

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) ***on the proposed*** ***Design for Mission and Ministry***

1. Where did our ministry goals come from?

The Ministry Goals come directly from our long held Mission statement which flows from our Vision and Values, all of which have been long held in Hudson River Presbytery (HRP), and they are aligned with our Constitutional responsibility “for assisting and supporting the witness of congregations to the sovereign activity of God in the world, so that all congregations become communities of faith, hope, love, and witness” (G-3.0301). This fall we asked Councils/Sessions to give feedback not only of ideas for the ministry goals but whether or not these particular goals are on target. All those congregations that gave feedback were in agreement with the proposed Ministry Goals and many expressed strong support for their implementation.

2. What is HRP’s mission?

As a resurrection people, Hudson River Presbytery
engages people's passions;
builds partnerships;
nurtures strong leadership;
and creates healthy, vital communities of faith; all to the glory of God.

3. What are the proposed goals?

- **PARTNERSHIPS:** Encourage and support the creation of **partnerships** by two or more congregations around people’s passion and energy within the life of our presbytery, our congregations and the larger church that furthers the cause of Christ in the world.
- **LEADERSHIP:** Provide initiatives, events, resources, etc. that create, grow, empower and nurture **strong, transformative leadership** for the purpose of leading resurrection people and healthy, vital communities of faith.
- **HEALTHY, VITAL COMMUNITIES OF FAITH:** Provide initiatives, events, resources, etc. that create, grow, empower and nurture **healthy, vital communities of faith** for the work of mission in a changing world.

4. Why do we need to name our ministry goals?

Every thriving organization needs to have goals that sets mission into action, moving the organization closer to its vision. The three proposed goals provide focus on the important and essential work of Hudson River Presbytery. These goals can be measured and the results evaluated as to whether or not we are being faithful and effective in our ministry and mission.

5. Why do we need a new design/structure?

The evaluation of the current structure, conducted by the presbytery back in April, informed us, among other things, that the current structure is not understood, not intuitive, not always working well and not sustainable as it requires well over 100 positions to be filled by the Committee on Representation and Nomination (CORN). We believe this new design addresses those concerns.

More importantly, the proposed Design for Mission and Ministry helps us to align and focus our available resources toward our ministry goals.

It was also determined through the evaluation that a piece needed to strengthen our presbytery is an entity empowered to focus available resources of the presbytery toward approved ministry goals, providing support, guidance and accountability in that process.

6. We used to have a council and did away with it. Why bring it back?

We are not bringing back the council from the past. That council had the chair of every committee sitting on the council, thus often having our leaders with two monthly meetings for their presbytery service, in addition to the work they do for their committee outside of those meetings. That council was somewhat cumbersome and all encompassing. The council in the proposed design is focused on the ministry goals, aligning HRP resources with those goals while burdening fewer people who are already very involved in the presbytery.

7. Why not have all the committees go through the council to get to the presbytery?

One of the things heard frequently during the evaluation was that a council be formed in such a way as to not over-burden leaders who are already giving a large amount of time to HRP. Given that, the council's purpose is to help the presbytery focus on our specific goals. Also, the design continues to give our committees that have Constitutional responsibilities direct and easy access to the presbytery without an extra step.

8. Who is on the Council?

The Council will consist of the no less than nine (9) Voting Members and no more than twelve (12):

- Chairs of BFP, Grants and Personnel (or the chair's year-long designee); (As currently done, the chairs of committees would be nominated by CORN and elected by the presbytery.)
- Moderator, Moderator-elect & immediate Past Moderator of Presbytery (As currently done, these persons would be nominated by the CORN and elected by the presbytery.)
- At least three (3), but not more than six (6) at-large (3 year staggered terms) (These persons would be nominated by the CORN and elected by the presbytery.)

Great effort will be made to achieve diversity: RE's vs. TE's; gender; racial/ethnic; LBGTQ; under 40; church size; regions; etc.)

The General Presbyter will moderate and have no vote.

9. Why do we have a council of only nine people?

We do not think a large council is needed, but one that has enough leaders to effectively carrying out its presbytery-approved responsibilities. It will be important to have strong, effective and involved leaders who represent the diversity within HRP serving on the council. In order to comply with the current Constitution which states that committees/entities of a council above a session have equal or more Ruling Elders serving, we must say that the council will be at least 9 and no more than 12. This allows for leeway to balance out the numbers of REs and TEs in years when committee chairs and presbytery moderators, moderator-elect and the immediate past moderator, are TEs.

10. If the council provides support and alignment for our ministry goals, two of which are about healthy, vital communities of faith and strong leadership, why isn't Commission on Ministry (COM) and Committee on Preparation for Ministry (CPM) connected directly to the council?

Sharing strategies will be developed to allow for easy sharing of important and relevant information from both COM and CPM to the two ministry teams. Some of those who serve on COM and CPM could certainly choose to be involved in developing and implementing a project or event of one of the ministry teams. However, those who serve and lead these committees have a significant amount of work. As indicated earlier, it is an intention of the new design to not unnecessarily over-burden leaders with additional required meetings. Also, as stated previously, we want the council to be focused on the ministry goals and not the detailed work of COM and CPM who do a very good job with their respective responsibilities.

11. Why is the General Presbyter moderating the council?

This will provide necessary and helpful guidance and continuity for the ministry of the council.

12. What are the basic responsibilities of the Council?

- Initiate strategic Vision and Mission planning, recommend goals for HRP action, implement decisions, oversee results and provide accountability to and for HRP.
- In order to coordinate, align and focus HRP resources toward our approved Mission and Ministry Goals, provide BFP, Grants Committee and Personnel support and direction by, among other things, acting upon BFP's proposed budget to HRP and approving Grants Committee recommendations and Personnel's proposed staff changes.
- Encourage and help coordinate HRP communication.
- Finalize the Presbytery meeting agenda and oversee worship planning.
- Interface with Synod, General Assembly and our ecumenical partners.

13. Isn't this design giving a lot of power to the council?

It is believed that the council is being given an appropriate amount of responsibility to provide guidance, accountability and counsel to the Budget, Finance and Property (BFP), Grants and Personnel committees. Both BFP and Personnel have strongly requested a council to provide them guidance, accountability and counsel as well as the bigger picture of the mission and ministry of HRP. Currently, each of these committees has significant authority over many important matters without anyone to consult or provide counsel except the presbytery as a whole. They have done a good job, but they request support and guidance in their work.

Certain significant responsibilities such as approving the presbytery budget will still be done by the presbytery. Also, the committees that carry out our HRP's Constitutional responsibilities such as COM, CPM, CORN and Faith and Order will continue go directly to the presbytery and not through the Council.

Finally, the presbytery will elect the members of the Council and most will be at-large. Only three, the chairs of BFP, Grants and Personnel or their designee, are not yet even they are elected by the presbytery.

14. How often will the Council meet?

Ordinarily monthly and we hope and expect that it will meet at times other than during a weekday or meet virtually, allowing for more diversity and for individuals with daytime jobs to serve.

15. Will the Vibrant Communities of Faith and Leadership Empowerment ministry teams be populated by CORN?

No. These teams will have recognized members, but they will not come through the ordinary nomination process. We envision a more welcoming and inviting process, incorporating open space technology, which will allow for new and diverse leadership to be a part of a ministry team for a year, maybe just for a particular project or event for which they have interest and passion in seeing accomplished. This allows people to be involved who cannot or choose not to accept a long-term, three year commitment. We believe this will provide the opportunity for us to recognize and welcome new leadership within HRP. Thus, with our two ministry teams, the design moves away from old representation categories such as regions, allowing for new and diverse voices and ideas for times such as these.

The at-large members of the Council will provide facilitation and leadership for the ministry teams.

16. Will the council direct the work of the ministry teams, providing the ideas for working the goals?

No. The vision of this design is that the ideas for the initiatives, events, resources, etc. will come from the ministry teams themselves and not from the council. A local congregation will also be able to provide and generate ideas at any time; indeed, the Transition Team has already sought and received many ideas from congregational councils/sessions this past fall. The COM and CPM will always have direct access and some of their members may likely be involved in the work of the two ministry teams. The council will provide a prioritization of limited resources as well as support and accountability for implementation.

17. Is the Advocacy, Education and Networks (AENT), Emerging and Imagining teams being eliminated?

Yes, if the new design is adopted, these teams would be eliminated. There are members of the Transition Team who have or currently do serve on these teams. These teams were often given large tasks beyond anyone's ability to accomplish and yet was often expected to do it all on their own. At no fault of their own, their responsibilities were not well defined, the expectations upon them not communicated well or at all, and they did not always have the support they needed and deserved nor did they receive the guidance to prioritize their work for the good of the whole. Those current and past members of these teams deserve our thanks and appreciation for serving faithfully!

18. If the AENT, Emerging and Imagining teams are being eliminated, will their work continue?

Absolutely! The essential and important work of these teams will continue in new ways through the partnerships and ministry teams.

19. Why isn't there an "advocacy" ministry team in the proposed design when HRP has been historically a presbytery known for advocacy?

Advocacy is important to HRP and has been a big part of our identity as a presbytery and it is hoped that this will continue. We propose a way that will be more sustainable, flexible and freeing... a way of being HRP that will focus on activity that local communities of faith cannot do alone but can do together with each other, HRP and our ecumenical partners. The proposed design frees up HRP to potentially have more advocacy done in areas where there are passion and partners. Previously, a team of six was responsible for a great deal of our advocacy. We think that important work needs to be done by more... more congregations, leaders and members of our congregations.

There is much advocacy to do and all of it is important. We want to be guided by our value of passion that focuses our efforts without choosing which efforts or issues are more important than others.

20. What is a partnership?

A partnership is where two or more congregations and leaders come together around their passion for a particular issue or ministry work. We currently have several active and supported partnerships within HRP: Presbyterian Prison Partnership, Peru Partnership, Rural Migrant Ministry, Educational Ministries, HR Green, PresbyBuild and one is being formed around Racism. There could be other examples such as confirmation, older adult ministry, new worship styles, international mission trips, youth ministry, gun control, immigration, the sanctuary movement and refugees. A partnership could be geographical in nature such as a partnership of all Orange County congregations or based on the identity of the congregation such as racial-ethnic or those in a yoked ministry.

HRP, through the Council, will encourage the formation of partnerships and provide support and access to communication resources of HRP. One of the at-large members of the Council will be a liaison with the partnerships, not necessarily attending or being a part of the partnership's work, but providing a direct link to the Council.

21. What if there's no passion for a partnership around a particular issue or work?

Then there will be no partnership around that particular issue or work.

22. What if the passion of an established partnership dissipates, what will happen?

That partnership will end. Naturally, things change, passions change, and new crises and challenges appear that generate passion, requiring a faithful response. Each generation has its own work and challenges, bringing new passions for new partnerships.

23. Is it true that the partnerships will not get any money?

No. There could be money available in a number of ways to partnerships. The Vibrant Communities of Faith and the Leadership Empowerment teams will be given money for initiatives, events, resources they develop and a partnership could very easily propose an initiative or event to one of those teams. For

example, a partnership on youth ministry or confirmation could propose to either of the teams a presbytery-wide event which the team supports and the council funds, because that activity will help achieve a healthy, vital community of faith or strong leadership. Or a partnership on eliminating racism could propose an event or resource that would clearly help HRP have healthier congregations and stronger leadership to address this important crisis in our communities and nation.

Again, it is expected that volunteers will come from the congregations that form the partnership as well as others throughout HRP. Along with those volunteers, congregations can provide financial support for any and all partnerships to which they belong.

Partnerships would also be eligible for grants from the Grants Committee.

24. Shouldn't anti-racism work be bigger than one of those small circles?

Yes. It is integral to the work we do to make congregations healthier and empower our leaders. Our anti-racism work must permeate all that we do as a presbytery and should not be relegated to any particular team. As a partnership within and throughout the presbytery and in coordination with the ministry teams, it is freer to work and flow both inside and outside HRP as the partnership is led.

25. Why is the Commission Ruling Elder Committee merging with CPM?

In part, they requested it. Though not exactly the same, their work is very similar... preparing persons for pastoral leadership. Merging these two committees into one allows for the pooling of their respective resources and skills; they are stronger together.

26. Why are the Grants Council, Legacy Team and Challenge to Change Team being merged into the Grants Committee?

The reasons are similar to what was stated above. Though not exactly the same, the work of these various groups is very similar... overseeing the application process for and approving grants from various HRP funds. Merging them not only pools respective resources and skills, it provides only one place a congregation, partnership or leader needs to go to apply for a grant. Further, by merging these three groups into one Grants Committee and connecting it with the Council, the Grants Committee will be more efficient in their work and more easily award grants based on the ministry goals and direction of HRP.

27. Is this design set in stone? Can it be tweaked in the future and might the goals change?

This is a Design for Mission and Ministry and could be altered. The Transition Team urges HRP to adopt the design as is, allowing it to be implemented and lived into. In the future, having achieved one of the ministry goals successfully, the council may propose a different or additional ministry goal.

28. Do we know for sure that this new Design for Mission and Ministry will be beneficial and generative for our communities of faith and leaders, assisting us in fulfilling our responsibilities not only found in the Book of Order but also helping us to be faithful servants and stewards?

We believe so, but we do not know for sure. Yet, the Transition Team knows this proposal addresses the concerns and challenges with our current structure. The proposed design provides the structure needed to achieve our goals, yet is flexible enough that it should guide us well into the future. We believe this Design for Mission and Ministry has a strong potential of doing the generative work needed to benefit all our congregations and leaders and the realm of God. It will allow us to focus our energy and resources on that which is most important for us as a presbytery. Many presbyteries, both in and beyond our Synod, are very interested in this design proposal as they have many of the same challenges and are exploring new ways of being presbytery that focuses on life giving ministry for their congregations and leaders.

We believe this Design for Mission and Ministry is a good way forward for times such as these. We hope the presbytery adopts it.

Your HRP Transition Team:

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