

# Flat. Flexible. Faithful.

**Missional Presbyteries in a  
Changing World**

**A Report from the Mid-Council  
Commission**

# The Big Question

- **“How are governing bodies best organized to be responsive both to the Spirit of Christ and the changing opportunities for discipleship?”**

We listened...

**And heard considerable yearning in every layer of the church's life, from ordained officers to frustrated folk in the pews, to see these deeply shared biblical convictions flourish once again:**

# Yearnings:

- **To discover new ways of being church in a post-Christendom context.**
- **To engage in evangelism that sees people come to faith and be baptized as followers of Jesus Christ.**
- **To experience more relational and less regulatory ways of being connectional.**
- **To focus on mission to the world not denominational fights.**
- **To birth new congregations and new worshipping communities.**

## MCC understanding

**We believe this is the voice of the Spirit:**  
**if every structure of our church is committed to the health and vitality of local congregations as the locus of God's mission in the world, then we will discover the practices will lead to revitalization.**

## MCC Resolve

**Instead of affirming structures that only protect us from the dysfunction of a few, we offer a proposal for the those who are willing to work together to draw upon the historic values of our past and faithfully adapt them to a changing world.**

So... how do we organize for:

- **“Changing Opportunities for Discipleship”?**
- **“Responsiveness to the Spirit”?**

***Stimulating creative collaboration within and among presbyteries to strengthen the vitality of missional congregations in a post-Christendom world.***



## **“Post-Christendom World”**

- The church is no longer in the center of culture and power. The ‘world’ is right around us. Our neighborhood is our mission field.**
- Our old structures need to become more ‘missionary’ less ‘institutional’.**

# “Missional Congregations”

- **Missional congregations: the central organizing principle is personal and communal participation in the mission of God in Jesus Christ to redeem and heal all of creation.**
- **A Missional PC(USA): every structure beyond the congregation exists so that congregations can fulfill their mission.**

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- **Councils of the church exist to help congregations and the church as a whole to be more faithful participants in the mission of Christ.**

# MCC Recommendations

- **Flat: Repurposing Synods**
- **Flexible: Provisional Presbyteries**
- **Faithful: Reflective Experiments**
  
- **Faithful: OGA & GAMC support**
- **Faithful: Racial/Ethnic commitment**

## Flat: Repurposing Synods

- **Become Multi-Presbytery Partnerships supporting missional congregations**
- **“Ecclesiastical powers” given to regional commissions.**
- **Synod PJs move to a new ‘appellate’ structure.**
- **To “Synod together” becomes a choice (no Per-Capita)**

## Flexible: Provisional Presbyteries

- **Ten congregations can become a new presbytery in the presence of a clear missional purpose.**
- **Contiguous geography is no longer the sole structure.**
- **A congregation could join a different presbytery.**

## Faithful: Reflective Experimentation

- **A congregation can join a different presbytery (geographic or provisional)**
- **If provisional, congregation maintains 'affiliate' relationship with geographic presbytery.**
- **Geographic presbyteries must be consulted for dismissal of property to another Reformed Body.**
- **Provisions Expire in 2021 if not renewed by GA.**

Faithful: OGA & GAMC support

**Establish a task force to evaluate  
OGA and GAMC in the context of  
their support of congregations**



Faithful: Racial/Ethnic commitment

**Establish a task force to evaluate our racial/ethnic behavior/performance**

# What does this mean?

- **One less “ecclesiastical” level**
- **Presbyteries** (within a larger region) **have flexibility to re-organize in any way** (including non-geographically) **that will further congregational mission on a provisional basis** (Until 2021)

What does this do?

- **Re-engages the pew with the presbyteries.**
- **Gives authority and power to presbyteries to experiment.**
- **Insures accountability and connection.**

# Why do this?

## **Genuine “adaptive change”**

- Gives the work back to the people closest to the problems. (Contextual. Local.)
- Creates collaboration and connection for missional congregations.
- Deals with the underlying issues. (Trust.)
- Keeps core values (Presbyteries rule! Congregations are mission outposts.)
- Focuses our effort on the place we need real change: Congregations.

# Why do this?

## **Focuses our structures on serving congregations**

- Congregations in “covenant community” (Not congregationalism!)
- Congregations are ‘locus’ of mission
- Gives us a mechanism for focusing on easily creating new worshipping communities

Why do this?

**It's focused on health, not dysfunction.**

- *more* congregational engagement
- *more* personal responsibility-taking
- *more* passionate convictions
- *more* freedom and creativity within safe, clear shared boundaries.

# Why do this?

## **Engages the “Emerging” Generation in Creative Collaboration.**

- Gives power and authority to those who are willing to be collaborative and creative.
- Gives flexibility and freedom to those who are willing to stay connected and in covenant.
- Gives opportunities for the “Inventive Age”.

# Why do this?

**This is what “Reformed and always reforming” looks like in a changing culture.**

- Affirms the heart of our ecclesiology: Elders rule together. Churches are mutually accountable to each other.
- Adapts for the sake of the mission of Christ.
- Allows for creativity, remains connectional.
- Addresses the key problem: Trust!



# Why do this?

## **It's NOT 'top-down'.**

- Our proposals do not require change at the congregational or presbytery level, but allow flexibility, freedom, and authority to those who desire it.

# Why do this?

## **It's not just talk.**

- Not debating, but doing.
- Not “conversing” but experimenting.
- Not ‘internal discussion’ but missional action.

# What else is in the report?

- **A Tremendous Amount of Data**
  - We really listened to the church!
- **A Host of Good Models**
  - We found a lot of “Best Practices”
- **A Thorough Consideration of Context**
  - We must operate in the present and for the future

# Where can I learn more?

- <http://tinyurl.com/MCCFinal>
- <http://pcusa-oga.typepad.com/mgbcomm/>
- [tod@scpres.org](mailto:tod@scpres.org)