

PSEC Consistory Meeting

Via Zoom

November 21, 2020

Consistory Members Present: Mr. Ray Edwards, Rev. Bill Worley, Mr. John Jones, Rev. Tony Villareal, Rev. Ann-Therese Ortiz, Mr. Tim Kissling, Mr. Lee Metzger, Rev. Jenny Smith, Mr. Charles Kuthuru, Rev. Anne Cormier, Rev. Bonnie Dalious, Rev. Kevin Fruchtl, Ms. Beth Walker, Rev. Jeff Wargo

Conference Staff Present: Rev. Susan Minasian, Rev. Cean James

Excused: Mr. Kyle Sakamoto, Rev. Bill Middleton

Guests: Ms. Susan Creswell, Rev. Stephen Ohnsman, Ms. Barbara Hughes, Rev. Karl Jones

Rev. Tony Villareal called the meeting to order at 9:06 AM. He welcomed members of the conference planning team on the annual meeting and the new moderator of the Philadelphia association, Ms. Beth Walker, and Mr. Jeff Wargo, who is filling the remaining term of moderator in the North Penn association. Rev. Worley led a devotion, sharing 1 Timothy 4:10 and playing a video of a virtual choir singing “*Believe*” by Mark Miller.

There was an addition to the agenda under new business, appointing a team to create salary guidelines. The revised agenda was approved. (Motion: Rev. Anne Cormier; 2nd: Mr. John Jones)

Rev. Steve Ohnsman opened a discussion regarding the role of the planning team on annual meeting. He asked whether the team should be looking to the consistory to establish guidance and set direction for the conference planning team, as opposed to organizing the program around a guest speaker. There was positive feedback regarding the speakers from previous meetings, characterizing them as aspirational. The team would like input regarding setting the aspirational theme, in keeping with where we are heading as a conference. Ideas were shared for questions to pose to the speaker and possible workshop topics for the 2021 meeting. It was suggested that this type of conversation take place in advance of planning each annual meeting. It was noted that the format for the upcoming June meeting could be hybrid, partly in person and partly online, but will depend on the distribution of the vaccine.

The minutes from the September 19 and October 19 meetings were approved. (Motion: Mr. Lee Metzger, 2nd: Rev. Bonnie Dalious) There were no communications to share.

Reports & Business

Rev. Karl Jones, Disaster Coordinator, shared a prediction that there will be a wave of homelessness coming in December due to the continued pandemic and ending of various support packages. He would like to make the local churches aware of

opportunities for advocacy and actions the consistory can take to influence legislative action.

The consistory approved two motions:

Through a conference communication, local churches will be made aware of opportunities for advocacy to ask their members to contact their representatives regarding assistance programs. Further, congregations will be made aware of the PA Council of Churches letter regarding poverty and its associated resources. (Motion: Ms. Beth Walker; 2nd: Rev. Anne Cormier)

The PSEC Consistory will sign a letter to the PA congressional delegation to remember the poorest of the poor as they put together their Federal Legislative Agenda session, by increasing SNAP benefits, offering childcare assistance, and providing adequate unemployment benefits, among other initiatives. (Motion: Rev. Anne Cormier; 2nd: Ms. Beth Walker)

Mr. Sukumar Kuthuru presented the Personnel Committee report. A new conference lawyer, Mr. Jim Smith, has been hired. Ms. Walker asked that we proactively seek a diverse pool of candidates when hiring. The conference minister's sabbatical has been moved to 2022. It was recommended that the minutes of the Personnel Committee include information about the hiring process for the conference lawyer. The PC report was received.

Mr. Ray Edwards presented the financial reports. OCWM numbers for November look promising, but given the ups and downs of the past several months, it is difficult to predict how the year end will look. At this point, the Endowment is up approximately 1% for the year. The financial reports were accepted. (Motion: Rev. Bonnie Dalious; 2nd: Mr. Lee Metzger)

Rev. Cean James' report as ACM for Congregational Development was received. (Motion: Rev. Kevin Fructal; 2nd: Rev. Jeff Wargo)

Rev. Susan Minasian, Interim Associate Conference Minister of Search and Call, presented her report. She shared her ideas on how small churches might be able to secure pastoral support through seminary students and lay ministers. There was discussion of ideas for new church models and the challenges all churches face. Her report was accepted. (Motion: Rev. Anne Cormier; 2nd: Mr. Lee Metzger)

The Conference Minister's report was received. Rev. Worley indicated that the survey has received 167 responses to date. We will hold a separate meeting to go over the results; expect a poll to determine the best time for this meeting.

Rev. Worley included an overview of the proposed ACM search process with a timeline in his report. The proposed date of October 31, 2021 for the fall PSEC meeting poses possible conflicts with fall association meetings. It was agreed to move the meeting to November 7th. (Motion: Mr. Ray Edwards; 2nd: Rev Bonnie Dalious)

Rev. Worley reported that the House of Faith in Philadelphia is being sold. St. Mark's UCC in Reading has voted to end their ministry. He encouraged us to form a

task force to consider the future leadership needs of our churches, given that so many have gone to part-time clergy positions and seminary students are gravitating to chaplaincy rather than parish ministry. Rev. Worley also reported on his work serving on various committees and boards. The Conference Ministers report was received. (Motion: Rev. Anne Cormier; 2nd: Rev. Ann-Therese Ortiz).

A motion to accept the reports was passed. (Motion: Mr. Tim Kissling; 2nd: Mr. Charles Kuthuru)

Consistory members discussed the Fall meeting. It was recommended that the minutes of that meeting include the letter that Rev. Villareal read.

Rev. Villareal made us aware that it is difficult for staff to respond to special requests during the week leading up to meeting. Also, there was the challenge of late registrations; the conference office received 36! We explored why there were late registrations and what work is involved in processing them.

We reviewed the old business items. Our next step in the strategic planning process will be guided by the survey responses. The Consistory will continue in a holding pattern on the medical debt initiative.

Rev. Worley reported on the activities for filling the ACM of Search and Call position. It was suggested that all of the associations have representation. Tim Kissling and Rev. Anne Cormier are willing to serve. It was also suggested that the members of Personnel Committee could serve, augmented by additional representatives from the consistory and associations. The profile writing could be done by the search committee or by a different person. The names would be needed by the January meeting so they can be appointed. We would need 2 from each association, one lay and one clergy.

We could follow the search and call process that was used for the Conference Minister; there is none for the ACM. Rev. Minasian encouraged an orientation meeting about the process once the committee is formed to identify a point person. She suggested directing the Personnel Committee to take the lead. Further, a timeline and progress report needs to be part of the agenda for each consistory meeting.

The Consistory approved housing allowances of \$30,000 for Rev. Worley and \$12,204 for Rev. Minasian. (Motion: Mr. Lee Metzger; 2nd: Rev. Anne Cormier)

It was noted that it has been a number of years since the salary guidelines were reviewed. A task force will be formed for this purpose and will include Ms. Beth Walker and Rev. Jenny Smith from the consistory, plus representatives from the budget and finance and personnel committees. This task force would also need outside expertise and guidance. Its work would begin in the new year, gathering data and forming the team while the funding and identification of a consultant is explored.

The meeting was closed with prayer at 12:20 PM. The next Consistory meeting is January 16. The agenda for that meeting will include the consistory covenant and conference stewardship program. Beth Walker suggested we have 1-on-1

conversations with each other - about why we are on consistory, what's important to us - to get to know each other and build relationships.

Suggestions are still needed for the nominating committee chair. Rev. Villareal encouraged those present to sign up for devotions. Rev. Worley offered a closing prayer and the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,
Rev. Jenny Smith, Secretary