

The Common Table for Church Vitality

The Virginia Annual Conference

February 20, 2021

The Common Table met on February 20, 2021 by Zoom. Members taking part in the meeting were:

Rev. Steven Summers (Director of Connectional Ministries and Chair)

Ms. Martha Stokes (Conference Lay Leader)

Rev Wayne Snead (Cabinet Representative)

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

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

Dr. Carlos Liceaga (2021)

Rev. Harold White (2021)

Rev. Ashley Isernhagen (2022)

Ms. Kimberly Young (2023)

Rev. Don Jamison (2024)

Ms. Terry Bain (2024)

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

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

Unable to attend were Bishop Sharma D. Lewis who was called away because of an emergency. Also unable to attend were Ms. Susie Wolf and Rev. Megan Saucier. Mr. David Dommissé was on the road and unable to connect to Zoom.

Chair of the Common Table, Rev. Steven Summers greeted the members and brought the meeting to order at 10:01. Conference Lay Leader, Ms. Martha Stokes also welcomed the group and lifted up several former conference lay leaders for prayer

including Ron Hardman, Darlene Ammon and Warren Harper. They have all dealt with health issues recently.

Rev. Ashley Isernhagen led devotions for the group. She read part of the Ash Wednesday text from the Revised Common Lectionary, Genesis 3:22-23. Adam must till the ground from which he was taken. In it two things are revealed about our human nature: we are unified with God's spirit but we are also made of dust. As we enter into the season of Lent, we should be mindful of those two seemingly incongruent qualities, our finite nature and the limitless nature of God.

A motion was made and seconded to approve the minutes from the November 24, 2020 meeting of the Common Table for Church Vitality. They were approved as written.

Ms. Kim Young submitted a written Personnel Committee Report. The onboarding of the new hires was completed. The job descriptions for the three new associate directors are in process.

Rev. Wayne Snead gave a brief report on the transitions related to the District Superintendents and the first round of appointments.

Dr. Carlos Liceaga brought the Grants Committee Report/Request beginning with the Benevolence Grants. The recommended benevolence grants are:

GraceInside	112,000
Society of St. Andrew	8,000
Wesley Community Service Center*	20,000
Rise Against Hunger*	20,000

The recommendation was unanimously approved.

He then presented the recommendations for the Sustaining Grants which were:

Rising Hope Food Ministries	4,300
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Tuesday's Table (Stanardsville UMC)	2,700
Henry Fork Service Center	2,200
Club Sandwich (Wesley Memorial UMC)	2,900
Wesley Community Service Center*	5,000
Jane Jones Food Pantry (Main St. UMC)	1,700
Anderson Memorial Backpack Buddies	1,700
Belmont UMC Community Resource Srv	4,000

The special grant recommendations were as follows:

Burke Gives Back	9,000
Hope Beyond the Bars (Scottsville UMC)	2,500
Chester UMC Preschool (NEW)	6,000
Bethlehem Preschool (NEW)	6,500
Ginter Park Food Pantry & Clothes Closet	9,500
Skipwith UMC Backpack Ministry	3,000
PACE Center	9,500
Micah Ecumenical Ministries St. Church	9,500

*Submitted for both Special/Sustaining and Benevolence Grants

The recommended special and sustaining grants were approved.

The Lay Servant Academy has made a ministry proposal request for \$2,500. The Grant Committee recommended it be approved. The recommendation was approved.

Further, the Grants Committee recommended changing the requirement for quarterly reports from churches receiving grants to annual reports. The recommendation was approved.

The Chair of the Board of Higher Education and Campus Ministry (BHECM), Mr. John Dunning thanked the Personnel committee for hiring Rev. Nicki Moreno Howard, Associate Director of Learning. She has been very helpful to BHECM. He compared pre-pandemic and pandemic ministries taking place through campus ministries. Even with the limits on meeting in person, pandemic ministry has almost kept pace with pre-pandemic ministry and in some cases has exceeded it.

BHECM has seven properties. The hope was to have the properties largely self-sustaining. Four of the seven have made strides towards becoming self-sustaining. Longwood and Virginia Tech have had the biggest challenges. Virginia Tech is starting a capital campaign and Longwood may need to get a loan to address their issue with the HVAC system.

Rev. Steven Summers brought a request from the Older Adult Council. They would like to have wider representation within the conference and asked for an older adult to have representation on the Common Table. Rev. Moreno Howard has had a conversation with the Older Adult Council as the Age Level ministry person. It was pointed out that older adults are already well represented among current members of the Common Table.

It was noted that the bigger issue is perhaps a sense of the Council feeling they are not being heard. This may be a larger issue with multiple Conference Councils. The question was raised, "What outcomes will make people feel like they are being heard?" It was noted that in its earliest form, the Common Table assigned its various members to be liaisons to different groups. This was too cumbersome to sustain. Issues around communication and transparency were lifted up. Ms. Martha Stokes and Rev. Summers

will report the Common Table's discussion of their request back to the Older Adult Council.

Rev. Isernhagen brought a report on the Charter Review the Common Table did over the summer. The revision's biggest change was to the membership of the group. The recommendation to decrease the membership came from the study of Patrick Lencioni's book *The Advantage*. The recommendation was also made to have all of the members come from the Conference Nominations Committee (formerly CLLDT) with the input of the Bishop. The changes to the charter were put before the conference as a document included in the packet of Conference materials. It was pointed out that when it came out in the fall there was so many things that needed to be attended to with the pandemic, personnel changes and challenges of having a virtual conference that the proposed changes to the Charter were overshadowed. It was noted that the proposed changes to the District Alignment Team should not have an effect the Charter. Communicating beyond members of the conference was raised.

It was suggested that a simple survey could be sent out. It would ask people to read the charter and then ask what questions they have. We need to answer the question, "Why are we doing this now?" Rev. Isernhagen will put together a google doc on possibilities. The members agreed to look at the document and comment.

Ms. Martha Stokes spoke about the Strategic Visioning Team that was mentioned at a previous meeting of the Common Table. It was proposed that some members of the Common Table be on the Strategic Visioning Team. The Focus of its work will be to communicate with boards and agencies and build trust – trust among the Common Table as a team and trust between the Common Table and the Conference. It will also be about embracing the Common Table's role in the Conference and having accountability. Four members of the team could be Common Table members and

people from outside the Common Table would also be incorporated. Ms. Stokes will put these ideas in a google doc for everyone to review and flesh out.

Rev. Summers brought a recommendation from the rules committee to change Standing Rules V.A.4.D as corrected below:

Missional Ministries. The Missional Ministries Board in cooperation with the General Board of Global Ministries and the Common Table for Church Vitality shall develop programs to assist and *invite* districts and local churches to carry out all phases of the work of the church in mission and of church extensions within the annual conference, *and beyond*. The Conference ~~Director of Justice and Missional Excellence~~ *Associate Director of Serving Ministries (ADSM)* shall serve as the Conference Secretary of Global Ministries (CSGM), fulfilling the responsibilities outlined in ¶ 633.3 of the 2016 Book of Discipline. To discharge its responsibilities it shall divide into ~~two (2)~~ *three (3)* mission teams: (1) Missional Discipleship and Engagement and (2) Missional Connection *and (3) Partnerships in Hope*. The position of Conference Coordinator of Christian Unity and Interreligious Concerns (CUIC) shall be appointed by the Bishop and shall be an ex-officio member of the Mission Connection Team of the Conference Missional Ministries Board, as outlined in ¶ 633.2 of the 2016 Book of Discipline. The membership of the board shall be 20, with 6 or 4 persons (one-half lay and one-half clergy) elected each year to replace outgoing classes.

It was approved.

The financial update was brought by Rev. Summers. Apportionments for 2020 were down 16.22% for year with \$2,3361,856.00 receipts. This was in line with what was expected given the impact of the pandemic. Ms. Myers mentioned that we are currently behind schedule in assigning grants due to annual conference being held last October rather than in June 2020.

For 2021 the Virginia Annual Conference will be virtual.

The next meeting of the Common Table will be April 8, 2021.

Rev. Wayne Snead led the group in prayer and Rev. Summer adjourned the meeting at 12:15 p.m.