MINUTES
Michigan Conference United Church of Christ - Board of Directors Via Zoom
March 20, 2021

Present: Mary Ann Martin, Judith Booker, Liz Larrivee, Cheryl Burke (Associate Conference Minister), Phil Hart (Transitional Conference Minister), Alexandria Goldsmith, Dan Spaulding, Judy Forman, Ralph Sims, Akua Budu-Watkins, Ivana Barrow

Absent: Ruth Moerdyk

Welcome and Devotions: Judith provided prayer and a devotional reading from “Act of Faith”

Agenda

Judith Booker, Board President, asked to move the break to later in the agenda. Moved and seconded to accept the agenda with suggested revision. Motion carried unanimously.

Minutes

Moved and seconded to accept minutes of January 2021 meeting. Passed. Motion carried unanimously.
Minutes were later amended to include devotions by Ralph Sims in the minutes of January 2021.

Financial Reports

Alexandria led a discussion regarding the financial reports which were presented. Seems all is looking good. Phil is working with Lisa to put together a Conference Calendar to show timelines for help with income/expenses. OCWM is ahead right now and in a good position. The need for a Financial Meeting including Merrill Lynch was noted. Moved and seconded to accept the Financial Reports. Motion carried unanimously.

Camp Talahi

Horse Powered People are negotiating an offer of $1,000,000, plus payment of closing costs. Discussion was held regarding where the funds would go. Former plans appear to indicate discussion of an Endowment to Youth and Children’s Ministries. Further discussion would need to happen upon sale of the Camp.

Annual Meeting
Piwa is no longer with the UCC Conference and has moved to Atlanta. We need to replace her as Moderator. One of the Moderator’s main duties is to plan and lead the Annual State Meeting. We still need a firm date. Discussion was held concerning the designation of an Annual Meeting Planning Committee and also an Annual Meeting Planning Book.

Election of At-Large Members of the Board

Liz requested that she be transitioned to an At-Large Member instead of the UNA to simplify her role as Board Member and serving as Interim Pastor at Covenant. **Moved and seconded to move Liz Larrivee from DMA Board Delegate to At-Large Member. Motion carried unanimously.**

Current openings for the Nominating Committee to fill include Moderator, one member from United Northern Association, and one member from Covenant Association.

Synod Delegates

Looking for two delegates from Eastern Association. Phil suggested we wait until we fill those positions to do the Commissioning.

Search Committee Update

As Lee is feeling better, a date of April 24 has been set with Lee to meet with the Search Committee.

Needs Assessment Update

Liz and Phil have met regarding developing a needs assessment survey for the congregations. This is an opportunity to ask local churches what their needs are for the next year or two. Questions regarding demographics, ie, number of worshippers, number of staff, etc. would ideally be given to the Pastor and to Congregation members. Information regarding worship needs, ie, items helpful, suggestions for worship would also be requested. Responses could be given to appropriate MATs.

Vital Growth MAT Presentation

Rev. Cheryl Burke gave a very informative and thorough presentation about the role of the Vital Growth MAT, including the Michigan Conference Process and Procedures for new church starts. Discussion was held regarding the Vitality Award (formerly Innovational Fund) and the Bertha Dayton Fund, which encourage new programs in existing churches. Coaches are available for new starts and for existing churches, which are funded by Convergence (formerly CPR). A discussion was held concerning the start
of a conversation with Associations regarding the Conference providing administrative assistance to the Committee on Ministry (COM) relating to Members in Discernment. Records need to be centralized so that records and changes in status are kept current and thorough. Support was received from the Board. Questions and answers were entertained providing insight and clarity. It is planned that all MATs will be asked to make presentations about their vital roles and responsibilities. A suggestion was made to put together a Resource List for the existing churches to use with organizations within the UCC and from Washington.

New Moderator/Responsibilities

Responsibilities of the open Moderator position includes planning the Michigan Conference Annual Meeting. The Moderator should oversee meetings for the Call of a Conference Minister and keep the Board informed.

Update - Transitional Conference Minister

Conference is still looking for a company or individual to do bookkeeping. Bob is currently working 15 hours a week on a contractual basis. Lisa is taking on increasing responsibilities as Conference Administrator. Not needing a Business Manager, the Conference may be able to hire a communication and technology staff and make that person available to both the Conference and the churches without impacting the budget.


It is anticipated that the Conference offices will not be reopening soon. Operations will continue virtually.

Trying to obtain appraisal of the East Lansing properties is still being addressed. Due to existing problems with infrastructure, it is doubtful that repairs of existing building would be recommended.

Staff reviews are in progress.

The consensus from the Great Lakes Minister’s Group is that this coming year will be difficult for churches. Experiencing pent up stress and anxiety from COVID, conflict is expected, pastors may be moving, churches may be closing, and financial problems may be evident.

The meeting was adjourned. The next regular meeting is scheduled for May 20.

Respectfully submitted,
Mary Ann Martin