

Pennsylvania Southeast Conference Fall Meeting
November 17, 2019
Ursinus College, Collegeville, Pennsylvania

Welcome and Introductions

Ms. Jennie Strauch, moderator, thanked Ursinus College and their chaplain, Rev. Terri Ofori, for hosting our meeting. Rev. Ofori offered an opening scripture and prayer.

Following the opening hymn, Rev. Worley thanked the organist and introduced our new Vice Moderator, Rev. Antonio Villareal. Rev. Worley recognized first time attendees and added his thanks and support to Rev. Ofori.

Rev. Worley also recognized Ms. Anaiya Huertas, a current student at Ursinus, Rev. Kriebel from the class of 1956, and other Ursinus graduates in the room. Rev. Ofori thanked Rev. John Hogue whose church donated bibles to the chapel. Rev. Hogue shared background information about Rev. Bomberger, for whom the chapel in which we meet was named. Rev. Suzanne Schwarz-Green shared history about Trinity UCC, Collegeville.

Ms. Strauch recognized Rev. Frances Chester, Dean of Church and Ministry Council, Rev. John Hogue, Clerk of Church and Ministry Council, the moderators of each association, and the members of the Conference Consistory.

Rev. Terri McNamara announced that the Spring meeting will be held at The Inn at Reading, June 4-6, 2020. She noted that there will be no late or walk-in registrations.

Call to Order and Credentials Report

Ms. Strauch called the meeting to order. Rev. Villareal gave the credentials report. 159 voting delegates are needed for a quorum. There were a total of 226 consisting of 117 clergy, 103 church delegates, 4 lay consistory members, 2 lay moderator delegates and 2 members-in-discernment (MIDs). This constituted a quorum. The bar for the meeting was set at the building.

Adoption of Standing Rules

Ms. Strauch invited attendees to look at the standing rules which were subsequently accepted. (Motion: Rev. Anne Cormier; 2nd: Rev. Terri McNamara)

Approval of Minutes

It was noted that the minutes misspelled the name of the president of Lancaster Seminary (Rev. Carol Lytch) and mistakenly encouraged us to be pilgrims not tortoises (should be tourists, not tortoises). A motion to accept the corrected minutes was passed. (Motion: Rev. Ann Few; 2nd: Rev. Darryl Cruz) Subsequently it was noted that another name needed correction (Kate Hoffman, not Kay), so the minutes were accepted with this additional change. (Motion: Rev. John Folk; 2nd: Rev. Nate Shaw)

2019 Financial Report and 2020 Spending Plan

Mr. Ray Edwards invited attendees to check in on social media to let people know that church is important because it builds bridges for conversation. It is one way to tell a story. Budgets are another way to tell a story. Budgets are also a moral statement indicating what is important to us. He displayed the narrative budget and proceeded to have MIDs, interim pastors, anyone from a church who used conference resources to assist with search and call, members of pastoral excellence groups, those who have attended a youth retreat or General Synod, workshop attendees, supporters of Bethany, Phoebe and Lancaster Seminary to stand. This emphasized the importance of telling the story of OCWM.

The financial report showed an increase in OCWM giving, reduction of endowment draw from 6% to 4% and a forecast of 3% for 2020. The Personnel Committee and Consistory recommend a 3% increase in salary for 2020. Over \$129,000 has been forwarded to the greater UCC during 2019.

Mr. Edwards reviewed the spending plan from 2017 through the 2020 proposal. Rev. Karl Jones responded to a question about disaster response funding of over \$12,000 in 2019 and only \$100 for 2020; this is pass-through monies. A motion to accept the spending plan passed unanimously. (Motion: Annika Hegamin; 2nd: Rev. Roger Ulrich)

Generations of Service Campaign

Mr. Tim Kissling reported that PSEC exceeded the goal with over \$50,000 collected and pledged. He thanked the churches for meeting the 5-year goal in just 18 months. Ms. Strauch thanked Mr. Kissling for spear-heading the campaign.

Rev. Worley blessed the collection of 2020 pledge cards, and the offering, designated for PSEC youth to attend the National Youth Event in July 2020.

Conference Minister Remarks

Rev. Worley shared a summary of follow-up conversations between PSEC and PNEC leadership. He noted that shared ministry between the two conferences continues in joint clergy convocations and clergy retreats. He encouraged all to form connections and partnerships, between churches and associations as well as conferences.

Mobile Office Proposal

Introducing the proposal to explore a mobile conference office, Rev. Worley pointed out that there are conferences within our denomination who have moved away from a physical office building. Feedback from Southern California-Nevada conference indicate excitement over what their staff has been able to accomplish. Rev. Worley asked attendees to consider the three questions posed in the proposal.

During discussion it was noted that any move would be heavily reliant on technology not just in conference office, but also associations and local churches so would require them to absorb the cost and become comfortable with it.

Other comments and points raised included:

- Concern about boundary issues; geographical boundaries can be “closed” but not as easily done if working from home.
- Why are we not asking this about Pennsylvania conferences? This would be a way to come together and use resources, not be so turf-based.
- The questions of logistics. The struggle is real. It takes the right people to be home-based. It can be very isolating and one has to make an effort to be in fellowship with people. Need to find a way to maintain the fellowship of people.
- What about sensitive discussions and centralized files?
- Mobile offices could lead to reduced staff coordination and cohesion. New seminary models that rely on online interaction result in missed opportunities for spontaneous discussion and situations that let dynamic interaction arise. However, it was noted that bonds are formed during online interaction.
- Do we want to spend time on something we might not do?
- A mobile office could be more environmentally-friendly. We need to figure out new ways of being together.
- Quality of life requires time off the road. Maybe a hybrid model with some residency time. Use churches for in-person gathering from time to time.
- It would cost less to have the internet and technology than to pay travel costs.

Delegates voted to explore the possibility of a mobile office through Phase 1 (not to actually start it).

What Matters Most: Social Justice Issues

The 2020 Vision included an objective to identify 2 social justice issues and offer prophetic witness. The Consistory suggested addressing the opioid epidemic and climate change. Discussion was invited to identify what matters most to attendees and why it matters. Additional issues included:

- Civility to each other, how we treat one another
- Human trafficking
- Poverty and economic justice
- Fair education funding

It was noted that the opioid epidemic is a symptom of a problem rooted in economic issues and access to health care. The larger issue is of addiction, not opioids. There is

an obstacle to treatment due to stigma. What is the particular and unique thing we can bring to the conversation? Addiction can be approached spiritually. Climate change also in terms of how we understand creation. We can uniquely speak to these and not duplicate others' efforts.

The issue of climate change is met with different attitudes in our churches. The attention of the denomination on WISE and mental health already has some positive movement. Climate change is already a crisis. Impacts economics and health. Not all efforts out there are political. Non partisan resources are available.

This kind of organizing is so important. Millennials care about these things. We need to partner with other organizations involved in these issues.

Attendees expressed a desire for more time and space to discuss the topic. A motion to table the topic did not pass - 86 in favor, 91 opposed, 5 abstentions. (Motion: Rev. John Folk; 2nd: Rev. Joe Motz)

There remained a desire to reflect and consider other issues, but not lose more time addressing the issues already raised. The possibility of an online survey was offered.

A motion was passed to accept climate change and addiction as 2 focus issues today with continuation of the conversation for possible additional topics at the spring meeting. (Motion: Rev. Ann Few; 2nd: Rev. Cydney Van Dyke)

Sign up sheets were made available for people interested in climate change and addiction.

A motion to adjourn the meeting passed. (Motion: Rev. Suzanne Spaulding; 2nd: Ms. Liz Brunton) The meeting was closed in prayer led by Rev. Worley. Ms. Strauch thanked attendees.

Respectfully submitted,
Rev. Jenny Smith, Secretary