

NEW JERSEY ASSOCIATION
MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL MEETING
April 19, 2008
Stanley Congregational Church – Chatham, NJ

Starting at 9:40 am the Rev. Shawn Garvey welcomed everyone and led the opening worship service.

The Vice-Moderator, Wayne Placek, called the meeting to order at 10:12 am, thanking those in attendance and conveying regrets from the Moderator, Heather Cherrey, who was unable to attend due to the change in date of the meeting. Wayne then reported that the acting secretary at the meeting would be Bart Brown and Dick Benson had agreed to serve as parliamentarian.

Following a review of the agenda for the day and a reminder that the annual reports are available on the Association's website, Wayne introduced Sue Williams, Treasurer, for a discussion of the financial information that was available at registration. Sue first reviewed the 2007 Budget Comparison Report showing a surplus of \$12,835 for the year. Sue also reviewed the Statement of Changes in Funds and noted that the market value of funds invested in the New Jersey Mission Fund had increased by \$12,697 during the year, with income of \$11,408 earned in the Mission Fund. Sue then presented the 2009 budget based on receipts and disbursements of \$45,150, pointing out the principal changes from prior years. Following questions, the budget was moved, seconded, and unanimously approved.

On behalf of the Stewardship Commission, the Rev. Craig Anderson discussed the form distributed at registration for requesting information on a gift annuity and encouraged everyone to take advantage of this planned giving technique.

The Rev. Rusty Eidmann-Hicks, Chair of the Nominating Commission, distributed and discussed the ballot containing the names of those nominated for various open positions within the Association. He also explained that some positions had not been filled in anticipation of a proposed change to reduce the number of members on commissions. After Rusty answered questions and it was determined that there were no further nominations from the floor, the slate as presented (with the addition of Joan Brannick as the representative to the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice) was moved, seconded and unanimously approved.

The Rev. Mark Boyea, Chair of the Pre-Ordination Commission, reviewed the highlights of his written report and introduced those present who are currently in In-Care status.

Our Associate Conference Minister, the Rev. Sherry Taylor, then presented some comments on her written annual report and other matters. She explained how the Association Council is thinking about meeting less frequently on an "as needed" basis and having two rather than three Association meetings (fall and spring, with room for scheduling special events in a winter month). Increased use of the Association's website is contemplated. Sherry reported that the process of having the Association become an ONA association is going forward. She introduced the Rev. George McDonald, the interim at St. Paul's in Nutley. Attendance at the CAC annual meeting in Newark, DE on June 13-15 was encouraged. Linda Holzbaur, the head of the Annual Meeting Task Force (the NJA is the "host" this year), commented very favorably on the variety of workshops that had been developed under the leadership of Christine Shesler, requested about ten volunteers to serve as tellers at the meeting and also asked for volunteers to serve as hostesses to direct people, handle snack distributions, etc. at the meeting. The Holmdel church's choir will serve as the choir for the CAC annual meeting, with provision for others to join with them on Saturday.

A question was raised about why no vote is scheduled at this meeting on the draft resolution to become an Open and Affirming Association that had been discussed at the winter Association meeting in Rutherford. Sherry explained that all the written documentation had attempted to make it

clear that no vote would be taken on the proposal before the 2009 Association annual meeting at the earliest. At the present time, steps are being taken to check in with all churches as to where they stand on the ONA issue. It was made clear that the process is long and time-consuming. When asked whether additional people could be used to facilitate the development of the dialogue within the Association, Sherry indicated that help would indeed be welcomed.

The Rev. Stephanie Weiner raised a question on the Association Council's follow-up on the motion passed at last year's annual meeting concerning the Association's purpose. Sherry pointed out her article in the March issue of *E-Update* and the lack of any response from anyone in the Association and reiterated her willingness to have a broader conversation with those who are interested. Stephanie repeated her request for a plan to address the purpose of the New Jersey Association and presented a motion that "the Association Council provide a plan to engage the Association in a general conversation on our purpose." The motion was seconded and followed by considerable discussion. After a motion was made, seconded and passed to call the question, a vote was held and the motion was approved by a vote of 33 to 12 or 13.

Sherry Taylor departed from the regular business to thank Wayne Placek (who for personal reasons had had to resign as of the end of this meeting) for his year as New Jersey Association Council President and Vice-Moderator and presented him with some mementos.

Sherry further took a moment of personal privilege to explain that her church in Plainfield was not otherwise represented at this meeting because of efforts including a prayer service to direct attention to the planned closing of Muhlenberg Hospital that serves some 1.5 million people, including a large number of uninsured in the Plainfield area. She requested our prayers for those trying to keep the hospital open. A suggestion was made that this meeting should prepare a resolution to convey the group's concern. Later in the day Sherry reported that Joyce Phipps had drafted a proposed document. Since Joyce had left and taken the draft with her, it was left for Sherry to follow through as she deemed appropriate.

Following a brief break, the meeting resumed at 11:28 am. Marge Royle from the Communications Commission introduced the keynote speaker of the day, Scott Thumma from the Hartford Institute for Religion Research, who spoke on the topic "The Church and the Internet." Following the end of the first part of the presentation, the meeting was adjourned for lunch, following an announcement by Bo Boccock asking churches present to sign up for meetings that will be planned to take place on a regional basis throughout the Association on the topic of church websites. During lunch, miscellaneous announcements were made and certificates of 2007 OCWM participation were distributed to the churches of the New Jersey Association.

After a tasty lunch served by members of Stanley Congregational Church, the meeting resumed at 1:25 pm with a presentation by the Stewardship Commission emphasizing the importance of the Covenant Keepers and recognizing individual churches' accomplishments in OCWM giving.

Scott Thumma continued his presentation at 1:42 pm with more detailed comments on the development of a website. Since the day's events had fallen behind schedule, the meeting was officially adjourned at 2:26 pm, with an invitation for those who could stay to continue the discussion with Scott Thumma, who was thanked for his interesting presentation.

Respectfully submitted,

H. Bartlett Brown
Secretary pro tempore