

One Heart Working Group Report

Heartland Conference Annual Gathering

September 21, 2020

One Heart Collaborating and Sharing Ministry

The One Heart Working Group formed from members of the Executive Teams of the Associations and Board of Directors of the Heartland Conference in June 2020. We were charged with evaluating and updating the 2018 Vision Team Proposal. That document set forth a vision and purpose for restructuring the conference and associations to facilitate mutual ministry. In our deliberations, we have shifted our focus from creating a new structure to identifying and pursuing opportunities for collaborative and shared ministry using the structure that we have and recommending modifications based on the experienced gained from doing ministry together.

Our first task was addressing the elephants in the room. Those were unexpressed attitudes and beliefs that hindered trust and maintained barriers to doing ministry collectively.

We then moved to updating key statements from the 2018 Vision Team Proposal that would help ground our work and mutual ministry. Our focus was on the vision, mission, and purpose statements from the 2018 Vision Team Document. We have revised them in both title and content after much thoughtful, theological, and missional reflection:

- **Why (Vision) Statement:** Together in Christ love, we collaborate to reconcile and restore all God's creation.
- **Calling (Mission) Statement:** Empowered by the Holy Spirit to connect, equip and support our faith communities to grow as faithful disciples and responsible stewards, following Jesus' call to extravagantly love all God's children and creation.
- **One Heart Working Group Purpose Statement:** To create a collaborative, flexible and supportive structure that will serve, enhance, and nourish our covenantal growth in all our faith communities and ministry settings

The Executive Teams affirmed these statements and our attention turned to putting bones on this idea of collaborative and shared ministry. We developed a list of opportunities for collaborative and shared ministry:

- ✓ Communication
- ✓ Boundary Training/Healthy Practices for Ministry
- ✓ Periodic Support
- ✓ Anti-Racism
- ✓ Schools of Ministry
- ✓ Faith Formation
- ✓ Stewardship
- ✓ WISE (Welcoming, Inclusive, Supportive, Engaged) Congregations for Mental Health

As we evaluated this list, we recognized existing sharing and collaborations as well as the fact that each setting may assess their own participation in a specific area based on unique contextual considerations. We defined the distinction between collaboration and shared ministry. Collaboration occurs when all parties participate in the entirety of the process, from leadership and visioning to execution. Shared ministry happens when one setting offers their ministry as a gift to the others (i. e. opening registration to all the associations in the conference for an event that the conference or one of the associations has planned).

Way Forward – Shared and Collaborative Ministry Updates (Celebrating Progress)

- The Association Ministers, Transitional Conference Minister, and Communications specialists from each setting met in August to determine the logistics for using Constant Contact as a shared resource as well as a process for sharing communication for wider distribution.
- The Anti-Racism Network held its initial gathering with over twenty attendees from our faith communities and more than thirty expressing interest.
- Stewardship and Finance continues to work in a shared and collaborative way. The Heartland Finance Committee and the Stewardship Working Group have been revitalized over the last several months. This not only has addressed the necessary financial concerns of the Conference but has facilitated collaboration and sharing.
- Financial administration by United Church Homes for Heartland Conference, Central Southeast Association, and SONKA is proceeding.
- The Generosity and Stewardship Festival hosted by Living Water Association had conference-wide participation.
- Living Water Association Investment Committee co-hosted (with Pacific School of Religion) a conversation about diversity and inclusion in asset management with the Knight Foundation, which included conference leadership (TCM and Stewardship WG Chair).
- The Heartland Stewardship Working Group has met with Andrew Werner from the National Setting to beginning plotting a stewardship strategy to resource our faith communities for 2021 and beyond.

Way Forward –Facilitating Collaborative and Shared Leadership

In our discussions, we have identified three functions needed in the fiduciary leadership of our settings: vision, administration, and ministry. The strength of the existing Working Group lies in created relationships and created spaces. It has been an organic process. By meeting regularly and intentionally building trust, the working group has not only been informed but has been transformed into a community that gathers for the purpose of visioning. In a moving forward structure, there needs to be a body focused on visioning that is not also weighed down by the necessary minutia of functional operation. In addition, in a legal structure, there are required responsibilities that must be met, such as the treasurer role. There are other administrative concerns that must be addressed, such as camp management, sell of properties, etc. Importantly, there are the programmatic aspect of ministry that is essential for our support of the local church and other faith communities. Any structure needs to

account for these functions in a way that facilitates collaboration and shared ministry without overly burdening a small group of people.

Our growing consensus is that the Heartland Conference Board of Directors (BoD) should draw from the leadership of the associations' governing bodies. This may mimic the current practice of NWA, which currently has two members of its cabinet who also serve on the BoD. Each association may choose how it designates that representation. Officers of the BoD may be elected separately by the conference. Heartland BoD then becomes the visioning body. The administrative and ministry functions are then designated as teams that report to the BoD. At the center of this leadership model are the ministers called to serve and lead our associations and conference. This table of peers would be the initial vetting space for collaborative and shared ministry. The minister who has the capacity, energy, and passion around a particular area would facilitate moving that ministry forward. A graphical representation of the leadership model follows this report.

This model strongly addresses the "us" and "them" divide that easily arises from a lack of communication and shared leadership. The One Heart Working Group has demonstrated, in a short time frame, what we are capable of achieving together when we cultivate trust, accountability, and shared commitment while maintaining autonomy.

And it does not yet appear what we shall be... (1 John 3:2)

Yours in Christ and community,

The Rev. Dr. Cheryl A. Lindsay

Chair, One Heart Working Group

Relationships for Collaborative and Shared Ministry

