

Pennsylvania Southeast Conference 2022 Fall Meeting Treasurer's Report

Many people pretend that faith and money involve totally separate realities—that one has nothing to do with the other. That's not what we read in the gospels:

“Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Matthew 6:21);

“From everyone to whom much has been given, much will be required, and from the one to whom much has been entrusted, even more will be demanded” (Luke 12:48 – NRSVue).

The growing uncertainty of the world economy challenges those assertions, all the way down to our own households. But following the Jesus Way still calls us to be clear about our priorities as people who show our love for God in how we share God's love with others.

With God's mission for us in mind, let's review some aspects of our Conference finances.

Notes on 2022

THANK YOU to all our congregations who are faithfully fulfilling your OCWM pledges for 2022! Our fall meeting dates always preclude having the most current financial statements available for reporting, so the most recent available is for September 30. At that point, our churches' OCWM giving was 5,000.00 ahead of budget. *The mission priorities of the Conference, along with the diverse programs and services that directly benefit our congregations, are all possible only as we sustain—and grow—our OCWM giving.*

Secondly, a reminder of how we use our investments. For a number of years, we have included in Conference income an amount equal to three percent of the average value of our investments for the past three years. (Using a 3-year average is mandated by Pennsylvania law. The percentage withdrawn is decided by the Budget and Finance Committee, within states guidelines.) We apply half of that amount in July and the remainder at the end of the year.

This year, our operating finances were doing well enough during the first six months that the Budget and Finance Committee decided to not make the mid-year draw. The committee hoped (in vain, as it turns out) that investment performance might improve. Later in November the Committee will recommend to the Consistory how to apply the total 2022 budgeted investment income.

Looking Ahead

Preparing the next year's budget is always a challenge. Tammie Wisniewski has to begin the process in July when we are long way from seeing how the current year's money for mission will turn out. In addition, the stock markets' decline is having a broad impact in our economy. Even those who have no direct investments in the stock markets are affected. We all watch more carefully how we are spending—and giving. The overall uncertainty will impact the finances of our congregations and, by extension, our Conference.

After reviewing four versions of a budget, the Budget and Finance Committee approved several recommendations that led to a balanced proposed budget. Two major recommendations were:

(1) Keep the originally proposed 6 percent pay increase for all staff. The Committee wanted the spending plan to express our gratitude for their leadership and support that benefits all our congregations, leaders, and pastors.

(2) Eliminate General Synod funds as an expenditure for 2023. PSEC has for many years helped to underwrite the costs of General Synod delegates, thus enabling the participation of a broad representation from our Conference. In 2022 we set aside nearly \$17,000 (about half of the total required) for this purpose. For 2023, we will draw funds from Conference savings accounts rather than from current income to assure the continued support for General Synod delegates.

A few other modest reductions from the first draft of the proposed budget resulted in the proposed balanced budget. Please review the proposed spending plan (either the detailed or condensed version for the numbers, and the narrative that describes the numbers) to prepare for voting on the proposed plan on November 13, 2022.

— Bob Fogal, Treasurer