

## **Long-term financial health of the Conference**

In the last year the Conference had brief conversations about the long-term financial health of the Conference in the light of anticipated closings and amalgamations of congregations. Presbyteries were asked to give some kind of projections of changes that might take place as a way of gauging the big picture of where we might be headed.

Generally, the Presbyteries have had difficulty with this task. Two requests for information produced the following results, below. There is an understandable reluctance to develop what could be perceived as a “hit” list.

Despite this, the Conference needs to consider its future if there is a continued decline in numbers, since the Conference assessment is based on congregational membership and expenses. This could significantly impact the revenues, and staff and services would have to be cut. On the other hand, property sales could provide a significant infusion of funds.

Current Conference policies direct that the majority of money from property sales be forwarded to the Presbyteries through the Presbyteries of Toronto Conference Corporation (PTCC). Depending on the number of sales, each Presbytery could easily find itself with \$5-6 million in a relatively short amount of time. Questions that need to be discussed: How much money do Presbyteries need? Are there are other needs within the Conference and/or the wider church? Is PTCC the appropriate place to lodge all of the funds, since the funds are then “owned” by the corporation and are less fluid?

At this stage it would be helpful for the Executive to have a proactive discussion about the responsible stewardship of financial resources, rather than passively waiting until the future catches up with us. As indicated in the agenda for this meeting, the Executive is being asked to consider the following question:

**Given the amounts of money that could result from sale of property, what is responsible stewardship within Toronto Conference?**

The discussion may suggest further requests for information or action.

## **Reports from the Presbyteries**

Living Waters: No response received, but the following is an excerpt from the minutes of the Vision and Church Development (VCD) Commission:

1. Establishing a Strategy...The Presbytery needs to be in a position to approve an overall strategy on Church Development. We proposed that VCD Commission working closely with Congregational Life Commission develop this strategy, recognizing that both commissions are very involved in this challenge/opportunity. It is recognized that other Commissions will need to be involved and support the strategy.

2. Categorizing Pastoral Charges - for level and nature of support needed from each commission. We propose the following categories for consideration:-

- a. New Church Development (Present existing)
  - i. New Hope and Painswick
- b. New Church Development (Future)
  - i. None at this time
- c. Existing Church Development (Growth Locations)
  - i. Developing areas identified by Presbytery or Pastoral Charge. Support will be necessary
- d. Existing Churches (Sustain)
  - i. No immediate action required
- e. Existing Church Development (Potential Rationalization)
  - i. Opportunities for Amalgamations and Clusters
- f. Existing Churches (Congregational Support Needed -may not be sustainable)
  - i. Assist Pastoral Charge to close or amalgamate

3. Data Gathering and identification - working with Congregational Life we can quickly identify the appropriate category for most churches. If we follow a typical "bell curve", we can expect the following:

Category a and b excluded		
Category c	10%	9 churches
Category d	30-40%	27 - 36 churches
Category e	35-50%	31 - 45 churches
Category f	10-15%	9 - 14 churches

Assume total is 91 churches

4. Criteria for categorizing could include the following
- Financial stability
  - State of Physical Premises
  - Potential for expanding ministries and outreach
  - Energy of Congregation
  - Need to maintain presence in Community

Northern Waters: No official response received, but an e-mail from Ann Harbridge, chair of pastoral relations, provides some data:

My numbers predict 18 churches to close or amalgamate in the next 10 years if we stick with the idea that every church must have a minister to serve it. If we loosen that up, then some of these churches will hang on, but they won't have large numbers (in fact some are already only having 8-10 people show up on a Sunday), and they will only be open because their expenses to care for their building are low. They won't have ministry staff.

South West Presbytery – Don Laing provided the following information:

- One amalgamation approved to take effect in 2012
- One amalgamation pending
- Two congregations closed in 2011
- One church building for sale currently
- One potential building for sale as part of the 2012 amalgamation
- Five to eight congregations potentially closing in the next five to 10 years

Toronto Southeast: Response from Tom Clarke, chair of the finance and property team:

I am responding on behalf of Toronto Southeast Presbytery in regard to your request of December 9, 2010 for information on anticipated "amalgamations, closings and relocations" as well reductions in ministry personnel in the next 5 to 10 years.

Although the intention was to have a forum of relevant Chairs where information and concerns about specific pastoral charges could be shared and discussed this has not been possible as yet. Rather an initial assessment has been shared with some Chairs at a recent Chairs Forum and with members of the Finance and Property Team. Among those who have looked over the list, there are very likely gaps in our collective knowledge of the new Presbytery. There was, however, a strong agreement that any such list would not be shared but only a summary of the results which appears below.

	<u>In 5 years</u>	<u>in 6 to10 years</u>
Pastoral Charges closing including Riverdale and Centennial-Rouge (not unexpectedly, many of these are very small)	7	2
Churches made surplus through amalgamation (assumes 1 church for every amalgamation)	5	7
Reduction in Ministry Personnel (through amalgamation/closure and reduction in staff model)	11 FTE	6 FTE