The Common Table for Church Vitality

The Virginia Annual Conference

November 9, 2017

The Common Table met on November 9, 2017 at the United Methodist Conference Center in Glen Allen, Virginia in the Cabinet Room. Members present were:

Rev. Marc Brown (Director of Connectional Ministries and Chair)

Mr. David Dommisse (Treasurer)

Rev. Kathleen Overby Webster (Cabinet Representative)

Rev. Rob Lough (Board of Higher Education and Campus Ministries)

Rev. Gary Miller (Commission on Ethnic Minority Concerns and

Advocacy Representative)

Ms. Iris Gunter Smith (2018)

Rev. Chris Bennett (2018)

Rev. Larry Lenow (2019)

Rev. Rachel Chen (2019)

Rev. Jonathan Page (2020)

Ms. Unsil Choi (2020)

Dr. Carlos Liceaga (2021)

Rev. Harold White (2021)

Rev. Susan Reaves (Annual Conference Secretary, without vote)

Also present were Rev. Tom Joyce (Assistant to the Bishop) as the Bishop’s representative, MR. Paulo Lopes, Director of NextGen Ministries and Ms. Bev Myers, Executive Assistant in the office of the Director of Connectional Ministries.

Unable to attend were Conference Lay Leader Warren Harper and Bishop Sharma Lewis who was preaching at the meeting of the Council of Bishops.

Chair of the Common Table Marc Brown opened the meeting at 10:03 with a word of welcome. He read Matthew 25:1-13, the parable of the ten bridesmaids. He spoke about the coming of Christ as a moment of deciding or of fear. He asked the group to consider, as we anticipate what comes next for United Methodists, is this a moment of deciding or is this a moment of fear?

The minutes from the September 21, 2017 were approved with spelling corrections.

Mr. David Dommisse, treasurer, presented the financial report. The year-to-date percentage of apportionments collected through October compares very favorably to previous years. The current year is up 1.47% over 2016. Overall, the financial outlook is good.

Mr. Paulo Lopes, Director of the Center for Next Generation Ministries, presented an update on the launch of the Ministry with Young People’s team which is now the Next Generation team. There will be other teams launching such as the Children’s Ministry and Young Adult Ministry teams. Next Gen Ministries will need financial support to form these new teams. Mr. Lopes asked the Common Table for a budget line item for Next Gen Ministries as the team building goes forward. Mr. Dommisse suggested adding it to Supporting Schedule, Line 3 under Apportionment 401. He pointed out that putting together the teams replaces the cost of hiring another staff person. The cost would support having teams meet as they provide leadership for the work done by the Center for Next Generation Ministries. Mr. Lopes also noted that the Campus Ministry Institute has just launched an 18 month program for developing leadership within Campus Ministry.

Rev. Brown reported on his contact with the President of United Methodist Women, Mary Jane Rawley, regarding Celebration Women’s request to be a recognized ministry of the Virginia Annual Conference. Ms. Rawley disagreed with Celebration Women’s characterization of United Methodist Women as lacking an emphasis on spiritual formation. She said that the United Methodist Women do not wish to share table space with Celebration Women or “blur the lines” between these two separate groups. Rev. Brown will contact Ms. Julie Cheatham and Ms. Judy Mann with Celebration Women and inform them they will not be a recognized ministry of the Virginia Annual Conference.

There was discussion about how to engage more men and women in ministry by helping the United Methodist Women and the United Methodist Men reach out to more people and younger people. Rev. Brown will speak to the Chair of the Board of Laity and the Chair of the Board of Discipleship about the conversation that was begun at the Common Table and invite them to take part in it.

Rev. Brown reported that the Goodson Academy for Preaching held their October 30, 2017 event and had over 100 people attend. Oversight for the Goodson Academy will come from the Board of Discipleship.

Rev. Larry Lenow presented the report of the Personnel Committee as the Chair of the Committee, Ms. Shirley Cauffman, was out of the country. Ballots were passed out so the members of the Common Table could vote on the directors that report to the Common Table. The following directors were affirmed unanimously: Mr. Paulo Lopes, Rev. Mark Ogren, Ms. Madeline Pillow, and Rev. Glenn Rowley.

Rev. Lenow also noted that Ms. Cheryl Edley-Worford is no longer employed by the Virginia Annual Conference. Currently, the directors are dividing up the duties of the Director of Inclusivity and Lay Leadership. This will serve as an interim situation as the job description of the Director of Inclusivity and Lay Leadership may be changed.

A motion was made to recommend to the Executive Committee of the Common Table and the Chair of the Personnel Committee that the unused portion of Ms. Edley-Worford’s salary be used as a bonus for the directors and administrative staff. The motion passed.

Chair of Program Ministries, Dr. Carlos Liceaga, shared the following program ministry requests: the Asian Caucus requested $2,000; Latino Ministries, $3,000; the Conference Legislative Network, $2,000 per year for the next four years; and the Clergy Women’s Retreat, $10,000. Of this amount $6,250 is being requested for use in 2017. It was felt that line item 3090, contingency funds should be able to cover the cost of these requests until the apportionments for November and December 2017 are received. It was proposed that only $2,500 be granted for the Clergy Women’s Retreat. This would give the planners more time to give a fuller break down of the costs. This should include what will happen if there are less than 260 participants. The request could then be revisited at the Common Table meeting in February. Rev. Brown, Rev. Overby Webster and Dr. Liceaga will discuss this and other questions the Common Table has with the Clergy Women’s Retreat point of contact. The program grants were recommended by the Program Ministries committee as listed above with the exception of the Clergy Women’s Retreat which was amended from $10,000 to $2,500. The recommendation was approved.

There was also a discussion about following up with groups that receive funds. It would be useful to know more about the outcome of the events that are being funded. Ms. Bev Myers noted that there is already a form available that could be used for feedback.

Dr. Liceaga will follow up on this. Rev. Brown would encourage the Commission on Ethnic and Minority Concerns and Advocacy (CEMCA) to take the caucuses under their wing because the Latino and Asian caucus gatherings will be ongoing. This would give them a budget item and place discussion about their programs within CEMCA. Rev. Gary Miller noted that CEMCA is already reaching out to these groups.

A suggestion was brought to the Common Table that a team be formed with the mission of:

1) developing a plan for resolving the concerns and proposals of the clergy and laity in this annual conference; 2) ensuring the plan provides an opportunity to reach common ground and consensus through holy conferencing; 3) providing for an optional extension of time beyond one year; 4) providing for timely response to urgent matters; and 5) promoting unity. This team would present its findings and recommendations to the 2018 Virginia Annual Conference.

The resolution was discussed and was not approved.

A motion was made that the Common Table recommends to the rules committee that resolutions be done away with at Annual Conference. The motion was approved.

Those who wish to lift up issues before the Annual Conference could request time to address them from the platform at Annual Conference. The Bishop would decide who would be allowed time to speak from the dais.

At 12:05 Rev. Chris Bennett prayed over the food and the group broke for lunch.

The Older Adult Council has requested a change in structure. Rev. Brown will meet with them tomorrow. Other groups have been downsizing but they are thinking of expanding substantially. It was agreed to table this agenda item until the February meeting of the Common Table.

The Conveners of the Commission on a Way Forward have compiled a list of questions for the Bishops to use in order to receive feedback. The Conference chairs have already given feedback as a focus group. The Common Table also served as a focus group. The questions were discussed one-by-one and Rev. Brown recorded the responses.

Rev. Brown led in praying the Lord’s Prayer and adjourned the meeting at 2:33.