

Alabama-West Florida Conference
CORE Team Meeting
October 4, 2018
Zoom/Christ UMC, Mobile

The meeting was called to order by Ashley Davis.

Those present were: Ashley Davis, Beverly Maddox, Jason Thrower, Steve Lewandowski, Steve Reneau, Jonathan Hart, Tim Trent, Bishop David Graves, David Morris, Debbie Bell, Lisa Hunt, Kristi McClellan, Jeremy Steele, Michael Cobb, Mary Catherine Phillips, Celeste Eubanks, Misty Barrett, Sarah McWilliams, Jim Sanders, Ron Ball, Brennan Peacock, Clara Ester

Welcome and introductions were made. Jonathan Hart offered a devotional and prayer.

A correction to Misty Barrett's name in the previous meeting's minutes was moved by Tim Trent. The motion was seconded by Emily Kincaid, and the motion was approved.

Kristi McClellan gave her report on grant writing throughout the conference. She emphasized that relationships are important. While attendance numbers are important, measuring impact makes for a more effective application. 2019 is the last year the conference will fund the Advance agencies directly from the conference level. It was mentioned that districts need to become more involved in local ministries and take ownership of our responsibilities. Using this model in the Pensacola district has been beneficial and successful. It was also mentioned that it is critical that the CORE Team keep track of which districts are successful- often the local church is more responsible because districts aren't engaged.

Celeste Eubanks presented her report on the At the Table event to be held on October 6 at the Vision Center of St. John UMC in Mobile. Maria Dixon-Hall will be the keynote speaker. The event will also include clergy breakout sessions, communion, and laity focused sessions in addition to the keynote address. Video will be taken to utilize in future teaching settings. To clarify, At the Table is open to all peoples, not just people of color. The purpose is to increase cultural competency (being aware of cultural differences and working through them), cultural intelligence, and self-evaluation as well as train both clergy and laity for cross cultural appointments which is a requirement of the Book of Discipline. This event is made possible through a grant which was obtained by Jen Lusher. This spring, regional gatherings are being planned to continue the conversations started at At the Table. These Focal Point Leadership Seminars will be on March 23, 2019 at Aldersgate UMC in Montgomery and April 6, 2019 at Monroeville First UMC.

Jeremy Steele gave his report on the Ultimate Training Event (UTE). This year's event will be smaller (in the 40-50 person range) and will focus on burn out and exercises to measure, survey, and work through those challenges. A task force was given the question: what could this look like if it were done conference wide? The initial overview is that boundaries of what would and wouldn't fit need to be defined. It could be given in a seminar format with a diverse offering for all levels of church leadership. Mary Catherine Phillips added that a survey was recently distributed conference wide to ascertain the best time availability to attend conference events. The current response total is a little better than half of the distribution list for laity. It looks like the best season to hold an event would be in January or February.

Ashley Davis presented the Connectional Ministries Report and opened with an update on the conference priorities. The conference staff doesn't want to impose these priorities on the local church but there should be some alignment. In Connectional Ministries, Ashley Davis along with Celeste Eubanks and support from the Board of Higher Education and Campus Ministries will conduct campus visits. Work needs to be done on better integrating boards in the work of the conference.

Ideas were brainstormed regarding the structure of the group in order to be more functional in addressing our vision, focal areas, and priorities. For instance, the conference in partnership with ACE is continuing work with Rev. Sam Parkes in Partners in Preaching Excellence. There is a clergy leadership development initiative spearheaded by Bishop Graves. This initiative is executed through a clergy learning cohort which will be composed of one large cohort split into three small groups. Paid facilitators are possible through funding from ACE. ACE is also developing a Leadership UMC program modeled after Leadership Alabama and Leadership Montgomery to foster and grow leadership initiative in our laity.

Other ideas tossed around were:

- Conference podcast on preaching. Pilot with District Superintendents?
- Articulating what we mean when we say "culture of call." Lots of churches never put the call out. There is a misconception that discerning a call is for youth and young adults only. It needs to be open for all.
- Steve Lewandowski shared that there are many opportunities with summer staff at Blue Lake to discern call.
- Steve also proposed planning a marriage enrichment weekend at Blue Lake for clergy.
- Steve Reneau mentioned health- mental health and wellness/physical health of clergy. There is a need for positive wellness initiatives for the mind, body, and spirit. The healthier we are, the more effective we can be.
- Jonathan Hart offered that there is a need to multiply discipleship. Clergy should evaluate ministry from appointment to appointment.
- Clara Ester was glad to see that there is more focus and concentration in areas that have been neglected. Leadership training is needed. We constantly see the same people. Diversity in leadership is a must.

The Bishop offered a word of thanks for the work that is being done and encouragement for the work yet to come.

The group broke out into budgeting teams to discuss the budget meetings and process.

The meeting adjourned. The next CORE Team meeting will be held on December 6 at the conference office in Montgomery.