

The Executive Board met 11 times over Zoom between Annual Meetings. Meetings were attended by members of the Executive Board in addition to Genevieve Benham, the Rev. Dr. Barb Doerrer-Peacock, and the Rev. Dr. Bill Lyons.

Highlights of the Board's actions are further detailed in reports by the Conference Minister, Associate Conference Minister, and committees. I encourage you to take the time to read them - our staff, called leadership, and volunteers did exceptional work this year!

What's missing from our lists of numbers and actions, though, is an account of all the hard work that got us there—the hours where we poured over data; the prayers; the tears; the tough conversations where we worked to balance the physical, financial and spiritual well-being of our covenant partners; the laughter; the hours we just spent listening; the Zoom and phone calls with local church leaders; the personal and corporate grief we carried; the trips to meet with real estate agents and notaries; the time spent in meetings where we stayed late into the night, because in order to be faithful, we needed to be thorough; and of course, all of the times we got to celebrate with folks doing innovative ministry and social justice work.

When time and energy were stretched thinnest during the pandemic, the Executive Board, our staff, and our Conference committees showed up—prepared, faithful to their call to serve, and centered in God and the mission of the Southwest Conference.

So thank you, staff, called leaders, members of the Board, and members of our Southwest Conference committees for the hours of hard work you put in behind the scenes! Thank you for bringing your unique voices, humor and expertise to every project and gathering. Thank you for having the courage to listen, disagree, and ask difficult questions. Thank you for your compassion, your vision, and your grace!

Thank you also to our Southwest Conference churches who worked along side us this year. Thank you for trusting us. Thank you for your flexibility! Thank you for voicing your questions and doubts and frustrations. Thank you for walking with us on this journey, sharing your call to serve, and dreaming with us about the future.

May God continue to show up in all of us and in our work as we enter this new year together, extravagantly welcoming and affirming followers of Christ called to embody God's unconditional justice and love.

God is still speaking,

The Rev. Sarah Tevis Townes  
Southwest Conference Moderator, 2021-2022