

Unapproved Conference Council Minutes
Saturday, April 5, 2008 – Casowasco – 10:00am

Members Present—Bp. Violet Fisher, Dale Austin, Jackie Bellamy, Beth Benham, Pat Curtin, Stephen Deckard, Marie DeWispelaere, Ed Enstine, Thom Fassett, Robyn Hays, Bill Hinderliter, Maddie Horrell, Sung-Ho Lee, Jeff Losey, Louise Matthews, Lee Mount, Deborah O’Connor-Slater, Gerry Rehkugler, Robert Sherburne, Kim Snyder, Lauren Swanson, David Underwood, Leon VanWie, Heather Williams, Betty Youmans; Betty Morey was present representing Religion and Race.

Excused— Ruth Deitrich, Chuck Forbes, Sharon Fulmer,

Opening Devotions were led by Deborah O’Connor-Slater and Beth Benham. The focus was on the dedication of the director’s house, which will take place later. Matthew 7:24-25 was the text for the message “Built on the Rock.” Prayers were offered for individuals.

Meeting was called to order by Snyder, associate Conference Lay Leader. Mike Huber, director of CCRM, offered greetings from Casowasco.

Episcopacy Concerns—Bp. Fisher spoke of her travels to the Republic of the Congo and brought greetings from the churches there. She addressed the entrepreneurship programs that the UMC is supporting in that country. She would like to see more support from our annual conferences as we find ways to partner with the churches of Africa.

Connectional Ministries—Deckard spoke of his drive in this morning and a sign along the roadway referring to the Underground Railroad. “Will there be any reason to put up a sign about the work that your church is doing?”

Congregational Development—Swanson has just returned from his study leave and encouraged others to do the same. He reported on the studies and visits that were part of his leave. The parish nurse program at New Creations has been expanded to two nurses and a social worker. A new worship community has been organized and now has about 20 – 30 people attending. One of the members is considering donating a facility valued at \$1.5 million for use by the United Methodist Church. “New ministry encourages new ministry.”

The Southern Sudan Health Initiative has some exciting possibilities. Some of those working with this initiative live in our own region. Currently there are ten adults and fifteen Sudanese meeting in an apartment in Central New York, hoping to find a more suitable place for worship.

Because change is inevitable in our environment, we all have opportunities facing us in the next years. Now is a good time to design and develop new and exciting ministries, to plant seeds, to take risks.

Spiritual Leadership—Barrow was not present. Deckard reported in his absence. Information was offered regarding the NYS Council of Churches and Soulfest. “The new act” is the name that the four conferences are currently using to refer to merger discussions and negotiations. There are four planning sessions over the next two years bringing together key leaders from each

of the four conferences. Some things will line up nicely; others will need some work. We are moving ahead.

Minutes of the February 2 meeting—VanWie offered corrections. Benham has asked to be excused. He asked about reports—are they available on the website? Can we link the minutes to those sites? Consensus of the group is that these reports need to be available. “Church and Society” or “Social Concerns”? Which is it? The council may have changed the name at some time in the past. VanWie agreed to accept temporary leadership of the team. Austin presented other amendments. The minutes were then approved as corrected.

Ministry Areas

Church and Society—VanWie reported on the speaker for the Church and Society Breakfast at AC. Betty Morey reported on the dinner at Clay Trinity church “Gathering at the Lord’s Table.” Many ethnic groups will be represented at this dinner. Report was accepted.

Congregational Development—VanWie presented the report. There were no questions concerning the report. Snyder asked about the comment that 50% was a good goal for Mission and Ministry in a local church. It was clarified that churches spending most of their funds on pastoral support (as an example) don’t have a lot left for mission and ministry. Vital churches seem to be actively involved in M&M. Report was accepted.

Deckard sought to clarify the names of ministry areas. Global Ministries is now Caring Missions. There appears to be no record of the council having changed the name of Church and Society, so that one remains.

Caring Mission—Losey spoke of the program at Andrews Memorial for the Sudan Initiative to take place on Sunday. Accepted. Morey mentioned that the Onondaga Nation church invited people to attend their worship service this weekend, as well. The global ministries teams of the four conferences have met and are beginning to work on coordinating efforts. Snyder asked for a representative of the council to be present at both Andrews and the Onondaga Nation church tomorrow. Benham will be attending services at Hogansburg, as well.

Spiritual Leadership—A report from CCRM was distributed to the council. Bellamy commented on the report. The 2008 brochure is available. Work on the director’s house has been completed. The washhouse addition to the chapel building was funded by private donors and has been completed. It is anticipated that no mortgage will be needed for the Emmaus Commons expansion, which should be completed by June 1, 2007. Huber then mentioned that 2007 was a “stable” year for Aldersgate. The definition of “camper” has been clarified for purposes of measuring participation. Aldersgate is “powered down” for the time being, but will soon be gearing up for the summer and for spring and fall retreats. Casowasco is nearly at full capacity; there is not a lot of potential for growth.

Curtin was asked to address finances concerning CCRM. Camping was able to break even last year, with some deferred maintenance money to be carried over. We are “right on target”; camps are financially secure at present. Huber commented that CCRM is also working on a “one ministry” concept, addressing some of the “rivalry” that previously characterized some

of the work of the team. This year both sites are using the National Council of Churches curriculum, "Handle with Care."

Curtin asked about Safe Sanctuaries. Are churches developing policies and should they be kept at the conference office? All churches are expected to develop a policy by their 2008 charge conferences, and send a copy to the district office. It might also be helpful to have all policies on file at the district office.

Report of the team was then accepted as presented.

Service Ministry—Mount reported that Archives and History is moving to Andrews Memorial. Hays reported that Pensions and Health Benefits is preparing a resolution for the AC to send to the Attorney General of the state. Past service annuity rate for Pre-1982 service will be increased by 10% for the next year. We have tried to maintain a 4% increase in past years; this leap narrows the gap between ourselves and the other conferences with whom merger is planned. There is still more to be done to close that gap completely.

Lay Ministry—Horrell presented the report from CCYM. Last year was the first year when CCYM offered only one retreat rather than two. The 4-Word event with the other three conferences is being emphasized.

Snyder reported on the work of District Lay Leaders. Gifts and Graces workshops are proceeding in most districts.

Williams reported on Young Adult Ministries. She needs a team. We need to do a better job of mentoring young adults and encouraging them to consider ordained ministry as a career.

Reports were received and accepted.

Lunch Break

Following lunch, the council members moved to the director's home for a service of dedication led by Bp. Fisher. They then returned to the Foster Center for the remainder of the meeting.

Finance—Sherburne presented the budget proposal for 2009. VanWie asked about the 3.9% increase for salaries (consistent with DAS) when the budget increase is 3.0%. The issue was clarified. VanWie then asked about "moving off the grid." This is to keep us in line with the other conferences involved in merger discussions. Sherburne moved adoption of the budget. VanWie asked about the additional part-time employee in Connectional Ministries. This is currently staffed as a part-time position, and the individual will be placed in a permanent position. The need arose when a member of the current staff was asked to do more in the area of Information Technology. VanWie then asked about the proposal from Church and Society regarding a person to coordinate Dismantling Racism ministries. It remains tabled. Budget was approved.

Sherburne stated that we are continuing to pay General Church apportionments in 2008 and in 2009.

Curtin reported on two requests for funding from the contingency fund. One is a request for funding a critical response team to work with churches in financial stress--\$4,500 to cover training and travel. Discussion followed. Motion to accept this request was approved. Second request is for \$3,000 to cover costs of retirement banquet. Approved.

Curtin then reported on the conference portfolio and what funds are held for which agency of the conference. Funds earned and spent from this portfolio were explained, for information purposes.

New Business—Snyder addressed conference workshops for 2009, asking that we set the dates of April 25 and May 2, 2009 for conference workshops. There were no objections, so the dates were locked in.

Action Items—Sherburne presented the resolution from Finance concerning “sweep account” funds. “Sweep accounts” are defined as interest that is accumulated on funds and “swept” from those accounts at the end of the business day for use by the annual conference. Funds over \$10,000 will have accumulated interest retained in the accounts. Earnings on items below this amount will be moved into a contingency fund. VanWie moved to amend by deleting the last two sentences of item # 4 and all of # 5. Then add a new # 5 an item # 6. Discussion followed concerning the amendment. Amendment was defeated. The main motion was then approved.

Next meeting of the Council will be on September 27 at the Liverpool UMC. The following day, the new bishop will be welcomed at Asbury First UMC, Rochester. October 3-4 or November 14-15 will be dates for key leaders of the four conferences to come together with the new bishop.

Youmans asked about the conference workshops. No questions.

Devotions for September will be led by Louise Matthews.

Meeting was adjourned at 2:13 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
DALE E. AUSTIN, Conference Secretary