

## **PNC UCC Stewardship Reflection – June 2021**

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What a time we have had over the last year witnessing and responding to the impacts of COVID-19 on our own lives and the lives of those around us! Through these challenging times we have had revealed to us many opportunities for stewardship. God's call for us to seek justice, love kindness, and walk humbly has been loud and clear. The pandemic has stressed our society and particularly those who have historically lived, for un-just reasons, at the margins. Many of us who have had blinders on in the past or who had taught ourselves to look the other way when faced with justice challenges have been moved to confront the immediate needs of our brothers and sisters as well as to strive to understand the specific and systemic factors that have disproportionately put some at greater and need than others.

One of the ways in which PNC UCC has responded to the call for focus on justice is an action that was taken by the delegates during our recent conference annual meeting. When reviewing the conference budget, questions were raised regarding a \$2,000 line item to fund expenses of an Advisory Committee on Racism. While this line item does not represent all of the resources including staff time that PNC UCC devotes to this area, many of the delegates found this level of funding to be embarrassingly low given the overall size of the conference annual budget. As comments were shared during the planned budget approval agenda item time it was clear that a more in-depth discussion was needed. The conference leadership re-organized the meeting agenda to allow for quality time to consider changes to the proposed budget. In the end \$50,000 was added to the budget "to implement a plan to work towards becoming an anti-racist Conference". The conference annual budget with this amendment in place was overwhelmingly approved by the full slate of delegates.

While the annual meeting increased the expenditure side of the budget as described above, the question as to where the needed funds would come from was left to be addressed later. Later is now. The PNC UCC Stewardship Committee met this past week and briefly discussed this. One option to bring the approved budget into balance would be to draw more heavily from conference reserves. That would significantly increase our annual usage of our limited reserves resource. If reserves are to be the only revenue source to fund this \$50,000 increase in our conference annual budget that would put us on a course to exhaust those reserves in approximately seven years. Clearly that is not a sustainable path for us to follow.

While specific plans are not yet in place to make a direct request of conference member churches and individual members of the conference to step forward with donations earmarked to be used for this racial justice taskforce, I think that now is the time to for each of us to make that part of our call. The PNC UCC 2021 Annual Meeting delegates spoke clearly to the need for us as a collective to be meaningful in our financial commitment to this purpose. I, as a member of the PNC UCC Stewardship Committee but acting as an individual ahead of any committee action on this, ask that those so moved add this to their humble walk toward seeking justice and kindly offer what they can to move our amended budget in the direction of balance. Wouldn't it be a wonderful gift to the PNC UCC Board of Directors that its focus on racial justice actions could be centered around how to use this resource to the greatest benefit rather than spending precious time and energy debating where these funds are to come from? Any donation sent to the conference earmarked for this purpose would be greatly appreciated.

Blessings to each an every one of PNC UCC's member churches and individuals as each of us navigates the stewardship issues, at both the conference level and locally, that emergence from this COVID-19 pandemic brings to light. We have weathered the pandemic itself together and will also

navigate the emergence more successfully if we lean on each other and remember to be our brothers' and sisters' keepers.