

TO CHURCH COUNCIL:

First, apologies for missing this meeting. In lieu of being able to be there and deliver a verbal report, I am sending this report on SPRC's activities and plans for 2013.

The Staff-Parish Relations Committee has have broad responsibilities, but the first two listed in the book of discipline are to encourage, strengthen, nurture and support the pastors and staff and their families; and to promote unity in the church. We also have a duty to recommend to the church council the professional and other staff positions needed to carry out the work of the church.

Our church has had many changes over the last few years, and our committee will be spending the next few months looking at the work of the church as a whole and how we ensure that this work is done effectively and efficiently. It should be no surprise to anyone reading this that our staff have not had the easiest year in 2012, and SPRC will be working on the twin goals of ensuring we support and care for all our staff, as well as ensuring we have the right match of people and responsibilities for the coming years. It should also be no surprise that our budget is very tight and we need to look at how to be faithful to the church's financial position.

The finance committee has asked us to reduce our budget for 2013 so as to contribute to the financial health of the church. It has been very helpful and encouraging to know that they have explored all possibilities and they have provided continuous updates as to our financial needs. On the SPRC, we are concerned that when we make plans, we do so for the long term, as staffing decisions made now will have their effect five or more years into the future. We frankly think that if we decide too fast, we run the risk of making serious mistakes and undermining our church's core goals. We will instead take the next few months to thoroughly review all areas of staffing, not primarily for the purposes of reducing budget, but for the purpose mandated in the book of discipline: "to recommend to the church council, after consultation with the pastor, the professional and other staff positions (whether employee or contract) needed to carry out the work of the church". This would have been our work anyway -- we should continually review and restructure our staffing for effective and efficient ministry. The budget needs simply make it more urgent.

However, we are not going to simply say "we'll work on it and let you know". We have made a commitment to the finance committee to reduce our budget. We have started discussions and have ideas and thoughts, and although we do not have a plan right now, we do believe that we will have a plan, and so we are committing to reducing our budget, and committing to communicating a complete plan for that reduction to the church council by the middle of the year. We also strongly expect to take some steps in the first quarter to reduce expenditure.

Part of our reason for this measured approach is that we do not want to surprise people (staff or congregation) with our decisions. Our goals are encouragement, support and unity, and we confidently expect that, by taking the time to plan carefully, we can meet the financial needs of the church while respecting these goals. Thank you for your support in our work,

Graham Wills (chair)  
Staff-Parish Relations Committee=