

How will a merger might expand capacity for mission, innovation, or support of small churches?

1. Expanded Capacity for Mission

- **Blending Strengths:** Each presbytery brings unique ministry focuses—North Central Iowa emphasizes mission (mission grants, trips), Des Moines focuses on diversity and inclusion, and Prospect Hill supports small churches. Merging would allow these strengths to be shared and learned from across the new presbytery, broadening the mission impact (February 21 Fort Dodge).
- **Shared Resources:** The merger could enable the sharing of resources such as curriculum, speakers, and mission trip opportunities, making it easier for all churches to participate in mission activities (March 12 Zoom).

2. Fostering Innovation

- **More Minds, More Ideas:** Consolidation brings together more people with diverse experiences and creativity, which can foster innovation in ministry approaches and problem-solving (February 21 Fort Dodge).
- **Revitalized Committees:** There is an opportunity to revitalize committee structures, blending different approaches and encouraging new ways of working together (February 21 Fort Dodge).
- **Think Tanks and Peer Groups:** Suggestions include creating think tanks or peer groups for small churches to share what works, support each other, and develop innovative solutions to common challenges (April 7 Zoom).

3. Enhanced Support for Small Churches

- **Specialized Support Models:** The merger could allow for new staffing models, such as employing commissioned or interim pastors who serve multiple small churches, providing consistent support and flexibility (February 21 Fort Dodge).
- **Peer Support:** By drawing on the experiences of smaller churches, the presbytery could facilitate peer groups where churches help each other with pulpit supply, crisis management, and sharing best practices (April 7 Zoom).
- **Partnerships and Collaboration:** There is potential for small churches to partner with each other or with larger congregations to remain active in their communities, possibly through ecumenical collaboration (April 7 Zoom).

Example Implementation:

- Organize regular peer group meetings (in-person or virtual) for small church leaders to discuss challenges and share solutions.
- Develop a pool of commissioned or interim pastors who can serve multiple small congregations as needed.
- Create a shared resource library (curriculum, speakers, mission trip opportunities) accessible to all churches in the merged presbytery.

Summary Table:

Area	How Merger Expands Capacity
Mission	Blends strengths, shares resources, broadens impact
Innovation	More ideas, revitalized committees, think tanks/peer groups
Small Church Support	Specialized staffing, peer support, partnerships

In summary, a merger could expand capacity for mission, innovation, and support of small churches by blending strengths, fostering creative collaboration, and enabling new models of support and resource sharing. The key is intentional planning to ensure these benefits are realized and equitably distributed.