

NCNC-UCC Annual Gathering Business Meeting
June 16, 2018
10:15 – 10:45 am

Begin: 10:21 am

Election of Conference Leadership (Mr. Theron Jones)

Presented by Mr. Theron Jones, Vice-Moderator – Pilgrim Community Church, SF. Slate of names projected onto screens.

- Conference Council
- Committee on Ministry – Section A
- Committee on Ministry – Section B
- Committee on Ministry – Section C – In the works to be reorganized
- Committee on Ministry – Section E
- Youth & Outdoor Ministries (YOMC) – 1st

Theron Jones presented slate and moves to approve. No need to second since came from the committee. Unanimous vote. Passed as presented.

- No nominations from the floor.
- Questions at yellow mike:
 - Pastor Casey Tinnen – Loomis Basin Congregational Church – Sacramento Valley
 - Rob will give the nominated names in writing. This is for YOMC 2020 open position.

2019 Conference Budget Discernment

Presented by Rob Parrish, Council Treasurer – Eden UCC, Hayward. Projected budget onto screens.

- Gerald Delonso – Skyline Church – Santa Clara Valley Association
What happens to the balance? To fund negative cash flow.
- James Kosko – Squaw Valley – Sacramento Valley
From property, funds created the Church Vitality Fund

Rob moves to adopt budget. No need seconded since presented through council. No questions. No comments. Unanimous vote. Passed as presented.

Vice-Moderator's Announcements

- Mountain Valley in Night's Valley
- Petaluma Church volunteered to hold all the backpacks.
- HR Bootcamp workshop – Presented again

Moderator Announcement:

Southern Border – Conference minister is drafting letter. Hope Signatures on that will be sent to appropriate people.

Meeting adjourned 10:44 am

The following are notes provided from the discernment sessions.

Discernment: Palestine's land has diminished drastically since the 1946 Palestinian's are denied freedom of movement and feel dehumanized by Israel's control and dominance.

Richard Brabham was the facilitator.

Esther Riley was the convener.

Position #1: ACLU opposes the Senate Bill (S.720) & House Bill (HR1697). Israel Anti-Boycott Act (1st Amendment Right to Boycott)

Bill would prevent companies and organizations from boycotting Israel' exports ... could face penalties (Caterpillar, HP and ore are US companies operating in Israel)

Position #2: S.2940 HR5924

NCNC UCC urges NO on these bills (erosion of our First Amendment)

Add: Nevada to position (not just California) because we are NCNC.

Suggestions:

1. Esther email us all a sample letter to send to our reps. Postcards are better.
2. Make phone calls
3. Join UCC PIN

Notes taken by Carol Chivers (408) 813-7717

Discernment: Follow Me- 6/16/18 NCNC Amendment of Constitution

Pastor Renie Kirk started. She is from Community Congregational Church in Benicia. She mentioned that CCC is getting more denominations worshiping in her church, including Hari Krishna's, Muslims, and people who had trouble with the G-O-D concept. One person in the church had been denied membership because they could not say they believed in God. There were other people who were also just on the border of the church, who could be "in" the church, but not "of" the church.

The church began to discuss what it means to be a member. Is everyone invited to the table of Grace as members? It is not about taking God or Christ out of the Church, it's about putting Jesus back into the church. It isn't about asking people to take a litmus test, it's about asking people to be members. Jesus didn't require people to meet John first before they could walk with him. He simply said "follow me". He never insisted on baptism. Baptism should be a choice, not a requirement. We should invite people to follow Jesus. The church now has many people with mixed beliefs, but no church on any given day, can say that 100% of people in the pews believe in God on any given Sunday. It's also allowed some of her church elders of 40 years in the church, to bring their doubts before because they were afraid of losing their membership.

Mary Susan Gast continued- to bring this conversation into a larger context. She mentioned she had talked about this issue in the Conference in the early 2000's. There are those among us who will not make this particular statement of belief. Our national constitution of the UCC has no statement of belief because two denominations came together and both needed to be able to

believe in. It's very easy to claim a believer's identity without following Jesus. We want to look critically at Jesus, and if those who are not believers want to be a part of this, that should be a good thing.

The national Constitution does speak for the individual churches, but it allows for opening up of other options a freeing up for local churches. This motion comes from a local church, then the Conference, then the national level. Today she would like to see if the NCNC would like to send this proposed amendment to the UCC board via the president. The vote is on whether this should be part of the national conversation, and what it means to follow Jesus.

North Hollywood Pastor spoke that in his church baptism became an issue as they had many people of different faith's coming to their church and they instituted baptism by faith.

Sally from First Congregational Church in San Raphael stated that the word in the Bible for 'belief' used to be a verb not a noun, and meant living in faith. Do the 'verb thing' and follow Jesus in faith. She also requested that the commitment to follow Jesus, another Pastor request "reverence" of Jesus.

Mary Susan pointed out that in the early days to follow Jesus meant you weren't following Ceasar.

Pastor Renie pointed out that most people who come to church are coming to the United Church of Christ (versus Unitarians Considering Christ as one person questioned). She also said that in her new members class she talks about what it means to follow Jesus. The Pastors of their own churches can discuss Jesus.

One person pointed out that the current Constitution states that their should be a reaffirmation in faith, but not in what. He asked if we should be a church where people belong to reinforce their faith, or a church that allows people to discover their faith.

One person like that by having the conversation you allow for doubt.

One person said the "come follow me" is not so we can fill our seats, but rather get more people following Jesus.

One person said this sounds like a more interfaith church community versus a church with history.

Pastor Renie said that the person that started this had been in her church for ten years by believing in nature, and had been blocked from membership and that this was the conversation, not an interfaith or geographical issue.

Baptism would continue to happen as it has always happened. Mary Susan said that church membership would not hinge on baptism but that she also believes Jesus saved the world. One person said she was also struggling with the baptism part.

One person stated that it was rather colonial in approach by stripping away identity and culture. He thinks people should be solidly Christian in belief. He feels that as a denomination we would be watering ourselves down in the world. Mary Susan restated that the local churches are free to do what they choose, but that they often transpose what's in the national Constitution for their own churches. She said this would open up churches to have a larger dialogue.

One person shared that her Japanese American church has people that identify as both Buddhist and Christian and this has made them somewhat second class in the Presbyterian church.

One person pointed out that in the early church were not called Christians, but rather "followers of the way". His church has never required baptism.

One said that this might have repercussions with our relationships as a church body.

Another said that many people were baptized as children so didn't make a commitment. Why are they held to a different standard?

Logistical questions were asked- if we vote on this is the National Conference required to address this and Mary Susan is unclear about that. She answered that no other conference has brought this forward.

One person was very concerned about this as she feels that this is turning this into a church that has Jesus as an optional figure. Are we losing when we try to open up space so wide that we lose who we are. She would like Christ to be a requirement for joining a church.

Another person said that the United Church of Christ is united and uniting, and that people should be baptized as Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist.

Mary Susan stated that nothing will change our belief systems will not be changed by this proposed resolution. Each church has it as strong as it needs to be. She pointed out again that what is said on a national level is not binding to local churches. Pastor Renie said the point of this is to bring people closer to Christ to meet Jesus and that they can come who they are, with their doubts and foibles. It's about inviting people to the table, fully, as they are.

Shelby Riddle- Scribe

Discernment: UCC Constitutional Change Ratification

Dick Hom & Liz Armstrong presented. No written report submitted.

Discernment: Palestinian Children

Mike Hill and Casey Ream presented. No written report submitted.

Respectfully submitted,
Rev. Melissa Tumaneng, Conference Council Member