

**PSEC Consistory Meeting  
St James UCC, Limerick  
March 14, 2020**

**Consistory Members Present:** Rev. Jenny Smith, Mr. Ray Edwards, Rev. Bill Middleton, Ms. Jennie Strauch, Rev. Bill Worley, Rev. Bonnie Dalious, Rev. Anne Cormier, Rev. Beth Lyon (attending via ZOOM), Mr. John Jones, Rev. Tony Villareal, Mr. Kyle Sakamoto

**Conference Staff Present:** Rev. Susan Minasian

**Consistory Members Excused:** Rev. Ann-Therese Ortiz, Mr. Tim Kissling, Rev. Kevin Fruchtl, Mr. Lee Metzger, Rev. Mark Roberts

Ms. Jennie Strauch thanked Rev. Bill Worley for the refreshments. Rev. Susan Minasian provided a devotion, asking Consistory members to consider what they are called to do as a member of this body.

Jennie Strauch called the meeting to order at 9:30 AM. The minutes from the January 18, 2019 meeting were accepted.

There were two e-ballots since our January meeting. On February 10 we voted to form a team led by Mr. Ray Edwards authorized to conduct a conference-wide campaign to raise the funds to eliminate six million dollars in medical debt. This debt relief would be focused on the geographical areas within the borders of the PSEC but, depending on its success could spill over into other areas. Rev. Beth Lyons cast the first Yes vote, thereby making the motion, with Mr. Tim Kissling casting the second Yes vote, thereby seconding the motion. There were 12 votes in favor, 0 votes opposed, and 1 abstention.

The second e-ballot approved a housing allowance of \$9766 for Rev. Susan Minasian, the Interim Associate Conference Minister for Search and Call. Mr. Ray Edwards was the first Yes vote and Rev. Kevin Fruchtl was the second Yes vote, constituting the motion and second. There were 13 votes in favor, 0 votes opposed, and 1 abstention.

There were no communications to share.

### **Reports**

Mr. Ray Edwards provided the Finance Committee report. He cautioned that OCWM pledges are behind by a significant amount, over \$100,000. Also, he noted that the annual audit is underway. Rev. Worley encouraged us to continue following up with churches who have not yet submitted their OCWM pledges.

Rev. Tony Villareal presented the Personnel Committee's report. He reported that Rev. Bill Worley is seeking nomination for a second 6-year term as conference minister, which the committee recommends. The Consistory is asked to work with Rev. Worley in setting the vision and goals for this next term. Those present voted to move his nomination to the annual meeting for approval.

Rev. Worley raised a concern about the failure of the current search and call system to meet the needs of local churches. The ensuing discussion included ideas about greater use of technology, sharing pastors, encouraging lay leadership and changes to the way new ministry grants are given.

Rev. Karl Jones' Disaster Coordinator written report was received.

There was no report from the Associate Conference Minister for Congregational Development, Rev. Cean James.

Rev. Susan Minasian, Interim Associate Conference Minister of Search and Call, presented her report. Rev. Minasian expressed her appreciation for conference staff assistance, particularly Ms. Brea Rarick, in helping her to get started in her new role.

Conference Minister Bill Worley's report was received. He raised a question about the role the Conference office plays in guiding congregations regarding decisions to suspend worship in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic. Rev. Worley views his role as being a non-anxious presence. We agreed with his advice that the decision needs to be made at a local level, in consultation with lay leaders, and be appropriate for each location considering the perceived level of risk for the congregation. Rev. Worley also noted that he was going to ask the conference staff to begin working from home starting on Monday, excepting the audit which requires in-person consultation. Staff remains accessible through phone and email; they are going virtual.

The Church and Ministry Council has recommended a change to the PSEC bylaws. The membership on the Council changes to reflect the changes to associations within the conference and stipulates that the Conference Registrar serve as clerk. The Consistory voted to send the proposed amendment, with a recommendation to accept, to the churches in advance of the Spring meeting.

The Safe Conference policy needs to be updated. Ms. Jennie Strauch and Rev. Villareal agreed to review the policy.

New ministry grant requests were received and there are grant monies being returned from churches who did not use the funds from previous grants

Climate Change and Addiction social justice teams have met. The Climate Change group seeks support for their 50-50-50 challenge: 50 churches would sign up to take immediate steps to benefit the environment within 50 days of Easter to celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Earth Day. Consistory voted their support. (Motion: Rev. Bill Middleton; 2<sup>nd</sup>: Rev. Anne Cormier)

Mr. Ray Edwards reported on the Medical Debt reduction initiative. He is seeking information from the National church about their participation in regional medical debt purchases. He is willing to coordinate a conference-wide initiative but could also do a targeted initiative within Covenant Association. The initial amount was \$65,000 to purchase \$6 million in medical debt within PSEC zip code areas.

Rev. Beth Lyon reported on activity within the Philadelphia Association. They will plan fundraising events targeting medical debt from low income areas in Philadelphia where there are UCC churches. The fundraising would begin in May with a goal of \$15,000 which is the minimum for be able to direct the purchase of debt.

Rev. Worley asked if we would consider ecumenical/interfaith participation. Rev. Cormier suggested a matching funds model between associations and the conference. Mr. Edwards encouraged us to lead rather than wait. We need to identify how the monies will be received within each association and forwarded to the conference.

A motion was passed to approve the purchase of medical debt within PSEC of approximately \$12 million for a cost of \$125,000 using a matching funds model; each association would pledge an amount that the conference would match up to a total of \$62,500. It is requested that each association pledge a minimum of \$12,500 with the conference matching dollar for dollar. (Motion: Rev. Anne Cormier; 2<sup>nd</sup>: Rev. Bill Middleton)

The Consistory approved a set of guidelines for social justice teams. (Motion: Rev. Anne Cormier; 2<sup>nd</sup>: Rev. Bonnie Dalious) The Conference office will be asked to distribute these guidelines to the Climate Change and Addiction social justice teams.

Registration for the spring meeting closes May 3. Our next meeting is May 16.

All reports were accepted.

Rev. Worley offered a closing prayer. The meeting was adjourned at 12:05 PM.

Respectfully submitted,  
Rev. Jenny Smith, Secretary