

Campus Ministry Presbytery Talk May 2022

This presbytery has always had a heart for campus ministry at The Ohio State University. Many churches have stepped up to partner, support, and champion campus ministry at OSU throughout the years. But in the last several years, it's been harder to give it the adequate support it takes to run a campus ministry at a university the size of Ohio State. Our Presbyterian campus ministry has looked like part-time ministers filling in for a few years at a time and large gaps of time with no leader, leaving us with no Presbyterian ministry on campus at all. It's been a constant battle of building it up, having it falling apart, and then starting over again.

Through the Commission on Nurture and Outreach, a group was formed to dream once again about campus ministry at OSU. The reality is that the dominant voice of Christian campus ministry on campus is not in line with the PC(USA)'s values. Most are not from the reform tradition; in fact, they are intentionally para-church and non-denominational in structure. They do not welcome LGBTQ + young adults, and a couple have even been characterized as religious cults. Our young people who are seeking to nurture and explore faith at OSU don't have many safe options that we would endorse.

In the Summer of 2021, we reached out to and partnered with Jacob's Porch, an established campus ministry program with the ELCA. We couldn't let another school year go by without a Presbyterian commitment to campus ministry, especially after COVID and the continued reality that young adults face depression, anxiety, and loneliness like no other generation. We now have people on teams and on the board at Jacob's Porch, and we have made a financial commitment of \$10,000 to support their work and be invited in.

Our group has continued to meet to evaluate this relationship with Jacob's Porch and think about what's next. We have discerned a call and hope that this presbytery can renew its commitment to these 60,000+ young adults on campus and their faith with a hired full-time staff person that would work at and with Jacob's Porch. The Spirit is moving, as the Methodist and Mennonites are doing this at the same time as us - truly a step forward in an ecumenical campus ministry, one that is welcoming and affirming and aligns with our theology.

We are in conversation with the Ministries Initiative Board of the presbytery for funding, and plan to reach out to Presbyterian churches, not just in our presbytery but throughout Ohio, to add their prayers, financial support, (and incoming students!) to this dream. We hope that we can count on your congregation as we continue to make plans for a Presbyterian campus ministry at OSU. If you have are excited about campus ministry, want to know how you/your church can be involved, or have questions or comments, please feel free to reach out to a member of the campus ministry group – Kathi Bubb, Brittany Porch, Rev. Trip Porch, Rev. Rick Nutt, Rev. Steve Brand, Rev. Bill Gause, or Rev. Peter Galbraith.