

Des Moines Listening Session Conclusions

Top 4 positive conclusions

- **Resource sharing can strengthen financial sustainability and retain professional staff:** Consolidation is seen as a path to stabilize finances and maintain/support staff capacity to enable mission (Feb 10, Feb 24, Feb 28).
- **Greater collaboration and connection across congregations:** A larger body could foster fellowship, cooperative ministries, relationship-building, and cross-fertilization of ideas (Feb 17, Mar 5, Apr 7).
- **Refocus on spiritual and missional purpose over administration:** The merger is viewed as an opportunity to reimagine the presbytery's role, support discipleship, and emphasize mission over institutional maintenance (Feb 10, Feb 17, Feb 28).
- **Potential to engage younger members and expand mission/youth opportunities:** Hopes include increased engagement of younger people and broader mission partnerships (Feb 10, Feb 28, Apr 7).

Top 5 negative conclusions

- **Rural isolation and geographic/logistical burdens are likely to increase:** Larger distances, travel demands, and limits of virtual meetings threaten connection—especially for rural congregations (Feb 10, Feb 24, Mar 5).
- **Loss of local autonomy and identity—especially for small churches:** A more centralized presbytery could impose one-size-fits-all practices, risking unique local approaches and youth program continuity (Feb 28, Apr 7).
- **Uncertain or adverse financial impacts:** Doubts about actual cost savings, potential per capita increases, and complexities around reserves and staffing changes (Feb 10, Feb 17, Feb 24, Feb 28).
- **Erosion of personal relationships, trust, and cultural fit:** Fear that scale and cultural differences will weaken personal connections and mutual trust among congregations (Feb 10, Feb 17, Mar 5).
- **Process risks: overemphasis on administration and weak communication/input:** Anxiety that administrative focus will eclipse vision, with insufficient congregational input and communication gaps (Feb 10, Feb 24, Apr 7).