

Meeting Summary

Date: October 15, 2025

Primary Focus: Review and Q&A on the Alaska Conference Budget, shared services, funding structures, and stewardship processes in advance of the Special Called Session on October 22, 2025.

1. Opening & Devotion

- The meeting began with a prayer focused on stewardship, generosity, and the responsibility to care for communities, especially those affected by the recent typhoon in Western Alaska.
 - The prayer emphasized discerning how budget decisions reflect faith, stewardship, and compassion.
-

2. Main Topics Discussed

A. Budget Process & Context

- **Budget Documents:**
 - All participants were expected to access shared budget documents for review and queries.
 - **Long-Term Intent:**
 - The intent is to return to regular scheduling; preparation for the 2027 budget will start soon after this budget's passage.
-

B. Major Budget Highlights & Changes

- **Increase in Apportionments:**
 - Alaska's apportioned budget is up slightly from last year; spending plan increased a bit more proportionally.
 - General Church apportionments are the main driver due to denominational reallocations following conference disaffiliations.
 - Alaska's minimal disaffiliation means a higher proportional burden, especially due to the high cost of living and the apportionment formula's structure.
 - Ongoing efforts to advocate for a more equitable formula at the General Church level.
- **Budget Structure Adjustments:**
 - Budget now categorized into:

- Apportioned
 - Required
 - Connectional activities
 - Programmatic “Ministry Opportunities” (grant-based, designed for flexibility)
 - Exploration of grant-based systems to create responsive budgeting between annual cycles and emerging ministry needs.
 - **Ministry Opportunity (Grant Section):**
 - Approx. \$43,000 proposed, nearly 50% requested from Outdoor Ministries.
 - Funds are not static “earmarks” in the apportioned budget; actual funding is reliant on available non-apportioned sources (e.g., endowment income, reserves).
-

C. Staffing and Role Clarification

- **Superintendency & DCM Positions:**
 - Question addressed regarding whether these constitute one or more full-time equivalents (FTEs).
 - Currently budgeted as a single FTE using AK Conference rules, though the two roles can and have been split/flexibly staffed. Includes travel and business expenses.
 - The budget secures funding for the functions, not the number of people.
 - The 2026 proposed budget is flat compared to 2025 current compensation.
 - **Shared Services Evolution:**
 - Shared administrative structures among Alaska, Pacific Northwest, and Oregon-Idaho Conferences.
 - Rationale: Resource optimization, access to specialized expertise (HR, property, benefits), and efficiency in serving small conferences.
 - Current Alaska contract continues at the same cost; in the future, expanded shared services will not require extra funding in this budget cycle.
 - **Key Personnel Updates:**
 - Introduction of Sara Goetze as GNW Assistant Treasurer (background in non-profit management and United Methodist finance).
 - New roles in HR and property asset management have been added to shared services.
-

D. Budget Assumptions & Philosophy

- **Apportionment Realism:**
 - Continuing the practice of budgeting based on the assumption that only 85% of apportionments will be paid, reflecting historical trends.
 - **Moving from Earmarks to Grants:**
 - Emphasis on improved stewardship and responsiveness.
 - Leadership team responsible for developing grant request processes and criteria.
 - **Transparency and Tracking:**
 - Need identified for clearer balance sheets, funding source overviews, and education for conference members about existing endowments and funds.
-

E. Non-Apportioned Funding

- **Sources Identified:**
 - Line-item reserves, conference-controlled endowments (e.g., Legacy Fund, Thomas Dahl Fund, indigenous ministries endowment, seminary scholarships for Alaska Natives), and investment earnings.
 - **Communication Commitments:**
 - Balance sheets/funding source statements to be posted by October 16.
 - Commitment to add income/funding source clarity to future budget templates.
 - **Resource Locations:**
 - Conference Journal (contains lists, rules, and explanations for funds, including reverting/non-reverting designations).
 - Annual audit includes detailed funding information.
-

F. Process & Access

- **Budget Amendment Process:**
 - Any proposed budgetary changes over \$1,000 must specify new income sources and should be submitted at least 24 hours before the special session (Oct 22).
 - Standing rules outlined, with a goal of advance clarity and preparation.
- **Education & Transparency:**
 - There is a recognized need for:

- Definitions of roles (e.g. which teams approve grants/subsidies)
 - Educational material for new delegates and ongoing clarity on processes, especially for newer members.
 - Suggestion that staff summary role and contact sheet be provided as a resource.
-

3. Detailed Discussions / Questions Raised

- **Grant Functionality:**
 - Clarified that “Ministry Opportunity” funds are available, but not pre-allocated; access requires developed grant processes and leadership team decisions.
 - No current grant application forms—task delegated to leadership for rapid development.
 - **Carry-overs and Balance Sheets:**
 - Request and agreement to provide historical/ongoing balance sheets and dedicated funding details to support informed decision-making.
 - **Conference Budget vs. Spending Plan:**
 - Clarified what the budget includes (apportionments, select spending) and does not include (benefits pass-through funds, annual conference event registration pass-throughs), and why.
-

5. Follow-ups & Next Steps

- **Prepare for Special Called Session:**
 - Continue answering remaining questions—participants encouraged to submit questions or amendment proposals before October 22.
 - Summary of these questions and answers to be provided in advance.
 - **Ongoing Education Commitment:**
 - Incorporate improved financial transparency and process education into future conference materials and templates.
 - **Leadership Team Tasks:**
 - Address development of grant management and communication protocols at the next leadership team meeting.
-

6. Closing

- **Closing Prayer:**

- Expressed hope for thoughtful decision-making, effective stewardship, care for hurting communities, and mutual accountability as conference work progresses.