



## Heartland Conference and Association Executive Teams Meeting Minutes October 27, 2021 - 9:30 am

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- **9:34am Welcome - Introductions - A Word of Hope**
  - Tom Hathaway called the meeting to order and invited all to introduce themselves and offer a word of hope for the day
- **Sharing our [Why, Calling, and Covenant](#)**
  - Dave LH shared the document and asked various members on the zoom to read parts of document
  - Dave LH offered some thoughts on the statements
  - He closed this time by having Nayiri pray the Covenantal Prayer
    - **Covenantal Prayer**

God of Love, *(made known to us in Jesus Christ)*, our common journey of faith leads us to continue to grow in mutual love. Help us respect each other's place on the journey of faith, living into our commitment to be active agents of social justice. Guide us to extend an extravagant welcome to all as together we are nurtured in the unity of the One Spirit across all settings. Empower us to offer our diverse gifts in building Your Beloved Community here and now. Promote in us responsible stewardship and sharing of resources, answering Your call to reach out across the Heartland and beyond to our ecumenical partners. Empower us to embody Your healing love throughout all creation. Amen.
- **9:52am Observations about Life in Each Association**
  - [BOD Orientation Retreat Summary Doc](#)
    - Tom prefaced the document and invited members to dialogue on various aspects of the document
      - Additions/Corrections
        - NWOA
          - Committee on ministries should read "churches" not "charges"
          - Grace Community Center Toledo needs to be added to the NW list of mission partners
        - SONKA
          - Getting churches to collaborate
          - Sharing resources so that they're all working together in generosity and good stewardship

- CSEOA
      - Nothing to add
    - LWA-ONE
      - SPIRE
        - School of Possibility, Inspiration, Reimagining and Exploration
      - Working on the website to add resources
        - Simple, practical - the things that churches are asking for
  - Challenges Facing Church - Feedback from Annual Gathering
    - Tom called on Dave LH to lead this portion of the meeting
      - Looking at the feedback, is there anything that we as a “conference” group might be able to address?
      - Noticings, additions, questions
        - These will be the basis of our breakout rooms discussions
        - Tom asked Dave LH to break us into our rooms
- **10:14am Consideration of Trends and Priorities (Breakout Rooms)**
    - What are the important items that most catch your attention?
    - Is there something missing from these lists that should be considered?
  - **10:39am Large Group Processing**
    - What did your group identify as the most important trends and priorities?
      - Group 1
        - Took the list and tore it up!
        - Racial equality was left off the list and the churches need to address this and we as leaders need to model this discussion
        - Change in pastoral patterns
          - Lay, bivocational, credentialed-vs-seminary trained, etc.
        - Church vitality
        - Involve young people
        - Faith Formation
        - Churches are places of service not place to be served
        - Community outreach
        - Partnering with churches of different types/backgrounds to build relationships
      - Group 2
        - Remembering the giftedness of our churches while holding that in the midst of decline
        - Shifting understanding from local churches need to be in competition to being gifted in one way and see your context as part of a greater whole
          - What is the structure that we need to pursue this type of model?

- Group 3
      - Ministries of the church are where ever you engage folks
      - Church is meant for outreach
      - Balcony view - stepping back to see the bigger picture and how do we tell that story
      - Video of people as they do things, etc. to share back with folks to remind and inspire them
      - Naming our losses
      - Serving in small rural congregations, this list doesn't resonate with us
    - Group 4
      - Pastoral Leadership going forward
  - What kinds of next steps does this clarification suggest?
- **Next Gatherings - 2022 Meetings - Two Possibilities**
  - **Option One**
    - January 26, 2022, at 9:30 am
    - April 27 - 9:30 am
    - July 27 - 9:30 am
    - October 26 - 9:30 am (or should this meeting be in November after fall meeting elections?)
  - **Option Two**
    - February 23, 2022
    - May 25, 2022
    - August 24, 2022
    - November 30, 2022

**ACTION:** Consensus was to hold the January 26 meeting as scheduled and consider alternate dates from the two options for the remainder of the meeting schedule.

## **Executive Teams idea sharing - 10.27.2021**

- Racial equality needs to be addressed. Conferences and associations need to lead by example. Our leadership does not reflect diversity. ARN needs to be active and grown.
- Change in pastoral patterns – churches are being served by PT ministers – how are they prepared, how are they certified to lead? Seminaries are not producing a diverse population. We need to strengthen our lay education.

- At LWA they are reimagining their whole preparation for ministry programming.
- Church Vitality – How do you affect and involve the young people? They are not in the pews or participating in activities. The issue is faith formation, churches are places to serve and not be served.
- Barriers of churches becoming diverse – We do it in the workplace but not in churches. They need to work on understanding each other.
- Seeing a decline and small churches. How do we collaborate? There doesn't seem to be a diversity as a whole when you look at single congregations. Churches are not looking at the big picture when doing long term planning.
- Churches are competing with each other instead of collaborating. Now that we are online there are practical ways to share across congregations. Sharing of bible studies across the associations and conferences instead of each church trying to do their own programming. Let's use the gifts as a whole and collaborate more.
- If your church disappeared from the community, would you be missed? All the ministries you engage in are a part of the church as a whole. We need to move outside of the building and look at the broader view. There are many layers of people, and we need to make everyone feel that they are a part of the ministry.
- Balcony view – What's the balcony view of our churches, associations, and conference and how do we tell the stories that remind us of the importance of our churches, people, and ministries? Culture is constantly changing- how do we keep up? We cannot stay stagnant and refuse to change things.
- Take videos of peoples faces when they see or hear of their accomplishments to share with them. They need to see the impact and the results, areas that can be improved, and how that made them feel. It will show them how they impacted people, why they should continue, and how things can improve.

- Naming and grieving our losses and the importance of that – individually and as a church.
- Serving small churches – these things are irrelevant to them. They have found a way. There is a disconnect with these ideas and the reality of the rural congregation. To partner and look at diversity is difficult when we are so spread apart. There are many churches who are unable to do hybrid, they have no internet access or just dial up. Their folks also do not have internet access due to their location. We must see the larger picture. How can we share their stories as it is an inspirational gift to the conference because they persevered despite the challenges?
- Looking at pastoral leadership going forward – fewer congregations can afford Full Time ministers; fewer students can afford seminary.
- How do we attract more people? Is the church a living entity, are we a living entity?
- Hybrid – how do we build community doing both and engage with the folks who are only online?
- Dwindling resources – Jesus' early followers had no resources, and they did well.
- Big view – what is our purpose? What are we about – churches, people, faith communities?