2016 Conference Leadership Team Report

The Conference Leadership Team is charged with helping the Annual Conference remain faithful to its mission and vision and to be the group that makes time-sensitive decisions between sessions of annual conference. In 2015-2016 it met six times:

August 11, 2015 –CLT met via conference call to discuss two resolutions adopted by the 2015 conference session with assignments tasked to CLT:

* UNYAC2015.7 “Creation of Bridging Team” – CLT decided to speak with the Human Sexuality Task Force and ask if some of it members might consider becoming part of the bridging team. It was also noted that they could recruit other team members by using people who are presently working with some of the issues raised in the motion (such as: Israel/Palestine, BOM, etc.). In addition, two members of CLT agreed to meet with the maker of the petition to seek clarification of his intent and the direction he wants this to go.
* UNYAC2015.10 “Fruits of Repentance: An End to the Celebration of Columbus Day” – CLT decided to work in conjunction with the conference’s Committee on Native American Ministries to develop a liturgy by local churches for use on the weekend closest to the traditional commemoration of Columbus Day. A timetable was established to enable the liturgy and accompanying information sheet to be distributed in early fall.

October 10, 2015 – CLT met in Syracuse to review the work the team had done in the previous year around clarifying the primary task of the conference as increasing the leadership capacity of lay and clergy. Discussion centered around five key questions: 1) what are the barriers that currently keep us from living out this primary task; 2) in what ways does our system need to change; 3) how is our structure aiding our purpose? what needs to change; 4) what is the role of MOTs (ministry oversight teams) and the Connectional Table; and 5) what will our structure look like when we are fully supporting our purpose? The Conference Treasurer Kevin Domanico then shared a report detailing current financial realities. CLT then discussed what it would look like for the annual conference to move to a place of financial health.

October 20, 2015 – CLT met in Victor, NY with members of the Commission on Equitable Compensation to discuss how to best align grants with missional purposes, i.e., to assist struggling but viable congregations to get on a path of sustainable and fruitful disciple-making ministry.

December 5, 2015 – CLT met in Syracuse with Extended Cabinet. Director of Camp and Retreat Ministries, Mike Huber, provided an update on ways CRM expenditures have been brought in line with revenue through staff and program reductions. CLT and Extended Cabinet then discussed the broader issue of how the conference anchors its primary task/culture (growing Christ-following leaders how build healthy congregations) in concrete programs and practices. What will our structure look like when live our primary task? What pieces of our current structure need to be realigned or put aside? Participants discussed how shifting more mission responsibility and resources to local level via District Leadership Team might lead to greater fruitfulness.

January 23, 2016 – CLT met in Syracuse to address financial challenges posed by 2015 deficit in ministry share receipts. Plans for the Cabinet to engage underpaying churches were supported. Spending plan for 2016 involving a)shifting some fixed expenses to variable or contingent and some variable expenses to contingent; 2) suspending all MOT funding in 2016; 3) partially funding salaries of Directors of New Faith Communities and Vital Congregations out of New Beginnings Fund and also partially funding Property Manager’s salary out of Trustee funds; 4) suspending funding for SU Chaplain (after July 1), VIM coordinators (after March 1) and eliminating finance area payroll clerk position (immediately). Spending plan decisions were based on reducing funding to areas with least direct impact on local church. CLT acknowledged there were only hard choices to make and attempted to make the “best worst choice,” with hope revenue will increase and funding can be restored. By unanimous vote, the spending plan recommendations were sent to Council on Finance and Administration for consideration. It was also decided a joint letter from CLT and CFA would be sent to the conference outlining the spending plan and its rationale if CFA adopted these recommendations.

Decision was also made to disband Ministry Oversight Teams (while noting with appreciation how well they served in their time) and allowing District Leadership Team to take over ministry initiation role. CLT also decided to move to a different configuration of the Connectional Table (after March 19th meeting) whereby CLT would meet with District Leadership Teams for purpose of conversation and alignment.

March 19, 2016 – CLT met with extended cabinet and chairpersons of conference teams to review current finances and discuss 2016 funding plan.

The Conference Leadership Team has had a very full and demanding year. The team thanks the conference for the privilege of service and invites interested persons to be in touch to share hopes and concerns.

Team members 2015-2016:

Blenda Smith, Mary Howard, Janet Rothfuss, Nathan Trost, Bethany Printup-Davis, Rev. Robert Sherburne, Rev. John Martin

Ex-officio:

Appt. Cab reps: Rev. William Mudge, Rev. Sherri Rood

Conference Lay Leader: Scott Johnson

Commission on Religion and Race rep.: Barbara Heise

Director of Connectional Ministries: Rev. William Gottschalk-Fielding

Resident Bishop: Bishop Mark J. Webb

Director of Communications: Steven Hustedt