

2023 Annual Report of the Church and Ministry Council

- Reformed Church of the Ascension was given permission for their event with Rev. Traci Blackmon; Call to Action, Reconnecting the Church to a Vocation of God's Justice; to count as diversity training for attendees.
- Associations Reps were reminded to not edit the Book of Worship too much when planning a service of release. The release of vows must be included.
- Discussion around Exempt Standing for retired pastors. This standing needs to be framed as a positive thing promoting flexibility and is not intended to side-line anyone who has retired.
- A draft of a webpage to be added to PSEC website was approved. It lays out the steps for a non-UCC church to learn more about the UCC, get into relationship with an Association, and eventually join the Association. These steps for partnering churches is geared toward exposing the new church to the culture and practices of our mostly German Reformed conference.
- Creating a Culture of Call, on June 21 the Conference hosted an event on Zoom for all who were interested in a call to ministry. Nineteen people attended representing all 5 Associations.
- The Council sent a letter to MESA requesting a re-affirmation of licensure and commissioning, hoping that it could be returned to the MOM (Manual on Ministry). In October we received a reply from Elizabeth Dilley saying that MESA would be working on some documents regarding licensure. They hoped to put something out by the end of the year.
- Lay Ministerial Covenant for Sunday Supply was updated with "4-way covenant" language and more clarity about documentation required. A lay minister granted this standing in any PSEC Association would be able to serve as Sunday Supply in any other PSEC Association.
- The Council continues to receive updates about the Keystone Working Group and we keep the conversation going about how associations and COMs might change and do our work more effectively.
- Retiree Month, COMs were encouraged to designate February as retiree month to focus on reaching out to the retirees in their association. In April 2024 the Conference will host a Retirees Event at St. James UCC, Limerick.
- The Ethics Committee was granted permission to adjust their terms as needed in order for the terms to be staggered.
- Conversations continue around the need for COMs to hold clergy responsible for completing boundary and diversity training as well as keeping up with other continuing education requirements. The general conclusion: work with folks if you can, and eventually you're going to have to hold people responsible. This could include suspension of ministerial standing for the non-compliant.

Respectfully submitted,
Rev. Suzanne M Spaulding, dean