

Conference Consistory

March 17, 2018

Attendance: Elaine Ely, Bill Middleton, Ray Edwards, Jennie Strauch, Bill Worley, Lee Metzger, Barbara Guido, Barb Pence, Sharon Morris, Anne Cormier, Edward Livingston, Bob Stewart, Maureen Duffy-Guy, Karl Jones (visitor).

Barb Pence called the meeting to order.

Ray Edwards led devotions on the issue of gun violence.

Minutes were reviewed, motion by Bob Stewart, 2nd by Barb Guido, minutes approved.

Correspondence:

Bill received a letter from Brian Bodager, of the UCC Pension Boards, regarding "Generations of Service," a \$20 million capital campaign of Pension Boards around supporting retired clergy, doing leadership development and financial wellness with clergy. The campaign is hoping for PSEC to give \$50,000 over next five years. Bill has no recommendation on this.

Treasurer's report:

This year we will draw 4% from the endowment for our budget. Our return on investment on endowment is 14-18%, of which we are drawing 4%. We are not drawing on principal. We had been drawing 6%, then we made the decision to draw 4%.

OCWM. Ray wants to thank those who contacted churches who had not pledged OCWM. They saw an additional \$200,000 since that request to contact churches. Some churches also make budget decisions after the new year, and finally pledged.

Motion Ed, 2nd Jennie, motion carried, Treasurer's report approved.

Personnel Committee report:

Sue Bertolette requested to be on the Personnel Committee, the committee requests she be put on. All in favor, motion carried.

Disaster Ministries: Karl Jones is on deployment from UCC Disaster Ministries to SE Pennsylvania or Puerto Rico and Virgin Islands evacuees. Half of evacuees are in the city of Philadelphia. SEPA VOAD worked with Phila Office of Emergency Management to work with people coming to Phila. The Greater Phila Longterm Recovery committee was formed. Karl Jones requests a signature on application for PSEC to become an official member of the Greater Philadelphia Longterm Recovery Committee. PSEC is contributing Karl, and a grant from National UCC (which is almost expended), but Karl is told that the National UCC will give more as needs continue. Karl needs to meet with UCC churches in Philadelphia, especially in NE Philadelphia. In Philadelphia the Salvation Army has contributed \$120,000, Lutherans \$100,000 for case management services. National UCC made a \$6,000 grant. Karl is also working with the Hispanic Center in Reading, for folks staying in a hotel in Wyomissing. St. Peter's Pine Grove will adopt an evacuee family in Reading.

The other resource PSEC brings: we are the keeper of all the data. UCC and FEMA have a contract so Karl gets updates daily of what benefits people are receiving. Motion Anne, seconded by Ed, that the PSEC conference become a member of Greater Philadelphia Long Term Recovery Committee. It is a long term commitment, until Hurricane Maria work is done. To date we have not used any conference funds. If a congregation wants to give, send donations to PSEC. Karl is available to come to churches and speak.

Amanda Shelton from UCC National Disaster Ministries Refugee Resettlement will come to our area April 24th, to shadow Karl. Karl hopes she can meet Bill Worley.

Motion approved that PSEC become a member of Greater Philadelphia Long Term Recovery Committee.

Assoc. Conf. Minister for Congregational Development:

Church planting is in a lull. Ray hopes we can get more aggressive. But what is lacking is will across the conference. Ray would say do a national search for a church planter and get it done, make a big plan. Bill says we have resources, we just need is to identify people with missionary zeal. Sharon said we need to have a safety net, so if it fails the leader will be taken care of. It will be interesting to get more input from Cean. Churches closing are more likely to give to a church plant than to a PSEC fund. Bill says we are a conference in decline. It is hard for us to cultivate something that is not in decline. What does the future church look like? We are thinking bricks and mortar, we are not thinking outside the box.

Sharon has been working with Cornerstone to create a fund to create communities of faith. Sharon knows if she could connect to a closing church's history, what their ancestors did to get the church going, maybe closing churches would be willing to give to church rather than other charities. Bill: we have a small group for church planting that has taken ownership, and there is no ownership on the part of the larger system, the conference. Seems like Associations have a vested interest in the wellness of their congregations. How does an Association take responsibility to make disciples? There is an inherent resistance. What if every Association meeting started with vision?

Motion to receive the report: Jennie moved, Lee 2nd, report approved.

Assoc. Conf Minister for Search and Call:

Rev. Mary Lake Dillensnyder is leaving St. John Hill.

Bern UCC is following pattern set by other congregations who won't respond to the Conference. Sharon reaches out to help them find a pastor, but they don't give her information to let her help. They are disassociating from the UCC, but with no official vote from the congregation to leave the UCC.

Lou Vetri's wife will be joining the National Staff.

Motion to receive Assoc. Conf. Minister's report, 1st Barbara, 2nd by Ed. Motion carried.

Conference Minister Report:

At the retreat Bill attended he learned 3 things: 1. People who joined military tend to have experienced trauma in childhood, and that plays into addiction. 2. Trauma sits in the same place in brain where creative capacity sits. So people look for resolution. That prevents creativity from happening. 3. My life will take shape in way I can't anticipate, because I've been going backwards instead of forward.

Bill would coordinate the coordinators for the National Youth Event.

What is the defined role for Council of Conference Ministers? There is none. The Three Great Loves are our UCC strategic vision. If we don't merge with PNEC, what would be our PSEC vision?

There are four goals of Rev John Dorhauer. Bill would support him. There is no strategic vision.

Conference Minister's Report: Lee 1st, Elaine 2nd, motion approved.

Joint Conference Vision and Development Team (JCVDT) update:

17 people made it to the Joint Conference retreat. The JCVDT is trying to create a new conference rather than simply merge two existing conferences. The priorities and foundations for a new conference were created from people's responses on the first day of the retreat. On the second day we shared results of surveys. It was noted how blessed we are to have our conference staff; how creative and willing they are to do the work. A draft was made of Vision, Mission, Purpose and Values statements. We wanted to make it concise and easy to understand, but also not to lose our Christian identity. Consistory agreed.

What does PNEC do better than any other conference? PNEC has relational pastors who are more collegial. What does PSEC do better than any other conference? PSEC has amazing committees on ministry. There is a difference in diversity. PNEC is not as diverse but would like to be. Bill Middleton would like to see diversity lifted up in values; racial diversity and other diversity.

Vision, Mission, Purpose and Values statements will go to our Spring Association Meetings. A subcommittee is being created to structure a new conference. Persons from PNEC and the PSEC Associations and or COM's will be asked to be on the committee. The work will include possible association COM setup. Acknowledgement that PNEC has no history of working as associations. Our associations self-define. Some possible structures were discussed.

JCVDT realizes they will not have a new conference ready in time for a resolution for General Synod. So we would like to have a bare bones vision: Vision, Mission, Purpose and Values. Then begin to live into these structures, and realize where we need to change things. So we would like a resolution for 2019 General Synod to ask for permission to change the conference boundaries without waiting until 2021, should we decide to become a new conference. It will not be a done deal.

There is a subcommittee set up for staffing. All staff members on both conferences would like to continue in a new conference. A concern was raised about trying to build a new conference with old staffing.

JCVDT will do the work of creating a possible new conference with outlines of staff and budget, these will be brought before our PSEC Consistory and the PNEC Board, then if approved before both conferences. We will have to deal with change if we create a new conference, but trust in God, we will be better for the journey.

Bill asked if we say no to this new conference, what's on the other side of no? Bill's worst fear: saying no will de-energize us. Bob Stewart says the cumbersome nature of our associations weighs us down. Can you build a structure around mission? You join the association where you have affinity with the mission. Bill Middleton says if you can protect committees on ministry, people are more likely to vote for a new conference. Barb was thanked for all her work on the JCVDT.

2020 vision updates. We had chosen 5 priorities. Ed Livingston reported on social justice ministry. He had a 2014 peace and justice survey of churches' involvement in social justice ministry. This gives a baseline of what was happening before the 2020 vision. For each issue (such as the environment) it shows congregations that responded to the survey and how they are involved in the issue. It would be interesting to know how that has transformed the community around the congregation.

Expectation for pastoral excellence. There are two new groups that have started. About 60 clergy are members of a group.

The member in discernment academy will happen this summer.

Moderator. Barb's time as moderator is coming to an end. At the Spring Conference meeting, Jennie Strauch will be voted on as new Conference Moderator, Rev. Edward Livingston as Vice Moderator. Tim Kissling from Covenant Association is willing to serve on Conference Consistory. Motion by Bob, 2nd by Elaine, motion carried to elect Tim.

Revision of Bill Worley's housing allowance from \$24,000 to \$30,000. Motion Lee, second by Bill Middleton. Motion carried.

If housing allowances are found unconstitutional, congregations may want to help pastors offset the financial burden from losing them.

Do we need a Fall Meeting? We need a Fall Meeting because the budget begins Jan. 1 and we need to approve it. But we could dispense with the Fall Meeting if we went to a fiscal year budget. In the constitution it states that we have to vote on an annual budget, but we don't have to have a Fall Meeting. Motion by Barbara that the Budget and Finance create a plan for a fiscal year budget. Barbara motion, Ed, 2nd, motion carried.

This year, the Fall Meeting is Nov. 10, 2018, 9am-4pm. Place TBD.

New Ministries' Fund had four requests: East Goshen UCC, Love in Action, St. Pauls in Robeson, and Community UCC in Schwarzwald. St. Paul's asked for money for mailing, we gave them \$2500. This is the second time we have given, we said it may be the last we give. Love in Action asked for \$15,000 for transgender ministry, we haven't awarded that yet, Bill needs to speak with them. \$1000 approved for clothing bin for Community UCC in Schwarzwald. We awarded East Goshen for their new worship service a portion: \$14,500.

Motion to adjourn, approved.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Maureen Duffy-Guy, substituting for Jenny Smith.