

TRANSITION TEAM MINUTES OF THE KANSAS EAST, KANSAS WEST AND NEBRASKA
ANNUAL CONFERENCES

October 3 and 4, 2011

Wichita, Kansas

Monday, October 3, 2011

I. Those present: Eduardo Bousson, Gary Beach, Charlotte Abram, Bishop Scott Jones, Bob Cox, Nancy Brown, Sheran Cramer, Dixie Brewster, Matthew Fowler, Janet Maxwell, Pat Ault-Duell, Cody Godbey, Oliver Greene, Gil Rendle, Jan Todd, Tom Watson, Cheryl Jefferson Bell, Troy Bowers, Brian Kottas, David Livingston with Carol Roettmer Brewer, Lisa Diehl and Kathryn Witte.

2. Eduardo Bousson led worship.

3. Tom asked the Team to list any problems that came up at the Annual Conferences. Gary Beach said that there are two groups, one is trusting, and the other group has to have everything pinned down before a vote. Gary wonders if there could ever be enough detail for the second group. Bob Cox went to all three conferences; he noted that after doing the Five Finger Vote process, members of the Annual Conference's curiosity increased. Jan Todd noted that in Kansas East younger folks have questions about itinerancy and older folks have concerns about retirement benefits; those in their 30's to 50's don't have much reaction. Troy Bowers reported that the retirees are apprehensive, and there were many positive comments. Bishop Sherer-Simpson recommended that our story be sharpened about what will make our ministry better. Tom Watson said no one came to the microphone in Nebraska with a negative tone.

4. Tom summarized the discussion by stating that our One New Annual Conference statement needs to be sharpened. Some suggestions were: the Bishop as vision caster needs more detail; sharing resources can become one process; reinventing our Annual Conference. Tom suggested connecting the one conference process with the mission of the church.

5. Bishop Jones reflected on his experience at the Small Membership Rural Church Dream Team meeting. Small membership and rural churches can be more vital by pooling ideas, talents and a common approach; one mutual approach is more likely to be helpful than three different approaches.

6. David Livingston spoke of all of the committees of the three conferences. The committees can become consolidated so people have time for other things. Jan Todd agreed by saying it is a window of opportunity. Nancy Brown spoke of using technology and affirming that relationships can and are being built. Pat Ault-Duell said that some experiential learning is happening, i.e. Small Membership Dream Team.

7. Gil Rendle said that the Team has responded to the dialogue at the Annual Conferences. Now the Team is responding to the raised concerns and telling a bolder story.

8. Carol and Lisa presented a report about places where the joint conference(s) could meet.

Gil mentioned another model that used satellite viewing sites. Pat suggested breaking out some of the business to regional groups or streamlining the agenda. Bishop Sherer-Simpson said some Annual Conferences have clergy session before the Annual Conference session. Dixie mentioned the age of Annual Conference attendees who don't want to travel that far. Gary suggested four regional gatherings.

Gil said that businesses are using viewing sites, but it may not be starting place. How do we move from one experience to another? What are other conferences doing, i.e. Dakotas or Rocky Mountain.

Carol and Lisa were asked to research three break-outs and 3 to 4 weeks in late May to mid-June. Lisa has talked to the Sessions chairs.

9. 6 Member Subgroup Report by Bob Cox.

The Subgroup has five guiding principles: a. Bishop is to be a visionary leader; b. Utilize as little as possible disruptive change in the midst of doing adaptive work; c. the emotional cost of recommendations outweigh the financial costs; d. a new Annual Conference, when launched, will have self-determination, but would best phase changes over time; e. the basic timeline is Sept. 1, 2012 for the new episcopal area, Jan. 1, 2012 is Launch date for new Annual Conference (if approved) and January, 2016 are changes related to buildings, staff, etc. (with exception of Bishop's residence)

Their recommendations were the following:

Episcopal Residence and Office: It will be in Wichita for the next quadrennium.

Name: Great Plains Annual Conference to be voted on in 2012.

Apportionments: Recommendation to explore changes to apportionment formula. 2012 explore changes to apportionment formula in all three conferences. 2014 Uniform apportionment formula among all of the formerly three conferences. Tabled.

Buildings: phase out the Topeka office in 2013; building is not desirable. The staff can use different facilities. Reassess conference building needs in 2014. Tabled.

Staffing: An area Personnel Committee will be elected at Annual Conference, 2012. There are two issues: 1. policies and procedures that include retirement, severance, etc. with the process including consulting attorneys and 2. staffing a new conference. Tabled until Tuesday.

Districts: District Superintendent Task Group will be formed in 2012 to implement in 2014. No change now but will discuss relationships and costs. Their responsibilities are the following: 1. given the values and purpose of a Great Plains Annual Conference, how can districts best accomplish these tasks? 2. What kind of staffing is necessary? 3. What size of districts is necessary or appropriate for this work? The key role of D.S. is being the primary connector in our new Conference; it is a relational and resource (cost) discussion. It is an intersection of the interests of rural and urban churches. There are multiple models. No action was taken.

10. Tom has raised the length of time that the Transition Team will serve. This Team will continue.

11. Joint Distributing Team by Brian Kottas. The Team discussed "Extend Health" system for retirees; the role of the Conference would be to provide a health reimbursement debit card. More Annual Conferences are moving out of retirees health benefits so it may not be available. He discussed the four options that the Team discussed. Research is being done on Option #2. Grandparent date with existing retirement benefits for all retirees then after a specific date going to an "Extend Health" kind of system and Option #3. Something else--Grandparent everyone and leave it alone through a certain date.

12. Asset Allocation by Gary Beach. Recommend an oversight board for the six camps. Also do the same for Campus Ministry. There are more institutions to consider. Gary and Robin are making a list of those institutions and the Conferences' relationships to them. It will take Conference Chancellors and Attorneys to guide us into the new entity. There needs to be research of the donor restrictions. Each Conference will pay their own Chancellor; it is time to get the three chancellors together. It was emphasized that all assets given for a specific purpose will be respected in the new Annual Conference. The Team authorized Asset Allocation Team to contact the Conference Chancellors.

A motion was made to approve the Asset Allocation Technical Team's recommendation of keeping all camps open for the foreseeable future and the camps will be organized under one board. A second motion was made that will keep all of the campus ministries open under one oversight board. Pat Ault-Duell made the motion and Jan Todd seconded the motion to approve. The motions passed.

13. Small and Rural Churches by Pat Ault-Duell. 70 out of 90 invited people attended their summer meeting in Red Cloud, Nebraska; Harold Backus is chair. It is as much about building relationships as anything else. The Dream Team raised concerns in five areas by forming work teams: Providing Leadership for Small Membership Church (SMC), Encouraging Collaboration among SMC, Nurturing Vitality among SMC's, Nurturing Hospitality and Community Outreach of SMC.'s and Strengthening the Connection between SMC's and Annual Conference. The Work Teams will submit a document for distribution for the January Dream Team. A communication strategy was discussed.

The Transition Team is free to share the work of the dream teams unless it is confidential. The dream teams are to work in their areas, not promote the one annual conference concept.

14. Racial Ethnic Dream Team by Cody. Cody, Charlotte and Oliver are developing a base.

15. Eduardo Bousson said the Techno Team will meet on October 17th.

16. Matt Fowler reported for the Youth Dream Team. Justin Lefto of Kansas West will call the meeting in few weeks. They focused what ministry would look like in 3 to 5 years and resources needed. They didn't get to the discussion of ministry in 5 to 10 years.

17. After dinner at the Kansas Area Episcopal Residence hosted by Bishop Scott Jones and Mary Lou Reece, the team gathered for discussion. Appreciation was expressed to our hosts.

18. Leaders in the Sexual Ethics/Clergy Boundaries area have met. They first met at the "Do No Harm" conference and have met since to share resources. They will have recommendations for the three conferences later.

19. The Conference Officers of the United Methodist Women have met. There were glowing reports of their time together. Bishop Sherer-Simpson attended. [It was suggested that the Transition Team could ask for a report.]

20. Representatives of the Boards Ordained Ministry have also met to discuss standards of Clergy Excellence.

21. Eduardo said that there is talk of a meeting of the campus pastors.

22. It was noted that the Transition Team will also need to write legislation for the 2012 Annual Conferences to consider for recommendation to the 2012 Jurisdictional Conference.

Tuesday, October 4, 2011

23. The Transition Team gathered for worship.

24. Future meeting schedule: Nov. 17, 1 p.m. distance meeting, Jan. 12-13 in Lincoln, March 1 and 2 in Manhattan (finalize report). Gil will be present in March, and he will review the detailed agendas.

25. The 6 Member Sub-Committee's amended recommendations and timeline were considered. The Transition Team affirmed them:

A. The recommended name of Great Plains Episcopal Area [and Annual Conference] will be announced in October, 2011. The Communicators will begin work with the branding process.

B. The Transition Team appoints and announces the formation of a Staff Transition Policies working group in October, 2011. Its purpose is to develop policies on such things as severance, relocation and communication between the existing staff and an area personnel committee. It is asked to prepare a draft of the proposed Staff Transition Policies to the January 12-13, 2012 Transition Team meeting.

C. On January 12-13, 2012, the Transition Team will announce the Staff Transitions working group to study of the conference structure and staffing for mission which will include evaluating the location of the bishop's office and offices for the new conference which might include the current locations or a new location. The study will take place during the 2012-13 Conference years.

D. Since the Episcopal Residence is decided by the Annual Conferences, the Sub-Committee recommends the Episcopal residence be in Wichita until 2016. This will be announced in October, 2011. This is recommended to the Common Table, Leadership Team and Focus Team of the conferences. This will allow time for Nebraska to find appropriate housing for the new area bishop beginning in September, 2012; the Task Force recommends Nebraska consider an apartment or condominium rather than retention of the current episcopal residence.

E. The Great Plains Annual Conference timeline will be announced on January 12-13, 2012:

--Three conferences vote on creating one new conference, with an all or none proposal, and the vote is announced on Saturday, June 9, 2012 at the concluding session of the Nebraska and Kansas East Annual Conferences.

--Separate annual conferences held in three locations in May/June, 2013

--Separate annual conferences held in one location in May/June, 2014

--Uniting Conference held in October, 2014

--All three conferences legally become one on January 1, 2015

F. Apportionment Formula will be worked out by a CFA team during the 2012-3 Conference year and be voted on by the Conferences in May/June, 2013. The Transition Team announces the following principles:

--The new formula will be phased in with no church's apportionments being increased or decreased more than 10% from one year to the next.

--The new formula will be sensitive to the missional needs of local churches and the annual conference's programs.

--The new formula will be sensitive to changes in current practice being asked of each of the three conferences.

G. The Transition Team announces on January 12-13, 2012 that it proposes no change in the number of districts in the new unified conference.

H. On March 1-2, 2012 the Transition Team finalizes its report and sends it to all three annual conferences.

I. May/June, 2012 all three conferences vote.

26. The Writing Team is asked to draft the Missional Precepts for the Transition Team's work with the local church and mission field being first. The Writing Team is asked to send out their work two days before the November Conference Call. The Team is asked to send ideas to Pat Ault-Duell for the Writing Team. In January, the Transition Team's Writing Team would have a draft with more missional logic about being one Conference.

27. There will also be a report about the two petitions to Jurisdictional Conference about being one conference. Gary and Carol will write the Jurisdictional motions for January meeting with help from Kathryn and Lisa.

28. The status of the second Episcopal residence in Lincoln will be on the January agenda.

29. The Team discussed the issue of one Conference voting no. More felt that it is all or go back to the Transition Team. Spring Pre-Conference briefing will have a Transition Team member at each site.

30. Charlotte raised the issue about a joint profile for the Jurisdictional Conference Committee on the Episcopacy. Nebraska wants to write it with Kansas West and Kansas East. Transition Team requests one profile from the three conferences.

31. Assignments:

- Writing Team draft of Missional Statement
- Staff Transition Team formed Jan and Gary by email
- Gary will contact the Conference chancellors.
- Gary and Carol will write motions for Jurisdictional Conference
- The meeting venues for Annual Conferences will be arranged.
- The Team wants to keep Dream Teams moving and ask them to send their work into Communications.
- The Small and Rural Church Dream Team meeting summaries can be released.
- The Team will ask for reports from Dream Teams for the January, 2012 meeting. Integration of the dream teams are needed especially in the new Conference.

33. Communications Summary: Small and Rural Church, Episcopal Residence and Office in Wichita, UMW getting together, name of area, forming Staff Transition Policies working group and no change in the number of Districts. The article will be reviewed by Tom, Ann, Scott, Gary and Carol.

34. Sheran offered the closing prayers and blessings

Recorded by Carol Roettmer Brewer