

## NEBRASKA-KANSAS EPISCOPAL AREA TRANSITION TEAM

### MEETING NOTES

**April 6-7, 2010**

**Wichita, Kansas**

Those present were Brian Kottas, Bishop Scott Jones, Matt Fowler, Debra McKnight, Oliver Green, Gil Rendle, Gary Brooks, Dixie Brewster, Troy Bowers, Pat Ault-Duell, Janet Maxwell, Lisa Elliott Diehl, Gary Beach, Bob Cox, Jan Todd, Tom Watson, Wayne Alloway, Charlotte Abram, Cheryl Jefferson Bell, Sheran Cramer, Eduardo Bousson, Corey D. Godbey, Bishop Ann Sherer-Simpson, and Carol Roettmer Brewer.

Worship was led by Janet Maxwell.

Team Building was led by Eduardo Bousson including prayer for David Livingston's community.

Tom Watson opened the meeting with prayer and remembered Nancy Brown's brother-in-law's family

The Task Force's Consultant Dr. Gil Rendle reminded that we are also learning our way and will help others to learn. He reviewed technical and adaptive work and reminded us that we are to move slowly and intentionally to do the adaptive work or the "balcony" work.

Gil reviewed the paradigm shift that is happening for mainline Protestant churches. However, if information doesn't fit, we ignore it. He distributed a hand-out on Edward Deming's work "Simple Systems Theory." Deming's initial ideas become complex as we consider them since non-profits often does not know what they produce. We tend to measure inputs and activities. If we are clear about the outcome, then it instructs us about what we need to do.

Gil discussed our shift as United Methodists from understanding ourselves as members of the church to disciples of Jesus Christ. It is challenging us deeply. Gil said that he was taught to keep members and clergy satisfied. Church committees including the Connectional Table were to keep everybody around the table so they could agree (and be kept satisfied). The Church has defined harmony as agreement in our system rather than listening to others so then we can make/sing harmony. What used to be considered outcome is really an input, i.e. budget is a resource; we have plenty of money to do what we need to do because we rebuild the system. Our paradigm shift means we go back to zero. Then people become dissatisfied for to change is to dissatisfy them. We/they have to reinvent everything.

United Methodist churches especially many small churches are below the threshold of change. However, there is a wide array of experiments going on in the United Methodist churches. Gil encouraged us that the Annual Conference of 2011 is a good starting place for change.

Reggie McNeil's book Missional Renaissance outlines 60 to 70 other measures of change.

Gil continued that making disciples may not be the same in every congregation. Measure of health

could be a community Sunday School or legacy plan. We are learning the limitations of measurements and there are more measures.

Bishop Jones said that Disciplinary paragraph 122 explains process of making disciples.

Gil said that he recommends using more measures, and measurement is difficult. We need to look beyond ourselves to mission field. What is the mission field of our area?

Kansas West offered a power point and a written report. Copies were sent to those not present.

After a delicious dinner and time of fellowship at Bishop Jones and Mary Lou Reece's episcopal residence, the group continued its discussion.

Gil began by observing that he works around ideas, and ideas are shifting in denominations, including our United Methodist Church. He then asked what the better conversation about the area is. The leaders can give the people a better story.

Gil commented on his hand-out "Observations and Issues." He said that the risk is to not know what to do and feel driven back to what we know. Section 1: assumptions and practices on which the United Methodist Church tends to operate. He continued that human consciousness is either: 1. fully aware or 2. unconscious or hidden. Human consciousness will continue to be unconscious unless persons do structured work. There is: 3. in between or tacit level. It is hidden since it is so common. By naming it, it is brought to awareness; it is inherited because it worked in the past.

The group then turned its attention to Caught in the Middle: America's Heartland in the Age of Globalism by Richard C. Longworth. The author described a different geographical area than Nebraska and Kansas since he included only a small area of Nebraska and Kansas. The book focused on economics. The author insisted that in the global market, there needs to be a regional approach. He stressed that replication is not necessary from community to community or state to state.

Gil asked if the three Annual Conferences need to replicate the leadership in administrative services and resources. He also observed that the economy of scale doesn't save money and being missionally strategic is different.

The group lifted the following observations:

1. Could identify with what was said in the book;
2. Hard to deal with boundaries; common mission across state lines

Gil discussed the concept of "breaking rules." In Quinn's book Deep Change, stable organizations find it hard to break rules.

3. Hope to put together a think tank.

4. We are polite and stubborn. Eat the frog first (do the hard thing). There is a sense of mourning to get through, i.e. in 2012 one bishop.

5. Author describes reality of fewer people in an area. Leaders must be honest about reality and possibilities

6. Even traumatic events don't assume that the end is near. First churches need to behave their "right size" for it is the first step of vitality. For example, churches who act like Sunday School classes could be organized that way or class meetings could be started. First play with ideas and not solve problems.

7. Book leads us through the process of grief.

8. The new Midwesterner (immigrants) is not seen. Immigrants have creativity and innovation that was welcomed in Chicago and not welcomed in Cleveland. How can community leaders be created in immigrant communities? The book discusses a Marshall Plan concept.

Gil described radical hospitality as inviting people to do what they want to do instead of inviting people to do what we like to do. In the book immigrants are not a problem. They are a necessity. The client of our work is the mission field.

9. Do people believe that there is hope/relief? There are growing churches in non-growing areas too. Bishop Jones said that he was surprised about the spiritual hunger that people have.

Gil said that there are two "missions": 1. Public mission and 2. Private mission satisfies the strongest voices. If one mission, the people may be angry about the unchurched so a strategy is needed to balance what needs to be done with loving the naysayers. Heifetz describes disturbing people at the rate that they can absorb. It is a risk to go back to the default mode to keep clergy happy.

Gil asked: Who is the client? It is the mission field. How can we convince other people? We need to give up trying to change others and change ourselves. Then others will follow.

Gil observed that the culture likes large organizations and small organizations, but not much in between. Our dilemma is that small is not necessarily attractive. He asked "What if Nebraska and Kansas were better at the middles?"

Gil said that not everyone will come along and the Conference cannot be fixed. There will be resistance that is the voice of fear. We must be clear about the purpose so people will be willing to sacrifice.

The evening ended in prayer.

On Tuesday, April 7, 2010, Matthew Fowler and Debra McKnight lead morning worship.

Gil reminded us that we take our work with us into today's discussion. He posed three questions:

#1 What are the dominant questions that a draft about the Nebraska-Kansas Episcopal area must

answer? A group will self-select and include the two Bishops.

#2 What do we need to know about the mission field? A governing board tends to the organization for its mission. The governing board may be the connection to the institutions and constituency. Or could the governing board focus on the mission field? What about our area? The Task Force will formulate a description of the whole area. Who else can the team engage in this work?

#3 What do we need to tell/teach our Conferences? (Communication strategy) What needs to be communicated right after the meeting? Also at our Annual Conference sessions, some will be interested and, worse yet, some are not. First we need to help to shape their questions.

Gil continued by pointing out that committees are standing, study or action committees. We are a study committee. Standing committees frame the future by what they know from the past, i.e. Finance is to protect the institution or Annual Conference. Study committee begins to see reality differently from standing committee so when the standing committee says no; it is natural. Also true in the appointive process--the separation of the study aspect of the Cabinet and the linear view of PPRC. Our task is to connect our study with the linear line of the Annual Conference. We have to extrovert our process.

Gil's hope is that each Annual Conference will communicate what the team has been doing. Also what do we need to teach our Annual Conference? What question do we want them to have on their minds in the future or their responses will go underground. Gil wants us to ask and survey. Surprised people act badly. Authority to teach and convene the conversations.

The Nebraska-Kansas Episcopal Area Transition Team does not have the power of implementation but it does have to be bold in the beginning (maybe exceeds authority to implement change). Also note: it depends upon the specific recommendations as to who has to agree or vote.

Congregations may not care about technical issues but are concerned about mission. Change is pain and possibility. People waiting to hear of possibility and beyond their self-interest.

Bishop Jones: What is the purpose of one, two or three Annual Conferences? How do we organize "to do church"? Leadership development, UMW, UMM, camps? Number and functions of D.S.? This is an opportunity of rethink leadership?

Small groups began their work and later reported.

Question #1 summary: How can we talk about a connection in Annual Conference sessions and other conversations? Affinity groups meet? I.e. young clergy going on mission. Human Resources: role of BOOM, Cabinet. Develop leadership of lay and clergy. What would our Annual Conference look like if leadership was the main thing? Each Bishop will recruit two or three persons to work with them to bring draft to the group in September.

Question #2 summary: The group meets again in August and will complete their assignments

meanwhile. They discussed the meaning of mission field and how to shift the thinking. They will type up sheets and distribute them to their group.

Question #3 summaries: They plan a consistent report for each Annual Conference that will begin with video announcement. Then we will share some of what we have learned. Then we will celebrate what is happening and wrap it up with a challenge. Solicit the questions from Group #1 that we will then ask for responses at Annual Conference. The #3 Team made itself available. They also discussed identifying leaders of the Conference who could help and also use District meetings. In 2011 it will be time for persons from other Annual Conference to visit. Each communication piece will be shared with the other Annual Conferences.

What groups or relationships need to dialogue? Could a standing agenda item be the Nebraska-Kansas Team?

The Bishops will check the timing and agendas of the Annual Conference sessions with DCM's and chair.

Debra suggested a mutual devotional resource for all three Annual Conferences. She needs six people to write devotions. Carol said that her office will assist Debra.

Representatives of the Annual Conferences attending o other Annual Conferences was discussed but no plan was decided.

Eduardo will coordinate the Annual Conference presentation.

The group's next book is The Starfish and the Spider by Ori Brafman. The next meeting is at the Campus Ministry building in Manhattan on October 1 and 2.

Gary Beach gave us a copy of the First Session of Nebraska-Kansas Annual Conference.

Oliver Green offering the closing prayer and meal blessing.

Recorded by Carol Roettmer Brewer