

Report to the 2014 Synod
From: Provincial Support Services Board (PSSB)

Mission, Purpose and Values

“The Provincial Support Services shall provide ancillary services (Financial, Human Resource, Archival, and Risk Management to all organizational points of the Southern Province” (Section 10 of the Book of Order). The PSSB is composed of two members of the Board of Cooperative Ministries, two at-large appointments by the Provincial Elders’ Conference, one of which is an ordained pastor serving a congregation of the Southern Province, the President of the Provincial Elders’ Conference, ex officio, and two additional members of the Provincial Elders’ Conference. With operational effectiveness as its focus, the PSSB makes recommendations regarding the alignment of resources to strategic priorities. The PSSB is charged with defining capacity, measuring results, mitigating risks and supporting the administrative decisions of the Board of Cooperative Ministries and the Provincial Elders’ Conference.

Responsibilities

As stated in the Book of Order, it is the duty of the PSSB to:

- a. Oversee the coordination of support for ancillary services to all organizational levels of the Province.
- b. Provide analytical support for measuring results.
- c. Monitor the financial health for the Province providing information to the PEC and BCM.
- d. Assess financial health of churches and cooperative ministries.
- e. Evaluate and recommend action on financial forgiveness requests from churches.
- f. Assist the PEC in allocation of financial resources to cooperative ministries based on realistic church share expectations.
- g. Monitor compliance and address issues regarding human resources, financial audits, operating risks and legal risk.
- h. Provide oversight of the benefit plans.

The PSSB was also tasked to address the following resolutions from 2010 Synod: #10 (Clergy Compensation and Benefits), #18 (Laurel Ridge – Limited Liability Corporation), #19 (Book of Order Revision; Chapter 8), #23 (Provincial Financial Board), #26 (Delinquent Congregations), and # 28 (Provincial Share Allocation).

Summary of Activities

A part of the reorganization plan adopted by the Special Synod of 2009, the PSSB was initially formed under the direction of the PEC with a roster of Marian Carter and Sherry Edwards (BCM representatives); Gray Styers and Craig Troutman (members at-large) and David Guthrie, Gary Kniskern and Chris Thore (PEC members). After electing Gray Styers as chair and Sherry Edwards as vice-chair, the group began its work in the first quarter of 2011 by facilitating communications with different provincial organizations, including the PEC, the BCM, Archives, IBOC, Moravian Ministries Foundation and Laurel Ridge.

In response to resolution #23, the Financial Board was reorganized as the “Finance and Administrative Support Committee” (“FASC”), a committee of the PSSB. In this time of

transition, the Human Resources Task Force, another PSSB committee, was reconstituted as the “Human Resources Compensation and Benefits Committee” (“HRCB”).

Begun in May of 2011, the development of a new Provincial Share methodology was the first major initiative undertaken by the PSSB. Synod resolution #28 directed the PEC and the yet-to-be-appointed PSSB to “review, evaluate and develop a potentially new methodology for allocating the need for Provincial support from our churches.” At the direction of the PSSB, the FASC developed a survey that was distributed in the summer of 2011. Follow-up meetings were held with RCC groups to review and discuss the survey results. There was general agreement to change the current allocation methodology. Based on this recommendation, the PSSB approved a revenue capacity based methodology. Initiated in the 2013 budget cycle, the new system utilizes a 3-year rolling average percentage to determine an individual congregation’s provincial share. The new plan requires a 10% minimum and establishes 20% of a congregation’s income as the maximum amount that can be required.

In response to resolution #26, the FASC also developed a stewardship program for congregations that are unable to meet the minimum provincial share requirements. Drawing on resources and support from PSSB, BCM, MMFA and the PEC, the stewardship program begins with a review of financial records, an assessment of the congregation’s life and ministry, and a series of meetings with the congregation’s leaders. From this process, a plan that addresses the church’s specific needs is implemented. For the Synod of 2014, the Finance and Administrative Support Committee will prepare a description of the new share methodology that Synod will be asked to approve.

In response to resolution #18 that authorized the PEC to assess the feasibility and desirability of forming a Laurel Ridge LLC (Limited Liability Company), the PSSB engaged the services of the Kilpatrick Townsend law firm to assist in the evaluation of legal, liability and tax issues that would inform a decision as to whether or not create a Laurel Ridge LLC. In December of 2011, the PSSB recommended that the PEC not implement at this time the formation of a LLC, “and instead direct[ed] the Laurel Ridge Board to continue its diligent efforts to minimize risks to campers and guests, consistent with prudent practices, as well as the spirit, purpose and mission of the Camp and Conference Center, and direct the Treasurer’s Office to evaluate the costs and benefits of additional insurance coverage of activities at Laurel Ridge.”

In its oversight of the HRCB Committee, the PSSB directed this group to develop a “Policy on Family Relationships between Provincial Employees,” which the PEC adopted in July of 2012. The policy permits the employment of qualified relatives of employees so long as (1) such employment does not, in the opinion of the provincial leadership, create actual conflicts of interests, and (2) relatives recuse themselves from decisions involving related employees.

In response to synod resolution #10, the PSSB advised Gary Stilley and HRCB regarding the drafting of an Administrative Manual of Personnel Issues for Ordained Ministers. In addition, the HRCB was tasked to develop proposals for PSSB consideration in the areas of risk management and safety for personnel, volunteers, equipment and vehicles. An HR Compensation and Benefits Summit was held in August of 2012 during which the leaders of both the Northern and Southern Provinces discussed best practices and questions related to compensation and benefits (e.g., health insurance, retirement plans, etc.).

Responding to resolution #19 that called for a revision of the Book of Order, the PSSB reviewed proposed revisions of the rules and regulations, specifically Chapter 8 regarding "Finances." It recommended clarifying language and moving policy and procedure items to an Appendix to the Book of Order.

Guidelines for "Obtaining Approval for Major Property Purchases, Building Programs and Commercial Loans" were drafted and reviewed by the PSSB. A recommendation was forwarded to the PEC who adopted this policy in August of 2013.

In May of 2013, the PSSB joined with many others of the Southern Province in expressing its sincere appreciation to Ted Leinbach for his nine years of exemplary service as Provincial Treasurer. In anticipation of Ted's retirement, a search committee was formed in November of 2012. In their work, the search committee was assisted by an executive search professional, Sarah Bradley, a member of the New Beginnings congregation. Eleven resumes were received and reviewed, and most of those applicants were interviewed by telephone. In-person interviews of four finalists were conducted at Cedarhyrst by the Search Committee. The Committee's unanimous recommendation to the PEC was to issue an offer of employment to Dennis Stanfield, a member of the Trinity Moravian congregation.

Working closely with the Provincial Treasurer, the PSSB each fall carefully reviewed and revised the proposed Provincial budget and made recommendations to the PEC regarding the allocation of annual budgeted expenditures. Following the adoption of the budget by the PEC, PSSB then took responsibility for the presentation of the budget at the annual Stewardship Dinner in October each year. The PSSB worked to refine these presentations to clarify and emphasize how Provincial financial resources are utilized to support our shared ministries.

In March of 2013, the PEC directed the PSSB to engage the Pension Committee in a twofold task: 1) "to determine if moving the Pension Fund to the MMFA represents the soundest and most economical method of investment and administration" and 2) "to obtain and act upon a recommendation from the Pension Committee prior to the end of 2013 regarding changes in the Clergy Pension Plan." A financial gap between actuarial projection of current pension obligation and projected contributions prompted the reexamination of the Plan and its future. In the months that followed, the Pension Committee considered the functional (what is the Plan's purpose) and technical (what changes may be needed regarding the Plan's provisions and operations). Steve Wyatt, a partner with Aon Hewitt, assisted the committee in exploring various scenarios and options for strengthening the Pension Plan.

During its meetings in the fourth quarter of 2012, the PSSB spent a portion of its meetings reviewing its strategic function, evaluating its first two years, identifying future needs and challenges, exploring how it could effectively perform its role in the new Provincial structure.

Future Direction and Opportunities

In January of 2013, the PSSB elected new officers and welcomed two new members. Craig Troutman was elected to serve as chair, and Gary Kniskern was elected vice-chair. In addition, two new representatives from the BCM (Lisa Kirkman and Jerry Smith) began their service on the board. The change in the committee's composition in the middle of the intersynodal period (BCM representatives are elected to two-year terms) is a topic that warrants further consideration as the PSSB considers its role and responsibilities between synods.

Regarding future opportunities, the PSSB, with the support of the Interprovincial Board of Communication, will continue to explore the expanded use of technology at the local church level. New means of communications with church members, between congregations, the RCCs and provincial agencies – through e-mails, listserves, websites, social media, and otherwise -- will need to be addressed and improved.

The missional direction of the Province requires more participation from the local church in order for the Southern Province to fulfill its identified focus of promoting “healthy congregations.” The coming intersynodal period will provide more opportunities for the Province to benefit from the best practices and shared resources identified and implemented through the RCCs and by individual congregations.

The PSSB will continue to support sound stewardship of Provincial and church resources – especially for churches facing financial hardship. These resources will need to be focused and deployed where they can most effectively support the mission and ministries of Moravians throughout the Province, serve the communities where they live and witness. These efforts will require careful planning, prioritization, input from stakeholders, clear communications, and strategic, forward-thinking decision-making to ensure that the Province remains financially secure and sustainable in the long run.

We should be open to and cultivate collaboration with other Christian organizations, denominations, institutions, and agencies with whom the Province is in relationship. Such cooperation may assist in achieving cost savings, economies of scale, and recognition of shared opportunities for outreach and mission. We have much to offer such relationships—our rich traditions, our sense of community, our music, our historical archives, our emphasis on world-wide missions—and much to gain from others who may have a scope and scale of operational support that we are unable to obtain because of our size and geographic concentration.

Central to the PSSB’s mission and purpose, strategic planning will continue to be a major topic of conversation. We live, witness, teach, preach, and worship in changing times, and we need to accurately assess our strengths and weaknesses on an ongoing basis in order to adapt—to avoid complacency and immobilizing inertia and to recognize opportunities for growth and vibrant ministries. It will be an ongoing challenge to avoid distractions and stay focused on long-term goals. With these goals in mind, we must continue to establish working models and habits in order to expend our resources, energy, and attention on achieving those goals. We believe that the new Provincial structure facilitates this focus, and an opportunity for the PSSB is to further refine its implementation and improve its functioning.

As the reorganization phase of the Provincial structure enters its second intersynodal period, the need for clear direction and delegated responsibilities will continue to be addressed by the PSSB. The roles and working relationships among the PEC, BCM, and PSSB will continue to evolve to avoid redundancy, to clarify expectations and responsibilities, to improve coordination, and to perform their respective functions as efficiently as possible. In this way, the Province will be able to maximize the gifts and graces present within our congregations, the RCCs, the Province as a whole, and interprovincial boards and agencies.