

REPORT OF CONFERENCE CHURCH & MINISTRY COMMITTEE

The Conference Church & Ministry Committee met on May 19th at the call of the Conference Minister. This action followed the request of the Rev. Bernie Zerkel, Jr. President of the Board of Directors, made in the light of the resignation of the Rev. George H. Schults, the appointed Committee Chairman.

Association Committees have been busily engaged in organizing themselves and establishing their lines of responsibility. Reports from Association Committee Chairman to Conference Committee indicate a vigorous approach to the work confronting them. Two students have been interviewed and approved for ordination by the Southern New Jersey Association, and one by the Catocin Association. Other students have requested to come under Care of Association, and have been interviewed. Communications from students currently under care indicate several will need student loans if they are to continue their studies. Several ministers from other denominations have been interviewed, welcomed and granted standing in the United Church of Christ. Letters of transfer for several ministers leaving the Conference to other Conferences or to other denominations, have been given. Several men appeared before committees requesting initial or renewal of Licentiate standing. Interviews were held and appropriate actions taken in matters of new churches requesting recognition and charter.

The Conference Committee directed its attention to the following items:

1. Pursuant to a suggestion from the Board of Directors, this committee assumed the responsibility for conducting a study of the salary scale for ministers in the Conference. The Committee voted to recommend to Conference that a committee of laymen be elected, to serve no more than one year for the purpose of studying and bringing in recommendations on the salary scale of ministers. The Conference Minister will be an ex-officio member of that committee - and the study committee will be responsible to the Conference Church & Ministry Committee.
2. The Conference Committee directed attention to student evaluation procedures developed over a period of many years by the former Potomac Synod in association with the Guidance Center at Franklin & Marshall College, Lancaster, Pennsylvania, and more recently, the Pastoral Institute, 3000 Connecticut Avenue, N.W., Washington, D. C.

The Guidance Center provided much help to the Synod, and to a number of students who, early in their college years, were given a thorough aptitude evaluation. As time went by and high school guidance centers, and more recently College Entrance Examinations provided this information, it was felt a change was in order. The Guidance Center was unable to answer our needs, and by mutual consent, the relationship between Synod and the Center was terminated two years ago. The services of the Pastoral Institute were engaged.

By Synod action the following procedure for accepting students "under care" was adopted: The student is interviewed by the Church & Ministry Committee at the time of his decision to prepare for Christian Service, and if acceptable, is taken "under care" of the Association. This status indicates official recognition by the Church of the student's plan, and readiness to grant student aid within the limits prescribed by the denomination. It expects the student to report at least once a year on problems, progress, and any changes in plans or status.

At the conclusion of the College Course, and prior to entering Seminary, the student will arrange for an intensive interview with personnel of the Pastoral Institute. These interviews are conducted by pastors skilled in the art of counselling, and by recognized psychiatrists and psychologists. The completed evaluation is sent to the student, to the seminary of his choice, and to the Chairman of the Association Church & Ministry Committee. From these interviews the student will get a critical evaluation of his motivations, and the areas of strength, weaknesses and conflicts, either actual or potential. With such help, the student should be better prepared to utilize the resources of the seminary and the world at large for his own growth. The cost of the interview will be borne by the Church. It is fifty dollars at present.

It was recommended that the student be given a second interview at the close of his seminary study, if he so desires, and that the cost again be borne by the Church.

It was recommended that, where the student was married, the married partner also be given the tests, but that the cost would be borne by the couple. These actions were being implemented at the time of the merger of Synod with Middle Atlantic Conference.

The Conference Committee, having reviewed the matter, recommends the adoption of the over-all student "in-care" procedures as outlined, with the following specific provisos:

(a) that the student evaluations become a requirement to be met prior to final acceptance as a seminary student, preparing for Christian Service in the United Church of Christ,

(b) that the evaluation be done late in the senior college year, or during the period prior to entering upon the seminary course,

(c) that the cost of the evaluation be borne by the Conference, and that the cost of transportation, food and other expenses incident to the evaluation be borne by the student,

(d) that the student be permitted a final evaluation at the close of his seminary course, if he requests it, and that Conference bear the cost of same,

(e) that Conference urge the spouse, in cases where student is married, to also take the evaluation, with the cost being borne by conference.

The Committee also recommends to those Associations more distant from the Pastoral Institute in Washington, D. C., that they explore similar counselling resources in their areas, with the hope of developing similar relationships. The resources of the Pastoral Institute are being employed in the surrounding area by ministers who themselves find the need for guidance and counsel, and similar centers ought to be made available in all areas of the Conference. Associations ought therefore to explore available resources in areas such as Princeton, New Jersey and the New York City area.

The Conference Committee discussed the advisability of requiring a similar intensive evaluation of men coming to us from other denominations and requesting standing in the United Church of Christ. It recommends that this procedure be

adopted by Conference, with the cost of the interviews being borne by the person requesting recognition. It further recommends that, until such time as facilities are established and proven in other areas, the Pastoral Institute be the interviewing agency.

The Committee discussed the various problems that have frequently arisen between the seminaries and the local churches or associations. It recommends to Conference that the problem of meaningful communication between seminaries and associations or conference be studied, with the view to establish workable procedures. The Committee awaits the expression of intent by Conference, before proceeding to act further in this matter.

The Conference Committee recommends to the members of the Conference that the many opportunities for in-service training be more vigorously utilized. Lay people could be a great service to their own churches by reminding congregations of the gains to be derived through using these opportunities, and asking their pastors to use them. Churches ought also to undergird this interest with financial support, and to assure their pastors that the time spent in any in-training course is not to be seen as part of his vacation.

Ernest J. Melchert - Chesapeake
Paul L. Althouse - Catocin
Willard Bickett - Southern New Jersey
Silas E. Madren - Shenandoah
Kenneth B. Wentzel - Potomac
Lewis S. Winter - Northern New Jersey