

Pennsylvania Southeast Conference Special Annual Conference Meeting
August 15, 2020
Via Zoom

Welcome

Ms. Jennie Strauch, moderator, welcomed everyone to the special online meeting. She asked for patience considering our varying levels of familiarity with technology and the large number of participants. She explained that the chat feature will be used for motions and announced that the meeting will be recorded. The offering is being taken online and will be split between National OCWM and PSEC disaster ministries.

Worship

The service opened with a prayer of lament led by Rev. Susan Minasian and a scripture reading from John 11 by Rev. Sean James. Rev. Bill Worley thanked the consistory officers and members, conference staff, and attendees, then offered a brief reflection. Attendees joined in an affirmation of hope.

Call to Order and Credentials Report

Ms. Strauch convened the meeting and asked Rev. Tony Villareal, vice moderator, to give the credentials report. 155 delegates are needed to call the meeting to order. There are 221 voting delegates which constitutes a quorum: 140 clergy, 76 church delegates, 4 consistory lay members, 1 lay moderator, 5 members in discernment, and 16 visitors.

Ms. Strauch explained how voting will take place then asked for a motion to accept standing rules. The motion passed. (Motion: Rev. Craig Zimmerman; 2nd: Rev. Robert Stewart)

Approval of Minutes and Reports

The minutes from the Fall 2019 meeting were accepted. (Motion: Sean Donlon; 2nd: Rev. Suzanne Schwarz-Green)

Ms. Strauch accepted reports from the consistory secretary, the Interim Conference Minister of Search and Call, and the Conference Minister's State of the Conference report.

Mr. Ray Edwards provided the financial reports. He explained there is presently a "paper loss" on the endowment funds due to market fluctuation and added that the Finance Committee has decided not to make a withdrawal at this time. Mr. Edwards indicated that the conference received a PPP loan through the CARES Act, which he anticipates will be forgiven. There were withdrawals from the conference "rainy day" fund with \$1,000 sent to each church, some of which was returned unused. Other churches sent notes of appreciation describing how the funds were used. Mr. Edwards noted that 73 churches achieved 5 for 5 status supporting churchwide offering initiatives. The audit was completed successfully.

The treasurer's report (2nd: Rev. Roger Ulrich) and audit report (2nd: Mr. Brian Barndt) were accepted.

ACM of Search and Call

Ms. Strauch described the search and call process for the interim ACM of Search and Call which resulted in hiring Rev. Susan Minasian. She also outlined the steps moving forward regarding the search for a permanent hire.

Old Business

Addiction Task Force

Rev. Dr. Deborah Rahn Clemens, task force moderator, shared a personal story regarding her son's addiction and death and the support she received from her congregation at the time. She noted that the pandemic has heightened the need to support those dealing with addictions. The task force has put together a list of resources for congregations, including personal essays. It was requested and agreed that these materials will be made available to local churches in both in print and electronic form.

Climate Justice Team

Rev. Marian Shearer, co-chair of the team, shared information about the 50-50-50 challenge inviting 50 churches in the PSEC to commit to taking on a "green" project to counter climate change for the 50th anniversary of Earth Day. Despite the pandemic, at least 8 churches have already done so. A list of ways to participate in the challenge are listed on the PSEC website.

Mobile Office Platform Committee

Mr. John Jones spoke on behalf of the committee, describing how the pandemic has forced the conference staff to work remotely and advanced the original timetable. They have determined that the conference does not require the current amount of office space and has negotiated with the landlord for approximately half the space at a savings of \$17,350 per year. The committee is continuing to gather feedback from staff on the mobile office experience and their technology needs for home office support. They are also gathering feedback on how well the mobile office supports conference churches.

New Business

Zachariah Walker Racial Justice Initiative

Rev. Ann-Therese Ortiz shared the historical framework for this initiative, the lynching of Zachariah Walker, an African-American man, in Coatesville on August 13, 1911. Ways in which the churches can provide support for our Black members, neighbors and friends will include liturgical resources beginning in Advent 2020, to help us embrace our collective racist past, open our eyes, repent and turn our hearts to God.

Elections & Installation

A recommendation from the Personnel Committee was presented to re-elect Rev. Worley for second 6-year term as Conference Minister. (2nd: Rev. Wanda Craner)

Rev. Worley spoke of the challenges facing the PSEC and the local churches programmatically and financially. He expressed concern about clergy health and issues of depression, stress and anxiety. He also identified questions on how to select and train individuals for clergy and how do we prepare them to serve. Rev. Worley cited the low participation in conference meetings among both clergy and lay people, asking where are our lay people? The work of the clergy is to train people for the ministry. While he is not sure how to make new expressions of the church happen, he acknowledged that we need to change the way we are doing church, to go out into the world and make disciples.

Rev. Worley responded to questions from attendees including a request for more plug-and-play worship resources for pastors, inquiries about a wrap-up report for the 2020 strategic vision and the possibility of a new strategic vision, as well as the status of shared ministry with other conferences and ministry bodies including online spaces.

The recording of the meeting was paused and Rev. Worley was excused to allow for discussion of the motion. A motion to call the question passed (Motion: Rev. Roger Ulrich; 2nd: Rev. Ann Few) and a vote was taken. The recording of the meeting was resumed. Rev. Worley was elected for a second term with 188 yes votes, 13 no votes, and 12 abstentions.

Rev. Karl Jones presented the report from the Nominating Committee of 2021 General Synod delegates and a slate of conference consistory and committee members. Note that the chair of the Personnel Committee will be the new vice moderator. Additional nominees were Rev. Schwarz-Green as a GS delegate from the Ursinus Association, and Rev. Mary Etta Mest as a Nominating Committee member from the Covenant Association. Attendees voted to accept the slate. Rev. Villareal is the new conference moderator; Mr. Charles Kuthuru is the vice moderator. The officers were installed.

Ms. Strauch offered her thanks for the opportunity to serve as conference moderator, mentioning numerous people who have helped her as she served in this role. One of her greatest joys was visiting churches and meeting the members. Ms. Strauch presented Rev. Villareal with the moderator's medallion.

A motion to adjourn the meeting passed (Motion: Rev. Suzanne Schwarz-Green; 2nd: Rev. Ann Few) and attendees participated in a closing worship service.

Respectfully submitted,
Rev. Jenny Smith, Secretary