

PSEC Consistory Meeting
Meeting March 18, 2017
St. James UCC Limerick, PA

Consistory Members Present: Rev. Dr. Jon Fogle, Mr. Lee Metzger, Rev. Elaine Ely, Mr. Ray Edwards, Rev. Barbara Pence, Ms. Barbara Guido, Rev. Bill Worley, Mr. Fred Schuetz, Mr. Rob Stilwell, Mr. Harold Albitz, Rev. Jenny Smith, Ms. Jennie Strauch

Consistory Members Absent: Mr. Max Ruemmeler, Ms. Nya Huertas, Ms. Regina Floyd, Rev. Cean James, Rev. Maureen Duffy-Guy

Consistory Staff Present: Rev. Sharon Morris

Additional Attendees: Karl Jones

Barb Pence called the meeting to order at 9:30 AM and thanked Jennie Strauch for providing refreshments. Jenny Smith offered a devotion with a reading from Numbers.

The minutes were approved. (Motion: Fred Schuetz; 2nd Barb Guido)

There were no new communications to be shared.

Treasurer

Ray Edward's report was received. He noted that the number of OCWM congregational pledges have increased by 6 through contacts by phone/email. Per the financial snapshot, we are behind in OCWM contributions to date, but it is early. Bill has a draft letter regarding OCWM giving that will go out shortly.

The Committee recommends any request over \$500 that is not budgeted be sent first to Tammy for review so we know where money would come from in advance of acting on the request. This was approved as policy by vote. (2nd Jennie Strauch)

The Treasurer's report was approved (Motion: Rob Stilwell; 2nd: Lee Metzger)

Personnel Committee

Barb Guido's report was received. Performance reviews of conference staff were completed. Everything was very positive and Bill is pleased with staff and noted their high willingness to work together. The committee will do midyear reviews as well.

The report was approved (Motion: Elaine Ely; 2nd: Lee Metzger)

Disaster Coordinator

Karl Jones' report was received. He attended annual training. He will use \$100 in the budget to match the UCC initiative for Church World Service Emergency Cleanup Buckets.

He requested that PSEC become a partner in disaster spiritual care network, with a \$1,000 startup. This will be funded from the disaster ministry savings account. The action was approved. (Motion: Barb Guido; 2nd: Lee Metzger)

Karl shared a letter from Bridges Out of Poverty which is a model for a resiliency project reflecting a whole community response. Karl noted that it is hard to revitalize the church without revitalizing the community around it.

ACM for Congregational Development

Cean James' written report was received. He is leading a workshop at Woodcrest UCC today. He joined the staff in February and is putting together a working group.

Cean's report was approved. (Motion: Jennie Strauch; 2nd: Elaine Ely)

ACM of Search and Call

Sharon Morris' report was received. She noted that Brea finished the yearbook reporting to national data hub. Sharon praised Brea's work getting 80% of the churches to report.

Sharon will be hosting a webinar on local church profiles. A goal from 20/20 Vision was to use more technology for training and meetings.

She has an attorney and a real estate person who have volunteered to meet with churches who are facing closure.

The Conference received \$1,000 in honor of First UCC Reading.

The insurance board has started offering ALICE training which is about preparation and planning in case of intruder/active shooter situations. We may have a workshop on this at the fall meeting.

There are 33 churches currently in search; many are part-time positions and several are looking for interims.

Some congregations are too small to afford a pastor. They blame conference when they cannot find someone. A few churches present a liability ... safety and financial ... with no heat or water. While polity limits authority over local churches, we need to act on situations up to the limit of our ability. When we are aware of situations, we can have dialogue with churches; staff act at direction of Consistory. Who should be involved; the COM, local code enforcement? What is the standard for having a church in terms of safety? Expectations of churches are named in the UCC bylaws. There is some hint that the manual on the church is to be updated. Currently, there is a draft from 1996 online. How do we counsel churches to a good ending, particularly when they are in denial?

There is a legacy church resource online that identifies areas that churches discerning their future need to look at. It talks about stewardship as churches who close may decide to give money to a new church start fund.

It was suggested that we follow up with churches who have closed to ask what would have been helpful and what the conference could have done sooner.

Jon and Jenny volunteered to meet with churches who need to consider closure and Elaine offered to do bereavement counseling.

Sharon's report was approved. (Motion: Jon Fogle; 2nd:Rob Stilwell)

Conference Minister

Bill Worley's report was received. He will be going to Germany.

Bill presented a merged conference resolution which provides for a period of 1 year to explore and plan what a merged conference would look like. What can we do as a merged conference that we cannot do as separate conferences? Looking for consent to develop a team and envision what it would look like. The plan would be presented in 2018 then, if approved, would go to General Synod at their next meeting. We could begin trying shared ministry prior to that.

The following resolution was approved:

Therefore, be it resolved, that PNEC and PSEC will form a transition team to vision and develop a model of a new, merged conference. This transition team will hold small group meetings in both conferences to present the vision, invite feedback, and continue to develop a new understanding of conference ministry, identity, purpose, and mission. (Motion: Barb Guido; 2nd: Ray Edwards)

PSEC Retreat

In January, we selected 5 values and 5 objectives as priorities from 20/20 vision.

Values: Transparency, Covenant, Radical Inclusivity, Celebration, Building Capacity

Objectives:

- 5 cities and towns positively impacted by the presence of a UCC church
- Connect local congregations to training, inspirational experiences, networking opportunities and resources with a goal of increasing active participation by 10%
- Develop expectation of pastoral excellence with a coach for 1st year pastors and accountability support groups
- Prepare for the birth of 6 new church starts
- Academy for standardized training of potential clergy

A motion was approved to give the new pastor coaching and accountability objective to the Church and Ministry Council for policy development. (Motion: Ray Edwards; 2nd: Jon Fogle) Note that the Member In Discernment team reports to the Church and Ministry Council.

A motion was approved to give the MID training priority to the Church and Ministry Council for policy development. (Motion: Elaine Ely; 2nd: Barb Guido)

Regarding the new church starts objective, we will look to the ACM for Congregational Development to advise the Consistory.

The local church networking objective is the purview of the associations. The 10% increase in local church participation would be measured in whatever manner churches wish to measure it. Sharon offered that she can share slides about shared ministry, including association statistics, at the association meetings.

New Ministries Fund Requests

Checks were cut. Elaine raised a question about requests that do not use all of the money. The recipient could either submit a revised request or return unused funds.

Bill asked for ideas on how we could stimulate applications for truly new ministries.

UCC/PSEC Mission, Purpose, Value

We will have new statements from national church.

Spring Meeting

Barb reminded everyone that registration for the Spring meeting is available online now.

In addition to reports, there are 3 agenda items for Saturday, June 10:

- Resolution for merged PSEC/PNEC
- Constitution and bylaw changes for our conference
- Installation of new members

Diversity Training

It was noted that the workshops on diversity went well.

The meeting was adjourned shortly after noon. (Motion: Barb Guido; 2nd: Rob Stilwell)

The next meeting Consistory meeting is May 20th at this location. Elaine volunteered to do devotions.

Respectfully submitted,
Jenny Smith