

Minutes of the Board of Lay Ministry Zoom Meeting
August 23, 2020
4:00 p.m.

Present: Co-Lay Leaders Nancy Flint, Gayla Jo Slauson, and Barry Welliver, members Michelle Aldrich, Linda Cockett, Mark Cumming, Curtis Gay, Barbara and George Goree, Ken Hazlitt, Jerry Krause, Paul Langley, Gaylene Maka, Peg Plimpton, Christine Ostendorf, Myrna Prentice, Joan Richard, Cindy Snodgrass, Christiana Tavo, Susan Wheeler, Ruth Wills, Susan Yeager, and clergy Annie Arnoldy and Tezenlo Thong.

Gayla Jo Slauson began the meeting at 4:02 p.m. She welcomed the several new members and noted that we live in strange times. She welcomed the Holy Spirit to join us, noting that we can do all things through God who strengthens us. Then she invited the group to move forward with enthusiasm.

The April 26, 2020 minutes were approved as written. (Wills, Cockett)

Each member introduced himself/herself by pronouncing one's name, stating our position on the board, our district and location, and how long we have been on the BOLM – a short, medium, or long time.

Nancy Flint presented the opening devotion, noting the exceptional times in which we live. She invited us to name a hard time, which led into the video song, “You Can Do This Hard Thing,” by Carrie Newcomer. The Bible reading came from Romans 16:1-6, and the devotion ended with prayer.

REPORTS

Annie Arnoldy explained the “Pilgrimage to the Land of Love,” a three-month endeavor beginning September 7. Endorsed by Bishop Karen Oliveto, it is a study recommended to all individuals – the goal is to have at least three laity per congregation, and all clergy – which entails going deeper into understanding minorities' concerns. The study is designed for participants to work individually for six days a week, and then in small groups by zoom on Sundays. More information will be available very soon.

Annie also spoke about the conference nominations committee on which she and Christine Ostendorf serve. There are still some opportunities for laity to serve on conference committees. Anyone interested should learn more from these two members.

Another committee that is forming for the fall is one which will redesign the conference circuits, with the intention of relaunching them for 2021.

A third group is looking at ideas for getting young people involved in conference-level groups. One of the ideas they are discussing is in having an adult liaison sit in on youth meetings, since they do not seem to have the time to sit in on our meetings.

Gaylene Maka is the new Ethnic Ministries Director. Since she is new to this position and this board, she does not yet have a report, but will speak at the next meeting.

Curtis Gay, Director of Lay Servant Ministries and Certified Lay Ministries (LSM and CLM), explained the requirements and outcomes for Certified Lay Servants, Certified Lay Speakers, and Certified Lay Ministers. (See below.)

Certified Lay Servants: 1 basic course + *1 advanced course required;

may assist in various roles within the local church, such as being committee chairs or worship assistants.

*Note: This course was inadvertently omitted in the Sunday discussion.

Certified Lay Speakers: 1 basic course + 6 specific advanced courses required; provide occasional pulpit supply for various clergy for up to one year.

Certified Lay Ministers (CLMs): 1 basic course + 4 specific modules required, plus other supervision and paperwork; eligible for niche ministry, or pastoral duties in smaller churches, with clergy supervision.

Curtis made several points about these ministries:

- The basic class will be renamed in the near future.
- There is a group of CLM candidates interested in serving in Utah and Wyoming.
- There will be a meeting for the district directors this Saturday, August 29; Curtis expects to place great emphasis on coordinating class schedules.
- District directors will be asked to take the ethics training course.
- Letters will be sent to all pastors in the conference, requesting that each pastor put forward one person [for Lay Servant, Lay Speaker, or CLM training] to assist them in leading their church; district superintendents and congregational resource ministers will also receive letters.
- District directors will still be responsible for courses in their districts but courses will be open anyone within the Western Jurisdiction
- Advanced LSM courses may be taken at any time, in no specific order.

Myrna Prentice, Communications Coordinator, began by stating that Annual Conference (AC) 2020 was the first zoom webinar meeting for the Mountain Sky Annual Conference, and it was overwhelming the communications staff, so she volunteered to help with the BOLM slide show. She explained that not all the BOLM information or the musical background for the slide presentation were added before it was shown at AC; that has been corrected, and is now posted on the Mountain Sky Conference (MSC) website (www.mtnskyumc.org.)

Her next project involves updating the LSM courses on the website. Curtis will assist with that information. Curtis added that they are working to get all the district directors listed on the website under the district lay leaders' (LL) names.

Linda Cockett, UMW President, noted that the conference UMW Annual Gathering will be October 23, with the theme "Meeting at the Crossroads." It was to take place in Cheyenne WY, the crossroads of I-25 and I-80, but will now be held online. The theme remains the same: human trafficking. People may register online on the Mountain Sky United Methodist Women website (www.msucumw.org).

Susan Wheeler, Quiet Disciple Coordinator, has a meeting tomorrow (Aug. 24) with Charmaine (conference office communications person) to introduce the 2020 Quiet Disciples on the conference website. This is a program previously advocated by Charmaine to give publicity to local laity through the conference venues.

Tezenlo Thong, clergy representative from the Bishop's cabinet, noted three major projects that the cabinet is currently undertaking: He first noted how challenging it was this year to cover all the

appointments within the conference. The MSC is currently not producing enough clergy to fill all the positions; therefore they brought more people in from other conferences this year. This lack of clergy is causing them to feel the need for more Certified Lay Ministers (CLMs), especially for the rural churches. Clergy are hard to place in half-time positions, at least partly because of financial reasons, so perhaps the conference will be hiring more pastors plus CLMs or Lay Speakers to fill appointments.

Currently the cabinet is hearing about challenges the clergy are facing. And they are working on circuit charge conferences, which will be online this year (except where this is not possible.)

Ruth Wills and Ken Hazlitt, the Laity Scholarship Coordinators, feel that people with new ideas need to take over this project, so they both wish to be replaced. Only one person applied for a scholarship this past year. Up to \$250 are available for in-state learning sessions, and up to \$500 are available for out-of-state learning sessions. The purpose of these scholarships is to help a person in a spiritual journey, to become a better-informed Christian. (Note: Funding is available for many types of workshops and other learning events, but it is not available to apply to Annual Conference costs.)

HARD CONVERSATIONS and BREAKOUTS

Barry Welliver introduced the topic of Hard Conversations, as in getting to know one another regionally, engaging in spiritual formation and missions, considering our legacy conferences which joined together, and assisting churches in visioning connections with the MSC vision. He provided an overview of ongoing issues as The United Methodist Church prepares for General Conference 2021; topics include human sexuality and the Traditional Plan adopted in 2019, options for Protocol legislation, and the Pathways focus sessions from last winter. And he reviewed the role of the BOLM: to foster awareness of the role of laity, to develop/promote programs for understanding theological and biblical bases for laity in their work and their lives in general, and provide training of lay members of Annual Conference. He followed up by asking how we re-launch church as the current Covid-19 period subsides. Do we know the difference between biblical and secular justice? We are gaining a “new” perspective that people need caring church communities in their daily lives. And there are cultural issues that require our attention and advocacy.

Barry referenced Paul's letter to Philemon, explaining that Paul modeled the Good News, that he believed in the power to unite, and he described the characteristics of a life that is fitting to all followers of Jesus.

The board members were then divided into small groups for a breakout session, to discuss the question, “In what ways are you or do you see engaging with your local congregation on the hard conversations?” The whole group then summarized their small group answers.

The two-hour session was drawing to a close, so individuals are being encouraged to send their ideas to the unasked questions, “In what ways are you or do you see engaging with other churches in the connections on the hard conversations?” and “What are our goals going forward?” These questions could possibly be discussed via email conversations before the next meeting, which is tentatively scheduled for November if the decision is made to meet quarterly.

Gaylene Maka gave the closing prayer, using Psalm 137. The meeting adjourned at 6:04 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Susan Yeager, Secretary