

Common Table for Church Vitality Minutes

Thursday, October 17, 2024 – 6:30 PM

The scheduled meeting of the Common Table for Church Vitality was held on Thursday, October 17, 2024, on Zoom.

In Attendance:

- Mr. Dwayne Stinson, Co-Chair (Director of Connectional Ministries for Discipleship and Congregational Vitality)
- Rev. Jonathan Page, Co-Chair, (Director of Connectional Ministries for Creativity and Innovation)
- Ms. Martha Stokes, (Conference Lay Leader)
- Rev. Amanda Miller Garber, Clergy (Director of Office of Missional Engagement)
- Rev. Beth Givens, Clergy (Cabinet Representative)
- Mr. David Dommissie, Ex Officio, (Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer)
- Dr. Carlos Liceaga, Certified Lay Speaker (At-Large Member)
- Ms. Terry Bain, Lay (At-Large Member)
- Rev. Amanda Webber, Clergy (At-Large Member)
- Rev. Claire Miller, Clergy (Conference Secretary)

Not in Attendance:

- Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson (Resident Bishop of the Richmond Episcopal Area)
- Mr. Steve Summers (Assistant to the Bishop)
- Rev. Ahnna Lise Jennings, Clergy (Board of Higher Education)
- Ms. Kristina Wilson, Lay (At-Large Member)
- Rev. Lyle Morton, Clergy (At-Large Member)
- Ms. Katie Mueller, (Executive Administrator – Office of Connectional Ministries)

Greetings and Prayer – Rev. Jonathan Page and Mr. Dwayne Stinson

The meeting was called to order by Mr. Dwayne Stinson at 6:33 PM. Mr. Stinson and Rev. Jonathan Page greeted the members and Rev. Givens offered a prayer.

Approval of the Minutes of September 19, 2024

The minutes of the September 19, 2024, Common Table meeting were approved as amended.

Reports and Comments:

Lay Leader Report, Ms. Martha Stokes

Ms. Stokes shared that she's inspired by those participating in the Soul Feast Journey and looks forward to the fruit of that study. The next session is on prayer, and she will be leading that discussion.

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Sunday, September 22nd is Laity Sunday. Ms. Stokes noted that it is interesting that Laity Sunday falls in the middle of Clergy Appreciation Month.

Cabinet Report, District Superintendent Rev. Beth Givens

The cabinet has not met since the last meeting Common Table meeting and Rev. Givens had nothing new to report

Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer's Report, Mr. David Dommissie

Mr. Dommissie reported that this is a busy time. The Foundation is working hard at reorganization to add a Vice President of Philanthropy and Donor Development to raise funds for churches and grants. They have been lights out for money management work for a while and with adding this new venture, his hope is that everything is coordinated, and everyone is aware.

Office of Missional Engagement, Rev. Amanda Miller Garber

Rev. Garber reported that she, Ms. Hannah Bryn, Mr. Stinson hope to choose grant consultants by mid-November.

Camp Rainbow Connection is doing a great job and is on track launch as a 501C easily by January 2025. She added that they have an amazing leader in Bob LeMay who has been their champion.

Rev. Garber stated that they are in early stages of conversations with All God's Children camp about their future. She added that there is a lot going on in Community Engagement at the moment,

Rev. Page added that Jonathan Rev. Garber and JoAnn Batteiger, have been doing amazing work and we have sent out 1500 Cleaning Buckets which is an amazing disaster response. He also added that he recently got word about the first of our Emergency Response Teams (ERT) coming up. Two ERT training classes will be held soon. Missional activities in the Carolinas and Appalachia are building

Director of Connectional Ministries for Discipleship and Congregational Vitality Report, Mr. Dwayne Stinson

Mr. Stinson reported that about twenty churches representing every district are scheduled to attend the Growing Young workshop. He hopes to develop four cohorts to engage with younger people in their communities and to implement several culture shifts in their congregations. The Board of Laity and the Board of Discipleship are having talks about ways to collaborate, grow together and better support local churches.

Mr. Stinson celebrated that we have received a \$1.2 Million Lily Grant. They had invited several churches to be a part of writing the grant as they were developing the plan. Hannah Bryn was very instrumental in writing it. The first cohort of "Hatching Faith Cohorts" will be hand selected from churches we engaged with to write the grants and from District Superintendent recommendations.

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Want to be as representative of all the angles of diversity in the conference so that whatever we create will be relevant to all the diversity in the Conference. Part of that will be hiring a contractor who will oversee some of the logistics in running the process. He added that the Lily Foundation sent a paper check by FEDEX!!

Director of Connectional Ministries for Creativity and Innovation Report, Rev. Jonathan Page

Rev. Page shared that he is very excited about things coming up that aren't quite ready to be shared yet. He also shared that he had just returned from the Duke Convocation and Pastor's school. The theme was *"Pulpits in Many Places"*. The emphasis was that our churches are located within communities and these communities are best served as the primary audience of the church rather than the members of the church. He added that if we are focused on our communities, then the members of our churches are part of those communities. Rev. Page shared some of points that one of the Keynote speakers, Mike Shashefski made regarding the "Four A's of Leadership", great leaders are: Agile, Adaptable, Accountable and have an Attitude that we will accomplish what we set out to do. He related this to the mission of the United Methodist Church.

Rev. Page added an update on the Leadership Standards which he, Ms. Stokes and Rev. Garber are discussing and stated that he hopes to have some proposals of what these standards might look like soon.

Grants Update, Rev. Jonathan Page and Mr. Dwayne Stinson

Mr. Stinson gave an update the Grants Collective. The Church Development Team, the Foundation and the Common Table are working together to pool funds to provide more substantive grants. This will also simplify our grant making process. While he and Rev. Page were reviewing the budget for the coming year and thinking through the kind of things we've funded over our history, he is convinced that we need a new system. A number of things we fund make more sense to him as budget items rather than as a grant process. We budgeted in the 2025 budget a quarter of a million dollars for Common Table grants. The reality is we don't receive this amount in apportionments. With that in mind he used roughly an 80% mark for discussion purposes. He proposes we set aside a hard \$50K of that budgeted out of the \$200K that we're likely to have in reality. This doesn't include the money that the United Women in Faith have to offer us, so we should have a bit of a cushion. So, he proposes \$50K for the grant collective plus what the others in the collective have committed we should have in the range of \$150K.

Rev. Page added that we are looking at one or two significant grants and a few other smaller grants. This is a pilot year, so we need to test it out and see how it goes.

Mr. Domisse added that The Foundation is hoping for next year to go to one grant application for all to review. This year they will share all applications with the Common Table to ensure they are not duplicating efforts.

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Rev. Page shared that Rev. Gina Anderson Cloud had asked at Annual Conference about the District level of participation in this. Rev. Page thinks that while we are one who conference, we have many micro communities around the Conference. When it comes to how we do financial distribution – one thing that can get muddy is having individual groups be protective of their pool instead of seeing how we all can collectively share our resources to make a bigger missional impact. This would eventually simplify the process in the Conference around the Commonwealth.

Mr. Stinson confirmed that we are looking at \$ 50K for the grants collective. He added that many ministries we support with the grants are the same each year. He suggested that we budget for these in the future (ministries such as the prison ministry, Grace Inside, and other ministries we regularly support). He added that key ministries are dependent on us for their ability to do ministry. He proposed that we set aside \$70K in real, apportioned dollars. Rather than doing program grants to support connectional ministry ministries, instead we should set aside a \$30K pool of money for the committees and the boards to use the money as they see fit, so they aren't writing grants each year. If we have a collective budget for the connectional ministries team it would be more streamlined. This would make it easier to plan and be a better use of staff time. So, the proposal is that we budget \$200K, which would include \$50K for the Collective, \$70K for Benevolence, \$30K for Connectional Ministries programming and \$50K for Special and Sustaining Grants.

Dr. Liceaga asked if what Mr. Stinson is calling "Connectional Ministries" includes the different caucuses.

Mr. Stinson replied that – most of what we've spent in the program line item is programs that are managed by the Connectional Ministries Office. He could see the money for the caucuses coming out of either the Special and Sustaining grants or out of the programming. He added that he is trying to leave more in the Special and Sustaining grants pool for things like the caucuses.

Dr. Liceaga stated that the thought the programming pool was for the programming that the caucuses do.

Rev. Page agreed that some of those have been program grants in the past. He asked Mr. Dommissie from a financial standpoint, with a 20% reduction in our overall granting budget, is there flexibility on that overall \$200K overall number? Mr. Dommissie replied that he believes \$200K is a good estimate.

Mr. Stinson stated that this year we received \$25K from United Women in Faith in additional grant funds. He doesn't know what it will be next year, but we do receive additional support.

Dr. Liceaga stated that he was just trying to understand with the new system being proposed, will there eventually be a budget line item for caucus programming.

Rev. Page responded that what he envisions is that some of the funding will probably come from the new Commission on Religion and Race to determine how we are partnering with and supporting all the

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caucuses. We're inviting an application model that can communicate that we'll fund what we can. We need to figure out how we are prioritizing those, so we figure out how we are supporting. He added that one of the things that we're living into right now at the direction of the Extended Extended Cabinet is creating a narrative budget to build from the ground up at tell the story of who we are, what we are trying to be and what we think we need to get to that point.

Ms. Stokes asked if as they are considering the more ecumenical ministries have, they also considered the more connectional ministries such as disaster response that have always been asking for grant money. Have we priorities some of this funding to go into the budget?

Mr. Stinson responded that he anticipates they will receive money from United Women in Faith that could help with these special and sustaining grants. He proposed that we might need to stretch that \$30K budget further.

Mr. Dommissé asked to clarify that we are talking about budgeting at the Common Table level and not the Annual Conference level. Mr. Stinson affirmed that he was correct.

Mr. Stinson recommended that we bump up the budget for Special and Sustaining grants to \$40K and then add the United Women in Faith funding to that so we would have approximately \$65K available.

Rev. Page suggested that we say, we have \$50K for both Connectional Ministries and Special and Sustaining Grants, assuming that the United Women in Faith money comes in. Then that is what goes to cover the additional costs. The expected budget would be broken down as: \$50K to Grants Collective, \$70K to Benevolence, \$50K to Programming, \$50K to Special and Sustaining.

Mr. Stinson stated he thinks this is a reasonable proposal and Rev. Garber supported this as well. Rev. Page asked if there was any further discussion on this proposal.

Dr. Liceaga asked to clarify that what is in the agenda is the numbers but when Mr. Stinson was speaking, he introduced the idea of delegating the authority for some of the grants to the Directors and that wasn't in the agenda. Mr. Stinson stated that this is what he is listing as Connectional Ministries programming. This would be money that we would set aside, and it would no longer be in the grant pool but would be money for Connectional Ministries programming.

Rev. Page amended and restated the proposal to read: We have a total anticipated income of \$220K, with that being distributed as \$50K to the Grant Making Collective, \$70K to Benevolence Support, \$50K to Special and Sustaining Grants and \$50K to Programming.

Mr. Dommissé stated that Rev. Page and Mr. Stinson will need to develop some guidelines to ensure that the process for grant applications and approval is clear. They agreed that they will draft the guidelines.

There was consensus to approve this proposal.

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Other Business

Dr. Liceaga asked if at some point we will have a sub-committee to look at other grants that come before the Common Table. Mr. Stinson replied that since the Common Table membership changed on July 1st, we will need to see who is on the Grants Committee and make necessary changes.

Rev. Page reminded the membership that the next meeting on November 14th is an important meeting as we are being called upon to be the Conference Leadership team rather than just the stewards of the Conference vision. He strongly urged everyone to be attend this meeting which will be from 10:00 AM to 3:00 PM. He challenged the membership to prepare for the meeting by thinking of ways that we can be leading our Conference forward. He added that Katie Mueller will be back in the office by then.

He encouraged the members to ask ourselves “Are there ways we can work to be leaders to move our Conference forward?”.

Closing Prayer and Adjournment

Ms. Stokes offered a closing prayer, and the meeting was adjourned by Rev. Page at 7:25 PM

Upcoming Meeting times/dates:

Thursday, November 14th at 10:00 AM, In Person at the VAUMC Conference Center

Respectfully Submitted,



Rev. Claire B. Miller, Conference Secretary