

## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

On Tuesday, May 31, 2011, the Presbytery of San Diego held a gathering at the Village Presbyterian Church in Rancho Santa Fe to discuss requests we are receiving from churches that want to transfer into our presbytery. At that gathering, we listened and learned what some of the questions are that people are looking for answers to. While not listing every single question, here are some of the key questions that were raised, and our initial answers:

1. What criteria would be used to screen churches wishing to transfer in to our presbytery?  
We would develop a series of questions to understand their purpose, culture, and mission. We would look at their level of agreement with some of our statements, such as our Essential Tenets/What We Believe, our Missional Vision, and our Standards of Ethical Conduct. We would look to see how common ground exists between our ministries.
2. Would we ever say “no” to a request to transfer in?  
Yes, we would. While there is no such thing as a perfect church, we have no desire to add “problem churches” to our presbytery. Churches that are extremist, rigid, inflexible, arrogant, strident, or focused on one issue, would not be a good fit here. Churches that want to re-open issues that we have already decided would not be a good fit here. Churches that are wanting to make a statement would not be a good fit here. We would welcome churches that are grounded in historical Reformed theology, missional aspirations, and ethical relationships. We would welcome churches who want to be in a covenant, learning community with us. We would welcome churches that exhibit a generous orthodoxy, a spirit of graciousness, humble convictions, and who understand our culture. We would welcome churches who love God, love people, love their communities, and who are looking for fresh ways to connect with the hurting world around us. We would welcome churches who have a passion to participate in the mission of God. We would welcome churches where we can benefit and learn from each other.
3. Would this violate the Book of Order?  
The Book of Order allows for the transfer of the First Presbyterian Church of Honolulu, as we share a geographic border of the Pacific Ocean. Changes would have to be made in our current polity to allow for the transfers of Glenkirk and Covina. We are in conversations with our synod and the Office of the General Assembly to explore what possibilities might exist. Changes in our current polity would also need to be made to allow for a church from Mexico to join us.
4. What are the financial implications?  
We will take a look at the financial condition of each church requesting to transfer in, asking about their debts, loans, and insurance. We want to make sure we have a good understanding of where they stand.
5. What would be our increased financial costs?  
We would likely have increased costs for people travelling for presbytery meetings, training events, and other conversations and gatherings. These costs would be more than offset by the new per capita contributions we would collect.

6. What changes would result from churches transferring in?  
We might need to build in more relational time at presbytery meetings to get to know each other and our ministries. We would look for ways to help people connect. We would invite them to support our missions. We might be invited to get to know some new missions these churches are involved in. We would seek to learn how to involve people in committees and fellowship groups through internet, skype, and technology, like some presbyteries are already doing.
7. How does a church in Hawaii actually become involved here from so far away?  
This would be a great learning experiment for us. They have been doing this for over 50 years with the presbytery in LA, so we can learn how to do this from them – learning what has worked well in the past and how it can be improved. If needs arise for PJs, ACs, or if there are legal challenges, we can learn how they have handled these before. Many CPMs already oversee candidates who live many hours away.
8. Will this increase our decrease our diversity?  
Each congregation has its own unique personality. This would increase our diversity. We have learned that even people who say they are in the same “theological camp” often have many diverse views. This would increase our racial ethnic membership. We would strive to find the right balance between likeness and diversity.
9. Will this serve the whole church?  
We believe it can. If a church is excited about its presbytery, it is more likely to be involved and encourage its people to give, than if they are not. If people feel better about their presbytery, they might feel better about their denomination.
10. Are churches just coming here to make it easier to leave the denomination?  
We have no desire to be a stepping stone for churches to leave. If that is why they want to come here, they should not come here. They should leave from where they are. We will not be pressured to leave the denomination.
11. Would we still focus on local issues?  
Yes. In the same way that a congregation focuses on its local community as well as missions around the world, we would continue to focus on local issues, but gain increased awareness of what God is doing in other parts of our world.
12. Is it either/or – geographical or theological/missional – or it is both/and?  
It is both/and. Nothing is truly non-geographical. We already have presbyteries where it takes ten hours to drive from one end to the other. We simply look for common ground areas that can increase our connections and our ministry effectiveness.
13. How can we be gracious?  
By remembering what it was like to be the first time guest in a congregation or attending our first presbytery meeting where we didn’t know anyone. If we take the initiative to welcome people and show hospitality, people will be grateful and return the favor. Ministry is always about the relationships.