

ITEM D.201
FOR INFORMATION

NEW BEGINNINGS UPDATE

whatisourfuturestory.com

New Beginnings is an assessment-based discernment process for churches that seek to make a bold decision about their future. It was originally designed for use by churches struggling with issues of viability and sustainability but it has also proven helpful to those that, while still viable, are stuck in a pattern that leads to decline. It is designed to take roughly five to eight months from start to finish, though many of the churches are taking longer than that. It happens in four phases: assessment, leader training, discernment (thru small groups), and decision-making. Churches participate in one of two ways; either on their own or with a cluster of churches sponsored by a presbytery.

1. Number of churches that have gone through New Beginnings:

Previous years:

2010 - 7
2011 - 39
2012 - 90
2013 - 92
2014 - 167

This year: 2015 – 84 (thru July)

36 more estimated (16 of those confirmed)
Total estimated = 120

Total actual to date: 479

2. Actually making New Beginnings happen:

In early 2015 we lost one of our team members, Julie Olt, to a new call and so I had to pick up all the scheduling. I covered that portion of the work until our new scheduler, Alicia Demartra-Pressley, came on board in June. That reality slowed down my work on resource improvement and development. Alicia is now on board and while she is still learning the ropes, she has jumped right in and is picking things up quickly.

We have had productive conversations with our legal and human resources staff to determine the most effective way in which to write contracts for the many independent contractors needed for the New Beginnings process. Our desire is to live into a balance between compliance to Presbyterian Mission Agency (PMA) policies and procedures and mission. The issue we are dealing with is having the clearest guidelines possible for New Beginnings contractors being contractors and not employees of the PMA. We hope to agree on a system that 1) is not overly complicated to implement, 2) will not cause PMA difficulties with IRS and other authorities, 3) will not impose excessive uncertainties and financial difficulties on the program and the contractors, while 4) enabling effective and valuable mission. This conversation is ongoing and should be wrapped up by fall.

PRESBYTERIAN MISSION AGENCY BOARD
September 23-25, 2015
Theology, Formation and Evangelism Ministry Area

We began work in 2014 on clarifying the financial picture of New Beginnings, work that is still ongoing. We have financed the cost of providing New Beginnings in part through the fee we charge for using it. This fall we will look at issues such as pricing and what amounts to sustainable costs associated with the program.

3. New Areas of Development

We began partnering with San Gabriel Presbytery to do a pilot project using New Beginnings with the presbytery itself in 2014 and this is still ongoing. It is not clear yet whether this resource will be adaptable to presbyteries.

We have used New Beginnings with a few larger churches and it has proven to be helpful to some of them. Evaluations show, however, that we have some work to do to rewrite the report template and possible portions of the curriculum to reduce the temptation of the larger congregation to dismiss the report and process as only for struggling churches.

Respectfully submitted,

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Associate for Church Growth and Transformation