

JCVDT Update

We've been asked multiple times why we're doing this work of creating a new Eastern Pennsylvania Conference. The best answer we can give you is when God gives us an opportunity to create something new, you take it and see where God will lead us.

The JCVDT meets twice a month exploring the possibilities of the development of a new Eastern Pennsylvania Conference.

PNEC Minister Bonnie Bates created a Lenten Bible Study with reflection questions that we made available to our churches on our PSEC website. We invited feedback from the questions in the Lenten Bible Study.

To encourage relationship building, we invited churches in both PNEC and PSEC to partner together in our Valentine's Day match-up.

On February 10th, the JCVDT and POWER held a healthcare workshop at the Reformed Church of the Ascension in Jeffersonville (PSEC). We had 20 people participate.

On Saturday, February 24th, the committees on ministry from both conferences were invited to a workshop to share their best practices and to begin to think about how Committee on Ministries might work in a new conference.

A joint PNEC Board of Directors and PSEC Consistory Retreat with the JCVDT was held on March 2-3. At this retreat, the JCVDT shared its work, results from the surveys and town meetings, staff interviews and results from the joint Committee on Ministries Day. Together, we discerned the possibilities of a vision, mission, and purpose (VMPV) for a new conference. We will also explore possible budget, structures, and foundations of a new conference.

These VMPV statements were shared at the PSEC Consistory meeting since most of the consistory wasn't able to be present at the retreat due to the snow storm. Two suggestions were given that are not reflected in today's draft. Both are in the Values statements: the first is "to serve God **with passion** and our neighbors with compassion" and to add fourth value: **to be committed to having the diversity of God's children at the Table**. These suggestions will be shared with the JCVDT for consideration.

These statements were also shared at the PNEC Annual Meeting held on April 14 and at the PSE Spring Association meetings. Delegates were invited to discuss and share feedback and to also take the statements back to their churches to discuss and share feedback. The feedback will be shared with the JCVDT for consideration.

Following a discussion at the joint retreat on how associations might be structured in a new conference, it was decided to create an Association subcommittee to create a model or models to be presented back to the JCVDT. The JCVDT is reaching out to other Conference merger committees to hear their experience around Associations. The make-up of the committee will include PNE members, and a representative from each PSE Association, some from their COM, and members of the JCVDT.

A staff structure and conference administrative site subcommittee was created. It is the general consensus that a new staff structure should reflect the VMPV of a new conference. Job descriptions should also reflect the skills and talents needed to accomplish this work. We did note that all current staff persons

would like to continue if a new conference is created. The subcommittee will work in conjunction with the Association structure subcommittee.

We took a brief look at what a merged budget might look like using a simple draft created from the budgets of both conferences. It became apparent when this budget was presented at the retreat that it didn't fully reflect the ministry of our conferences. A budget subcommittee will be formed to look at our VMPV statements, staff structure and conference structure to determine a possible budget for a new conference.

Looking ahead, the PNE Board and the PSEC Consistory came to a consensus that the JCVDT would do the work of creating a possible new conference with outlines of staff, association and budget structures. These would then be recommended to the PNE Board and PSE Consistory for consideration. Should these governing boards approve the structure outlines, it would then be brought to the two conferences for consideration and approval. If approved, a resolution will go to General Synod for permission to change the boundaries of our conferences so that we can begin to live into these new structures.