

Executive Team Meeting
March 23, 2019
Minutes

Present:

Lou Bury
Bill Crowder
Chad De Jager
Jim Even
Jewel Willis Thomas

Chad De Jager opened the meeting with prayer.

1. Team reports

a. Pastoral Care Team Report (See attached notes)

- i. Mark Chen is waiting for process to be completed with ELCA.
- ii. Lou Bury Draft program from MFCA was presented, approved and signed by Stated Clerk.
- iii. Chris Thompson at Christ Community church needs to come under care.
- iv. Pastor Bill attended the Women's event by Danny Davis with Jebasingh Jebamony.
- v. Conversation about financial support for Jebasingh Jebamony. \$4500 to pay off his car.

b. Stewardship Committee

- i. Faith Community church has asked that their loan be forgiven. We will reconsider for 2020.
- ii. Funds in Fidelity was transferred into Gov't Securities. Putting \$250,000 in RCA Growth fund, not insured.
- iii. Van Heese no update. Lou will try to find the lien.
- iv. Update will be given i the Spring Stated Session on the budget.
- v. Signers on accounts are James Even and Rich Van Swol. For the RCA committee are James, Rich and Hal Brown.

c. Church Care Team

- i. Zach Pryor, Caryn Bahman and Jeff Klein. They met.
- ii. Committee to visit every church in groups of two. Building relationships. Jeff hopes to build relationship with Taiwanese church and his new CRC church.
- iii. Chad has been working on legal status of J. Jebamony. Met with Randy Weiner and Jeb. Must give a pretty firm commitment from Classis. Must be an employee of the Classis for three years. Stewardship committee will be manager of funds.
- iv. Moved that for the purposes of Jeb R1 visa application, the Classis of Chicago compensation (includes housing, benefits,etc.) him \$40,000/yr. for 3 years beginning later of April 15, 2019 or approval of Visa.
- v. Chad presented a Contract of Employment draft for Jebasingh Jebamony. He also presented Pre-launch Benchmarks for church Planting.
- vi. Discussed status of Pastor Mark Chen of Taiwanese Church

2. Legal report

- a. Lou Bury gave an update regarding the legal matter between the Classis, the ECO, and Rich Schuler.

3. Discussion of J.Jebamony's proposal re "Christ, Culture, and Contemporary Society."

Chad suggests that we seek approval at the Spring Stated Session for the event to garner support

4. Status of Ivanhoe
 - a. Still working on getting the building sold to the Hispanic Church. Our law firm is not being responsive.
5. Bill's stipend
 - a. Motion to increase the compensation for Pastoral Care Team Leader to \$5000 retroactive to January 2019. Will be presented at Spring Stated Session.
6. Other business
 - a. Regional Synod is going to meet with Camp Manitoqua to discuss ways to strengthen the relationship and discuss use of financial resources.

Next meeting is 3pm is April 17th. Come prepared with agenda items.

Motion to adjourn at 11:30am. Meeting adjourned with prayer.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jewel Willis Thomas

Congregational Care Team Report

May 2019

Introduction

Life requires care. Neglect (the lack of care) endangers the present and threatens the future. This is true of congregations as well. The ministries within Chicago Classis require consistent, individualized and compassionate care. We currently have five unique congregations. Each has its own story, season and needs, you will read about each one in this report. The congregational team will build relationships and trust over the next few years so that when needs and opportunities emerge we have earned the right to care and that the ministry of God's kingdom can be shared.

The Team

The Congregational Care Team has quadrupled in size (from 1 to 4)! We now more fully represent our classis and have a greater diversity of gifts. Chicago Classis here is your team!

- Jeff Klein of Wheaton is passionate about seeing the church on mission. He is now on staff with Elmhurst CRC as their pastor of outreach. Jeff is an ordained minister of word and sacrament in the RCA.
- Caryn Baham of Willowbrook is passionate about getting people plugged in. She brings a special focus on the individuals that the church unintentionally marginalizes (the single, senior, minority, disabled, etc.). Caryn is an ordained minister of word and sacrament in the RCA and a member of Downers Grove Community Church.
- Zach Pryor of Orland Park is passionate about helping people heal from brokenness and wants to help the church move outside the walls of the church. Zach is an ordained minister of word and sacrament in the RCA and is currently interviewing for open ministry positions while working in the home improvement industry.
- Chad De Jager of Homer Glen is passionate about getting the church to be the church in its locations. He is a pastor with Christ Community Church and is an ordained minister of word and sacrament in the RCA.

If you would like to connect with either of us or join our ministry to the congregations in the classis - please use the contact information at the bottom.

Resources

1. Free Congregational Assessment through NL Moore and Associates
2. 1 Free Pulpit Supply Per Year
3. Network - we might not have an answer to your situation or question, but we might know someone who does. Don't hesitate to ask.
4. Crisis Management Support - if you suddenly find yourself in a crisis and need a safe, confidential leader to strategize next steps with - contact Chad @ 708.567.6156
5. 1 Hr Leadership Seminars for your consistory or staff
 - a. Defining Current Reality (Tool: SWOT Analysis)
 - b. Understanding Our Problems (Tool: Adaptive vs Technical Leadership)
 - c. Simple Transformational Discipleship (Tool: Triangle)
 - d. Forgiveness (Tool: Desmond Tutu's "The Book of Forgiving")
 - e. Leading Beyond Conflict (Tool: Anxiety Management)
 - f. What's Next? (Tool: God's Preferred Future)
6. Transitions - We can walk with you as you navigate leadership transitions or adjust your ministry to reach your community.

The Work

The main focus of our work has been to request an R1 (Religious Worker's) for Jebasingh Jebamony. In February we voted to provide legal counsel and develop an employment contract for Jebasingh (contingent upon approval of the R1). We are working with the Law Offices of Lakshmi Lakshmanan out of Skokie.

In order for the R1 to be approved we have had to demonstrate dozens of documents that prove our financial strength, the credibility of the job, the locations of employment, the nature of the work, Jebasingh's academic and work experience, etc. Pending final approval the final documents will be submitted to the US government during the week of April 29.

Legally, Jebasingh may not work for pay until this is approved. The classis has provided financial gifts of housing and support while this case is adjudicated. The congregation at Mt. Greenwood has been exceptional in helping Jebasingh. They have donated housing supplies, car repair and financial counseling.

If approved, Jebasingh would be on a 30 month contract with Chicago Classis to plant multi-ethnic communities throughout Chicagoland. He will continue to develop and multiply relational networks, get church plant coaching and develop "New Congregation Plans." The Congregational Care Team will be asking some of our member churches to consider ways they can support this new opportunity (time, office space, worship space, funding, encouragement).

The Congregational Care Team will now direct its resources to visiting existing churches and consistories. Our hope is to establish relationships with congregational leaders and gain an understanding of their current opportunities and needs. Members of the team will begin scheduling visits in the next few weeks.

Requests

The Congregational Care Team brings no motions or requests at this time.

Congregation Updates

Christ Community Church

1.How would you describe the season your church is in right now?

This has been a season of firstfruits. By God's grace we have seen some relationships and ministry starts develop new connections and visits.

2. What signs of life are you celebrating?

As we wrap up our program year we celebrate the most consistency we've seen in our mid-week program with increases in children, youth and adult discipleship ministries.

We also saw 40+ people commit to running the Chicago Marathon with World Vision to raise money for clean water. That is amazing and blew away our expectations.

Our VBS is already almost full for 2019. We have 300 children signed up and will have to close it at 350. There are more opportunities coming, so we are trying to sustain our energy and focus on faithfulness.

3.What are you dependent on God to provide?

We need God's Spirit to give our leaders discernment and focus. While there is plenty of excitement we have to not allow our dreams to supplant God's plans.

We need volunteers - especially for VBS. This is a huge opportunity 75% of the participants are not part of our community. While we are excited about how many are coming - we need enough volunteers to personally connect with each kid and sustain a quality experience.

We also need financial resources and staff discipline. We are using our building and staff more than ever before. We are will be considering how to build with momentum without becoming reckless with money and people resources.

4. What will the summer bring to your community and leadership teams?

June will be our busiest month: Vacation Bible School, Adults serving in North Carolina (hurricane relief), students learning and serving in Philadelphia. Each of those has its own week. Later in the summer 20 middle school kids are going to camp. Worship will focus on the 10 commandments and we hope to launch some new small groups.

5.Is there anything the Congregational Care Team can help you with?

In the summer Chris Thompson will become ordained and we hope to install him as a minister of word and sacrament. We will be seeking classis help with that.

Mt. Greenwood

1. How would you describe the season your church is in right now?

Winter (mature or elderly season), but we still have life and ministry here. We are mostly elderly individuals that are past our prime and many can't be as active as they once were.

2. What signs of life are you celebrating?

We celebrate 100+ years of ministry and a small but rich-in-faith congregation. Our BRAVE Boys and GRACE Girls are active and growing with community children. Excitement is building with the HO Model Train Room. Also, the work with the Spanish congregation and work with Pastor Jebasingh are signs of life for celebration. A lot of people stepped forward to help with the furnishing of the apartment and more will happen as the time for family to join him draws near.

3. What are you dependent on God to provide? We depend on God for EVERYTHING, which we all know is the best place to be. We are dependent on God to provide people, especially younger people that can take an active roll in the church.

4. What will the summer bring to your community and leadership teams?

Summer will bring Vacation Bible School with over 100 community children, visiting neighbors and new adventures with the churches now sharing our space. We will have to do some necessary maintenance, including something with the parking lot.

5. Is there anything the Congregational Care Team can help you with?

We need prayer, financial help when available and direction with the new church joining us. We could probably use some volunteers for the DVBS, even if only for one night of the week.

Taiwanese Community Church

1. How would you describe the season your church is in right now?

For now, the church ministry is just like a spring season. EX: Today (4/12), we have a new ministry called Family Worship Night that will take place once a month on a Friday at a church member's home. The purpose of Family Worship Night is to allow families to come together and worship. During the gathering we will worship God, sing hymns, pray for each other, fellowship, and etc.

2. What signs of life are you celebrating?

I am happy to see that more and more people are attending the adult Sunday school.

3. What are you dependent on God to provide?

I am dependent on God to provide personal time with Him everyday. It's always provide me that I need in the ministry.

4. What will the summer bring to your community and leadership teams?

We have a retreat on 8/2- 8/4 at NIU, DeKalb. The church has not had this outside revival meeting in many years.

5. Is there anything the Congregational Care Team can help you with?

Please keep praying for me and my family as we serve at TCC ministry. Also, please pray for my wife and I's health.

La Capilla Del Barrio

1. How would you describe the season your church is in right now?

No question that this has been and continues to be a challenging season for La Capilla. There are perhaps many reasons, such as Pastor's health challenges and recovery process. Several of our families have also undergone or are going through their valley experiences. The Chicago Winter has been more naughty than nice. Much can be said regarding much of the woes that we have and are experiencing, however the grace of God, and the fortitude of our members has been amazing!

2. What signs of life are you celebrating?

We continue to gather for Worship... Our young people are doing great in school. Folks will gather in a drop of a hat to help their neighbors in a variety of ways. Preparing meals and snacks for homeless school children. Providing clothing to distressed families and individuals. Our people are very approachable and make themselves available to others by listening, relating, partnering and praying. We are preparing to baptize a child this June.

3. What are you dependent on God to provide?

We want to reach a multiplicity of our neighbors with the gospel of Jesus Christ!

4. What will the summer bring to your community and leadership teams?

Violence escalates during the Summer... We will be looking for ways to partner with other churches and community agencies in various anti-violence initiatives.

5. Is there anything the Congregational Care Team can help you with?

Pray for us! We need handy people to help with some repairs in our facility. Graphic person to help design our store-front windows. We need a roofer and someone who can tuck point around brick structure.

Downers Grove Community Church

1. How would you describe the season your church is in right now?

God is leading our church in a season of renewal and partnership. Renewal in that our parking lot is overflowing and partnership in that we have been exploring ways to "Build Bridges" within the Chicago metropolitan area with ethnically and culturally diverse churches, including those that are Taiwanese, African American, Hispanic, South Indian, and South Asian. In the spirit of ministering to all of God's people in the community, we are also exploring ways to minister to the intellectually and physically handicapped in our community through partnership with the Ray Graham Association.

2. What signs of life are you celebrating?

- Our "Emotional Resilience" Class taught by Pastor Ron Ovitt on Monday nights has grown to minister to between 35 and 40 people every week. Some have started to come to Sunday worship.
- Our Wednesday evening dinner, Caring Community Kitchen, (CCK) now feeds almost 100 people on Wednesday evenings, many of whom are from the neighborhood Ray Graham homes. Some have started to come to Sunday worship.
- Over 300 people combined have attended our first two praise and worship nights titled "Building Bridges." These events, which are designed to reach out to churches of other cultures and ethnicities, have garnered three articles in local newspapers, guest speakers from Northern Seminary, and ministry partnership with Rapha Ministry and Hope's Front Door.
- We celebrate the miracle of healing in Pastor Howard from his latest heart valve procedure. God is good all the time, and all the time God is good.

3. What are you dependent on God to provide?

We depend on God for His grace to show us how we can serve Him and His people in the community. We depend on Him for discernment and direction and, especially in this Easter season, for forgiveness as we humbly accept the unmerited gift bought by His Son on the cross.

4. What will the summer bring to your community and leadership teams?

We are looking ahead to further community outreach with our Spring Fling event scheduled for May 18 as well as our VBS scheduled for July 22-26.

5. Is there anything the Congregational Care Team can help you with?

We covet your prayers for our church during this season of renewal.

Pastoral Care Team Report

Mark Chen

Pastor Chen has been transferred to ELCA Chicago Synod. They will hold a Synod meeting on April 27 and during that meeting approve a call for Pastor Chen to the Taiwanese Community Church in Greater Chicago. Pastor Chen anticipates an installation service on May 25. Please set your calendar for that date. More information will soon follow.

Fred Wezeman

Fred has been accepted as a student under care of Chicago Classis. Fred has his MDIV from Chicago Theological Seminary and will be completing the MFCA process for ordination into the RCA.

Matthew Nelson-Rogalski

Will be completing his final exams on May 28. Holland Classis has graciously agreed to give those exams. Matthew has also applied to Albany Synod for a 2 year fellowship position. More information on this Fellowship may be found at: (<https://www.albanysynod.org/albany-synod-fellowship-program>)

Rev.'s Uriel and Rosie Isunza

Both are in the process of transferring their ordination from the Assemblies of God into the RCA. Also, their church, Iglesia Cristiana Esperanza Viva (Christian Church of Live Hope or Living Hope) is interested in becoming an RCA congregation. This congregation includes members of 15 various South American countries. That process will begin soon.

Concerning the transfer of Ordination, Pastor Uriel and Pastor Rosie are in the process of writing a paper on their held position of Reformed Theology. Before he became General Secretary of the RCA, Eddy Alemán had met with them to begin their process of transferring their ordination. In follow-up conversations, they have articulated their acceptance of our RCA held positions. After our team reviews their paper, we will offer it to those within Classis who would like to see it. The one area I have spent the most time working with them on concerns infant baptism and this is mainly from reactions against Catholic theology brought from their home countries.

Check-In

Our next Check-In will be on May 15. We look forward to a time of fellowship as we share a meal and conversation. Please set the date in your calendar and be looking for reminders to show up in the mail and email.

A fun event is being planned for later this summer – this will include our spouses or guest as the need may be. Information will be coming out soon.

Jebamony Jebasingh

Jeb has been in his apartment now in Blue Island (2455 Orchard Street). When he moved to Illinois from Wisconsin his car insurance doubled in price. The Deacons of Mount Greenwood Community Church have looked at his needs and determined a minimum weekly allotment of \$200 is needed for him to survive and continue to make contacts for his Church Start after the R1 Visa is approved. Because of this, we are requesting an additional \$125 per month to maintain the \$200 limit. That would mean the monthly rate would move from \$1500 to \$1625 a month for the next few months, or until the R1 is approved.

Stewardship Committee of the Classis of Chicago Report for May 11, 2019 Stated Session

Membership

Jim Even (Downers Grove Community Church)

Hal Brown (Christ Church)

Rich VanSwol (Mt. Greenwood)

Peter Teng (Taiwanese Community Church of Greater Chicago)

La Capilla is eligible to have a representative on the committee.

Assessments

Classis assessments, Regional Synod assessments, and General Synod Assessments were waived for FY 2018. Assessments will be paid from reserves. Estimated assessments for 2019 are \$ 42,140 for General Synod and \$13,790 for Regional Synod.

Bank and Investment accounts - BMO Harris checking account – Jim Even will be primary signer and Rich VanSwol will be secondary signer.

Pursuant to the motion approved by Classis at the Winter Stated Session MAI Capital was contacted and asked to liquidate the Classis Investment portfolio which occurred in March, 2019. The proceeds were placed in the existing Fidelity Government Securities Cash Reserves yielding approximately 2%. Subsequently \$ 250,000 was transferred into a Reformed Church Growth Fund Savings One Year Certificate yielding 2.5%.

As of April 15, 2019 the balance in the Fidelity account was \$ 1,109,728 and the RCA Savings Certificate of \$ 250,000. The BMO Harris Classis Checking has a balance of \$ 30,677.

Ivanhoe property status

The Ivanhoe Church property in Riverdale is likely to be sold in the near term to a Hispanic congregation which is interested in having discussions to join the Chicago Classis. Approximately \$ 43,000 in assets remain in the Ivanhoe account managed by Jim Even.

Van Heest property lien

The Palos Reformed parsonage in Palos Heights is owned by the former pastor Timothy VanHeest. The Chicago Classis holds a \$ 37,500 lien on the property. Hal Brown of Christ Church researched the issue and reports. The Stewardship Committee recommends that the Classis Executive Team pursue steps to ensure the Classis of Chicago's financial interest in the property. The current issue is pending.

Loan to Faith Stickney

Classis records indicate a loan of \$ 7500 outstanding to Faith Stickney which is no longer with Chicago Classis. Faith Stickney reports that the loan was deferred by Classis until 2020 and has also asked that they be forgiven. The Stewardship Committee nor the Executive Committee are in support of forgiving this loan.

Ministry Grants

All ministry grants budgeted for 2019 have been disbursed.

The Stewardship Committee requested input from the Executive Team regarding future use of reserves and mission grants and posed the following questions.

- 1) Classis reserves are approximately 1.3 million dollars. What is an appropriate level of reserves for the Classis of Chicago given an annual budget of \$ 90,000 comprised of Classis expenses and General and Regional Synod Assessments?

- 2) What is the short and long term vision of The Classis of Chicago for 2 years and 5-10 years out as it relates to growing existing churches, developing new churches, and developing new leaders through scholarships and other ideas? Regarding developing new churches, share thoughts on traditional church plants versus attracting existing nonaffiliated or non RCA churches. How important is the fact that we are the Classis of Chicago in the demographics of our growth?
- 3) Given the wide disparity in the sizes of the remaining churches in Chicago Classis should the model for use of reserves to benefit existing churches be 1) based on membership as are assessments 2) solely based on need and potential to grow a church, 3) a combination of membership, need, and potential for growing Christ's Kingdom? What would be the mechanism to make these decisions?

The Executive Committee has met twice to review these questions.

.Classis Budget

The 2019 budget was reviewed and approved. The 2019 budget with year to date expenses will be provided the day of the Classis Meeting. Please note that the Executive Committee has approved several expenditures outside of the budget which will require a motion to amend the current 2019 budget. These related to legal bills associated with property and incorporation issues with the Taiwanese Church and costs related to Jebasingh Jebamony and church planting. The Reserves discussion will likely require an additional budget amendment in the future upon approval.

Reserves discussion

The Executive Team has met twice to discuss Classis Reserves and consider the questions/issues raised by the Stewardship meeting. We decided that the discussion needs more time and input from involved parties so a final determination will be made for the October Classis meeting. Some broad areas of agreement that are a framework for continued discussion are as follows.

- Classis reserves are at 1.33 million after 2019 budget expenses are deducted
- A 10% tithe of that amount or \$ 130,000 will be set aside for multi-cultural church planting in the Chicago Classis.
- The amount of \$ 500,000 is reserved for future needs and will not be used
- The remaining \$ 700,000 will be used for investing in Classis churches and members over the next 5 to 10 years. Proposed ideas are base grants for each church as well as capital and debt reduction grants
- General and Regional Synod assessments beginning in FY 2020 will be assessed to each Chicago Classis church.