

What are the key concerns and examples that address the fears, griefs, and resistances noticed in yourself or within the Presbytery regarding the creation of one Presbytery?

### **1. Fear of Losing Local Identity and Autonomy**

- Many participants worry that a larger, more centralized presbytery could lead to the loss of local traditions, autonomy, and the unique character of smaller or rural congregations. There is resistance to standardized or prescriptive expectations that might not fit every context. (April 7 Lenox, Feb 24 Atlantic, Feb 28 Allerton)
- Example: "We don't want to have to conform to practices and policies that don't work for our way."

### **2. Concerns About Connection and Communication**

- There is grief over the possibility of increased distance—both geographically and relationally. People fear that larger size could lead to disconnection, making it harder to maintain personal relationships and effective communication. (March 5 WDM Covenant, Feb 17 Hartford, April 7 Lenox)
- Example: "Will we be too big, so that we don't feel connected anymore?"

### **3. Staffing and Resource Allocation**

- Anxiety exists about how staffing will be managed, whether current staff will be retained, and if resources will be spread too thin. There is grief over potentially losing valued staff or changing familiar support structures. (March 5 WDM Covenant, Feb 17 Hartford, April 7 Lenox)
- Example: "Concerns about the overall staffing being spread too thin."

### **4. Financial Uncertainty**

- There are fears about how finances and reserves will be handled, whether consolidation will actually save money, and if per capita giving will need to increase. Some question whether bigger is truly more cost-effective. (Feb 10 Zoom, Feb 24 Atlantic, Feb 28 Allerton)
- Example: "How is being larger saving us money? Bigger isn't cheaper."

### **5. Resistance to Change and Uncertainty About Outcomes**

- Change itself is a source of resistance. Some express skepticism about whether the merger will bring real benefits or just more complexity. There is grief over the potential loss of familiar ways of operating and uncertainty about what will actually improve. (Feb 28 Allerton, March 5 WDM Covenant)
- Example: "We want change without making change." (laughter)

### **6. Fear of Small Churches Being Overlooked**

- There is a strong concern that small and rural churches may become even more isolated or overlooked in a larger presbytery. Participants want assurance that their voices and needs will not be lost. (Feb 24 Atlantic, Feb 28 Allerton, April 7 Lenox)
- Example: "Don't want the small churches to get lost in southern Iowa."

### **7. Grief Over Potential Loss of Programs and Traditions**

- Some express grief about the possibility of losing cherished programs, such as youth camps or mission partnerships, if priorities shift or resources are reallocated. (April 7 Lenox, Feb 28 Allerton)
- Example: "Don't want to lose our camping at Wesley Woods."

## 8. Distrust and Concerns About Decision-Making

- There is resistance rooted in distrust—worries that decisions will be made by a few leaders without broad input, or that communication will not be transparent. (April 7 Lenox, Feb 17 Hartford)
- Example: "Not being heard by Presbytery."

**Summary:** The main fears, griefs, and resistances revolve around losing local identity, diminished connection, uncertainty about staffing and finances, resistance to change, concerns for small churches, grief over potential loss of valued programs, and distrust in the decision-making process. These concerns highlight the importance of transparent communication, honoring local autonomy, and ensuring that all voices—especially those of smaller congregations—are heard and respected throughout the process.