

PSEC Consistory Meeting
March 20, 2021
Via Zoom

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

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

Rev. Villareal opened the meeting and Ms. Walker gave the devotion, inviting attendees to recall lyrics from hymns/songs related to strategic planning.

A motion to accept the agenda was passed, and the minutes from the January 16 and February 3 meetings were approved. Rev. Worley shared a letter from the National Church thanking our conference for our OCWM commitment.

Having decided to devote the first half of the meeting to strategic planning, we reviewed the notes from our February meeting, looking at our purpose as stated in the constitution, and considering what it means to be a conference: to get people together and provide a framework, to do education, implement the work of the Holy Spirit, furthering the covenantal life, work, worship and fellowship of the UCC, ministry and outreach. It was felt that the strategy needs to carry the concept of building bridges.

We considered lessons from the 2020 vision plan, which ended up being owned to a large extent by the conference staff; some portions of it did not gain traction. The 2020 vision elements that succeeded were ones the conference could control, not ones involving local churches. We asked how the strategic plan can achieve better integration between the conference, associations and local churches. We recognize the diversity of churches and want to improved the functioning/consistency of COMs, while realizing that no one size fits all.

There are inherent tensions in our structure regarding the distribution of resources (e.g., knowledge, money) and responsibility. How can we address the problematic aspects and move away from silos in which the conference just does conference work, the associations do association work, and the local churches do local church work? Local churches in decline are not finding ways to work together; what is the role of the conference in addressing that? How can we help association moderators get their hand around what working well looks like?

How can we focus the plan on the strength and vitality of the local church? Could the money for new church starts we used for new forms of ministry in existing churches? The current environment may help present the possibility to promote change.

After much discussion, it was felt that it was time to put some specific proposals on paper and get the ideas before other stakeholders. We assembled a list of questions related to a conference strategic plan for associations to consider in their upcoming meetings. Rev. Villareal will send these to the moderators and receive their responses.

1. How does the UCC presence in your community change the nature of the community?
2. We are very much aware of the decline happening to the Church - particularly the local church. What are you doing to prepare for the future and how can Conference and Association support that?
3. If your church is not preparing for the future, what are you doing?
4. Does your local church have a strategic plan? Is it working?
 - a. Why is it important?
 - b. How can the Conference and Association support it?
5. What would an effectively functioning Association look like? What would an effectively functioning Conference look like? What roles would both play in helping local churches prepare for the future?
6. How can the Conference support new forms of ministry in existing churches?
7. How are you preparing people for leadership in all forms of ministry (lay, ordained)?
8. How do we help strengthen and improve the vitality of the local church?
9. How can working collaboratively with other faith communities help support, break open to possibilities, benefit, your congregation?
 - a. What are you doing now that you could do better with other communities?
10. Are you aware of faith communities that might have an interest in joining the United Church of Christ?
11. How will you commit to taking these questions back to your local church for discussion, prayer, and action?

Moving to the business portion of our meeting, the Consistory approved \$10,000 for a stewardship initiative to create videos and handouts. Rev. Worley thanked those who helped with OCWM calls to local churches. The Treasurer's report was accepted. (Motion: Ms. Walker; 2nd: Mr. Jones)

It was noted that the process for evaluating the conference minister does not follow the constitution/bylaws. It was moved that the Personnel Committee be the subcommittee for this purpose. (Motion: Rev. Ortiz; 2nd: Mr. Kissling) The Personnel Committee report was approved. (Motion: Rev. Wargo; 2nd: Ms. Walker)

The Disaster Team has a Partner In Service person lined up to help with the rebuild in the Eastwick section of Philadelphia. The disaster hotline will be shutting down, but they would like to retain some of the funding to reactivate for short time periods in specific locales when disaster emergencies arise. There is also a call for volunteers to help with the vaccination clinics in Philadelphia.

The Consistory accepted the reports from the ACM for Congregational Development (Motion: Mr. Kissling; 2nd: Mr. Jones) and the ACM for Search and Call. (Motion: Mr. Kissling; 2nd: Rev. Cormier)

The Conference Minister needs to contract with a tech person to create online videos and workshops for online worship. The estimated cost is \$20,000-30,000 for 9 months. The concept was approved (Motion: Rev. Fruchtl; 2nd: Mr. Jones) and the report was accepted. (Motion: Mr. Jones; 2nd: Mr. Kissling)

Mr. Kissling reported that the Search and Call Profile group has completed their work of creating a document to be sent out to find candidates. The profile was accepted. (Motion: Mr. Kissling; 2nd: Rev. Cormier) It was noted that representatives are still needed from some associations for the search committee, which will include the Personnel Committee. Unfortunately, the April 15 deadline for identifying representatives comes before some of the associations are scheduled to meet. The Consistory authorized the approval of the remaining 3 members of the search committee by electronic vote. (Motion: Mr. Kissling; 2nd: Mr. Jones) The committee will select a chair at their first meeting. Associations may add their representative no later than May 15.

The Climate Justice group received proposals that exceed the allocated \$1,000. A motion passed to approved the additional \$175 for projects. (Motion from committee; 2nd: Rev. Ortiz)

The previously tabled motion from the Addiction and Recovery task force was rescinded. (Motion to remove from table: Ms. Walker; 2nd: Rev. Cormier/Motion to rescind: Mr. Jones; 2nd: Mr. Kissling) The task force is not requesting funding at this time. Instead, they would like an endorsement for their campaign to get narcon/narloxone in the hands of appropriately trained pastors. The task force has addressed the concerns that were previously raised and have funding elsewhere. The motion to endorse was passed (Motion: Mr. Kissling; 2nd: Mr. Jones) The task force is looking into training offered by state representatives.

Mr. Kissling presented a proposal for stewardship education. The initiative is aimed at building support for OCWM. The training would start virtually, then move to face-to-face later. He will try to involve people from previous campaigns, and it was recommended that he contact people at the national church for input. It was suggested that \$10,000 in funding from the sale of the Kensington property be used to fund the campaign.

The Fall meeting date was set for Sunday, November 14. (Motion: Rev. Cormier; 2nd: Rev. Fruchtl)

In addition to the business portion of the Spring meeting, it was suggested that the agenda include a celebration of the ways we have found to "do church" during the pandemic. Ms. Walker volunteered to help coordinate this. The agenda for the spring meeting was approved. (Motion: Rev. Cormier; 2nd: Mr. Kissling)

A chair for the conference nominating committee is still needed. We need to publish the names of nominees 30 days before the Spring meeting. Due to the timeframe, we may need to appoint individuals pending approval of their association.

The next Consistory meeting will be May 15. Rev. Fruchtl will do devotions.

A motion to adjourn was approved (Motion: Ms. Walker; 2nd: Rev. Fruchtl) and Rev. Villareal offered a closing prayer.

Respectfully submitted,
Rev. Jenny Smith, Secretary