

Ministry Team Leadership at Westminster – Q&A

Why have things changed?

For many years, Westminster followed a traditional leadership model, consisting of the Session and a variety of committees which reported to Session. Much of the planning, work, and oversight of church activities happened in committees (worship, education, mission, and membership/evangelism). This model worked well for many years, but today's church needs a more flexible, creative, holistic approach to planning. The Holy Conversations Report suggested a Ministry Team model, which we are trying for 18 months.

How does the Ministry Team work?

The Ministry Teams do everything the Worship, Christian Ed, Mission, and Membership/Evangelism committees used to do, but on a seasonal model. The church year is broken down into 6 seasons, each lasting two months. The seasons are: Epiphany and Life of Christ (January-February), Lent and Easter (March-April), Pentecost (May-June), Life of the Church (July-August), the Story of God (September-October), and Advent and Christmas (November-December). A ministry team is convened for each season to plan and implement the worship, education, mission, and membership & evangelism ministries of that season. Seasonal members are committed to two months of planning and two months of implementation. The seasonal members are then done and do not repeat consecutively. (The annual members, elected by Session, serve on all six teams to provide continuity, oversight, and guidance.) This allows for short term commitments, fresh perspectives, creative/innovative ideas, and training new individuals in the work of the church. Each ministry team member discerns how and what they are called to do and be as a disciple of Christ; how they individually and corporately will use their talents and time to add vitality to the overall purpose of the church-- to proclaim the gospel and care for the needs of the congregation and community.

What happens at the meetings?

Each team meets three times in the two months of planning before their season. At the first meeting, they spend time reading the scriptures for that season, considering the hopes, needs, and prayers of the church and community, and they begin to focus on a theme for the season. At the second meeting, the team selects a leader, decides on a theme, and starts to brainstorm ideas for ministries for the season. At the third meeting, plans are fine-tuned and individuals commit to overseeing one or more projects or tasks. After the three whole-team meetings, team members will meet as needed (or communicate via email, phone, or other) in small groups to carry out the plans of the season.

Do the Ministry Teams replace committees?

There are still Session committees which oversee Finance, Property, and Personnel. The Board of Deacons continues to carry out caring ministries. The Session oversees the work of the

Ministry Teams. The Ministry Teams replace the Worship, Christian Education, Mission, and Membership & Evangelism Committees, and do all the work previously done by these committees. Staff participates in the Ministry Team meetings, and help carry out the ministries which are planned. The Ministry Team's budget is the combined budgets of the former Worship, Christian Ed, Mission, and Membership/Evangelism committees (allocated over the year to the six seasons).

What are the types of things the Ministry Teams plan?

Ministry Teams might come up with completely new ideas, like a special worship service, a mission project, an educational offering, or a community event. They might propose a new way of doing an old thing, like a new twist on Rally Day or a Lenten series. They might decide to NOT do something that's been done before, taking a break from some traditions or routines. They are also responsible for details of regularly scheduled ministries, like preparing communion, lining up liturgists, preparing the chancel for worship, arranging weekly coffee hours, planning or assisting with educational offerings, assisting Small Group ministries, communicating through social media, bulletins, and newsletter articles. People are responsible for what they feel called to do. Gifts and passions are matched, rather than tasks assigned.

Who can be on the Ministry Teams?

Anyone and everyone! Ministry Team members can be members, friends, and non-members. They can be any age, and any level of participation (new to the church, old-timers, in person or online, snow birds, travelers, etc). The beauty of the seasonal approach is that it allows for flexible participation and it encourages fresh thinking and new approaches to ministry. In addition to annual and seasonal members, we also welcome "advisors," who come to the first meeting to be part of the conversation or simply to check it out.

Is this model here to stay?

We are learning as we go, and constantly evaluating the process. We are still figuring out how to best 'organize' the ministry team's collaboration. It is still a bit messy, but that 'struggle' in itself provides the basis for discernment, creativity, and newness, that engages and challenges us to reach down deep, to be brave and daring. At the end of 2023, or perhaps mid-2024, Westminster will decide on the path forward. The church may feel called to adopt this new structure, or adapt it significantly, or return to the previous committee model, or to find some blend of the best of each. At that time, new bylaws will be drafted, to be approved by the entire congregation.