

Explain your fear, grief, or resistance regarding the creation of one Presbytery.

### **1. Fear of Loss of Local Voice and Identity**

- Many participants, especially from smaller or rural congregations, expressed concern that their voices would be diminished or lost in a larger, merged presbytery. There is apprehension that urban areas (like Des Moines) could dominate decision-making, leaving rural churches "left behind." (Feb 3 Denison, March 3 Sioux City, April 18 Cherokee)
- *Example:* "Concerned about not having a voice in the new model. Doesn't want rural congregations to be 'left behind.'"

### **2. Grief Over Potential Loss of Close-Knit Community**

- There is a sense of grief about possibly losing the collegial, supportive relationships that exist in smaller presbyteries. Some worry that a larger, more corporate structure will erode the sense of community and mutual support. (March 3 Sioux City)
- *Example:* "Prospect Hill's size has led to a very collegial group of pastors and members, as opposed to larger and more corporate presbyteries."

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

- Change itself is a source of resistance. Participants noted that even small changes can be difficult for churches, and merging presbyteries is a significant shift. There is skepticism about whether the merger will actually address core issues like declining participation or church vitality. (March 3 Sioux City, April 18 Cherokee)
- *Example:* "Change is hard. An example of how difficult it was to replace salads with desserts was a good illustration of that aspect of churches."

### **4. Concerns About Equity and Support for Small Churches**

- There is resistance rooted in the fear that small or aging congregations will not receive equitable support or resources in the new structure. Some worry that the needs of small churches will be overshadowed by larger ones. (March 3 Sioux City, Feb 3 Denison)
- *Example:* "Will congregational 'care' be unequal? Areas of concern expressed included money, travel to presbytery meetings, care of each congregation."

### **5. Anxiety Over Financial and Logistical Implications**

- Participants questioned whether the merger would actually save money, how per capita assessments might change, and whether financial priorities would shift away from local needs. There is also concern about increased travel, decreased access, and the location of the presbytery office. (April 18 Cherokee, Feb 3 Denison)
- *Example:* "Does this merger save us money? Is per Capita going to change/increase? What are we getting for our money that we aren't getting now?"

### **6. Grief Over Declining Participation and Uncertain Future**

- There is a sense of grief about declining church membership and participation, and uncertainty about whether the merger will help reverse these trends. (Feb 3 Denison, April 18 Cherokee)
- *Example:* "Church participation appears to be decreasing. No 'good' answers from anyone currently."

### **7. Resistance to Perceived Loss of Autonomy**

- Some participants expressed resistance to the idea that local churches might lose autonomy or flexibility in decision-making, worship times, or ministry focus as a result of the merger. (Feb 3 Denison, April 18 Cherokee)
- *Example:* "Would this process prevent a local church from changing their worship time(s) to be better servants in their individual communities?"

These fears, griefs, and resistances reflect both emotional and practical concerns about the merger, highlighting the importance of communication, equity, and maintaining local identity within a larger presbytery structure.