

Renewing Congregations Action Group
Board of General Ministries
November 14, 2014
Duportial Suite #406 – Crowne Plaza Valley Forge

Directors: Wesley Roberts, Leader; Joyce Blandon, Judy Fackenthal, Kay Farley, Manuel Luquin,
Manuel Magana, Nancy O'Neill
Staff: Jeff Woods, Marilyn Tyson
Absent: Richard Hansen

Wesley Roberts, Leader, called the meeting to order and welcomed the group, noting that Joyce Blandon, new BGM Director from Connecticut had joined the group. It was noted that Elias Echevarria, member of the Action Group, has resigned from the Board of General Ministries. Members of the group were asked to introduce themselves. Each member of the group then shared in prayer.

Jeff Woods, Staff, gave an update on the *Transformed by the Spirit* (TbyS) initiative. He noted that the Renewing Congregations Action Group is the group to provide feedback on TbyS and the Mission Summit as provided for in the new ABCUSA Bylaws. TbyS has been in the pilot phase and it is hoped that at the next Biennial Mission Summit speakers will be selected to further this project. He explained how his own work has expanded from facilitating the search for new executive ministers to doing “outcomes” based work and envisioning retreats and now to serving as a catalyst for regions.

He was asked if he could identify a region which is currently successful in congregational renewal. He suggested that Nebraska is one region which is doing a good job with renewal. The question was then asked about what skills are necessary for pastors. Jeff responded that while seminary training often focuses on being a good person and a good theologian, pastors often need help with leadership, developing strategies, facilitating work with groups and teams. Pastors are now asked to “partner”—to see what God is up and then joining in. It was also noted that “adaptability” is also a necessary skill—often this needs to be developed.

As the group discussed these concepts further, it was noted that “urgency” is a trait that needs to infuse the work of a congregation. There needs to be a core of people who pray consistently for the pastor and for renewal.

Further discussion led to the consensus that “stories” of congregations who are successful at renewal need to be shared, leading to a sense of excitement about what God is doing, and then resulting in a desire to be involved. Members of the committee shared stories of congregations of which they have knowledge.

Another learning is that “not one size fits all.” It was also suggested that “transformation” is a better descriptor than “renewal” which seems to suggest a going back.

All of the group acknowledged that other important aspects of renewal include reading and modeling the scriptures. Relevance is key and leaders must practice what they preach.

There was brief discussion of a paper “How is Your Congregation’s Health” which Jeff wrote and which was presented in *The Parish Paper* in 2012. The article related to congregational typology.

Next steps will be for the committee to each share two stories, which will include an explanation of the context of the church which is the subject of the story, sharing what God is up to, and how God is found in the context. Jeff will provide a format for the committee to follow as they prepare their stories.

The meeting was adjourned.