

Minutes of the Board of Lay Ministry Zoom Meeting
November 12, 2020
6:30 p.m.

Present: Co-Lay Leaders Nancy Flint, Gayla Jo Slauson, and Barry Welliver, members Sandy Brown, Jerry Clare, Linda Cockett, Mark Cumming, Curtis Gay, George Goree, Ken Hazlitt, Jerry Krause, Gaylene Maka, Peg Plimpton, Joan Richard, Cindy Snodgrass, Susan Wheeler, and Sue Yeager. Cabinet member Jeff Rainwater participated as a guest speaker.

Gayla Jo Slauson began the meeting at 6:35 p.m. Sue Yeager offered the opening prayer, then sought approval for the August 23 Minutes. No additions or corrections were offered; the minutes were approved. (Cockett/Goree)

During the Introduction process, each member was asked to state one's name, location, and one way each one of us is keeping connected with the laity we represent. Besides the relatively expected phone calls, emails, newsletters, and Zoom meetings, other answers were brought forth, including:

- having an active Lay Servant ministry;
- interacting with assisted living places;
- officer training sessions and Mission u via Zoom;
- upcoming Advent activities and classes;
- Lay Servant Ministries collaborating with the Pacific Northwest, offering joint courses; and
- live streaming memorial services.

As she led the group through her devotion, Gayla Jo asked whether we knew the old hymn, "Jesus is my savior, I shall not be moved." She encouraged us to become like a tree with our faith. A tree stands where it is planted and stands through everything that comes its way! And each tree is different from other trees. Trees are productive. What a wonderful symbol trees are to our faith, which comes with Hope. Therefore, "Jesus is my savior, I shall not be moved!"

Conference Committee reports

Nancy Flint explained the importance of the "Ministry in the Time of COVID" group that meets on Tuesday mornings. The Lay Leaders attend this meeting with other conference leaders. Their focus, of course, is on how to minister in this time of the COVID pandemic. A new recommendation from Bishop Karen is expected to be sent tomorrow (Nov. 13) to clergy, and to others a few days later; the recommendation is that in-person worship should cease beginning next week and lasting at least through January, 2021. The group understands how this hurts small churches that do not have many technology options. The group also is not trying to offend any of the churches, but is recommending these actions for the safety of the people.

Barry Welliver introduced another leadership group which is working to prepare for the General Conference [and its aftermath] Initiative. He invited Rev. Jeff Rainwater, Superintendent of Congregational Vitality, to explain this expected scenario to the board. Jeff reported that some kind of separation will occur after General Conference (GC), and some churches will withdraw from the United Methodist Church/Mountain Sky Conference immediately. And he warned that those churches and people who want to stay within the Mountain Sky Conference should be careful, because church life will not just pick up where it left off. Changes WILL occur. Ministry will need to be recreated in a new way, because there will be fewer people to work with. There will not be enough clergy to serve the congregations; new churches will need to be created. Training for laity to become lay planters has

already begun with interested people, but more will be needed. With the creation of new ministries, there will be vibrant, living churches again.

Jeff also mentioned trees when he referenced Isaiah 11:1. He said that trees will regenerate. But regenerating the church(es) means that money is needed for this to happen. And money is not even the most challenging aspect; that is in developing leadership for this great endeavor.

We can expect that some churches may not even have their own buildings, and certainly there will be fewer people to work with. Then there will be some churches with buildings but with few people. There will be two rounds of developing leaders for the new churches: The first round of training is for anyone who is interested in getting these new churches started. The second round will be for those people who wish to further their training and remain in leadership roles in the new churches.

Finally, there is the question whether GC will be able to meet as planned. “We hope so.”

The third conference working group is called the “Circuit Design” group. They are working to develop a summit in February for 60-100 clergy and laity, so that the new design will be a bottom-up model. The reason for this project is that clergy circuits are losing steam, and laity circuits are not yet operating satisfactorily since the top-down model was introduced a few years ago. Jeff assumed that the board would like to know why we are working circuits new, with so many other questions unanswered about what the conference will look like after GC 2021. His philosophy is that “we're stronger when we work together.”

Clergy circuits were first developed in the legacy Rocky Mountain Conference because some clergy were found to be engaging in a variety of deviant behaviors. Research indicated that those deviants were “Lone Rangers”, i.e. acting alone and were unsupervised. This led to the development of clergy circuits, where there could be some supervision, as well as opportunities for education and support for one another.

This group is still talking about how to structure the summit, which is scheduled for Feb. 19-20, 2021 as a zoom conference. It is hoped that whatever the summit attendees develop will be introduced in April at the District Gatherings, and be implemented in August. There is much work yet to be done!

Small Group discussions

The board was asked to discuss the following question within their assigned small group: What are two or three challenges - occurring within the next three months – for you personally, church-wise, and the conference?

One group mentioned the COVID pandemic, and suggested that churches pull together to support one another. Another group mentioned pathways to moving forward. A third group said that communications need to improve across the board within the conference, to educate the laity and use them more.

The committee was introduced to the book, *“A Leadership Guide for Synergy for Church Staff and Volunteers.”* Annie Arnoldy recommended it to some of the committee members earlier. The premise is that synergy is created when one makes connections with other people.

The next BOLM meeting will probably be sometime early in March. No date was mentioned yet.

Gaylene Maka closed the meeting with prayer. The meeting concluded at 8:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan Yeager, Secretary