

Case for Support for Make A-New Wisconsin

In the first few years of his time with us, Bishop Jung set out to travel the entire state, to meet people where they are, and to engage in meaningful conversations about the future of the Wisconsin Annual Conference. He was inspired by what he heard and it led to imagining a bold future for our Conference. In the summer of 2016 our Conference passed a resolution supporting the conducting of a feasibility study to determine the likelihood of success of a campaign to create the faith, spirit, and resources needed to Make A-New Wisconsin. The title, Make A-New Wisconsin is viewed as an affirmative action step in responding to Bishop Jung’s call to Imagine Wisconsin Anew.

We are proposing this plan in order to Make A-New Wisconsin. In doing this we are challenged to:

- Answer God’s Call
- Reach New People
- Better Serve Current Members

Our Goals

How do we answer the challenges mentioned above? The Make A-New Wisconsin proposal calls for three primary areas of focus in order to work together to live out Jesus’ call:

- Creating New and Renewed Congregations
- Developing Christian Leaders
- Engaging with the Poor

A Feasibility Study Team was created and they began meeting this past summer with our consultants, *The James Company*. (You’ll find the list of those who accepted the call to serve on the Feasibility Study Team later in this document). Our charge is to refine the proposal, share the proposal with pastoral and lay UMC members throughout the Conference, gather their questions and responses and provide a final report and recommendation at the Annual Conference in the summer of 2017. We will gather stories and ideas from throughout the Conference so that this process is not simply about fundraising, but is also about Faith-Raising!

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

This document shares some of the questions we have heard thus far, and provides our best thinking in response to those questions. We are learning from others as we move forward and expect to continue this learning as we engage more people in this dialogue. We ask for your prayers and support as we discern the best way to Make A-New Wisconsin.

Q. If we enact this proposal, how would it effect the current operations of the Conference?

A. The current activities of the Conference would continue and be supported by the Conference budget. The funds that we propose to raise will pay for new initiatives in the three focus areas: creating new and renewed congregations, developing Christian leaders and, engaging with the poor.

Q. What’s wrong with what we already do in these focus areas?

A. What we are proposing is not a criticism of any existing programs or initiatives. To the contrary we expect to learn from, and in some cases, enhance what is already being done. This effort is about asking can we be more effective? Can we have greater impact? Funding these initiatives will result in a fundamental shift in our Conference identity toward prolonged health and vitality in disciple-making and justice ministries.

Q. How much money are we proposing to raise?

A. We are suggesting that a range of \$6—\$8 million be our goal based on our preliminary assessment of the objectives, and other factors. Ultimately you and other members of the Conference will tell us what is feasible. Should our recommendation in 2017 be to move forward with a campaign, we expect goal amounts to have been refined and informed by the feedback we receive. If we conduct a campaign, it is reasonable to believe that some of the money will be given up front while some of the money is paid in pledge payments over time. This \$6—\$8 million is necessary to fund the strategic opportunities necessary to achieve the vision. The final goal will be an amount our feasibility study believes is attainable.

Q. How will the Conference determine how the money gets spent?

A. As a starting point we envision the money we raise being allocated in the following manner:

- Creating New and Renewed Congregations - 40%
- Developing Christian Leaders - 30%
- Engaging with the Poor - 30%

All moneys will be allocated through a rigorous process that will focus on addressing our goals, accountability for the dollars allocated, and tracking and reporting results. This process will be established in future phases of this project.

Q. Are there any examples of the kinds of projects/programs we might invest these dollars in?

A. There are many ideas being discussed and we wish to be clear that no final decisions have been made. We expect the feasibility process to inform and shape those decisions. For purposes of illustration here are some examples of programs/projects that could be targeted for these funds:

- New programming for young adults.
- Enhanced leadership development training for laity.
- Enhanced professional development for clergy including a mentoring program.
- Renewed support for health and welfare ministries, such as Northcott Neighborhood House, Harbor House, and UM Children’s Services, beyond levels that apportionments currently provide.
- Increase the number of new church starts funded.
- Housing and job/employment initiatives.

Additionally, we expect good ideas to rise up from successful local initiatives that could be expanded or replicated in other locations.

Q. Will all these initiatives flow from the Conference offices?

A. While many existing programs and some initiatives will have ties to the Conference, we believe that many of the kind of bold new initiatives we hope to create will come from individuals and groups at the local congregation level. We want to find out what is working in other places and apply those successes more broadly. Between now and the time of the Annual Conference in Summer 2017, we will identify several of these congregation level programs, and engage in conversation within districts about what might be possible and have examples available as part of our recommendation.

Q. What will my congregation be asked to do?

A. There are several things we ask from congregations. Keep the feasibility Study Team in your prayers. Find an Information Forum that will be held near your congregation and encourage individuals or a representative delegation to attend these listening sessions. If a campaign is recommended, there may be an opportunity to raise funds in a manner that can benefit your local congregation while raising funds for Make A-New Wisconsin at the same time. Be open to learning more about how that opportunity might make sense for your congregation.

Q. What do you ask of me?

A. As with congregations, we ask for your individual prayers as we move forward with this process. Be open to learning more about this proposal, attend Information Forums and provide your feedback. The best outcome relies on each of us seeing ourselves as owners of the process.

Throughout October, November, and December of 2016, members of the Feasibility Study Team sought out opportunities to engage in discussions with Conference committees and leadership groups to refine the answer to some of the questions and concerns that we have been shared in this document. We expect that new questions will also arise. With each meeting and discussion the plan will be sharpened and distilled.

Next Steps

In January, February, and March of 2017 we will hold listening sessions around the state and our consultants will conduct personal interviews with a cross section of members. Anyone wishing to take part in one of the confidential interviews is welcome to participate. You can schedule an interview by calling *The James Company* representative, Donna Lund at 630-428-7654. Plan to attend one these Information Forums and participate in the process. There will be an opportunity to respond by survey at the Information Forums, as well as on the conference website.

We will provide a summary of the feasibility study at the Annual Conference in the summer of 2017 and provide a final recommendation for moving forward. The time for bold thinking is now. For the Conference to better serve existing members and reach out to new members we need a robust plan to move forward. We invite your participation as we plot a course forward to Make A-New Wisconsin.

Make A-New Wisconsin Feasibility Team Members

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