemented;
  - c. Conference will be guided by General Council calls to action or priorities that would benefit from a broader level of activity and/or where presbyteries have not identified these as presbytery priorities.
  
3. If the remit on the three-council model is defeated and Conference and presbyteries continue to exist, Conference engage in a formal review of the Conference/presbytery structure to identify areas where program and public witness work would best be done.