

ITEM D.201 FOR INFORMATION

Collegiate Ministries Update

www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/collegiate/

Mission Associate Bio:

Jason Brian Santos joined the Presbyterian Mission Agency as the Mission Associate for Collegiate Ministries in October of 2014. His last call was as the Associate Pastor for Children, Youth and Young Adults at New Wilmington Presbyterian Church, in New Wilmington, PA. He is an ordained teaching elder in the PCUSA and holds a Ph.D. in practical theology from Princeton Theological Seminary, where he was named a Timothy Scholar for research on the spiritual formation of youth and young adults.

Report on Past and Present Ministry

Over the past five years, the Office of Collegiate Ministries has undergone several organizational and leadership transitions. The 2010 task force for Collegiate Ministries made a recommendation to develop a fuller network under the branding “UKirk,” a labeling that took effect after the 220th General Assembly (2012). While over 100 campus ministries and associates have transitioned to this new branding, there are many Presbyterian campus ministries still considering associating with the UKirk network.

www.ukirk.org/

Since arriving in October, the Associate has visited over 15 campus ministries and consulted with over two dozen campus ministers and chaplains. These visits and consultations opened doors to dialogue about the current climate of campus ministry in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). The most salient concerns voiced were around financial/fund raising challenges, denominational support, lack of resources, and isolation in ministry. The “best practices” observed and reported focused on liturgical worship, intergenerational ministry, development of student leadership, and connection to mid-council judicatories as a means of broader support.

Finally, it is clear that there still exists considerable ambiguity about the UKirk network and what it is/how it functions. Efforts were made at the 2015 UKirk board meeting to identify five characteristics that both reflect the current exemplary practices in college ministries and demonstrate areas of emphasis for the future. The identified areas of emphasis are:

1. **Radical Hospitality**—is an effort to move congregations and campus-based ministries beyond just serving college students a free meal. This emphasis compels us to ask deeper questions about the perceived needs of college students and how we might welcome them into our communities.
2. **Intentional Ecumenism**—is recognition that many UKirk chapters are places for interdenominational and ecumenical fellowship. We value this diversity and understand that it is representative of a broader search among college students to engage faith beyond their denomination background. Though we are guided by a reformed theology and ethos, we also desire to extend our efforts in faith formation to all spiritual seekers.
3. **Critical Engagement in Faith**—is an emphasis that seeks to preserve and promote the historic tradition of critical thought around faith, which when coupled with the exploratory nature inherently found in institutions of higher learning, creates an environment for college age students to work out their faith in community.

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4. **Intergenerational Ministry**—is a central theme that raises awareness around the importance of embracing college students with the whole congregation. This emphasis is of particular significance for churches directly adjacent to college and university campuses.
5. **Social Justice Initiatives**—is an emphasis that finds its expression both locally and nationally/globally. In the next three to five years, UKirk will launch nationally-supported local and global social justice initiatives.

Report on Future Ministry

Using these five emphases as a guide for ministry, the Office of Collegiate Ministry is launching the UKirk Cohort Project. The Cohort Project is at the center of how we hope to help form campus ministers and chaplains, professionally and spiritually. The Cohort Project aims at addressing the central needs expressed by campus ministers, while also promoting identified best practices from the field. Every UKirk affiliate will be assigned to a regional cohort, which will meet annually. Each gathering will be comprised of 10-13 participants and take place in a rental home for a three-nights/four-days regional retreat.

The curriculum for these cohorts stem from the pedagogical method of *shared praxis* (see Thomas Groome, *Christian Religious Education*, 1999). Every participant in the cohort will share from their own ministry context, engage in conversation around ministry practices and challenges, explore how their ministries are theologically undergirded (or not), consider a set curriculum (defined and directed by the associate for collegiate ministries) aimed at helping them function more faithfully in their ministry, and strategize how they will integrate those topics into the life of their ministry. Additionally, it should be noted that these cohorts are the basis for our local and global social justice initiatives.