

Westmoreland Congregational United Church of Christ  
Board of Spiritual Formation  
Minutes of Meeting February 6, 2017

Present: Rev. Alexis Kassim, Marianne Courtney, Beth Ferris, Yonce Shelton, Jane Williams

The meeting began with updates on Westmoreland **Building 2020 plans** and implications for children's classrooms, library, etc. Alexis said the preschool class would likely move upstairs to what is currently the library, thus creating an additional classroom on the lower level for middle schoolers, for example. BSF Chair, Jane Williams, will attend the February Governance Council meeting to discuss the future of the library collection.

Prior to Rev. Tim Tutt's **sabbatical**, the biggest task for the Board of Spiritual Formation (BSF) should be to recruit church school teachers, with the goal of a full roster for 2017/18 by the June church-wide picnic. BSF will lead the October 15 worship service. Alexis handed out a template for board-led worship services this fall. (Alexis will preach every other Sunday.) Beth volunteered to do the sermon. BSF members will also lead centering words, children's sermon, call to offering. Jane will check on hosting the coffee hour. A follow-up conversation to the sermon could be held in the parlor, with Q&A with Beth, and could be similar to previous years' "20 Questions" series.

Regarding how BSF can contribute to the church-wide theme of **Black Lives Matter (BLM)**, members present discussed and tentatively agreed to the following:

- Supporting registrations for a group of youth and adults to participate in Ecumenical Advocacy Days (EAD), April 21-24, Crystal City, VA, focusing on the Friday evening and Saturday of the weekend. Yonce will look at that group's interacting with Volunteer Corps members, perhaps the week before the EAD.
- Translating/experiencing BLM in members' daily personal lives, with two-three people leading an after-church discussion in March – to get the conversation started. Alexis will check the church calendar for an available date.
- Partnering with predominantly black or diverse churches. To start, Alexis will get information about Plymouth UCC's Lenten series, with objectives of publicizing more at Westmoreland and encouraging attendance when possible.

Other ideas pertaining to the Black Lives Matter theme that were discussed are these:

- Hosting guest African-American preachers.
- Focusing on incarceration.
- Book-reading club featuring African-American authors.
- Using Westmoreland Circle and/or Westmoreland Church property for future demonstrations and vigils.
- Sponsoring youth to the UCC General Synod (June 30-July 4 in Baltimore) with a Sat. youth mission experience, along with several days of service projects and education about Baltimore at The Center in Baltimore.

Each church board needs to present its plans to the Governance Council by the start of April.

The “**Welcome Summer**” church-wide picnic will be June 18, so participation in the DC Pride/LGBTQI Festival on June 11 can be promoted. New Course Catering will likely supply the main dishes.

The group talked at length about recruiting and supporting **church school teachers**. Six adults are needed every Sunday and it is ideal to have twelve people on each of the three teams (36 total). Various churches have different approaches to teaching. Some require it of parents who have children in church school; at other places, like Westmoreland, it is voluntary. For the March BSF meeting, Alexis will provide a list of potential teachers/contacts, as a start for BSF members for recruiting. Beth and Yonce commented on an idea of special guests/visitors who could talk about their work or other topics for a Sunday in a class. Alexis said that teachers could look through a year’s curriculum to see what visitors/topics might fit.

Alexis asked BSF members’ views about whether to have children participate in the Easter worship service rather than being in a class. Views in BSF and among church leaders vary.

Jane closed the meeting at 7:50 p.m. with excerpts from a prayer for the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration of the founding of the Alliance of Baptists.