

Approved Conference Council Minutes
Saturday, December 01, 2007 – Cicero UMC – 10:00am

Members Present—Bp. Violet Fisher, Dale Austin, Darryl Barrow, Jackie Bellamy, Tom Bement, Beth Benham, Jeff Childs, Inell Claypool, Lamar Claypool, Pat Curtin, Stephen Deckard, Ruth Deitrich, Marie DeWispelaere, Ed Enstine, Brian Ethington, Bill Hinderliter, Sung-Ho Lee, Louise Matthews, Lee Mount, John Pierce, Gerry Rehkugler, Jane Sautter, Deborah O’Connor-Slater, Robert Sherburne, Kim Snyder, Lauren Swanson, David Underwood, Leon VanWie, Thom White-Wolf Fassett, Heather Williams, Betty Youmans

Excused— Chuck Forbes, Sharon Fulmer, Robyn Hays, Jeff Losey

Kim Snyder called the meeting to order at 10:13am. An opening exercise paired members off in an effort to get to know each other better.

Snyder presented Dale Austin as the new secretary. **Approved** by acclamation.

Lauren Swanson led the opening worship, with the song “Gather Us In.” He then read from the third chapter of Nehemiah, rebuilding the wall.

Swanson then addressed concerns of Mission, Vision and Plan for Conference Areas and Teams. He reminded the council of the mission statement for the Conference. Each ministry within the Conference has a mission, as well. It would be helpful for each group to identify its own mission statement or purpose. He then presented the Conference’s vision statement, encouraging each ministry area to develop its own vision statement. Vision will shift as the needs of those around us and the personnel of the team shift. After discussing staff relationships with various teams, he then discussed the church as an organism, as opposed to an organization. Organisms evolve and adapt, while organizations are rigid, often inflexible. “The church is the body of Christ blown by the wind of the Spirit ...” but we need to have a plan. Discussion followed concerning training opportunities for team leaders, particularly.

Bp. Fisher then asked “how do we get the news of exciting ministries around the conference down to the local church?” How do we help people to feel good about our conference? She then shared that she had received a letter of resignation from Alan Kinney from his role with Social Ministries and leading the Dismantling Racism program. We affirm the work that he has done. VanWie stated that we all share some responsibility for this. He asked that we **request Kinney to reconsider**. The suggestion was **supported**.

Strategic Plan and Staff—According to *The Book of Discipline*, the conference Treasurer/Director of Administration should be under the umbrella of the Conference Council on Finance and Administration. Curtin will report to CF&A, who will oversee her work.

World Aids Day—Bp. Fisher asked that we take a moment of silent prayer for people infected with HIV/AIDS.

Finance—Curtin reported for the team. Sherburne thanked people who have worked hard in the churches to increase their level of giving. Curtin indicated that we should be able to pay 100%

of our connectional ministry expenses this year. January 8 is the deadline for 2007 submissions and requests. At this point we are optimistic. The last time that we were able to pay 100% was in 1959, when both the Northern and Central New York Conferences paid their commitments in full. The deadline for requests for the 2009 budget is January 18. Expenses related to boundaries will be handled through a consolidated fund, rather than through individual teams.

2008 Budget—Two new requests have been received. Darryl asked for funding to support the General Conference delegation (actually a carry-over from last meeting—Darryl is asking for the remainder of the funds for 2008). The second item is a math error in the Conference Session budget. Both will be covered through contingency funds. This will bring the remaining contingency fund for 2008 down to about \$17,000; there will not be a lot of funding available for additional requests from ministry areas. Additional expenditures were **approved**. The full report was then **accepted**.

Deckard indicated work to be done during lunch break. Snyder offered the grace prayer. Fassett introduced Marie DeWispelaere as the new lay leader for Finger Lakes District. Heather Williams was introduced as coordinator of Young Adult Ministries.

Minutes of last meeting—Ethington noted that the minutes were not available online. Deckard clarified that minutes are not posted until approved at the next meeting. Mount questioned whether we could post unapproved minutes in the interest of sharing information as opposed to ensuring 100% accuracy. It was treated as a motion. Motion was **approved**. Motion was made to approve minutes; motion **accepted**.

Conference Workshops—April 12 workshops will be at Cicero, UMC. Location for the April 19 workshops has not been determined; looking for someplace north. One of the limiting factors in determining location is accessibility.

Congregational Development—VanWie presented his report. Conversations have begun with other three conferences involved in the proposed merger; differing structures in each of the conferences make for difficult beginnings. “The Parish Paper” is available to us as a judicatory at a much lower price than for individual churches. This is a helpful resource which will be made available through Swanson’s office, beginning in January 2008. The paper offers insights and suggestions into attracting new people to churches. VanWie asked for suggestions on two additional past issues which we might get.

VanWie offered a resolution of support for the work done by Bill Gottshcalk-Fielding as conference chair of the boundaries task force. Hinderliter suggested that Putney put the presentation into a proper format, and O’Connor-Slater will present the resolution to Bill during a worship service. Resolution was **approved**.

Curtin asked about Barneveld. \$15,000 is available for congregational development. VanWie indicated that funding is currently available through budgeted money. Signatures are needed, followed by team approval, at which time a request will be made.

Full report was then **approved**.

Global Ministries—Childs presented the report. Does the team have the power to change their name? Childs **moved** to change the name to **Caring Missions** rather than Global Ministries.

Deckard noted that the new name does not carry the weight of the entire globe. Motion was **approved**. A motion will be forthcoming asking that the new conference (whatever the configuration may be) fund a conference coordinator of missions, on at least a half-time basis. No action required on this today. Childs will be meeting with mission leaders from the other three conferences in February. A new missionary is coming to the Utica area, on February 29; Nancy Daleney, deaconess, will be a church and community worker who brings much experience and a heart for missions. Bp. Fisher noted that Carl Johnson has been working for the past few years to make this ministry happen. Andrew Hyland of St. Paul's church in Ithaca has been approved as a church and community worker and may soon be going *from* our conference to be in mission. A laptop computer has been approved for a member of the Central Congo Conference. Bp. Fisher was asked to consider three recipients for 2008 Love Offering at Annual Conference. Childs asked for information about previous mission connections through our conference. Burundi and Africa University were mentioned; there are others, as well.

Safe Sanctuaries—Glenda Schuesler and Jack Keating presented the sample policy. Workshops have been well attended. Keating and Curtin have been working to make the background checks requested as part of this policy easier to come by. Church Mutual offers checks through their "Choice Points" program. Swanson asked about support for those who are unjustly charged; they can become victims, as well. He suggested that until all events are clarified, anyone who claims to be a victim should be treated as a victim. Bp. Fisher stated that the *Discipline* has a clear procedure; this should be referenced in the policy. Bement asked about the negative reaction that might be expected in some smaller churches where "everybody knows everybody." Schuesler stated that the general policy might have to be modified minimally for some churches. Snyder asked why a national background check is not required. Keating stated that the proposed policy is following an established procedure.

What we are being asked to do today is to approve a sample policy, only, which can be presented to individual churches for adoption. As a conference we do not have a minimum policy expectation. Local church policies need to be approved by their 2008 Charge Conference, with policies given to the D.S. Childs **moved** that we accept this policy as a minimum expectation of the Annual Conference and present it to churches in that light. Seconded by O'Connor-Slater. Snyder suggested that the minimum should be a national background check, rather than just the state. Discussion followed. Bellamy asked about legal liability if a local church did not have the resources to pay a hefty settlement. Since the conference and the jurisdiction could be viewed as "deep pockets" there should be a minimum standard across the board. Childs called the question. Mount objected to terminating discussion. He then questioned the need for a national search, particularly for individuals who have been lifetime residents of the area. Vote was taken; Childs' motion was **approved**. The full report was then **approved**.

VanWie asked about implementation of this policy. As a result of our vote, this is now a conference policy. Childs suggested that this policy be a required report for 2008 Charge Conferences. Next training event will be in April and another opportunity on Thursday of Annual Conference week.

Service Ministry—Mount reported that the team has been active, but there are no action items.

Spiritual Leadership—Sautter stressed the concerns raised in her written report. She has had difficulty getting the heads of organizations together for meetings. Budget issues were raised. If the various teams do not submit requests, what happens? VanWie noted that some of the sub-teams have been linked to areas for purposes of linkage to the conference council. Childs asked about the joint workshop being planned by Christian Education and Evangelism; could this be linked to an already established training date rather than organizing an additional event which conference members would be expected to attend?

Snyder asked for an update on the Gifts and Graces team. Leadership has not been a problem. Mohawk District is planning a follow-up workshop to build on the information gathered through the initial training. Central Lakes, Northern Flow, and Finger Lakes have held several workshops. Crossroads needs to work on it.

Religion and Race—Lamar Claypool stated that a Religion and Race audit will be held soon. At this point, we have little information as to what this entails. NEJ chairs and co-chairs will be attending a workshop on December 15.

Calendar—Deckard led the council on a walk through the calendar.

January: There will be a national Religion and Race audit in January at which various members of the conference will be asked for input.

Conflict Resolution workshop at the end of January.

Worship workshop January 10-11 at Liverpool.

Budget requests are due the 18th.

February: Council meeting first Saturday in February.

March: PPRC Training on Central Lakes at Auburn 1st.

General Conference delegation will be holding a series of listening sessions the Sunday after Easter giving members of our conference a chance to voice their concern and opinions.

Spiritual gifts workshop at Clifton Springs.

April: Conference workshops 12 & 19

UMW Jurisdictional gathering.

18-20, conference-wide confirmation retreat.

May: 29th Religion and Race sponsoring “Dining at God’s Table” experience at Clay Trinity (?).
Annual Conference May 29 – June 1.

Bp. Fisher thanked Snyder for her leadership.

Old Business

VanWie raised the concern about nominations submissions. He then asked about term limits; he would like to begin training someone to take over when his term is up. Can we create “assistant area leaders” to be training positions for this purpose? Sharon will be working through such issues with the nominations committee. Concerning minutes published on the web, we are probably falsely assuming that people are looking at them, unless their attention has been specifically called to them.

O’Connor-Slater, on personal privilege, presented an update on her mother. She is still alive, but has had to be revived at least twice. Prayers have been appreciated greatly. She is currently in a skilled nursing facility. Our resurrection story for the day.

1 December 2007

Childs reminded everyone that it's time to get the flood buckets headed south before they freeze. He thanked everyone for their response.

Next meeting—Benham and O'Connor-Slater will do devotions.

Ethington closed with prayer.

Respectfully submitted,
Dale E. Austin, Secretary