

CROSSROADS

NEWS FROM THE JOINT TASK FORCE
OF THE NEW HAMPSHIRE/VERMONT AND
NORTHEAST DISTRICTS

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THE TASK FORCE

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The Joint Task Force met in retreat on September 23 and 24 in Portsmouth, NH. This time together was very productive, enlightening, and fun. We learned more about each of our three states (from the residents on the Task Force!), their cultures, and their pros and cons. We looked at the results of the survey that Karen Brammer put together which showed that of the 46 responses we received 35 congregations dream of growth, and 35 see a lack of resources as the biggest obstacle. 27 congregations are looking for leadership training, 22, congregational sharing, and 22, funds for growth.

We then divided into three groups – one to talk about staffing and office(s), the second to talk about governance and money, and the third to look at services to congregations. Each group brainstormed things that would need to be done along a time line, and when we re-gathered, each group presented their tasks that needed to be done and when.

Together, we created a time line toward shared events, shared services, shared staff and shared headquarters to allow us to take things slowly and to have clear points along the way where we will evaluate each step to see if it is the right thing to proceed to the next step. By proceeding one step at a time, with clear breaking points for evaluation, we can experience working together before we actually make a final commitment for consolidation or merger. Dating at its best.

We will tinker with the plan between now and March when we will present the final time line to each District Board for their approval, then the plan will be brought forth to the two Annual Meetings in April and May. Different Task Force members will be speaking with different District groups over the next few months to get people's input on the time line.

We are encouraging complimentary committees and groups in the two Districts to talk together and possibly meet. District committees such as the program/conference committees, and the chalice lighter/extension committees have much information and expertise to share. We think it would be fun for the Districts to hold a joint fall conference in October of 2005. We're still getting to know one another!

Independent groups such as the ministers, women, youth, young adults, and religious educators also plan to talk, and it will be up to each group like these to decide how and when they would like to work together.

As always, feel free to contact any Task Force member for more information and comment.



