

Report to the 2021 Western Jurisdictional Conference

Workgroup Four Workgroup on Boundaries and Permeable Boundaries

Team

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Task

The Workgroup on Boundaries and Permeable Boundaries defined our task in three parts:

1. To learn about the “permeable boundaries” work of the Western Jurisdiction in responding to the mission and ministry, its success, and challenges.
2. To identify ministries that the WJ should do together across our boundaries to strengthen our witness.
3. To consider if the boundaries of the WJ are the most missionally appropriate at this time and identify partners beyond the jurisdiction that we should be in dialogue with.

The workgroup reviewed or surveyed the most relevant documents and experiences related to the concept of permeable boundaries:

- The 2012 report and proposal of the WJ Boundaries Committee, specifically regarding the vision and values related to “permeable boundaries”.
- The history and process of creating the Greater Northwest Area in 2012 and a survey of the challenges and opportunities it provided.
- The rationale and motivation for the proposal of Alaska Missionary Conference to become a Mission District of Pacific Northwest Conference.
- The process and experience of Mt. Sky Conference with the merger of the former Rocky Mountain and Yellowstone Conferences.
- The demographics and conferences’ boundaries map (using MissionInsite data).
- Survey of jurisdictional shared ministries.

Learnings

The permeable boundaries work of the Western Jurisdiction has been implemented by shared ministries that are mission oriented. While our conference boundaries are contextual and may be changed when conditions arise, there are missional challenges that can be addressed across the boundaries of our conferences. Permeable boundaries work is based on the values of transparency, sharing information and resources. It demands an intentional process of collaboration to accomplish our mission as a church.

Page 2.

The demographic changes in the area covered by the Western Jurisdiction have caused a misalignment between our boundaries and our missional challenges. At this time of transition, our response needs to be based on the missional values, instead of the ecclesial, institutional values. The experience of the episcopal areas that lived through mergers or combined areas indicate opportunities to better match talent and needs, to learn from each other strengths, to expand our capacity and to identify affinities across challenges and perspectives. It also points to the need to acknowledge differences in culture and history, the time and energy necessary to promote collaboration, and the complexity for the episcopal leaders to oversee distinct policies, practices, structures, cultures and relationships.

The experience of the jurisdictional collaboration groups identified the common themes from their practice of permeable boundaries: the need to foster trusting relationships for effective collaboration; the need for intentional and mutual collaboration across the teams; the need for cultural training and awareness; the need to value and train volunteers to accomplish the work due to limited staffing resources; the value of connecting opportunities across the jurisdiction and beyond, to the larger church; and the value of sharing resources, experience and wisdom for greater effectiveness.

Recommendations

1. Continue to perfect the definition of permeable boundaries from the practice of collaboration groups, incorporating additional shared experiences
 - Permeable boundaries are mission oriented, strategic, and adaptive.
 - Permeable boundaries are distinct from mission partnerships that are based on collaboration among partners with different access to resources (e.g., mission trips).
 - Permeable boundaries demand new ways of collaboration based on resource sharing for missional needs that benefit all parties (e.g., appointment making, leadership resources, mission opportunities, social justice engagement, cross cultural experiences, connectional resources, assets, and expertise).
2. Incorporate the concept of permeable boundaries in the mission statement of the WJ
 - Define and incorporate the values of the practice of permeable boundaries (transparency, information sharing and knowledge sharing, working together for the common good).
3. No change in boundaries be recommended to the Jurisdictional Conference at this time
 - Boundaries are contextual and will change when conditions are ready.

- Boundary proposals must be constructed so that the least resourced in our organizational structure (local churches; conferences; jurisdictional agencies; demographics of the mission fields) have the opportunity to thrive.