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## TEAM HOPE

### RESTRUCTURING PROPOSAL FOR KISKIMINETAS PRESBYTERY

*The following is a proposed restructuring of Kiskiminetas Presbytery designed to allow it to adapt to the future demands and realities of supporting healthy congregations and pastors.*

## SUMMARY OF PROPOSED CHANGES

### ***A RENEWED VISION FOR THE PRESBYTERY:***

*Kiskiminetas Presbytery is a community nurturing and invigorating churches to grow spiritually and serve lovingly in Christ.*

*As part of this vision, the presbytery is actively called to:*

- Build relationships between and among pastors and churches.
- Train pastors and churches for healthy leadership and growth.
- Nurture peoples' experiences of God.
- Transform and bless people through acts of Christ's love.

To accomplish this vision, Team Hope proposes the presbytery a renewed emphasis on better training and support for ordained pastors, lay pastors, elders, and churches so that they can better respond to and reverse the numerical, spiritual, and missional decline of its churches.

### ***THE PROPOSED, TRANSFORMED PRESBYTERY STRUCTURE:***

#### **The following is the proposed Commission, Team, and Task Force Structure:**

- **Commissions:** The presbytery will create an organizational structure that is aligned with the renewed vision. It emphasizes a more streamlined approach to presbytery operations, functions, and activities that encourages a permission-giving approach rather than a gatekeeping approach; and that becomes less dependent on a shrinking pastor pool, while allowing the presbytery to tap into a greater talent and gift pool of ruling elders and non-elder laity. The presbytery will have two commissions overseeing and organizing the work of the presbytery:
  1. **The Presbytery Organization Commission:** This commission will be focused on the operations of the presbytery, including:
    - *Trustees*
    - *Finance*
    - *Personnel*
    - *Pastoral concerns:* facilitating processes for incoming pastors; setting minimum terms of call; and granting pastoral permissions.



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- *Administration and disciplinary concerns:* creating administrative commissions and disciplinary structures and efforts.

*This commission will be staffed by the Organizational Presbyter.*

- 2. The Congregation and Pastor Formation Commission:** This commission will be focused on training and forming healthier pastors, lay pastors, leaders, and congregations, including:
  - *Lay pastor training program.*
  - *Preparation for Ministry processes.*
  - *Congregational transformation programs.*
  - *Elder and Church Leadership training (with a focus on church transformation rather than just church function).*
  - *Will be staffed by the Training Presbyter.*
- **Task Forces and Teams.** The presbytery will adopt a permission-giving model for task forces and teams, as opposed to a gatekeeping model.
  - Under a permission-giving model the presbytery nurtures and encourages personal and congregational calling to mission. The presbytery acts to look for ways to facilitate, nurture, and fund ministry and mission opportunities discerned by congregations, leaders, and pastors.
  - This approach decentralizes mission and encourages a prayerful approach to ministry and mission within the presbytery, while also freeing up more people to be involved in presbytery and congregational ministry, outreach, and mission.
  - Mission, outreach, polity, and other efforts of the presbytery will be coordinated by task forces and teams of pastors, lay pastors, elders, and church members in these specific areas.
- **Vision Team.** the presbytery will establish a team of between 3 and 5 teaching and ruling elders, led by the two presbyters and comprised of other presbytery members who are responsible for:
  - Understanding the ongoing challenges facing the presbytery in relationship to an ever-changing culture.
  - Envisioning the future of the presbytery in keeping with the renewed vision of the presbytery.
  - Nurturing ongoing relationships and health within and beyond the presbytery.
  - Ensuring healthy relationships and efforts between congregations, the presbytery, the Synod of the Trinity, and the General Assembly.

*Members will be nominated by the Nominating Committee in consultation with the presbyters.*

**The following is a proposed Staffing Structure:**

- The presbytery will create a staffing structure that's aligned with its Renewed Vision. It emphasizes leadership staff who are skilled in visioning, training, and operations, as well as an



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operations staff who are skilled at supporting this vision. *The following is the proposed staffing structure:*

1. **Organizational Presbyter, who will:**

- Serve as the Stated Clerk.
- Staff THE PRESBYTERY ORGANIZATION COMMISSION.
- Serve as co-leader with the Training Presbyter and would be expected to work collaboratively together in leading the presbytery.
- With the Training Presbyter, act as a pastor to pastors and churches.
- With the Training Presbyter, co-lead the Vision Team.

2. **Training Presbyter, who will:**

- Coordinate and provide training for pastors, lay pastors, churches, and leaders, with a focus on church turnaround, spiritual growth, and missional outreach.
- Staff the CONGREGATION AND PASTOR FORMATION COMMISSION.
- Develop training programs, seminars, webinars, and other events that help pastors, elders, and congregations adapt and thrive in a changing cultural context, which includes:
  - Training in healthy leadership, thriving worship, and community outreach;
  - Adaptive technology and video training.
- Develop a dynamic, growth-oriented lay pastor training program that is focused on helping lay pastors develop skills and abilities that will help churches grow spiritually and missionally, rather than simply replicating a reduced version of traditional seminary education.
- Offer mentorship and guidance to ordained ministry candidates and seminary students in presbytery field placement opportunities.
- Serve as a co-equal leadership partner with the Organizational Presbyter in envisioning and nurturing growth within the presbytery.
- With the Organizational Presbyter, act as pastor to pastors and churches, especially with those she/he is training.
- With the Organizational Presbyter, co-lead the Vision Team.

*The Training Presbyter will initially be supported financially through synod and other grants, and/or through presbytery reserves.*

3. **Operational staff:**

- Presbytery staff who facilitate the operation of the presbytery office and its finances.

## **BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE**

### **HISTORY OF DECLINE:**

As is true of most presbyteries in the Presbyterian Church (USA), Kiskiminetas Presbytery has experienced a significant decline in membership and worship attendance over the past 30 years. Between 2013 and 2022, the presbytery's membership dropped from 8726 to 4787 members,



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according to the statistics of the Presbyterian Church (USA)—a 45% decline. In that time almost all churches lost members, and some congregations have been dissolved. The remaining churches have become significantly grayer and older as they struggle to reach out to younger generations.

Kiskiminetas Presbytery's decline is similar to the decline in all presbyteries within the Presbyterian Church (USA). Despite the PC(USA)'s efforts to emphasize increased mission to plant over 1000 new churches across the country, these efforts have had minimal impact on the decline. It indicates that Kiskiminetas presbytery can't simply continue to operate as it always has. Instead, it needs to act in unique and innovative ways, initiating new ideas rather than waiting for the denomination to set a path for it. It needs to become more innovative and risk-taking, rather than waiting for changes in the denomination.

The following are issues that have contributed to Kiskiminetas Presbytery's decline, as highlighted in conversations with presbytery personnel:

- **The Presbyterian Church (USA) and the presbytery has become accustomed to decline.** Many leaders of churches and the presbytery are invested as much or more in maintaining what has been rather than embracing innovation and responsiveness to how the culture at large has changed. Too many want the culture to adapt to them rather than adapting themselves to the realities of modern America. Simply put, the culture is not going to adapt to us. The church must adapt without losing its foundation in Christ. This is in keeping with the history of Christianity, which has always adapted to new cultures and demands. Our tradition has embraced this in the guiding phrase, "*Ecclesia reformata, semper reformanda secundum verbum Dei* (the church reformed, always reforming according to the Word of God).
- **In recent years the denomination and its seminaries have put fewer resources towards church transformation and renewal,** meaning that few pastors, elders, and churches are trained in how to turn churches around, especially since we don't dialogue with non-denominational churches and secular organizations that have been good at organizational transformation and growth.
- **Often presbyteries, their committees, and their staffs face so many challenges that they are overwhelmed with handling problems.** It prevents them from being more focused on spiritual, missional, and numerical growth. Presbyterian bureaucratic structures generally support this problem-centric focus.
- Most presbyteries across the denomination are aware of the realities of their decline and have tried to address the issues through various presbytery restructurings. Except in rare cases, **these changes and adaptations have not led to true renewal of presbyteries or their congregations.**

### TEAM HOPE BACKGROUND AND WORK

A specially selected task force of the presbytery was created in January of 2022 to work with the Rev. Dr. Graham Standish, director of Samaritan Counseling, Guidance, Consulting's Caring for Clergy and Congregations program, to undergo a complete review of the presbytery's structure and operations to transform the presbytery in ways that can overcome the decline in membership, energy, and engagement. Dr. Standish is experienced in organizational transformation, having led church and organizational transformation and growth over his 34-year career, as well as having



written 7 books on congregational transformation. The task force was to work between 12-15 months to:

- Understand the history and context of the presbytery and its ongoing decline.
- Study insights and practices from the field of organizational growth, leadership, and associated fields, focusing on atypical ways to transform the presbytery so that it becomes less bureaucratic, more adaptable, more growth-oriented, and better prepared to help its member churches adapt to the realities of being town and rural churches in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.
- Create a proposal for the presbytery that might include minor to significant restructuring of staff, commissions, and more.

The task force was comprised of 8 members: General Presbyter Don Wilson, Stated Clerk Kathy Nice, Lay Pastor Sheila Wadding, Elder Carol Hickman, Elder Sandy Gandolfi, Pastor Colleen McFarland, Pastor Diane Flynn, and Pastor Erin Kobs. They were chosen to represent different populations within the presbytery, while simultaneously demonstrating through their work an openness to new ideas and perspectives.

Calling themselves “Team Hope,” they met for 17 months. During the process, they spent:

- Six months studying modern church issues, sharing the history of the presbytery, and reading and discussing materials from church growth and organizational development fields.
- Three months interviewing representatives from other presbyteries that had undergone significant transformation.
- Eight months devoted to discerning, discussing, and eventually crafting proposed changes for the presbytery.

During the process the team recognized that:

1. ***Pastors are not being adequately trained in the dynamics of healthy leadership and congregational renewal.*** The result is that while they are adequately trained in theological reasoning and articulation, pastoral care, and Presbyterian polity, they are inadequately trained in the dynamics of leadership and organizational transformation, even as a primary emphasis of the pastor vocation is leading congregations through renewal. In addition, they are inadequately trained in the field of spiritual formation, despite a growing non-church population declaring itself to be “spiritual but not religious,” who have a spiritual hunger the church is not addressing. The presbytery restructuring addresses this reality by hiring two co-equal presbyters with experience, respectively, in healthy organizational leadership and transformational leadership.
2. ***With a declining base of pastors for its 75 churches, the presbytery is confronting a reality that there are not, nor will there be, enough pastors for its congregations.*** Many simply cannot afford a full-time or even part-time pastor. With only about 14 installed pastors in the presbytery, churches without pastoral leadership will face increasing decline and dissolution. This proposal creates a robust pastor and lay pastor training program to renew churches. A Training Presbyter will help design and oversee such a training program and enlist existing pastors and others from within and outside the presbytery to assist in the program as teachers, mentors, and guides.



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3. ***The presbytery needs to create a dynamic, growth-oriented lay pastor training program*** that includes:
  - Training in dynamic preaching that integrates insights and practices that aren't traditionally part of the Presbyterian practice, but that have proven to engage and attract those who may have previously not been open to church.
  - Training in the dynamics of individual and communal spiritual growth rather than just theological understanding.
  - Training in organizational development.
  - Training in understanding and adapting to changing cultural contexts.
  - Technology, video, and social media training, enabling churches to better adapt to a modern cultural context.
  - Traditional training in polity and Reformed theology.
4. ***Congregations need to be trained in how to become open and welcoming*** to populations that either have walked away or have little exposure to church. These training programs include:
  - Training in welcoming worship practices that help the church become invitational and attractational.
  - Aesthetical training that helps congregations assess what their buildings and property look like, their accessibility, and how to create physical spaces that are attractive to non-churchgoers.
  - Fundraising and stewardship practices that fund adequate renewal and missional efforts.
  - Technological training and support to enable churches to operate in a changing landscape where websites, digital presentation, live-streaming, and other technological advances are now part of the cultural mainstream.

**Final Note:** *In accepting this proposal, there's also a reality that a transition process will be needed to facilitate the transformation to the new structure. The presbytery will need to be intentional in transitioning from one General Presbyter to new Training and Organizational Presbyters. These are two new positions and need to be treated as such if this new structure is to have a chance at helping the presbytery to become transformational.*