

The Unglued Church Experiment

Is your church “stuck?” If so, you’re not alone. Lots of churches feel stuck for many different reasons today:

A building too big and a membership too small.

A neighborhood changing faster than your ministry.

An unclear mission for an uncertain future.

Tired people and a discouraged leadership.

Empty offering plates that match emptying pews.

A nagging feeling that your church must somehow “change,” but an uncertainty about what kind of change God is leading you to undertake.

Unfortunately, many of the models for “being church” that worked just a few decades ago are no longer viable in maintaining congregational health. And many, many churches feel “stuck,” but do not know how to change in ways that are faithful to God’s dream for their neighborhoods and communities.

You are invited to take part in a 12 month pilot program coordinated with the Presbyterian Church (USA) Office of Church Growth, Pittsburgh Presbytery and a group of local pastors who, like you, want to develop practices to help stuck churches become unglued in ways that bring about deep and sustainable change for sake of the Gospel and the mission of Jesus Christ in our communities. This pilot program is being offered to a select number of presbyteries throughout the U.S. by the PCUSA.

The only qualification your church needs to participate in this program is a willingness to become unglued in the best possible way and a commitment to stick with the process over the entire 12 months, and then to make a choice about your future. The experiment will include:

New Beginnings, a 6 – 8 week assessment process, will give your church an accurate and detailed look at your ministry: the community in which you serve, the make-up and commitment of your congregation, your financial viability and total assets, your mission life, and your buildings and grounds. At the end, a set of options will emerge, any one of which could be a viable path forward for your church.

Next comes the discernment process when each church will receive coaching assistance to imagine and create their new future, drawing upon data and recommendations from the ***New Beginning*** report. The “Unglued” team of local and national coaches will walk with pastoral and/or lay leadership from each congregation to help implement and support decisions for change that reflect both the concerns/needs of the congregations and the missional realities of their particular context. Our coaches will be Jim Kitchens and Deborah Wright of PneuMatrix, both with 35+ years as PCUSA Teaching elders, and experienced adaptive change leaders. Each church will have 24 hours of coaching time throughout the year, as well as participation in 2 halfday and one fullday onsite working sessions with all the churches going through the “Unglued” venture.

Interested in learning more? Come and join us for lunch at the 11:00 a.m. Conference Hour at the Presbytery meeting on February 13th at Mt. Hope. The conversation will be led by the Rev. Ayana Teter, Rev. Bill Gracey, Rev. Sarah Robbins, Rev. Susan Rothenberg, and Rev. Deborah Wright of PneuMatrix. Please RSVP to Rev. Ayana Teter (412-323-1400 / ateter@pghpresbytery.org) by Tuesday, February 11, so we will have sufficient food for everyone!