

## Pennsylvania Southeast Conference Treasurer's Report – Fall 2023

### *Gratitude*

One of the best anecdotes about grace and gratitude I've encountered comes from Diana Butler Bass. She writes:

After my book *Grateful* was released in 2018, I spent almost two years speaking and preaching about gratitude. One of the most frequently asked questions at those events came from grandparents: "How do I get my grandchildren to write thank you notes?"

At first, I replied by offering tips on forming spiritual practices with children. That never seemed quite satisfactory. During one Q&A, a nice grandmother bemoaned that her grandchildren never said thank you for any of the gifts she sent them — and she was quite hurt by their lack of gratitude.

On a whim, I asked her a follow-up question, "If your grandchildren never sent you a thank you note, would you stop sending them gifts? Would you insist they return your presents?"

She laughed, "I'm tempted. . ." Her grandparent-peers laughed. "But of course I'd still send them gifts. And I certainly wouldn't take them back!"

"So," I replied, "you don't send gifts to get notes? Why do you send gifts?"

"Because I love them," she replied. "Thank you notes are nice, but gifts aren't contingent on them."

Bass goes on to sermonize a bit on the healing of the ten lepers, when only one returned to Jesus to say "thank you" (Luke 17:11-19). She points out how the healing of the other nine didn't depend on their saying thank you—on their being grateful. And Jesus didn't do anything to make them "pay" for their ingratitude.

The passage ends by Jesus instructing the one who returned, "Get up and go. Your faith has healed you" (CEB)—your trust has brought you wholeness. Aware of the healing he received, the Samaritan who returned to say thanks was grateful.

. . . Generous people are grateful people—grateful for the family and friends who nurture them, grateful for the gifts of creation that sustain them, grateful for the presence in their lives of a healing God that gives them hope.

REFERENCE: <https://dianabutlerbass.substack.com/p/sunday-musings-ee9?r=uijlr>

Rev. Worley's letter to pastors requesting OCWM pledges for 2024 quoted these words of gratitude.

"I was so excited to attend the Lay Leadership Convocation in April. The varied topics and the wonderful leaders who shared their expertise were much appreciated. Reminded me of the days of the Boyertown workshops with all the information we were able to take back to our home churches. I hope these continue."

“We have always supported OCWM even though our church is quite small in number. Our church has benefitted from all the talents of the Conference staff over many years. Without OCWM, there would be no ‘wider church’ to be there for us.”

“Each step of the way, the staff at the Conference were available and more than willing to assist with connecting me to the right people and answering my questions. It was great to be able to have someone look over my shoulder and offer assistance, giving me assurance that even though I was new at what I was being asked to do, there was someone who had experience and was willing to share that with me in a loving manner.”

“The PSEC Spring Meeting was the first meeting I have ever gone to, but it certainly won’t be my last. It was awesome to be surrounded by so many who believe the same things I do and to hear new ideas that I hope to incorporate into my own church. I was greeted with open arms and loved unconditionally by strangers who are now friends.”

We give thanks for all the contributions that make possible the opportunities and benefits reflected in these words of gratitude—opportunities and benefits that enhance the leadership and ministries of our congregations.

### ***Current Giving***

Our Church’s Wider Mission is the keystone of our Conference, both as a symbol of our covenanted connectedness and as an important resource for ministry. As of August 31, 2023 OCWM contributions were \$38,000 behind the budgeted OCWM contributions through August. This compares to the previous four years’ year-to-date totals:

<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>
\$454,662	\$414,909	\$433,879	\$440,456	\$415,017

Some of the drop from last year may involve the timing of when contributions will be sent to the conference. There may be other reasons. It is worth noting that the YTD operating deficit of \$39,650 only slightly exceeds the YTD shortfall in OCWM contributions. That is, there would be no significant operating deficit at the end of August if OCWM giving had met budgeted expectations. In some past years, end of year giving has been enough to erase a mid-year operating deficit. We trust that such will be the case this year.

### ***Proposed 2024 Budget***

In 2023 the Budget and Finance Committee employed the “snippet” method to achieve a balanced budget, taking a bit from this and that proposed expenditure until expenses equaled income. For the proposed 2024 operating budget, this was not done. Rather, the proposed budget anticipates a deficit of \$79,174. For this one year, the deficit can be covered by savings, should that be necessary. (To the extent that we underspend various budget lines, the deficit may be less.)

Spending savings, however, is not a permanent solution to PSEC’s financial projections.

- Many funds in savings have restrictions on how the monies may be spent.

- Sound financial management requires that we keep on hand unrestricted monies equal to 4-6 months of operating expenses.
- Unrestricted savings make it possible to cover operating expenses without using a commercial line of credit. In essence, we borrow from ourselves to meet expenses when income falls short of monthly needs.

Using the narrative budget that is also among the documents for our fall meeting, the following provides a comparison between the 2023 and 2024 proposed budgets. For details of each of the categories, please see the Proposed 2024 Narrative Spending Plan in the meeting documents.

<b>Purpose</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2024</b>
National Commitment	\$76,510	\$73,400
Salaries	\$444,955	\$460,804
Benefits	\$161,117	\$163,176
Staff Development	\$2,500	\$2,400
Travel	\$6,000	\$7,700
Equipment Purchases	\$6,000	\$12,000
Cost of Space and Overhead	\$58,375	\$55,106
Miscellaneous Conference Expenses	\$21,375	\$21,816
Conference Administrative Expenses	\$69,951	\$92,019
Conference Supported Ministries	\$31,274	\$34,742
Church Development	\$6,100	\$6,900
Clergy and Lay Development	\$77,724	\$88,970
Youth Program Expenses	\$7,000	\$7,000
Other	\$20,250	\$22,250
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$989,191</b>	<b>\$1,048,283</b>

The Budget and Finance Committee recommended that Consistory approve the proposed budget. Consistory presents the proposed budget for adoption by the Conference body.