

Here are positive and concerning conclusions drawn from the listening sessions in North Central Iowa regarding the potential merger of the three Presbyteries:

Positive Conclusions:

1. **Blending Strengths and Learning:** Combining the different presbyteries could allow for blending their unique ministry focuses (mission, diversity and inclusion, support for small churches), enabling learning from each other and fostering innovation. (February 21 Fort Dodge)
2. **Greater Efficiency and Specialization:** The merger could lead to more economic efficiency and allow presbyters to specialize more, improving support for churches. (April 7 Zoom, March 12 Zoom)
3. **Vibrant and Inclusive Gatherings:** Success would be measured by vibrant, interesting presbytery meetings that draw people together for worship and represent the diversity of Iowa. (March 12 Zoom)
4. **Potential for Fewer Meetings:** Fewer meetings could open up time and energy for executive presbyters and others involved, making participation more manageable. (March 12 Zoom, April 14 Waterloo Westminster)

Conclusions of Concern:

1. **Loss of Identity and Voice:** There is concern that smaller or rural churches may lose their unique personality and influence within a larger presbytery, and their voices could be overshadowed. (April 7 Zoom)
2. **Geographic and Logistical Barriers:** Increased distances could make participation in meetings and activities harder for churches on the geographic fringes, leading to decreased engagement. (April 7 Zoom, March 12 Zoom)
3. **Staff Overload and Insufficient Support:** There is fear that staff are already overworked and that a larger presbytery would stretch them even thinner, reducing the quality of support for churches. (April 7 Zoom, March 28 Garner)
4. **Power Dynamics and Equity Concerns:** Anxiety exists about power and control, particularly regarding the distribution of resources and attention, and whether one presbytery might dominate decision-making. (March 12 Zoom, March 28 Garner)
5. **Loss of Camaraderie and Tradition:** There is concern that blending presbyteries could dilute or erase valued practices, traditions, and the camaraderie that exists within smaller groups or committees. (March 28 Garner, February 21 Fort Dodge)