

Consistory Secretary Report

Pennsylvania Southeast Conference 2021 Spring Meeting

Meetings of the Consistory

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Consistory continued to meet online for regularly scheduled and special meetings on September 18, October 19, November 21, and December 17, 2020, and January 16, February 3, and March 20, 2021. The next regular meeting is scheduled for May 15.

The 2020 PSEC Spring Meeting was cancelled and a Special Conference meeting was held on August 15, 2020 via Zoom. The Fall Meeting of the PSEC was held online on November 15, 2020.

Changes in Consistory Officers and Delegates

Under the leadership of Moderator Rev. Tony Villareal, the Consistory welcomed Mr. Charles Sukumar Kuthuru as Vice Moderator, and association representatives Ms. Beth Walker (Philadelphia), Mr. John Jones (Schuylkill Association), and Rev. Jeff Wargo (North Penn).

Summary of Pertinent Consistory Actions

- Determined that the offering (\$500) from the Spring meeting be used to fund the Keystone Disaster Spiritual Care Network.
- Accepted the Conference Minister's request for a sabbatical, currently scheduled for the summer of 2022.
- Tabled the launch of the medical debt purchase initiative due to the pandemic. Conference funds earmarked to initially purchase the debt (to be matched by local congregations and individuals) were to come from the "rainy day" fund which was used instead to send money to the local congregations.
- Approved a 1.5% salary increase beginning in January 2021, offset by a decrease in staff travel in the same amount (\$6,000). The feasibility of an additional increase will be revisited in the spring.
- Approved a recommendation from the mobile office group for conference staff to continue working from home and to work with the landlord on requested changes to the facility that will reduce the space we lease. In a related measure, the Consistory addressed phone expense reimbursement related to an app that lets staff know if incoming call is personal or work-related, coming from office phone system. Every staff person will receive \$80 a month to offset the cost of using their phone. This represents a reduction for clergy from \$100. The end result is an extra \$1,500 annual expense to an existing budget item.
- Related to a prediction of increasing homelessness due to the continued pandemic and ending of various support packages, the Consistory approved measures to make the local churches aware of opportunities for advocacy and actions to influence legislative action. The PSEC Consistory signed 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.

- Approved housing allowances of \$30,000 for the Conference Minister and \$12,204 for the Associate Conference Minister of Search and Call.
- Formed a task force to review the salary guidelines.
- Held special meetings of the consistory to work on setting the strategic direction for the Conference, including the review of responses to a recent survey on this topic.
- Monitored the Conference income and expenses closely during the pandemic. We anticipate receiving forgiveness for the Payroll Protection Plan loan we received.
- Approved funding requests from the Climate Justice group (\$1,175) and Racial Justice group (\$2,200). The Addiction and Recovery task force is not requesting funding at this time. They received an endorsement from the Consistory for their campaign to get narcon/narloxone in the hands of appropriately trained pastors.
- Adopted the use of the online platform Whova for the Spring meeting at a cost of \$1,270 for two days. With other expenses, that would be \$30 per person in attendance. A motion was passed for a reduced cost of \$15 per attendee, but we will budget for the full cost. We will encourage churches to cover attendee cost, and include a registration option for people to pay the full amount to offset the conference expense.
- Approved \$10,000 for a stewardship initiative to create videos and handouts.
- Approved contracting with a technology person to create online videos and workshops for online worship. The estimated cost is \$20,000-30,000 for 9 months.
- Accepted the Search and Call Profile for a new ACM. The search committee will consist of the Personnel Committee and representatives from the associations.
- Approved a proposal for a stewardship education program focused on building support for OCWM.
- Set the Fall meeting date for Sunday, November 14, 2021.

Respectfully submitted,
Rev. Jenny Smith, Secretary