

Conference Council Minutes
Missouri Mid-South Conference, United Church of Christ
January 8, 2011
Columbia United Church of Christ
Columbia, MO

Present: Jeff Whitman, Conference Minister; Marc Wessels, Associate Conference Minister; Dale Parson, Associate Conference Minister; Brady Abel, Moderator; Wes Hurt, Vice-Moderator; Don Hubatka, Treasurer; Joyce Bathke; Steve Buchholz; Judi Privitt; Martha Hawthorne; Chuck Adams; Les Kemp; Cindy Moeller; Ron Wendle; Jerry Cundiff; Andy Mockridge; Connie Brooks; Don Frandsen; Don Bizer, Interim Director of Outdoor Ministries; Jeff Fulk, Director of Shannondale; Jerry Paul; Betsy Happel; Jacquelyne Tyler; Dannie Burk

Absent: Jamie Schultz; Leah Atkinson Bilinski, Secretary; Dennis Burger; Charlotte Ward; Mark Roberts

Jacquelyne Tyler offered to hand record minutes in Leah Atkinson Bilinski's absence.

Gathering Time commenced around 10:15am a welcome from Brady Abel, opening prayer led by Jeff Whitman, and morning activities of board formation led by Rev. Jerry Paul, followed by lunch.

Call to Order:

Brady Abel called the meeting to order at 12:35 PM.

Approval of Minutes:

The approval of the minutes from the last meeting held November 20, 2010.

Betsy Happel called attention to her absence from the last meeting and it was not recorded, and asked that she be listed as absent from the last meeting.

Steve Buchholz moved that we approved the minutes with the changes requested by Besty Happel. Dannie Burk, seconded. No questions. Motion Passed.

Treasurer's Report:

Don Hubatka wanted to ask the council to approve 2011 housing allowance for the conference staff, before he started the official treasurer's report.

The members of the Conference Staff that will receive the 2011 housing allowance are:

Rev. Jeffery Whitman, Conference Minister	\$20,000.00
Rev. Marc Wessels, Associate Conference Minister	\$30,000.00
Rev. Dale Parson, Associate Conference Minister	\$29,000.00
Rev. Don Bizer	\$ 9,000.00

Danny Burk moved that we pass the 2011 housing allowance for the Missouri Mid-South Conference staff. Ron Wendle seconded: A question was raised: Regarding the IRS and how it will be reported. Jeff stated that we can declare whatever is necessary to the IRS. Motion passed.

Financial Report: Did not include a lot of the details from the last meeting; the figures show through November 2010. There are some figures that were reported in December 2010, but we will not know officially until the books are closed by Friday of the following week.

*Shannondale received a harvest payment for timber and that information should be on the next financial report.

Don stated that he hopes the December figure would be better regarding the OCWM (Our Churches Wider Mission) budget. As of yesterday, January 7, 2011 OCWM figures were \$705,000; (\$145,000) below the 2009 figure of \$850,000. Don is going to talk to Laura around the third week of January to see if the conference office will have the final figures from the year. If so, then a comparative spreadsheet summary report from the last three years will be sent to the board members in order to review the financial trend. Don believes that we have not exhausted all of our resources as of yet. The financial discussion continued with a detailed look at the OCWM support allocation for MoVal and Shannondale. The report did not include OCWM allocation for the end of the year report. There could be a higher deficit than what the current report is showing but the financial committee will not know until the end of the year books are done.

There was much debate regarding OCWM fund allocation to Mo-Val and how the deficit would effect the bottom line of income for both MoVal and Shannondale. There was a suggestion that money was sitting in a scholarship fund and could be transferred over to the income for MoVal.

The conversation shifted to the harvest income report of Shannondale. \$20,000 was the projected budget for this year and Shannondale harvest income was reported at \$68,000; an \$18,000 increase beginning for 2011 partly due to the Carbon Credit venture. In addition the recent tornados in the area have caused a high demand for timber. Therefore a change to the harvest income budget for 2011 is now \$40,000 and reduces the amount of needed OCWM contributions for Shannondale.

Steve Buchholz: Expressed his concern for the environmental stress on the forest in the area, because of the anticipated large harvest of trees.

Jeff Fulk: stated that the harvesting of timber and land is in excellent condition so there should not be any concern with the stress of the forest, because Oak trees are strong and grow fairly quickly in the area. Jeff Whitman believes that the income for Shannondale will increase and yield \$50,000.

Ron Wendle: Motion to Increase the Shannondale Budget for the purpose of: Forest, Harvest, and Income by another \$22,000 bringing the total to \$40,000. While reducing the OCWM budget by \$32,309. Dannie Burk: Seconded. Motion Carried.

Wes Hurt: Motion to accept the overall Treasurer's report. Connie Brooks, seconded. Motion carried.

Conference Ministers Report:

Jeff's report was a continuation of the treasury report; discussing the serious deficit in the conference budget with regard to the OCWM contribution from the churches in the conference. Giving to OCWM is down by 18% in the conference. According to a spreadsheet distributed with a breakdown of the regions in the conference for the years of 2008-2010. In the Eastern association a church has decided to cut their OCWM giving by ½, and we are still waiting for their contribution to come in.

Some issues raised with regard to giving are as follows: the smaller churches who can only afford to give less than \$100; and churches who do not give at all. What do we do with those churches that do not contribute, but request services from the conference? One suggestion is to publish the church contributions on the e-courier for everyone to review.

Judi Privitt asked if churches and members need more education as to OCWM and its importance to the conference, and could Jeff and Dale come out and give a small presentation?

It was suggested that the Leadership Development group should take a look at Judi's suggestion within the group.

Dale Parson: 15 top churches in the conference total about ½ of the Conference's OCWM budget.

Jeff Whitman: There are people in the local churches that feel as if they are top givers already with \$20 a week. The question arises; "what becomes of the churches who are contributing nothing?" What does it mean that pastors do not encourage contribution, and how should that affect their ordination? A solution to this statement was pastors who do not encourage contribution but request services from the conference office should go for a fee for service. In addition, we as the council should bring that pastor and the church to the committee on ministry and ask the committee to re-evaluate their standing as a UCC pastor.

Connie stated that some would consider that approach as their opportunity to leave the United Church of Christ. So we should prepare for a mass exodus.

Jeff: People question why do we even need the conference? With that said, this issue is not financial but a shift in the local congregation and they do not see OCWM as a part of "their ministry" (meaning there is no vested interest) or as our church. The mentality is people are

disconnected from the church...There is a shift in the local congregation and many members of the church do not see OCWM as our ministry.

What is needed is a massive restructuring of the conference and restoring vitality within the local churches by empowering congregations to see OCWM as an investment in covenanted ministry. ***OCWM meaning: “Our Churches Wider Mission”*** (A comment was made: We as a council know what OCWM means, but how are we sharing its meaning with local churches?)

Comment: There is a fear of putting out these figures without the per capita data. With that said it becomes an “us vs. them” situation.

Danny: even the per capita data is skewed.

Associate Conference Minister’s Report by Rev. Dale Parson:

Primary Present and Proposal for a Sabbatical; Please see hand out provided by Dale

Report:

13 churches in various stages of transition: Breakdown below..

8 in the Western Association

4 Eastern Association

2 St. Louis Association

With regards to OCWM, one of the churches in transition have not contributed to the basic support. They have ignored Dales suggestions to support, but they are looking to receive support. The person dealt with did not now know what OCWM meant. So there has to be an awareness as to the importance of OCWM for the conference. We have a National OCWM power point presentation available on disk.

Proposal for sabbatical time for Dale Parson

Conference Council approved time for sabbatical leave for Dale Parson

Camp Mo-Val Report:

Representative Board Members: Rick Oberle, Randy Orrick, Laura Mignerone

The minutes are not prioritized and it is a preliminary report. The board has been in existence for one year. (Please refer to the yellow hand out notes for details to the report)

- 1985 churches have given over \$2million dollars to Mo-Val. Since that time giving has dropped.
- There was consideration of Mo-Val becoming covenanted partners with the conference, with the ability of having an autonomous structure.
 - There needs to be an understanding between autonomy and independence.

- There was the suggestion of moving toward a more ecumenical relationship with other outdoor ministries.
- MOVAL's 50th Anniversary is in 2012, so there are plans in place to start a drive to raise funds.

A rereading of the motion from the 2010 October Annual Conference meeting was read: Paul Osgood of Country Club Congregational moved that the conference leadership establish a task force to study the budget and operation of Camp Mo-Val and Shannondale with ideas of moving them toward the possibility of becoming self-supporting and report back to the conference business meeting of 2011. Janet Weiblen of Country Club Congregational seconded the motion. The motion passed.

Connie had a question: Were there plans to market Mo-Val as a private camp for the purposes of generating income? Not taking solicitations from local church funds only?

What could be presented as conference support for Mo-Val, and is it possible for Mo-Val to be more self-sustaining?

In response to her question, it was shared that Camp Aurora...20 years ago when the conference could not afford to keep the camp for \$50k only if they parties kept the camp within the UCC. Six churches used sweat equity to keep up the camp. This is an example of how to solicit volunteer labor. First, a Volunteer coordinator and Second, having some churches come out to help other churches.

A comment was made about the history of Camp(s) TAMBO, Aurora, and Mo-Val, and Neighborhood Houses using the facilities for inner city youth programs of St. Louis, MO. Thus, Programming by Neighborhood Houses has also decreased.

Until recently Neighborhood Housing Organization have started programs at Camp MOVAL

Brady concluded this discussion with these statements:

- Address the matter of Camp Mo-Val becoming a self supporting entity
- How much effort with marketing and advertising will be needed to generate interest at Camp Mo-Val.

Connie asked if the original motion included a three year projection for Camp Mo-Val's plan of self-sufficiency; the original motion was still too ambiguous.

After much discussion regarding the situation with Camp Mo-Val, the committee and council needed clarity with plans presented at the gathering.

Self-Supporting:

- Camp Mo-Val would have the ability to support visitors to the Camp site who need support with regards to camp fees.

- Encourage churches to be more supportive to the camp, in sponsoring retreats and mission groups to the area.
- Revisit partnerships with other camps to prevent other camp closings.

Les asked the question: “Has there been an analysis of the most successful programming with the camps?” Response: Don and the programming committee have looked into issue.

It was suggested getting some social clubs involved like the Lions club for example.

Don Hubatka stated that there needs to be some hard figures and facts to be justified in the overall budget.

Dannie commented that there are some churches at the end of the year still waiting to pay their fees to Camp Mo-Val.

Jeff Whitman commented that the camp and conference need to have the churches contribution up front...period. He went on to make the following points:

- “I understand the context of autonomy. Mo-Val is owned by the Missouri Mid-South Conference and the ultimate responsibility rests on the conference.
- Second, Look at the report and analyze the kind of structure will determine covenanted ministry? We must ask the questions: who are we going to hire and what are they going to do?
- Third, we need to know how to articulate outdoor ministries and what it looks like. With that said we the council need to see more structure, more detailed analysis. We need to understand:
 - What is working
 - What is not working
 - And more important what needs to be changed.
- That is the task for the board to start with these questions.

Betsy commented: Is there a need for the formation of a new board, and that the work for camp Mo-Val should be starting now. The response to that statement was this is a job for the leadership development committee.

Brady shared that we needed to wrap up this discussion. Thank you.

A break followed until 2:45pm, after which, board members proceeded into individual committees.

All returned to for committee reports at 3:30 PM.

Finance/Administration:

- Establishing endowments
- Proposals to be presented in April

- Formalize for the conference council figures for Shannondale and Mo-Val
- Research other groups for social support
- Meeting with Nelson, Murphy, regarding investing our UCC funds
- Agenda for Jeff Whitman
 - A proposal taking the restricted funds and combining with the UCC church funds. (this information needs to be reviewed for clarity)

Wider Church Ministry:

- Discernment of the identity of the group
- Also looking closely at ministries within the conference like:
 - JWM (Justice and Witness Ministries)
 - Congo
 - Shannondal & MOVAL
 - Jamaican Partnership
- There will be a meeting with the Wider Church issues about vitality in February, 2011 in Jefferson City, MO

Leadership Development:

- Searching for candidates to serve on the council after the term of service has ended. Mainly for those serving one year terms. We have asked individuals already serving on the council if they are willing to serve another three years.
 - Connie Brooks-Yes
 - Dannie Burk-Yes
 - Jerry Cundiff-Yes
 - Jacquelyne Tyler-Yes
 - Andy Mockridge-awaiting response
 - Dennis Berger-Will not serve another term for he is moving to Florida
- Conference Deacons Program
 - A representative from each Association
 - Pairing with clergy
 - Assigned a certain number of churches keeping congregations informed as to key events going on within the Missouri Mid-South Conference
 - Our group will submit a proposal outlining the details of this program
- Mo-Val
 - Help develop a leadership board for the Mo-Val board
 - Talk to Don in order to gain clarity regarding outdoor ministries, provide a job description for individuals serving on the board
 - Look at the size of the board
 - Intentional diversity regarding board members

Local Church Ministries:

- Youth Ministry
- Young Adult

- Resident Arts Programs
- Spiritual Formation
- Congregational Vitality
- Stewardship
- Task: Designate each member of the committee with a particular concern and develop a proposal

Jeff: Commented regarding the Artist in residency program that a grant proposal is to be submitted into the mail by Tuesday, and there should be a decision by May, 2011.

- Retreat: seeking letters of support for the grant support. They are shooting for large and small churches.
- The retreat is open to anyone and there are instructions as to who can apply for this program. It is the hope that conference can get churches from all of the associations to participate.
- There is a request to the council for \$2000 from the congregational vitality budget toward this program.
- Details of this retreat:
 - January 22, planning. There are no training artist residence program
 - Contact other churches informing them that “Oikos” will be the Conference Gathering worship team.

Shift in the discussion:

- Update on Carbon Credits: There are 2 possible sales with companies. Both proposals are over the market prices and sales are pending for June. Mike McKee is working on the closing.
- Don H. and Jeff are going to meet with Mike and the Auditors regarding the IRS guidelines. The staff is currently learning the tax implication regarding carbon credits, therefore this is a learning process for both the IRS and the Conference.
- The proceeds from this sale could be the start of the Shannondale Endowment fund by the end of the year with an estimated \$427,000. A proposal will be presented by the next Conference Council meeting in April.
- As a council, we approved up to \$75,000 at a minimum of \$6.00. The buyer has offered to purchase at \$6.25 a share.
- Don Hubatka commented that they are looking at the international markets but it always changes. However we are set up on the Chicago carbon exchange and we would have to go in and retake measurements and climate information before the closing in June at the highest possible price.
- Jeff Whitman assures the council that the process is looking really good at this point.
- When the timber is sold then the proposal has to come to the conference council to be approved.

Conference Council Meeting wrapping up: Dale Parson shared the tragedy of Congresswoman Gifford being shot by a gun man in front of a local Shop N Save in Tucson, AZ; and that 17-18 others were either wounded or killed including a 9 year old girl. Dale stated that such events affect us here in Missouri and that we should keep the families of the victims in prayer.

Brady Abel: Closing Prayer

Motion to Adjourn. Passed.

Next Meeting of the Conference Council: April 9, 2011 in Columbia, MO

Meeting minutes provided by Jacquelyne Tyler.