

**United Church of Christ Congregational
Executive Board Meeting
March 3, 2024**

Present: Jenniffer Carrico, Katie Bauer, Christi Thielman, Geoff O’Meara via phone, Ben Crosby, Jeremy Bullen, and Lou Larson. Two guests: Dr. Morag Stewart, the chairperson of the Pacific Northwest Conference of the UCC East Side Committee on Ministry (COM) and Pam Peterson, Managing Director of N-Sid-Sen Camp & Retreat Center. Morag was in attendance to share a 3-minute statement on behalf of the COM and to serve as a silent witness to the meeting by prior arrangement with Jenniffer. Pam was also there to serve as a silent witness.

The meeting opened with a prayer from Christi Thielman.

The minutes from February 9, 2024, were approved.

Old Business:

1. Treasurer’s role – We are actively seeking a new treasurer. Ideally, it has been proposed to train two persons for the position and Ben has offered to do that training. Ben also stated he has full written instructions to support the transition.
2. A suggestion was made that our congregation needs to be more pro-active in our stewardship. Christi announced Sunday in church that our next opportunity is One Great Hour of Sharing, March 10th.
3. Wallace Food Bank – Discussion continued on the Food Bank’s request to occupy some of our basement space. Problems with this idea are no restrooms, no heat, (cost to install heat might be as much as \$20,000), need garbage service, stairway, refrigerators and freezers brought in, traffic during the month to bring in supplies, possibility of attracting rodents, key distribution, liability insurance, and possible conflict with the Christmas Fund Group investment already in the building. The only advantage we see is it offers more space for them. Jeremy will be meeting with Mike Hoffman, the director, and get more details.

New Business:

Morag Stewart shared a prepared statement from the COM (the statement is attached), The primary purpose of the statement was to clarify that Jeremy’s Member in Discernment application was still in process and that the next steps were in Jeremy’s court. A few questions were asked by the Board. When Jeremy was asked his perspective, he indicated he would rather not respond while our guests were present and asked that they be excused. Jenniffer asked them to leave. Ben made and Christi seconded a motion inviting them to stay. The motion passed with Ben, Christi, Geoff & Katie in favor and Jenniffer, Lou & Jeremy opposed.

In further conversation, Jeremy indicated among other things that he “had no interest in working in or with the UCC”. (He had earlier expressed this to Geoff in an email dated February 12, 2024.) After Morag and Pam left, Katie made and Lou seconded a motion that the question of Open & Affirming be brought to the congregation at some future date. The motion passed with Katie, Lou, Jenniffer & Geoff in favor and Ben & Christi opposed.

The date for the next regular meeting was established for Sunday, April 14.

Arrangements will be made for Maundy Thursday service on March 29, 2024.

Meeting was adjourned.

Approved by the Executive Board 04-14-2024

Good morning! I am Dr. Morag Stewart, Co-chair of Committee on Ministry of the PNC. I thank moderator Jennifer for allowing me to speak, I will then be silent. My remarks are in print for you.

Previously, I only met Jeremy via Zoom. However, Rev. Russ Clark, the committee's liaison with Jeremy, has also connected with him in-person. At Russ's first meeting, Russ ask Jeremy if he intended to take Wallace Congregational UCC out of the UCC. Jeremy answered he did not!

Jeremy and Rev. Ben Crosby joined the committee's October 20th. Zoom meeting to consider Jeremy's application to be a UCC Minister in Discernment (MID). A MID is someone accepted *on a path towards* Ordination! When committee member Rev. Marj Johnston asked if she and her wife Cindy would be welcomed at Wallace Congregational UCC, Jeremy responded by quoting scripture from Romans advocating homosexuality was a sin. There was stunned silence. Rev Ben broke that silence stating that Wallace UCC was loving and caring to all, its members were good people. Jeremy and his family received Wallace UCC's inclusive welcome, extended to them when they arrived, even though their church affiliation differed greatly from Wallace UCC! After this 10/20 committee meeting, I consulted with attendee Rev Jonna, Acting Conference Minister. I asked if Jeremy's comment to Marj was a deal breaker. Jonna responded where Jeremy begins his MID journey is less important than where he finishes. Jonna felt exposure to "a UCC community" would change Jeremy.

At the committee's January 19th. Meeting, Jeremy's Psych Eval and OnA paper were discussed. Jeremy affirmed his Eval was accurate. He affirmed he learned about himself. However, he did not recall that suggestions had been offered. All committee members felt the suggestions gave him sound advice. Questioning on the OnA paper quickly became intense. Jeremy affirmed it accurately reflected his views. Under probing questioning and challenges, Jeremy appeared defensive. Tension was rising. I felt it prudent to end the interaction. Then Jeremy asked, would his Psych Eval fee be refunded^{1,2}.

I spent three days assessing what transpired and discerning how to proceed. I left unread two e-mails³ from Jeremy. Jeremy's OnA paper is written to be "anti-OnA" selecting controversial, negative content. OnA affirms the God-given worth of **all**, it does **not** endorse all behaviors! *Jeremy misrepresents OnA*. In assessing Jeremy's fitness to be a MID, I felt the committee could not say yes. Jeremy revealed values and theological perspectives that did not align with the UCC. I sent an e-mail to committee members with my thoughts and then collaboratively worked via e-mail to prepare an e-mail⁴ for Jeremy. The decision given to Jeremy was **not yet**, it was **not a no**! I prepared a detailed letter to explain to Jeremy the committee's rationale. I believe you have my January 30th. letter.

Jeremy edited your by-laws showing how easily you can leave the UCC, your denomination for decades. Jeremy proposes you remain a Congregational church while his actions appear contrary to congregationalism, a polity where the lay moderator leads the church, not a pastor-led polity. The UCC is in Covenant with you! We made a promise to you! The UCC remains prepared to help you strengthen, celebrate, and live into the future that God plans for you in the UCC, should you remain! In closing, I urge this board to take time to prayerfully discern your church's path forward!

Acknowledgement: Acting Conference Minister, Rev. Phil Hodson, and committee members Rev. Russ, Bart, and Susan contributed.

1 Rev. Ben has shared with you a detailed description of the COM questioning process for MID candidacy and candidates.

2 The \$600.00 that was Jeremy's portion of the Psych Eval fee. I used personal funds to send \$600 to Jeremy Tues 23rd.

3 The two e-mails sent by Jeremy to me January 20th are on the printout.

4 This e-mail is on the printout.

E-mails

----- Original Message -----

From: Jeremy Bullen <JeremyBullen@proton.me>
To: "morag.stewart@comcast.net" <morag.stewart@comcast.net>
Date: 01/20/2024 5:19 PM PST
Subject: Psychological Evaluation Reimbursement

Mrs. Stewart,
When should I expect my promised reimbursement of \$600?
Jeremy Bullen
jeremybullen@proton.me

----- Original Message -----

From: Jeremy Bullen <JeremyBullen@proton.me>
To: morag.stewart@comcast.net
Cc: huckleberrycrk@hotmail.com, russdclark@gmail.com, pastor@fcchurch.net, bpreecs@gmail.com, revcsharp@comcast.net
Date: 01/20/2024 5:18 PM PST
Subject: Re: E-COM 1/19/24

Morag,
Thank you for the update.
In any future meeting, I must insist that committee members refrain from insult and from picking theological debates. I was shocked by this meeting.
Perhaps the committee might hold a meeting without me to determine any specific items to communicate or questions to ask regarding sensitive issues.
Jeremy Bullen
jeremybullen@proton.me

----- Original Message -----

From: Morag Stewart <morag.stewart@comcast.net>
To: Jeremy Bullen <JeremyBullen@proton.me>
Cc: Susan Chamberlin <huckleberrycrk@hotmail.com>, Cameron Sharp <revcsharp@comcast.net>, Russ Clark <russdclark@gmail.com>, Jonna Jensen <jonnaacme@gmail.com>, Bart Preecs <bpreecs@gmail.com>, "pastor@fcchurch.net" <pastor@fcchurch.net>
Date: 01/27/2024 9:05 AM PST
Subject: PNC E-COM meeting January 19, 2024

Greetings to you today, Jeremy!

What you have revealed so far to committee members of the Eastside Committee on Ministry (E-COM) for the Pacific Northwest United Church of Christ Conference is that *you are not ready to begin the journey of a "United Church of Christ Minister in Discernment"*.

Moving forward, we are not closing the door to you. Rather than stating *not ever*, we are stating *not at this time*. This week, a letter will be mailed to you with specific details as to why we arrived at this decision. Then, when you have taken time to seriously reflect, if you discern that this is still the path you wish to pursue, you should reach out to E-COM. Rev. Russ Clark has offered to continue as your liaison with E-COM.

We pray for you and for Wallace UCC as we strive in our own unique ways to follow Christ's example in the environment of today!
Sincerely,
Morag Stewart, E-COM chair
