

Notes from Listening Session at St. Paul's, Sidney – Carl Robinson facilitating February 24, 2018

8 persons attended (4 clergy), including Cal, Joyce Oyler, and me. Names and email addresses were collected.

Devotions by Carl – “Imagine...” by John Gantt

No live streaming today.

Carl began with a description of past efforts to restructure and what makes the current effort different. Shared the vision of “One nimble and responsive judicatory that is both faithful in mission and responsible in stewardship.”

Attendees introduced themselves and shared their involvement in the UCC and the wider church.

Ideal Judicatory – What would it do? Why have judicatories fallen short? How has the structure of judicatories in the Ohio Conference been a factor in the ability of judicatories to meet these expectations? (or not meet these expectations?)

- Care for the needs of pastors and lay people.
- Help local churches meet their goals. These will differ by congregation. Examples are radical hospitality and mission work.
- Be personally connected to pastors and congregations. Regular follow up with pastors when they come to a congregation to find out how things are going. Might use Skype or other such technology. Currently there is no connection after a call is extended by a church. There is no pastoral care for the pastor. It wouldn't necessarily need to be a staff person; it could be provided by a network. Either way, there is a role for a judicatory. Connection must be initiated by the judicatory, not left to the local pastor. Cultivating this relationship can be helpful in these early months and also builds a relationship where the pastor is more apt to participate in the association/judicatory and ask for help when needed.
- There once was a cluster program that many pastors participated in regularly.
- A description of serving on a fitness review team and feeling devastated by the experience without support.
- There's a difference between pastors connecting regularly and church connecting regularly. Not all pastors enjoy participating in pastor focused gatherings. A description of two churches that have steadily increased their partnership during Lent.
- Search and Call process.
- Ministerial authorization.
- Be a resource to churches and pastors.
- Crisis intervention, whether it be physical circumstances like a floor, or interpersonal conflict.
- Promote the UCC to the wider community.
- Communication to numerous audiences.
- Lifting up wider needs - might include disaster needs, public witness and issues of social justice. Gathers information from local churches and shares information from other churches and the wider church.

- Lay education.
- Outdoor Ministry.
- Have fallen short partially because churches stay in their silos. There needs to be a two-way street.
- A pastor described the relationship he had with past judicatory but that happened primarily by his own initiative, which was ok with him. Another pastor commented that styles vary with many (75%!) being introverted.
- Recommends a book by John Maxwell: “Everyone Communicates but not Everyone Connects.”
- Professionally training for fitness review teams.

Three working groups were described: 1) Structure; 2) Stewardship and Finance; 3) Best Practices

- Different areas in Ohio have different needs. There are some common needs but some needs vary based on geography, urban/rural, or large church/small church.
- Availability of people in the judicatory with the churches – could mean visits to worship services, electronic. The need is more with the lay people in the churches than with pastors.
- Access to specialists are important. The specialists may be part of employed staff but may be a network local pastors and lay people that the judicatory staff can direct churches to.
- Structure committee needs to develop an expertise on webinars and telecommunications. Need to support churches in coming into the 21st century. Also have people that help churches, pastors, and lay people get started with technology. Youth groups may be able to help older persons. If we don’t utilize technology than the restructure plan will simply be hospice.
- Make it easier for local pastors to educate congregations about OCWM and how it’s used.
- Don’t minimize the issue of territoriality. Money often is what holds us hostage.
- Continuity of Lay School programs across the conference will be helpful.
- Training of all types including Church and Ministry.
- Churches need to get beyond Christian Education (or Faith Formation) being exclusively on Sunday morning. They need resources to help them.
- Think outside the box.
- Don’t neglect how we got to where we are. Liberalization of the national setting has lost us members and churches.

Finding a New Name – what are fitting names?

- None suggested today

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