The Common Table for Church Vitality

The Virginia Annual Conference

*The mission of the Virginia Conference is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world by equipping its local churches for ministry and by providing a connection for ministry beyond the local church; all to the glory of God.*

The Common Table met on September 20, 2018 at the United Methodist Conference Center in Glen Allen, Virginia in room 122. Members present were:

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

Mr. Warren Harper (Conference Lay Leader)

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

Rev. Lyle E. Morton (Commission on Ethnic Minority Concerns and

Advocacy Representative)

Rev. Larry Lenow (2019)

Rev. Rachel Chen (2019)

Ms. Unsil Choi (2020)

Rev. Harold White (2021)

Rev. Ashley Roth (2022)

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

Also present was Ms. Bev Myers (Executive Assistant in the office of Director of Connectional Ministries).

Bishop Sharma Lewis, Dr. Carlos Liceaga, Mr. David Dommisse, Rev. Jonathan Page and Ms. Sandi Blackwell were unable to attend. Rev. Kathleen Overby Webster joined the meeting after the conclusion of a cabinet meeting. Rev. Jonathan Page joined us for lunch. He was attending a planning meeting for the 5 Talent Academy.

Chairperson Marc Brown opened the meeting at 10:01 with a word of welcome. He had everyone introduce themselves. Following this, he prayed over the group and read Colossians 1:1-12 which includes, “May you be prepared to bear everything with patience. Rev. Brown played a video clip from “Britain’s Got Talent” featuring singing duo, Charlotte and Jonathan. He then asked everyone to note some defining moments for the performers. Rev. Brown pointed out that the Special Session of General Conference in February 2019 could be a defining moment for the United Methodist Church as a denomination. We should be prepared to endure with and lead lives worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, so that we may bear fruit in every good work. Rev. Brown then asked the group to break into twos and threes and consider:

What have been some defining moments in your life?

What are possible defining moments for the Virginia Conference?

The entire group discussed defining moments for the Virginia Conference and the denomination. It was noted that in times of change it is important to have excellent leadership. It is necessary to be open and vulnerable. Remaining involved in mission is vital. Rev. Brown remarked that a group has formed to consider what kind of response will need to be made immediately following the Special Session of the General Conference.

Rev. Brown prayed.

A motion was made and seconded to approve the minutes from the March 15, 2018 meeting of the Common Table for Church Vitality with two corrections. The motion was approved.

Rev. Brown gave a review of the purpose of the Common Table which is “to coordinate and prioritize the ministries and resources of the Virginia Conference.”Rev. Brown gave some of the history of the Common Table and talked about what it means to coordinate its ministries. The Common Table has reduced the number of ministries it supports from 90+ to around 20.

Rev. Chris Bennett came and related some of the history and goals of the Ministry Accelerator for grant recipients. The accelerator’s purpose is to help ministries develop the 4 Cs: capital, community, capability and capacity So far 23 groups have been part of the Accelerator process. Rev. Bennett reported that the cost to run the Accelerator is about $8,000 for 10 groups. The Roanoke District held a district wide accelerator event which they funded themselves. Rev. Lough suggested splitting the costs of holding accelerators among the Conference, a District, and the participating Churches. It was decided to discuss this with Rev. Kathleen Overby Webster as a similar district wide approach had been tried on the Roanoke District.

It was noted that the Ministry Accelerator ties in with the Conference vision since there is learning and growth through the Accelerator which can be used to influence the ministry and mission of the local church which then goes out into the world through the ministries being funded. The question was posed, “Would it make sense to have an event for groups that have already been through the process?” Rev. Bennett thought that it would be best to not mix groups going through the process for the first time and groups coming back through. The Grants Committee, Rev. Overby Webster and Rev. Bennett will meet and report back to the Common Table.

Rev. Brown gave the Finance Report. In general, receipts through August are higher by 1.5% than receipts in 2017. The Common Table is currently under budget – in part because there is one staff position that has not been filled while consideration is being given to structuring staff responsibilities.

Mr. Warren Harper gave the report on Program Ministry requests. Mr. Paulo Lopes, Director of the Center for Next Generation Ministries requested funding for Young Adult Leadership for Youth Retreats. This request is a continuation of funding for the 2018-2019 for Youth Retreats. This would have been a quadrennial request as it is an ongoing ministry, but from its inception to the present it has been evaluated year by year. Mr. Lopes requested $5,000 and the Grants Committee recommended approval. The recommendation was approved.

Mr. Harper noted that the Focus 2020 grant for 2018 was withdrawn. However, Focus 2020 requests $11,100 for 2019. This amount would allow eight churches to receive coaching. These eight churches could then coach other churches. It was suggested that Rev. Ted Smith come to the September 2019 Common Table to speak about Focus 2020. The Grants Committee recommends approval for Focus 2020 to receive $11,000. The recommendation was approved.

The Special and Sustaining Grants Committee Report was brought by Rev. Brown. He noted that two proposals, Annandale UMC Faith Justice Forum and New Life Deaf Ministry, did not meet the grant guide lines. The Grants Committee recommended $20,300 for special grants be awarded. The recommendation was approved. The Committee recommended that $34,800 be awarded for sustaining grants. The recommendation was approved. A detailed report is given in the appendix.

The Grants Committee recommended extending the deadline for grant applications until October 31. A total of $90,000 is available for Special and Sustaining Grants ($30,000 from the Conference United Methodist Women and $60,000 from the Common Table) with $55,100 of this total being approved by the Common Table. The recommendation was approved.

Rev. Jonathan Page who joined the meeting while on break from a meeting of the 5 Talent Academy prayed over the meal and the group broke for lunch.

Rev. Rob Lough, president of the Board of Higher Education and Campus Ministry, brought an update from the Board. Campus Ministers are now reporting data monthly. Two items are currently being considered. First, properties owned by the Wesley Foundation, Inc. need renovations. Rev. Lough has asked the boards of the various Wesley Foundations to consider two questions – a) what would it take to maintain their current space for the next decade? And b) what would it take to give up their current building. Campus ministries that do not have a building tend to struggle, but having a building does not guarantee fruitfulness. Currently nine buildings are being sustained. The second item being considered, is the process that takes place when a campus ministry chaplain takes an appointment. The Board needs to begin an interview process that can take multiple months to complete. Bishop Lewis has asked Higher Education and Campus Ministry to think about ways the appointment process and the Campus Ministry interview process could relate.

Rev. Brown spoke about the difference between the ministry supported by the Board of Higher Education and Campus Ministry and the Virginia Education Fund that supports someone like Justin Allen who is an employee of Shenandoah University.

Rev. Brown addressed the Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) Task Force that is being formed out of the resolution “Compassionate Support for Members of the Armed Forces, Veterans and Their Families” approved at the 2018 Annual Conference. The following six people have been proposed for the task force, Rev. Darrin Buse who brought the motion before the 2018 Annual Conference, Rev. Dr. Jim Ginther, Mr. Peter D Wells, Ms. Stephanie Slocum, Ms. Sherry Ashe and Rev. Chuck Rowley. Rev. Lough moved that the proposed names make up the Task Force. The motion was seconded and approved.

Rev. Glenn Rowley came and gave a staff report on his ministry. At Rev. Brown’s suggestion he shared some of his experiences as a missionary and then as a mission interpreter in the Western Jurisdiction and now as the Conference’s Director of Justice and Missional Excellence. He discussed his responsibility with Initiatives of Hope and the Virginia Annual Conferences connection to Brazil, Mozambique and Cambodia. Cambodia just formally became a provisional Methodist Conference. Rev. Rowley has oversight of disaster relief in the conference. He also works with the Commission on Ethnic Minority Concerns and Advocacy (CEMCA). He has recently traveled to Mozambique, Cambodia and Viet Nam and will be returning to Mozambique in the near future.

Rev. Rowley noted that when we are in mission with others we need to consider the question, “What is poverty, and what does it mean to be poor?” No one defines themselves as poor. We all experience poverty in some way. We are not in ministry to the poor. We need to make the transition from transactional outreach to transformational outreach. Transactional outreach operates on the principle that “You need stuff, I have stuff.” The shift should be to transformational outreach in which we acknowledge that others have gifts and we have gifts, so we can learn from each other. Rev. Larry Lenow reported on the Virginia Council of Churches (VCC). He is the ecumenical representative to VCC and LARCUM. At the 2018 Virginia Annual Conference Rev. Charles Swadley requested that a report be made at the 2019 Annual Conference regarding our financial support of the VCC. The other ecumenical group we support is LARCUM, made up of Lutherans, Anglicans, Roman Catholics and United Methodists. LARCUM exists to create ties between these four denominations. All four have episcopal leadership and have a shared history and shared sacramental authority. All four are large denominations, affluent and white. Our financial support of LARCUM is $500.00 annually.

VCC is made up of 36 very diverse denominations. The denominations are generally small. It was active during the Civil Rights movements. VCC was involved in establishing the Head Start program in rural areas as well as supporting migrant workers and refugees. These programs have been spun off to other organizations. Little or no information has been shared about the work of the VCC has done in the last year. A LARCUM representative from the conference has not attended in the last two years. There are people in the conference who have been active with VCC but who do not report to Common Table. The new interim general minister for VCC is Rev. Mary Anne Glover. Rev. Lenow reported that he believes the $10,000 we have apportioned for VCC in the upcoming year is appropriate. He made a motion the $500.00 support for LARCUM come out of the Common Table budget, from emerging funds. The motion was approved.

Rev. Lenow suggested that the funding for these organizations come from outside the benevolence grants system so that communication doesn’t break down as it has in the past. Rev. Brown noted that the relationship with these two organizations was through the Bishop’s office while funding came through the Common Table.

Rev. Brown informed the Common Table that after the special session of general conference held in St. Louis in February, the annual conferences might be required to vote depending on the action taken by the General Conference. Currently a meeting with our Bishop and General Conference Delegates has been scheduled for March 4, 2019. The members of the Common Table and the Board Chairs will participate as well.

The next meeting of the Common Table will be November 8, 2018. Rev. Lenow prayed over the group and Rev. Brown adjourned the meeting at 2:54 p.m.

2019 Special and Sustaining Grants Report to Common Table

September 20, 2018

1. SPECIAL AND SUSTAINING GRANTS RECOMMENDATIONS

Special Program Grants Request Committee Recommendation

SHEEP $1,000 $1,000

Learning Mountain $1,500 $1,500

Ginter Park Food Pantry $8,000 $8,000

Skipwith Backpack $4,500 $4,500

Basic UMC God’s Table $3,500 $3,500

Casa de Amistad $8,000 $1,800

Total $26,500 Total $20,300

Sustaining Program Grants Request Committee Recommendation

Henry Fork Community $3,000 $3.000

Club Sandwich $5,900 $2,600

Jane Jones Food Pantry $4,000 $2,000

Mt. Olive-Shiloh Enrich $3,000 $2,100

Amherst Cares $10,000 $10,000

Anderson Memorial $2,000 $2,000

Belmont UMC Food $10,000 $3,700

Sherborne Food Pantry $2,500 $2,500

UMCOPR $8,298 $6,900

South Covington Food $5,000 $5.000

Total $53,698 Total $34,800

Applications that do not meet eligibility guidelines

Annandale UMC Faith Justice Forum

New Life Deaf Ministry

1. MINISTRY ACCELERATOR

A ministry accelerator has been conducted for interested ministries during the past several years. Chris Bennett has coordinated this event and is available if there is interest. The cost of funding is estimated between $6,000 - $7,000. The Grants Committee is recommending:

1. Common Table consideration of continuing Ministry Accelerator
2. The possibility of expanding the range of participants beyond special and sustaining grant recipients if Common Table continues Ministry Accelerator.
3. EXTENDING DEADLINE FOR SPECIAL GRANTS APPLICATIONS

A total of $90,000 is available for Special and Sustaining Grants ($30,000 Conference United Methodist Women and $60,000 Common Table) with $55,100 of this total being recommended for Common Table approval. The Grants Committee recommends extending the deadline for Special Grant applications to October 31 with recommendations by the committee at the November Common Table meeting.