

## Summary Notes of the Sept 21, 2022, Conference Board Meeting

### Issues Discussed:

- Our guest at the meeting, Rev. Dr. Becky Beckwith, who serves on the Discernment and Visioning Team, led a group discussion on some of the questions developed by the team to hear input on what services provided by the conference are used most by member churches. The questions were aimed at learning what direction those served by the conference would like to see PNEC move into. The questions included in this discussion were:
  - How has the pandemic brought new life and energy to you or your church?
  - What did you learn about yourself and your church during this time?
  - What role does the PNEC staff, committees, groups, and colleagues play in the recovery and revisioning work you are trying to do?
  - What is your church known for in your community? If your church closed next week, would the community notice?

- Some items to celebrate included in the Committee and Team reports submitted before the meeting were:

Amigos de Guatemala – The multi-purpose Community Building is complete!

Authorization Working Group -The work of Linda Garger as she resigns, and the graciousness of Becky Sausser in stepping up to convene a Community of Practice for MIDS.

Committee on Ministry- The work the committee has accomplished and the energy they bring to the table.

GEM Fund – The gift awarded to Greenawalds Church.

Oversight Working Group – Ministers and lay people working together to maintain accountability, promoting integrity among Authorized ministers.

- The Treasurer reported that total revenue as of the end of August came in at almost 127% of the same point in 2021, which was a result of a bequest and some assets that came from the dissolution of Hope UCC in Allentown, rather than increased OCWM giving. Actually, OCWM revenue is running at only about 81% of what was budgeted because PNEC churches/members are struggling with the economy. However, we are in a relatively strong fiscal position for now and are keeping expenses in check.
- He then reviewed the draft of the proposed operating budget for 2023. Total revenue for 2023 is projected at about 94% of what is anticipated total revenue for 2022. Total expenses for 2023 are projected to come in about 10% higher than the final expense estimate for 2022, due to a combination of factors such as an increase in insurance, taxes, and staff benefit expense, as well as an accountant review of financial records, and administrative coverage for Bonnie Bates' sabbatical.
- Board Sub-group Updates
  - Program Evaluation – Surveys from the teams responsible for programming indicate most are meeting with regularity, they are adhering to their stated purpose, and have

created action steps. They are trying valiantly to keep moving toward achieving their goals, but lingering COVID restrictions and safety concerns about group events have hampered many of them in achieving as much progress as they hoped. Many of them also noted a need for more members on their team, especially ones that would increase diversity representation.

- Wider Church – PNEC continues to work with several interfaith groups actively, such as the Interfaith Action Committee, and the LV Ecumenical Committee. The collaboration between Touchstone Theater, the Bethlehem Interfaith Group and the Interfaith Action Committee is almost ready to stage the Interfaith Devotional at 1:00 pm on October 1<sup>st</sup> in south Bethlehem at Touchstone Theater. It is part of the fourth Festival Unbound celebration from Sept. 28 through October 2<sup>nd</sup>.
- Generosity Team – They are about to launch the PNEC Ambassador program, enlisting a member in most congregations to personally deliver regular messages about support and services the conference can provide and upcoming events, training, etc. they can take advantage of. They are also planning a special PNEC Covenant Sunday on November 20<sup>th</sup> to focus on the relationship between the conference and the member churches. It will feature a special (second) offering asking every member to give a dollar directly to the conference as part of the “Friends of the Conference” Campaign. Suggested materials that can be incorporated into the worship and suggestions for how to remit the donations will be sent to each church shortly.
- Governance & Ministry Implementation – A survey with questions about the effectiveness of the Governance and Ministry system was sent out to all the groups in PNEC and Board members early in the month, and a reminder of the deadline will go out shortly. A summary report indicating whether it is functioning as designed from their perspective will be presented to the Board at the November meeting.
- Keystone Study Group- Having received a grant to support their three-year study, the twenty-five people representing the four PA Conferences has made a tentative meeting schedule beginning on October 14<sup>th</sup>. They will explore the possibility of partnering, combining, or merging the four Conferences into one, or “doing a new thing”. PNEC will hold the grant funding and disperse it when expenses are submitted.
- Conference Meeting Planning Updates – The Fall Conference Meeting will be held as a hybrid meeting on November 5<sup>th</sup> at Forks UCC in Stockertown. The theme will be information derived from studies about those unchurched individuals (especially younger generations) who consider themselves to have no religious affiliation (“nones”), or those who are no longer part of a religious tradition (“dones”). The Spring Conference meeting will be held On April 29<sup>th</sup>, 2023, and the planning team is developing a theme on health.

### **Decisions Made/Actions Taken**

- The Treasurer’s report was accepted by consensus, and the proposed 2023 operating budget was approved (with possible minor adjustments) to be referred to the Fall Conference meeting for a final approval by the delegates.