

PSEC Conference
Fall 2018 Meeting
November 10, 2018

WELCOME/INTRODUCTIONS

Following the opening worship service, Ms. Jennie Strauch, conference moderator, welcomed the attendees and reminded those present to turn in their conferring card if they had not already done so. She thanked the pastors of our host church for their hospitality.

Rev. Worley, conference minister, added his welcome and introduced the conference staff. He and Ms. Strauch recognized several guests and attendees. Rev. Barbara Pence, past moderator, received a UCC conference moderator medallion in appreciation for her service.

CALL TO ORDER

Ms. Strauch called the business meeting to order.

Credentials Report

Mr. Harry Rosenthal was appointed as Parliamentarian. Rev. Edward Livingston, vice moderator, provided the credentials report. 161 voting delegates are needed for a quorum. Attendees consisted of 125 clergy, 99 church delegates, 3 lay consistory delegates, 2 members in discernment and 23 visitors. The 227 registered voting members constituted a quorum.

Ms. Strauch defined the bar of the house as the church building.

Adopt Standing Rules

Ms. Strauch called attendees' attention to the standing rules, in particular #14 pertaining to the afternoon vote. A motion was passed to adopt the standing rules. (Motion: Mr. Bill Hariegle, New Goshenhoppen UCC; 2nd: Rev. Ann Few, Linfield)

Adoption of Minutes

Minutes for the 2018 spring meeting were approved. (Motion: Rev. Tyson Frey, Friedens UCC Oley; 2nd: Rev. Erick Kern, 1st UCC Spring City)

REPORTS

Treasurer's Report

Mr. Ray Edwards referred attendees to the budget in the meeting handout. He reviewed what has been done with OCWM (Our Church's Wider Mission) funds this past year, including numerous retreats and training events. Income was increased by 2% over the last 12 months of receipts. The goal is to reduce draws from investments 2% by 2020. Mr. Edwards reviewed projected health cost increases, salary increases

(2.5%) and other expenses. He also clarified how pass-through donations are handled. He encouraged those present to let congregations know how OCWM funds are utilized.

Ms. Tammie Wisniewski spoke about the importance of the relationship between local churches and the conference and congregational giving to OCWM. The conference has hired a public relations firm to assist with communications in this regard.

A motion to receive the treasurer's report was passed. (Motion: Rev. Frances Merkel St. John's Gernants; 2nd: Rev. Jon Fogle, Zion Blue Mountain UCC)

Rev. Debra Timmins, UCC Royersford, seconded the motion to accept the 2019 budget coming from Budget and Finance.

It was observed that the increases amounted to about \$34 per member of our conference. We were short of our budget by approximately \$15,000 as of November, but we are closing the gap between the 2018 budget and actual. It was noted that the increase in the line item for pastoral excellence would mostly be offset by payment of attendees at these programs. Similarly, the joint conference retreat was a shared cost with half paid by attendees. The proposed unification with PNEC would not impact this budget because, if General Synod gave approval in 2019 there would be a two year transition period so we would continue operating through 2019 as a separate conference. The Ursinus campus ministry and home for the aged (Phoebe) line items are funded by endowments with specific intended uses; the projected draw is based on the average size of the funds the last 3 years so that is reason for increase.

Rev. John Folk, St. Paul's UCC Fleetwood, proposed an amendment to the budget: Include an additional \$3,000 under the youth ministry line item, to be taken from non-designated savings dollars, in order to fund an expansion of conference youth ministry events into the Philadelphia area. Rev. Marian Shearer, Calvary Reformed UCC Reading, seconded the motion. It was passed unanimously.

Ms. Strauch called for a vote on the full budget, which was subsequently adopted.

Pension Board Campaign

Rev. Worley gave an update on the campaign to raise funds for The United Church Board Ministerial Assistance program. Letters have been sent to congregations and pastors with information and an invitation to participate in the campaign. The responses are just starting to come in.

A motion to recess until 1:30 PM was passed. (Motion: Mr. Bill Vogel, Trinity Christian UCC Harleysville; 2nd: Ms. Erlinda Ardao, UCC of East Goshen)

NEW BUSINESS

Ms. Strauch reconvened the business meeting.

Joint Conference Vision and Development Team (JCVDT) Resolution

Rev. Worley offered remarks to set a tone of openness for the discussion and invited Rev. Barbara Pence to introduce the resolution. She recognized members of the JCVDT, then reviewed the work of the team to date.

A motion was made to accept the resolution to move forward with the formation of a new conference. (Motion: Rev. Tyson Frey, Friedens UCC Oley; 2nd: Rev. Leslie Mamas, Olivet-Schwenkfelder UCC) Ms. Strauch read the resolution aloud and then clarified rules for the discussion. A summary of the points raised during the discussion follows:

- Concern about a difference between the wording in the PSEC resolution and that passed by PNEC. Contradictory messages of this being the “final vote” versus can we step back from it; this is much too soon. There is a desire for more detailed information. Rev. Pence clarified that a final vote comes only after there is a constitution and bylaws. We can be flexible on the timeline, but set a goal of one year. JCVDT wants it to happen organically and with as much participation as possible.
- Change is hard, but we have not always been this conference. We have change all the time; God is always doing new things. The association is key. If this allows us to do the work of Jesus Christ with good stewardship and lets associations do their jobs, then I’m in favor of it.
- Would like to see us accomplish the 2020 Vision first. There is a concern that a merger will sap our strength. The conference office is already understaffed.
- The importance of leadership: a concern that our conference minister would not be the conference minister of a joint conference.
- PNEC brings joy and fun. When you take a risk, God comes through.
- Since the sale of the church house and Mensch Mill we have done much work in the healing of relationships and have striven for transparency. Let’s be candid about reasons for joining together. Is it the financial situation in PNEC? What is the number one question for couples? Finances! Also, there are the challenges of staff uncertainties.
- It’s not just about money. How can we do better ministry together?
- Why is a merger necessary now? There is no tangible reason to do so. There is no clear and compelling vision to guide us through framing ourselves together.

- What structure allows us to move forward in strength? What is the desired outcome, how will we measure success?
- We are being led by the Spirit in endeavoring to do a new thing. If we wait, when will the time be right?
- We enter into relationships because we love each other. This is not losing family, but growing family. It's about being in relationship with someone you love and being committed to deepen that relationship.
- Regardless of how the vote goes, we need to be in conversation with each other.

The question was called. The JCVDT resolution for conference unification did not pass. 224 votes were cast, 114 for, 110 against; 148 votes in favor were needed for a two-thirds majority.

Ms. Strauch thanked the JCVDT, the parliamentarian, the conference staff and the delegates for their participation.

The business of the conference being concluded, a motion to adjourn was passed. (Motion: Rev. Michael Bush, UCC Valley Forge; 2nd: Rev. Martha Kriebel)

Respectfully submitted,

Rev Jenny Smith, Secretary