

Slimmer NCC trims its priorities and personnel

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Finished with two years of “pruning and untangling” its operations, the National Council of Churches announced that it has cut 11 full-time positions while consolidating operations in Washington, D.C. It has set two social justice priorities for the immediate future. The reorganized NCC elected James E. Winkler to be its chief executive.

Peg Birk, in her final report as NCC transitional general secretary, said on November 25 that the heavily indebted, New York-based ecumenical organization, founded in 1950, had grown into three dozen commissions, committees and working groups.

The newly approved budget is based on “pledges received and revenue forecast for royalties” (such as for NRSV Bibles) and an “appropriate fee structure” for the 37 member denominations and communions. Most member bodies are relatively small.

The NCC said the organization now has two priorities—“addressing the injustices of mass incarceration and interfaith relations with a focus on peace. It will also continue to respond to urgent issues with the same moral voice it has expressed throughout its history.”

In the new structure, a smaller governing board will draw primarily from the heads of member communions or episcopal districts or commissions. Members will serve two-year terms. Eight at-large members will supplement the board “to enhance strategic partnerships” and “uphold the council’s commitment to diversity.”

In addition to Winkler, four new officials were elected to key posts:

- A. Roy Medley, who has been general secretary of the American Baptist Churches U.S.A. since 2002, will chair the NCC governing board, succeeding Kathryn Lohre.

- Sharon E. Watkins, general minister and president of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), will succeed Medley at the end of his term as chair of the governing board. Watkins was recently reelected to the World Council of Churches' central committee.
- Geoffrey A. Black, general minister and president of the United Church of Christ, will serve as secretary. Black has headed the Cleveland-based denomination since 2009.
- W. Darrin Moore, bishop of the western episcopal district of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, will serve as treasurer. Moore has been an active leader in AME Zion and currently is on the executive committee of the World Methodist Council.