

January 14, 2019

Dear PSEC Consistory and PNEC Board of Directors,

Greetings in the name of Jesus Christ. Following the nearly unanimous vote in PNEC and a majority vote in PSEC at our respective 2018 Fall Meetings to work together to create a new unified conference in Eastern Pennsylvania, we the Joint Conference Vision and Development Team (JCVDT) are writing to encourage you to continue this work.

At our individual 2017 Spring Meetings, the JCVDT was created and tasked to vision and develop a model of a new, merged conference for Eastern Pennsylvania. The intent was to reimagine the church for the 21st century by mapping a future that enables us to be more responsive in a fluid world with the timeless truths of the gospel of Jesus Christ and move into the future with confidence and vision.

The JCVDT worked to this end, creating and presenting drafts that included vision, mission, purpose and values statements, a basic new conference structure, a staffing model and suggested a new name for a unified conference. In addition, a case study for why we should move forward was shared and a frequently asked questions document to help answer the questions. The JCVDT brought to the PNE and PSE Conferences a two-part resolution with your approval. The first part was to create a Unified Council and the second part was to receive approval to send the proposed resolution asking General Synod 2019 permission to change the boundaries of our conferences so that we could continue to work toward unification with General Synod approval.

We recognized that these drafts were just that: drafts or starting places to continue the work of visioning and developing a new conference. Had the resolution been passed to continue the work, the Conference governing bodies would have needed to create a new team or teams to flesh these documents out and bring them into a final working form that could be used to structure a new conference. Also, had the resolution passed, a Unified Council would have been created and tasked with forming constitution and by-laws, policies and budget drafts for a new conference. We, the JCVDT, recognized and shared that we thought this work would take at least two years before we would be ready to vote and potentially fully unify both conferences into one new conference.

Although we did not have a two-thirds vote in both Conferences to continue this work of creating a new Eastern PA Conference as presented, we believe the vote and conversation was positive enough to continue to be about this work. We recommend that the PNEC Board of Directors and the PSEC Consistory work together to create a process to move forward to work towards a possible unified Eastern PA Conference. We suggest that this process be presented to the Conferences at their Annual Meetings by the end of 2019 with a potential goal of having a resolution to unify ready for General Synod 2021. In addition, we recommend that the Conference governing bodies organize a joint meeting of both Conference bodies in 2019.

Should you decide to move forward, we would like to share our learnings.

- The JCVDT was too small for the tasks. Many more people and teams need to be about and fully committed to participation in the work.
- The timeline was too short to accomplish the tasks with the detail that it required.
- You can't communicate enough. Although the JCVDT tried to communicate using as many available means as possible, it was not enough.
 - Individual and personal engagement with clergy and churches will be key in moving forward.
 - Staff need to know from the start what the intentions/plans of each Conference minister is once the new unified conference is created.

