



STATED MEETING OF ALBANY PRESBYTERY

MEETING PACKET

Saturday, January 28, 2012

Registration and Fellowship begin at 8:30am

Call to Worship and Business Meeting begin at 9:30am

Meal Tickets for lunch are \$6 per person

Please make checks payable to: Westminster Presbyterian Church

Lunch will be served at 12:00pm

Presbyters with dietary restrictions are invited
to bring their own lunch

Hosted by Westminster Presbyterian Church

85 Chestnut Street, Albany, NY 12210

Telephone: 436-8544

website: www.wpcalbany.org

Disabled Access:



- Handicapped parking spaces near Chestnut Street & State Street
- Wheelchair accessible – ramp into the building
- Wheelchair space among the pews
- Handicapped accessible restroom
- Hearing assistance devices

Parking:

We have our own parking lot at 85 Chestnut St. just before the church building. The State Street entrance is the main entrance and opens directly into the back of the sanctuary. Offices are best accessed through the 85 Chestnut St. door, especially during the week. To access the sanctuary from this entrance, go up the stairs one level and follow the signs for the sanctuary.

CHILD CARE is provided without cost to you. It is, however, essential that you make a reservation for your child. Please call the Westminster Church office at 518-436-8544 or email them at: info@wpcalbany.org no later than Friday, January 20th, giving number of children, ages and any special needs. If your plans change after that date, please call to cancel the reservation or to ask if space is available. In the interest of the health of all children and their families who are brought for childcare during Presbytery meetings, please do not bring your child if he or she is showing signs of illness.

THE PRESBYTERY OF ALBANY Stated Meeting – January 28, 2012
Presbytery Telephone 273-4991
Westminster Presbyterian Church, Albany – Church Telephone 436-8544

DOCKET

Notes: New Business must be presented in writing to the Moderator prior to the meal.
Standing Rules & Basic Parliamentary Procedures are available at the Clerk's desk.

8:30 a.m. Gathering and Registration

We Gather in God's Name

9:30 a.m. **We Worship God Together** – Call to Worship, Opening Hymn and Prayer

9:40 a.m. Call to Order – Paul Randall, Moderator
Announcements
Greetings from Host Church – Jim Reisner

We Present our Offerings of Mission and Ministry

Report of the Stated Clerk [pp. 4-5] Dan Rogers
Compile Roll, Seat Corresponding Members, Welcome First Time Attenders
Approval of Meeting Docket as distributed
Approval of Minutes of November 12, 2011, stated meeting as distributed
Act on Consent Agenda – Consent items found in the following reports:
Committee on Ministry [pp.7-9]; and Council [pp.19-20].

10:00 a.m. Peacemaking Task Force Report – Statement of Support for the Occupy Movement
(See Council Report. Presentation only in morning; action to be taken in the afternoon.)

10:15 a.m. Committee on Ministry Report – Part 1 - Tom Gregg [pp.6-11]

Act on Contract for the Rev. Paul Ferenczy (RCA) to serve as Interim Pastor and
Moderator at Johnstown and to become a Temporary Member of Presbytery

Overture to General Assembly to approve the Plan of Union of the Bethel Peniel
Presbyterian Church and the Granville United Methodist Church.

Cohoes Per Capita
Gloversville Administrative Commission
Terms of Call SECA Adjustment

10:30 a.m. [Order of the Day] Joint Working Group Budget Presentation – David Moore

10:50 a.m. "Flipping the Presbytery" Task Force presentation

Open Space Discussions/Workshops:
Bible Study - Gen. 1:1-2:4a - Priestly Writer, Darwin, Hubble, Dawkins,
McKibben, Global Warming – led by Earl Johnson and Larry Deyss

Response to Budget Presentation by Joint Working Group

Occupy Movement Resolution Discussion

Other Open Space discussion topics to be proposed by the body.

- 12:00 p.m. **We Share God’s Good Gifts – Lunch**
- We Continue our Offerings of Mission and Ministry**
- 1:00 p.m. **We Worship God Together**
 Hymn
 Scripture and Sermon – Kathy Gorman-Coombs
 Memorial moment for Leif Erickson
 Memorial moment for William Rambo
 Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper – Jim Reisner and Frances Wattman Rosenau
 Necrology Report
- 2:00 p.m. Speak Out (Opportunity to express views in 1 minute or less)
- 2:15 p.m. [Order of the Day] Nominating Committee Report – Diane Calvanese
 Election of GA Commissioners and YAAD [pp.16-18]
 Other committee elections
- 2:30 p.m. Presentation on Fellowship of Presbyterians – Harry Heintz
- 2:40 p.m. Recognition of Kirianne Riehl’s service as Moderator – Cass Shaw
- 2:45 p.m. General Presbyter’s Report - Cass Shaw
- 2:55 p.m. Committee on Ministry Report – Part 2
 Act on unfinished business from COM Report – Part 1
- 3:15 p.m. Council Report - Lois Hessberg [pp.19-20]
 Standing Rules Task Force
 Act on recommendations from Mission Review Committee
 Act on election to Nominating Committee
 Act on change in date and time of April Stated Meeting
 Act on recommendations from Peacemaking Task Force
- 3:25 p.m. [Order of the Day] Act on proposed Overtures to General Assembly
- On Issuing an Authoritative Interpretation of G-2.0402 and G-3.0306 to Clarify the Appropriateness of Questions to Officers-elect submitted by Bethel Peniel PC
- On Issuing an Authoritative Interpretation of W-4.9000 to Ensure Pastoral Discretion submitted by Westminster PC, Albany, and United Church of Greenwich
- 3:50 p.m. Joint CLP/CPM Recommendation concerning Commissioned Ruling Elders – second reading and action.
- 3:55 p.m. Unfinished Business / New Business / Miscellaneous Business
- 4:00 p.m. **We Go Out in Christ’s Name and Adjourn as the Church Sent Into the World**

Committee on Ministry Report – Meeting Packet for January 28, 2012

The following recommendations are presented as part of the Consent Agenda for Presbytery action:

1. Recommends that Presbytery act to approve the request from the congregation of the Malta Presbyterian Church for a waiver as provided by G-14.0226 in the former Book of Order to allow Ruling Elder Sandra Hann to be nominated to serve another 3-year term on the session. Rationale: Sandra is completing six continuous years of service on the session, but due to the small size of the congregation, the church's nominating committee was unable to find another candidate for the position. Sandra brings much needed experience to the session.
2. Recommends that Presbytery act to approve the request from the congregation of the Welsh Presbyterian Church in Poultney, VT, for a waiver as provided by G-14.0226 in the former Book of Order to allow Ruling Elder Kit Mead to be nominated to serve another 3-year term on the session. Rationale: Kit is completing six continuous years of service on the session, but due to the small size of the congregation, the church's nominating committee was unable to find another candidate for the position. Kit brings much needed experience to the session.
3. Recommends that Presbytery act to approve the appointment of Kate Kotfila to serve as Moderator of the United Presbyterian Church of Shushan effective January 1, 2012.
4. Recommends that Presbytery act to approve the extension of Rich Patterson's appointment to serve as Moderator of the First Presbyterian Church of Hudson until further notice.

The following recommendation is presented for Presbytery discussion and action:

Subsequent to the preparation of the Pre-Meeting Packet, Tom Gregg, Cass Shaw, and Don Stake had an additional consultation with the session of the First Presbyterian Church of Gloversville. As a result of that consultation, COM ACTED to substitute the following motion for the motion originally included in its Recommendation #4 found on page 10 of the Pre-Meeting Packet : **"COM recommends that the Moderator of Presbytery appoint an Administrative Commission, as soon as practical after the Jan 28, 2012, Presbytery meeting to exercise administrative oversight of the session of the First Presbyterian Church of Gloversville during the process of graceful dissolution of the congregation with the final worship service to be on June 3, 2012."**

LEIF EDWARD ERICKSON

The Rev. Leif Erickson, a member of Albany Presbytery since 1975 died at his home in Millbrook, NY, on January 6, 2012, after a difficult battle with cancer. Leif served as stated supply at several Albany Presbytery churches in Columbia, Greene, and Rensselaer Counties including the First Presbyterian Church in Hudson. He also provided pulpit supply and served a moderator at a number of churches in Albany Presbytery. Most recently he served as pastor of the Ancramdale Presbyterian Church in Hudson River Presbytery.

Leif was a vocational rehabilitation counselor for the NYS Department of Education working with alcohol and substance abuse and physically and mentally challenged clients for 20 years. Leif was also a specialized treatment foster parent and cared for more than 60 emotionally disturbed children over the years through the Parsons Child and Family Service in Albany. Leif was active in the Hudson Interfaith Council and taught philosophy, psychology, and religion at Empire State College, Hudson Valley Community College, and Columbia-Greene Community College.

Leif served on a variety of committees and task forces for Albany Presbytery including the Care and Oversight Committee, the Mission Development and Interpretation Committee, the Committee on Ministry and the Personnel Committee.

Leif is survived by his wife, Linda Link Greer and sons Jon and Karl from a previous marriage.

WILLIAM HUMPHREY RAMBO

The Rev. William "Bill" Rambo, honorably retired member of Albany Presbytery since 2004 died suddenly at his home in Castleton, VT, on January 9, 2012. After serving as a Church of the Nazarene chaplain in the US Army from 1963-1969, Bill became a minister in the Presbyterian Church of the United States of America and served churches in New York, Nebraska, and Michigan. He also served as moderator of the Presbytery of Susquehanna Valley and the Presbytery of Utica. He retired from active ministry in 2001, but continued to preach occasionally at area churches. He transferred his membership from Donegal Presbytery to Albany Presbytery in 2004 when he moved to Castleton with his wife.

After moving to Vermont, Bill volunteered at Rutland's Community Cupboard and served on the board of the Southwestern Vermont Council of Aging.

Bill is survived by his wife, the Rev. Susan E. Rambo, also a member of Albany Presbytery; three sons and a daughter from a previous marriage; a stepdaughter; six grandchildren, and four great-grandchildren.

Open Space Reports

At the November Presbytery meeting six groups met to discuss various topics proposed by presbyters. Those who convened the groups were asked to provide a brief report on what had been discussed and whether or not they wanted to continue their discussion at the January Presbytery meeting. Only one of the conveners expressed a desire to convene another Open Space time on their topic, but any presbyter is welcome to do so if you believe the topic merits further exploration or action. Below are the reports from each of the groups.

Culture Change - Elizabeth Shen O'Connor, convener

The talk was slightly different than the originally proposed topic (culture change). The conversation focused on the need for "socializing" new members or delegates of Presbytery. Often it takes a while for someone to become acclimated to the "process" (what we do and how we do it) of Presbytery and even the "language" (acronyms and often used phrases unfamiliar to people just coming in). One suggestion put out there was to have "mentors" - people who would walk alongside new members or delegates during meetings to be available to answer questions, etc. The discussion even progressed to how we could then help congregations understand what happens at Presbytery and how it has impact on the day-to-day life of church.

There was a lot of encouragement for people to understand Presbytery as a resource - a place to bring problems or issues and brainstorm ways forward. It helps to know the culture before you can take stock and evaluate it. For those who have been in the Presbytery for a number of years, they (I would imagine) have a good sense of the dynamic. For those of us who are new, it's hard to define it right off the bat. I think it might be helpful to have a time/space set aside for newer commissioners/delegates to get together and even simply ask questions of some longer term delegates/commissioners. I was very enlightened by some of the words spoken by a member of the Flipping the Presbytery meeting who spoke of her experiences early on and how the atmosphere has changed for the positive in recent years. It helped give me some perspective. I tend to like to take people/things as they come to me, but history can be enlightening, especially if we are talking about changing the present culture.

Disaster Relief - Leslie Foltz-Morrison, convener

At the November 2011 Presbytery Meeting two people gathered to discuss Disaster Relief. We noted that in the midst of tending to the recovery needs of families and individuals in the flooded communities, as a presbytery we especially want to support our churches which were affected by Hurricane Irene. To that end the Albany Presbytery Disaster Relief Task Force was formed and is open to all who are interested in being part of this effort. Our time together included prayer for the affected churches, lay leaders and pastors.

Ecumenical/Interfaith - Alexandra Lusak, convener

In my view, the presbytery's and individual congregations' working in cooperation with other denominations is increasingly important, especially in this era of major constraints on resources and energy. However, it does not appear to be at or even near the top of most presbyters' lists of priority interests. There was a limited (five or six participants), although interesting and helpful, response to the ecumenical/interfaith activities discussion. I think the Open Space group served its purpose and would not recommend a second session.

Examination Process - Tom Gregg, convener

It's hard for me to determine whether to continue with an open space discussion at this time it might be more helpful to give COM's reflections from previous examination concerns. There are questions in our reflections that would probably be more beneficial if all would be willing to answer, therefore I would be willing to lead another open space if the Council suggests to do so. I am attaching a document, that covers all relevant information at this time and believe whether or not there is another open space time for this issue, it should be included in the pre-meeting packet (note: it can be found on pages 12-14 of the January 2012 pre-meeting packet) as evidence of COM's continued work in responding to the presbytery's request for reflection on the examination at Silver Bay last year.

Occupy Wall Street - Linda O'Malley, convener

Francis Rosenau was much more directly involved in Occupy Albany though a couple of us in the group had gone to NYC to observe the process. We discussed the democratic process, the general assembly from which working groups develop then report back to the whole group, and then of course the 'human mic' to amplify voices to the larger group. Now that these have been mostly disbanded, my feeling is the subject matter of economic justice will remain an ongoing conversation with continued protest or alternative forms springing from the Occupy movement. Should we continue discussion? I'm not sure. I await some feedback from Francis. My notes recording the Biblical references of justice issues relevant to Occupy are long gone.

Shared Ministry - Rob Rose, convener

I would say there's more to talk about, and to do, but I'm not sure what a further conversation would look like. Of course that's what Open Space is about. If this is a conversation others are still interested in - or if we want to look at sharing ministry with Deacons/RE/TE - I'd be ok with re-convening the conversation

Twenty- Somethings – Mac McDonald, convener

My sense is that the group does not need to meet again, but participants would welcome implementation of their recommendations re next steps.

The first was to invite our campus pastors to present a piece at presbytery on understanding 20 Something persons, best ways to relate/connect with them, include them in the community of faith, and offer worship experiences which are relevant for them. We also recognized that many 20 Somethings are not on a campus and wondered how best to connect/relate with them, as well.

The **second recommendation** was to create a communication network among communities of faith seeking to reach/relate to 20 Somethings for the purpose of exchanging ideas and results of our initiatives. For example, several members of our group reported success at building relationships via inviting 20 Somethings to their homes for a meal. If I remember correctly, they may have even concurred that Sunday evening was a very good time to do so. There was a unanimous desire among those gathered to keep this issue before us (and Presbytery) recognizing that we have both much to learn, and much to offer.

**NECROLOGY REPORT FOR ELDERS AND DEACONS
OF ALBANY PRESBYTERY**

Churches not listed submitted no report for 2011

Albany, First

Albany, New Covenant - None

Albany, Westminster

Ballston Spa

Breakabeen - North Blenheim

Broadalbin

Brunswick

Charlton Freehold -

June Gurnett – Deacon – March 1

Margaretha Smith – Deacon/Elder – May 1

Cohoes

Corinth –

Gerry Monthony – Deacon – June 2011

James Monthony – Elder – February 2011

David Nicol – Deacon – February 2011

Delmar -

Frank Mengel – Ruling Elder – August 4

Esperance

Glens Falls Chapel

Glens Falls First -

Gloversville –

Helen Mattioni Baldwin – Deacon – September 4

Carl Bovee – Elder – November 5

Richard C. Burton – Elder – July 18

Mary E. DiMezza – Deacon – July 5

Dudley M. Ferguson – Elder – August 1

Elizabeth V. Lambdin – Elder - February 19

Greenwich – Harvey Mason – Elder – December 18

Guilderland -

Charles Button -

Marty Edwards – Elder

Shirley Friebel

John Oakley

Louise Pattison – mother of Rev. Stewart Pattison

Eleanor Schaadt

Frank Snyder

Jewett – Kenneth Finck – July 14

Lake George, Bay Road Church

Lake George, Caldwell

Lake Luzerne

Lansingburgh – Walter D. Reynolds – Deacon – April 6

Loudonville

Malta – Lois Gilbert – April 2011

Mayfield –

Carol Hanna – Elder – August 9

Muriel Kobuskie – Elder – December 6

Donald Robinson – Elder – July 29

Deborah Olson Town – Elder – October 14

Mechanicville

Menands – Jeff Blair – Elder – August 28

New Covenant – Marshall Secor – Elder – June 12

Presbyterian New England CC -

Barbara Batten – June 9

Vivian Blanchard – May 31

Loiuse Boehmke – February 23

Eulah Caine – March 3

Jean Clements – November 21

Robert Durden – April 10

Dorothy Launer – March 8

Marguerite Rassmussen – October 29

Shirl Reinhart – April 11

Mary Ann Wadsworth – August 29

Northville – Ward Smith – Elder – January 6

Putnam Station

Poultney

Rensselaer

Rensselaerville –

Barbara Cooley McNamee Dudley – Ruling Elder - December 17

Roesseville – Wallace King – Ruling Elder – October 2

Salem – Calvin Chapman – Elder/Deacon – September 26

Schaghticoke –

Nancy Halford – elder – October 5

Jack Hpwes – elder – March 3

Schenectady, Christ's Church of the Hills –

Harvey Nelson – Ruling Elder – September 3

Schenectady, State Street - John Gahan - Elder - June 29

Schenectady, Union –

Richard D. Zentmire – Ruling Elder/Deacon – September 8

Schoharie

Scotia

Shushan

Spencertown - Elizabeth Johnson (Brockie) - Deacon - March 12

Stillwater – Annetta Marie Cowin Kellogg – March 20

Tribes Hill – Robert Francisco, Sr. – Ruling Elder – June 15

Troy, First

Troy, Third -

Ernest Sherman – Deacon – December 29

Annette Simpson – Elder/Deacon – November 24

Valatie

Watervliet

West Charlton

West Hebron –

Harold McEachron – Elder – September 18

Jean Getty – Deacon – July 4

Whitehall - Bernard Brown, Elder

2011 Ghana Mission Team

c/o Westminster Presbyterian Church, 85 Chestnut Street, Albany NY 12210

phone: 518 436-8544 fax: 518 436-8599;

The Rev. Frances W. Rosenau, Associate Pastor

The Rev. James L. Reisner, Pastor



Children at school in Okushibri (outside of Tema) celebrate for US visitors. Our partners in Ghana raised money in Tema and the Albany area to start this school for 70 children who had no school within walking distance.

Ways for our sisters and brothers in Christ in Albany Presbytery to Share the Ghana Mission Team's Experiences

(For more information email: alusak@nycap.rr.com, fwrosenau@wpcalbany.org, or LWilson502@aol.com)

Mission Team members are willing to talk to groups in the Presbytery, accompanied when possible, by a church member born in Africa.

We also invite our fellow presbyters to reflect on our experiences.

- A 15-year-old returning from his first trip to Ghana said, "I couldn't believe the **joy** of people who have very little in the way of material possessions."
- Every team sent to Ghana will long remember the **hospitality** showered upon them. Wherever we went, church members always offered cold drinks and often something to eat. The PCG members we met were willing to share food with a stranger and often offer the best bed in the house to a visitor who has no place to stay.
- An adult trip member received a Christmas message from a 25-year-old Ghanaian who was been raised by a single woman, has had to live apart from his wife for economic reasons, borrows the family vehicle when he has to drive, and does not have access to running hot water. He feels he is blessed and wrote, "*Do not forget your blessings. Count your blessings and name them one by one. And it will surprise you what the Lord has done. WISHING YOU ALL A HAPPY NEW YEAR.*" Comment: The recipient has responded by doing a lot of thinking about the importance of **gratitude** as a Christian value – as articulated in the answer to Question 86 of The Heidelberg Catechism. "Because just as Christ has redeemed us with his blood he also renews us through his Holy Spirit according to his own image, so that with our whole life we may show ourselves grateful to God for (God's) goodness and that (God) may be glorified through us..."

The 14 members of the 2011 Ghana travel team sponsored by Westminster Presbyterian Church really appreciated the \$10,000 grant from Albany Presbytery for the trip. They were affiliated with Albany Presbytery (Rev. Alexandra Lusak, Honorably Retired), Christ Our Light Roman Catholic Church (Regina Race), Loudonville Presbyterian Church (Peter Gregg), State School of Social Welfare (Martina Ahadzi, 2011 MSW graduate and Diane Van Dusen, LMSW) and Westminster (Chester Burch, Connie Frisbee Houde, Nancy Ost, Rev. Frances W. Rosenau, Nicholas Scaptura, Rev. Kathryn Shaffer, Laura Shaffer, Leslie Shaffer, and Lois Wilson). The two pictures were taken by Rev. Lusak and Ms. Houde.

- Church members in Ghana, even children, are always prepared to offer **prayer**. As our friend, Rev. Alice Kyei-Anti, often says, "you pray for me, and I pray for you." Ghanaians regularly pray to thank God for providing for them. They pray both at good times and when the outlook is bleak. They thank God for their blessings, and ask for blessings for others.
- Ghanaians think a lot about **community** and their extended family and strongly emphasize the value of sharing. Back home in the U.S., mission team members have been inspired to reach out to those who have unmet needs.

Join Westminster Presbyterian Church of Albany and at least two Presbyterian Churches in Ghana for Partnership Sunday later this spring.

In all churches, sermons will be based on the same lectionary texts, and participating churches will exchange prayer requests.

Contact Rev. Frances Rosenau to participate. (518 436-8544, ext. 13, fwrosenau@wpcalbany.org)

Schedule the 15-minute composite of pictures taken by Global Photographer Connie Frisbee Houde during the 2011 trip to Ghana,

in conjunction with one of the events mentioned above or as a solo activity.

The film title is: "Good Morning Teacher: A Journey to Ghana."

Participate in Westminster's annual African Spring Dinner on Saturday, March 31.
African Spring Dinner

Saturday, March 31, 2012, 5 to 8:30 p.m. Dinner at 6 p.m. Dinner is free.

Co-chairs: Felicia Kollie-Gambles & Fatmata Hilton

Honorary Committee, \$50 per person.

Checks to: Westminster Presbyterian Church. Memo: African Dinner ~ March 31

Program will include reports on successful 2011 mission projects, including:

In Liberia: clean drinking water and sanitation facilities for about 200 school children + 1,300 more from surrounding communities.

For Sierra Leone: Fall shipment to support families still suffering from the country's civil war.

Money raised at dinner will be used to fund Church projects in West and East Africa.

RSVP by March 29 to 436-8544 or info@wpcalbany.org

Westminster Presbyterian Church, 85 Chestnut Street, Albany 12210



School children from the Presbyterian School in Swedru playing on dirt piles left when a flood severely damaged the area in June 2010. Photo by Connie Frisbee Houde from her shoe "Good Morning Teacher: A journey to Ghana"

The logo features the word "Chicago" in a large, bold, sans-serif font. To its left is a large, stylized "X" symbol. Below "Chicago" is the text "25-28 May 2012" in a smaller, bold, sans-serif font. Below that is the word "Taizé" in a very large, bold, sans-serif font. At the bottom right of the logo is the website address "www.taize.fr/chicago" in a smaller, bold, sans-serif font.

Chicago
25-28 May 2012
Taizé
www.taize.fr/chicago

Youth of Albany Presbytery (YAP) is seeking to organize a trip for 18-25 year olds to take part in this great event.

Housing will be provided by families in the Chicago area so the cost of the trip will be little more than the cost of transportation.

Contact Tim Coombs by March 1 so that he can make appropriate travel and housing arrangements.
tcoomb@earthlink.net or 273-4991

To learn more about Taize and the Chicago Pilgrimage of Trust visit: <http://vimeo.com/32939054>

Please encourage your young adults to attend. The Taize Community is one of the most powerful witnesses to that age group.

THE PARISH PAPER

IDEAS AND INSIGHTS FOR ACTIVE CONGREGATIONS

Coeditors: Herb Miller, Lyle E. Schaller, Cynthia Woolever - www.TheParishPaper.com

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Should We Unleash the Power of Congregational Planning?

A traveler on an October flight to Chicago was seated by a little boy who was obviously traveling alone. The little boy seemed nervous, so the traveler tried to engage him in conversation: "Do you know what you want to be when you grow up?"

"No," the boy replied. "I don't even know what I'm going to be for Halloween!"

That level of planning is not a big liability for little boys, but it is for most organizations. What allowed Wal-Mart to replace Sears in retail market share? Why did Southwest Airlines steadily increase market share at the expense of American, Delta, and United? It seems that in older companies the leaders tend to drift into the future while focused on what worked in the past.

Does that kind of drifting-mentality happen in congregations? In most churches, the answer is yes. Like corporations, congregations do not *consciously* resist planning. Their failure to plan more often rests on the assumption that they are *already doing* sufficient planning. "Isn't that what we're doing at all these meetings of committees and governing boards?" one pastor asked.

But all of those meetings throughout the year sometimes blind church leaders to the fact that they are not watching the congregation's overall, big-picture direction. Thus, the church easily begins acting like an ocean liner in which the engine room is in perfect running order and the galley puts out excellent meals—while the ship sails confidently toward abrupt connection with a rocky coast ten miles ahead.

After a church decides that drifting into the future is inappropriate behavior for an organization that God has called to serve the people in its surrounding community for decades to come, its leaders must understand the value of an effective planning process.

Why Do Congregational Planning?

Several centuries ago Niccolo Machiavelli warned us in his book, *The Prince*, that "There is nothing more difficult to take in hand, more perilous to conduct, or more uncertain in its success than to take the lead in the introduction of a new order of things."

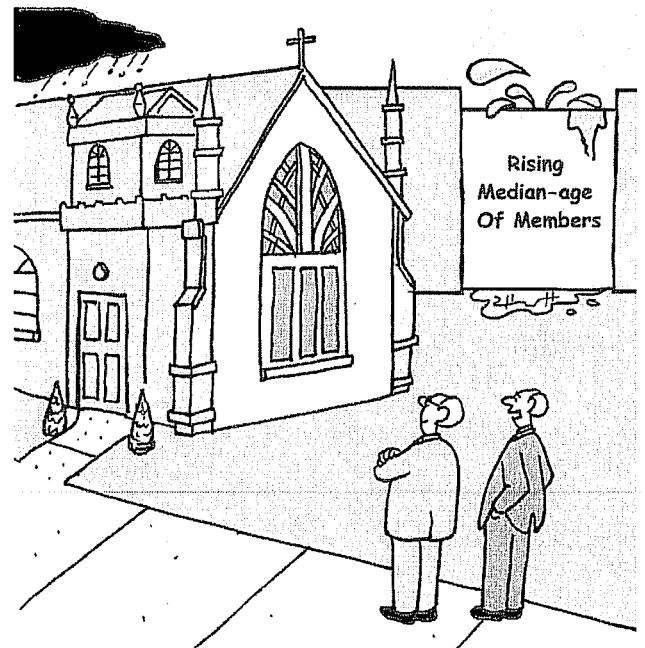
Why, then, should a church bother with planning? Without continuously fine-tuning its overall focus and ministries, a church can (a) feel satisfied with itself and (b) experience long-term failure in its health and vitality.

1. Planning keeps a church connected with the needs of people in its surrounding community and culture. The Moravian Book Shop, founded in 1745 by a congregation in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, is the oldest bookstore in the nation. Why did that church establish a book store? Because at that point in history, in that community and that culture, making books available to people was a significant ministry.

Does every church need a book store? Not necessarily. But every church needs to frequently and systematically involve its attendees in asking, "In our community, on this page in history, what can we do to help the largest possible number of people enrich their lives by loving God and loving their neighbors?"

2. Planning keeps the older age groups in touch with the thinking and needs of younger adults, their teenagers, and their children. F. Scott Fitzgerald said, "At eighteen our convictions are hills from which we look; at forty-five they are caves in which we hide."

Planning keeps generational viewpoints connected in ways that produce new insights, so that their church has great years in its future, not just in its past.



"The church has been here for 76 years. I don't think we need to be concerned about its future."

3. Planning helps us to respect what other people want, not just what we want. The thinking and aspirations of every church member are driven by “what I want most for myself and my congregation.”

When influential church members get frozen in the trajectory of what they want, they often lose the ability to hear what others want. The communication produced by an effective planning process helps unfreeze the perspectives of well-meaning people who, without realizing it, are building failure into their church’s DNA.

4. Planning helps us to reduce and prevent the pain of congregational conflict. Historical facts—such as ten-year worship-attendance trends and Sunday school attendance trends—are important to a church’s future. Such statistical facts tend to surface during an effective planning process. And the *feelings* that people have regarding those *facts* are equally important.

When parishioners have an opportunity to communicate their strongly held feelings in non-threatening circumstances, (a) wounds often heal, or are prevented, and (b) churches often find solutions to complex problems.

5. Planning helps us to overcome our inclination to retreat to what worked in the past, so common during times of anxiety and stress. People who grew up along the Mississippi River know that, during times of duress, the only direction a crawfish will move is backward. When a church experiences the stress of changing times, changing pastors, changing finances, or changing circumstances, the temptation to retreat to what worked in past years—rather than figuring out what works in the present—often exerts a strong pull. An effective planning process can prevent that often-fatal reflex.

6. Planning helps us to overcome the church-killing idolatry to sameness. Examine the sleeve of a man’s coat and you find two buttons, and sometimes three, or maybe four. Why? Custom put them there—and kept them there. We are told that in the monasteries of centuries past, the monks wore long robes that made eating their soup difficult—so they sewed buttons on their sleeves to keep them out of the soup.

Churches tend to retain all kinds of buttons from decades past, and their members are loath to remove those vestiges of what served a vital purpose in years past—once-valuable traditions that are no longer meaningful to most of their people. [J. Wallace Hamilton, *Still The Trumpet Sounds* (Old Tappan, New Jersey: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1970), p. 171]

A good planning process helps a church to trim non-productive buttons with fewer painful repercussions. By doing effective planning, we can claim that middle ground between destructive idolatry to sameness and frenetic idolatry to every new theory.

7. Planning helps us keep our congregation’s crucial ministries in balance. Five behaviors marked effectiveness in the ancient church: *Kerygma* (proclamation of the Gospel); *Koinonia* (community/fellowship); *Diaconia* (compassionate service); *Didache* (teaching the Christian

faith); and *Leiturgia* (worship/communal prayer). Effective planning strengthens achievement in all five of those behaviors—protecting a congregation from leaving out one or more ministries crucial to its future.

8. Planning generates hope. John Steinbeck eloquently wrote, “Hope implies a change from the present bad situation to a future better one. The slave hopes for freedom, the weary man for rest, and the hungry food. And the feeders of hope, economic and religious, have from these simple strivings of dissatisfaction managed to create a world picture which is very hard to escape.” [John Steinbeck and Edward F. Ricketts, *The Log from the Sea of Cortez* (New York: The Viking Press, 1941), p. 72]

Hope is not a church’s only important ingredient, but without hope, fear and anxiety drain church batteries of productive energy. An effective planning process provides hope for journeying into the future.

9. Planning helps keep Christ central. A hospital visitor saw these words on an inhalation therapist’s tee shirt: “Breathing is life. Everything else is details.” In churches, as in all other aspects of life, some matters are central; others are peripheral. When their people confuse central matters with peripherals, a congregation’s magnetic pull and life-giving power decreases.

10. Planning drags our future into the present so we can influence its quality before it happens. Long-range thinking tends to improve our short-term decision-making.

We take the first step toward higher achievement in ministries when we concentrate on our most result-producing priorities. An effective planning process helps us to identify those priorities.

There is never enough time to do everything, but there is always enough time to do the essential things. An effective planning process helps us to identify those essentials.

The Bottom Line

One way to summarize the purpose of church planning is by quoting an American Indian proverb about the environment: “We do not inherit the earth from our ancestors; we borrow it from our grandchildren.”

We do not merely inherit a congregation from our grandparents; we borrow it from our grandchildren. The big question: What strengths will our congregation have when we return to our grandchildren what we have borrowed? An effective planning process answers that question in a positive way.*

*From the “Free Resources” section of the www.TheParishPaper.com Web site, download two options for congregational planning—plus several dozen optional how-to church-effectiveness resources that committees and ministry teams can use to voyage with confidence into the future.