**Draft minutes for RCN Conference Call December 3, 2015**

Attending were: Alvin Luedke, Carl Ellis, Dave Ruesink, Gary Farley, Gil Waldkoenig, Judy Hill and Mark Yackel Juleen.

Regrets from John Young and Lon Oliver

**Opening devotion** by Mark on Jeremiah Chapter 33 relating to fears in our society today and how God fulfills the hope of promises.

**Check in**

Gil--Gettysburg Seminary has a special focus on Appalachia.

Judy--Attended Rural Chaplains Association this fall and working with UMRA as they get ready for General Assembly in May, 2016 in Portland, Oregon

Carl--Lay Academy for rural church leaders located in SE Kansas. Training people nation-wide serving in rural churches.

Mark--Director for Small Town and Rural Ministry at Wartburg. Also continuing as Director at Shalom Hill Farm Ministry. Mid October major fire at the farm. In process of plans for replacement of the smaller of the two buildings that burned to the ground.

Mark reported on work with Alvin and Gil on how seminaries can work cooperatively for Town and Country ministry training. Move to Wartburg is shaping up. President of Wartburg is supportive of work with RCN and other rural ministry programs. Traveled to Gettysburg this summer to observe how rural ministry is taught there.

Alvin--Had session for five students studying for rural ministry at SHF for three weekends with Mark.

Gary—House torn up for three months while installing an elevator. Hope to focus on RSSE rest of winter and into spring. Planned videos for RSSE and contacted folks related to the topics he is working on. Fifth Edition of Legacy and Change by Flora’s now available with updated statistics and fourth edition is still available at a cheaper price (maybe $30 rather than $50).

Dave—The RCN mailing list disappeared and after several tries, with the help of Lou Ellen (Dave’s wife), it was completely re-done. If anyone hears of someone who used to be on the mailing list, but is no longer, please notify Dave. This fall, he and his wife were gone on a “round the world” trip and were in 10 different countries during the six weeks and made contact with four people who are part of the International Rural Church Association. He is active with the local Chamber of Commerce and this fall received the honor of being the “Volunteer of the Year.”

**Treasurers report** In absence of Lon, Mark reported that Lon said there is about $2,000 in the account. Dave said there is about $1,200 due for the balance of 2015. The bank in North Dakota is still the one we are using. Will continue to see about changing banks.

**Spring, 2015 Minutes** as found on website were approved by motion of Alvin and Mark.

**Executive Secretary report:** –Since the last meeting, efforts have concentrated on:

- Making phone contacts with primary funders with email follow up as recommended.

- When contributions are received, they are recorded with a copy sent to Lon and checks are mailed to the bank.

- Minimal supervision has been provided for the webmaster.

- Emails and other sites are monitored daily for information that might be useful to forward to the RCN listserv.

- RSSE material is being reviewed and procedures are being established to have it become available on-line.

**Elections** Dave moved that the President and Treasurer be re-elected for two more years with motion approved unanimously.

**Website**—Update of blog related to first aid, but was not done.

Mailing list now corrected. Jake has a full time job now, but is still willing to be webmaster.

**RSSE**  Gary shared what he is doing. Writing team of Gary, Lon, Mark and Dave met at Gary’s place in July to outline procedures. Mark has introductory section competed. Will send it to the writing committee. Have not heard from Lon about his part. Dubuque administrators are willing to be a seminary portal for the material when it is ready to be on line.

Gary would like help with a course he did at the prison female prison where a class with a certificate from Sanford. Several ladies with advanced degrees. Some would like theological degrees but can not do on line work while in prison. Might be able to use DVD’s or other mechanisms. Potential contributions have great possibilities.

Alvin wondered about video modules from RSSE components. Video introductions would be possible with a cohort within the prison. Gary might help focus with general theological discussions. Old Testament and New Testament introductions

Mark—Continuing education at Wartburg might be a possible way where the intention is to engage laity with theological conversation.

Gary—has a class of 40 students and the Wardens seem to have networking possibilities. Good potential to enlist bright folks with different testimony. He taught eight weeks for two hours per night. Just getting a start. First time any request for longer services. The students at the prison would like at least three-hour sessions.

Mark will talk to administrators about whether “Seminary For Everyone” might be put on a DVD with someone like Gary being the teacher.

**Lay Academy Leadership by Carl Ellis:** This training to go national and ecumenical to train laity. Many small rural churches not able to pay for seminary trained ministers. Two parts

1. What is the call to ministry? What gifts do they have?

2. Nine month course called Foundations on ministry using lectionary and other areas.

Developed for on-line responses of professors and student in small group interactions. Travel became difficult and often writing is more difficult than speaking.

UMRA has a Circles Program to develop rural communities. Course on helping rural churches to develop a vision in their church in 2016

What are other courses that could be used? Familiar with UM work, but what else is available? Ninety five percent of the students go to Course of Study program. Once complete the first course, will go to the next step.

Mark—Fresh because of discussion about research needed with Gil and Alvin about multiple point ministry which is often ecumenical. Wartburg said to be sure the research is ecumenical. Seminary for everyone might include a multipolity course.

Alvin—Introduction to different worship services

Carl—Where multiple Lutheran churches, worship forms may not be as traditional as we think. Seminaries often don’t think about laity training so developed lay speaker program. Lay Academy is an in-between step. Students realize they can write and learn. Gives security of moving ahead. Certified Ministry program has potential if use it. Shows hunger to learn more. Realize need more training. Provide “sea legs” with a foundation to begin.

Mark—RCN could be a way to lift Lay Academy nationally and cross-pollinate with other denominations. ELCA Synods have a lay ministry program and TEAM ministry accessing Seminary education. Commonalities when pursued. Now have ecumenically served parishes.

Carl—One ELCA pastor has now gone through course of study and has a church where he can serve. Role of Pastor is changing. Many communities are shrinking.

Mark—Will keep this in mind.

Carl---Thankful for Theological Education. Doctorate helped move on. Many don’t understand the importance of Theological Education at the Seminaries. Support is needed.

Website for Lay Academy is **larcm.org**

**Spring meeting** will be April 28-30, 2016 in Chicago

**Rural Sociological Society Meeting**—August 7-10, 2016, Toronto—Understanding Rural Social Class in an Era of Global Challenge. Anyone interested presenting at the meeting should contact Mark or Alvin soon.

Closing Prayer by Judy

Recorded by Dave Ruesink, RCN Executive Secretary