

Council Summary

December 14, 2011

Sixteen elected Presbytery leaders spent a precious December day yesterday in retreat at Geneva Center with Richard Blackburn from the Lombard Mennonite Peace Center. It was a day of learning, introspection, and conversation about how the principles of “systems thinking” relate to our congregations and working together to advance the mission of Presbytery and the Body of Christ. Nutshells:

- Systems thinking focuses on the whole and the interconnectedness of the parts, whether in families, congregations or presbytery.
- In systems thinking, everything is mutual – problems are complex and influences are always inter-related. Leaders can enable problems or offer healthy responses with a working knowledge of self and those inter-relationships.
- Healthy relationships result from personal balance between the need for individuality and the need for togetherness.
- Leaders are stewards of healthy working relationships in organizations.
- Learning to recognize anxious behaviors in ourselves during times of conflict helps craft healthy responses that support more effective problem solving.
- Healthy self-differentiation, building upon strengths, and refocusing on mission and purpose are key strategies and skills for transforming conflict into problem solving.
- Leaders challenge people to grow and move forward with focus on mission, calm presence, and opportunity for change through creativity, i.e. church leaders are called to be mature, self-aware and faithful to Christ’s mission.

The day’s workshop was condensed from a longer workshop and many resources building upon the work of Murray Bowen, Edwin Friedman and Peter Steinke. It was a taste of more in-depth training and tools for peacemaking in the church, and a refresher course for conflict resolution wrapped in Scripture.

At 4:45 pm EST, Moderator Pam Camren convened Council to consider agenda items requiring action. Council approved:

- Recommendation from Stewardship Ministry Team (SMT) to work with Synod of Lincoln Trails and University Church to increase its Presbyterian Investment and Loan application from \$480,000 to \$521,769 in order to complete the extensive heating and cooling construction project (total cost \$629,500).
- Recommendation from SMT to begin legal work for separating the Ridgedale church building from the manse property, and to discontinue use and close down the Ridgedale church building by January 31, 2012. Conversations are underway for the Michiana All People’s Church worshipping community to be hosted at another site.
- Change of date for the November 2012 **Presbytery Assembly** to the second **Tuesday, November 13, 2012.**

Council adjourned at 5:30 pm EST with Evening Prayers led by Pam Camren.

– Summary by Linda L. Long, Stated Clerk