

How will success be measured spiritually and missionally (rather than institutionally) in the context of merging the three Presbyteries?

1. Vibrant, Inclusive Community and Worship

- Success is seen as presbytery meetings that are vibrant, interesting, and draw people together for worship. People would want to attend because the gatherings are spiritually enriching and foster a sense of belonging.
- Meetings should represent the diversity of Iowa, including people of color, openly gay pastors, and trans pastors, reflecting a truly inclusive body of Christ.

2. Powerful Witness to Christ and the Gospel

- The presbytery's witness to Christ and the gospel should become more powerful and evident. This means that the collective actions, relationships, and ministries of the presbytery visibly embody the teachings and love of Jesus.

3. Support and Longevity for Pastors and Churches

- Healthy, long-lasting pastoral relationships are a sign of spiritual and missional success. There should be less burnout among pastors and more interaction among a wider group of people, fostering mutual support and spiritual growth.
- Keeping churches alive in small communities is a key missional goal. Success means finding creative ways to help churches remain present and active in their communities, possibly through partnerships or ecumenical collaboration.

4. Innovation and Mutual Learning

- Success involves fostering innovation by blending different ministry focuses and learning from each other. This could include creating think tanks or peer groups for small churches to share what works and support each other.
- The presbytery should be a place where new ideas are welcomed and where the mission is continually redefined in light of God's calling and the needs of the community.

5. Deepened Relationships and Mutual Support

- There should be more connections among churches, especially in times of crisis. Success is measured by the ability of churches to help each other and by the presence of strong, supportive relationships across the presbytery.

6. Faithfulness to Scripture and Core Values

- Staying true to the Book of Order, the Bible, and the core values of the church is essential. Decisions and actions should be driven by Jesus and the guidance of the Holy Spirit, not just by institutional needs.

7. Trust, Graciousness, and Listening

- Building trust, showing graciousness, and a willingness to listen and accept each other's gifts and limitations are spiritual markers of success. The process should foster a culture of respect and openness.

Example Implementation:

- Instead of focusing on numbers ("nickels and noses"), success is measured by the spiritual health and vitality of congregations, the depth of relationships, and the visible impact of the church's mission in the world.

- Regular re-evaluation (e.g., every five years) to ensure the presbytery is meeting spiritual and missional goals, not just institutional benchmarks.

In summary, spiritual and missional success is defined by vibrant worship and community, a powerful witness to Christ, support for pastors and churches, innovation, deep relationships, faithfulness to scripture, and a culture of trust and graciousness. These measures go beyond institutional metrics and focus on the lived experience and impact of the presbytery's ministry.