

Stephen Sterner  
Executive Minister  
Local Church Ministries  
Report to Executive Council  
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Before I begin my report I want to say again how delighted I am to have such an outstanding group of new members joining with our outstanding continuing directors to engage the work of the LCM board for this next biennium. Welcome or welcome back to all of you.

I want to begin my remarks with three broad comments. First, I want to commend the LCM staff for continuing to be diligent in ministry in the face of both financial challenges and operational change. I appreciate and value their work. I also want to express gratitude to the team leaders and Betty Hall for working on a budget that continues our move to being more fiscally responsible while making additional dollars available for new initiatives and opportunities. This is not easy. There is more to do, but the cooperative spirit and energy evidenced in the budget you will be presented is a testimony to their vision and work. Third, I am very excited about this meeting because it represents something of a transition in our focus as a board and as the whole of LCM.

For the first two years of my time as Executive Minister we have been sorting out and shaking up—both of which have provided some anxious moments, but they also have by design and by the work of the spirit provided opportunities for ongoing discernment and direction. Our staffing, our budget, and our direction have a clearer focus now than they have had in recent years. We have two major new items in the budget that reflect something of our mission shift—the support for the Mentoring Church Project in the PLL budget and the Center for Progressive Renewal in the CVD budget. These will have more exposure later in this meeting. We are continuing to explore sharing of staff and resources with our Conference partners and other Covenanted Ministries. These go beyond collaboration in that they actually form new relationships of accountability and support.

In order to make this as brief as possible I want to outline where I think we are using an analogy from the principles of renewing congregations. The principle is simple. When renewing a local church the key is to remember that there are at least two entities to minister to: the existing congregation and the emerging one. Much of what we have been doing over these first two years, both intentionally and by accident has been sorting out our staff and resources roughly along these two lines of seeing the existing church and/or the emerging church as the focus of our mission. Please hear these cautions. Some of what we do belongs solely to one or to the other. Much of what we do is a combination of the two. Some staff are fixed solely on one, some solely on the other, but most move back and forth. I want to give you something of a broad sweep of what might be in each,

recognizing that I will be using generalizations if not gross characterizations to make my point, although I know that the picture is more complex than my categorization will allow. The existing church is of no more or less value or importance than the emerging church. The emerging church is of no more or less value than the existing church. Both are faithful. Both are important. Both are included in our mission.

I can't say this strongly enough: these are to some extent characterizations to make a point. These are not criticisms. They are descriptions. These are only examples from a long list of descriptive possibilities.

The Existing Church is far and away the largest partner in our mission from a numerical perspective. I would describe it this way:

- The existing church is interested in perpetuating where it is, or where its memory is.
- The existing church has members. Membership requirements are few.
- The existing church supports the wider church out of historic obligation, both financially and relationally.
- The existing church looks to the denomination for resources for its life.
- The existing church blames the denomination if its life is not what it would like.
- The existing church has lots of committees and focuses on programs.
- The existing church is often pastor or program driven.
- The existing church has been stable or declining for several decades.
- The existing church draws its identity from historic denominational theology and practices.
- The existing church sees technology as a tool to be used.

The Emerging Church is a much smaller partner numerically, although some existing churches are also increasingly stepping into elements of emerging churches. I would describe the emerging church this way:

- The emerging church is interested in moving to where its vision is.
- The emerging church is mission driven.
- The emerging church has less interest in structure and more in relational communities.
- The emerging church uses resources from multiple sources.
- The emerging church draws its identity from multiple connections and partnerships.
- The emerging church participates in and supports the denomination in those places where its mission and identity converge with the denomination.
- The emerging church has disciples. There are expectations for being a disciple.

- The emerging church sees technology as part of its ethos.
- The emerging church does not look to the denomination for its survival.
- The emerging church is drawn to networks and relationships more than historical theological ties.

There is much more that could be added here, but this gives you some sense of what I am talking about. There is considerable crossover and ambiguity to be sure.

We need to be attentive to both of these churches—new and emerging. We need to balance our staffing and our budget in appropriate ways in support of both. Increasingly the scales will be tilting to the emerging church. That will lead us to align our staff and budget accordingly over time. It will also lead us to rethink our mechanical structure in order to move to a more organic or systems form. In becoming more organic we might look for these characteristics to emerge:

- Less fragmentation of mission.
- Appropriate removal of boundaries.
- Increased flexibility—permission giving, not regulatory.
- Able to let things go—recognizing the life cycles of programs and mission.
- Built in accountability and assessment.
- Emphasis on networking and relationship.
- Flatter organization.
- Generative.

In doing this we must not lose sight of our mission around transformational leaders in transformational communities embodying and proclaiming the Good News of God's love and justice.