

**RENEWING CONGREGATIONS ACTION GROUP MINUTES
Board of General Ministries
November 12 &13, 2015
Doubletree by Hilton
King of Prussia, PA**

Directors: Wesley Roberts, Chair; Joyce Blandon, Cecelia Dachtler, Kay Farley, Manuel Luquin, Manuel Magana, Nancy O'Neill

Staff: C. Jeff Woods, Marilyn Tyson

Absent: Tom Roberts

As part of the group's work which has focused recently on stories to inspire, the Renewing Congregations Action Group had invited Robin Crouch of the Matthew 25 Committee to come and speak with the Group about the work of Matthew 25. Robin shared very enthusiastically about the process of ABC entities applying for grants to help in their work with the poor. The grants come from money which has been contributed by an anonymous donor—approximately 550,000 over a number of years. The donor's stipulation is that the money be given to address issues of the poor. Grants, which are distributed twice a year, are only given to ABC entities—never to a person. Robin reported that of 74 requests which were received in the fall of 2015, 69 were granted. Churches are asked to report on their work after they receive a grant. These are often very powerful stories which may be used to inspire congregations to expand and to serve their ministries.

The Group spent time discussing how to awaken or to help folks recapture their passion relative to the mission and vision of the church. The group sees this as their goal. Stories of how churches were able to reach their community are seen as an important way of doing this. Some of the learnings from the Matthew 25 ministry are that the grants make it easier for a congregation to get involved in their community and that once they take the first step toward community ministry, other partners often get involved.

One trend which was discussed was that of churches lacking the resources to have a full time pastor. While it can be difficult to grow a church with a part time pastor, it was noted that there are folks preparing for ministry which they understand will be bi-vocational. They are actively preparing for such ministry and they see their second job as an opportunity to invest in the lives of their community—to make connections with people. Then when these folks have a "need" there's a powerful connection in place and the part time pastor is able to minister.

It was noted that while there are churches which have lost their vibrancy and their connection with those outside the congregation who need to hear there are also churches which are very vibrant but which do not seem to have a need to be connected to ABC other than in a very minimal way. Ways of addressing this situation will need to be the focus of another meeting.

The group is sharing information about books which address the ways in which congregations might be renewed as a way of furthering the work of the group.

The meeting was closed with a time of prayer, asking God to give a vision of what can be done.