

Commission on Small Membership Churches

Members:

Rev. George DeFord, Chair (17-1) SO Rev. Shannon Sullivan (18-1) BA
Pastor Patricia Bittner (17-1) WS Rev. Rick Oursler (18-3) SO
Rev. Barry Hidey (17-1) BA Rev. R. Lorraine Brown (17-1) WA
Pastor Vickie Oliver (18-1) WS Conference Representative: Rev. Conrad O. Link

The Commission on Small Membership Churches last convened on April 6, 2016, during teleconference. Pastor Patricia Bittner and this writer recapitulated points from our January 2016 meeting:

1. There needs to be a clearing house for information and resources to assist the pastors serving small membership congregation;
2. Take opportunities to come together in small group experiences similar to the disciple groups of a few years ago where there could be sharing with other pastors of small churches;
3. There is an obvious need to prepare newly appointed pastors to small membership churches to facilitate their transition into this type of church rather than “parachute” them into the setting with minimal information and/or training for such;
4. There is a need to provide small membership churches with the minimal technology that is required in this day and time for basic ministry;
5. It is acknowledged that small membership churches struggle to meet financial minimums, i.e., benevolences to the annual conference and pastoral support;
6. There is a matter of self-esteem among some pastors that serve small membership congregation and a need for encouragement and support;
7. The team did not gather during Annual Conference as planned.

I will be facilitating a session during Washington East District Leadership day on February 11, 2017. My presentation will be on small membership congregations in urban, suburban and rural settings. Members of our commission will be contacted for a meeting at the conference mission center prior to the annual conference. It is my hope that the commission will re-energize and be of vital service to the Baltimore-Washington Conference.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. George F. De Ford, Chair (17-1) SO