

Common Table for Church Vitality Minutes

The scheduled meeting of the Common Table for Church Vitality was held on Thursday, November 16, 2023, at 9:00 A.M on Zoom.

Attendees:

o	Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson (Resident Bishop of Richmond Episcopal Area)	o	Rev. Steve Summers (Assistant to the Bishop)
o	Mr. Dwayne Stinson (Director of Connectional Ministries for Discipleship and Congregational Vitality)	o	Rev. Jonathan Page (Director of Connectional Ministries for Creativity and Innovation)
o	Ms. Martha Stokes (Conference Lay Leader)	o	Rev. Doug Forrester (Cabinet Representative)
o	Mr. David Domnisse (Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer)	o	Ms. Katie Mueller (Executive Administrator in the Office of Connectional Ministries)
o	Rev. Ryan LaRock (Board of Higher Education and Campus Ministries)		Mr. Lester Kurtz (Co-Chair) Rev. Eduardo Carrillo (Co-Chair) (Commission on Ethnic Minority Concerns and Advocacy)
o	Ms. Terry Bain (Lay Member 2024)	o	Rev. Don Jamison (Clergy 2024)
	Lay Member Vacant (2025)		Rev. Aaron Fitch (Clergy 2025)
o	Dr. Carlos Liceaga (Lay Member 2026)		Clergy Member Vacant (2026)
o	Rev. Joshua King (Annual Conference Secretary, without vote)		x – in person o – online blank – not present

Greeting, Rev. Jonathan Page

Common Table opened their time building team dynamics by discussing if they are early or late decorators for Christmas. Rev. Page then opened us up with a word of prayer at 9:14 AM.

Approval of the Minutes of September 25th, 2023,

The minutes were approved by unanimously with no corrections.

Bishop's Report, Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson

Bishop Sue reported that she truly loves being a residential Bishop and had a great gathering with the Eastern Shore recently. She also reported the fresh wind, fresh fire that was brought into the Council of Bishops with the 14 newly elected Bishops. She further shared highlights from her trip to the Eastern Shore and shared how exciting and energizing it is to see disciples being made and lives changed.

Lay Leader's Report, Ms. Martha Stokes

Ms. Stokes shared that it has been a great few weeks of sacred conversations. From meeting with the delegation preparing for the upcoming General Conference, to the continued Lay Leaders book study with Bishop Sue, "Faith Working through Love." She also shared the time she shares with people she is mentoring from the delegation is authentic sacred space. These conversations have been helpful.

Cabinet Report, District Superintendent Rev. Doug Forrester

Rev. Forrester updated Common Table on the work from the Just Compensation workgroup. There has been a great relationship between this work group and the cabinet as far as renewing the clergy housing policy. In addition, we have been doing a deep dive into some statistical and demographic information regarding salaries in the Virginia Conference. Currently they are working on a narrative from this information to be able to share summaries of this data they are gleaning.

Beyond this, the cabinet is finishing their annual one-on-one consultation with their clergy and are excited about starting the appointment making process. Mr. Chris Malak has done a bit of work on making this process smoother and the cabinet is grateful for Mr. Malak's contribution in this process.

Subcommittee Structure Moving Forward, Mr. Dwayne Stinson

Mr. Stinson and Rev. Page spent some time looking at the new roster of Common Table in relationship with the subcommittees. At this time, Mr. Stinson reported that we will continue with the traditional model of our subcommittees for grant requests. The Grant Committee will be meeting following this meeting and will be sending out their recommendations to Common Table after their meeting. Coming back onto the Grants Committee will be Ms. Terry Bain. Other members of the Grants Committee will be Rev. Eduardo Carrillo and Mr. David Domnisse. Rev. Don Jamison will be chairing the Personnel Committee for the upcoming year. Also on this committee are Rev. Aaron Fitch, Rev. Ryan LaRock, and Dr. Carlos Liceaga. Mr. Stinson asked that we bless these committees and the work they will do.

Conference Commission on Religion and Race (CCORR) Introduction, Rev. Jonathan Page

Rev. Page shared that one of the things that Common Table has been thinking a lot about recently has been the work of justice and advocacy. Rev. Page reiterated that one of the positions that we had hoped to hire was a Director of Advocacy, and that search came up a little bit short. And so, in conversations with Bishop Sue, the question that has been discussed

has been, “What is the nature of the conversation about religion and race in Virginia?” Rev. Page shared that in Virginia we have CEMCA (Commission on Ethnic Minority Concerns and Advocacy).

Bishop Sue shared about her experience meeting with CEMCA and a lot of other caucus groups around Race in Virginia. Through these meetings, Bishop Sue and these groups concluded that before we hired a Director of Advocacy and Inclusion, it would be good to prepare the groundwork by consulting Brian Tillman (North Georgia) and Doris Dalton (Director of Advocacy/Inclusion of the New York Annual Conference) who everyone has agreed are leaders in this field who are effective. Bishop Sue has met with them and their recommendation to us was Virginia Conference would be wise to re-establish the Conference Commission on Religion and Race. It not only is required by the Book of Discipline, but also it would strategically be able to “move the needle on race.” This should be proposed to the Annual Conference at the next year’s conference, and then Conference Nominations would populate this committee with the “dream team” for this work. And so, this is the work that is being done. We will first bring this to Annual Conference this year, and then begin to create this Commission. Bishop Sue spoke about how she does not believe this commission will replace the current caucus groups, but it will be the place where the major advocacy in the Annual Conference will be done. Then, once we have this Commission together and activated, we will hire the new Director of Inclusion and Advocacy with their input.

Safer Sanctuaries, Mr. Dwayne Stinson

Mr. Stinson shared that last time the Conference’s Safe Sanctuary policy was updated was November 21, 2013. It was approved by Common Table, and it was understood that it would be reviewed every 5 years. Mr. Stinson reported that Ms. Hannah Bryn and he had gathered a group of potential trainers of the updated version called “Safer Sanctuaries.” Since this policy needs to be voted on by Common Table, Mr. Stinson recommended some members of Common Table to be a part of this cohort to discuss Safer Sanctuaries for the Conference. Rev. Don Jamison said he would be willing to work on this cohort along with a volunteer staff member from his own congregation.

Open Floor

No discussion was heard.

Closing Prayer and Adjournment Bishop Sue

Bishop Sue closed the meeting in prayer at 9:40 AM.

Upcoming Meeting times/dates:

- Tuesday, January 9th at 5PM - Virtual Only
- Thursday, February 15th at 5PM - Virtual Only
- Thursday, March 14th at 10AM
- Thursday, April 11th at 10AM
- Thursday May 9th at 10AM

- Thursday, August 22nd at 10AM
- Thursday, September 19th at 5PM - Virtual Only
- Thursday, October 17th at 5PM - Virtual Only
- Thursday, November 14th at 10AM

Rev. Joshua King, Secretary