

Notes from Listening Session at Templed Hills – Joyce Oyler facilitating March 4, 2018

13 persons attended (4 clergy), including Joyce Oyler, John Gantt, and me. Names and email addresses were collected.

Devotions by John Gantt

No live streaming today.

Joyce provided an overview of the current structure and the work that is underway. She introduced the vision of being “one nimble, and responsive judicatory that is both faithful in mission and responsible in stewardship.”:

- The statement is too good to be true. People are often to reluctant give up authority and control.
- Concern that the goal statement from the Vision Team doesn't include any reference to God or Christ. We need to be clear about being “Christ-centered.”

In an ideal world, what would a judicatory do?

- Be an effective communicator
- Respond to the needs of the local setting
- Consultation for situations where the church needs/wants help. An example could be assistance with stewardship. The judicatory might provide direct assistance or be a clearing house to suggest other churches that might assist.
- Search and Call
- Authorization for Ministry and oversight over authorized ministry.
- Support for authorized ministry – this is critical! “ministry to ministers,” clergy groups,
- Directed giving for special missional needs
- A vehicle to connect churches together in mutual ministry
- Things that by their nature can't normally be done by a single church – examples are outdoor ministry, certain faith formation initiatives, national youth events.
- Churches need help with Christian Education – perhaps this is available from the national setting, but there is likely an additional need from a middle judicatory. How to do faith formation beyond the traditional Sunday School and youth groups – the culture has changed so much.
- Be a resource center for churches and a connection point for church leaders.
- Articulating how OCWM is used for mission. Assist pastors in talking about the theological foundation for giving. Giving is a spiritual discipline.
- Be the theologian(s) and prophetic voice. If you show that you're transforming lives, have good leadership, and are using money well, stewardship goals will be met.

What historical factors have led to judicatories falling short of the ideals listed above?

- Past judicatories had staff that were specialists. Today we have generalists. That's mostly what we need but there may be areas where specialists are useful. It may be that the specialists that we need are already in the churches and the judicatory could help churches find specialists elsewhere. Not a clear consensus on this by the group. A possible model is to have regional staff that all have generalist skills and each one has one or more essential specialties. It may be a hybrid.

- Our complicated structure makes it more difficult to explain how money is used. We need greater transparency. The UCC bylaws says OCWM goes to the conference, but that's not what happens here. Some are troubled by that.

Three Working Groups:

- Structure
 - At least three ordained ministers, plus administrative support.
 - Some staff should be deployed. They may be home-based.
- Stewardship and Finance
 - Be transparent and tell the story.
- Best Practices
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- Other
 - We should find out what other conferences are doing.

Finding a New Name – what are fitting names?

- Ohio River Conference
- Jack (like Jack be nimble)
- NOW (Northern Kentucky, Ohio, West Virginia), or WOK (WV, Ohio, No. Ky.)

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