

Meeting Notes  
Executive Teams Meeting  
Jan. 26, 2022

Dave Long-Higgins opened the meeting with the covenantal prayer – 9:35 a.m.

Observations from Life in Each Association

SONKA

- Experienced good year financially; increase in OCWM giving plus savings in operational expenses puts SONKA in a good place and we look forward to moving ahead.
- Future projects that we will have fewer congregations; foresee dropping from current 73 churches to approximately 50 in the next five years. This will impact all that we do.
- Studying a structure reorganization that will both in the short term allow us to do more while arranging for a time in which we will operate with fewer resources.
- See the development of Regional Elders to carry on the ministry of the association; lead to the development of a system to support our churches when it can no longer fund association administration

Living Water

- Finished the year in a good place financially
- Experiencing a lot of movement in pastors and leadership
- Churches are merging and yoking (sharing a pastor)
- We continue to see strong ministry and strong participation
- March 5, 9 a.m.-12 noon: Diversity Training program, qualifies as boundary training (virtual)
- May 2 – Spring Vitality Festival (virtual): Topic-Anxiety in the Church and Possibilities

Northwest Ohio

- Annual meeting April 30 via Zoom
- Have two churches sharing a pastor
- Finding pastors is becoming difficult
- Finding interim pastors is becoming extremely difficult
- Association membership remains at 73 churches

Central Southeast

- We have been optimistic about some trends; disappointed in others, saddened by others
- Financially we are better than we expected; living into the second year of closed office and those savings
- Will lose one congregation, possibly two as the second wrestles with facility issues
- Have experienced unexpected departures of some clergy
- Spring Meeting is May 7
- Association membership is 33 churches

## Report from the Leadership Round Table – Dave Long-Higgins

### Conference Ministry Priorities Update

Dave Long-Higgins shared and described the updated Heartland 2022-2024 Goals and Priorities document [shouldn't this be 2022-2025?] The meeting was divided into discussion groups, each addressing one of the six ministry priorities. Below are the discussion points reported by each group:

1. Anti-Racism
  - a. Why is Sunday morning still segregated in our churches? What can we do about it, how can we address?
  - b. Host cultural empowerment training
  - c. Host roundtable discussions on racism
  - d. New Manual on Ministry requires diversity training
  - e. Acknowledge that change in this area is slow
  - f. Is one of the functions of the Racial and Ethnic Empowerment Committee to promote anti-racism?
  
2. Reimagining Church Vitality
  - a. Suggest the creation of a conference-wide vitality team of trained leaders
  - b. Link struggling churches with mentor churches that are enjoying success
  - c. Encourage the tradition of the Holy Rest Sabbath
  - d. Share the success stories of congregations who are vital
  - e. Right-size church facilities to the current needs of the congregation
  - f. Help churches address sustainability
  
3. Organizational Clarity and Focus
  - a. A lot of the issues involve specific problems, shortcomings, etc. to be addressed by those in the know
  - b. Affirm that restructure is necessary
  - c. At what point do we reach affirmation that the conference BOD is composed of members of the associations' leadership teams and how do we go about that?
  
4. Pastoral Preparation and Support
  - a. There is a growing need for church leadership
  - b. Pastors and leaders are suffering burnout (hinder performance/leave profession)
  - c. Identify people to lead
  - d. Chaplains perform important service; need to identify and provide support
  - e. Utilization of retired clergy
  - f. Excellence in Ministry program is a great resource
  - g. Lay are faithfully serving as church leaders; why not name them as pastors?
  
5. Faith Formation
  
6. Financial Sustainability

- a. Begins at the local congregation level as generosity at this level supports the associations and conference according to our funding model
- b. Should assess what UCC programs exist for stewardship and generosity
- c. Northwest's Stewardship and Caring Committee has produced five videos for its member churches to use to promote generosity
- d. Covid has impacted giving; while on-line giving has increased, the absence of people in the pews has impacted cash giving
- e. On-line giving has transformed giving from weekly to monthly
- f. Need to develop an affordable giving platform for on-line giving
- g. Concern for lack of reach of ODM/Camp; tends to be utilized by affluent churches. Need to create better awareness for scholarships for camp fees for youth in less-affluent churches.
- h. Need to balance efforts of mission with those to attract members; people in the pews needed to support mission
- i. Traditional members give to support institution; younger population gives to support causes. Need to promote the causes our churches serve.

Conversations of these items will continue. The Goals and Priorities document will continue to change to meet on-going concerns.

Recommended reading: Quietly Courageous by Jill Randall. We will discuss this book at the May meeting. Order information:

[https://www.amazon.com/Quietly-Courageous-Leading-Church-  
Changing/dp/1538112906/ref=sr\\_1\\_2?crd=3A8NVDPTU31X6&keywords=quietly+courageous+  
by+gil+rendle&qid=1643212514&s=books&prefix=quietly+courageous%2Cstripbooks%2C76&  
sr=1-2](https://www.amazon.com/Quietly-Courageous-Leading-Church-Changing/dp/1538112906/ref=sr_1_2?crd=3A8NVDPTU31X6&keywords=quietly+courageous+by+gil+rendle&qid=1643212514&s=books&prefix=quietly+courageous%2Cstripbooks%2C76&sr=1-2)

Is it desirable for the Executive Teams to participate in the BOD annual retreat? We will discuss at the next meeting.

Future Meeting Dates:

May 17, 2022 – 9:30 a.m.

August 24, 2022 – 9:30 a.m.

November 30, 2022 – 9:30 a.m.

Meeting adjourned at 11:03 a.m.

Attending (from screen names):

Dian

Joe Kay

Dan Weyand-Geise

Thomas Kagy

Jo Anne

Jim Brehler  
David Plant  
Nayiri Karjian  
Jim Henry  
Dan Dieter  
Doug Ricci  
Carl Robinson  
Dan Busch  
Mark Katrick  
David Brown  
Rachel McDonald  
Cheryl Lindsey  
Melodie Rezac  
Kathryn Foster