

What are the key hopes and longings expressed by participants to answer the question about the hopes or longings that arise when considering the creation of one Presbytery?

1. Desire for Greater Clarity and Purpose

- Many participants hope that the process will help clarify the real purpose of a presbytery, focusing on what it is and is not meant to do. There is a longing to define the mission and identity of the presbytery more clearly, both spiritually and organizationally. (Feb 10 Zoom)

2. Increased Connection and Fellowship

- There is excitement about the opportunity to meet more people, make new connections, and foster a sense of fellowship across a broader community. Participants hope for a welcoming environment and a chance to build relationships that might not otherwise happen. (Feb 17 Hartford, April 7 Lenox)

3. Enhanced Support and Resource Sharing

- Many hope that a unified presbytery will allow for better sharing of resources, expertise, and support, especially for small and rural churches. There is a longing for increased capacity for mission, innovation, and mutual learning. (March 5 WDM Covenant, March 10 Zoom)

4. Financial Stability and Stewardship

- Some participants express hope that consolidation could lead to longer-term financial stability, slowing the drainage of resources and ensuring professional staff can be maintained. (Feb 10 Zoom, Feb 24 Atlantic)

5. Opportunity for Creative and Courageous Change

- There is a longing for genuinely creative thinking and the courage to reimagine what it means to be a presbytery, rather than simply rearranging existing structures. Participants hope to move beyond administrative concerns to focus more on discipleship and mission. (Feb 17 Hartford, March 10 Zoom)

6. Stronger Shared Identity and Mission

- Some hope that coming together will help churches feel more connected and act more connected, growing into a shared sense of what it means to be Presbyterian. There is a desire to forge a new, collective identity and to be equal partners in shaping the future. (March 5 WDM Covenant, March 10 Zoom)

7. Maintaining Local Autonomy and Flexibility

- While there is hope for greater unity, there is also a longing to maintain local autonomy, flexibility, and the unique character of different congregations and partnerships. (April 7 Lenox)

Examples from the Documents:

- "I would hope that it would be an opportunity to grow into a shared sense of what it means to be a Presbyterian."
- "We get to meet more people & make some new connections."
- "Hope for more recognition as a partnership – would like a seat at the table when interviewing potential pastor candidates."
- "I hope we can be combined in such a way that we can learn from each other – especially on mission."
- "Focus on purpose first and then build strategies and structures."

Summary: The overarching hopes and longings center on building a more purposeful, connected, and supportive presbytery that is financially stable, mission-focused, and open to creative change—while still honoring the diversity and autonomy of its member congregations.