PSEC Consistory Meeting
January 16, 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

Excused: Rev. Bill Middleton

Rev. Villareal opened the meeting at 9:00 AM. Rev. Cormier offered a devotion for Martin Luther King Day, reading his letter from Birmingham jail.

A motion to accept the agenda (Motion: Mr. Kuthuru; 2nd: Mr. Kissling)

The minutes from November 21 and December 17 meetings were accepted (Motion: Mr. Kissling; 2nd: Mr. Metzger)

Mr. Edwards presented the treasurers report, noting an OCWM shortfall of $136,000 against projections. The books for 2020 don't close until next week and he anticipates a shortfall in the mid $80,000e due to COVID. Mr. Edwards went over pledges to date, noting that some churches have not passed their budgets yet.

The pledges are in line with what we have seen historically. Lists of churches, by association, are being sent to consistory members to follow up with regarding pledges. A script will be provided to assist with these friendly reminders.

The balance sheet reflects receipt of over $200,000 from the sale of Oak Lane in Philadelphia; approximately $23,000 in accounts receivable remain in escrow for possible taxes on that property, but he anticipates that will be given to the conference as well. These monies go to the new church start fund

We anticipate receiving forgiveness for the PPP loan. Our investments accounts are approximately the same as at this point last year. Looking at profits and loss and pass through accounts as an indirect measure of vitality of local churches, these remain strong for past year, all things considered.

The personnel committee has not met.

Rev. James presented his report as ACM of Congregational Development, noting that there are three workshops coming up this spring.

ACM of Search and Call, Rev. Minasian, referred us to her report.

The Disaster Ministry report from Rev. Karl Jones noted that the hotline is up and running again.

Rev. Worley presented his Conference Minister report. He updated us that the ACM search and call process should include Rev. Anne Cormier working on the profile under the leadership of Mr. Kissling. St. Peters has received an offer for their church building of $30,000; the plan is to accept it. St. Marks in Reading is working with Mr. David Bean as the attorney on their church closing. Rev. Worley is saddened about the UCC's diminishing footprint in Reading. Christ Church in Temple also has a buyer.

Rev. Worley noted that, other Mid-Atlantic UCC conference ministers such as NY, are dealing with similar issues to those here at PSEC.

A motion to accept all of the reports was passed. (Motion: Rev. Cormier; 2nd: Rev. Wargo)

The next step in our strategic planning process will be a special consistory meeting next month. We are asked to prepare by looking at the addendum of comments received after our December special meeting.

Rev. Villareal noted that the medical indebtedness remains on hold during the pandemic.

Names are still needed for representatives from the associations for the ACM search and call committee. Rev. Worley noted that work is on track per the timeline.

The task force to review salary guidelines will begin meeting. They need to have a recommendation in place by the August consistory meeting so congregations can receive it in advance of their budget process

Under new business, the consistory reviewed task force budget requests. The Addictions task force noted that Rev. Mark Roberts was their representative from consistory and would like one to replace him. The group asked for $2,000 to provide for Narcan to each church. Is there a liability issue? No, this is covered under the Good Samaritan act. There is training available. Attendees discussed deployment based on each local church setting.

The Climate Justice group asked for $250 grants for churches who want to participate in their 50:50 campaign, for a total of $1,000.

The Zachariah Walker Racial Justice group received donations from the fall meeting. They would like an additional $2,200 for their billboard which is now up outside of Pottstown, on 422 E for one month. The billboard has received positive reaction on social media. The money would also go toward banners and signs, and an interfaith gathering planned for August.

Motions were passed to approve $1,000 for the Climate Justice group (Motion: Ms. Walker; 2nd: Ray Edwards) and $2,200 for the Racial Justice group (Motion: Mr.

Metzger; 2nd: Ms. Walker). A motion to fund the Addiction task force request (Motion Rev. Wargo; 2nd: Ms. Walker) was tabled, pending answers to questions posed to task force regarding legality and distribution. This request will appear in agenda of next meeting under old business.

Tammie Wisniewski joined us to talk about the conference stewardship program. She provided a brief review of how stewardship was previously handled in our conference – with a staff person specifically dedicated to it. Resources are available, but we need people who are willing to do the work. She shared ideas of organizing a group to liaison between churches and conference as well as help churches with their own stewardship campaigns, such as finding more ways to thank one another. There used to be annual stewardship suppers where churches would show videos from the national UCC. It was noted that people don't feel comfortable asking others for money, and some churches have someone who specializes in financial advice to their members which includes stewardship as well as budgeting and other matters. She cautioned we need to be clear about skills looking for when recruiting team members. We can be a resource for our churches so they are financially stronger as well. Also, we need to be clear about our mission when making an ask so people know what we want to accomplish. As part of our strategic planning, we would like to have 100% participation of churches in our OCWM program.

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 is to receive $80 a month to offset the cost of using their phone. This represents a reduction for clergy from $100 and add non-clergy staff. The end result is an extra $1,500 annual expense to an existing budget item. This action was passed with one abstention. (Motion: Mr. Metzger; 2nd: Rev. Fruchtl).

We are responsible for business portion of the Spring meeting. We would like to include following: elections (secretary position), recognition of general synod delegates as they prepare, traditional reports (including Karl Jones' presentation), and reports from the three social justice teams. Also, we want to allow people to share how they have risen to challenge of ministry during pandemic. We will give a pitch for stewardship development, provide a summary of resolutions that are going before General Synod, give an update on the ACM search process, and provide information about the strategic plan. We will provide time limit for each speaker.

Rev. Worley went over the features and cost of Whova, an online platform many nonprofit agencies are moving to for hosting meetings. It expands beyond Zoom, supporting simultaneous activities, and includes the phone application. The cost would be $1,270 for our two-day meeting. 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. (Motion: Mr. Kissling; 2nd: Rev. Cormier) We will encourage churches to cover attendee cost, and include a registration option for people to pay the full amount to offset conference expense.

In last 24 hours, Rev. Worley received a letter from the Rev. Dorhauer of the national church about possible threats to liberal mainline churches. No source for the threat was cited. He asked for guidance from the consistory on how to proceed and we encouraged sharing the information with local churches noting that the source not cited.

The meeting was adjourned (Motion: Rev. Fructl; 2nd: Rev. Cormier) Rev. Worley closed the meeting with prayer at 11:42 AM.

Respectfully submitted,
Rev. Jenny Smith, Secretary