

# Campus Ministry

*Review and Recommendations concerning the role and funding of campus ministry within the shared ministry and mission of the Synod of the Trinity.*

## Task Force

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## ADVISORY TASK FORCE

### DEFINED TASK AND QUESTIONS

Chosen and convened by the Transitional Executive, the central purpose of this task force was defined as reviewing, studying and analyzing the current and potential involvement of the Synod with regard to campus ministry. The group was “tasked” with recommending to the Transitional Executive whether or not the Synod of the Trinity should use its resources to incentivize and support campus ministry in a way that is consistent with the approved ends.

Related to any proposed affirmative answers to this question was the expectation that there might also be recommendations concerning “how” these resources might be employed in a manner both consistent with the approved “ends” and based upon current priorities.

The central questions that were being considered and wrestled with were the following:

- Do the current Synod “ends” justify continued engagement and support in campus ministry/higher education?
- If they are just “justified,” how much of a priority should they be?
- If they are a priority, how should that be expressed? Is the support/engagement to be immediate by the Synod and mediated through/with presbyteries and/or congregations?
- If there is a commitment to retain support and engagement, should that commitment be reflective of “seed” (startup) participation or sustaining (operational) participation or both or something altogether different? What should the relationship be between funding these initiatives and the other funding options within the Synod (Innovation, Partnership, New Worshiping Communities, etc.)?
- Should there be any limitations or focus of supported campus ministries either in local sponsorship, target audience or other variables? Should be principally Presbyterian or ecumenical in nature?

- In what ways, should be accountability in funding and implementation? Who is better prepared to ensure this connection (Synod, Presbytery, Congregation, other agency, etc.)?

## TASK FORCE PROCESS

Each member of the task force began receiving materials from the Transitional Executive in mid-June(2017) in anticipation of the first meeting scheduled for June 20, 2017. These materials included the following:

- First meeting docket
- Allocation history---PCUSA college, Protestant campus ministries, and congregation-based campus ministries
- Table Talk report (2008) from conversations conducted in each of the presbyteries
- Synod “Ends” documents
- Marks of Covenantal Campus Ministry
- History(anecdotal) of campus ministry prepared by the Transitional Executive

As members gathered for the first meeting, some of these documents were supplemented by the remembrances of each who have participated in campus ministry or higher education within the Synod over a long period of time. Each person shared the “wealth” of experience from the church, campus ministry and higher education that s/he brought to this task. Additionally, in order to provide context, Rev. Wonderland “walked” the group through the various documents that were made available to the task force.

Having reviewed some of the historical context of the relationship between the Synod and campus ministry/higher education, the task force focused on the meaning and implications of the primary and secondary ends of the Synod of the Trinity for the place or priority of campus ministries. In considering the role and future of campus ministry in relationship to the Synod, it was clearly established that this discussion was not a value judgment about campus ministry and its importance within the Church. Rather, these issues needing to be considered were their relationship (if any) with the purpose and goals of the Synod of the Trinity as a mid-council directed by these “ends.”

Through reviewing current and historical documents, engaging in exploration of current models elsewhere, and in working their way through these foundational questions, the task force deliberated and discussed the issues before it in order to complete the task. This took place through face-face meetings, WebEx meetings and

ongoing email communications. Assignments were made for exploring and identify other models and ways we could be thinking about the relationship. Individuals assumed responsibility for drafting specific portions of this report, but the work of individuals was crafted together in order to present a unified report representing the shared views of the task force. Ultimately, the conclusions reached later in this report represent a shared commitment and are presented as such to the Transitional Executive.

## TASK FORCE REVIEW

### History and Context

Historically, there has been a commitment for engagement and support for both campus ministries. Direct support for the United Ministries in Higher Education and the Westminster Foundation was a part of the annual budget of the Synod of the Trinity. After the funding model of UMHE was no longer viable, the Synod continued to support the ongoing campus ministries at a number of state universities in Pennsylvania. Meanwhile funding for campus ministries in West Virginia continued, as it is currently, through the statewide organization of the Westminster Foundation.

With an overture to the 1998 General Assembly, the development of a “church wide mission strategy for ministry to higher education in concert with middle governing bodies, congregations, and, where possible, ecumenical partners.” In “Renewing the Commitment,” the 213<sup>th</sup> General Assembly approved the report that was written by the Overture Response Committee, which included Sue Lowcock-Harris, Coordinator of Higher Education Ministry of the Synod of the Trinity.

Within the Synod of the Trinity, campus ministry was a priority in the early part of the 21<sup>st</sup> century through both staffing and a committee structure. Yet, with transitions over time, their level of active and viable engagement became diminished along with financial support levels. By September, 2008, there was interest in sponsored “table talks” around the various presbyteries of the Synod in order to evaluate the success of current efforts, hear the expectations of members and gauge their support for ongoing involvement in higher education and campus ministry as a mission priority of the Synod. In the fall, 2008, the Synod Assembly was to vote to remove campus ministry funding from the 2009 budget because of the “lack of accountability and lack of ownership by the presbyteries.” That motion failed, but did signify some level of questioning or dissent concerning whether or how the Synod should be involved in funding campus ministries. By 2010, through budgeting choices, allocations to individual campus ministries in Pennsylvania were significantly reduced (as a percentage). Meanwhile, the allocation to the Westminster Foundation(West Virginia)

had been reduced over a period of time from 2006-2012. During the 2010, 2011 and 2012 budget years, funding for the campus ministries in Pennsylvania (aggregate) and West Virginia (Westminster Foundation) were roughly comparable. Beginning at that point in time, a limited amount of funds began to be allocated through congregation-based campus ministries. At this same time, on a national level, UKIRK ministries were being developed and initiated in other parts of the country.

Meanwhile, the seven Presbyterian-affiliated colleges within the states of Pennsylvania and West Virginia continued to be part of the larger Synod commitment to higher education and campus ministry. Out of the seven institutions, five of them established “covenants” between the institutions and the Synod of the Trinity at the end of the “90’s” and into the “2,000’s.” These covenants were to be renewed by mutual agreement every five years, but there is no evidence that this was done. By 2009, Lafayette College had indicated that it no longer wanted a formal relationship.

During this period of two decades, several gatherings were organized, whether in meetings or retreats with college presidents, chaplains or campus ministry leaders. Sometimes these were discrete groups and sometimes together. More recent attempts at this type of programming have not been successful in attracting significant numbers.

Historically, each institution received a similar allocation amount from the Synod that was approximately \$16,000. While informally, there may have been expectations about its use (scholarships, campus ministry, etc.), there were no formal restrictions placed upon these awards. This funding level continued until a reduction began in 2007. From that point, amounts were \$10,000 (2007), \$7,143 (2008) and \$1,000 (2009) and continued at that smallest level until the present.

## **Policy Governance, the Synod and Campus Ministry**

Beginning in 2013, the Synod of Trinity began an exploration of its own purposes, structures and practices as a regional midlevel council engaged with sixteen presbyteries across two states. Influenced by and using approach of the Policy Governance model, foundational documents and organizational structures were developed and approved that included “Ends” statements, Statement of Executive Limitations, a new Manual of Operations, and the creation of a Synod Governing Commission. The Synod Assembly was changed from three meetings a year to two.

One of the key elements of this structure is empowering the executive in management of the means (the “how”) and giving authority for both strategy and tactics. Without relinquishing authority, the Executive may request additional insight and consideration

from particular groups of people. This Task Force represents one of these efforts. Any resulting work and recommendations are not binding and are for the purpose of providing input to the executive. Consequently, this report has been submitted only to the executive for her consideration and decision making about its usefulness, applicability or benefit.

Additionally, a central feature in this governance reorganization is the principle by which “owners” and “beneficiaries” are more clearly identified and published within the “Ends.” In the case of the Synod of the Trinity, the sixteen Presbyteries serve as both the “owners” (represented through their commissioners and the governing commission) and as the “beneficiaries.” (characterized by not only the official leadership and organizational structures of the mid-council, but ministries that are affirmed and supported within them). As a result, the Primary End of the Synod is stated as the following:

*As part of the Body of Christ, the Synod of the Trinity, through responsible use of shared resources, supports and challenges member Presbyteries to be vital, innovative, and faithful in their collaborative and distinctive callings.*

Additionally, secondary ends were established in a number of areas, but always focused on the “member presbyteries” or “presbytery leadership”

Into this context, the Campus Ministry Task Force was asked to study, evaluate and provide recommendations to the Transitional Executive who oversees the “means” by which the mission and purposes (ends) of the Synod are fulfilled. Because some of these changes have occurred through a process begun back in 2014, campus ministry agencies who have been funded through the Synod have been informed to anticipate that these changes in governance process and means of operation may have implications for the role and priorities of the Synod in funding campus ministries.

### **Task Force Conclusions**

In consideration of both the primary and secondary “ends” of the Synod of the Trinity, we believe there remains a possible role in support of campus ministry. Within the broader purposes of the Synod, the place of campus ministry might be viewed both as a viable expression of the fulfillment of some of the ends on one hand and as the very means to stimulate pursuit of these ends as well. Some have characterized ministry on and within campuses as the “research and development” (R&D) component of ministry within the broader Church. Such innovation may be worthy of ongoing consideration by the Synod as it resources presbyteries.

In reviewing particular ends, it also became apparent to us that there was sometimes a need to clarify the constituencies as defined. For example, how one understood terms such as “member presbyteries” or “Presbytery leaders” will inevitably have bearing on seeing any connection between the Synod and particular campus ministries. When thinking of those terms as only the “official” representations (eg. member presbyteries=presbyteries when assembled or their councils; presbytery leaders=moderators, executive staff, etc.), significant limitations might restrict more innovative and pioneering initiatives.

Nevertheless, the recognition that based upon the ends, presbyteries serve as both the “owners” and the “beneficiaries” of the ministry of the Synod requires the mission and strategy commitments to work in, with, for and through these groups, whether officially in standing committee structures or more informally with task groups and networks affirmed and encouraged by the presbyteries.

With these understandings, the Task Force believed that there was and could be a role relative to supporting campus ministry initiatives based upon the following secondary ends if the initiatives were affirmed and engaged by the Presbyteries:

- *To support and challenge member presbyteries to be vital, innovative, and faithful in their collaborative in this particular calling to continue to fulfill baptismal promises to those now in college;*
- *To connect presbytery leadership (not just Presbytery staff) for coordination, spiritual support and sharing best practices.*
- *To encourage innovation in, between and among presbyteries through use of human, programmatic and financial resources. (Campus Ministries may serve as the “R & D arm” of the Church)*
- *To extend partnership of member presbyteries in joint and shared mission and ministry (since many Campus Ministries appeal to people across several Presbyteries);*
- *To nurture relationships within the larger church for the purpose of greater witness.*

Yet, in affirming the consonance between the opportunities for support for campus ministries and the mission of the Synod of the Trinity, we recognized that ongoing pattern of interaction, support and connection has not necessarily operated in ways that fulfill the intentions of the ends where presbyteries are beneficiaries and focus of this level of mid-council ministry. Therefore, we believe, based upon the ends and possible priority of campus ministry, that the inclusion and engagement of Presbyteries is not only imperative, but has the potential to build relationships between the “people in the



pews” (even outside particular congregations personally engaged) and Campus Ministries. This might prove to be a valuable and more proximate relationship than possible through the central administration of a regional body(Synod) that covers two states. Without making campus ministry and its support purely the domain of interested local congregations, we agreed that this opportunity to strengthen nearby relationships is important. With possible ongoing Synod support, there would need to be the willingness to delegate and relinquish control enough in order to engage Presbyteries without just adding an additional layer of bureaucracy, administration and paperwork.

Consequently, we would propose that all campus ministry funding and support be channeled in and through presbyteries who are willing to either create or assign responsibility to a particular structure (standing committee, subcommittee, task force, network, etc.) There does not need to be a “one size fits all” category for all presbyteries, but each presbytery would need a designated group in order to maintain a local connection, support and “trusteeship” of campus ministries within their midst. This would be equally true whether the support is for campus ministries on private and state universities or within our Presbyterian-affiliated institutions.

In more recent years, grant processes have been revised within the Synod in order to have ensured at least the minimal involvement of presbyteries through the confirmation of the “presbytery leadership” that they had been apprised of and had the opportunity to review the grant application (eg. Innovative, Mission Travel, NWC, Partnership and Peacemaking). The grant programs related to the 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary (Abundance, Freedom) have integrally involve presbyteries in identifying partners or congregations who might both meet the criteria and benefit from such support. In some cases, presbyteries use this Synod support to stimulate additional support within the presbytery. While it is not clear whether or not the congregation-centered grants for campus ministry have engaged their respective presbyteries in order to receive support, we believe such involvement would be and is desirable not only in fulfillment of Synod ends, but to surround local campus ministries with interested connections within the region.

In practical terms, with the precipitous decline in financial support from 2005-2012, there may be justification for much more local and presbytery engagement in order to make determinations regarding mission and ministry priorities. This might be considered with an understanding of the availability of resources through ecumenical boards, local congregations as well as the presbytery, itself. With the limited amount of



funds being currently disseminated, decisions may need to be considered on questions such as:

- Should support be offered to as many ministries as possible even at lower amounts or should it be focused or prioritized? If so, based upon what criteria?
- Should support be offered on a continuing basis in undergirding ministry operations or should it be offered as part of start up or seed funds in order to initiate a ministry? Is it one or the other or both? How and when?

However the questions are approached and decided, decision makers closer to the “ground,” connected and engaged on an ongoing basis is more desirable. Hence, the need for integral presbytery engagement.

### **Task Force Recommendations**

As the result of these ongoing discussions and preliminary conclusions, the Task Force offers the following recommendations to the Transitional Executive for her consideration.

- Synod should support campus ministries in and through Presbytery engagement. This change may require the Synod to communicate effectively with the member Presbyteries about these new ways of supporting campus ministry. Differences in context for connecting Presbyteries with campus ministries may result in variations in approach.
- Synod should provide block grant support to Presbyteries based upon existing support (*same % of current budget through 2019*) for ongoing support and administration of campus ministries. In order for financial support to flow through Presbyteries, an identified entity (committee, subcommittee, task force, network, etc.) must serve as the agent on behalf of the presbytery not only for management and distribution of funds, but for interpretation and stewardship within the Presbytery. At the conclusion of the transition period (2019 budget year), the funding percentage would be reviewed by the Synod Executive in consultation with the Presbyteries.
- Synod should encourage use of the Innovation grant and New Worshiping Communities program for possible new and expanded campus ministry initiatives. These grants are available to all campus ministries, including Presbyterian-affiliated institutions. Presbytery involvement should be more than just a “sign off” that they have been apprised and read the application.

- Synod should incentivize with any new campus ministry opportunities that support and reinforce a joint or shared partnership across presbyteries.(where college and university campuses may reside close to more than one presbytery)
- Synod should initiate renewal of covenant relationships with each of the Presbyterian-affiliated institutions and consider including the immediate Presbytery(ies) in that covenant relationship. The annual funding should be designated for campus ministry programming.

While this report is only preliminary and does not address the many possible options going forward, we believe that it provides a worthwhile first step in responding to the task put before us. Therefore, we provide this report as an initial review and analysis with possible recommendations for the role and support of campus ministry consistent with the changes of recent years within the Synod of the Trinity and its approved mission and goals expressed through its “ends.”

## DOCUMENTS AND RESOURCES REVIEWED

- *“Ends” Statements of the Synod of the Trinity (2014)*
- *Governance Flow Chart and Means of Implementation Chart (visual explanations of Policy Governance model approved by the Synod of the Trinity)*
- *“Recent Mini History” from Early 2000’s to Present (prepared by the Transitional Executive)*
- *Allocation Spreadsheet of Synod of Trinity funds for Campus Ministry and PCUSA Affiliated Colleges---2006-2017*
- *Allocation Spreadsheet of Synod of Trinity funds for Congregation-based Campus Ministry – 2017*
- *Marks of Covenantal Campus Ministry*
- *Summary of Synod of the Trinity “Table Talks” ---2008*
- *Revised Rationale for Campus Ministry – 6/2017*
- *Completed Self Evaluations based upon “Marks of Covenantal Campus Ministry” and additional questions concerning Presbyterian connections and accountability*