

## Minutes of Jan. 24, 2018 meeting of Witness Commission

**Attendees:** Peg Over (chair), Michelle Clapper, Peggy McFarland, Paula Knudsen Burke, Sam Epps, Pastor Pam Reist (pastoral liaison)

1. Peg welcomed Sam Epps, who agreed to fill Naomi's one-year unexpired term.
2. Peg explained the January 2017 reorganizational meeting minutes had been uploaded to the Church Community Builder website, Witness Commission page.
3. Pastor Pam opened the meeting with a time of centering and prayer, focusing on Psalm 46:10.
4. Pastor Pam shared that the pastoral team had discussed the issue of conflict of interest. She said doing church business can be messy sometimes and the issue was important to discuss. The pastoral team identified three areas of concerns: (1) commission, (2) church board, (3) UCEA (United Churches of the Elizabethtown Area). The pastoral team said their goals would be that we function in all areas with integrity and transparency. Pastor Pam mentioned several individuals who have held church leadership roles who wear multiple hats for different community organizations. We should be cognizant of possible conflict of interest, name it, and hold each other accountable. If there is a conflict we would ask a person to recuse him or herself from the discussion, decision, or both. We should exercise discernment and make sure decisions are made wisely when conflicts of interest arise. Commission work would present the greater concern for conflict of interest, with less of a concern about board meetings. Pastor Pam said there is an issue with Peggy at times representing both ECOB and ECHOS, her paid employer, at UCEA meetings. Pastor Pam thanked Michelle for the insightful feedback so that the discussion could occur. Peggy said that the new UCEA person was very important. The individual should have traits of a strong theological background and be able to verbalize in public. Paula asked how many times they meet. Michelle said maybe five times per year. Peg suggested as a possibility Judith Gible. Peggy said the next UCEA meeting is scheduled for March 15 at 7 pm. Peg will talk to Beth DeGoede about the vacancy.
5. Vice-chair – Peg said a vice-chair represents the Commission along with the chair at board meetings. In the chair's absence, the vice-chair needs to sign check requests from the church office. Pastor Pam said every Commission has two votes. The church board tries to engage in "worshipful work," rather than voting. It is a method to ensure everyone's voice is heard. Paula inquired if Sam or Michelle was interested in the role of vice-chair; each declined. Peggy was interested and by group consensus, she assumed the role.
6. Witness action alerts – Peg inquired if all members were signed up for the Witness Action Alerts. Paula and Sam said they were not. Peg said she would add something in the church bulletin about the Witness Action alert and how congregants could sign up for the alerts.
7. Pastor Pam announced an event Saturday, January 27 from 2-4 p.m. at Church World Service called "Reflections from the year," presented by refugees and held at the Lancaster Theological Seminary. Pastor Pam said it was a free event and she put it on the Witness Action Alert. Sam volunteered that the college has an activist network Facebook page and he will post the event to the page.

8. Pastor Pam said the Washington office of the COB reached out about whether ECOB would be interested in chartering a bus to an April 4, 2018 event sponsored by the National Council of Churches. It is a rally to end racism at the Lincoln Memorial and the National Mall to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the assassination of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Pastor Pam said we could explore renting a bus and advertising in the district. Peg suggested contacting Ken Kreider to see if he could help obtain a bus. Paula volunteered to reach out to Ken. Questions about a bus would include what size available and how much. Sam volunteered to check with Mike Long at the college. Michelle said it would be important to think about how to reduce cost for students. Pam said she was in favor of scholarship aid to those for whom ticket price could present a problem.
9. Pastor Pam presented a Safe Sanctuary team update. Originally when the team was convened they thought they would be called upon to provide physical space like what happened in the 1980s. However, that does not appear to be the need, so the Safe Sanctuary team is testing the waters to see what else is needed. They held an information night for immigrants in the spring. They have connections with Church World Service and PIRC. Pastor Pam said six people went to Congressman Lloyd Smucker's office and spoke to his staff. Pastor Pam said advocacy is huge and they are looking at that, as well as education. Paula mentioned that during the reorganization meeting Pastor Greg broached whether lobbying training might be something the Witness Commission would consider. Paula emphasized how much experience Pastor Greg has in church advocacy. An educational presentation might be helpful for congregants nervous about lobbying. Possible resources could be Harrisburg immigration attorney Shamaine Daniels, who has previously presented in ECOB Sunday School, as well as Pennsylvania Council of Churches director of advocacy Rev. Sandy Strauss. Pastor Pam said she would share the names with the Safe Sanctuary team. They had talked about possibly doing a 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday forum. Sam said college students would be interested.
10. List of speakers for the year -- Peg said in the past organizations that presented to Witness Commission included BHA, Advoz and Samara. She said we could ask any of them to come again and present. Paula asked do the presentations happened every month, and what is the purpose of them. Peggy said that if the groups come, are we definitely going to give them money? What is the expectation. Peg said it is usually designed to be informational and educational.
11. Planning/philosophy witness budget – Peg passed out the Witness and Outreach budget sheet. Various questions were posed about budget line items. If we were going to invite organizations to present, Peggy said she would want to hear more about COBYS and New Community Project. Peg said she would want to hear about the teen hope project. Michelle said looking at the budget it feels like we have the organizations with prominent ties to the district or congregation, but due to expansion in recent years, the missing organizations are obvious, such as the Community Cupboard. Michelle suggested filling in the missing organizations, or take them out and use the money to increase the donations to other groups.
12. Pastor Pam suggested tabling discussion of the planning/philosophy of the O&M fund until the next meeting, scheduled for March 7 at 6 p.m. Meeting adjourned 8 p.m.