

# **KEY ISSUES FACING PALO DURO PRESBYTERY**

## **Strengths of Palo Duro Presbytery**

(These are only some of the strengths identified, by a range of interviews across the Presbytery. These indicate key resources upon which Palo Duro Presbytery can build as it considers God's call for the future.)

1. The current time of transformation is a “yeasty” opportunity for the presbytery. It has opportunity to define afresh its identity and vision, and the strategy and structure that will guide it into the future.
2. The spirit of caring for one another is a hallmark in the Presbytery of Palo Duro. There is a spirit of trying to get along, valuing relationships that cross lines of diversity and theological differences.
3. This presbytery's Cursillo is a unifying and ongoing ministry. Cursillo brings people together in significant relationships that cross over other barriers between people. People drive far for this!
4. Leadership has stabilized in the presbytery. We have a solid staff which brings wisdom and a variety of gifts.
5. Committee on Ministry and Committee on Preparation for Ministry provide a key ministry of the presbytery. COM and COPM illustrate effectiveness by having focus, clear task, and team cohesion in the midst of differences.
6. There are several strong, effective mission projects. People know about these mission projects sponsored by the presbytery and they participate in them.
7. A variety of processes and practices take place in this presbytery that make the Body of Christ visible in real ways. These include overnight meetings that build relationships, supporting small churches, responding to crises (e.g. Cross Plains), and engaging together in Bible study at presbytery meetings.

# Challenges Facing Palo Duro Presbytery

***Key Issue #1: Changing Circumstances—Destabilizing Effects*** The social, cultural, denominational, and religious environment for Palo Duro Presbytery and its congregations is changing dramatically. To be faithful in ministry given its context requires that Palo Duro Presbytery and its congregations be adventurous and open to rethinking assumptions it has held about its context, and what it will mean to be the church with a minority witness in this context.

***Key Issue #2: Confusion About Vision, Purpose, and Goals.*** Most persons do not know what vision is guiding Palo Duro Presbytery. There is lack of clarity about the purpose, or reason for being, of the presbytery (what work it should do and why). This leads to unrealistic and competing expectations and haphazard participation in its life.

***Key Issue #3: Losing a Sense of Community.*** While historically valuing collegiality and a rich connectional life, the sense and practice of community within Palo Duro Presbytery seems to be disappearing. We are losing the spirit of our presbytery family. Churches and pastors are going their separate ways and are no longer a community of congregations who know each other and seek to be in fellowship with each other.

***Key Issue #4: Keeping Congregations Vital.*** Congregations are the most important resource of a presbytery. The mission of the presbytery is essentially carried out in its congregations. This is where the ministry of the Gospel is most clearly proclaimed and embodied for the watching and wanting world. There exists a great and growing concern for the vitality of witness of congregations in Palo Duro Presbytery.

***Key Issue #5: Stalled by Our Differences.*** We get hung up on “hot button” issues which divide and frustrate us. Given the theological diversity reflected across the presbytery, it is challenging to realize unity in Palo Duro Presbytery. Differences appear larger than any particular shared commitment we have.

***Key Issue #6: Developing and Allocating our Resources.*** Significant cultural forces at work, combined with lack of a shared compelling vision for our presbytery, have an impact on resource development in Palo Duro Presbytery. This is especially true for the development of leadership resources and financial resources. Without effective development of these resources, the future of a viable and effective presbytery organization is in question.

***Key Issue # 7: Structure to facilitate ministry.*** The partial collapse and varying effectiveness of the current Palo Duro Presbytery organizational structure leads to frustration with how ministry gets done, dissatisfaction as people seek to participate in Presbytery life, and an unsettling sense that things are not working as they should.

