

**PSEC Consistory Meeting
Minutes for July 20, 2024
Hybrid meeting – on zoom or @ PSEC Office**

In attendance: Rev. Bill Worley, Rev. Melissa Burkhart, Mr. Bob Ames, Rev. Ken McDowell, Rev. Caroline Bashore, Rev. Selina Hamilton, Mr. Rick Deerfield, Ms. Caroline Dunleavy, Rev. Alan Miles, Ms. Mary Loiselle, Ms. Jennie Strauch, Rev. Suzanne Schwarz-Green, Ms. Donna Fried, Ms. Alisa Unell, Mr. Cole Brenner-Smith and Rev. Cean James

Word of Prayer and Devotions offered by Rev. Alan Miles.

Hospitality offered by Rev. Melissa Burkhart.

Meeting called to order by Moderator Rev. Melissa Burkhart at 9:07 am.

Work of God's People

Motion to approve the election of the nominating slate of officers and committees by Rev. Selina Hamilton and seconded by Ms. Donna Fried. No discussion, motion carried unanimously.

Installation of the New Officers led by Rev. Bill Worley.

Orientation – Rev. Bill Worley

- a. Welcome new members
- b. PSEC Constitution requirements
- c. Legal/Financial responsibilities
- d. Expectations of Consistory members
- e. Future meetings

Motion to approve the meeting's agenda by Ms. Caroline Dunleavy and seconded by Ms. Alisa Unell. No discussion, motion carried unanimously.

Motion to approve the May 18, 2024, minutes by Mr. Rick Deerfield and seconded by Ms. Caroline Dunleavy. No discussion, motion carried unanimously.

Reports:

1. Treasurer – Rev. Ken McDowell

A brief review for new members was provided, including the 2024 budget, which was passed with a \$79,000 deficit. Rev. Ken McDowell noted that 60% of the budget goes toward staff and benefits and explained that while the conference has significant funds in endowments (over \$4 million), much of it is restricted for specific uses, such as new church startups. Also highlighted was that the conference's income slightly exceeded projections by approximately \$4,000, but OCWM contributions fell short of expectations. Year-to-date expenses were \$450,631 which was below the budgeted \$596,413, leading to a net asset increase of \$116,000 as of June 30th. Rev. Ken McDowell explained the distinction between endowments and investments. Endowments are funds donated with specific usage restrictions unless the donor makes the donation without restrictions, while general savings can be invested for income generation. Endowment funds can only be used according to the donor's wishes, while unrestricted funds can be allocated as the Conference

Consistory sees fit. Looking at OCWM trends, in January, there was an initial shortfall, but February, March and April exceeded budget, and May and June both fell slightly short of budget all resulting in a \$29,000 shortfall for the year so far. Given a previously approved deficit budget of \$79,000, the real operating shortfall now stands at \$110,000. Year-to-date OCWM actuals at 39% of the goal compared to 43% in 2023 and similar percentages in previous years. If this trend continues, and with no changes to operating expenses, the projected deficit could grow to \$139,000 in 2025 and a cumulative deficit of \$4.2 million by 2034 as shared during the last Conference Consistory meeting and Conference Spring meeting.

2. Generosity Mission Team Report – Ms. Caroline Dunleavy – The Generosity Mission Team is focusing on developing a culture of generosity within the conference, emphasizing that while current financial systems like OCWM are essential, they must plan for a future that includes nonprofit-style fundraising. Ms. Caroline Dunleavy shared some insights from the Lake Institute Executive Certificate and Religious Fundraising course and noted that this shift towards proactive fundraising aligns with broader trends within the UCC. Additionally, she expressed gratitude to Rev. Suzanne Schwarz-Green and Ms. Mary Loiselle for helping with the annual report.
3. Disaster Ministry Coordinator Report – provided 300 hygiene kits and 25 period packs to residents of Eastwick, Philadelphia, who are experiencing ongoing flooding, and there is now an increased need for hygiene kits and period packs within the conference.
4. Personnel Committee Report – no report, next meeting will be July 31st
5. Associate Conference Minister for Congregational Development Report – Rev. Cean James – no additions to the written report
6. Associate Conference Minister for Search & Call Reports – Rev. Kevin McLemore – no additions to the written report
7. Conference Minister Report – Rev. Bill Worley – Rev. Dr. Doug Wooten from the Franklinton Center in North Carolina has requested a donation; additional details will be provided for discussion at September's meeting. In addition, Grace Trinity Church, led by Rev. Dr. Chandra Soans, has decided to withdraw from the UCC. This withdrawal has immediate implications for their membership benefits and is a significant development for the Philadelphia Association and the wider conference. As for the church in Trapp, the Ursinus executive committee met and will have a follow-up meeting this coming week.

Motion to approve the above reports (1-7) by Rev. Suzanne Schwarz-Green and seconded by Rev. Alan Miles. No further discussion, motion carried unanimously.

Old Business

1. Recap of June Conference Meeting – Feedback from the three-by-five cards distributed at the

tables during the June Conference meeting were consolidated and feedback shared, with some of the most common being clarity on voting procedures and staffing concerns. As a reminder each conference will meet individually on November 9, 2024, to vote on the merger, requiring a 2/3 vote from each conference. The discussion also covered concerns about communication, the need for a clear transition plan, and the role of associations and conference staff. For the Keystone Conference staffing model, the minimum, accounts for basic staff needs, while the dream includes more comprehensive benefits (plan A vs B) and additional staff roles. The key difference between these budgets is around \$20,000, primarily in benefits. For the 2026 Keystone budget, the projected costs are approximately \$2 million, with staff costs ranging from \$1.273 million in the dream budget to just over \$1 million in the minimum budget. The transition will involve a three-stage process with current staff through March 2026, a transitional staff in 2026, and transitional boards/consistories leading up to the full merger and settled Keystone staff and a Keystone board in 2027.

2. June Conference Meeting – Emails from Roshan Soans –Despite multiple requests from Rev. Melissa Burkhart and Mr. Bob Ames for meetings to address concerns and accusations Rev. Roshan Soans raised against some consistory members, Rev. Soans declined each request in a manner considered disrespectful. His refusal to engage in dialogue is troubling as it prevents resolution of issues regarding his concerns about the previous moderator and other association matters. As a summary of events, Rev. Soans, had questioned the legitimacy of decisions involving the previous moderator, Mr. Charles Kuthuru, and criticized consistory member Ms. Mary Loiselle. His emails were seen as disruptive, and his lack of cooperation led to his exclusion from the current meeting. The executive officers have decided to address this matter with the Philadelphia Association COM to find a way forward. This situation has highlighted the need for clearer guidelines on acceptable behavior within the consistory, which will be addressed in future discussions.
3. Keystone Study Update & Motion Review – Motion to include the presented Keystone motion on the agenda for the PSEC Fall Meeting 2024 by Mr. Rick Deerfield and seconded by Rev. Selina Hamilton. No discussion, motion carried unanimously.
4. 2025 Budget Plan – The discussion around the 2025 budget plan focused on the primary concerns raised during the June conference meeting. Delegates raised questions about how to avoid another deficit budget, stating they would not pass a deficit budget, but they also insisted on a 3% salary increase for staff. In order to balance the budget with a 3% salary increase, it would require staff reductions. The 2025 budget would likely be transitional, given the potential merger. The merger vote necessitates preparing two budget scenarios: one assuming the merger goes through with a deficit in order to maintain staff to assist in the transition, and the other assuming the merger does not pass with options on how to balance the budget. Delegates at the November 9th meeting will vote on the merger first, and the budget would be adjusted accordingly based on the outcome.

New Business

1. Election of the General Synod 2025 Slate – Motion to approve the election of the General Synod

2025 slate by Rev. Suzanne Schwarz-Green and seconded by Mr. Cole Brenner-Smith. No discussion, motion carried unanimously.

2. Fall Meeting – Nov. 9, 2024 – A few members expressed a preference for in-person only, emphasizing the importance of the topics being discussed, while others highlighted the benefits of a hybrid option, particularly in ensuring participation and reaching a quorum. A previous meeting’s discussion about the Fall meeting being hybrid occurred, but no formal vote had been taken. The Conference Consistory voted in favor of holding a hybrid meeting with 8 in favor, 4 opposed, and 2 abstentions. It was confirmed that the constitution permits electronic voting, provided all delegates can hear and be heard during the meeting. It was agreed that delegates be required to have their cameras on and are strongly encouraged to attend in-person. For the conferring session, consistory agreed it was a good idea to have a small team, the executive committee, work on the details of how information is presented and discussed.

3. Member for New Ministries Grant Committee – Rev. Suzanne Schwarz-Green has volunteered to serve on the New Ministries Grant Committee.

Motion to Adjourn at 12:38 pm made by Rev. Suzanne Schwarz-Green and seconded by Rev. Selina Hamilton, motion carried unanimously.

Lord’s Prayer said in unison.

For Sept. 21st meeting: Devotions: Rev. Suzanne Schwarz-Green Hospitality: Mr. Rick Deerfield

Consistory Meeting dates: 2024: Sept. 21, Nov. 16
2025: Jan. 18, Mar. 15, May 17, Jul. 19, Sep. 20, Nov. 15