

Autumnal Meeting Minutes
Rhode Island Conference of the United Church of Christ
November 1, 2014
Newman Congregational Church, UCC, Rumford, RI

The meeting was called to order at 9:03am by Conference President Peter Hainsworth following a hymn sing led by the Rev. Dr. Claudia Demick. The opening prayer was offered by Interim Conference Minister the Rev. Rev. Barbara Libby. Newman Senior Minister the Rev. Timoth Sylvia was invited to bring welcoming remarks on behalf of our host church. Thanks were offered to the Planning Committee for the event: Kleo Becker, Helen Schall, Suzanne Swanson, Mary Hazeltine, Frances Munro, Tracy Baran, Timoth Sylvia, Claudia Demick and Ruth Shilling Hainsworth. Following this the Conference staff was introduced: Peggy Matteson, Commissioned Minister of Congregational Health; the Rev. Jennifer Geary, Director of Irons Homestead; Kristin Putney, Consultant for Christian Education and Youth; Sandy Tremblay, Office Manager; George Weavill, Business Manager; the Rev. Barbara Libby, Interim Conference Minister. Special guests were recognized including Gary and Gloria Bert, guestspeakers at the Peace Breakfast; Daehler Hayes representing the Cornerstone Fund; Geoff Greene, Newman Minister of Music; Valerie Tutson, Guest Speaker for the day. Then Rev. Barbara Libby was invited forward by Peter to lead morning worship.

Following worship, a few minutes were allotted to stretch in place. The Business Meeting portion was called to order by the President at 9:50am. It was asked if anyone was in need of packets of materials. These were distributed by Sandy Tremblay. The first order of business was the certifying of the quorum by Registrar, Darlene McMillan as follows:

Churches represented	25	
Lay Delegates	58	
Clergy		26
Members in Discernment		3
Ex-Officio		
Visitors		3
Staff		6

Peter reminded everyone of the need to speak only when recognized.

The first order of business was the approval of the Minutes of the Spring Annual Meeting a copy of which had been sent out with the advance meeting materials.

A motion to approve the minutes was made [Joe Bishop] and duly seconded [Kathy Jellison].

Discussion: None. Vote: Unanimously approved.

Next Treasurer Mary Hazeltine was called forward to present the report of the Budget and Finance Committee. This was done via Power Point presentation. Advance materials on the budget were also sent out prior to the meeting. Mary observed that the Conference is moving forward and the Finance Report reflects this. We are a Conference moving forward, strengthening and revitalizing the Conference. Mary referenced page 10 of the packets, the far right column (2015 Annual Budget) as a starting point. Each category of Income was reviewed and explained. Noted that Per Capita comes from the \$18 per member paid by churches. Basic Support is largest source of income for the Conference and 35% of that is sent on to National. Mary stopped for questions.

➤ Question: Where does Basic Support comes from? Answer: the local churches.

- Noted that slide shows projected income at \$546,946 when report shows \$510,500. Why the discrepancy? Answer: Less deficit of \$31,446.
- Question: What is the basis for the investment income figure? Answer: 13 month average

Discussion moved on referencing p. 11 --Expenses. Mary reviewed category by category and explained each. Continued on to page 12 to review Program Expenses which Mary reviewed line by line explaining each. Mary noted that Outdoor Ministry Program is budgeted to break even with income equaling expense. Increased program costs are due to program offerings by the Conference increasing. Projected deficit is \$31,446. Income is based on conservative estimates and recent experiences. Mary observed that there is a hope people will go back to their churches and ask for additional funds to support the budget. If not, expenses will be cut.

Questions:

- Is this budget, which appears to go against trends in the local church, realistic, sustainable and why should we support it? Answer: Mary invited George to respond. He believes income estimates are conservative and we are prepared to cut expenses if we need to. Also, we have done considerable adjustments in reducing expenses in recent years leading up to this.
- Bill Sterrett offered his response to this question. He believes this budget reflects the direction the Conference is moving and that while it may not be strategic in a traditional sense it is reflective of the Holy Spirit. There is a new energy! Things are changing but we don't stop preaching the Gospel because things are in flux. Need to try new things as we keep preaching the Gospel and trusting the Holy Spirit.
- Delegate from Kingston Cong. remarked that many members don't understand the connection to the local Conference. Could representatives from the Conference come out to the local churches to communicate the importance of the Conference operations? Answer: If there is an invitation, we will be glad to come.
- Nancy Soukup as a member of the BOD took note of the Friends of the Conference line in the income portion of the budget reminding everyone that anyone can give to that line item.
- Delegate from Edgewood Church posed question as to what is included in the Conference Minister's benefits which increased substantially? Answer: The previous ICM did not take any benefits but now we are paying health, Social Security and health benefits.
- Question about the amount coming from Investment Income and concern that the deficit is considerable. Answer: We need to spend at this level to keep the Conference moving.
- When does the budget year start? Answer: January 1. If we get to December 31, 2015 and there is still a deficit, what happens? Answer: We tap the endowment. George W. noted that there is a line of credit which the Conference uses to operate throughout the year as income comes in spottily.
- Where are we with this year's actuals? Answer: George W. answered that we are running slightly ahead as of September with the bulk of the income anticipated in the fourth quarter. It has been improving steadily for the last two years – we are moving in the right direction which is why this budget is proposed as is.

When there were no more questions, Peter observed there are two motions to be voted. First is to receive the report of the Finance & Budget Committee as presented.

- A motion to receive the Finance & Budget Report was made and duly seconded.
- Discussion: Observation that further explanation did not seem necessary.
- Vote: Approved with one "nay" vote and no abstentions.

Peter observed that a second motion was needed to approve the 2015 Budget.

- A motion was made to approve the 2015 Budget as presented was made and duly seconded.
- Discussion:
 - Observation that we can't approve a budget with such a large "hole" in it without understanding where the funds will come. Mary invited to respond and she noted the hope for more income and the willingness to cut expenses and, if necessary, we will tap the endowment. This budget reflects a vital, living Conference willing to move forward.
 - Response from someone that their church has been running a deficit as well
- Vote: Approved by majority vote with some nays and abstentions.

The presentation of the slate of delegates to attend the General Synod this coming summer in Cleveland, OH was the next agenda item. Reference made to page 13 of the advance materials.

- A motion was made to affirm the slate of Delegates as presented and duly seconded.
- Discussion: Request made to review the Slate with photos visible on slide.
- Vote: Unanimously approved.

Next order of business was the presentation of the Compensation Guidelines for 2015 by Ray Christian from the Church & Ministry Committee. This was done by power point presentation. He noted that all the changes from last year are highlighted in red. Goal was fairness in compensation for ministers and staff and also for the churches. Document reviewed by Ray with emphasis on changes in red. Special note was made of health, dental and vision coverage for ministers and the need to really investigate what the best, most affordable option is with additional information provided in the Appendix. Special note of addition to covered expenses to include cell phone expense for clergy.

In preparation for the vote it was noted that the original motion coming from the Church and Ministry Committee which appeared in the advance materials has been revised at the direction of the Board of Directors to read as follows. Copies of the revised motion were made available to delegates and it also appeared on the overhead.

The 2014 Autumnal Meeting of the RICUCC approves the "Compensation Guidelines for 2015" and recommends to its congregations that they prayerfully consider the Guidelines to determine fair compensation for all church staff, authorized and lay.

This revised motion was duly seconded.

Discussion:

- Peter read through the Revised Motion just so everyone was clear.
- George W. noted that shopping if you have a UCC health plan, it is difficult to get back in if you leave it.
- Paul Bizer noted that the churches should be providing their clergy a W-2 form and not a 1099.
- P. 7 -- Observation that Commissioned Minister was left off the list for Pulpit Supply. George P. noted it was because Commissioned Ministers do not normally do pulpit supply. Consensus to add next year.
- Suggestion for next year might be that a survey be done of the churches to see where we are relative to the Guidelines for compensation of clergy and staff. This is done routinely in the MA Conference. Agreed to put the suggestion on the agenda for C & M.

Vote: Unanimously approved.

Next order of business was a brief presentation by Kristin Putney regarding Youth going to General Synod.

- She provided handouts.
- CT & MA along with RI on a bus to take youth Synod.

- See her for details.
- Question as to where Synod will be. Answer: Cleveland, OH

A break of 15 + minutes ensued.

Peter called upon Timoth to introduce Val Tutson, Guest Speaker for the meeting.

Val's presentation ended with a worship experience of communion by intinction served in the pews. The Rev. Barbara Libby presided with Val's support and assistance.

Speak-outs concluded the meeting. Time limit of 60 second was observed. The Clerk did not attempt to record all the information provided. Some key points announced which were not time sensitive included:

- Reminder of the Ministerial Assistance Fund of the RI Conference
- Reminder of the Ministerial Assistance Fund of the denomination
- Report on Super Saturday Event and RI participation

Motion to adjourn following the prayer. Seconded. Vote: Unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Ruth Shilling Hainsworth
Clerk