

Pacific Northwest Conference Board of Directors Meeting Minutes, March 4, 2025

Board Members Present: Indigo Brown, Moderator; Esther Sanders, Vice Moderator; Sandy Wisecarver; Ron Patterson, Scribe; Amy Johnson; Leah Atkinson Bilinski; Wendy Blight; Diana Kutas, Treasurer; Deborah Tyler; Dawn Koloi.

Staff: Designated Conference Minister Phil Hodson; Conference Accountant, Andy Warren; Brian Wallace, Acting Director Camp N-Sid-Sen; Mark Boyd, Camp Director, Pilgrim Firs.

Excused: Talaalemotu “ Leilani” Alaelau; Tevita Fakasiieike.

In Indigo’s absence, (she is on the way), Esther called us to order and opened our meeting with prayer.

At Esther’s invitation, we checked in with a high and low of the day. This was a sensitive and loving opening.

February 4, 2025, minutes were approved as corrected by consensus.

Financial Report

Andy called for the Board to approve for referral to the Annual Meeting the budget as presented by the Stewardship Committee. This information had been shared in Basecamp. He presented the three parts of the budget which will be considered separately.

He began with the Pilgrim Firs budget which forecasts that in fiscal ‘25 there will be a surplus of \$75,000. He projects a \$50,000 surplus for fiscal ‘26. He recommends the Pilgrim Firs budget be approved. It was (Moved, Seconded, Passed) to refer this budget to the Annual Meeting for approval.

Andy shared the N-Sid-Sen budget. This budget shows similar income for ‘25 and ‘26 and similar expenses. The budget includes the funds to continue to use “Upper Crust” as the catering service for the summer months. Large losses were experienced in ‘24 and so far, this year, with another large loss projected in the fiscal ‘26 budget. Andy built this budget realizing that many repairs are needed. There are few changes from last year’s budget

A few questions were asked, including one about staffing, noting that there seemed to be more than needed last summer. Right now, we have only one staff person, Brian. We will be hiring only necessary staff for the coming months. It is hoped that they will be able to train their own lifeguards who will be recruited through “Camp America”. Some of the excessive expenses from last year will not repeat. Andy explained that losing these amounts are not sustainable. The Board is most concerned but knows that a robust effort will be required to turn this around. Our business was paused as we welcomed two of the Co-chairs of Justice and Witness.

Sophie Morse and Jennifer Butner joined us, as two of the four co-chairs of JWM to present information on their work.

We introduced the members of the Board. Sophie and Jennifer shared a document their committee prepared on their mission goals. This was developed over several meetings. This is the 'new' Justice and Witness committee that has reformed and reinvented itself since a hiatus of some time. We include this document in the minutes here:

JUSTICE AND WITNESS MINISTRY

Vision: God calls for justice. "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for justice, for they shall be satisfied." (Matthew 5:6)

We of the Justice and Witness Ministry hold a vision of a world reflecting that every human being and all of creation have inherent dignity and equal value.

Mission: We acknowledge the intersectionality and universality of oppression. JWM's Mission is to actively bear witness to God's love and peace in the world. We humbly and faithfully facilitate and coordinate the work toward justice in the PNW Conference of the UCC. We believe "that nothing can ever separate us from God's love." (Romans 8:38). We therefore welcome and strive to be present in God's offering of Grace for all.

Goals: We plan to develop intentional relationships with churches, congregants, clergy, and Conference leadership. We intend to facilitate access to resources and share power, prioritizing listening to and following those closest to injustice.

1. To listen to local churches as they determine justice needs in their communities, offering consultation around barriers, strategies, resources and partnerships.
2. To nurture connections between and among congregations and organizations doing similar work across our Conference (WA, N Idaho, Alaska) and communities.
3. To gather information from churches annually on the justice work they are doing, fostering a learning and nurturing network for Justice and Witness across the PNW Conference and the National Church.
4. To challenge institutionalized racism and de-center whiteness. This effort will include clergy and board member training, lifting up and supporting BIPOC leadership in the church, and encouraging DEI initiatives throughout the Conference, as well as constant reflection and prayer.
5. To advocate for structural alternatives to the historically dominant, white, hierarchical, capitalist system, in which none thrive. This may take the form of organized, tangible support and/or political activism for strategically undervalued communities such as immigrants, disabled people, the LGBTQIA+ community and those living in poverty, among others.
6. To support efforts toward safeguarding our planet and all living creatures, with the understanding that harm of creation by systemic greed, neglect and abuse impacts those living at the margins first and most.

"We can do all things through Christ who strengthens us."

Edited 1/13/25, JWM

They then spoke of their relationship with the dismantling racism group. There is a growing understanding that they are cooperating with mutuality and becoming structurally more in alignment. Members of the JWM committee and Dismantling Racism Task Force have agreed that the term "task force" implies there is an end to anti-racism work, and since there is not, they aspire to have the folks on the current DRTF be a part of JWM and do that work as part of the JWM committee.

They then raised the question of representation on the Board. While this is not currently in the structure, their request stands. They detailed their reasons for this request:

1. While this is not the current norm, they believe it should be the norm for JWM to have a member on the Board.
2. They believe all leadership committees would benefit from having representatives on the Board.
3. They have not found the process of having a Board liaison a clear channel and they want more direct access.
4. They want something more institutionalized. The membership of this committee is no longer satisfied with "being on the sidelines".
5. They believe that their work is not just outward, but inward in the life of the Conference. They have struggled to get members. Fifteen expressed interest and then they only had two show up regularly until one person recruited people and now there are many members
6. They have little appetite to function as a church serving committee. They want "a voice at the table". They feel strongly that their voice at the table would prevent the last-minute responses which they perceive that the Board has been making. While they know that the board is working hard, they believe their voice is a necessary voice for being a clearing house and to be the connective tissue. They pointed out that they believe Board members have often heard wonderment about how the Board can be engaged in these important issues. They believe that their voices on the board would strengthen the justice and witness efforts of the Conference.

On behalf of the Board, Esther thanked them for their presence and their perspective.

We returned to the discussion of the N-Sid-Sen budget as proposed by Stewardship.

When asked, Andy reported that there are no N-Sid-Sen reserves. These were used last year.

Leah asked once again that we share the resources from both camps commonly.

Phil asked that we carry forth these deep concerns about the financial situation at N-Sid-Sen as a Board. He reported that the taskforce for the future of N-Sid-Sen is close to becoming a reality. Andy suggested that we have resources that the Board can tap, and that we need not decide today. The deficit needs to be a topic of ongoing discussion.

The Annual meeting may need to know how we plan to cover this deficit. Amy urged us to put this discussion on the agenda for April. To meet the budget mailing deadline, Andy will bring to the board three options within the next two weeks and we will vote electronically.

It was moved, seconded, and passed that we approve the N-Sid-Sen budget for review and approval by the Annual Meeting, with the understanding that we will vote electronically on a decision about how to cover the deficit.

N-Sid-Sen Report

Brian reported as the acting director of N-Sid-Sen that they have completed tree trimming, have found a company to fix the water leaks in the tank up the hill and that an electrician will be taking care of some wiring concerns. He is being contacted by groups and there have been new bookings. He was dismissed to continue to prepare for his wedding! Congratulations!!!!

Further Budget Presentation

Andy introduced the proposed **Conference Ministry Budget**. Phil is content with the budget, noting that Conference ministry budgets normally operate with a deficit. This is a minimum deficit. This year revenue showed a decrease of \$25k. We had similar expenses with lower income. The ministry of the Unity Fund was funded by a percentage of OCWM in '25. We have budgeted new dollars for digitalizing the Conference records. Salary increases are 2.3% based on the local COLA number. Questions were asked and answers offered: We had higher income from OCWM because of one-time gifts that might not repeat. We have one congregation closing this year at Easter. (Broadview) Andy notes that he is proposing a conservative number for our income.

Leah objects to the appearance in the budget that the Unity Fund is the reason that funds needed to be transferred from reserves. She noted that lines 9011, 9016, 9026, and 9017 give that appearance. Andy will revise these lines to make the reality of the deficit's many sources more transparent.

We need further discussion of the Unity Fund. This is a discussion that we agreed Indigo needs to lead. At present there is \$66,000 available in the Unity Fund.

The Unity Fund will continue under present circumstances. And whether it's funded or not is a conversation we have yet to have. We agreed to include \$30,000 in the proposed budget, even though the Board needs further discussion. We recommend this budget, but we recommend it knowing some of the clergy of color might want to do something different.

Designated Conference Minister Report

Phil attended from Cleveland. Phil reported that 20 leaders of color had gone to Franklinton. He affirmed the power and importance of this retreat. 10% of our clergy are clergy of color. Today the Council of Conference Ministers met with Karen Georgia, our UCC General Minister and President. She urged all of us to realize that we are in the long game for the cause of justice. This is not the time for rock throwing at one another.

It has taken Phil a year to see where we are. While he despises deficit budgets, this is our best short-term course of action. We need to adjust how we govern as a Board, to make some big decisions. We need to build a runway to achieve strategic purposes by taking a long view of the needs of the conference. We need to avoid unnecessary fights. We must come together. There are so many big things that need our leadership.

We returned to the budget discussion. Andy will be revising the format of the budget to show how we are funding the budget.

Wendy had spoken in Basecamp about how as a Conference and as leaders, we have been complacent about fund raising. She noted that our recent efforts had not been great. We simply need to increase revenue. The Board has fiduciary responsibility to support the revenue side of the budget.

It was moved, seconded, passed to recommend the Conference Ministries budget with changes to the way the Unity fund is noted.

Pilgrim Firs Report

Mark had filed a written report, but he shared with us some reflections on his sabbatical and talked with us about the national situation and how this might impact what we are trying to do. We need to look at our priorities. We need to repair things and use our own labor. As the world changes drastically, we need to evaluate what is important. Pilgrim Firs is one part of this complex institution. We need to have conversations going forward about what we hope to accomplish. Check out the new website.

Dawn noted that Samoan youth had participated in camp offerings and how powerful this experience was. She offered words of appreciation to Mark and Zac. This effort to include the Samoan congregations will thankfully continue.

Wendy asked if past surpluses went into capital reserve funds. Yes, to help the camps pay for capital budget items. Mark said this is how it was done. Using this surplus for deficits prevents this.

Indigo joined us.

DCM Report Continued

Andy and Mark were excused, but Mark decided to stay around. Phil is close to completing the data base. This will be helpful to all of us. COM has helped with this. Several volunteers have sorted documents related to clergy records. The new website looks good. Ben is really fleshing this out. Broadview is closing this Easter. They have a plan for resurrection through the use of their resources. New life is happening in our midst.

Shalom in Richland has been in search for a long time. They reformed their search committee and after a long struggle, they found a candidate. But this person had to withdraw from the search because their home was destroyed by a hurricane. The people of Shalom made a substantial gift to that candidate. And after they reformed their search committee a third time and started their search again, in a couple of weeks they will call their next settled minister. Their candidate is the one they helped and who had to withdraw. They took the long view, and the Spirit responded. Remember, the Spirit is moving!!!!!!

He urged us to breathe and take the long view. May we not react and but rather be proactive. Invest in the future of the church.

He noted that JWM did not get back to him on the questions he raised after their letter to us.

Wendy asked if it was well with his soul? Generally, yes! This week is tough. How should we invest our energy? He reminded us that we cannot swing at every pitch.

Leah raised the question: Brian put forth a long list of needed repairs, how can we support him? We don't want to burn him out. Phil responded that Brian is doing a great job and would welcome more conversation and help. He is starting to make connections and members of the Board can be supportive.

Personnel Committee

Wendy posted goals for the DCM from the Personnel Committee. She pointed out that Phil as DCM, is our direct report. We need to approve these goals with Phil. We direct his activities. We will need to evaluate his performance before the Annual Meeting next year. She said the goals as listed are a living document. Deadlines and targets are flexible. It was moved by the Personnel committee and by consensus, the Board affirmed the document which had been posted by Wendy on February 27, 2025 in the Team Activity section of the Board Basecamp.

Constitution and By-Law Revision

When the new Constitution and By-laws are ready for presentation we need to have a series of town hall meetings for the Conference. There is a small group working intensely with Cameron on revisions to the document he has prepared. That group will soon offer the revision to Indigo for review and then to the Board for feedback.

(There was also a mention of a conversation about whether going forward we need to have COM east and west?)

We received Wendy's resignation as Chair of the Personnel Committee with sadness. (Moved, Seconded, by consensus.

JWM Conversation

Despite the lateness of the hour, we began a lengthy discussion of what we had heard. We affirmed that we needed the questions Phil had posed, answered. Esther had been meeting with JWM since we had not appointed a liaison because they had not been a functional committee when we assigned liaisons. Amy will rewrite the letter sharing an appreciation for their goal document they brought to us, and requesting they respond to the information and the questions Phil had asked them. We agreed not to respond at this time to their concerns about the by-laws and their ask for direct participation on the Board until they respond to Phil's request for information. Amy shared a revised letter. We had a consensus that this letter be sent. It will be signed "The Board of PNC"

Liaison Reports

Ron reported that COM will be requiring clergy to seek Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging training. They are close to a final draft of this policy. They will hold an information seminar at the Annual Meeting about the work of COM that will include this new policy.

We then discussed other liaison assignments.

Board Retreat reminder: May 23-25, 2025 at N-Sid-Sen. Plan to attend!!!!

Next meeting April 1, 2025, at 6:30 pm.

Deborah asked prayers for a woman introduced at the State of the Union address. Lord have mercy! Phil led us in prayer and concluded our meeting reminding us: Do not fear for we are not alone!

Esther adjourned the meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Ron Patterson, Scribe