

## Common Table for Church Vitality Minutes

The scheduled meeting of the Common Table for Church Vitality was held on Monday, September 25<sup>th</sup>, 2023, at 10:00 A.M via in person and on Zoom.

### Attendees:

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

### Greeting, Mr. Dwayne Stinson

Mr. Stinson opened the meeting at 10:04 AM with a time of receiving joys and concerns for prayer. Rev. Page then lifted these prayer requests and prayed for our time together as the Common Table.

### Approval of the Minutes of July 20<sup>th</sup>, 2023,

The minutes were approved by consensus.

### Presentation - Heart Havens/Camp Rainbow Update – Rev. Jonathan Page

Rev. Page shared an update on the ministries of Heart Havens and Camp Rainbow. He shared that conversations had begun in earnest about Heart Havens taking over responsibility and ownership for the ministries of Camp Rainbow from the Conference. The hope for today was for Common Table to have a window into these conversations, but those preparations were not ready at this time, but will be forthcoming in the future.

This conversation has led to other possible connections between GraceInside and All God's Children Camp. Bishop Sue shared that All God's Children Camp received some support from Angel Tree and her desire for the support of Common Table to highlight Angel Tree this year to our local churches and asking for local church support for this local ministry. This was approved by consensus.

### **Bishop's Report, Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson**

Bishop reported that she is in a similar place as the last time Common Table had met and that "she had a wonderful Annual Conference and is already working toward next year's Annual Conference. She is looking forward to concluding our last Special Called Annual Conference in October and then moving onto to a time of joy and identity building. She further stated that she believes her role is to make our hierarchy into a connection. She feels that we should all be pulling in the same direction for the support of the local church."

### **Lay Leader's Report, Ms. Martha Stokes**

Ms. Stokes also reported her looking forward to our last Special Called Annual Conference. She further reported the Board of Laity met. Further she had a chance to meet with the Delegation as well. She further mentioned that 160 folks joined together this past week with the symposium. And she stated that the fall has started off well. In addition, she shared that the Lay Council are working together on a 5-month study of "Faith Working Through Love." Bishop Sue shared that this was a book that was put together by the council of Bishops that is a helpful catechism mixing quotations of scripture with Wesleyan teachings.

Mr. Stinson requested a report based on Bishop Sue's recent meetings with laity from across the conference. Ms. Stokes shared that there is a desire for more intentionality around youth and young adult as well as certified Lay Ministry. Bishop Sue also shared there was also an overall positive reaction to "Fresh Expressions" Ministries. Bishop shared her desire for us as an Annual Conference to embrace Fresh Expressions. Bishop Sue also shared about a clergy trip September 1- September 13, 2024, to England as she will be the teaching Bishop about Fresh Expressions, a trip being led by Michael Beck. Further there will be a second trip on September 21 -Oct. 1<sup>st</sup>, 2024, Bishop Sue will be co-leading a "Travels of Paul Cruise" which will be a trip following Paul's Journey's (Greece, Turkey, Crete, and Rome). She further shared some information about funding made available for these trips.

### **Cabinet Report, District Superintendent Rev. Doug Forrester**

Rev. Forrester shared about the work he has been doing with the Just Compensation Task Force that was birthed out of Annual Conference. The Virginia Task Force has been working with the Western North Carolina Annual Conference. They have met twice now, one of which was with the North Carolina Task Force on Just Compensation and learning from them what they have done. The task force have also been working with Chris Malak to look at our own data and believes that their Task Force will help them better use the data we have gained from Virginia. One of the gems gained has been how their Foundation has purchased all the seminary debt from their clergy and then was able to refinance them to the clergy with only a 1% interest. They are continuing the work to bring back a report to the Annual Conference next year.

### **Camps and Retreat Center Visioning – Ms. LaKeeyna Cooper**

Ms. Cooper shared the vision of having the camp ministries that are under the Conference to be re-aligned under the ministries of others. As Rev. Page mentioned earlier, having Camp Rainbow come under Heart Havens and for All God's Children Camp come under Gracelinside. She further shared that she believes the transition from Camp Rainbow under Heart Havens will be an example for how to bring All God's Children Camp under Gracelinside.

A question was raised into the study of the five property camps of the Annual Conference. Rev. Page shared that there is still many details and questions about what the future relationships look like between the Conference and our property camps. Rev. Page asked Rev. Forrester to share about how the Camp ministry has looked on his District with Camp Alta Mons. Rev. Forrester shared about how the district moved from apportioned funds from the district, and how Alta Mons have now moved to an asking from each local church.

Currently the progress that has been made is we are collecting the data about our property camps so that we can make a more faithful decision. Mr. Dommissé shared the possibility of how to support our Camp Ministries by encouraging the camps to come together to provide support to one another. Bishop Sue shared the idea that if monies are received from the Conference, then there would be certain requirements that the camps would need to come under. Rev. Jamison shared concern about we sought a task force to investigate this some time ago, and nothing has been done at this time.

There was further conversation on putting together a sub-task force from Common Table and who else should be included on this task force.

### **Presentation - Wesley Community Development Corporation (CDC) – Mr. Joel Gilland**

Mr. Gilland shared that Wesley Community Development is a 21-year-old ministry. This is a similar ministry to that of Habitat for Humanity but with a Methodist backing. In 2008, they moved into Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC). Mr. Gilland joined Wesley Community Development in 2006. In 2016, Mr. Gilland led a class with pastors and laity of churches to consult them on how to better use real estate for ministry. Mr. Gilland then shared some of the projects he has worked on in the North Carolina Annual Conference. This includes creating a

database of every local church in the North Carolina Annual Conferences and their property usage. This also includes looking at the demographics in the area these churches are located.

Common Table discussed the potential usage and asked questions about the usage of Wesley CDC in the Virginia Conference, from the Conference ministries to Districts and local churches.

The purpose of today was for Wesley CDC to meet today with Common Table. If Wesley CDC were to expand, they would want to look to coming from North Carolina to Virginia. Further he shared that his goal is to have a series of groups that are talking to each other. So that for example when he has an idea of how to make all the churches across a conference begins making a shift (ex. making their campuses carbon neutral) it begins to change the conversation about United Methodist Churches in that state and beyond.

### **Board of Higher Education and Campus Ministries - Rev. Ryan LaRock**

Rev. LaRock shared the success story of Old Dominion University and their first relaunch worship service this fall which had 30 people in attendance which is phenomenal from where they have come from. In addition, UVA just had an incredible celebration of the Wesley Foundation Anniversary. He shared that through a dinner fundraiser had raised over \$10,000.00. Because of a matching gift, they raised over \$15,000 altogether. He further shared his joy how our campus ministries are becoming places of safe refuge as the student have something new to hope for in the future of United Methodism.

### **Grants Update – Ms. Katie Mueller**

Ms. Mueller shared the Benevolence Grant has closed at this point. There are 8 ministries seeking grants totaling a cost of \$166,000. This is budgeted for \$160,000 in 2024. There is one more grant request that would add an additional \$5,000, which would bring the total up to \$171,000. This overage would need to take into consideration as we approve these grants.

Rev. Page shared what he had noticed coming into this position in that there are some in the conference who don't know where to go for grants, while others know where to go and puts in grants in the 5 or 6 locations our conference gives grants. The idea he is proposing is to put together a Grants Committee that is conference wide which would allow the person requesting funds to put in one application that would reach the combined grants committee. This collaboration in our grants would allow fairer grant rewarding and even allowing them to give out larger grants to the areas that need more development. Mr. Dommissie believed that this is not something we can do this year, but certainly should be able to work towards this collaborative work in 2024. Rev. Jamison shared some pathways forward in bringing together the grants, while naming some of the difficulties in those who give the monies to certain grants and their say in who received the grant. Rev. Page shared one of the ways to address those difficulties would be defining a rubric for how grants are awarded. Ms. Stokes shared in the reservation Rev. Jamison shared but believes that with some strategic conversations it could be begun.

## **Subcommittee Structure Moving Forward – Mr. Dwayne Stinson, Director of Connectional Ministries for Discipleship and Congregational Vitality; Rev. Jonathan Page, Director of Connectional Ministries for Creativity and Innovation**

Rev. Page shared that he believed until we can combine our Grants at the Conference level, we will continue to have a Grants Subcommittee on Common Table. The other sub-committee of Common Table is Personnel Committee. This committee used to be our Human Resources for the Conference Center. Though this is now being done through GCFA. He further stated that he see the Personnel Committee being more so used as only for hirings and morale support of our staff that has been hired. In response, Rev. Page asked for some conversation about what are the needs for these sub-committees, and do they still provide the purpose we need them to do?

Ideas were shared regarding Grants Committee: Grants Committee help write grants on behalf of ministries, a desire to report and know what funds are available, generate revenue for future ministries, create initiatives that are conference wide, offer transparency to the Conference of ministries receiving grants, Grants Committee creating best practices on giving out grants,

Ideas were shared regarding Personnel Committee: The personnel committee's role should be in developing job descriptions with the input of the supervisor, define supervisor as the one who is responsible for hire and fire an employee.

### **Open Floor**

Rev. Jamison brought up creating a Safe Sanctuary Online Training Program that would include quizzes during training. This topic was discussed as to how to best have this training. There was a recognition that both online training and in-person training were needed.

Members of Common Table shared places of hope that they are witnessing in their lives as a time of closing the meeting.

### **Closing Prayer and Adjournment Bishop Sue**

Bishop Sue closed out meeting in prayer at 1:36 PM.

Upcoming Meeting times/dates: November 16, 2023  
Rev. Joshua King, Secretary