

April 28, 2023

From the Board of Directors

This past weekend, the Board of Directors of the Rocky Mountain Conference met for an in-person retreat at LaForet. This was the first time we had an opportunity to meet in person in the last couple of years. We welcomed our Interim Conference Minister, Rev. Dr. Douglas Wooten, who will begin his ministry with us on June 1.

In addition to part 1 of Racial Justice Training, which will be completed by zoom in the near future, we took time to get to know one another and to engage in difficult conversations, including a rich discussion on the work of Brene Brown as we studied together her book, Dare to Lead.

We talked about the myths of vulnerability and how hard (and how important) it is to be willing to be vulnerable when it comes to difficult conversations. We talked about what it looks like for us to armor up in order to protect ourselves and how to learn to let our armor down so we are able to be present and lean into difficult conversations.

We asked ourselves questions such as "What is our call to courage?" and "What is the cave we fear to enter?" We worked on building trust with one another, as Brene says, one marble at a time, and we engaged in a look beyond ourselves to how important this work is for us as entire community.

As would be expected, the pain and discord that is pervasive in our Conference often came up in our conversation. We know there is much work ahead of us and we continue to believe that the work we will do together will make us stronger and best able to live out of and lean into our faith commitments as a Conference. We are not running from the pain, nor do we want to rush to some form of healing so we can move on. We know the only way forward is through the messiness that we create as humans—because being human means there will always be mistakes, messiness and opportunities for growth.

We have wanted to discuss our attempts at offering severance to Rev. Dr. Anthony Scott related to the termination of his employment in November, 2022. It has been difficult to not know what we can say or if we can even say to all of you that there is litigation against the Conference. We recently learned we may offer some information related to these events, especially related to some of the items that were brought up in the listening session with Metropolitan Denver Association on April 16. At both that session, where Rev. Dr. Scott attended and spoke, and at other listening sessions, one of the requests that we have heard repeatedly is a request for more information about what is happening and what has happened. We explained that we want to be as transparent as we can, knowing that we also have a fiduciary responsibility, especially when it comes to legal matters. What follows are talking points we've learned we are permitted to share.

The Rocky Mountain Conference has been unable to reach a severance agreement with Rev. Dr. Scott. Many have expressed their frustration at the Conference not providing any detail around the

work we have been doing to achieve an agreement. Please understand that we are limited in our ability to discuss personnel matters, but we think it is important that you know that Rev. Dr. Scott was offered a severance payment when he was terminated, with common and standard provisions that an organization asks for when it is not legally obligated to provide severance. Shortly thereafter, Rev. Dr. Scott hired counsel and so the Conference was also obligated to seek counsel to ensure the Conference was protected. He has filed a discrimination claim against the Conference with the Colorado Civil Rights Division, which the Conference's legal counsel is handling. Multiple offers have been made to Rev. Dr. Scott with the objective of assisting him and helping him to move forward in his work, while also protecting the legal interests of the Conference. While one of these offers did prohibit Rev. Dr. Scott from working as an employee of the Conference in the office for which he was previously employed, it did not prohibit him from serving churches in the Conference in other capacities. We regret that the term was misconstrued. All offers have been refused by Rev. Dr. Scott. We continue to be represented by counsel and Rev. Dr. Scott has told us that he is represented by counsel, and we are assuming that he will move forward with his civil rights claim at this point.

As the Board of the Rocky Mountain Conference we want all of you to know that we understand how important it is to many of you that we were able to reach a resolution regarding severance. We are sorry that didn't happen. We also want to be clear that we are not looking for quick healing for all that has transpired. There is a lot of learning ahead of us as we work through the many layers of important issues in our Conference. This is going to take time. It is going to take a willingness to be vulnerable. It is going to take a commitment to rebuilding trust—one marble at a time, one conversation at a time, one step at a time.

At the Board retreat we each shared what our call to courage was and the answers were varied. We all have our own personal calls to courage and we all have those caves we fear to enter. Being brave means we will answer those calls and take those next steps because our call to courage as individuals and our call to courage as a Conference relies on all of us working together in this sacred work.

David Bristow
Eleanor Downey
Mark Dutell
James Fouther
Daniel Haas
Karen Howe
Kenneth Ingram
Wendy Kidd
Mark Long
Adam McCoy
Gail McDougle

Upcoming Events and Important Links

May 2, 9, 16 and 23: Daring Greatly Book study Zoom link https://us06web.zoom.us/j/3296187641?pwd=MU4yRGpMb3pEQ0MwbFFrUVFzalppZz09 June 15-17: Annual Celebration Learn more. Register.

Previous versions of the Together Newsletter can be found <u>here</u>.