

What are the hopes or longings that arise when considering the creation of one Presbytery?

1. Greater Diversity and Sharing of Gifts

- There is hope that bringing together different presbyteries will unite a broader diversity of gifts, experiences, and perspectives. As one participant put it, "The body of Christ is meant to be diverse and people bring different gifts. Hopefully in coming together we will bring together more gifts and more diversity of gifts."
- There is also a longing for a larger group to take an open stand on full inclusion in the church, reflecting a desire for a more welcoming and representative community.

2. Increased Efficiency and Resource Sharing

- Some participants hope for greater economic efficiency, with the potential for more streamlined operations and fewer meetings, freeing up time and energy for mission and ministry.
- There is anticipation that a larger presbytery could allow for specialization among presbyters and staff, leading to more effective support for churches.

3. Enhanced Mission and Innovation

- The blending of different ministry focuses (e.g., mission, diversity and inclusion, support for small churches) is seen as an opportunity to learn from each other and foster innovation. The hope is that more minds and experiences will generate creative solutions to shared challenges.
- There is a longing for revitalization—both of committee structures and of the committees themselves—to better align with God's mission and the needs of the community.

4. Stronger Community and Relationships

- Many express a desire for deeper connections among churches, especially in times of crisis or need. There is hope that a single presbytery could facilitate more mutual support and collaboration.
- The longing for community is strong, with recognition that institutions may be declining but people still seek meaningful relationships and belonging.

5. Vibrant and Inclusive Gatherings

- There is hope that presbytery meetings will become more vibrant, interesting, and inclusive, drawing people together for worship and shared purpose.
- Success is envisioned as meetings that represent the diversity of Iowa, including people of color and LGBTQ+ pastors, and fostering healthy, long-lasting pastoral relationships.

6. Setting a Positive Example

- Some see the creation of one presbytery as an opportunity to model a new way of working together for the larger church and the world, demonstrating graciousness, trust-building, and a willingness to listen and accept each other's gifts and limitations.

Example Implementation:

- One practical hope is for the creation of peer groups or think tanks where smaller churches can share what works and support each other.
- Another is the possibility of more specialized roles for presbyters, allowing for targeted support and innovation.

In summary, the hopes and longings center on diversity, efficiency, innovation, deeper community, vibrant gatherings, and setting a positive example for others. These aspirations are grounded in a desire to remain true to scripture and the core values of the church while adapting to new realities.