

Dear Lead Pastor and Church Chair,

At our upcoming Annual Meeting of the Great Lakes Conference (held during the GLC Annual Celebration, April 19-20, 2024), two important delegate interactions will take place that advance preparation would make more meaningful (and enjoyable):

- a. Delegates will vote on changes to our GLC Constitution and Bylaws. (See **“Comments on Constitution/Bylaw Revisions”** below)
- b. Delegates will be invited to give input on behalf of your church that will help our GLC Board, GLC Staff, and ultimately the GLC Annual Meeting to formulate the GLC’s mission direction to help GLC churches move forward in their local ministries. See **“Comments on Ministry Planning Cycle”** below.

In anticipation of those interactions, I am writing with two requests:

1. As soon as possible, begin the process of selecting your 2024 GLC Annual Meeting delegates. For reasons that will be evident below, it would be helpful if at least one of your delegates were a member of your Council/Leadership Team. It would be very helpful if your delegates could be identified by the end of January (2024) so they can attend a Zoom “GLC Annual Meeting Information Session” in the month of February.
2. If you have answers to the following Mission and Vision questions pertaining to the ministry of your church, then please (a) share your answers with your delegates, and (b) send your answers to Jody Eidnes in the GLC Office (Jody@greatlakes.cc):
 - a. Why has God placed your church - with the congregation you currently have - in the community where you are located? Why are you there?
 - b. What resources (opportunities, relationships, skills, talents, strengths, or other assets) are already in place that are helping you move in the direction of where/how you believe God has called your church?
 - c. Is there a gap in the church’s resources that needs to be bridged in order to fully move into where/how God has called the church?

While it would be helpful to have answers that are as complete as possible, one or two pages will be fine. We hope that many delegates to this year’s Annual Meeting will be able to share their church’s response to these questions. But we recognize that a number of our churches do not currently have clear, agreed-upon answers to these questions and will need time beyond the 2024 Annual Meeting in order to answer them. If your church is one of them, we encourage you to contact Peg Cichon (Missional Vitality Liaison) or Garth McGrath to begin a conversation about Missional Vitality and strategic planning resources available to help your church answer those questions. (See **“Comments on the Ministry Planning Cycle”** for more information.)

Thanks for your consideration of these two requests. Please see the additional comments below my name, and feel free to call me with any questions you may have.

Respectfully,

Garth McGrath

Comments on the Constitution and Bylaw Revisions

*Governing documents that reflect current reality and clearly delineate healthy organizational boundaries are a necessity for healthy mission. The Constitution and Bylaw revisions that were read into the minutes of our GLC Annual Meeting in 2023 will be voted on by delegates at the 2024 Annual Meeting. This past year's delegates requested that introductory and background information be shared with delegates to the 2024 Annual Meeting on the proposed changes prior to the 2024 Annual Meeting so that delegates would be fully prepared to vote. In order to fulfill the commitment that was made in response to the request (mail the documents before January and convene information sessions prior to the 2024 Annual Meeting), the proposed changes will be mailed (hard copy) to each church in December, and 3 "town meeting" type gatherings will be conducted via Zoom in the month of February to explain the changes and answer questions. For this reason, it would be good to have delegates from GLC Churches identified by the end of January. **Please send the names and contact information for these people to Peg Wolter (peg@greatlakes.cc) in the GLC office so we can communicate with them about zoom call arrangements.***

Comments on The Ministry Planning Cycle

Background

The GLC exists to serve Covenant Churches in the Great Lakes Region. According to our Constitution and Bylaws, The Annual Meeting, which is comprised of delegates from Conference Churches, is the highest deliberative and decision-making body of the GLC. The GLC Executive Board and Staff would like to engage the Annual Meeting delegates - and through them the churches - in a planning process that is consistent with the traditions of the Covenant and in concert with the Holy Spirit's work in and through the churches so that delegates to our Annual Meeting can make informed decisions about the GLC's mission direction. We are calling this new initiative the "Ministry Planning Cycle."

Key Questions

As noted above, we are asking all of our churches to consider these three questions:

1. Why has God placed your church - with the congregation you currently have - in the community where you are located? Why are you there?
2. What resources (opportunities, relationships, skills, talents, strengths, or other assets) are already in place that are helping you move in the direction of where/how you believe God has called your church?
3. Is there a gap in the church's resources that needs to be bridged in order to fully move into where/how God has called the church?

The best source of answers to these questions is the Council/Leadership Team of the church (which includes the Lead Pastor). We recognize that unless your church has already developed answers to similar "Mission and Vision" questions, then it may be difficult to develop this in a short time. It is our goal to serve the churches, not burden them. At the same time, the input from your church is needed to help us help all of our churches, including yours. We may reach out to you to see how this is going and offer assistance. We have staff who are experienced in helping church leadership groups through these types of questions who would love to come alongside you. If you think that would help in your church, please call the GLC office, or get in touch with Peg Cichon (616-510-1221; pegkohring@gmail.com). We will incorporate every input from your church into the prayerful discussions that go into developing the

GLC's mission direction, whether your input is received during this current step of the Ministry Planning Cycle leading up to the 2024 Annual Meeting or during one of the future steps outlined below.

Shaping Direction

Following the 2024 Annual Meeting, our Conference Board will take the information that is received and begin to shape the form of the GLC mission direction, take note of possible ministry connections between the churches, and celebrate the fruitful local ministry that is taking place in the GLC churches.

Refinement

Between this Annual Meeting and the next, the GLC Board and Staff anticipate that we will have 2-3 online meetings with the 2024 Annual Meeting delegates. Together we will clarify and expand on what was discussed in the 2024 Annual Meeting, note any developments that might modify the GLC mission direction being developed, and then agree on a GLC mission direction for submission to the 2025 Annual Meeting.

Mission Direction

A major goal of the 2025 Annual Meeting will be to communicate, possibly amend, and then approve the proposed mission direction of the GLC. Additionally, we will identify and further the possible ministry connections between the churches and celebrate the individual church ministry that is taking place. From this process the mission direction of the GLC (what we focus on in how we support the churches) will be set for the next several years until we start the cycle again.