

**Alabama-West Florida Conference
CORE Team Meeting
December 7, 2017
Montgomery First United Methodist Church**

The meeting was called to order at 10:00 a.m. by Rev. Nancy Watson.

Team members present were: Nancy Watson, Susan Hunt, Michael Cobb, Beverly Maddox, Don Woolley, Jason Thrower, Steve Lewandowski, June Jernigan, Misty Barrett, Jonathan Hart, Lance Eiland, Beebe Frederick, Lisa Hunt, Mary Catherine Phillips, Shirley Woodie, Frank Moore, Frank Dunnewind, Martha Rovira, Jeremy Steele, David Morris, Ron Penton
Also present: Sarah McWilliams (taking minutes)

Rev. Nancy Watson opened with a word of welcome and introductions. Rev. Watson expressed heartfelt thanks and appreciation for the service of Mr. Frank Dunnewind who is to retire on December 31 from his role as Conference Treasurer and Administrator.

Further welcome was given by Ms. Beverly Maddox. Rev. June Jernigan gave the opening prayer and devotional on listening to God and one another.

The minutes from the CORE Team meeting of October 10, 2017, were presented for approval. A motion to approve was made by Mr. Beebe Frederick, second by Rev. Jonathan Hart. The motion was approved by voice vote, none opposed or abstaining.

Budgeting process- budgeting approval to send on to CFA for approval or amendment and will then move on to the annual conference for approval in June. CORE Team is representative of the faces of the conference- lay and clergy "slice of life from our conference"

Mr. Frank Dunnewind began budget discussions by presenting the stewardship report team. Year over year, the current received apportionments are down slightly, 78.37% in 2017 compared to 78.39% in 2016. A copy of the report is attached.

Giving to Africa University and the Ministerial Education Fund (MEF) is below the 2016 level at this time; giving to other ministries increased. Reduced giving to the Ministerial Education Fund is not a historic trend. If the conference were to receive the same percentage in December as we received same time last year, we will be at 89.66% which is slightly under 2016. Apportionment giving could finish fairly strong if local churches are encouraged to pay apportionments. If strong resistance is encountered, suggest reaching 100% through another line item.

Consideration of Budget Requests:

Beebe Frederick presented the Admin Budget Team 2019 budget requests. The line for the Board of Pensions and Health Benefits is level. Conference Administration has asked for an increase to cover the cost of electronic voting (machine rental and technicians) during Annual Conference to eliminate an extra day of the conference.

Archives and History requested level funding. Capital and Operating has asked for an increase of 5.26% due to liability insurance for closed churches. Districts aren't responsible for the property insurance since the closed properties are held in trust by the Annual Conference Trustees.

The Leadership Team Report was presented by Jeremy Steele. The Board of Congregational Development is asking for a significant increase due to staff position that is being re-implemented. There was discussion over the line item for direct bill for new church start pastors. Don Woolley clarified the line items: Congregational Development Office- \$252,690; New Church Start Pastors' Salaries- \$170,000; New Church Development Fund- \$50,000; Church Revitalization Fund- \$20,000.

In 2016- \$200,000 was requested for New Church Start Pastors' Salaries direct bill. It was understood by the committee that those funds didn't come out of Congregational Development, but the monies were debited from that line anyway. In 2017, the committee requests that the direct bill come from somewhere else. Frank Dunnewind suggested that the monies for the direct bill cost of \$30,000 be reflected in the New Church Start Pastors' Salaries line item. Frank Moore moved that the figure be increased by \$30,000 from \$170,000 to \$200,000, seconded by Misty Barrett. The motion was approved by voice vote, none opposed or abstaining.

The Board of Higher Education requests level funding. Academy for Congregational Excellence (ACE) has reduced their budget request by 20% asking for \$60,000.

Committee on Equitable Compensation chair, Michael Cobb, presented their request of \$42,000 which is a decrease from last year's \$50,000. He expressed concern that the conference cannot continue to fund churches at the current level of support. The projected support for 2019 will total \$55,980 with the assumption that there will be no new churches asking for assistance. Discussion was had over whether or not the committee should continue at \$50,000 or take the reduction with the understanding that a substantial increase will be necessary in the future. A recommendation was made that the cabinet take up the issue of equitable compensation at their next meeting and getting churches off of the assistance program. A motion was made by June Jernigan to increase line to \$50,000 from \$42,000, seconded by Mary Catherine Phillips. The motion was approved by voice vote, none opposed or abstaining.

The Board of Laity requested an increase due to travel costs.

June Jernigan, representing the Board of Ordained Ministry (BOM), asked for level funding. However, it was suggested that an increase of \$1,300 be taken into consideration. The Ministerial Education Fund monies will no longer go toward operating costs. Those funds will be redirected directly to seminary scholarships. In 2018, the current amount going toward operating costs will be reduced by half. In 2019, no additional funds will be available. In order to cover the operating costs, the budget line item needs to increase. A discussion on how to fund the BOM will need to happen as once the funds are no longer available, the board will be unable to cover operating costs.

Motion to increase \$61300

Jeremy Steele made the motion to increase the BOM line from \$60,000 to \$61,300. Michael Cobb seconded. The motion was approved by voice vote, none opposed or abstaining.

The team unanimously decided to round ending figures to the nearest 5 or 10. For example, Wesley Foundation number from 4 to 5.

The Mission Budget Report was presented by Nancy Watson.

Change blue lake numbers to 0 and 50- no objection

Blue Lake operations increase- insurance (1.5%), program help, and compensation

Methodist Homes- level funding

Mission and Ministry Fund- 14% decrease- balance in mission fund, gradual decrease funding for mission agencies to phase out support by 2020- reason is because Conference was supporting 6 local ministries to the exclusion of others equally as valuable- helping the ministries locate other funding sources (ie grants), decreases made in ministry areas based on projected spending, annualized expenditures (Nancy has spreadsheet for numbers) Conference wide ministries- increase

Total 460,000 requested for Mission and Ministry Fund (14% decrease over 2016)

The Conference Resource Center (CRC) has asked for a 10.55% increase due to salaries and supplies/operating costs.

Back in 2014, the CRC was deficit spending each year- each year the request has increased to balance out the deficit- trying to control expenses and bring down spending- 2019 amount of \$790,000 will allow the CRC to cover all expenses with no deficit (without allowing any salary increases)

Total- \$6,615,675

Motion to approve- Beebe Frederick

Second- Frank Moore

No further discussion- voice vote- carries, no opposition or abstaining

Beebe Frederick made a recommendation for 2020 budgeting that all numbers be rounded numbers to thousands or 500s.

Michael Cobb gave the lunch blessing. The committee broke for lunch.

Afternoon Session:

Nancy Watson presented on the task force to give grants to local churches and ministries made up of David Morris, Jeremy Steele, Martha Rovira, Susan Hunt

A proposed Core Team/Ministry Project Grant Form (one time special project) was disbursed to those present. The idea is to give one time grants that will provide seed money to start a ministry, or give a one time grant to help ministry grow to the next level. The funding is to be project based rather than contribute to operating costs. The task force will move forward and report at next meeting.

Nancy Watson also distributed a ministry accelerator article used by Virginia Conference as a possible project for ACE to consider. Nancy would like to submit a formal request for ACE to develop something along the lines of Ministry Accelerator, and suggested that perhaps new church starts go through something similar. The task force will determine who would be responsible for processing and approving these grants. Jeremy Steele will be the point person for this project. Preliminary suggestions for discussion will be presented at the next meeting.

No one objected to Nancy asking ACE to take on Ministry Accelerator. She will write them a letter formally asking them to do so.

Nancy Watson then facilitated the conversation around "Vision for the Future and Living in to the Vision" to articulate what the CORE Team does and how it interacts with the conference, districts, and local church. The discussion included the following:

CORE Team is more than a budget committee.

Vision and Primary Tasks- see attached handout

- Seek, Engage, Nurture, Deploy (SEND)- how we realize the vision
- Vision: that every church is invitational and missional, regardless of size or location.
- How can the CORE Team help local churches and extension ministries become invitational and missional? That's the CORE Team's function.
- We move away from budgeting to becoming the stewards of the vision
- Differences between manager/problem solver and a missional strategist/leader based on work by Gil Rendle
- Where is God calling you to make changes and lead?
- Courage is the willingness to lead without regard for reward. What are we afraid of? What is holding us back? Positional arguments are unsolvable.
- Moving forward are we participants or leaders? Are we looking toward agreement or are we looking for connection/unity?

Conference Town Halls-

What assets do we have to face an uncertain future?

- dedicated people
- example of John Wesley, our traditions/resources to pull from in our DNA
- we have the answers in our history
- great new clergy- seminarians and local pastors coming down the pipeline
- book of discipline
- facilities- churches, camps, spaces for people, resources to share- take them for granted, look at what we have and recognize it
- great Latino/Hispanic pastors and lay leaders
- gift of being about to even talk about a \$6,000,000 budget and knowing it could be a reality
- asset mapping- talk about what we have and what we can do with it, counter acts scarcity mentality

What truths do we hold?

- God is amazing
- Christ crucified
- Champion grace
- What's at the core of why we're even here?
- Making disciples- John 3:16
- Redemption
- God chooses to work through us and in us
- He calls us to do work that is possible through him
- If God calls you, he equips you for it- finds the means (on his terms) for people to do that which they are called to do

Don't you find this hopeful? Aspects of an adventure. What's he going to do next?

How can we as leaders in our various areas, how can we help move our boards, churches, agencies, etc. in to the future?

- we go in clear eyed, taking steps in faith and not fear
- listen more
- build relationships and trust

- know your neighbor, identify your neighbor
- it can be hard, but it's not too hard (as we move forward)
 - o hard isn't necessarily a bad thing, there is value in struggle- you gain strength through struggle, embrace it

The next time you meet with your group, engage in asking these questions:
 What assets do you have? What truths do you hold (what's at the root of why we do what we do)? What vision do you have (how can you live into that future)?

Our effectiveness in the future will be measured by how well we lead. A budget is a reflection of priorities. It's a living document.

Beebe Frederick suggested that this movement starts in the local church- beyond boards and committees, leadership starts from the ground up. Inspiration starts at the local church level rather than top down.

Jason Thrower commented that good reminder is to ask questions and point it back to the Gospels for answers. Remind people that God can do immeasurably more than we can imagine. His vision is much greater than we can conceive of. Recognize this and be thankful.

Beverly Maddox encouraged us to imagine what the church can be with God, great things happen when you imagine with God.

Ron Penton reminded us that Financial Peace University is a valuable resource as well.

Looking to the future, Nancy Watson asked the following:

Where do you see the future of the CORE Team? What role do you see for this group?

- important role with communication and relationships
- broadcasting and celebrating the things God does for us- naming them
- walking along side ministries and building relationships

It is helpful to review what it means to say we're part of a connection- what does that mean? That we follow the same discipline, same budget, worship traditions?

- we know that when we need help, there are other local churches to come along side us- sharing of resources- if you can't connect with the church closest to you, how can you connect to the conference? VBS is a good example.
- connecting with Red Bird through VBS
- increase connection through local church members to send things to the AWFUMC Communications Department
- sharing best practices through newsletters especially for small membership churches

Other functions for the CORE Team to consider? The group has creativity, almost like a think tank- ways to help others over bumps. The CORE Team represents a wide swath of ministry settings. What are ways to encourage and foster that creativity?

- ministry incubator? Ministry launching pad rather than updates on budgets time to think creatively
- staying in tune with what's out there, keeping your eyes and ears open to other conferences

Misty Barrett suggested that the CORE Team develop ways to help local churches understand what the team is and what we can do to help them develop/implement ideas.

June Jernigan suggested that the group consider inviting a guest to come and share their "next big idea" to discuss. Also, District Superintendents need to be more involved.

Nancy Watson asked everyone to come to our next CORE Team meeting with ideas for the "next big thing."

Upcoming CORE Team 2018 meeting dates:

March 8 at 10:00 a.m. at Blue Lake

June 21 at 10:00 a.m. via GoToMeeting

October 4 at 10:00 a.m. at Christ UMC, Mobile

December 13 at 10:00 a.m. in Montgomery (location TBD)

Other dates of note:

CFA will meet February 8 to act upon budget recommendations

Annual Conference to approve budgets- June 3-6

The meeting was adjourned at 1:10 p.m. Rev. Jeremy Steele closed in prayer.

Respectfully submitted,