

Pacific Northwest Conference Board of Directors Meeting Minutes, January 5, 2025

Board Members Present: Indigo Brown, Moderator; Esther Sanders, Vice Moderator; Sandy Wisecarver; Deborah Tyler; Ron Patterson, Scribe; Dawn Koloi; Amy Johnson; Leah Atkinson Bilinski; Talaalemotu “Leilani” Alaelau; Tevita Fakasiieike.

Staff: Designated Conference Minister Phil Hodson; Conference Accountant, Andy Warren.

Excused: Mark Boyd, Camp Director, on sabbatical; Wendy Blight; Diana Kutas, Treasurer.

Indigo called us to order and invited Phil to open our meeting with prayer. His prayer remembered the generosity he witnessed at the Bellevue church in morning worship and at the installation of the Rev Stevi Hammil.

At Indigo’s invitation, we shared a highlight of the holiday season. Beautiful and poignant memories were shared.

We approved the minutes for October 29 and December 3, 2024, by consensus.

Financial Report

Andy reported on the finances. Copies of his report had been shared with the Board. Highlights and the actual reports are in Basecamp for Board review, and he welcomes calls with questions.

He shared five years of figures for Pilgrim Firs, N-Sid-Sen and Conference Ministry; our three cost centers. This gave the Board perspective.

Pilgrim Firs showed an upward trend since the pandemic year. The last three years of surplus have replenished reserves Pilgrim Firs is working!

N-Sid-Sen. While our revenues have been better than expected the ongoing losses have been significant. Fiscal ‘22 was bad, 23 less bad, while ’24 showed a \$200, 000 loss. Conference reserves were used to make up this deficit together with a loan from the Wagner fund. Andy is projecting a similar loss in fiscal ‘26. Last year’s losses were significant. We have a serious problem, and he recommends the Board come up with a plan. Q: What caused the serious increase in deficit?

A: Four causes: 1. Lower revenue; 2. Salaries went out of control; 3. Food costs were higher and 4. Repairs were more expensive. All these factors went south at once and while fiscal ’25 revenues were improved and using Upper Crust controlled foot costs, there was simply less revenue. We have four months remaining in the fiscal year, we have little pending business, having lost a couple of groups.

Leah noted that we have a surplus at one camp and a deficit at another and reminded us that while we have three cost centers, we have a single organization, whose health is dependent on all three cost centers. She suggested that we look at this situation from the perspective of a single budget.

Andy noted that the Conference ministry budget revenues are largely dependent on our congregations. OCWM giving has gone down since 2022. There have been a few positive blips caused by church closure donations and some special offerings by congregations. He is projecting less income in '26 because these additional sources of revenue are non-repeating. He noted that his income projections are conservative.

On the expense side, he noted that while a few leadership committees had requested increases in budgeted funding for this year, none of the requested funds had been spent. Budgeted funds are not carried over into the new fiscal year.

He said that, as a Board, we need to discuss what we plan to do with the Unity Fund and how it is funded and managed. He is making a proposal to the Stewardship Committee, but the Board needs to decide.

He pointed out that while we are closing the physical office with some cost savings, actual expenses will go up because of the cost of digitalizing the records of the Conference. He projects a loss of about \$64,000 in the coming year in the Conference Ministry cost center.

Ron asked that as part of the digitalizing of records, a consistent naming convention for all files be established. Phil received this suggestion with affirmation.

Andy reminded us that the draft budget is being proposed to the Stewardship committee and will come to us by our February meeting for review and passage to make the deadline for the Annual Meeting of the Conference. The deadline for posting the proposed budget is March 1.

When asked about our reserves, Andy affirmed that we have reserves for our operations for seven years without major changes. He reminded us that losses at N-Sid-Sen complicate the situation.

Designated Conference Minister Report

Brian Wallace, the interim director at N-Sid-Sen will begin work soon. Search and call around the Conference is proceeding with some movement nationally among potential candidates for open congregations. CM Marsha Williams of the NY Conference will be in conversation with him about Anti-Racism training for the Staff and Board members in the coming days. We will be notified about dates and times.

Phil celebrates that next weekend he will be with our PNC BIPOC clergy and spouses on retreat at the Franklinton Center in Bricks, NC. 22 are attending! This will be a time of rest and renewal for this important group.

He is thinking about possible visioning workshops for local congregations and clergy and possible diversity training for local congregations. This reflects promises made at the annual meeting. He reported progress on a new web site for the Conference and progress on the data management conversion now underway. His travel schedule is booked through 2025.

Giving Tuesday Andy reported that \$5,500 was raised on giving Tuesday.

The Board approved Phil's request for his Housing Allowance designation. He proposed that \$72,000 of his total compensation be designated as Housing allowance. (Moved, Seconded, Passed)

N-Sid-Sen Proposal

Phil began to outline a proposal for a task force to review the situation at N-Sid-Sen and make recommendations to the Board. In broad terms this taskforce:

- would begin with a blank slate
- examine all possibilities
- seek expert advice, locally, Conference wide and nationally
- be supported by staff
- would function independently
- would be talent driven and fact seeking
- would consist of nine members:
 - one member of the current Outdoor Ministries Committee
 - one member of the Stewardship Committee
 - One member of Plymouth Church, whose historic involvement with N-Sid-Sen is important
 - One member of Westminster, whose historic involvement with N-Sid-Sen is important
 - two Conference clergy whose participation would insure the group's diversity
 - Three named individuals: Martha Baldwin, John Eisenhower, and Courtney Stange-Tregear given their unique gifts, talents and history

The group would be commissioned in the Spring, and would have one year to complete their task, offering the Board a written report.

After discussion, with the Board being requested to offer names for consideration and agreeing to trust Phil to select the actual members of the taskforce.....

It was moved, seconded and passed.

Meeting Times

We began a lengthy discussion of options for meeting times. There are simply different needs that are presently difficult to satisfy with a single monthly meeting time. Another factor is that there is often too much work to accomplish to rely on a single monthly meeting. Sunday is tough for ministers, Monday is often not possible for Phil, and Tuesday, our current meeting time has proven impossible for a couple of our members. It was noted that whatever meeting time we agree upon, that the PRC (nominating committee) seek candidates who can meet at that time.

For the moment, we seemed to agree that we would meet on Tuesday, February 4; March 4 or 9 and April 7, 8, or 13.

The Moderator, Vice Moderator and the DCM will refine these dates and notify the Board asap for scheduling purposes.

Nominating Process

The position of Moderator and vice moderator will both be open for the coming year. We have one vacancy as the NE representative. Leah, Dawn and Sandy are eligible for reelection to the Board.

Special Election

Mr. Gene Hill was confirmed as a member of the COM West—moved seconded passed.

Anti-Trans Legislation in WA State

Amy Johnson reported that five anti-trans bills have been filed in Washington State. Amy asked us to issue a statement to legislators. She asked for help crafting such a statement. She will reach out to Justice and Witness to create a statement for Board approval.

Board Retreat

Phil reminded us to do the google poll for retreat dates. Phil will post the dates this week after more of us complete the poll.

Dawn closed our meeting with a few beautiful comments and a powerful prayer.

Respectfully submitted,
Ron Patterson, Scribe