

# **Blackhawk Presbytery Proposal for a “Visioning Task Force”**

## **Introduction**

The landscape of religion in America is changing. The Presbytery of Blackhawk has lost 10 congregations in 10 years. Total membership has fallen 29% during that same period and there is little suggesting this trend will end. The pace of change has accelerated with the pandemic. Blackhawk Presbytery is in a liminal moment – a break in time from church as we know it and a call for us to consider where we are going. This opportunity requires us to look to the future realizing some change may be loss and some change may lead to exciting new discipleship, witness, and mission. This proposal is a request to establish a Visioning Task Force to take an intentional look forward for the presbytery.

Evaluations of the presbytery, however defined, are not new to our leaders. The Life and Structure Task Force team completed an effort in 2004 that revised by-laws, evaluated assembly meetings, and modified our vision. The Crisis Management Task Force completed its work in 2017 resulting in an updated ecclesiastical manual, recreation of and focus for the Presbytery Council, and guidance for the separation of Stronghold Camp.

## **Goal of the Visioning Task Force**

The goal of the proposed Visioning Task Force is to take a deliberate look at the current situation of Blackhawk Presbytery and plan for where we might be in the next 5 – 10 years.

## **Key Activities**

The Task Force will consider the following activities

1. Examine: Look back at previous historical work that has shaped the presbytery and look at what other presbyteries are doing to prepare for the future.
2. Listen: Create discussion opportunities to hear what congregations, pastors, and leaders of presbytery entities feel we are doing well and what needs are unmet.
3. Dream: Discern what God is calling us to be and do in our communities.
4. Design: Consider what presbytery structures, communication, relationships, and processes will help move us forward.
5. Document: The finished product will be a plan presented to Council and the Presbytery Assembly. The work of the Task Force will include draft rewrites of the Presbytery Ecclesiastical Manual and By-laws.

## **Guiding Points**

Task Force work should be grounded in scripture, guided by the message of Jesus, and informed by the Book of Order. Our work should consider a relevant Biblical story that speaks to our context. The task force may consider books like *Canoeing the Mountains* by Bolsinger or *How to Lead When You Don't Know Where You Are Going* by Beaumont to guide their process. The Task Force may engage outside consultants if desired, pending budget approval.

### **Task-Force Members and Reporting**

The Task Force reports to Presbytery Council. The Task Force would include 5-7 people with a mix of minister members and ruling elders that represent the various contexts of the presbytery. The Task Force will be led by co-moderators. The co-moderators will select the remaining members of the Task Force. The Transformational General Presbyter would serve ex-officio and help guide this effort.

### **Timeline**

The goal would be to charter the Task Force by the April 2021 assembly meeting, develop a preliminary report to Council in 12 months, and present a final report to the September 2022 assembly meeting. The Task Force would provide updates at each Council and assembly meeting.

Approved by Presbytery Council February 23, 2021