

Synod of the Northeast's Missions and Ministry Commission Meeting

04/28 - 04/29/2017

Holiday Inn, Latham, NY

Friday April 28 – Synod commissioners gathered for lunch at noon and welcome and worship at 1:00 p.m.

2:00 p.m. – Report received from the Staffing Task Force and the work of the Search Committee.

- All job functions being reviewed.
- Personnel Manual being updated.
- Renewal of the Synod Networker contract (3 yrs.)
- Synod Leadership to interview the three finalists for the new position of Coordinator for Mission/Communication with selection expected by the October meeting.

2:15 p.m. – First read of new policies for **new** employees regarding vacation time, personal days, illness, bereavement and possible contributions toward payment of medical, dental, basic life and disability income.

3:00 p. m. – Working groups meet.

I attended the **Working Group on Mission** as a substitute for Katie Rivera Torea and was graciously welcomed by all. We broke for dinner at 6:00 and resumed at 6:45 and concluded our tasks at 8:10.

Our work involved reviewing 18 requests for first year funding that totaled \$318,710.00. We were appropriated \$120,000.00 from the Synod budget to work with. Applications were received from as far north as New England, west to Genesee Valley, east to Long Island and south to Newark.

Two applications were received from Hudson River Presbytery:

1/ **The Pastoral Sabbath of Stony Point Center** whose goal is for Teaching Elders and Commissioned Ruling Elders to understand their own vital need for nurture and perspective, and for communities of faith to learn (again) that Sabbath keeping is not merely a “day off,” but a time to be in , and return to, right relationship with God. The committee appreciated the uniqueness of an application that was intended for the benefit of **new clergy** who enter into a Presbytery. The funding request was for \$23,000.00. The committee chose to fund this effort at the \$12,000.00 level.

2/ **Spirit Talk of Peekskill Presbyterian Church** whose aim is to draw persons who desire a spiritual experience but who are not drawn to traditional church, with a targeted audience of young professionals and newcomers to the community. The funding request was for \$20,000.00. Due to the limited funds available to the committee and to other higher priority requests the decision was made not to fund this request. It was noted that funds were available at the Presbytery level for this initiative.

Saturday April 29 – Met as a Committee of the Whole

9:05 – **The Synod Leader Report** focused on the fact that “the majority of our member presbyteries remain in critical condition” The good news is that not all presbyteries are in crisis and that some are finding new ways to live and work together. It is both encouraging and challenging in how at least half of our presbyteries are reaching out to their Synod for support and resources in taking on this vital work of renewal and missional focus.

The work load for the Synod staff has increased exponentially with the additional requests for Innovation grants, Administration Commissions (Albany, Newark, etc.), and general Synod support. The addition of the Coordinator for Mission/Communication should reduce some of the work load for Harold who now reviews the application and consults the applicant for grant requests to the Synod. It was noted that there will be twice as

many applications in 2017 as there was in 2016. On a personal note Harold reported that there are no current sights of metastasis and that the old sights show significant healing.

Reports were received from the Stated Clerk and the Synod Networker.

The Stated Clerk reported on the work of the Newark and the Albany Administration Commissions and the ongoing challenges involved with these efforts.

The Synod Networker reported on the “New Way Forward” upcoming workshops, the importance of using Facebook and the “Come to the Table” event at Stony Point on Sept. 23rd. and 24th. He also reinforced the need for the new Coordinator for Mission/Communication position.

The Network Working Group recommended the authorization of \$9,500.00 for the Northern NY COM Working Group Retreat to be used for meeting expenses (lodging, meals, speaker, travel; 30 participants).

They also recommended authorization of up to \$6,700.00 for the purpose of holding up to 4 for Networking and Strategy Regional Gathering and 4 Sanctuary Training meetings. Original request was for 3 gatherings and 3 meetings in the amount of \$5,000.00. (Sarah Henkel and Jennifer Rodriguez.)

Both applications were approved by the Committee as a Whole.

The Administrative Working Group reviewed the Treasurers Report and noted that no assets were drawn down this quarter. In view of the fact that the Synod has been drawing down at the rate of approximately \$1m per year, the AWG recommends that in preparation for the 2019/2020 budget, the Synod seeks ways to increase its income, including the following:

- a. Encourage gift giving by Commissioners as part of the funding efforts
- b. Encourage Presbyteries to provide their full support to the Synod
- c. Seek ways to communicate the good work of the Synod to individual members throughout the bounds of the Synod and encourage their gift giving
- d. Review Synod investment strategies to maximize our assets

Other issues discussed were the Palisades Presbytery staffing, Synod staffing and personal issues, the new position of Coordinator for Mission/Communication and the request for individuals to act in an advisory capacity to the working group on matters of compliance in employment law, benefits, and general human resources management.

Commissioners are encouraged to recommend names to the convener of AWG, Jacinth Hanson

The AWG recommended the renewal of the contract with Rev. Amuray Tanon Santos for a three year period which was approved by the Committee as a Whole.

11:30 Worship and adjournment at Noon.

Next meeting: Oct. 6 – 7 at Holiday Inn Latham

A personal observation: The Report by the Synod Networker was a visual presentation on the importance of using facebook and other social media. Of the 22 participants I was one of three without a laptop, tablet, I phone or other means of participating in the presentation. Although not required, I would strongly suggest that our rep have the technical ability to participate in these types of offerings. Not complaining, just some “Old School Guys” observation.

Respectfully submitted: Jim Ferguson