

**PSEC Consistory Meeting
Minutes for March 16, 2024
@ PSEC Office**

In attendance: Rev. Bill Worley, Mr. Charles Kuthuru, Rev. Melissa Burkhart, Rev. Ken McDowell, Ms. Caroline Bashore, Rev. Selina Hamilton, Mr. Tom Wright, Ms. Caroline Dunleavy, Rev. Alan Miles, Rev. Roshan Soans, Ms. Mary Loiselle, Rev. Kevin Fruchtl, Ms. Donna Fried, and Rev. Kevin McLemore

Word of Prayer and Devotions offered by Ms. Caroline Dunleavy.

Hospitality offered by Rev. Selina Hamilton.

Meeting called to order by Moderator Mr. Charles Kuthuru at 9:04 am.

Work of God's People

Motion to approve the meeting's agenda by Ms. Donna Fried and seconded by Ms. Mary Loiselle. No discussion, motion carried unanimously.

Motion to approve the January 20, 2024, minutes by Rev. Ken McDowell and seconded by Rev. Melissa Burkhart. No discussion, motion carried unanimously.

Intro and Appointment of New Treasurer – Rev. Kenneth McDowell

Rev. Bill Worley introduced Rev. Ken McDowell as the new treasurer of the Pennsylvania Southeast Conference, reading his biography that is posted on the PSEC website. A motion to approve Rev. Ken McDowell as treasurer was made by Rev. Selina Hamilton and seconded by Ms. Donna Fried. No discussion, motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Charles Kuthuru thanked Rev. Bob Fogel for his years of faithful service to the PSEC and expressed well wishes for his future endeavors.

Correspondence – Ms. Caroline Bashore

Two correspondences were received and shared. The first, a letter from the estate of Helen Schneider, summarizing that Helen intended to leave money to the PSEC, but due to her unexpectedly long life, she outlived her financial resources, and no distribution will be made to the conference. The second, a thank you letter from Saint Stephens UCC to the New Ministries Grant Committee for the approval of their grant request for their Second Saturday Free Lunch and Clothing program, as well as their Connection Senior Lunch program.

Reports:

1. Treasurer – Rev. Ken McDowell expressed a desire to receive input from CC regarding the type of information they find most useful during the verbal treasurer's report given that the written reports are received and viewed ahead of time; exceptions or notable changes will continue to be addressed. Future reports will include visual aids such as charts and graphs.
 - Financial snapshot report - it was mentioned that there isn't much data to analyze at the beginning of the year, however, the trend of expenses exceeding income continues.
 - OCWM report, indicates a deficit in funds received compared to budget, though donation patterns are typically irregular throughout the year.

- Balance Sheet – to accurately assess the conference’s financial sustainability, a focus will be put on discretionary funds while still reporting on other components such as personnel, pass-through funds, and other earmarked funds.

OCWM calls – Rev. Bill Worley – Association OCWM contribution Excel spreadsheets have been distributed to the respective CC representatives. In the past, follow-up phone calls have been made in January, regarding church’s intentions and capabilities to pledge, however recognizing that many churches do not finalize their budgets until January or February, CC will work on making phone calls between now and the next meeting in May. On top of discussing pledges, the phone calls should be used to build and maintain relationships, express gratitude for each church’s involvement, and learn more about the church’s ministries. Rev. Bill Worley will provide a script and outline to aid in the conversations. With multiple representatives from each association on CC, it was suggested that association members meet briefly to form a plan in dividing the calls. Out of 150 churches in the conference, each year there are between 7-14 who do not contribute, leaving PSEC just shy of 100% participation

Motion to approve the Treasurer’s Report by Rev. Alan Miles and seconded by Ms. Caroline Dunleavy. No further discussion, motion carried unanimously.

2. Personnel Committee Report – Rev. Melissa Burkhart – During the Personnel Committee’s meetings in February and March, they reviewed Rev. Bill Worley’s evaluation and goals, as well as discussing the staff’s self-evaluations. The committee expresses their gratitude for Rev. Bill Worley’s dedicated leadership to the conference, the work of the Keystone Project, and the other aspects of his role including the leadership of the staff. Valuable insights on the impact the possible Keystone Conference is having on the staff were shared. At their next meeting, the committee will be considering feedback and evaluating the self-evaluation itself to explore potential adjustments that will allow them to better support the staff.

Motion to approve the Personnel Committee Report by Ms. Donna Fried and seconded by Rev. Selina Hamilton. No further discussion, motion carried unanimously.

3. Disaster Ministry Coordinator Report – there are plans for a significant presence of Disaster Ministry representatives at the June meeting in Penn State, including National staff members who will be joining Carl in leading a workshop. Carl is commended for his exceptional work, dedication, and passion to the area of Disaster Ministry, and persists in seeking a successor to continue the level of efforts. Potential successor suggestions should be shared with Carl who will no doubt assist in the transition of leadership.

Motion to approve the Disaster Ministry Coordinator Report by Ms. Mary Loiselle and seconded by Ms. Caroline Dunleavy. No further discussion, motion carried unanimously.

4. Generosity Task Force Report – Ms. Caroline Dunleavy – the Generosity committee has

proposed creating an annual report for PSEC that would differ from the existing documents that are submitted for annual meetings, featuring more graphical elements to showcase the work of the conference. The annual report will serve as an additional tool to reach a broader audience. The effort needed to produce the annual report is more than the committee is capable of, so a quote was obtained for graphic design services. The quote for a 10–15-page report was approximately \$2,000. The report would be distributed digitally via email, website, and social media. Motion to use \$2,000 from savings to support the Generosity team’s annual report initiative made by Rev. Kevin Fruchtl and seconded by Rev. Alan Miles. No further discussion, motion carried unanimously.

Motion to approve the Generosity Task Force Report by Rev. Selina Hamilton and seconded by Rev. Alan Miles. No further discussion, motion carried unanimously.

5. Associate Conference Minister for Congregational Development Report – Rev. Cean James – no additions to the written report.

Motion to approve the ACM for Congregational Development Report by Ms. Mary Loiselle and seconded by Ms. Donna Fried. No further discussion, motion carried unanimously.

6. Associate Conference Minister for Search & Call Report – Rev. Kevin McLemore – in the last few weeks there have been 6 resignations resulting in churches beginning the search and call process. Rev. Kevin McLemore shared that he does not see this as a trend but expressed that there will be challenges associated with filling the vacancies, especially given that some are half and quarter time. There was a discussion around potential solutions, including shared ministry models, lay leadership programs similar to the Lutheran 6261, and partnerships with theological students though there is declining availability of seminary students and participation from seminaries. Continued resource-sharing and follow-ups to assess the effectiveness of various programs was emphasized.

Motion to approve the ACM for Search & Call Report by Ms. Donna Fried and seconded by Ms. Mary Loiselle. No further discussion, motion carried unanimously.

7. Conference Minister Report – Rev. Bill Worley – there are three town hall meetings scheduled to discuss the Keystone Conference on April 11th, April 16th, and May 2nd. Following the St Thomas situation, fees owed to the conference attorney amount to \$45,002, bring the total coming to the conference from St Thomas to \$156,730.66. Further discussions will be held with Joe Burley regarding Bethany Children’s Homes’ receipt of funds to ensure they are appropriately compensated. After an update from Bethany, CC will need to decide where the funds from St Thomas will go, whether that is in the Church Start Fund or not. Lastly, Rev. Bill Worley shared his celebration of the funds received from St Mark’s which closed three years ago.

Motion to approve the CM Report by Rev. Selina Hamilton and seconded by Rev. Melissa Burkhart. No further discussion, motion carried unanimously.

Old Business

1. Keystone Study Update – Rev. Bill Worley – the group met yesterday where discussion centered around updates from the five working groups. Conversations focused on a proposed staff model, finance team reports, budget projections for the Keystone conference, and governance models. Key documents, including frequently asked questions and the basis of union are accessible on the PSEC website. Registration for the Spring meeting is now open, and CC was informed that there will be a meeting of all four CC on Friday morning at the Penn Stater starting at 9 am. Concerns were raised about the cost of attendance, particularly for laypeople; Rev. Bill Worley shared that there are limited scholarship funds available, but because of CC designating \$50,000 to defraying the cost, registration costs will receive a 75% discount. It was clarified that no votes will be taken at the June meeting regarding Keystone but serves as an opportunity for information sharing and discussion before the November meeting where the motion to merger will be voted on.
2. 2023 Annual Report for Spring Meeting – discussed during the Generosity Task Force report.
3. Resolution of the St. Thomas legal proceedings – discussed during the Conference Minister report.
4. Follow up of the \$400K distribution – the last of the files will be sent out to be scanned in a few weeks, funds were returned to savings from those allocated for General Synod, no progress has been made yet on the clergy coaching and mentoring program, the donation to Gestalt Pastoral Care was made, Sue Creswell is coordinating with the Lombard Peace Mennonite Center, an invitation was extended to delegates of the Medak Diocese for the June meeting, financial support for the Keystone Working Group has been processed, work has not begun on the new mental health fund, and the remaining funds have been transferred to savings.

New Business

1. Survey results for bus to Penn State for Joint Spring Mtg. – 900 surveys were sent out about interest in taking a bus to Penn State, 73 responses were received with 14 expressing interest. Consensus was to abandon the bus idea.
2. T-shirts for Spring Meeting? – CC decided to remove the idea of t-shirts for June's meeting from consideration.
3. Conferring Session - a budget proposal for 2025 will be presented during the June meeting with the aim of addressing the deficit passed in 2024; it will not be voted on. For the conferring session discussion on Keystone, different mechanisms were proposed, including creating questions, engaging in small and large group discussions, and utilizing a facilitator to

guide the conversation. There was a consensus to wait until the May meeting to further plans, as more information will be available by then. Concerns were shared about clarifying the distinction between the current Keystone process and the past experience with PNE. Ms. Mary Loiselle and Rev. Melissa Burkhart volunteered to work on shaping the conversation and bringing ideas to May's meeting.

Motion to Adjourn at 11:30 am made by Ms. Donna Fried and seconded by Ms. Caroline Dunleavy, motion carried unanimously.

Closing Prayer led by Rev. Melissa Burkhart.

For May 18th meeting: Devotions: Suzanne Schwarz-Green Hospitality: Tom Wright

Consistory Meeting dates: 2024: [May 18](#), [Jul. 20](#), [Sep. 21](#), [Nov. 16](#)