

NETWORK STARTER FAQ

- What is the intended outcome of networks?
We desire that the creativity, inspiration, expertise, peer-to-peer learning, decision-making authority, and disciple-making spread to churches at ground level, where real ministry and forward movement will occur. We can do more together in connection to know God, proclaim Christ, serve others (especially the poor), and seek justice.
- How will members of the congregation benefit from networks?
They will experience peer-to-peer learning, supportive connections, and mutual ministry (harnessing gifts and resources). Some congregations are joining in mission trips, Bible studies, VBS, and concerts in the effort to deepen their faith and share that faith with others.
- How often will the networks meet?
We recommend at least six times per year. You may want to meet more often in the beginning as you build relationships.
- How long will we use the network system?
For the foreseeable future. We expect that the network system will enhance every district and become the foundational system of peer-to-peer learning and support.
- How will we assess whether this model strengthens ministry in the Great Plains?
The bishop and cabinet will listen closely to network leaders and participants as to the effectiveness of the network model. They will also collect stories and data from sources like Vital Signs and Ezra statistics. We expect that we will not go back to the way it was before and that that we will adapt as our environments change and as we see the need.
- In multi-point charges, will a layperson from each church need to be in the network?
Basic design is for one clergy person and one layperson from each charge to serve on the network team. Each DS may have alternative plans for her or his district.
- Are clergy and laity required to be present at these meetings?
Networks are designed to include one clergy person per charge and one layperson per charge (or church, if desired). Participation is required for clergy and highly recommended for laity.
- If a clergy person or layperson refuses to participate, how do we handle the situation?
For clergy, inform the DS. Collegiality, cooperation, and working in a network team are requirements for the appointment. Bishop and cabinet will consider refusals and take appropriate action. For laity, offer encouragement and share benefits of participation. Also, talk to the pastor about confirming someone to represent the church. If necessary, contact the DS.
- What will the DS be doing in the networks?
After initial organization, the DS will maintain contact primarily with the network leaders. She or he will continue to provide some services directly to pastors due to the nature of the DS's supervisory role by Discipline. The DS will provide resources and support to the networks. He or she will work sometimes as coach and sometimes as encourager to keep networks on task.
- How will we do Charge Conferences?
Each DS will decide how to conduct charge conferences, though many districts may hold clusters based on networks. Follow your DS's instructions.

- Will the bishop be involved with us in some way?
Overall, the bishop engages congregations through the DS, who serves as an extension of the bishop. The DS will keep the bishop well informed. The bishop will be instrumental in providing resources and information as well as in coaching and collegial problem-solving.
- Will the conference eventually re-district?
The bishop and cabinet currently have no plans to redistrict. Redistricting is a costly transition that includes many sacrifices of congregations and individuals as well as legal work, property matters, reprinting materials, etc. Re-districting may happen, but probably not soon.
- What happens if the network clergy leader is moved to a new appointment?
The DS will put a new clergy leader in place.
- Will I get paid to be a network leader? If so, how much?
Network leaders (lay and clergy) will not receive monetary compensation.
- Will we get reimbursed mileage? If so, at what rate?
Network leaders (lay and clergy) will receive the full IRS rate, not the volunteer rate. To receive reimbursement, submit a meeting voucher to the district office.
- Will we be reimbursed for resources that we purchase for our networks?
Yes. Please consult with the district office before making major purchases.
- Will the conference/district provide resources for the networks to use?
Yes. Congregational Excellence has already made copies of *Choosing the Faithful Path* and *Fresh Expressions* available for your use. If you have ideas for other resources, consult with your DS.