

Tres Rios Next Steps Task Force
Recommendation
February 23, 2018
Approved as amended June 29, 2018

The Next Steps Task Force, since the October 2017 meeting of Tres Rios Presbytery, met 7 times for half day meetings and participated in a retreat February 4-6 facilitated by Valerie Young of the Synod of the Sun. After much prayerful consideration and discussion we bring the following recommendation.

The Impact:

Tres Rios Presbytery partners with pastors and congregations so that all feel respected, encouraged and inspired.

This proposal is built upon the foundation of partnership. Why? So that all pastors and congregations feel respected, encouraged and inspired. We are partners. We work together and come alongside one another. We show respect for our shared Presbyterian tradition, heritage and form of government; for our diverse perspectives and ministry contexts; and simply for each other as brothers and sisters in Christ. We encourage one another not merely to feel good, but to build one another up, to demonstrate our care for one another, and to embolden each other in our ministry and witness. We inspire one another to move beyond ourselves, to see our communities and be empowered to serve and share the love of Jesus with those outside our churches.

Tres Rios Presbytery partners with pastors and congregations so that all feel respected, encouraged, and inspired. All our efforts should be filtered through this desired impact. How can we partner? Does it show respect? Does it encourage? Does it inspire?

The Plan:

1. Governed by three teams: The Administrative Team, the Pastoral Team, and the Vision and Outreach Team.

The Administrative Team partners with pastors and congregations to facilitate the business of the presbytery and ensure proper fulfillment of the Book of Order requirements.

The Pastoral Team partners with pastors and congregations to encourage spiritual growth and guidance.

The Vision and Outreach Team partners with pastors, congregations and officially established projects of the Presbytery to inspire vision and service to the community.

Each of these teams will consist of 4 nominated and elected members: two clergy and two ruling elders, each representing one of the four clusters. Each will serve a two-year term, with the exception of one clergy and one ruling elder from the first class who will serve a three year term.

The teams will function as commissions, having authority to make their own decisions and spend within their budget, with the exception of items that require a vote of the full presbytery.

Each team will have the power to create sub-committees and task forces as necessary.

Each team will participate in a “Team Meet” at least quarterly to report on their activity and decisions, presided over by the Moderator. This is not a decision-making body, but is intended to promote communication, transparency and collaboration among the teams.

Each team will be resourced by a part-time staff member and the full-time Administrative Assistant.

Job descriptions for the teams are attached as Appendix A, B and C.

2. Gathered two times per year as a presbytery.

One of these gatherings will be a one day worship and business meeting planned by the Administrative Team. The other gathering will be a “Big Event” to include a brief business meeting but primarily consist of an energetic, inspiring, equipping and/or mission-oriented event to be planned and organized alternately by the Pastoral Team and the Vision and Outreach team.

3. Resourced by three part-time and one full-time employee as follows:

Stated Clerk, paid part-time employee who resources the Administrative Team and fulfills the Book of Order duties of a Stated Clerk.

Pastoral Presbyter, paid part-time employee who resources the Pastoral Team.

Vision and Outreach Presbyter, paid part-time employee who resources the Vision and Outreach Team

Each of these positions could be filled by ordained clergy, ruling elders, or CREs and could be shared with a local congregation as a way of partnering with our churches who do not require or cannot afford a full-time pastor.

Job descriptions for the new positions of Pastoral Presbyter and Vision and Outreach Presbyter are attached as Appendix D and E.

The Means:

1. Implementation

Timeline:

February 2018 - Recommendation presented at Presbytery meeting and initial questions answered

March – June 2018

Next Steps members will meet with current teams of Presbytery and existing cluster events to further explain this recommendation and respond to questions and concerns.

Request the current Committee on Nominations and Representation to nominate an Implementation Team consisting of not less than 5 members, nor more than 7 members, consisting of a combination of individuals with experience and knowledge of presbytery activities and at least two members from the Next Steps Task Force that would be knowledgeable of the intent/direction proposed by Next Steps. The Implementation Team will do the following:

- Oversee necessary amendments to the By-Laws and Operations Manual
- Develop the process and oversee the hiring of all new staff.
- Develop the process and nominate the members of all the three teams.
- Submit the recommendations and proposed new hires and team members to the Presbytery for their approval (if necessary) at the October 2018 and no later than the spring 2019 meeting of Presbytery.

Proposed amendments to this recommendation should be sent in writing to shannon.weisenfels@gmail.com before May 1, 2018. The Task Force will submit these amendments with recommendation for a yes or no vote to the Missional Networking Team for distribution to the presbytery prior to the June meeting.

June 2018 - Vote on the recommendation at Presbytery meeting. If the motion to adopt passes, elect the slated Implementation Team so they can begin work immediately.

January 2019 – New staff and structure in place.

If this recommendation is adopted, the task force further recommends the following: As a first order of business for the newly re-formed Presbytery, the Vision and Outreach team will consider the creation of a specific *Vision and Mission Statement* that, in accordance with the primary mandate of the Great Commission would set specific expectations for enhancing the lives of its congregations.”

- When hiring, build up the foundation of partnership with congregations if possible and be sure there is an agreement between presbytery and the congregation as to the time and travel expected for the presbytery position.
- Encourage cluster gatherings and get-to-know-you events 3-4 times a year, including during the implementation process, to build community and connection. The type of event is up to the cluster, but we encourage family-oriented activities where all the member churches can fully participate. We must know each other to truly be partners.
- Once implemented, Vision and Outreach Team will evaluate the progress annually by conducting a survey among a broad random sampling of the presbytery consisting of three True/False questions:
 1. Do you feel respected by Tres Rios Presbytery?
 2. Do you feel encouraged in your interactions with Tres Rios Presbytery?
 3. Do you feel inspired by your connection with Tres Rios Presbytery?

Please explain/expand upon your answers.

The Vision and Outreach Team will recommend adjustments, changes and new vision as needed in response to this evaluation.

2. How do we provide the resources to fund the implementation?

In order to finance these new positions, combine three current funds into one ‘Tres Rios Future Fund’ and allocate up to 6% of that fund toward new staff costs. Details

of the funds involved are as follows based on the estimated current value less that portion of Camp Chimney Spring fund already needed for Youth:

Camp Chimney Spring fund	\$300,000
First Midland fund	\$735,000
Trinity Sales fund	\$1,465,000
Total of \$2,500,000 X 6% =	\$150,000

The Rationale:

1. Why only four elected members of each team?

One of Next Steps' earliest agreed upon goals was that our presbytery should be administratively lean. Each team has the power to appoint sub-committees or task forces as needed. We hope that providing more short-term opportunities for people to serve on well-resourced teams will actually involve more people in the presbytery in the long run. We also hope that by wiping the slate more or less clean in terms of responsibilities for the Pastoral Team and Vision and Outreach Team, we will only go forward with the events and projects that have a champion and energetic volunteers behind them.

2. Why three staff people?

We are required to have a Stated Clerk and most presbyteries now compensate their Stated Clerk, which is right given the many responsibilities of the position. It is our human tendency, however, to give priority to the tasks that are well-defined, staffed and funded. While our administrative functions are important and required, they are not necessarily the most important function of a presbytery. For this reason, we wanted to equally staff the three teams and three ministry areas of our presbytery so that all our functions become well-defined and funded, and thus are all prioritized.

We founded this recommendation on the idea of partnership. More staff, potentially living and working in different clusters, will enable more easily facilitated partnerships and connections between neighboring congregations.

3. Why spend so much money? Wasn't financial decline one of the reasons the Next Steps Task Force was formed?

Tres Rios actually has significant financial resources in the form of investments with the Texas Presbyterian Foundation. While we do anticipate a continuing decline in church contributions in the future, we want to put our financial and human resources into building a more vital partnership among our churches, building on our shared Presbyterian value of connectionalism. We are also recommending

generating new income through the sale or rental of the presbytery office. We hope that embedding employees in our local congregations will help to foster the sense among our churches that “presbytery is me too.” We’re also encouraging saving travel expenses for volunteers by the use of Zoom for meetings when possible.

4. Do we really need to change?

Yes. The Church in the western hemisphere is weathering a significant cultural change, and we need to be better positioned to address it. All our churches, not only the smallest, need partners to move into the future fulfilling the Great Commission and discerning what it looks like to encourage and inspire our communities in this fast-moving 21st Century world. Many presbyteries across the nation are going through similar processes to address this broad reality as well as the commonly shared reality of fewer churches and the resulting decline in human and financial resources.

5. Does this recommendation go far enough? Is it enough change?

The Next Steps Task Force engaged in research and much discussion about more drastic options such as allowing our member churches to join neighboring presbyteries and merging with another presbytery. After evaluation, we felt that our churches going their separate ways, while definitely a new direction, did not address our key concern that presbytery partner with pastors and congregations to respect, encourage and inspire. There was energy in our conversations about the potential of a merger with a neighboring presbytery, particularly Palo Duro. Merging is a long process and we want to do much more than just get by in the near future. We want to pour our energy and resources into strengthening our partnership. As we become more connected and encouraged by one another, we also become a more attractive potential partner. We built the annual evaluation of this new plan into the structure so that if we feel another next step is needed in the coming years, there is an already established team charged with assessing our needs and exploring that further next step.

Appendix A

Tres Rios Administrative Team Job Description

Tres Rios Presbytery partners with pastors and congregations so that all feel respected, encouraged and inspired.

Membership:

The Administrative Team shall be comprised of 4 members nominated by the Leadership Recruitment and Representation Team and elected by the Presbytery. Each member will represent one of the four clusters. Members will serve a two-year term in classes (with the exception of the first class who will serve a three-year term) as follows:

Even year class: 1 clergy, 1 ruling elder

Odd year class: 1 clergy, 1 ruling elder

The Administrative Team will maintain a standing Leadership Recruitment and Representation sub-team, 2 clergy and 2 ruling elders in 2 classes representative of each cluster, to nominate the 4 members of each team, the Moderator of Tres Rios Presbytery, the members of the Permanent Judicial Commission, and the new class of the Leadership Recruitment and Representation Team. They shall fulfill the nominating and representation functions required by the Book of Order.

The Administrative Team has the power to appoint sub-committees and task forces as deemed necessary.

The Administrative Team is resourced by the Stated Clerk and Administrative Assistant.

Mechanics:

The Administrative Team will serve as a commission, having authority to make its own decisions and spend within its budget, except for items requiring approval by the presbytery.

At first meeting of each new class, the Administrative Team will elect a team moderator and clerk.

The team clerk will provide minutes of all meetings to the Administrative Assistant and Stated Clerk for Presbytery packets, Team Meets, record keeping, website and any other shared communications.

Responsibilities:

The Administrative Team partners with pastors and congregations to facilitate the business of the presbytery and ensure proper fulfillment of the Book of Order requirements.

This includes:

1. All financial duties such as the budget and annual review
2. Matters concerning property and insurance
3. Maintain the Manual of Operations
4. Provide for necessary Personnel functions of the presbytery
5. In partnership with the Stated Clerk:
 - Records Review
 - Matters pertaining to General Assembly and Synod
 - Provide for the nomination of new team leadership and a moderator in collaboration with current team leadership
 - Resource the Permanent Judicial Commission, Administrative Commissions and any other judicial functions of the Presbytery
6. Provide for all matters pertaining to Pastoral Calls (receiving inquirers and candidates, annual consultations, examinations, ordinations and installations, etc.)
7. Plan the annual worship and business meeting
8. Plan the annual small business portion of the Tres Rios Big Event
9. Organize and participate in the Team Meet at least quarterly

The Team will consider the following in all their responsibilities:

How can we partner?

Does this decision/action show respect?

Does this decision/action offer encouragement?

Does this decision/action inspire?

Appendix B

Tres Rios Pastoral Team Job Description

Tres Rios Presbytery partners with pastors and congregations so that all feel respected, encouraged and inspired.

Membership:

The Pastoral Team shall be comprised of 4 members nominated by the Leadership Recruitment and Representation Team and elected by the Presbytery. Each member will represent one of the four clusters. Members will serve a two-year term in classes (with the exception of the first class who will serve a three-year term) as follows:

Even year class: 1 clergy, 1 ruling elder

Odd year class: 1 clergy, 1 ruling elder

The Pastoral Team has the power to appoint sub-committees and task forces as deemed necessary.

The Pastoral Team is resourced by the Pastoral Presbyter and Administrative Assistant.

Mechanics:

The Pastoral Team will serve as a commission, having authority to make its own decisions and spend within its budget, except for items requiring approval by the presbytery.

At the first meeting of each new class, the Pastoral Team will elect a team moderator and clerk.

The team clerk will provide minutes of all meetings to the Administrative Assistant and Stated Clerk for Presbytery packets, Team Meets, record keeping, website and any other shared communications.

Responsibilities:

The Pastoral Team partners with pastors and congregations to encourage spiritual growth and guidance.

This includes:

- Provide pastoral care for pastors and congregations
- Conduct congregational visits
- Create connections and relationships among congregations
- Participate in the Team Meet at least quarterly
- Plan the Tres Rios Big Event every other year

Other examples may include:

- Oversight of TRYC and/or other youth events
- Providing Officer training, Confirmation or other shared seminars/classes
- Facilitating participation in CRE training
- Providing continuing education opportunities to pastors
- Recommending educational resources

The Team will consider the following in all their responsibilities:

How can we partner?

Does this decision/action show respect?

Does this decision/action offer encouragement?

Does this decision/action inspire?

Appendix C

Tres Rios Vision and Outreach Team Job Description

Tres Rios Presbytery partners with pastors and congregations so that all feel respected, encouraged and inspired.

Membership:

The Vision and Outreach Team shall be comprised of 4 members nominated by the Leadership Recruitment and Representation Team and elected by the Presbytery. Each member will represent one of the four clusters. Members will serve a two-year term in classes (with the exception of the first class who will serve a three-year term) as follows:

Even year class: 1 clergy, 1 ruling elder

Odd year class: 1 clergy, 1 ruling elder

The Vision and Outreach Team has the power to appoint sub-committees and task forces as deemed necessary.

The Vision and Outreach Team is resourced by the Vision and Outreach Presbyter and Administrative Assistant.

Mechanics:

The Vision and Outreach Team will serve as a commission, having authority to make its own decisions and spend within its budget, except for items requiring approval by the presbytery.

At the first meeting of each new class, the Vision and Outreach Team will elect a team moderator and clerk.

The team clerk will provide minutes of all meetings to the Administrative Assistant and Stated Clerk for Presbytery packets, Team Meets, record keeping, website and any other shared communications.

Responsibilities:

The Vision and Outreach Team partners with pastors, congregations and officially established projects of the Presbytery to inspire vision and service to the community.”

The Vision and Outreach Team will plan the Tres Rios Big Event every other year.

Examples of the team’s other work may include:

- Partnership with established agencies and missions (such as Project Vida, Pasos de Fe, St. Andrews Mission, etc.)

- Church Development
 - Conducting community needs assessments
 - Promoting dialogue within the community
 - Partnering with Sessions to create life-giving vision
- Development of ecumenical and interfaith relationships
- Actively partnering with other presbyteries and/or the larger church

The Team will consider the following in all their responsibilities:

How can we partner?

Does this decision/action show respect?

Does this decision/action offer encouragement?

Does this decision/action inspire?

Appendix D

Tres Rios Pastoral Presbyter Job Description

The Pastoral Presbyter is a part-time employee of not less than 20 hours per week with the following responsibilities:

1. Facilitate the Pastoral Team's development of a strategy to partner with pastors and congregations to encourage spiritual guidance and growth. Participate in the implementation of this strategy as necessary.
2. Develop relationships with pastors and Christian educators in each congregation.
3. Attend to all necessary documentation and reporting.
4. Serve as official point of contact for the Pastoral Team.
5. Collaborate with other Presbytery staff.

The Pastoral Presbyter is accountable to the Personnel sub-team and the Presbytery.

Desired characteristics:

- Self-initiative
- Entrepreneurial spirit
- Spiritual Leadership
- Compassionate heart
- Good listener
- Skilled presenter and facilitator
- Knowledge of educational resources and opportunities

Appendix E

Tres Rios Vision and Outreach Presbyter

The Vision and Outreach Presbyter is a part-time employee of not less than 20 hours per week with the following responsibilities:

1. Facilitate the Vision and Outreach Team's development of a strategy to partner with pastors and congregations to inspire vision and service to the community. Participate in the implementation of this strategy as necessary.
2. Develop relationships with each congregation.
3. Attend to all necessary documentation and reporting.
4. Serve as official point of contact for the Vision and Outreach Team.
5. Collaborate with other Presbytery staff.

The Vision and Outreach Presbyter is accountable to the Personnel sub-team and the Presbytery.

Desired characteristics:

Self-initiator
Entrepreneurial spirit
Sensitivity to the diverse needs and perspectives of member churches
Passion for mission and for equipping others for mission
Skilled facilitator