Conference Council, UCC

Council Meeting, January 11, 2014 – approved at April 12, 2014 Conference Council Meeting

Present: Wes Hurt, Rev. Mauri Peaco, , Connie Brook, Les Kemp, Gus Elia, Rev. Laura Mignerone, Rev. Alan Gatewood, Mary Lou Datema, Dannie Burk, Rev. Ken Ulmer, Judi Privitt, Joyce Bathke, Rev. David Mehl, Cindy Moeller, Rev. Rick Riedel, Linda Stenger, Jack Wendleton, Rev. Steve Buchholz, Laura Dierberg Ayers, Jeff Fulk, Judi Privitt

Staff Present: Rev Dr. Allen Fluent, Rev. Dale Parson, Jeremy Force, Jan Aerie, Jeff Fulk

Absent: Rev. Andy Mockridge, Jerry Cundiff, Rhonda Stockglausner, Mark Ferbet,

Wes opened the meeting at 9:33 AM.

Dale opened with devotion.

Wes started the business session at 9:50 AM.

Consent Agenda items presented by Judi Privitt

* Approval of MMSC Council Conflict of Interest Policy
* Approval of MMSC Individual Gift Acknowledgement Policy
* Approval of Minutes for Conference Council, October 4 & 5, 2013, MMSC Council Meeting Minutes, with necessary corrections
* Approval of Policy on MMSC Council Committees and Covenanted Ministries Meet Minutes
* Ratification of MMSC Council e-vote for MMSC/UCC members to the Deaconess Foundation Board of Trustees, November 13, 2013

Consent items taken exception to:

* CA No. 1: This policy shall be effective on the date of its adoption by the Missouri Mid-South Conference Council (item #6 on original conflict of interest policy document)
* CA No. 4: Laura wanted confirmation that any information related to personnel matters will not be publicly published on the MMS website.

**Dannie made a motion to approve the consent agenda and Rev Steve seconded.**

Laura asked questions regarding when these minutes will be published on the website. Each committee deals with it in their own realm to decide what will be published.

**Motion carried with all in favor (consent agenda items)**

One item on agenda was asked to be removed - #7 – F & A has been asked to report on this during their reporting time.

There was one more item for housing allowance that did not get included on consent agenda item due to its late arrival. Wes stated that for the calendar 2014 the housing allowance for Rev. Allen Fluent will be $24,000 and for Rev. Dale Parson, the housing allowance will be $28,000.

**Rev. Mehl to approve the housing allowances for 2014 as stated, seconded by Dannie. Motion carried**.

Wes stated that several ExCom members met with EA Mission and Social Concerns Committee. The ExCom gave the Committee a history of Shannondale Carbon LLC. The Committee members expressed concern regarding how we will select a purchaser for the carbon credits. The Committee agreed to draft a resolution, which has been posted on the Council website. Wes distributed copies of the draft resolution without providing any comments and requested that any comments should be e-mailed directly to him. This will be on the agenda on April meeting for possible discussion and possible action. Wes will keep the EA committee informed regarding how we are proceeding with this. Rev. Yurs is the chair of the committee and Wes will be updating her, as needed.

A Point of Order was raised from Alan Gatewood –Can a proposed resolution come directly to the Conference Council through an Association Committee or does it have to come through an Association? Mike McKee stated that the document is in discussion mode right now. Any consensus that comes out of this discussion is yet to be determined.   
Laura Dierberg Ayers stated that the Conference Council’s role is an advisor, rather than to complete the consideration process. She requested that he committee be made aware that the resolution may/ma not be accepted by the Conference Council.

Rick noted that the Mission and Social Concerns Committee is recognized by the Eastern Association. Alan Gatewood stated his concern is that it appears that his document has been approved by the Eastern Association.

A discussion ensued on the following procedural issues.

\*\*\* How do we receive documents from different associations to present information to Conference Council? Wes replied that he presents information with/without awareness of the association.

\*\*\*At the Conference level – how do we handle requests by individuals/organizations within the conference?

The Council did not pursue the procedural issues further.

Consideration of the minutes of the October 4, 2013 meeting.

**Ken Ulmer moved and Dannie Burk seconded the motion that $35,000 (on an annual basis) is hereby designated as housing allowance for Rev. Allen Fluent’s 2013 compensation for serving as Acting Conference Minister beginning September 15, 2013. Motion carried.**

Treasurer’s Report – Rev. Ken Ulmer

Ken noted that the December 21, 2013 financial report is incomplete. In order to prepare for the January 11 meeting, the report used revenue through January 3. More OCWM revenue will be received from the local churches through January 17th.

Balance Sheet

Ken presented the highlights of the December 31 balance sheet and income statement.

$202,000 was in the bank on January 3, which is a comfortable amount in that more 2013 revenue is expected.

The Conference’s obligations to Jeff Whitman were completed on December 31, 2013.

The sabbatical reserve fun for Rev. Dr. Marc Wessels will go back into cash since Marc had not been with us the requisite 5 years.

Income Statement

Ken Ulmer reported that through January 3 – the Conference had received 84% of the budgeted amount for OCWM. Since then, we have received roughly $92,000 in December (basic support).

Osage Head Rights Income. Mike McKee provided background information on the income from the head rights from Osage Nation in Oklahoma. Mike has recommended that we should pay that back to Native Americans at some point. Mike stated that it is a very difficult process to give the revenue money back to the tribe. The Chief of Osage Tribe will be in STL soon and Mike will meet with this person to explore options related to the Osage Head rights.

David Mehl stated that the question of how this money should be allocated has been raised by the Conference Council, and that no particular body or person is pressuring us to reallocate this.

The Conference Salaries are 116% over budget. This is because we have had 2 Conference Minister salaries for 7 ½ months of 2013.

Payments to Richard Hamm, Consultant for Visioning, is charged against the Strengthen the Church (Local) fund account.

The Net Total for the Conference is a shortfall of ($198,975.61) as of December 31, 2013. Unexpected expenses of around $70,000 were the death benefit (contained in our Personnel Policy) for Marc Wessels, legal expenses for the cap and trade program, and two salaries for CM. In addition, Ken Ulmer stated that it appears that the Conference will receive fewer OCWM gifts than budgeted.

Mo-Val

The net result for MoVal on December 31, 2013 is a surplus of $40K as compared to a shortfall last year of about $40K.

Shannondale

Shanondale budgeted a $7K deficit, but has completed 2013 with a small surplus.

Conference Ministers Report – Rev. Allen Fluent

Conference Council members have received a draft copy of the Conference profile. Allen said he is simply working on our behalf and it is still an open document. Individuals are welcome to make comments. The profile will ultimately be sent to the Search Committee, and they will also need to see it and approve it.

Steve wondered if this profile will be for the Designated Conference Minister profile. Allen stated that it will.

Allen reminded us that there are many decisions that will need to be made. Conference Council is looking toward a person that will leads us through a transition for 2-3 years. At that point, that persons’ certain gifts may/may not be what we need. At that point, the Council will decide if that person will best meet our needs.

Dick Hamm’s viewpoint regarding conference structure and our visioning team contributed to the language that was included in the profile. Dr. Bracke, Dale, Joyce, Ken, and Jan also contributed to the language that was included in this.

Alan Gatewood expressed appreciation for the document as a whole. Paragraph 6-8 is a great articulation for smaller, rural churches. Allen is glad to see that, since his experience in WA has been limiting.

David Mehl emphasized that he appreciates that there were many eyes on this document. The intended final eyes will be the three intended candidates (3-5) that will be recommended by the national staff for our consideration. Our Cleveland representative and the DCM committee will be the only ones that will be privy to this document.

Dannie Burk – as a new person relatively new to the conference, this is very helpful information regarding the entire conference. We need to make sure that this document is labeled DRAFT so that members know that this document is not for public information.

Search committee might need to be initially involved as well as Conference Council in the initial approval. There is still discussion regarding who might need to be the one to approve this document. We need to make sure that Search Committee remembers that final approval for the profile should come from the Conference Council.

Alan wondered about paragraphs 6-8 (confidentiality). Laura reminded us that until this document is officially approved, we should not circulate any parts of this document to any public source.

David is hoping that, with Renee’s help, conference members can read electronically, any and all updates related to this search.

Allen also shared a few notable things:

\*There are some things in our conference that are divisive: rural churches .vs two cities (STL and KC), it is important to notice and think about what we need to be doing about this.

\*There is a real serious issue in Franklin County area; they don’t like just having our publications come out in E form. They would like a hard copy Courier. Allen knows that this is not the direction we are heading, but reminded us that we do need to think about how we might be making some of them feel left behind. They feel there is a bias towards people who use electronic means, and these kinds of situations get attached to other issues too (rural .vs city values).

\*There are some trust issues in the conference, with work still to be done. Trust issues get transmitted informally, by the time you hear them, they get mixed up and some make sense and some don’t. OCWM funding may be related to that too.

\*Renee and Allen are working on the office/ phone system issues. Renee and Allen have now changed the phone system. Please let Renee/Allen know if you appreciate the change or not. An alternative is now *first* on the choice menu for the conference options.

\*Allen has a concern to raise with conference council related to covenanted ministries and their level of function. Some of these operate very efficiently (outdoor ministry, F & A), but when we get to other matters, like public issues, Allen has a harder time finding these and wondered how they operate. Allen is concerned that there is no functioning OCWM ministry team. In a conference that is concerned with this, he is surprised by this. Allen does not presume that he is going to resolve some of these issues during his tenure. Promotion of OCWM is an important initiative for us to pursue.

Allen hasn’t witnessed a wider church and local church ministry meeting since our last meeting. Allen reminded us that these are structures and need prompting, since these committees then deploy ministry teams.

Someone needs to get together (perhaps the Ex Com) and decide how these will function.

Mike stated that there should be a 3 ring binder describing all of these covenanted ministries. Every covenanted ministry should be funneling their minutes to Ex Com. The by-laws were designed with lots of flexibility in how covenanted ministries should arise, but this group does need to exercise some sort of oversight with all of these covenanted ministries to date. Our plate has been overflowing with other issues to date, so this is now something that we need to address.

Every committee ministries need to have an approved document, roster, and information sheet related to their covenanted ministries.

We need a person that periodically reviews the structure and make sure all documents are in place for needed covenanted ministries.

* One item of official business: Deaconess Parish Nurse Association. They are renaming it: “Deaconess Faith Community Nurse” and Donna Pupillo is the director. They train and deploy nurses in the churches, and want to expand and broaden their purpose in the community, so this required that they change their name.

**Motion to approve and accept this covenantal relationship. Steve moved and Connie seconded to approve**.

**“The Missouri Mid-South Conference and Deaconess Faith Community Nurse Ministries hereby express their intent to be in a covenantal partnership to advance the healing and service ministry of the United Church of Christ.**

**Therefore, Missouri Mid-South Conference and Deaconess Faith Community Nurse Ministries hereby agree to adhere to the Policy, Requirements and Expectations for Covenantal Inclusion of Health and Human Service Ministries in the life of the Missouri Mid-South Conference.”**

Reminder that is will be a covenanted partnership, not a covenanted ministry.

This is actually a CHHSM process – they have to have a conference blessing.

Strategic Innovation Report – Jan Aerie

She circulated a five month review handout. Jan is not concluding the interviewing process, but she is scaling back these interviews. She will then move into the innovation and modeling and experiments that come directly from the results of these interviews. The gift we have as a conference is a great number of committed and talented people. They are ready and willing and anxious to move in creative ways. It is grass roots drive and we all know how to do that. They will have some measureable experiments to report out in June 2014.

They are looking into training consultants with search and call process in conference. They have identified a trainer and to are ready to experiment, on a small scale, to see how this goes.

Dannie asked questions regarding communications comments – electronics .vs paper communication. They will be looking into this in their work too.

We are going for the sparks right now, and then see how they can be ignited.

We need to rebuild trust and build quality along with it. She felt confident that people felt enough trust to share honestly; they also maintained a level of appropriateness and confidentiality.

Question regarding the ages of those interviewed were (demographic breakdown). Jan made an extra effort to reach the younger ages because she believes it needs to be as balanced and diverse as possible. Late 30’s thru retirement age. The younger input has been harder to access.

Allen commented about the subject of search and call teams. This has been operative in the PA conference. When we talk about doing things in new ways, make sure that folks know that these type of changes are being done, not because of reduced staff, but because it is a new and innovative way of doing things. How can we provide more services that we have provided in the past? This is the kind of thinking we need to be embracing.

Shannondale Carbon LLC & Church of the Open Door –Mike McKee

Church of the Open Door – had their last worship service before Christmas. The initial sale contract fell through; the second offer is due to close sometime around the first week of March. The congregation has agreed to provide oversight and management until closing. Conference will not have to be involved in property maintenance with this property. Conference will receive $350,000 for the sale of this building

When we get that money, F & A will designate a “Church of the Open Door Fund.” The leaders of the Church of the Open Door and the Conference have agreed for a period of 7 years the earnings will be distributed according to the following (25% for outdoor ministries, 25% for students, from Missouri Mid-South Conference going to seminary, and 50% for operational funding of the conference).

Carbon Credits

Wes and Joyce are the authorized users with Air Resources Board (compliance entity). Wes shared that Joyce and Wes received a letter stating that he and Joyce are to be the individuals completing the application. Wes conferred with the legal counsel of the Air Resources Board to find a way to have assistance with the paperwork. Wes inquired if we can designate Mike McKee to handle these matters. Wes will consult with the Ex Com about a method of giving Mike the authority to complete the application process. The Council adjourned for lunch.

The meeting reconvened at 1:04 PM.

Wes reported to the Council that during a lunch meeting Shannondale Carbon LLC adopted a resolution that authorizes Mike to be a registered user with CITSS, the regulatory agency overseeing the carbon credit application process. Wes will inform the Air Resources Board and Finite Carbon of this action on Monday.

Finance and Administration Committee – Dannie Burk

Dannie reported on the activities of the F & A Committee.

OCWM Covenanted Ministry – The Committee is working to recruit individuals to serve on this Covenanted Ministry.

Betsy Happel has volunteered to look through the personnel policy for the conference. Dannie Burk requested Council members to give him names of anyone with HR experience. Mike shared that there is a template used from Illinois South Conference

The F & A Committee presented a proposed motion for the Sale of Carbon Offsets. Discussion ensued on the liability related to an “avoidable reversal.” IT was noted that this issue has been debated and was accepted by Council when the approval was given to enroll the tree farm with the Air Resources Board. Mike McKee stated that sine we don’t yet have any credits to sell this is a premature discussion. Following discussion it was decided to rework the motion and bring it forward for action at a future meeting.

**Dannie withdrew the proposed action.**

Dannie requested feedback on instituting the practice of supporting the camps similar to how we support OCWM, namely, on a percentage basis. If we used this method to support the camps (assigning a percentage of OCWM gift), it would ensure the churches that the camps are an integral part of where the OCWM gifts are spent. There was consensus with this approach. F & A will consider this method in developing the 2015 budget. Allen feels that this will need input from outdoor ministries and others.

**Overview of the 2013 revised budget – Rev. Ken Ulmer**

Ken Ulmer noted that we have a wonderful experience of surpluses at MoVal and Shannondale, $35,000 to $40,000 at MoVal and under $2,000 at Shannondale. The F & A Committee will assign these surplus dollars into Capital Reserve accounts for MoVal and Shannondale.

Rev Ken Ulmer provided an overview of the 2014 revised budget.

He noted that the combined net result of the proposed 2014 budget projects a combined shortfall of ($35,430) compared to the $29,674 surplus of the version of the 2014 Budget adopted by the Conference Annual Gathering in June.

Income. OCWM Gifts from local churches are sized at 96% of the dollars received in 2013. This results in the reduction in total income to $724,000, down from $754,000.

A general discussion ensued regarding the continuing shortfall in covering the operating costs of the Conference. The unrestricted assets stand at $20,000. The F & A Committee has identified four options for discussion with the Conference Council

Options:

\*increase the withdraw rate (3 ½% of 16 quarter rolling market value average) by the Conference Annual Gathering. The bylaws require a supermajority to change the withdrawal rate.

\*borrow from our ongoing (fund) accounts dollars, with repayment plans. In effect we would be borrowing from our own internal resources. Repayment would be from future surpluses.

\*Open a Revolving Line of Credit with the Cornerstone Fund. Annual interest is currently at 6A%, FOR A MAXIMYNOF aaaaa$75,000. The Conference only pays interest on what amount is borrowed.

\*go to churches for 2014 and say THANKS and request extra OCWM support.

\*Ask local churches to increase the frequency of forwarding OCWM gifts, from annual to quarterly, etc.

The following comments were offered, a discussion followed.

Challenging each church to ask every member to donate $1. ($30,000 members would yield $30,000)

One member reminded us to not rely so much on congregations’ right now as much as individuals. There might be individuals who are able to donate to this right now.

Another reminded us that we need to creatively build the beauty, celebration and wonder that the Conference is. This is not a time to ask churches to give more.

Time Table – Ken stated that we can ponder options and be read to develop a plan in April. Wes proposed that we put together a task force that can work with F & A to find a plan to address this at our April meeting.

Dannie Burk will be in charge of recruiting this task force.

**Steve made a motion for adoption of 2014 budget ($1,214,499 revenue) as presented. Joyce seconded**. **Motion carried**.

Leadership Development Committee – Laura Dierberg Ayers

Document circulated regarding the search committee process as well as the members listed. She did review that we have looked at LGBT, gender, persons of color, ages, as well as other diversity issues. We also have one conference council member from each association.

**Motion (out of committee) The Leadership Development Ministry moves the Conference Council to approve the appointment of the following persons to serve on the Search Committee for a Designated Conference Minister: Rev. David Mehl, Chair, Rev. Laura Mignerone, Vice Chair, Lorin Cope, Rev. Wayne Hoffman, Elaine Hudson, Linda Stenger, Sonja Vann, Lloyd Viehland**

**Motion carries**.

Conference Council Members not eligible for renewal:

Connie Brooks

Dannie Burk

Jerry Cundiff

Andy Mockridge

Mauri Peaco

Eligible for renewal, but declined

Mary Lou Datema

Jack Wendleton

Openings for Conference Council

STL – male layperson, female layperson and clergy

Western – male & female layperson, clergy

Eastern – male & female layperson

Conference Council and others received an e-mail from Laura asking for prospective Council members. There is a form that already exists on the conference website (self-nominate or send them a form). Laura reminded us that we should encourage them to apply, but don’t promise them the position.

Vision Team Update – Joyce Bathke

Dec 13 meeting was cancelled due to the weather; it is now scheduled for April 6th with Dick Hamm. Four conference gatherings will be presented for folks to discuss this visioning – those dates are: May 9, 10, 16, and 17.

Local Church Ministry Committee – Rev. Mauri Peaco No report for today.

Wider Church Ministry Committee- Cindy Moeller

Shannondale Covenanted Ministry Update has been meeting regularly since August. They have put together their preliminary vision and value, as well as marketing Shannondale.

Camp MO Val Covenanted Ministry Update – Constance Brooks

Connie is the Conference Council representative on this covenanted ministry. This covenanted ministry has a lot of excitement. They developed a Camp Mo Val Strategic Plan (3-5 years), and Connie (and Jeremy) reviewed this document with the Council. Connie is open to how we might share this document with others.

Old Business: 2014 Conference Annual Gathering Planning Update – Dale Parson

Committee is a talented group of people, and they have an amazing commitment. “Dreaming God’s Dream” is the theme for CAG. There will be a Pre-conference event on Thursday with Geoffrey Black, Friday will be workshops and boundary training, and Conference council will meet on Friday afternoon. The banquet will also be on Thursday evening (farewell for Jan Aerie and possible Allen).

The challenge they face now is to weave the conference business into the time we have available. The committee has little desire to put together an agenda that is similar to 2013. The whole meeting can’t be built around the struggles and pulls we’ve had from the past. In addition to conducting business in a timely and meaningful way, there will be opportunities for spiritual renewal, and to celebrate and honor the churches that have anniversaries. Worship will be a celebration and meaningful experience. We will work on building community and trust with one another.

Laura shared that they are looking intentionally at involving our youth, and the Youth covenanted ministry is going to work with them on this. Cliff Aerie will be working with worship committee.

Possible ending time of Saturday afternoon (somewhere around 3 PM). Wes would like to limit the business session to no more than 5 hours. June 12-14. Reservations at motel can be taken anytime.

New Business: Per April Council Meeting Agenda

\*resolution for discussion (EA)

\*2015 budget per Ken Ulmer

Meeting adjourned by praying the Lord’s Prayer at 3:43 PM.