

PROPOSAL FOR RE-VISIONING PCTS

April 15, 2009

PURPOSE & PROCESS

The purpose of this proposal is to cast a vision for the future of the Pacific Coast Theological Society that seeks a new direction and energy for PCTS while being attentive to the many strengths of the Society that have evolved over the years. After deliberate conversation with currently active and non-active members as well as consulting with current PhD students and professors at the GTU, several issues were raised as well as some assessment of current strengths and weaknesses of the Society. This proposal seeks to address these issues and to present its findings and vision at the Spring Meeting in April 2009. The vision revolves around three key points: invitation to participants, structure of the Society & Meetings, and membership requirements & retention.

RESPONDING TO THESE ISSUES

Concerns

- The gradual loss of membership and the increasing average age of PCTS members.
- Concern over the lack of visibility of the Society within theological circles and the GTU in particular.
- The expressed need for new leadership that will take over the responsibilities of the Society.
- Responding to opportunities for legacy giving and the need for a PCTS endowment.

Current strengths of Society as expressed by members

- The unique character of a multidisciplinary group responding to a given theological topic.
- The significant time allotment given to each presented paper and the valued corresponding critique offered from numerous voices.
- The opportunity for fellowship and networking.

INVITATION

Deliberate invitation of Doctoral Students, Junior Faculty and related Senior Professors

- PCTS provides a unique opportunity for scholarly engagement between senior and junior scholars within a multidisciplinary setting.
- Leading-edge scholarship would be brought into the conversation by such engagement.
- Fellowship and networking opportunities would facilitate writing projects.
- An environment of informal mentoring of junior scholars by senior scholars would be fostered and could include help with publication as well.

PCTS "Open House" in September to advertise November Meeting

- An orientation and social gathering inviting local students, academics and pastors to meet with local PCTS scholars. Wine and appetizers. Panel discussion.

Ongoing advertising for Meetings

- A combination of approaches is suggested: Advertising in publications and newsletters such as the GTU Dean's Letter. Creating an informational brochure about the Society and its benefits. In person announcements during doctoral orientation and to GTU doctoral area meetings. Personal invitation of professors and if appropriate, whole classes. More use of the web including links to PCTS, etc.

Maintaining the “Pacific Coast” mandate

- Inviting working groups within schools or regions to present work on a particular topic.

STRUCTURE

Current dates, timeframe and meeting schedule seems to work

- Though open to suggestions, feedback from members suggests that the current schedule and time frame for the Meetings works well. The allotted time for papers, the opportunities for fellowship during Happy Hour, and the autobiography by a member have been appreciated.

Assigning of topics, papers and people

- Traditionally, a topic has been selected and then people were assigned to write papers and to respond to those papers, regardless of the individual’s previous acquaintance with the material. This has provided stimulating perspectives from multiple disciplines.
- Relatively recently, the trend has been to seek people with a specific expertise in a desired topic, or individuals have offered to present papers within their current interests. Examples include programs presented by the Center for Jewish Studies, PANA, Ted Peters and Jerome Baggett. This approach has brought PCTS greater exposure through guest presenters and accompanying scholars.
- It is suggested that a combination of approaches be explored. Perhaps each approach could be used on alternating meetings (i.e., for the Fall Meeting people could be assigned general topics and for the Spring Meeting people could be sought with specific expertise), or the two sessions within a meeting could provide both approaches.
- Regardless of the approach, it is suggested that there be some level of quality control implemented for papers and responses in order to assure academic excellence. A group would be selected to accomplish this task as well as moderators who would facilitate conversation during a Meeting.

Leadership

- The current structure relies upon two people: the secretary and the treasurer. A larger leadership group of “teams” with specific tasks would spread out responsibilities and strengthen PCTS’s mission.

Endowment Fund

- Members have expressed the desire for tax-deductible and legacy giving to PCTS and the need for an endowment fund to insure the Society’s future.
- With the death of Patricia Codron and outpouring of gifts towards PCTS, the timely necessity of implementing such an endowment has been answered by the Executive Committee’s decision to put monies into an endowment fund with the GTU. It is called the “Patricia Codron Memorial Endowment for the Pacific Coast Theological Society.” Please refer to documentation on the PCTS website, www.pcts.org, describing the process and rationale for this decision.

Other possible locations for PCTS Meetings

- Given the limitations of past locations such as the GTU Dinner Board Room, it is recommended that PCTS explore other venues for the Meetings.
- An example is Easton Hall on the CDSP campus. This is an ideal place for housing, facilitating smaller meetings and providing informal opportunities for relationship building. It could be used in conjunction with the Bade Museum or the Dinner Board Room above the GTU Library for larger group meetings.

MEMBERSHIP

Question of how open Meetings should be to non-members

- Traditionally, participation within meetings was limited to members and those recommended by members.
- In the recent past, a less exclusive approach has been taken with broader invitation to groups and whole classes.
- The Society needs to consider the balance of prestige and the need for more participants.

Membership Retention

- The creation of contact information for participants/guests at the Meetings would provide easy invitation and reminders for upcoming Meetings.
- Follow-up and feedback from lapsed members would provide insight into further needed changes.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Implement invitation strategies with a focus on bringing in junior scholars with associated senior professors and the creation/strengthening of multiple cohorts within PCTS.
- Explain and promote the Patricia Codron Memorial Endowment for the Pacific Coast Theological Society.
- Create a series of teams and accompanying coordinators for a more broadly implemented leadership of PCTS. The following are suggested teams and their basic duties:
 - **Outreach Team**
 - A team of two or three people that reach out to scholars and institutions to advertise PCTS Meetings and solicit new members. A GTU doctoral student liaison would be particularly helpful.
 - As suggested in the “Invitation” section, this would mean ongoing advertising and the coordination of any special events such as a PCTS Open House in September.
 - The team would also facilitate the welcoming of guests to Meetings and gathering of contact information for further invitation.
 - **Program Team**
 - A team of three individuals charged with overseeing program content for each meeting. It is suggested that they serve three years in staggered terms to maintain continuity.
 - They would develop program ideas and find or assign presenters, respondents (and moderators if necessary).
 - Some possible resources for topics include prize-winning work, grants that have been received by scholars for projects, and books that have been recently published not only in the GTU but also in schools up and down the Pacific Coast. Professors could suggest doctoral students that are involved with leading-edge projects, and invite people to respond to their papers whose work reflects a connection with the topic that has emerged.

- The Program Team would be responsible for developing the criteria and methods by which program content would be assessed and quality maintained.
 - They would disseminate the papers to members through the PCTS website (and other means as necessary).
 - **Hospitality Team**
 - A team of two or three. It is strongly suggested that this team recruit two or three other people in order to carry out the immediate tasks required for a Meeting.
 - This team would carry out the logistics of the physical setup of each Meeting including tables, chairs, catering arrangements, appetizers, wine, cleanup, etc.
 - A two-day Meeting has traditionally included a Happy Hour with appetizers & drinks, a catered dinner, and a simple continental breakfast.
 - **Membership/Finance Team**
 - A team of three individuals that would include the PCTS Treasurer, Financial Secretary, and Membership Coordinator. Members would serve three-year staggered terms.
 - The team would maintain membership records, track membership dues and costs associated with the Meetings, collect dues and banquet fees at a Meeting, and do financial reporting.
 - The Society's checking account is maintained by the Financial Secretary.
 - The Patricia Codron Memorial Endowment at the GTU is maintained by the Treasurer, who also prepares the Annual Treasurer Report.
 - The Membership Coordinator would maintain membership records during the year and coordinate the collection of dues during the meeting (with the Financial Secretary).
- The **Executive Committee** consisting of the Society's Secretary, Treasurer and a representative/coordinator from the other teams would oversee the suggested teams as well as fulfill the following tasks:
 - Fiduciary oversight of PCTS.
 - Set dates, times and locations (including room reservations) for Spring and Fall Meetings.
 - Oversee PCTS website and PCTS Journal.
 - Send out communications for upcoming meetings.
 - Create a task force to actively fill team members, particularly team coordinators.

TASK FORCE FOR PROPOSAL

The following individuals have worked together the past five months to bring this proposal for re-visioning PCTS:

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They are grateful for the numerous comments from members of PCTS and others who have contributed their insights to this document. It is still a work in progress and will benefit from further ideas, critique and refinement. Thank you.