

SMALL MEMBERSHIP CHURCH COMMITTEE REPORT
Dot Descieux and Russ Reighley, Co-Moderators
April 28, 2015

Small Membership Church Committee has concluded its two years of Forums with the Presbyterian Foundation. These meetings were very well received and found to be helpful by a number of congregations. Paul Grier and Olanda Carr from the Foundation were highly committed and extremely helpful in leading these meetings. Paul also has followed through and met with individual congregations to help them tackle specific issues. Paul's sharing of his experience by guiding a number of us in some very difficult, and sometimes life-changing, challenges is greatly appreciated. Initially financial problems were dealt with, including aging buildings and their upkeep, and then we moved on to other things, such as relationships, leadership, communications, marketing, and assessment of priorities. Olanda continues to work with the Committee in meeting with a group of pastors of African American congregations and helping them to identify and deal with some of their unique problems.

We also met Catherine Lynch and became acquainted with the Presbyterian Investments and Loan Program (PILP) and how it can be of assistance to our churches. We are greatly appreciative of the work of all these folks, and are in their debt for their great assistance and for allowing us to know and work alongside them for the past two years. Even though the commitment of the two years of Forums is concluded, we have grown from the experience and look forward to other opportunities of working with the Foundation and these people who mean so much to us.

Water to Wine projects were undertaken by several congregations, allowing them to reach out to their communities in new ways. Some of them worked alone, and others discovered the joys of ministry working with a neighboring congregation or two. Many small churches struggle making themselves better known in the community, especially with everyone using social media. John Pea stepped up and has set up websites in at least eight churches, and is working on others. Some who already had a website have gone to John to update what they have and make them more attractive and useful.

We have dealt with the inevitable disasters created by weather, and granted funds for cleaning up the mess left by frozen pipes and by the collapse of older buildings. Small amounts were sent from our budget, and larger needs were directed to the Synod where more assistance was available.

In the coming months, we anticipate challenging more congregations to be what they can be, and urge some to move out into their communities with establishing new ways of ministry. That might be with a Water to Wine Ministry or something on a larger scale, such as a New Worshiping Community. We want to continue to walk alongside congregations and be the Church.

Respectfully submitted,

Russ Reighley and Dot Descieux, Co-Moderators