

**IOWA CONFERENCE BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING  
APRIL 18, 2009**

Members Present: Hanon, Douglas, Guffey-Lewis, Jares, Boege, Altenbaumer, Howie, Schmidt, Noer, Darmour-Paul, Stonebraker, Benda, Nelson, Lang

Absent (with prior notice): Lof, Sargent, Wenzel, Eastin

Absent (without prior notice):None

Also Present: CM Pleva, ACM's Jensen, Havelka, Stoik

In the absence of the Chair, Vice-Chair Howie presided. He called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m. CM Pleva gave the opening prayer and led the Board in a period of bible study (John 20:19-31) and reflection. Following this period of study and reflection, at 9:55 a.m., the meeting was recessed to allow the Board teams to meet.

**Introduction of ACM Havelka**

The meeting was reconvened at 12:35 p.m. and CM Pleva introduced the newest staff member, Nicole Havelka, Associate Conference Minister for Youth and Young Adult Ministries.

**Resignation of Rev. Peter Wenzel**

CM Pleva announced that Rev. Peter Wenzel has submitted his resignation from the Board of Directors in a letter of resignation dated April 8, 2009.

**Conference Minister's Report**

CM Pleva presented the Conference Minister's report. In addition to his written report, a copy of which is attached to these minutes, CM Pleva also briefed the Board on the current status of the single-governance proposal for the national setting of the United Church of Christ.

At this time, Rev. Jane Willan and Rev. David Mears, Iowa delegates to the board of Justice and Witness Ministries and Executive Council respectively, joined the meeting to report on the action taken by their organizations in connection with the proposal.

CM Pleva distributed copies of a resolution that has been prepared by the Penn Central Conference for submission to this summer's General Synod. The proposal calls on the General Synod to affirm the principle of single governance, directs the Executive Council and Covenanted Ministries boards to bring a single-governance proposal to the next General Synod and calls on the Executive Council to appoint a working group to guide the work of preparing such a proposal.

**BOD 2009-8.** Noer/Hanon that it is the sense of the Board that the Iowa Conference supports the single-governance concept and that this support should be demonstrated by the preparation and presentation of an appropriate resolution at the Twenty-seventh General Synod. Approved unanimously.

### **Approval of Minutes**

**BOD 2009-9.** Schmidt/Guffey-Lewis to approve the minutes of the Board of Directors' meeting of February 7, 2009 as presented. Approved unanimously.

### **Real Property Matters**

CM Pleva reported to the Board concerning the status of the search for new office space.

1. The sale of 600 – 42<sup>nd</sup> Street closed on April 7, 2009.
2. The owner of the condominium complex at 6151 Thornton has decided not to sell Unit 6 as a single unit.
3. The Conference has purchased the land and building at 5609 Douglas Street for \$120,500.00. That transaction closed on April 16, 2009.
4. It is anticipated that the Conference will take possession of the Douglas Street property on or about May 15 and that remodeling work will begin shortly thereafter.
5. The total cost of remodeling the new building, making necessary electrical and electronic upgrades and moving from the present building is estimated not to exceed \$35,000.00.

**BOD 2009-10.** Nelson/Lang to ratify the purchase of 5609 Douglas Street and to authorize the Conference to enter into one or more contracts as determined by CM Pleva for necessary remodeling and moving services. Approved unanimously.

### **Financial Report**

CM Pleva presented the financial reports for the month and year-to-date ending March 31, 2009.

**BOD 2009-11.** Guffey-Lewis/Jares to receive the financial report for the month and year-to-date ending March 31, 2009. Approved unanimously.

### **2010 Budget**

CM Pleva presented the proposed budget for the year 2010. He reported that it was the recommendation of the Administrative Team that the budget as presented be amended to increase the total amount for Computers (Lines 51000 through 51003, inclusive) from \$9,600 to \$25,000. The Administrative Team feels that the additional amount will be necessary to upgrade the Conference's electronic communications and IT capabilities.

The recommended change would increase the total General Operating Fund from \$993,840 to \$1,009,240, an amount that would still be less than budgeted Receipts (\$1,056,000).

**BOD 2009-12.** Lang/Guffey-Lewis to recommend to the 2009 Annual Meeting that it approve the 2010 Budget as amended to conform to the recommendation of the Administrative Team. Approved unanimously.

### **OCWM**

**BOD 2009-13.** Nelson/Darmour-Paul to direct CM Pleva to prepare a form of resolution calling upon the Conference to strive to increase its annual OCWM contribution from 36% of shared OCWM giving to 37% of shared OCWM giving. Approved unanimously.

### **Scholarship Assistance**

**BOD 2009-14.** Schmidt/Altenbaumer to approve scholarship grants in the aggregate amount of \$125.00. Approved unanimously.

### **Fund Definitions**

CM Pleva presented an updated list of fund definitions used by the Conference in its accounting system. He informed the Board that it was the recommendation of the Administrative Team that these fund definitions be approved.

**BOD 2009-15.** Nelson/Lang to approve the fund definitions as presented. Approved unanimously.

### **Amendments to the Bylaws of Mayflower Homes, Inc.**

CM Pleva reported to the Board that Mayflower Homes, Inc. amended Article I, §§ 2 and 5 of its bylaws on January 20, 2009. The amendments authorize telephonic board meetings and board actions without meeting. The text of the amendments was provided to the Board for its review.

**BOD 2009-16.** Noer/Guffey-Lewis to approve the January 20, 2009 amendments to Article I, §§ 2 and 5 of the bylaws of Mayflower Homes, Inc. Approved unanimously.

### **2008 Thank Offering Grants**

CM Pleva presented a schedule of the 2008 Thank Offering Grants showing grants to the following organizations in the amounts shown:

1. New Hampton Congregational UCC Women's Fellowship - \$600.00.
2. Crisis Intervention Services - \$900.00.
3. Francis Lauer Youth Services - \$ 900.00.

4. Primghar Junior Women's Club - \$800.00.
5. Ottumwa Community Outreach Ministry, Inc. - \$1,000.00.
6. Klemme Immanuel Reformed Women's Fellowship - \$600.00.

**BOD 2009-17.** Lang/Benda to approve the 2008 Thank Offering Grants as presented. Approved unanimously.

### **2010 Compensation Guidelines**

CM Pleva reported that the Commission on Ministry has recommended that the 2009 Compensation Guidelines of the Iowa Conference be amended to increase the components of the "Ministerial Cash Salary Guidelines" by 2% across the board.

**BOD 2009-18.** Lang/Nelson that the recommendation of the Commission on Ministry be accepted; that the "Ministerial Cash Salary Guidelines" of the 2009 Compensation Guidelines be increased by 2% across the board; and that the Guidelines as so amended be recommended to the Annual Meeting for approval as the 2010 Compensation Guidelines. Approved unanimously.

### **Other Reports**

The Board received the following reports:

1. Center/Learn/Search – Dianne Prichard
2. Local Church Ministries – Rev. Dr. Shannon Michael Pater
3. Wider Church Ministries – Andrew Buck
4. Iowa Disaster Response Coordinator – Rev. Gayle Strickler, Jr.

### **Next Meeting**

The Vice Chair announced that next regular meeting of the Board of Directors will be on June 12, 2009 at 9:30 a.m. The location is to be determined.

There being no further business to come before the Board, the meeting was adjourned at 3:15 p.m.

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Mary Stonebraker, Secretary

Conference Minister's Report to  
The Board of Directors of the  
Iowa Conference  
United Church of Christ

18 April 2009

## TRANSFORMING CHURCHES – TRANSFORMING LIVES

Maybe I'm weird (there's probably more than a 50-50 chance that's true!), but I think a lot about sound bites. I think a lot about sound bites because I don't like them. I was relieved not to be interviewed about the Supreme Court's decision about same sex marriage – not because I'm shy, or reluctant to reveal my convictions, but because I knew the media would be looking for simple answers to complex questions. I'm suspicious of those simple answers, and generally eschew them. I didn't want to have to oversimplify my thoughts on a very complicated and important question.

Nonetheless, my aversion to sound bites is undoubtedly quixotic. Sound bites are a significant part of our lives. People are busy and don't have time to become as knowledgeable about all the important issues of our day as I might wish they (and I!) were. Those who refuse to trade in sound bites generally cede the conversation to those who do.

The title above – “Transforming Churches – Transforming Lives” – is my “sound bite” for the work of the staff of the Iowa Conference. It's not an official mission statement or anything like that, but it's hopefully a helpful summary by which to remind folk of what we do and a helpful encouragement to the staff itself as we sometimes find ourselves tempted to invest limited and precious time and energy in activity which has little prospect of “transforming churches and transforming lives.”

When we make the move to our new office, we'll need new letterheads and business cards, and signage and more. You can expect to see this slogan/logo more and more as we attempt to “brand” the Iowa Conference as an organization intent on transformation.

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I'm relieved that the decision making about the office move is completed. The hard work of the move, however, is only beginning. Please keep the staff in your prayers as we live through the next couple months. The timing of the move (probably middle of June) is unfortunate in its proximity to the Annual Meeting. We'll do our best.

I'm sad to report that one of my favorite members of the board has decided to tender his resignation. Peter Wenzel was on the board when I began here, and he has been an unfailing source of good humor and good sense during that entire time. Peter tells me he has no particular reason for resigning except that he needs to focus his energies at home. He reports delight at the place the conference finds itself today (as compared to several years ago) and wishes all of us well. I know that you'll share my sentiments in wishing Peter well!

Some of you know that my wider church responsibilities (a part of the responsibility of every conference minister in the United Church of Christ) has had me much involved in work about the governance structures of the national setting of the church. I plan to make a fairly extended verbal report about that process at our meeting and will suggest to you the possible endorsement of a resolution to this summer's General Synod on that topic.

I'm torn about this restructure thing. I need to be clear – there's no new structure which is going to miraculously cure the ills of the national setting of the church. But I firmly believe that a bad structure (which is what I believe we currently have) exacerbates our decline by making unified and coherent planning next to impossible. In our admirably intended goal of redressing past wrongs and creating structures of empowerment for otherwise marginalized voices and groups, we have inadvertently (I believe) created structures of entitlement in which dysfunctional process is rewarded and in which constructive voices become discouraged and eventually leave.

Though there are exceptions, we Iowans tend to be conflict avoidant. We may agree or disagree with each other or with our pastor, or with the General Synod (or even the conference minister!!), but for the most part we keep our dissatisfactions to ourselves. I don't believe this is healthy. We fear that the alternative to quiet is war. We don't want war, so we keep quiet.

In fact, however, the long-term consequence of artificial peace is just as destructive (of true community, at least) as is war. By keeping quiet about things about which we care, we foster superficiality and we eviscerate the community. Instead our relationships with each other become shallow and meaningless. There ARE ways to disagree without being disrespectful or destructive. We must learn those skills, and this is, I believe, a time for the Iowa Conference to overture the national setting of the church and speak our mind clearly.

I'll say more about this.

Finally, I need to say a word about my staff. I am astounded at the skill and diligence and faithfulness of our program staff. They are hardworking and smart and they love the church and they love Jesus. That's a wonderful thing. When I get discouraged (which I do from time to time), they encourage me. They are an incredible gift to the churches of the Iowa Conference. Please join me in thanking them.

I will soon (after the move into the new office) hire a part time executive assistant. I'm both looking forward to this transition and a bit fearful about it. Even though our current support staff is dedicated and faithful, I came to understand a long time ago that I do not have the kind of administrative assistance that I need in order to maximize my contributions to the conference. I need someone who understands my style of working and who is sufficiently insightful, disciplined and attentive that I will be willing to turn over to that person significant responsibilities that I ought not be attending to myself. For a variety of reasons, I've not felt comfortable using the current support staff in these ways, but that's becoming more and more untenable. This probably says more about my limitations as an executive as it does about the current staff, but it must be addressed. Your prayers (and counsel, if you have any), will be appreciated.

Through all the above, the need for transformation continues. Many of our churches are not the vital communities of fruitful transformation that I believe all churches are called to be. I still love them, and love their pastors, but I am not content with the current status quo. That fact itself makes this work hard because congregations (like all institutions) are naturally resistant to change. The work of transformation is not easy – at least it isn't for me. At times it drains me, and that itself becomes a source of concern. Please keep the conference staff in your prayers. We need the support of those who share the vision that the Iowa Conference can become a community of congregations committed to a radical vision of hope, inclusion, grace and change.

Thank you for YOUR support of this work. God bless you!

Rich Pleva  
Iowa Conference Minister