

Renewing Congregations Action Group
Board of General Ministries
June 13, 2014
Stansbury Room – Kern Lodge – Green Lake Conference Center

Directors: Kay Farley, Nancy O'Neill, Manuel Luquin, Eli Echevarria, Judy Fackenthal, Wesley Roberts, Manuel Magana

Staff: Jeff Woods, Marilyn Tyson

Guest: Ken Marsenburg

Absent: Richard Hansen

It was noted that James Wolfe is moving to the BGM Finance Committee/Action Group

Wesley Roberts opened the meeting by reviewing the change to Renewing Congregations Action Group from the Congregational Renewal Response Group.

Introductions of Committee:

The members of the Group were asked to introduce themselves and to share some information about their current church involvement. Each one did. There was prayer with each one praying.

Dr. Roberts noted that many churches in mainline denominations are in decline and many ABC churches can no longer support a full-time pastor. In ABC of Massachusetts with 260 churches, there are 107 full-time pastors. He reported that as the Chair of the Credentials and Caucus Committee he has been looking at church statistics and that ethnic churches seem to be growing more than white churches. He also noted that many of the "received" churches which are listed on the Report of Changed Relationships have a very small number of members. He further stated his concern that statistics do not tell the complete story. The issue is really "how can God use us to help restore, renew, and grow the churches in our denomination?" Prayer is needed in addition to discussion about the situation. He posed the question, "Now that we are an Action Group rather than a Response Group, what can we do to make a difference?" While there are many political issues, we believe that God can break through any situation.

Dr. Jeff Woods gave a PowerPoint Presentation, "New Tasks for a New Congregation", a sample presentation he prepared for a weekend seminar at a church. The presentation refers to changes in society which have had an impact on the church. The world now is a post-modern, post traditional, multigenerational, and multi-cultural world.

For example, in the pre-modern world the idea was "people will teach us what we need to know"; in the modern world it was "we can reason things out for ourselves"; and in the post modern world, it is "truth is broader than intellectual knowledge. What I have experienced is also truth."

Life expectancy has greatly increased—from age 46 in the early 1900's to 80 years now. And society now incorporates only those traditions it chooses to embrace.

There are Five New Tasks for a church:

1. Build the Relationship--with the unchurched; with ethnically diverse people; with community leaders

2. Create the space – large enough to include everyone; small enough to provide for intimacy need to constantly create new small groups
3. Enable the Journey – each person’s journey is different, but should lead to a similar destination
4. Seek the Direction – of God’s spirit
5. Receive the Cup – receive not just give; not just meet the physical needs of people in the community but also to receive from those being served;

There is a need for clarity of purpose—need for a vision. And there is a need for new leadership.

Jeff explained how he shares resources with regions and churches every month.

There was discussion about the presentation and it was decided that the Group will gather information from the wider group. Each person in the group will check with their own region’s executive minister and with the executive minister of one other region, asking what is taking place in the region and asking what practical things the Group can do to help churches.

There was discussion about church renewal, the need for pastors to be spiritually connected and reflective, the nurture and care of pastors, how bivocational pastors deal with time constraints, and the financial aspects of the high cost of seminary education and the decline in the number of churches who are able to pay for a full-time pastor.

Jeff agreed to write a script for Group members to use when they each contact two regions. Reports will be shared at the next Group meeting in November. Wesley and Jeff will discuss the coordination of the information. A list of the Group and the regions they will contact is shown below.

Wesley closed the session with prayer.

Group Members & Regions to Contact:

- Eli Echevarria – Connecticut & Rhode Island
- Judy Fackenthal – Greater Indianapolis & Indiana/Kentucky
- Kay Farley – Rocky Mountains & Pennsylvania/Delaware
- Manuel Luquin: Northwest & West Virginia
- Manuel Magana: Central Pacific Coast & Evergreen
- Nancy O’Neill: Wisconsin & Mid-America
- Wesley Roberts: Massachusetts & Vermont/New Hampshire
- Ken Marsenburg: Philadelphia & Ohio
- Richard Hansen: Maine & ? (not known since Richard was not present)