

Board Minutes 12\_05\_25

**Pacific Northwest Conference Board of Directors **Special** Meeting Minutes,  
December 5, 2025, 6:00 pm**

**Board Members Present:** Sandy Wisecarver, Moderator; Diana Kutas, Treasurer; Morag Stewart; Ryan Lambert; Kendrick Richardson; Ron Patterson, Scribe; Leah Atkinson Bilinski; Amy Johnson; Indigo Brown, Past Moderator; Edwin Galeai; Demontrice Bigham

**Staff:** Phil Hodson, Designated Conference Minister

**Excused:** Talaalemotu “ Leilani” Alaelau; Dawn Koloj, Vice-Moderator; Tevita Fakasiieike; Ryan Lambert

Sandy called us to order and Ron opened our meeting with a prayer.

It was noted that a quorum was present.

Sandy began working through a list of tasks which she and other Board members had identified.

\* We need to craft a letter to the conference explaining our actions.

\* We need talking points to help unify our response.

\*Establish clear channels of communication between board members and churches.

\* We need to have open dialogue with our staff.

\* We need to meet to discuss the search process.

\* Plan next steps with Phil.

\*Sandy needs to be in contact with the CM Search Coordinator for the UCC, the Rev. Diane Wieble.

Sandy called on Phil who began to discuss next steps. He assured us that he will continue to do his job.

We then began a review of the letter to be send to the Conference. Board members received an early draft and comments and suggestions were offered. The following is

the final draft that will be sent via email, posted to the Google group and placed on the Conference website on the coming Monday.

**Greetings PNCUCC members,**

**As you have hopefully read by now, Rev. Phil Hodson has removed his name from consideration for the settled conference minister position. We write now to add our voice as a Board of Directors to his good voice, asking for your support and prayer for him, for us as a Board and for our Conference.**

**Phil joined us as our Acting Conference Minister in February of 2024. He worked tirelessly from day one, and it wasn't long before the Board of Directors (BOD) decided to ask you, our PNC-UCC Conference to call him as our Designated Conference Minister (DCM). You extended that call at a special meeting in June 2024, asking Rev. Hodson and the BOD to enter a two-year period of work on the many issues before us.**

**Alongside that work, you asked the BOD and DCM to discern whether we might feel a mutual call to continue in ministry together. The Board and Phil gave that discernment our full attention, weighing the joys and struggles of our Conference, our various needs, Phil's needs and the path behind, before and under us.**

**Prayerful discernment can be a surprising process; to faithfully engage discernment with openness to God's Spirit, persons must enter it with hands and minds open to arriving at end points we may not have expected at the outset of the journey. That is never easy nor without big feelings, and as your BOD sought to be faithful from a variety of perspectives, we stumbled a bit. The stumbling was hard but as we turned to one another in it, we better realized ways we have failed you. We recognized ways we could have been better partners to Phil and our past Conference Ministers. We realized questions we should have been asking and guidance we should have been giving. It was messy but good work. It was a next step for the BOD in our ongoing journey of growth. It should have happened sooner, and we wish to say to you and Phil that we are sorry it did not.**

**After several meetings of the Board, an initial vote was taken of members present. The vote split, and while that did not complete the discerning process of the Board, Phil determined it best to withdraw his candidacy. He will now complete the final six months of his call among us focused on preparation for our transition while building on successes of the last year-and-a-half.**

***Those successes have been many. Under Phil's leadership, we have built up a tremendous Conference staff team, set N-Sid-Sen back on its path to full potential, successfully helped many churches through pastoral transitions and crises, walked alongside many of our Samoan churches and pastors as they embraced full communion with the PNCUCC, and successfully put before you a long overdue draft for a new Conference constitution and bylaws.***

***Phil would be the first to say that he did not do these things alone, but his leadership and guidance was present in all these things and many more. Rev. Hodson has worked hard for our Conference, and we are grateful for the ways he has moved us forward.***

***There are many next steps before us as your board, and quite honestly, we do not have all of them figured out yet. We know those tasks include turning to Rev. Hodson, our Conference staff and one another with care. We know we need to work with the denomination to begin a search and call process. We know we need open discussions around who we are as a conference and who God is calling us to be. We know we need deep and meaningful efforts in the direction of community-building. The Board has begun meeting to work in these and other needed directions.***

***We ask you for your prayers during this time, and we offer you ours. We also ask for your help in considering how you, your churches and all of us together might rise to embrace the gifts God wishes for us to see and the future God knows is possible in the PNC-UCC.***

***Warm Regards,***

***Your PNC-UCC Board***

**As agreed, this letter will be signed by the Board.**

### **How should we respond to questions?**

Discussion centered around options to enhance communication. It was agreed to design ways for the members of the Conference to connect with the Board. It was agreed to create a place on the website for people to engage the Board. Another option noted was the importance of listening and that settings where the Board just listens might be important. Phil will put Sandy in touch with Ben Crosby, our webmaster, to create space for dialogue.

*(Note from the Scribe, there was more happening in this discussion than I could record, but I had the concern that some of the vital issues the Board had struggled with in the last few meetings did not get voice or given space in our discussion and that our deepest communication with one another needs more effort!)*

**We need to prepare a timeline of the last three years since Mike left,**

*(Your Scribe combed the notes and came up with the following first draft to jog better memories than mine!)*

1. The Rev. Mike Denton resigned **June, 2022 and ended his tenure at the end of September.**
2. The Board met with Lee Albertson, Conference Minister Search Coordinator for the National UCC. **July 19, 2022**
3. The Rev. Courtney Stang-Tregear was hired by the Board to be the interim/transitional/ acting Conference Minister. (All three titles were used in the minutes during her tenure) **August 11, 2022**
4. The Rev. Jonna Jenson joined our staff as a part-time Search Coordinator.
5. The Board hired the Rev. Cheryl Lindsay, a member of the national UCC staff, who also has a private business as a process consultant, to assist the Board and “to serve as an outside voice to help us facilitate our discussion around next steps”.
  
6. The Rev. Courtney Stang-Tregear ,ACM, resigned **April 4, 2023.**
7. The Rev. Jonna Jenson became the Acting Conference Minister.
8. On **May 2, 2023**, the Board asked the Personnel Committee to prepare a job description for an Intentional Interim.
9. A Search Committee began to form under the leadership of the Moderator, the vice Moderator. A group of Conference leaders were considered for membership.
10. Lee Albertson, the national UCC CM Search Coordinator, met with the Board to review the procedure for seeking an intentional interim CM. He will help us train a Search Committee for this position. **June 13, 2023**
11. A small, diverse search committee under the leadership of the Moderator and Vice-Moderator was approved by the Board. **June 21, 2023**
12. The search committee identified three candidates. Two were interviewed and the candidate selected withdrew their name. **August 29, 2023**
13. Three additional candidates were identified by the committee. **October 3, 2023**

14. With the goal of hiring an Intentional Interim Conference Minister by December 1, 2023, the Committee scheduled interviews with two candidates. **November 7, 2023**
15. At a special meeting of the Board: **December 5, 2025**, the Search Committee presented the name and qualifications of a candidate. It was (moved, seconded, passed) to affirm the work of the Search Committee and to enter negotiations with the candidate.
16. Shortly after this meeting, the Candidate withdrew from consideration.
17. The newly appointed National UCC Conference Minister Search Coordinator met with our Moderator and suggested that an experienced Conference Minister who had resigned his previous position might be available to become our Acting Conference Minister to take the place of the Rev. Jonna Jenson who needed to leave us. **January 25, 2024.**
18. A Special Meeting of the Board was held on **January 28, 2024** with the Rev. Hobson and after lengthy discussion we invited him to become our Acting Conference Minister.
19. The Board met with the Rev. Diane Weible, CM Search Coordinator for the UCC and reviewed all possibilities. **April 2, 2024**
20. After extensive discussion and consideration, the Board voted to recommend to the Conference Annual meeting that ACM Hodson, become our Designated Conference Minister. **April 9, 2024** We recommended extending his contract an additional two years, beyond the initial agreement of 6 months.
21. At a special meeting of the Pacific Northwest Conference, The Rev. Phil Hodson was elected our Designated Conference Minister. (129-6, with one abstention) **June 18, 2024**
22. For the past several months, the Personnel Committee sought input from Conference members, and the Board has reviewed that input and held many meetings. At a retreat, October 2025, we delayed a decision until we had more of the Board present. We met again in November and still needed more time to consider diverse opinions and then again in early December. **May-December, 2025**
23. After extensive deliberations, the Board finally had a split vote and Phil withdrew from consideration as our settled Conference Minister, He will continue with us until June 30, 2026. **December 2, 2025**
24. At present the Moderator will enter a conversation with the national UCC Conference Minister Search Coordinator, the Rev. Diane Weible, about next steps. **December, 2025.**

The above time line was prepared in response to Phil's suggestion that we prepare a simple time line to share with the Conference about the Board's actions during the past few years. This is part of being transparent.

As a Board we have a duty of obedience, loyalty and care. While we can and do disagree on many things, we are called as a fiduciary body to work together for the good of the Conference.

Sandy will be meeting with the Rev. Diane Weible who will advise her on next steps. Her experience and wisdom will help us. As in the past, she will probably want to meet with the entire Board going forward.

Phil reminded us to be deliberate, intentional and slow to prevent over-reaction.

It is ideal to let everyone on the Board know what is happening—but the timeliness of response is most important.

It appears that the letter will not go until Monday. Don't rush. He reminds us to be faithful, and to take logical next steps.

### **Letter to the Conference**

The letter, near the beginning of these minutes, is the letter as revised during the meeting with input from several Board members and Phil.

Phil noted that his withdrawal was prompted by what he saw as a situation that was not healthy for the Conference.

Phil reminded us that we all had agreed to be ambassadors to local congregations and that we need to do this more than ever.

Once Sandy meets with Diane, a process will be laid out; including seeking broad involvement as we form a search committee.

We should have a process for seeking nominations for the committee. We need to listen and have listening sessions as we move forward.

We are the Conference! And our goal as a Board is to build relationships and community. Message: you are the conference

Leah noted the gathering at Fauntleroy on January 11, 2026 which is sponsored by the Church Development Committee. Board members could be visible at this event.

Diana reminded us that we need to let Stewardship know what we need so they can revise their proposed budget. Diana will ask Andy to prepare a revised budget with current salary information and what a benefit package would need to be for a settled Conference Minister and the probable cost of relocation. Sandy will ask Diane about this to offer guidance to Andy.

What are we not saying when we say that the Board is not healthy? What is behind that?

This is a question that needs to be answered as we prepare a profile. Leah volunteered to work on a profile. We need to have a compelling story that candidates can see themselves involved in.

What is unhealthy? Demonrice noted that disagreement is not unhealthy. How it is dealt with can be unhealthy.

We talk around things sometimes, often with some passive aggressiveness. We are not direct enough and that impedes us. We are passive about our roles as Board members. We need to know what we need to know to do what we need to do.

Edwin noted that respect for authority and the elders and leaders is very important in Samoan culture. For the past year or so, Phil has been our pastor and Designated Conference Minister and he has not heard that our Board has offered any apology or humble statement by the Board asking for forgiveness. He believes that Phil was disrespected at the annual meeting.

Various members of the Board spoke words of apology to Phil.

Phil thanked Board members for these words and said to the Board: "In the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven". He offered those words, saying that he is proud of the work we have done together. He moves on, confident that he did good work. We are in a better place than when he arrived. Jesus has called us to be forgiving of one another.

Phil pledged that for the next six months, he will land this plane as best he can with God's help and our partnership.

He urged us to be a big voice to call people in. Don't factionalize, divide or silo. Autonomy is never enough.

We need to develop a good narrative that we are growing from our experiences. That we are one body with many gifts: diverse, inclusive and radically loving. Focus on that. What are the next faithful steps?

Sandy thanked Phil for his wise words.

How can we be there for the staff? We discussed ways to do this: listen and care.

Phil will meet with them in the coming days.

Remind them that we are moving forward. Phil will report after he meets with them.

We need to partner with staff. When you onboard someone new in the coming days our staff will be the best eyes and ears that the Board can have. Check in with staff.

Sympathy was expressed to Edwin on the loss of a family member. We hold him and Dawn in our prayers.

We closed with prayer!

Respectfully submitted,

Ron Patterson, Scribe