

## **Penn West Association Case Statement**

With the Keystone Conference likely beginning in 2026, leaders in the six Associations of the Penn West Conference are seeing this time as an opportunity for us to consider becoming a Penn West Association.

There are a number of potential benefits to doing this:

- We have a historic and relational connection to one another that is very important and worth maintaining. Relationships that existed with churches in the current Association structure may remain intact with mission clusters and other ways of connecting. Groups of churches could continue to nurture, strengthen, and expand upon alliances around different missions, ministries, and affinities. Zoom and other electronic means of connecting may also help to serve local and wider connections between churches across a new Association, as well as the new Conference.
- A single Association will allow us to draw on a greater pool of volunteers, so we are not repeating our functions six times over. One of the current concerns in our committee structure is a lack of capacity to do the work that we need to do and/or to find willing volunteers to do it. We expect that having a single Association will increase our capacity to do the necessary work of an Association better than we are doing it. We also expect that it will increase our capacity to do other programmatic ministries, perhaps along the lines of what we have done in the past in our All Association Spring Meeting, but to an even greater degree.
- With a Conference staff that needs to cover a much wider geography, it makes greater sense to reduce the number of Associations in the western part of the new Conference. It will be much easier for the staff to resource a single Association in the west, and we expect that this will yield a more efficient and productive approach to our ministry.
- A single Association will help us to achieve greater consistency of practice with respect to our Executive and Committee on Ministry functions. We anticipate that this will reduce any current concerns about discrepancies of practices among our current six Associations. This is particularly true around the Member in Discernment process. An expanded Committee on Ministry could organize itself around specific aspects of the work to help the whole group to do its work more efficiently.
- There will be greater ease with some financial pieces if our current six Associations remain together. Donor restricted funds, such as Caring for Churches, Caring for Clergy, will be easier to manage if the boundaries remain clear, and a single Penn West Association can help to ensure that.

Our Association leadership has shared for many years now that we lack the capacity to do our work as well as we would like. We expect that continuing to do things the way we have been doing them will lead to the quality of our work on behalf of the whole church to suffer. Reconfiguring in this way will heighten the possibility that our work will improve, and therefore, we believe that it is worth doing it. With the anticipated new Keystone Conference on its way, we believe that the time for actively considering this is now!