

Winkler picked to head National Council of Churches

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As the National Council of Churches struggled year after year with growing deficits, a United Methodist official who headed the denomination's social justice arm from a building on the edge of Capitol Hill kept urging the NCC to relocate from Manhattan to Washington, D.C.

Earlier this year, that's exactly what the downsized NCC did. And when its governing board met in Chicago on November 18 to elect a new executive, it nominated and elected James E. Winkler, the one who suggested the move into the offices of the United Methodist Building.

Winkler will succeed Peg Birk, who has served as transitional general secretary of the NCC since July 2012. The previous general secretary was Michael Kinnamon, who resigned in 2011 for health reasons.

"We are confident that Jim Winkler's gifts and experience are just what the council needs to stay on the right path and expand its horizons," said Kathryn Lohre, who has served as NCC president. Lohre also praised Birk for her guidance in reorganization while maintaining "our fiscal strength during a challenging time."

Winkler has served since 2000 as general secretary of the Methodists' General Board of Church and Society, the public policy and social justice agency with offices in New York as well as Washington. Unlike many U.S.-based denominations, the United Methodists are a global denomination.

He has led delegations to the Middle East, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Iraq and Germany, seeking peaceful solutions to conflict. Winkler also has preached and led workshops in Russia, Nigeria and the Philippines.

Winkler will have the combined title of general secretary/president of the NCC.