

**Oikosnet North America  
Annual Gathering  
Five Oaks Centre, Paris, Ontario  
May 20, 2006**

**Notes from Business Meeting submitted by Wayne Edgar**

The following are notes arising from discussions during the Oikosnet business meeting held as part of the Oikosnet Annual gathering at Five Oaks Centre from May 18 to 20, 2006. Most of these notes are transcriptions of the flip chart notes taken during the meeting. A couple of other information items (general reflections on the meeting and program and notes from Jim Palm) that may be of use to Oikosnet members and in particular the executive are also included.

These notes were recorded by Wayne Edgar of Tatamagouche Centre, Tatamagouche, Nova Scotia.

The agenda for the business meeting included the following items:

- review of Oikosnet North America (ONA) Budget
  - election of new board members
  - membership invoices
  - priorities for the coming year
  - location of the 2007 gathering
1. Budget review:
    - Wayne Edgar reported that ONA operates on a small budget of less than \$18,000US each year. The main source of revenue is a grant of approximately \$12,000 which is a small portion of grant from the German Churches provided by Oikosnet. Membership fees are also an important part of ONA annual budget and all centres were encouraged to pay their annual fees. The funding from the German churches is expected to decrease in the future.
  2. Election of new board members:
    - The board of directors of ONA for 2006 – 2007 will be:
      - Sally Simmel (Chair) –
      - Wayne Edgar (Vice-Chair)
      - Rich Watson (Past Chair)
      - Kathy Nash (Treasurer)
      - Paul Campbell (US representative)
      - Mardi Tindal (Canadian representative)

Paul Campbell, Spirit of the Desert was elected to fill the vacancy created by the retirement of Margaret Fraser. Appreciation to Margaret for her service and contribution over the years was noted by participants.

3. Membership Invoices:

- All present were encouraged to pay their annual membership fees. ONA's budget is so marginal that every membership fee really helps to support the organization. **In addition to this verbal reminder, it was agreed that Kathy Nash would be asked to send an invoice to all annual meeting participant centres and other potential members so that they would be encouraged to pay their dues. It was noted that invoices have not been received and this simple act would remind folks to follow-through.**

4. International Communication:

- Participants expressed interest in possibly communicating with some of the many other international member centres of Oikosnet. Folks were encouraged to use Wolfgang Lentz's office and services as a way into this network. People were also encouraged to communicate directly with other centres and leaders such as our friend, Serop Megerditchian in Syria.

5. Priorities for ONA in 2006-2007:

- These notes do not capture the enthusiasm, optimism and good energy that was evident throughout the time spent together at Five Oaks. We all appreciated the practical value and benefits of meeting with colleagues sharing the same work, telling stories and being inspired by a well designed program. As a result there was a strong consensus to move forward and build on the success of this meeting. We want to see ONA continue and be of practical service to us all. To this end the following actions were suggested and various individuals agreed to initiate action:

1. **Establish an on-line discussion forum** – participants wanted a practical and accessible way to communicate with each other. An on-line discussion form that any of us could access was suggested. **Lawrence Pentelow and Wolfgang agreed to establish this service and advise us how to use it.** (I believe this service is now operational.-WLE)
2. **Marketing of ONA as a network for Progressive Centres** – Participants felt that ONA represents some of the best programming opportunities and hospitality service for progressive religious and social justice organizations in North America. We need to get the message about the unique and progressive nature of our organizations out to more people. Many ideas were discussed including web marketing and possibly print in progressive publications (Utne for example). **Mardi Tindal, Linda Anderson and Jean Richardson agreed to form a working group on this topic.**
3. **Pilgrimage Opportunities** – Many centres are either doing or interested in doing international pilgrimages, study tours or solidarity delegations with international partners. It was proposed that this activity could be a collaborative exercise among a number of North American centres. Tours could even be held within North America to highlight aspects of programming at member centres. **Lawrence**

**Pentelow and Jean Richardson in collaboration with Syrop Mergerditchian agreed to give this opportunity some consideration.**

- 4. Pay Your Dues** – An invoice will be sent to all. The executive was encouraged to examine the current dues structure and consider alternative fee structures based on services received or operating budget.
- 5. Expand membership** – All including the board are asked to give some thought to how we might expand the membership base of ONA. **All centres are encouraged to list their ONA membership on our web sites and provide links to ONA and other member centres.**

### **Reflections on our Time Together**

The following is a list of comments, ideas and suggestions recorded during the last group reflection of participants on the Five Oaks Gathering:

- It was noted that we are stronger when we are together. The inclusiveness of this group ought to be expanded.
- Build it and they will come! We can strengthen our network as we are the new generation of participants in ONA.
- The good energy in this meeting was noted and appreciated.
- Many of us face the same practical issues.
- Great appreciation was expressed for the international representation and participation.
- The value of this collegial association was affirmed as was the value of a global perspective and the sense of role and mission.
- In birthing a new ONA let us focus on the practical.
- This organization feels very embodied.
- ONA can be the practical aspect of the church in its diversity, transformational nature, colourfulness, and global perspective.
- We share a common interest in global issues and social justice.
- Participants were very impressed with the energy and passion of younger participants. There is much hope.
- It was suggested that we could create another circle comprised of younger people involved in our centres. We can more consciously mentor new leadership.

### **Key Questions participants were interested in Discussing more:**

1. Issues relating to staffing and staff management.
2. Programming – What is the call/yearning that draws people in this age? What do we see five years down the road?
3. How can ONA be a place for mutual support? Through what means, what mechanics?

4. How can we be connected globally to educate and strengthen our own work and increase our understanding of each other?

**Jim Palm:**

Our dear friend, Jim palm passed me a note before he left indicating that he was willing to work on some projects:

- revise and update the “orientation” booklet – perhaps with the assistance of Marylu Pentelow.
- Collect and edit the worship resources used in the centres
- Work on the development of a “founders fund”
- Work on fund development for Oikosnet