A Proposal for Revision

Synod Ministry Cohorts
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The proposal for structural revision that was introduced at the 2017 Southeastern Synod Assembly includes the following description:

“A Synod Ministry Cohort consists of 15-25 congregations in a geographical area within the synod. Synod Ministry Cohorts exist to foster cooperative/collaborative efforts among congregations and agencies that are in proximity to one another. The goal is to strengthen each local community of faith while enhancing approaches to shared mission.”

Let’s unpack that a bit.

These geographically defined areas/territories within the synod are called “cohorts” because of the relational nature of ministry. A cohort is a “group of people banded together,” or working together. That is the point—congregations, agencies, and other partners working together - partnering with each other when a collaborative effort enhances our shared mission and strengthens the local community of faith.

The boundaries of these ministry cohorts reflect the combination of existing conferences. That means that in most cases, congregations with a history of relating to each other in conferences will find themselves in the same ministry cohort. But ministry cohorts are not intended to function like conferences have operated in the past. There is no requirement for the entire cohort to gather for assemblies and the collaboration within the area is most likely to take shape among smaller groups within the same area.

Like with any comprehensive plan, one aspect is closely related to, even intertwined with, other parts of the plan. That is the case here. Ministry cohorts will be the areas on which synod council membership is based. This allows for the council to reflect more accurately the membership distribution across the synod. And deans from within ministry cohorts will be appointed to serve the synod by relating to ministry partners throughout the ministry cohort. (Watch for the next blog where Bishop Burk will be writing about deans in the proposed structure).

In the end, the important thing to keep in mind about Synod Ministry Cohorts is that their purpose is to embody what it means to be “in the this together” as the people of God in the Southeastern Iowa Synod.