

To: Delegates to Anchorage and all NACCC Member Churches

From: Rev. Dr. Neil Hunt

RE: Strategic Planning Team Report of May 2010

The following document includes not only the final report dated May 20, 2010, but also the supporting documents which led the thinking of the team. We hope they will help our conversation at the Annual Meeting and Conference in Anchorage.

National Association of Congregational Christian Churches

STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE REPORT

May 20, 2010

Strategic or long-range planning is an important activity in all healthy organizations, and the NA is no exception. Over the years committees have been created to look forward into the future.

The present Strategic Planning Committee was appointed by the Executive Committee a few years ago. Its work has included reviews of historical documents related to planning, the Roosen Report, readings from current theological perspectives on church growth, denominational and association structure, and service delivery systems. The committee also developed a survey for member churches, reviewed the demographics of our member churches, and considered the wants and needs of our churches. For more than two years members worked independently and met via teleconference. Finally, to consider meaningful action and recommend intentional change in a pro-active rather than re-active fashion, the committee gathered for comprehensive face-to-face meetings at the Center for Congregational Leadership on October 8th and 9th 2009 and on May 19th and 20th 2010.

This report contains comments, conclusions, and recommendations meant to ensure the efficient and effective delivery of services to member churches in support of the NA's mission ...

***Bringing together Congregational Christian Churches
for mutual care and outreach to our world
in the name of Jesus Christ.***

THREE RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Restructure the National Association to better support four key functions ...
Congregational Leadership, Church Vitality, Outreach and Mission, and Administration and Development.
2. Revise the **service delivery model**.
3. Develop a system with **“year-round” church delegates**.

The report presents concepts. It does not identify specific implementation steps. If the concepts are affirmed, it is recommended that the present committee or a similar ad-hoc team be appointed to identify and recommend implementation steps and/or manage the implementation process.

To ground its work the committee drew up a list from stated **Church Wants and Concerns** (Attachment 1). Items on the list were compiled by referencing the Roozen Report, 2009 Church Survey results, calls to the NA office, and personal experiences. The list was prioritized by those present and key functional areas were identified. It is acknowledged that, despite its mission and passion, the NA is not able to fill every service desire. Referrals for services by regional associations and other organizations may yield more effective results, and the local congregation may need to address some of its own concerns.

As the list of church wants and concerns developed, the committee affirmed that the NA must continuously and diligently maintain a **‘bottoms up’ input** that is central to its planning and forms the basis for its existence. Healthy churches ensure a vibrant and healthy NA.

A review of geographical and statistical data (Attachments 2 and 3) provided insight as to who and where our members are.

With this foundation in place, the team considered how the NA might more effectively and efficiently deliver its services – how it might serve and change, and what constrains it from doing so (Attachment 4).

Reorganize to better support the NA’s four key functions

The NA is structured, legally, as two organizations, the Association and the Corporation. The Corporation forms separate divisions. This structure dates back more than 50 years to the NA’s formation and is reflective of the concerns of that time. Viewed now, after the NA has settled into mature form, its original well-intended **independent divisional structure is seen to create units of single-focused concern**, that sometimes block and often inhibit a collective effort to advance mutually important functions.

Whereas our present structure broadly directs that key activities be resolved through existing divisions -- CCD for church development, CFTS for ministerial development, DFM for ministerial support, Missions, and an administrative function for management of the Annual Meeting, communications, technical support, the Foundation, and personnel -- the committee believes it would be more effective to **organize around our key functions – Congregational leadership, church vitality, Outreach and Mission, and Administration and Development** (Attachment 5) with each function guided by an advisory team that sets policy and priorities while developing or vetting proposed action (attachment 6). A few benefits expected of this organizational change are:

- Reduced division size
- Replacement of 4 divisions with 3 advisory teams
- Corresponding reductions in operational costs
- Activities focused on core mission
- Mutual support for shared programs and services

- Improved divisional support of operating costs
 - For example the teams now operating as Congregational Church Development, Division for Ministry, Congregational Foundation for Theological Studies and the Missionary Society would jointly develop NA plans and budgets, and, valuing shared services, contribute appropriately to the Center for Congregational Leadership operational and program costs as well as NA administrative, personnel, and travel costs. Likewise, the CCL would develop and conduct programs on behalf CCD and others for presentation at the CCL, Annual Meetings, or regionally.
- Reduced Executive Committee size
- Executive Committee energy transitioned to provide increased support of mission-focused activities
- Executive Committee retains principal responsibility for representing member churches. It ensures current understanding of church wants and needs.

It is recommended that movement towards a new organizational structure be slow but deliberate. Advisory Teams might be established on an ad-hoc basis with representation of each present division. Eventually, after Teams establish credibility for effective performance, a change in the NA's bylaws should be initiated.

Revise the service delivery model

NA services are most often delivered by the NA staff. This model causes excessive travel costs, constrains service delivery to staff capacity, and limits staff engagement to individual churches, Annual Meeting presentations, or, occasionally, to regional events. It is recommended that the NA transition to a **regional service delivery model**.

As envisioned educated, trained, and empowered **regional personnel would deliver desired services whenever appropriate**. Services would be available more frequently because of proximity and increased capacity, and, as is often the case when local service is delivered locally, more effectively, more efficiently, and at lower cost. Since the likelihood of effecting change improves when more than one local church person is informed and motivated, this model can increase impact by attracting more people to its programs.

The model would also build **partnership relationships with regional associations** wherein service delivery is planned and developed together, limiting duplication and maximizing the strengths of both national and regional expertise and leadership.

While additional management and coordination time will be required, the change is expected to deliver these benefits ...

- More effective use of staff time – teaching people to fish
- Local church people empowered to act locally whenever appropriate
- Reduced travel costs
- Greater ability to serve more people and churches
- Increased local church participation
- Improved program impact.

- Stronger partnerships with regional associations
- Greater freedom for NA Staff to concentrate on programs that address long-term needs

Illustrations of New Ways of Working

A **pilot program** underway in southeastern **Michigan** is an example. One person is being educated and trained in church conflict management, increasing our capacity to deliver this service. Expansion to other services is envisioned. Examples include intentional transitional ministry, NA representation at regional events such as ordinations and installations, and response to inquiring churches.

A **new program** being established in **New York - New Jersey** is illustrative of the potential for greater success through regional effort. The New York – New Jersey association is about to begin a 12 to 18 month church leadership development program in which participating local church boards and committees will meet in several sessions to learn together thereby increasing their power to effect positive change and growth in their individual churches.

Programs such as these that reach more people and respond to expressed local needs are acknowledged as important because they **deliver more services more effectively** with a greater potential for lasting results, and regional program expertise can potentially be shared in other regions.

Other variations of this model include **driving change through grants** wherein the NA challenges regional associations to apply for grants directed at areas of defined need. Selected proposals would be expected to meet pre-determined deliverables and would be required to report progress and results. In this form services are promoted and at least partially funded nationally but delivered locally through motivated individuals and regional groups

It is not yet clear how regional service delivery might be organized. One consideration is that 3 service areas be developed (east, central, west). Another is that 6 areas be created replicating our present church clusters (see Attachment 2). Still another possibility is that we serve directly through the 18 existing regional associations.

It is recommended that transition to this model be developed through pilot programs that develop techniques and test effectiveness. As experience is gained the model will evolve and desired structural changes will become clear.

Year-round Delegates

Technological advances provide increased opportunities to engage our churches in our work. It is recommended that church **delegates participate more frequently** in the dialog that shapes our priorities and choices.

While Annual Meeting participation will continue to be of significant importance into the foreseeable future, periodic communications that both inform and solicit responses has

value in **increasing the flow of information to and from our churches**. An engaged year-round delegate, whose opinions are sought periodically, maintains an active interest in the activities, issues, and functions of the NA, potentially championing the NA to the church and the church to the NA. For churches whose interest in the NA wanes because no current need for direct NA services exists, a deliberate, meaningful program of involvement will enhance and sustain its connection.

It is recommended that the Executive Committee create **opportunities for delegate information sharing** throughout its work year, increasing ‘bottoms up’ input from churches. A possible application is a fall and early spring poling of delegate opinion on issues being considered by the Executive Committee. Actual voting issues may not be presented until the process stabilizes and technical issues are resolved, but that is a possible future benefit. As the process evolves, electronic responses to specific questions will be possible, enhancing the timely accumulation of response data. Even churches without IT capabilities now have increasing access to the Internet through local libraries permitting electronic responses to mailed inquiries.

It is also envisioned that a robust and settled program of year-round delegate participation will **decrease the business meeting portion of the Annual Meeting** and permit a corresponding increase in the Conference portion.

Advantages of a developed year-round delegate program are ...

- Increased dialog to and from our churches – increases ‘bottoms up’ input
- Improved engagement of churches in NA activities
- More accurate information flow to and from churches
- Evolving improvement in Annual Meeting function
- Meaningful continuous church and NA contact during times of diminished need for NA services
- Potential reduced Executive Committee size due to enhanced church representation.

Development of this program will require more focused review of possibilities, obstructions, and process requirements. To begin, it is recommended that the Executive Committee champion this task. It is observed that such a program would begin a significant transition in our church representation process while demonstrating the Executive Committee’s willingness to engage change by reshaping itself.

What next?

As these proposals were considered and developed, additional worthy topics became apparent. With the Executive Committee’s encouragement, the Strategic Planning Committee will continue work on the following subjects and others the Executive Committee may suggest.

The NA’s **fundraising, administration, and management** could be better organized to encourage contributions and align causes with the broader purposes and needs of the NA while providing donor recognition and observing donor use restrictions.

Reforming the NA's **governance** process could improve the quality of both volunteer contributions and service outcomes at potentially reduced cost. Topics to be addressed include ...

- Revising the nominating process to improve diversity (sex, color, ethnicity, region, clergy/laity) while seeking and identifying needed leadership talents.
- Realignment of leadership team management activities as mentioned in earlier – advisory teams, reduced committee and division structures, alignment of NA and Foundation structures to ensure full utilization of needs and talents.
- Creative use of leadership team members as service terms expire.
- Succession planning for executive staff

Developing a **structured future planning** process would ensure a continuous, thoughtful look into the future needs of member churches and the NA response thereto. As churches adapt to serving God in an ever-changing world, the NA must nimbly respond. A structured look into the future will keep us alert to service delivery needs and improvements.

The Strategic Planning Committee welcomes thoughtful responses to its proposals and looks forward to an opportunity to develop an implementation proposal.

... The Strategic Planning Committee

Neil Hunt, Chair, Bob Carlson, Jim Hopkins, Mark Jensen, Art Voisin,
Jim Waechter, and, from staff, John Carson, Betsey Mauro, and Tom Richard.

Attachment 1 – Church Wants and Concerns

Attachment 2 - Geographic Description of NACCC Member Churches

Attachment 3 – Compilation of NACCC Member Church Statistics

Attachment 4 – Serving and Changing

Attachment 5 – How does the NACCC organize to serve the local church?

Attachment 6 – Function Chart

Revision 2, 1 June 2010

**GEOGRAPHIC DESCRIPTION OF NACCC MEMBER CHURCHES
YEARBOOK 2009**

(compiled by Rev. Dr. D. Elizabeth Mauro – Oct 6, 2009)

Number of Churches: 416 in 36 states:

AK 5	IA 10	MN 9	OK 1	VT 3
AL 5	IL 26	MO 4	OR 2	WA 6
AZ 3	IN 9	NC 3	PA 10	WI 32
CA 29	KS 5	NE 6	RI 2	WV 1
CO 3	MA 37	NH 12	TN 1	WY 1
CT 25	MD 1	NJ 6	TX 1	
FL 13	ME 40	NY 13	UT 1	Rprtd Members
GA 5	MI 62	OH 23	VA 1	58,239*



West Segment

AK 5	(377)
AZ 3	(666)
CA 29	(5925)
CO 3	(96)
NE 6	(428)
OK 1	(30)
OR 2	(234)
TX 1	(250)
UT 1	(300)
WA 6	(482)
WY 1	(20)

Total: 58 churches
Reported Members: (8,808)

* of those reporting



Central Segment

IA 10	(1399)
IL 26	(3120)
IN 9	(746)
KS 5	(833)
MI 62	(10269)
MN 9	(4693)
MO 4	(314)
OH 23	(4541)
WI 32	(5664)

Total: 180 churches
Reported Members: (31,579)

South Segment

AL 5	(227)
FL 13	(3417)
GA 5	(241)
NC 3	(367)
TN 1	(67)

Total: 27 churches
Reported Members: (4,319)

East Segment

CT 25	(3258)
MA 37	(3686)
MD 1	(100)
ME 40	(3073)
NH 12	(877)
NJ 6	(630)
NY 13	(1216)
PA 10	(387)
RI 2	(50)
VA 1	(44)
VT 3	(187)
WV 1	(20)

Total: 151 Churches
Reported Members: (13,533)

How would we like to serve churches?

What would we like to be and do?

- Nimble – responsive
- Promote our vision
- Embody the tradition – Tell the story
- Goal is service delivery
 - Deliver our services well (quality) – efficiently and effectively
- Infuse our church wants and needs into our main focus areas
- Direct funds to 4 major functions: Leadership, Vitality, Outreach, Administration
 - Ability to spend funds wisely
- Restructure the organization
 - Remove silos
- Pay more attention to technical support and data base management
- Creative ways to be with our churches

How would we like to change?

How would we like to do it?

- New models of service delivery
 - Partnerships with regional associations
 - 3 regions – 6 regions – 18 present associations
 - Church vitality teams
 - Trained specialists, consultants, team leaders
 - Programs at the CCL
 - Partnership with existing external resources
 - Other educational institutions, organizations
- Year-round delegates

What are our constraints?

What inhibits our ability to perform more effectively?

- Fear of change .. of loss .. of what has been
 - False Evidence Appearing Real
- Loss of institutional memory (the people in the pew)
- Too much institutional memory (leadership team)
- Loss of control – within the NA leadership team
 - Turf concerns, passions too narrow or too broad
- Same leaders – too few new and fresh faces
 - The nominating structure does not serve us well.
- Financial concerns – NA and Personal
- Annual Meeting: Need a higher perceived value for the Annual Meeting
 - More people should attend when not on the leadership team
 - Move to conference format is correct
 - Reform: moderator function / business meeting / conference focus
- Institutional inertia – inability to act
- Too process oriented .. instead of purpose oriented
- Delegate buy-in for change
- Passions are too narrowly focused
- Loss of focus – our mission needs to be at the heart of what we do
- Structure
 - Form does not follow function
 - 50 year old bylaws don't fit present circumstances
- Need to define ourselves by mission – not by office

Church Wants and Concerns

Attachment 1

Strategic Planning Team opinions based on Survey responses, calls to the NA office, and personal experience.

Item	NA Focus Area				Votes Received *
	Leadership	Vitality	Outreach	Administration	
Being the Attractive Church	XXX	XXX			6
Pastoral Leadership	XXX	XXX		XXX	6
Help Strengthening Leadership	XXX	XXX			6
Conflict Management	XXX	XXX			5
A Service Center for Solutions				XXX	5
Help Defining Church Priorities	XXX	XXX			4
Stronger Regional Association				XXX	4
Stewardship Training/Education	XXX	XXX			4
Membership Loss Concerns	XXX	XXX	XXX		3
Telling the Congregational Story	XXX		XXX		3
Mission Giving (broad) - \$, effort, skills	XXX	XXX	XXX		2
Aging Populations Concerns	XXX	XXX			2
Help with Youth Ministry	XXX	XXX			2
Help with Spiritual Life	XXX	XXX		XXX	1
Tech Help				XXX	1
Call for Hospice (dying church)				XXX	0
Facility Needs	XXX	XXX			0
Sunday Competition	XXX				<u>0</u>
					54

* Priority determined by Team. Voting method: 9 participants - 6 votes each - distributed 1 to all 6 per item = 54 votes available.

* NA Focus Area: Broad NA Service Functions. Boxed, bold item Indicates prime focus area for each need.

Strategic Planni Team

Olivet - OCT 20

NA Focus Areas and Organization

Congregational Leadership
Center for Congregational Leadership

Education
Partnership with Olivet
Ministers: **find, educated, develop, place**
Seminary education
Lay ministry
Polity
Congregational story

Distance Education
Seminars / Conferences
Stewardship
Planning

How does the NA organize to serve the local church?

Church Vitality
Church Growth and Development

New churches
Strengthening existing churches

Outreach and Missions

Missions: local, national, international
Advocacy / Fiduciary
Sharing resources with others
Enabling local churches to define their raison d'etre

Outreach
Telling the Congregational Story
Inquiring churches
Partnerships: churches to each other

Attachment 5

Administration and Development

Annual Meeting
Pastoral Search - Advice / Support
Financial services
Youth services
Communications
Foundation / Funding
Donor Development
Technical services
Information Systems
Data base management
internal - outsourcing
external - church support

Function Chart

Attachment 6

