PSEC Mobile Office Exploration
PSEC Fall Meeting 2019
Ursinus College
November 17, 2019 – 3-5pm

Background:
In 1962, PSEC established its first Conference office in a house bordering the campus of Ursinus College. Twenty-six years later, the Conference constructed a new facility in Collegeville that was our Conference home until 2013 when we downsized to a much smaller facility in Pottstown which is our current location. Each of these changes was designed to meet the current ministry needs of local churches, lay leaders and authorized ministers as much as our resources (financial and otherwise) could make possible.

Very hard decisions in our recent past, combined with an ongoing spirit of OCWM generosity and good stewardship, have placed our Conference on solid financial footing. Still, the church in all its settings contends with the uncomfortable reality of diminished resources and new ways of being church. Conference Consistory is discerning how we can creatively leverage our current strengths against future challenges. One possibility is to move to a mobile office platform.

Why make this move?
1. To model the Church and a faith focused on people and mission apart from buildings.
2. Create a model that local churches could use in their own future plan of work.
3. Possible new ministry opportunities that might come from net savings of rent/utilities, etc.
4. Staff would work from home offices and travel as needed.
5. It might ease the possibility of future Conference unification.
6. Potential reduction to the carbon footprint of staff travel to and from the office.

Why not make this move?
1. The possibility for reduced staff coordination and cohesion.
2. Diminished Conference identity that is associated with a physical location.
3. Cost savings could be offset by rented space requirements for document/artifact storage.
4. Change is hard work and it would (temporarily) require the reallocation of staff time/energy to implement this new way of operating.

How might we explore this change and what it would mean? A potential process might look like this:
Stage One: Information gathering
1. Creating a working group of staff and Consistory members and willing Conference volunteers to answer questions related to:
   a. A finance plan showing projected gain/loss
   b. Measure openness/capacity to increase use of video conferencing by Conference Consistory, Ministry Teams and Committees.
   c. Explore phone systems based on connections to staff cell phones, cloud-based storage systems and the digitalization of files (to be subcontracted?).
   d. Space needs for document/artifact storage.
   e. Investigate mail processing options.
2. Determine staff reconfiguration (if necessary/possible)
3. Conduct opinion survey of Conference membership

4. Working Group reports findings to Conference Consistory to determine movement to Stage Two.
5. Consistory reports to Conference members their findings and decision about movement to (or not to) Stage Two.

Stage Two: Testing
1. Review proposal with legal counsel and auditors.
2. Experiment with a mobile office for two months, obtain feedback from staff.
3. Evaluation of mobile office experience by Consistory and Working Group.
4. Consistory reports back to Conference members.

Stage Three: Approval
1. Recommendation to Conference body to move forward, or not, with mobile office platform.
2. Implementation of Mobile Platform plan.

CONCLUSION:
We will consider the mobile office platform idea at our Fall Conference Meeting and hope to find consensus around one of three possibilities:

1. This is an idea we need to explore now. Begin Stage One and report back at 2020 Spring Annual Meeting.
2. This is an idea worthy of consideration, but not now.
3. This is not an idea we should consider.