

**PSEC Conference Consistory
Meeting September 17, 2016
St. James UCC, Limerick, PA**

Consistory Members Present: Rev. Barbara Pence (Moderator), Harold Albitz, Rev. Maureen Duffy-Guy, Elaine Ely, Rev. Dr. Jon Fogle, Barbara Guido, Rev. Cean James, Rev. Teresa McNamara, Lee Metzger, Fred Schuetz, Rev. Jenny Smith, Rob Stilwell, Jennie Strauch

Consistory Members Absent: Rev. Bill Worley (Conference Minister), Regina Floyd

Consistory Staff Present: Rev. Sharon Morris

Guest: Ray Edwards

The meeting was opened shortly after 9:00 AM. Barb Pence offered devotions and an opening prayer.

The minutes for the July 16, 2016 meeting were approved (Motion: Fred Schuetz; 2nd: Harold Albitz) with the following corrections:

- The spelling of Rob Stilwell's last name has only three L's, not four.

Appointments:

Jenny Smith has agreed to serve as secretary. This was formally approved (Motion: Barbara Guido; 2nd Cean James).

We are still looking for a treasurer. It was suggested that we post the job description and mention there is a bookkeeper who supports the position. Barb Pence will follow up with the nominating committee.

Communications: The secretary read letters from Bethany Children's Home, The Evangelical and Reformed Historical Society, and Lancaster Theological Seminary thanking PSEC for recent donations.

Barb Pence passed around a card to sign for John Folk to acknowledge his work with our youth.

REPORTS

Associate Conference Minister Report: Rev. Morris' report was received.

She received from national headquarters statistics for the UCC. We are now below a million members, a dramatic shift, and down to 5,032 congregations. PSEC went from 205 congregations to 164, a significant decrease. Only 79 have fulltime pastors at their church; the remainder are $\frac{3}{4}$ time or less. We have more authorized pastors than

there are churches that need fulltime pastors. Sharon commented that congregations are not willing to be in conversation about sharing a pastor, or administrator or combining youth groups. She feels we need to have a serious conversation on the conference level. Sharon anticipates a large number of retirements in 5 years in PSEC and we need to prepare for that. Currently there are 32 churches in search of a pastor in our conference.

In addition to the new local church profile there are changes to the Marks of Ministry; Sharon encourages use of this to evaluate pastors.

Sharon is going “over the edge” on Oct 12 to benefit Bethany Children’s Home.

Conference Minister Report: Rev. Worley’s report was received. Due to his absence (to attend a memorial service), Barb Pence provided a summary of key points.

There are two retreats coming up in next 6 months. The PSEC/PNEC retreat on September 30 - October 1 will consider a possible merger. The goal is to reach a yes/no decision on whether or not to continue discussion on this idea. A conference consistory retreat is scheduled for January 27-28th. There is also a fall meeting coming up in November with two preparatory meetings preceding it.

There was a discussion regarding the proposed merger of four PSEC associations. Once the current associations vote to dissolve, what happens to churches who decide not to join the new association or who do not decide either way? They will lose their 501(c)3 status and would have to apply for that separately. The pastor would lose authorization from the conference unless s/he leaves their position. The pastor’s retirement is through the UCC and s/he would not be able to continue in that plan, but would still be vested in prior contributions. Some congregations are being coached on how to leave the UCC by merely not showing up for the meeting or not voting. Executive committees of each association bear the responsibility for getting the information out to congregations and encouraging them to attend.

The UCC had a great national youth event.

Bill is working on a fundraising team. Note that he will be away next two weeks.

Personnel Committee Report - Barb Guido’s report was received.

The committee worked on a recommendation for next year’s proposed salary increase of 2%; they recommend that conference guidelines parallel that.

They extended the deadline to receive applications for the part-time conference minister for congregational development and are starting the interview process. Unfortunately, they will not be done by the fall meeting. It is likely that we will need to call a special meeting of the entire conference for approval. We could hold the special meeting either immediately before or after the consistory meeting on January

21st. There was a suggestion for regional meet and greet events for the proposed candidate prior to that.

Treasurer's Report - Rob Stilwell's report was received.

The financial report was approved (Motion: Cean James; 2nd Lee Metzger 2nd).

The budget proposal includes a 2% salary increase and a one-time capital campaign donation to Bethany. It is recommended that we stay at 5% withdrawal from the endowment fund. Operating expenses for the new associate conference minister are included and the new website as well as the 2020 vision MID academy. What about other parts of vision? We have a contract with the Center for Progressive Renewal and four churches have applied for support to set goals, etc. Ray requested a progress report/scoreboard for where we are on 2020 vision to guide decisions on where to put money. We are working on 9 of the 17 per Barb Pence. The budget proposal was approved (Motion: Barb Pence; 2nd Teresa McNamara) and will be presented at the fall meeting.

2015 pass-through report was presented to provide an idea of what is coming in from churches. OCWM is slightly behind, around 1%.

The New Ministries Fund Committee approved funding for the following: 1st in Royersford = \$10,000; Heidelberg = \$4,462; Living Water = \$7,500; Grace C.F. = \$12,000. The Dinner Church was declined because the money would go to funding staff. St. Paul's music project was funded for \$8,100, but they lost their music director so did not take funding at this time; they may in the future. The total amount approved was \$42,062. The committee will seek more applications in December. Each congregation is to keep their own scorecard. Ray suggested putting a list of what projects were funded and the recipient on the PSEC website; Teresa agreed to send the information to Sue at the conference office.

Additional Appointments Needed

Barb Pence indicated we need an additional Ursinus representative because Jenny has become the secretary; a Reading representative is also needed. Ray Edwards is here today as a guest from Heidelberg. Sharon assumes members of all current associations will continue on the consistory and other committees until we can change the bylaws.

The merger of four associations will mean significant change. If approved, the new Covenant association will put half of our churches in one association. We need to figure out fair representation. In the past it was two representatives from each association. Should we now base it on the number of churches or number of members? Rob suggest based on membership. Jenny suggested having at least one representative per association then divide the remaining slots (if there is a cap to total consistory members) based on church membership. We may want to suggest each association have an alternate in case one of their representatives cannot attend. Cean liked having a maximum number, but wants to keep it simple in terms of the

math. Lee requested data for next meeting regarding number of churches and membership. Elaine asked what PNEC did with the consistory when did away with associations. We will revisit this topic in November.

PNEC and PSEC Retreat - Will be held at Diamond Ridge Conference Center in Jamison, Bucks County.

Spots have been reserved spots for 30 people. Barb Pence urged everyone to respond regarding attendance. Goals include team building, addressing issues of diversity, asset mapping (find places of overlap to share, strengths and gifts bring to table), and creating a draft resolution for a unified eastern pa conference. There is already something that is being revamped and will be distributed before the gathering. Fred wondered if we will be able to discuss pros and cons within our respective conference groups or will it all be open discussion? Barb Pence shared the draft agenda. There will be a lot of small group time. Friday begins with a gathering at 3 PM and goes through worship at 8:30 PM. Saturday is 8:30 AM to 2:45 PM. Is there a registration fee? Sharon Morris pointed out this is a way to model at the conference level what we are suggesting to local churches. Ray asked what everybody is bringing to table, especially given we are already understaffed now at the conference level. Jennie Strauch indicated we should go into it as what is the mission God has for us, not what do we get out of it. Elaine Ely spoke to the enthusiasm of PNEC and having a sense of community. Jon Fogle recalled that when began 2020 vision in January 2015 there was a sense of this not being the right time to put the energy into it. Sharon Morris clarified that decision from retreat is whether or not to move forward with dialogue.

Consistory Retreat - New date is January 27-28 at Mariawald in Shillington, a Reading suburb.

Dale Davis is a pastor at Emmanuel and consults with boards. First we will address identity; who we are, what do we care about, what is our passion? Then we will look at what are we called to do; how does our identity play into 2020 vision, how do we do it, what is our purpose, what needs to happen? He will come to the November meeting to lay groundwork for the retreat.

PSEC Fall Meeting Agenda - Sunday, November 13 at First United in Quakertown.

Note dates and locations of the two pre-meetings: October 9 at Zion Blue Mountain in Strausstown and November 6 at Reformed Church of the Ascension in Norristown. Both begin at 3 PM.

We will present the budget for 2017, give an update on the ACM position, and talk about the general resolution on the using the Manual on Ministry on a provisional basis. We can also provide an update on 4 association merger and collect OCWM pledges from local churches to estimate 2017 giving. Sharon indicated that the

consistory will be asked to make calls to churches that have not registered for the meeting. Be at the meeting to assist people find their way, and be welcoming.

The Conference Church and Ministry Council is planning a continuing education event around cultural diversity/sensitivity and institutional racism in 2017. This comes out of the G.S. resolution from the Missouri/Mid-South Conference for the Synod in 2017. The document in its current form: “calls upon the judicatory and educational settings of the denomination to include the study of cultural diversity/sensitivity and institutional racism in clergy preparation and authorized ministry within and on behalf of the United Church of Christ.”

Ongoing Items

The H.O. Davis lawsuit was settled by the insurance company, but there is an appeal.

At our last meeting we agreed to seek information from the Emergency response team regarding how to respond to a shooting or other violent event if one occurs in our conference. Barb will follow up with Karl Jones head of disaster response.

Our next meeting is November 19th, then January 21st.

Harold Albitz indicated he is now representing Calvary UCC as he is no longer a member of St. John Hill. He is still representing East Berks.

The meeting was adjourned (Motion: Terry McNamara; 2nd Elaine Ely).

Respectfully submitted,

Jenny Smith, Secretary