

CPMC Conference Ministers and Congregational Pastors

Wednesday, April 15, 2020

Susan Janzen opened the meeting with prayer.

Conference staff shared the news that there will not be an in-person Annual Meeting this June, but rather that a delegate session will be held by Zoom on Saturday, June 20, and that CPMC is asking congregations to celebrate Conference Sunday on June 21. More information about the Zoom session and resources for Sunday will be forthcoming. At this point, the plan is for the speaker engaged for this year, David Fitch, to be with us in 2021 in the Twin Cities.

Conference staff also shared a new assistance fund set up by MCC, MDS, and Everence in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This \$550,000 fund is designed to help congregations and church members through this time. More information about eligibility and an application form can be found on the CPMC web site.

Discussion turned to the CARES act and how it relates to churches.

Susan noted that Matt Troyer-Miller has extensive experience with working with government agencies in times of crisis. He indicated that these agencies look to clergy to help them identify priorities for assistance, and sometimes even see clergy as “unpaid staff.”

Joel Beachy from East Union stated that while their need for funding isn’t immediate, they anticipate that giving will drop off in a couple of months as the crisis drags on.

Susan then read “Waiting,” a poem about life during the COVID-19 pandemic, by 11-year-old Beulah Landis, and shared an article by Jessie Cruickshank about “Leading Your Church in a Prolonged Crisis.”

Cruickshank has served as the director of a wilderness ministry school and suggests that leading in a crisis, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, is more like an expedition than a sprint. It is a journey with an arc and a path. Leadership for the long haul goes through four predictable phases (the time frame for each phase depends on how the crisis progresses):

- **BUILDING:** creating teams and finding solutions to logistical issues (days 1-14)
- **BREAKING:** learning what you can’t control; emotional, mental, and spiritual fatigue set in (days 14-28)
- **BAPTIZING:** maintaining plans and working rhythms; guarding against apathy and depression; practicing a ministry of presence (days 28-60)
- **BUDDING:** new ideas arise as you move beyond the crisis; opportunities come for deep change and new vision (beyond day 60)

Susan advised that it is important to give yourself permission to feel your feelings and that it is also important to process your own emotions. This helps you to determine what you must do. Everyone comes to the end of themselves by the 30-day mark of a crisis. She noted that the

author suggests that if leaders are not present to someone or the group during the “Breaking” part of the process, they won’t be invited to the rebuilding part of the process.

Susan invited reflections on how everyone was currently feeling.

Galen Kauffman, Bethel MC, Mountain Lake, MN – noted that the big push toward Easter is past and he feels like he is “over the hump”. They have had almost the full rotation of monthly committee meetings by ZOOM and it is starting to normalize.

Several others agreed with the comment about the push to Easter being behind them now.

Suzanne Ford, Zion MC – called it the “lull after Easter”. She said some really good things have happened this past week. People are self-reflecting more now. She noted that COVID-19 deaths are starting to touch their congregation—not directly, but family members of church members have passed away suddenly from COVID-19 related illnesses and this is difficult. She has been staying in touch by telephone and noted that the Deacons in her church as well as other church members are also doing this for grieving families. “We all need each other. We are all frightened, grieving, tired.”

David Heusinkveld, West Union MC – They invited church members to submit photos of sunrises and received about 30. These were shown while a hymn was played on Easter morning. David expressed that he feels he has reached a new equilibrium in these strange times and also feels that the congregation is achieving this. He is finding new ways to be a pastor in isolation, but feels like he is disconnected from his congregants and in a vacuum. He noted surprise at how much information he used to absorb just by being in a person’s physical presence on a Sunday morning, and how that is now gone and contributes to the information vacuum he is experiencing. He asked, “How do we support one another?”

Corey Miller – Salem Zion MC – had some questions about how the gift of the sermon from the Conference Ministers would work.

The Conference Ministers are still coordinating this. Amanda will be preaching the sermon. The Scripture and a prayer will be done by Susan and Nathan. It will be made available as a “all-in-one” presentation and also in its separate components for pastors to use in their individual service presentations. They will also make available a WORD document for distribution to those without internet connection. Presentations will be available by Wednesday, April 22, 2020.

Susan asked, “Are we just sort of waiting to go back to ‘normal’?” The acuteness of the crisis is past (for the moment). “What do you (pastors) need?” from conference ministers in this time.