

A Conversation with Glenkirk and Covina  
For the May 31, 2011 Presbytery Conversation  
Written by Rev. Bob Davis

On Monday, April 28, 2011, at the invitation of Rev. Jim Miller of the Glenkirk Presbyterian Church in Glendora, CA, the Rev. Mike McClenahan of Solana Beach and the Rev. Bob Davis of Chula Vista went to meet with their session. Also in attendance was Andrea Messenger, who is one of the pastors of the Covina First Church.

1. Mike and Bob first thanked them for the invitation to meet. We provided a little background on San Diego Presbytery, indicating that we were there to hear from them, to talk about some ideas; however, we had no authority to make any representations on behalf of the presbytery. We gave a brief history of the development of the Presbytery of San Diego over the last decade -- Essential Tenets, Way Forward Work Group, the Missional Commitment, and the idea that we wanted to "Lead, Not Leave".

2. We shared our standard for developing these conversations is this: given San Diego Presbytery's identity and mission, does a partnership with this congregation make sense? Specifically, how does the ministry of the congregation complement the call and direction of this presbytery and how does the ministry of this presbytery complement the call and direction of the congregation?

In short, there is no desire to add to our rolls for the sake of adding to our rolls; nor is there any desire to be a "presbytery of refuge" regarding ordination standards. Again, the point is that requests are coming and we should be equipped to make prayerfully discerned choices.

3. We also shared our initial framework for the conversation for the Presbytery of San Diego is to determine what -- if any -- developments or experiments we are called to pursue. We emphasized how San Diego had not even begun to engage in this conversation yet; thus, no matter what, they should expect some bumps and inconsistent kinds of responses from us going forward. There is not an assumption that change will be the discerned response; however, given the rate and scope of the inquiries that have been coming, it seems to make sense to pose the question to the presbytery so that we can have that conversation.

We asked what they wanted from a presbytery. We asked what attracted them to San Diego Presbytery. We asked how they were handling their desires to move with San Gabriel Presbytery; how they were addressing the legitimate questions that should be posed. We asked how our description of San Diego Presbytery sounded to them and whether they could articulate a way of fitting into our paradigm.

Their answers were fairly preliminary. The last round of ordination standard voting had a significant negative impact on their membership; their expectation was that this round would be even worse if there was not some alternative course to present to their congregation. That fueled some of their urgency. They were less specific in terms of how being part of San Diego Presbytery would be a direct benefit to the mission and ministry we are called to pursue. They were excited about the possibility of investigating those questions and conversations with us -- understanding that there may be both polity and logistical hurdles that could be insurmountable.

We prayed.

We left with the commitment to keep talking in a process of discernment.