

We have encouraging news about SONKA's future and some new steps in reorganizing the Heartland Conference to enable more collaboration in ministering to our people and our churches.

First, a SONKA update.

A working group including representatives of the associations and conference transitional minister Rev. David Long-Higgins has created a plan to assist SONKA and share associations' resources.

Living Water Association has pledged financial support for up to half of SONKA's \$58,000 deficit. Living Water also will share staffing for search-and-call and lease a car for association minister Rev. Carl Robinson.

The Heartland Conference proposes up to \$30,000 in assistance for SONKA.

In response, SONKA's Governance Council is exploring ways to reduce expenses, including moving into a congregational space by the end of 2020 when the lease for our current office expires.

These moves will keep SONKA on solid footing and pull the associations into closer partnership, which is the intent of the conference's ongoing restructuring talks.

As we know, the restructuring work has spanned many years and hit several snags. It's appropriate that as we celebrate Pentecost, there's a new energy flowing into the effort.

The conference's executive committees are forming a temporary team that will include two members of each association and the association ministers and the transitional minister.

Within the next three months, this team will review and revise, where necessary, the conference's restructuring proposal so that it nurtures associations' needs and ministries. This team also would identify and address concerns – often unspoken – that have gotten in the way.

In recent meetings, association representatives have talked openly about a lack of trust and some proverbial elephants in the room, which are now being more openly discussed.

I'm reminded of a church experience that has parallels. When my church went from a full-time to part-time pastor, there were many unspoken fears.

A major reorganization touches everything in some ways, and people get understandably afraid of what might happen and how things will change for them.

During our church reorganization, we needed to build trust. We trusted one another, but we hadn't yet built trust in the process itself. That came only with progress that allowed people to see how it would work.

Worry dissipated. Instead, people started focusing more on what they could contribute to building a new wineskin, to borrow from a favorite verse.

I sense that same spirit rekindled within our conference work. We've now seen what can happen when associations work together and share resources, both financial and spiritual. This can become a starting point for building trust in the process.

We've sewn initial stitches in something new that can securely hold our churches in the coming years, which will bring many challenges. Let's keep the needle moving.

_ Joe Kay, Governance Council vice moderator