



IOWA ANNUAL CONFERENCE



TREASURY NOTES

October 2009

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Software Update

As most of you know for the last few months the conference has been involved in changing our software programs. The process began well over two years ago when it was decided that our current system did not meet all our needs. (The last time the Conference invested in a software purchase was in the early 1990's.) An ad-hoc committee of staff from the Treasurer's office, District offices, CCMC and Bishop's office interviewed a number of software companies. The committee narrowed the selection to two companies.

After the two companies had been identified, the Conference Audit Committee, with the support of the Conference Council on Finance and Administration, (CFA), voted to hire a consultant to help us evaluate the two software companies and once a selection was made they would assist with the implementation phase of the process. The Sogeti Company's Des Moines based office was hired as our consultant. Also, at that time a Steering Committee consisting of possible users of the new software systems was appointed to assist in the final selection and implementation process. Sogeti provided a comprehensive review of the software packages and provided expertise as we negotiated possible contracts with the company of choice.

Early this summer, the Steering Committee recommended to CFA the software system that would best fit our current and future needs; Blackbaud's "Raiser's Edge" and "Financial Edge" solutions. Blackbaud is well known in the non-profit and educational institutions both in Des Moines and across the nation. It is also a company that provides software for a number of other United Methodist Annual Conferences. There were positive references from a variety of conferences and local organizations.

The implementation schedule that we developed was aggressive by trying to be ready to complete the conversion in October. This time was chosen for the following reasons: 1) *the apportionments for the next year have been calculated*; 2) *before the budgeting cycle for the next Annual Conference gets started*; 3) *a nice fit during the Charge Conference season with the election of new local church officers*; 4) *it could be operational before year-end closing of our financials*;

and, 5) before the appointment season for the Cabinet. Simply it is the most convenient time in our church year.

The products and technologies that were purchased include:

- Blackbaud Financial Edge which is a complete accounting program from budgeting to reporting.
- Blackbaud Raiser's Edge which is a complete data base including event management addresses information and a remittance system.
- Microsoft Windows Server 2008 (*This was the year that our office had planned to replace our main frames*)
- Microsoft SQL Server 2008
- Microsoft Office 2007

The staff members from Sogeti and Blackbaud have partnered well with the Conference staff to always keep the Conference's needs at the top of the priority list. The Steering Committee has been given weekly updates of the process and reviewed progress in the implementation to help ensure that those working on this project were not missing important components.

Some of the benefits of the new system include:

- Improved financial reporting and budgetary tracking.
- Better management of clergy and conference personnel.
- Increased attention to monitoring candidate clergy members.
- More effective information sharing with partner organizations.

Since we are now in October, the conversion process from our old software systems to the new system is in full operation. This means that at times, certain areas of our data base will not be operational as we move that data from one system to another. We want to thank you for your cooperation as we move through this process--hopefully as seamlessly as possible.

On a personal note I want to thank the staff in Administrative Services who have dedicated many

extra hours of work with the consultants to develop and now implement the new processes. Their cooperation and commitment to this change has been invaluable as we serve the local congregations and the mission of the Iowa Conference.

September Receipts

Because we had to close our September receipts early, we do not have complete information for our treasury notes. We will report in October the status of our apportionment receipts. In the mean time, please accept the thanks from me for the mission and ministry projects that depend on your faithful support.

Property Issues

When the EUB and the Methodist Church churches merged in 1968 there were over 1,000 congregations in Iowa. Today, there are less than 820. Whenever a congregation closes or merges with another, certain legal papers are very important. The Conference Board of Trustees and my office in the last few years have expended a great deal of energy and time helping congregations get some of their legal affairs in order. I state this as a way of asking three important questions.

First, do you know where your abstract is located, and can you within a few minutes actually put your eyes and hands on that legal document? I have heard church members say, "Well yes, we have one and I think it is" Only to discover that when they try to find it no one really knows. Some abstracts can be reproduced at reasonable costs, (the cost can vary a great deal from one location to another); however, it is much less costly to have the abstract updated, and in hand before a church merges or closes. Therefore, not only do you know where it is but you can lay your eyes and hands on it today.

Second, related to the first; do you know where the deed to the property is and again, can you lay your eyes and hands on it today? I know that one can do a search in the County Recorder's office for this document but often that can be very difficult in some areas. Also, it is good if all of the members of the Board of Trustees know where these important documents are located and they are actually seen each year.

Third, are your State of Iowa Incorporation papers current? Have you or a member of your trustees filed the bi-annual report with the Secretary of State. You can check the status of your filing by going to Iowa's Secretary of State's website. Some church's incorporation papers were filed with a fifty year expiration date. Therefore, it is important to check to make sure that you have filed with the Secretary of State and have remained current. Incorporation of our churches is important when liability issues may be at stake.

Insurance

In June, the Annual Conference passed an action item that outlines the recommended minimum policy limits for all congregations. You can find that information on page 333 of the 2009 Annual Conference Journal. I

want to stress that these are minimum coverage's, and a church may elect to have higher limits in some areas. A number of congregations ask, "Why do we need replacement cost on our building because if it were to be destroyed we would not replace this building?" It is true that if the building was completely destroyed, it would not be replaced as is; but the real question becomes what happens if only a part of the building is damaged. Then the value of your insurance may be prorated, and so you may not get enough to actually cover the cost of the partial damage. Some also question the crime and other limits such as Directors and Officers or Employment Practices. Liability in these areas is not limited by the size of the congregation and the settlements; especially if it goes to court; and is not determined by the financial resources of the church. For this reason, minimum coverage's are important. When your policy comes up for renewal, check it out. I also suggest you shop the market for the best coverage. Remember, the least costly is not always the best, and don't wait for a lawsuit or a fire to discover your least costly policy is now very expensive because of items not covered.

Worker's Compensation

Recently, I reviewed our worker's compensation claims report for the last year. One thing that stands out is that we still have too many people who believe that a piano bench or a chair is also a ladder. I do understand the temptation. The afternoon after reading the claims report, I was in our file room which has files from the floor to ceiling and I needed something from one of the higher files. A chair was in the room and I was about to use it when I remembered. I went to the store room and got a ladder. Just a couple minutes more is all it took and my conscience felt much better. A large number of claims occur because of slips and falls. As you tour your building, look for places where people could easily trip; such as, loose carpets, corners turned up or wrinkles in carpet, items stored in stairways or hallways that do not belong, extension cords on floors, and of course, in the winter ice and snow on walk ways. A little prevention can save a lot of pain for someone.

Our Mission Statement

Administrative Services is dedicated to serving the Iowa Annual Conference with our gifts of knowledge, integrity, and caring as we assist persons with the business and operational aspects of our shared mission. Our ministry supports the Annual Conference in developing leaders who proclaim the gospel and transform the world.

Holiday Closing

The Conference Offices will be closed for Thanksgiving on November 25 at 2:30, November 26 and 27. The Conference Offices will also close for Christmas on December 24 and 25.

Quote...

Don't part with your illusions. When they are gone you may still exist, but you have ceased to live.

Mark Twain