



# Great Plans for the Great Plains: A Vision

*“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”*

*– Jeremiah 29:11*

At 2011 Annual Conference Gatherings the Transition Team brought to the three annual conferences – Nebraska, Kansas West and Kansas East – the strong conviction that God desires the conferences to move past mere reorganization and into deeper change including creating a single, new annual conference in the states of Nebraska and Kansas.

The Transition Team also pledged to further the dialogue about the recommendation of one annual conference and to be inclusive in discussions prior to the 2012 annual conferences. Opportunities for conference members to be part of the dialogue have resulted in the creation of Technical and Dream Teams.

Two technical teams were formed prior to the annual conferences to address specific areas of concern that need analysis and technical solutions. These are matters that must be resolved prior to creating a new conference but that *should not require a rethinking of how we do ministry*. The Joint Distributing Committee is studying compensation, health insurance and pension practices of each of our current conferences. The Asset Allocation Team is compiling a comprehensive inventory of properties, holdings and institutional relationships as well as the apportionments formulas and budgets of the three annual conferences.

Dream teams are groups that will *explore how ministry could be as one new conference*. The creation of these teams now will help remind us all that we are envisioning a new way of doing ministry in a new conference. They also will help us keep our purpose at the forefront of our minds as we consider structure and staffing for a new conference.

To date, the following dream teams have been established, and more will be created as the need is discerned: Techno Dream Team, Small/Rural Church Dream Team, Young Adult and Clergy Dream Team, Youth Dream Team, and the Racial/Ethnic Dream Team. Some groups have already been meeting within their current team structure, i.e., the Sexual Ethics Teams of each annual conference.

Each technical and dream team will have members from each of our current conferences and a variety of ministry settings. As we begin the work in the months ahead, the Transition Team has provided the following guideline/parameters as the technical and dream teams begin their work. We hope you will find them useful.

We look forward to serving God together as one annual conference until God's great plans for us come to pass!

### **GUIDELINES/PARAMETERS FOR THE TECHNICAL AND DREAM TEAMS**

- Realize that the task of the dream team is to dream, envision, explore and brainstorm . . . not to make decisions regarding the future.
- Be mindful that the task of the Church is to make disciples, so in your dream team category imagine new ways in which this ministry area can be more effective in disciple-making, equipping and empowering people for the transformation of the world.
- Remain true to the defined area of ministry of your dream team and do not "wander" into the other ministry areas; if the team comes up with thoughts outside their specific area, share it with the appropriate Dream Team Leader.
- Recognize that within the team structure there are members with gifts and graces, experience and expertise, and all voices are important.
- Think both inside and outside the "box" – let your dreams flow and don't limit the Spirit.
- Be aware and informed of the past, but don't be restrictive in your thinking for the future. Just because it didn't work then doesn't mean it cannot work now.
- Experience the "wilderness," realizing that while some journeys may lead to a dead end, others will open new vistas and possibilities.
- Honor and celebrate the ministries in each conference, taking the best practices from each to make recommendations for the future.
- Identify key areas of common life within the three annual conferences, but be open to discussion around the opportunities and barriers so the dream team can re-imagine ministry in new and creative ways.
- Know that it is OK to acknowledge what may not be working or what may need to be moved aside if it is getting in the way of the preferred future.
- Consider recommendations for policies and procedures where applicable, but don't get bogged down in the details. This is the time for dreaming, not creating.
- Remember that all dream team reports will be brought back to the Transition Team who will then bring them together in a composite document for consideration and review.
- Be bold in your dreams, but kind in your words. Don't bring baggage or personal issues to the "table." The only baggage you bring should be Scripture and Wesleyan traditions.
- Discuss when, where and how often you will meet, whether by conference call or in person, rotating meetings for the convenience of all. Electronic media is encouraged when appropriate. (Travel vouchers for mileage and meals are available through the Dream Team Leader. Kansans may turn their vouchers into the Episcopal office in Wichita; Nebraskans to the Episcopal office in Lincoln.)
- Consider a team covenant if you feel applicable and bathe all discussion and discernment in prayer.

Thank you for stepping forth to say “Here I am,” and to be part of the Great Plans God has for the Great Plains!