

Our
Changing Church
in Today's World



Background Information:

The Ultimate Question:

“What is the faithfulness in our time?” Every church should have a different answer, as it has been for the last 2000 years – we are unique.

Presbytery:

Imagine Presbytery to be the “Air Traffic Controller” and your church the “airplane”. The job of the Air Traffic Controller is to ensure the air strip is clear and that you can land the airplane safely. The Air Traffic Controller cannot land the plane for you – you must do that.

Presbytery is there to provide boundaries and support. You (the Congregation) make the choices.

Keep Presbytery informed and ask for their guidance.

“What is the faithfulness in our time?”

What do you want to know?:

Realities:

Some of the realities in our churches today are:

- Aging Congregations – most are over 65
- Aging Buildings
- Same people doing all the work and supporting the church.
- Feeling of indifference – “What can we do about it”?
- Not able to financially meet the budget.
- Sister churches are closing – we cannot do it alone.
- Ministers are always changing.
- Feeling burnt out.

You are not alone. Many churches are feeling the same things – regardless of denomination, place (rural or urban) or size (big or small).

Survivors:

We can be survivors, if we choose or we can be victims. The choice is ours. Survivors look for opportunities to be the church in the community. Victims retreat within themselves waiting for the axe to fall. We all want to be survivors!

List of Possible Resources:

- Asset Mapping/Community Mapping*
- The World Café process*
- Discernment processes*
- Emerging Spirit Resources*
- Healthy Congregations Materials*
- Conference Office and Staff
- Presbytery Pastoral Relations and Oversight Committees.
- What resources have others used?

Finding These Resources:

- * Many books are available on the first five resources
- Check with Susan (519-436-0819) at the Kent Presbytery Resource Centre – many are in stock.
- Contact London Conference Office: (519) 672-1930
- Kent Presbytery Pastoral Relations contact: Barbara Robbins (519) 436-0505
- Kent Presbytery Oversight Committee contact: Margaret Trapnell (519) 352-8460

Steps along the way:

1. Start from where you are:
 - ❖ Explore your roots.
 - ❖ Consider your assets.
 - ❖ Know your community.
 - ❖ Listen to your stories – they will tell you who you are!

 2. Consider your possibilities:
 - ❖ Look at alternative forms of ministry
 - ❖ Conversations with neighbouring churches
 - ❖ Do community mapping to find out who your neighbours are.
 - ❖ Consider asset mapping to discover new possibilities using what you already have.
- Through all of this – spend time in prayer and discernment. “What is God asking you to be and to do?”*
3. Move into decision-making:
 - ❖ Prayer and discernment throughout
 - ❖ Get everyone involved
 - ❖ Listen respectfully to each other.
 - ❖ You have choices – make them faithfully.

Options:

Disbanding: (Closure)

- Congregation is disbanded.
- Membership is transferred to churches of choice.
People have a choice - even in disbanding.

Three (likely) Steps: *(Invite Presbytery to work with you from the beginning – it is easier for the “Air Traffic Controller” to guide you before you get over the runway)*

i) Congregational vote – then send a letter to the Secretary of Presbytery notifying Presbytery of your intent to disband. Such as, *“Our last service is (Date) and the final disbanding date will be when all the business of the church is finalized”*

Note: (Likely an 18 to 24 month process)

ii) Distributing Assets – send a letter to the Secretary of Presbytery notifying Presbytery that you wish to distribute your assets in the following manner (list how you wish to distribute the assets).

iii) Building – send a letter to the Secretary of Presbytery notifying Presbytery what you wish to do with the building.

You make the choices; Presbytery approves your choices.

Amalgamation:

When two or more congregations come together to form a new congregation. All assets of the congregations involved become the assets of the newly formed congregation.

All members of the involved congregations become members of the newly formed congregation.

Requires congregational votes and Presbytery's approval.

The newly formed congregation has the responsibility to make decisions regarding property(s) (with Presbytery's approval).

Realignment:

A change of Pastoral Charge boundaries where new Pastoral Charges can be formed.

Requires congregational votes and Presbytery's approval.

As you dissolve existing Pastoral Charges into new Pastoral Charges, decisions around Pastoral Charge Assets will need to be made and approved by Presbytery.

Creative Ways to Share Ministry:

Expanded Parishes, Cluster Groups and Circuit Riding Ministry to name a few.

As these ministries are creative, they may take unique forms that answer your particular needs.

Many resources are available → Check them out! Call Susan at the Kent Presbytery Resource Centre (519) 436-0819.