

**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.

March 12, 2020

The Common Table met on March 12, 2020 at the United Methodist Conference Center in Glen Allen, Virginia in the Cabinet Room. Members taking part in the meeting were:

Bishop Sharma D. Lewis (Bishop)

Rev. Ted Smith (Director of Connectional Ministries and Chair)

Mr. Warren Harper (Conference Lay Leader)

Rev. Kathleen Overby Webster (Cabinet Representative)

Mr. John Dunning (Board of Higher Education and Campus Ministries)

Mr. David Domnisse (Conference Treasurer)

Rev. Lyle Morton (Commission on Ethnic Minority Concerns and
Advocacy Representative)

Rev. Jonathan Page (2020)

Rev. Harold White (by Zoom) (2021)

Rev. Ashley Isernhagen (2022)

Ms. Kimberly Young (2022)

Ms. Susie Wolf (2023)

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

Also present were Ms. Bev Myers, Executive Assistant in the office of Director of Connectional Ministries, Ms. Shirley Cauffman, chair of the Personal Committee and Rev. Tom Joyce, Assistant to the Bishop.

Unable to attend were Ms. Unsil Choi, Dr. Carlos Liceaga and Rev. Megan Saucier.

Chairperson Ted Smith opened the meeting at 10:04 with a word of welcome. Rev. Harold White prayed over the group and led devotions based on nurturing new ways to respond to the ministry of Jesus Christ. He noted that fresh life can come from the compost of old ways.

A motion was made and seconded to approve the minutes from the February 13, 2020 meeting of the Common Table for Church Vitality with corrections. They were approved.

Bishop Sharma Lewis spoke about the Alignment document. She gave a brief history of the process leading up to its drafting. She noted that newly elected Bishops receive expectations from the annual conference they will serve. Vision casting was emphasized by the Virginia Annual Conference. The Bishop's chat and chew sessions were part of the vision casting process. Rev. Christian Washington, a coach, pastor and church planter from Texas, went through the material from the Chat and Chews with the Bishop. This was the first stage of working towards a vision for the conference.

Craig Robinson founder of Spiritual Leader Inc. (SLI) joined the process incorporating the 3 "L"s Loving, Learning and Leading. SLI3 is a long and difficult process. When Bishop Lewis returned from her medical leave, Bishop Weaver challenged her to discover how she and the leadership of the Annual Conference can make the vision come alive. The Bishop's Steering Committee has been working on this. The Alignment Proposal is part of the process of unifying the work of the Conference with the vision that began to emerge from the Chat and Chews. Bishop Lewis encouraged the Common Table, not to halt, but to keep doing the hard work that is before the group.

Mr. David Dommissé brought the financial update. He stated the COVID-19 will have an impact on finance but it is hard to predict what that will be since no one can predict how long the disruption will last. If the Protocol of Reconciliation and Grace through Separation is adopted a 20 % reduction in revenue is expected. Conference apportionment receipts

are down over last year which was a terrible year. February is still too soon to make accurate predictions about the current year.

There is a decrease of 24% being projected for the 2021 General Conference budget. Virginia United Methodist Pensions, Inc. (VUMPI) reported that clergy benefits are again remaining flat for 2021. There will be an approximate reduction of \$90,000 paid to affiliated colleges and universities. The Council on Finance and Administration (CFA) is investigating how the district superintendents fund can be lowered. The Common Table Directed Ministries line will need to be cut by 14.3%.

Rev. Smith noted that while there will still be grants and benevolences directed by the Common Table there is a need to find ways to become more flexible in awarding grants to ministries. Mr. Dommissé suggested that under Schedule A - 401 Apportionments the following lines be combined into one: Line B., Benevolence Grants; Line C., Special and Sustaining Grants; and Line D., Conference Programs. The Grants Committee recommended 1) combining the B, C, and D lines under Common Table Directed Ministries into one budgetary line item and 2) the adoption of the procedures outlined in the document "Common Table Procedures and Policies for All Grant Proposals" (see attached). The recommendations were adopted unanimously.

Mr. Dommissé shared that the CFA budget Committee is meeting next week, and will send one last notice to groups requesting that they share insights about their particular priorities. Common Table should provide something by March 23 to CFA. Then CFA will meet April 1, 2020 to set budget before the Book of Reports is printed.

Mr. John Dunning presented the Higher Education and Campus Ministry budget proposal. He suggested that the reduction for Higher Education and Campus Ministry be \$35,000 rather than \$50,000. CFA wants the Common Table to come up with a budget of around 2.5 million. In regards to this, Mr. Dommissé stated that CFA is looking for guidance on

how funds should be allocated. Answering the question how important are the buildings to campus ministry could help bring clarity.

Ms. Shirley Cauffman gave the Personnel Committee Report. The Committee met on February 26. She presented 6 recommendations. In brief these are:

1. That the editorial language reflecting Vision Alignment changes be made as appropriate to the Administrative staff position description and that no other 2020 changes be made prior to July 1, 2020 except as follows in recommendation 2.
2. One full time administrative assistant be eliminated.
3. The part time news associate position be eliminated
4. Three new positions titled Learning, Influencing and Serve be created. Two of these would be Associate Director Lead positions and a third would be an Assistant Director.
5. This would save approximately \$105,000 and with the Common Table's 20% reductions would represent a savings of around \$200,000 annually.
6. A severance package for terminated employees would be based on years of service.

The recommendation provided by Personnel Committee with edits suggested by the Common Table members was before the group.

Rev. Jonathan Page made a substitute motion, the Personnel Committee Minority Report Proposal. There was no second.

Mr. Warren Harper had to leave the meeting. Rev. Smith took over as chair.

Rev. Page made a motion that the recommendations be amended so that Congregational Excellence and its Administrative Assistant would shift to episcopal supervision as of July 1, 2020 and be paid from line 405 of the budget. Mr. Dommissé pointed out that line 405 cannot be used for personnel expenses. Rev. Smith ruled the motion out of order since conference rules prohibit that action.

The recommendation of the Personnel Committee was before the group. The vote was by show of hands: 8 in favor and 1 abstention. The recommendation was approved.

The rule change recommended by Higher Education and Campus Ministry that the Board of Higher Education and Campus Ministry (BHECM) current policy of including a current United Methodist College or University President in its membership be changed to a current United Methodist College or University representative. The recommendation was approved unanimously.

The Common Table affirmed the work done at the previous meeting which included a 20% reduction on the programming side of the budget. This along with the work done by the personnel committee should become the 2021 budget. This was affirmed by the group.

The next meeting will be April 30, 2020.

Rev. Tom Joyce led the group in prayer and the meeting was adjourned at 1:23.

Addendum

**Common Table Procedures and Policies
For Special and Sustaining Program Grants**

1. Prioritize grants to local chartered churches over district sponsored ministry and new church starts. District sponsored ministries and new church starts are eligible for funding from other sources.
2. Change the date from summer to fall for applications.
3. New programs will be defined as programs that have not existed before the year of application
4. Equipment costs will not be funded.
5. There will be a lifetime cap of three years starting with the 2020 Quadrennium.
6. When previous criteria for a Grant proposal is unclear or a Grant proposal is deemed to go beyond current criteria, the Grant Committee may recommend a Grant proposal be reviewed by the full Common Table by a 2/3 vote of the committee