**Rural Church Network Fall Meeting**

**November 19-20, 2010**

**Kansas City, MO**

**Attenders on 11/19**: John Young, Alvin Luedke, Dave Ruesink, Susanna Metz, Shannon Jung, Lon Oliver

**Opening Prayer:** Susanna

**Secretary Report:** (sent by email by Dave)

**--Minutes were moved, seconded and approved.**

**Treasurer Report**: (Lon Oliver)

--**current balance: $2,206.96**

Discussion on revenue:

--grants used to work better when denominational offices were strong

--most of granting agencies who were generous to rural groups are also struggling. As a result everyone is cutting grants.

--looking for gifts from a donor base is probably the best way to go. Ours would be small, and it takes about 5 years to develop a base, but it might be a good way to go.

--we also want to continue looking for grantors who would be willing to give a small grant.

--Lon suggests we **look at our mission statement again and tweak it to be a bit more accurate of who we are.** **We also need to have some defined projects to introduce to grantors.** We also shouldn’t give up on our denominational connections, including individual congregations, etc. Church agencies have never had to look to the private sector before, but they must now.

--Lon suggests most of **our energies ought to be put on identifying individual donors. We need to get every name we have into a donor base, get an inexpensive donor software (e-tapestry might be one).** Begin process of getting a donor base. It takes time, but is important.

--Alvin asked what a general year’s expenses looks like. Lon says it’s about $3,500 per year. We’ve been holding pretty constant until last year when things took a real dip. However, this doesn’t really allow us to be creative with projects, etc.

--Lon and Dave will talk at this meeting about when the next asking letter will go out for this year.

**Motion moved to accept treasurer report by Shannon, seconded by Susanna, motion was approved.**

**Expenses: Dave Ruesink has expenses to turn in of $2,239.87 which takes us through December 2010.**

**Website Discussion:**

--discussion about the problems/misunderstandings we have with the function of our website.

--we have a subscription to Dreamhost and use the WordPress platform.

--we would like to see on the website:

--resources in the 8 categories that are listed on the home page. We would like them to be ours, but at this point we need something there even if it isn’t ours. What comes up ought to be the latest and most relevant.

--links to our denominations and/or agencies. (e.g. Bread for the World, ELCA Hunger Program, etc)

--forget about our archive materials for now which used to come up on the Grove Site page.

**Motion by Shannon:** **David Firman will continue to design and implement our website from construction to a finished product. In addition he will select a server and by our next meeting we will have a RCN website concluded.**

**--Amendments offered after discussion**

**--the website needs to be Google-able as Rural Church Network**

**--Allen work as the clerical person to add resources that RCN members send him**

**--Lon seconded.**

Discussion:

---it should be under RCN.org name. We need to reregister our domain name this week.

---costs: we’ve been paying Firman $50 per hour for his time.

---Lon suggested: until David completes website it’s not helpful to have Alan and David working together. Once it’s finished, then we can have Alan work as the person who adds material.

---Call to Alan: Dreamhosts is hosting our website; Alan has transferred everything from the CD he got from David Firman. Dreamweaver is necessary to maintain, edit, and attach things to the site. It has been used to build the site, eventually Alan will need it.

**Motion was carried.**

**New motion (by Shannon)--to empower individuals in the RCN to develop particular sites (in the 8 categories) as lead developers.**

--we’ve been slowed down by being teams

--for example bibliographies; book reviews; worship ideas

--seconded by John

--Discussion:

--would we put things up without any type of review?

--assumption is the lead person would check with a colleague before we run it

--getting it vetted is ideal; getting it up is crucial

--we then have to be careful of the price of putting the resources up. Individual could send the resource to Shannon and he could copy it to Kenny and Lon and they could send 4-5 sentences about what would be the best way to get the resource on-line

--what’s the best technology to get it up.

**Ammendment:** **Individuals should send resources to Kenny, David, Lon, and Shannon for vetting according to format, price, usefulness, etc. Then it will go to Alan to be put up. This motion was superseded by another motion on Saturday.**

--we need to have at least one piece of content in each of the 8 categories

--Seconded by John

**Motion was carried**.

**IRCA** (Alvin)

---a week long meeting in Germany this year, had good representation from Eastern Europe (Hungry, Romania, Czech Republic) No one from Korea or far east.

---4 from U.S. and 4 from Canada

---There will be a summary statement coming out (a copy of the constitution and a reflection on this meeting can be found at: http://www.irca.net.nz/)

---Good discussion led by Winston Caroo (Ag Missions) on what was going on in the church in Europe

---two women (one from Africa and one from Lebanon) came from World Council of Churches. Good participation of this group in the whole meeting. Talked about the challenge the church faces in many places.

---elected chair is Catherine Christi from Canada and now in Korea for 3 years.

---secretary is Garry Hardingham from Australia

---treasurer is Kevin Harper from Australia

---next conference will be four years from now, but there is no location named yet.

**Discussion about future RCN meeting design**:

---how do we want to design future meetings?

---may be wise to have one face to face meeting a year

---since we are a smaller group and mostly travelling on our own “dime” this might be a good idea and perhaps meet an extra day.

---what time of year is better

---Jan term time is not good; end of Jan is no good either

---summer is not good for seminary faculty

**Next face-to-face meeting**:

**---Friday September 23-Saturday 24, 2011**

**---begin at 1:00 p.m. on Friday to 9:00 p.m. Saturday**

**---Location will be Dallas/Forth Worth**

**---fall of 2012 we will meet in Atlanta**

**Spring meeting:**

**---conference call: April 1, Friday, 9-11 Central (10-noon Eastern)**

**---use to check in with where people are in preparing resources for the website**

**RSSE:** (Lon)

---Right now the question is finances. Might be an 8-10 thousand dollar grant need. Good news is that once this is done, many of us could teach it. We’d have a valuable project.

---Lexington Theological Seminary is willing to host it

---material needs to be updated and gone over and someone to put it into on-line form

---Shannon talked about a new certification program that was presented at St. Paul. There has been interest a rural ministry certificate. RSSE might be a good thing to partner with in this.

---RSSE could be used through RCN as a certification program that might be of interest to most of our judicatories.

---(Shannon and Lon) **look at partnering perhaps with some para-church groups like Shalom Farms to do a rural ministry certificate.** Other denominations have some groups like this that might find it useful. AMERC might be able to make use of it also. This might be more fruitful than to seek seminaries that could fit us in their course of study. **We could do a pilot of what a certificate might look like, pick a couple partners and run it.**

---this might also be helpful for those in their first call who must do on-going education the first year. (First Call Theological Education for Lutherans)

---getting a certificate like this is a good way to give positive reinforcement to rural pastors and their congregations.

For our April conference call:

**---Alvin will do some checking on the FCTE folks**

**---Lon will check with CCK Ministry School**

**---Lon will have a 1-2 page what if and here would be his thinking on it before the call so we could discuss it.**

**By-laws** (Alvin)

**---Alvin will look at what we have talked about at this meeting, our finances, our group make-up and make some suggestions.**

**-**--discussion ensued about some of the changes in the make-up of the membership who come to meetings, the loss of national denominational people, what might this mean to the language of the by-laws.

**-**--who’s likely to want to be around this table in the future?

**-**--it was suggested that we must first look at who we are and then look at the by-laws. We may not know for awhile yet the answer to these questions. We are more in to resource production than judicatory networking. **John Young would be willing to look at the by-laws when we are ready.**

**-**--for grant writing we need to have a clear understanding of our mission. This we need to do sooner. **John Young will take a look at the mission and have something to share during the conference call.**

**Letters for support:**

**---to be sent to seminaries $300**

**---judicatories $500**

**---individuals $50**

**Closing evening prayers:**  Susanna

**SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 20, 2010**

**ATTENDERS:** John Young, Alvin Luedke, Dave Ruesink, Susanna Metz, Shannon Jung, Lon Oliver**,** Judy Heffernan and David Firman for part of the morning.

**Opening Prayer:** Susanna

**Website category discussion:**

--change communications to Blogs and Posts

--change women in ministry to community issues i.e. things that affect how we live together

--change hunger to food and agriculture

--change communication to globalization

--one of us might write an article to explain how a certificate program might help them rather than offering the links because there are so many they could Google for themselves.

--Alvin offered a list from our discussion to include:

**Globalization,**

**The Church;**

**Practices of ministry;**

**Worship resources;**

**Community forum;**

**Agriculture and food;**

**Environment and health;**

**Community issues**

**Meeting with David Firman (10:00 a.m.)**

--Shannon brought David up to date with what the group decided above about the website.

--**David says to stay with Dreamhost, which is a hosting company. Alan will need Dreamweaver, a web design program software, he takes over the site.**

--David says that he can have this for us by April 1 conference call meeting.

--**David suggested that instead of having several gatekeepers that we send thing to, one person would be easier, so Shannon will be the point person. This supersedes the motion made yesterday.**

--David suggested that **when something is added we’ll have a banner that announces it with a date on the home page**

--David explained the Google engine thing. The more hits you get the higher up the list you get.

--our domain name has been renewed through GKG. In 60 days we’ll be able to transfer it to Dreamhost.

**--the current website of ruralchurchnetwork.org will be taken down until we have resources to post.**

--**popeweb.com/RCN** **is Firman’s website and will be the place our website on a temporary basis until it has at least 50% of the material on it. Alvin suggested Shannon decides it’s up to 50%. We NEED to get resources sent in before April 1.**

--the website that’s on *appalministry* will be taken off. Our name will be saved however. David Firman will put the site on his site so we can access it.

**--we need to have two people go through the links and see which ones are good and which ones aren’t helpful to us or already dead. Dave Ruesink said that’s something they can do in his office. Dave said he’s happy for us to take any off we think ought to be off.**

--David Firman thinks his part of the website design should take a few hours. It will be more hours however once we start sending things in.

**Elections:**

--Currently: VP, Susanna Metz; Executive Secretary, Dave Ruesink; At Large, Judy Heffernan

--The election can be discussed at the conference call in April

--**we don’t have the categories represented anymore so we’ll have to change the by-laws**

**--Alvin suggests we suspend the by-laws for the time and keep the current executive group the same.**

**--John Young will work with the by-laws for the September meeting so we can do the elections in September.**

**--John nominated Mark Yakel-Juleen as VP. Mark was elected by acclamation.**

**--John moved that Judy Heffernan stays as at large. Judy was elected by acclamation.**

**--John nominated Dave Ruesink to another term as Secretary. Dave was elected by acclamation.**

**--Alvin called for a motion to have the election, it was moved by Lon and seconded by John. The motion carried unanimously.**

**--Lon suggested that Ben Poage be asked to do the evaluation of the Executive Secretary because of his expertise in this area. Lon will ask Ben and suggest that Ben have questions to help us focus on the task at hand by the April meeting and that the final report be ready by the September meeting.**

**INDIVIDUAL REPORTS**

**St. Paul’s School of Theology**: Shannon

---most exciting thing is that they are starting a D.Min. in revitalizing congregations. They have a number of faculty already signed up to be involved. UMC Bishops said it should be the focus of their work for the next 10 years, so this comes at a good time. Shannon feels there will be a place for rural ministry in this focus.

---Shannon is thinking more and more multi-culturally. He just returned from an immersion in western Kansas

---they’re looking for a Hispanic ministry person

---he is collecting names of people who might be interested in carrying on rural ministry at St Paul’s after he retires.

---it’s important to link up rural ministry as part of the main curriculum as well as doing some unique things.

**Luther Seminary**: Alvin

---Alvin was approved and promoted to full professor

---continuing to teach in Congregational Mission and Leadership program. He does research methods and statistics (use as second foreign language for the PhD!) About 1/3 of the D.Mins are from rural contexts. They have approximately 100 D.Min students …..about a Ø D.Mins are international, which brings in more rural.

---he taught rural church administration last semester

---this year he has 3 courses in the fall: an MA writing course. Reading the audiences (a first year core course), Foundations of rural ministry (one of 3 full courses in rural ministry they teach (he has 16 students, 7 of whom are international)

---they will graduate about 70-80 M.Div. each year; about 25 M.A.s in each of 2 groups.

**CMSC and School of Theology, Sewanee (Susanna)**

--CMSC:

--is really no longer a group effort. Susanna still does workshops and consultations under the name of CMSC.

--the board decided that with the balance left in the CMSC account, we are going to partner with AMERC

--this will be a much better use of our funds

--School of Theology, Sewanee

--offering a new course in experiential urban ministry elective; rural ministry is still a component of the contextual education requirement; small-church and multi-cultural electives offered.

--Susanna is in the final 4 for bishop of Northern Michigan to be decided Dec. 4.

--if that happens, any rural and/or small church focus might probably be lost at the seminary.

**Meeting of USDA and Dept. of Justice**: Judy Heffernan

---Dept of Justice and USDA came together to work together

--one of things was: Grain Inspectors Stock Yard Act

--GIPSA had not been in effect, but now because of the monopoly in meat packing they’re being asked to look at this

--presenting problem is that there is not at all an open or transparent market in meat. Contracts are seriously one-sided and unfair

--packers have set up private deals with certain people that has nothing to do with quality

--40% of men and women in uniform come from rural areas.

--you can go to usda.gov site, you can go to GIPSA site and make a comment about how you feel up to this Monday, the 22nd.