

Joint Conference Visioning and Development Team Report PSEC Spring Meeting

The JCVDT team spent the fall of 2017 gathering information. We developed a survey, attended Association meetings in PSE and Area Mission Councils in PNE. We held a town hall meeting at Zion Lehigh on 11/16/2017, and we gave an update and provided a feedback time at the PSE Fall Meeting in Schuylkill Haven on 11/18/2017. Our intent was to listen to folks in order to compile hopes, dreams, concerns, visions, questions, and thoughts on this process to form a new conference. A sub-team interviewed staff in both PNEC and PSEC. We compiled the data and reported back to the PSEC Consistory and PNEC Board of Directors at a joint retreat on March 2-3.

We invited participation in joint ministry, programs, and opportunities:

- PNEC Minister Bonnie Bates created a Lenten Bible Study was available on the PSEC website. We invited churches to share their feedback on the reflection questions.
- We invited churches in both PNEC and PSEC to partner together in our Valentine's Day match-up. The idea is to encourage relationship building among our churches. Fourteen churches are participating in this opportunity.
- On February 10th, the JCVDT and POWER held a healthcare workshop at the Reformed Church of the Ascension in Jeffersonville (PSEC). We had 20 people participate.
- On Saturday, February 24th, the committees on ministry from both conferences were invited to a workshop to share their best practices and begin visioning how COM's might work in a new conference.
- The PSEC Consistory and PNEC Board of Directors participated in a retreat with the JCVDT on March 2-3. At this retreat, the JCVDT shared its work, results from the surveys and town meetings, interviews and results from the joint Committee on Ministries Day with the two boards. Together, we discerned the possibilities of a vision, mission, purpose and values for a new conference. We explored possible budget, structures, and foundations of a new conference.

Draft Vision, Mission, Purpose and Values statements for a new conference were created and shared at the retreat. Suggestions were given and the draft was revised. The revised draft was shared at the PNEC Annual Meeting and the PSEC Spring Association meetings for feedback.

Reflecting on the new Vision, Mission, Purpose, and Core Values statements for the proposed new Eastern PA Conference, the work of the Conference is different from the work of the local church. Local churches are called to welcome, encourage, and nurture disciples of Jesus. The mission of the conference is to support local congregations to fulfill their calling. The conference is the wider community of congregations in relationship with one another to support the wider mission of the church. Pastors, delegates and churches were invited to reflect on these questions concerning the statements:

- Do you believe a new Conference guided by these statements would integrate well with your church's work?
- How is your local congregation working to make disciples of Jesus?
- How might the combined resources and reach of a new, larger Conference support your church in those efforts?
- What specific support could a new, larger Conference provide that would help you expand those efforts?

The feedback from these questions will be used to create a final draft of Vision, Mission, Purpose and Values for a new conference to be presented to the two governing boards and the two conferences.

Following our discussions at the retreat on how a new conference might be structured, the JCVCT created two subcommittees. The first subcommittee is working on staff structure and administration site selection. This committee has noted that all current staff would like to continue if a new conference is created and job descriptions should reflect the skills and talents needed to accomplish the vision set forth in the Vision, Mission, Purpose and Values of a new conference.

The second subcommittee is working with associations to vision and create a new model of Associations and how Committees on Ministries would function in a new model. This subcommittee is made up of representatives from the PNEC, each association of the PSEC and members of the JCVDT.

At the retreat, we took a brief look at what a merged budget might look like using a simple draft created from the budgets of both conferences. It became apparent when this budget was presented it didn't fully reflect the ministry of our conferences. A budget subcommittee will be formed to look at our Vision, Mission, Purpose and Values statements, staff structure and conference structure to determine a possible budget for a new conference.

Moving forward, our Consistory and the PNEC Board came to a consensus that the JCVDT would do the work of creating a possible new conference with outlines of staff, association and budget structures. These would then be recommended to the Consistory and Board for consideration. Should these governing boards approve the structure outlines, it would then be brought before the two conferences for consideration and approval. If approved, a resolution will go to General Synod for permission to change the boundaries of our conferences so that we can begin to live into these new structures.

It is important to note that in creating something new, that we will have to live with unknowns that will only become known as we live into a new conference structure. The task of the JCVDT is to create the basic structure that will be filled out as we determine together how God is calling us to be the church in Eastern Pennsylvania. We recognize this cause anxiety as change and unknowns do but we are the people of God who trust God's to lead us through this wilderness time into something new for the glory of God.

The JCVDT promotes events and updates through the PSEC and PNEC websites, the *Communitas*, e-blasts, and through our Facebook page. The JCVDT meets twice a month to be about this work.

Respectfully submitted by,
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Co-Chair of the JCVDT