The Common Table for Church Vitality

The Virginia Annual Conference

March 15, 2018

The Common Table met on March 15, 2018 at the United Methodist Conference Center in Glen Allen, Virginia in room 120. Members present were:

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

Mr. Warren Harper (Conference Lay Leader)

Rev. Kathleen Overby Webster (Cabinet Representative)

Mr. David Dommisse (Conference Treasurer)

Rev. Gary Miller (Commission on Ethnic Minority Concerns and

Advocacy Representative)

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, and Ms. Bev Myers (Executive Assistant in the office of Director of Connectional Ministries).

Bishop Sharma Lewis, Rev. Rob Lough and Ms. Iris Gunter Smith, were unable to attend.

Chairperson Marc Brown opened the meeting at 10:06 with a word of welcome. He read Psalm 117 in its entirety. He emphasized verse two, “the faithfulness of the LORD endures forever.” Rev. Brown asked members of the Common Table to share where they have seen the endurance of God’s faithfulness. He concluded by rereading the Psalm. Mr. Warren Harper prayed.

A motion was made and seconded to approve the minutes from the February 22, 2018 meeting of the Common Table for Church Vitality. They were approved with two spelling corrections.

 Dr. Carlos Liceaga gave an update on Program Ministries. The Program Ministries group received a proposal to fund Ryan’s House Rescue Mission. The committee recommends not approving the request. The request is primarily for funds to buy a building. However, the stated purpose of these grants is to cover program expenses and not building projects. The recommendation not to fund Ryan’s House Rescue Mission was approved.

Reports from ministries using program funds in the previous year were received. Among these follow up reports were ministries which received program funds but did not use the allotted funds. The Engaging New Pastor’s in Mission was approved for the quadrennium but has not used any funds. The Committee recommends no longer funding this program. The recommendation was approved.

Related to Program Ministries, The Goodson Academy will have a speaker at their next event. Scholarships will be made available for Festival of Homiletics.

Rev. Chris Bennett gave a report on the Grants Committee which met on March 5th, 2018 to consider 2019 Benevolence Grants applications for four organizations. They had up to $200,000 to allocate. In addition to reviewing the applications, they met with representatives from each of the four organizations. After reviewing applications, meeting with organizational leaders and receiving input from Bishop Lewis, the Committee made the following grant recommendations:

Society of Saint Andrew $8,000

VA Interfaith Public Policy Center $15,000

Grace Inside $167,000

Virginia Council of Churches $10,000

The recommendation was approved.

There was discussion of the reduction of funding to the Virginia Council of Churches (VCC). Currently, the VCC is going through a restructuring process. The VCC has been important in fostering relationships between denominations and sustaining ecumenical dialogue. While the Grant Committee proposes reduced funding for the VCC, The United Methodist Church continues to value and support relationships with other denominations.

Director of Justice and Missional Excellence, Rev. Glenn Rowley, reported to the Common Table. He spoke about the partnership between the Conference and developing churches in Cambodia. There will be a medical mission going to Cambodia later in the year. Justice and Missional Excellence continues to work In Mozambique where a hospital needs its facilities updated. The Conference is also helping with Lay Leadership development in Mozambique.

Rev. Rowley reported that disaster recovery in Virginia Beach is coming to a close. Tornado recovery has been completed in the Evergreen area. The Bishop’s Conference on Racial Reconciliation is coming up in April. There will be a retreat in Washington, D.C. for victims of gun violence. A Communication summit on Immigration outreach is currently being planned. Following Rev. Rowley’s report, Rev. Jonathan Bennett prayed for his ministry.

Treasurer, Mr. David Dommisse reported that receipts of apportionments this year may reach 89%. Last year the Conference took in 89.91% of apportionments, but it would be hard to match that number this year, due to last year’s tax break.

The proposed 2019 Common Table Budget reflects a reduction by 30% over the previous year; however, because of restructuring and reallocation the change will not be readily apparent.

Mr. Dommisse reported that the Board of Higher Education and Campus Ministries asked for a budget of 2.5 million but will be receiving .5 million for renovations, largely for the Wesley Foundation buildings. Detailed plans were not submitted with the budget request for those renovations which is a reason for the reduction. There was a suggestion that someone from Common Table should be present during the Board of Higher Education and Campus Ministries discussions regarding renovations in order to ask questions. Information about the amount of local commitment for each renovation would be useful. Also it would be helpful to know what kind of fruit renovations would hope to yield. Most of these buildings were built in the 1950’s and do have maintenance needs.

Mr. Dommisse presented the proposed 2019 budget. Data management will be different than was presented in the report because of the division of the data manager’s salary. The budget recommended by the Council on Finance and Administration was presented with changes noted above and will be adjusted as noted. The budget was approved unanimously.

If anyone feels led to be present at Higher Education and Campus Ministries meeting, they are asked to contact Rev. Brown.

Dr. Liceaga asked question about unused program funds. Unused funds return to the emerging funds account and are credited back into next year’s available apportioned emerging funds. Additionally if a program goes over budget that comes from emerging funds as well. This fund is zeroed out each quadrennium. It was noted that when common table program money is used whatever donations are made are always spent first; earned income, say from fees charged, are spent next; and finally the program money is spent.

Following Mr. Dommisse’s report, Rev. Page prayed and the group broke for lunch.

The Historical Society would like the Virginia Annual Conference to endorse United Methodist Historic Site No. 7: William Watters Grave, McLean, Virginia, for status as a United Methodist Heritage Landmark designation. It is already named a United Methodist Historic Site by the Virginia Annual Conference and the General Commission on Archives and History of The United Methodist Church.

Dr. Liceaga will assist in presenting the Common Table report to Annual Conference.

Rev. Bennett then presented an activity that demonstrated design thinking and encouraged creative problem solving. He used the Mission Possible game put out by Matryoshka Haus. Design thinking is about identifying and working within given constraints to arrive at innovative and generative solutions. Mission Possible explores design thinking through a gamified experience to address complex problems and social ills.” The members of the Common Table broke into teams, were assigned real world problems and tasked with coming up with creative solutions.

Rev. Brown reminded everyone that Rev. Bennett and Ms. Iris Gunter Brown were rotating off the Common Table. He offered his appreciation for the hard work and service they have provided.

Ms. Rachel Chen prayed over the group and Rev. Brown adjourned the meeting at 2:04 p.m.