

Presbytery of New Covenant  
Stated Meeting Draft Minutes  
November 21, 2015  
St. John's Presbyterian Church

Moderator TE Laurey Murphy (Houston, Spring Branch) called the meeting to order at 9:06 am, after an organ prelude by Dr. Alina Klimaszewska (Houston, St. John's). Laurey reminded us of our baptism as she poured water into the font, and invited us to pass the peace. We opened the meeting with worship, which included a message from the Moderator of the 221<sup>st</sup> General Assembly, RE Heath Rada, as well as a moment for mission from Ed Knight, president of Presbyterian Children's Homes and Services (our offering recipient), and the installation of the Moderator for 2016, RE Shelley Hernandez (Houston, Pathways). The morning offering was \$4,009 (increased by \$20 from a bill found on the sidewalk to \$4,029).

A quorum was declared. The revised docket found in the addendum was adopted. We welcomed first time commissioners, corresponding members (Heath Rada, Valerie Young, Friday Ngandu, and Rev. Serge Changa from the United Church in Zambia). Mission fair participants briefly introduced their work. Commissioners were encouraged to visit the mission fair. TE Jon Burnham offered greetings from the host church and offered thanks to those who helped with the planning of the meeting, including the members of the presbytery staff. We welcomed TE Miriam Haas-Melchior (Needville, St. Paul's) and TE Holly Smith (At Large) as new members of the presbytery.

Tellers Appointed: RE Bill Bryant (Houston, Spring Branch), RE Ava Kimble (Houston, Pinecrest), TE Kathleen Davies (Community of the Servant Savior), TE Greg Davis (Houston, San Pablo + Trinity) who will work with RE Jane Larkin (Houston, St. Philip, Chair of ADSC) to count the ballots.

Nominating Committee: Class of 2018: RE Jennifer Carr, RE Sharon Carey, RE Robert Westheimer, TE Shawn Kang; unexpired class of 2017: RE Gary Weinburger (Conroe, First) – the nominees were approved.

Report of the Stated Clerk: Stated Clerk Lynn Hargrove reminded commissioners in attendance that Manuals of Operations, Sexual Misconduct Policies and Child Protection Policies are required by the Book of Order and that if they are not mentioned in the session minutes that there will be exceptions noted in session records review. She noted corrections on page 15 and 17 in the meeting addendum.

Report of the General Council: GC moderator Shelley Hernandez gave a report from the Vision Team. She recognized the members of the Vision Team who were dismissed with thanks for their work. She made a motion (as recorded in the Addendum) to approve the sale of a lot owned by Bryan, First.

### Resolution

(The First Presbyterian Church of Bryan, Texas, Brazos County, Texas)

RESOLVED, that the General Council of Presbytery of New Covenant, Inc. ("**Presbytery**"), on the recommendation of Presbytery's Administrative Division Steering Committee, DOES HEREBY approve the sale by The First Presbyterian Church of Bryan, Texas ("**Church**") to Christopher P. Briggs and Penny J. Briggs ("**Purchaser**") of Church's property in Brazos County, Texas that is more particularly described below ("**Property**"), at a sale price of \$49,000.00, payable by Purchaser in cash at closing, and on such other terms and conditions as shall be approved by the Session and the Congregation of the Church and as shall be reflected in an earnest money contract signed or to be signed by a trustee or other officer of the Church, the Property being described as follows:

The real property located at 1317 Carter Creek Parkway, Bryan, Texas 77802, being more particularly described as Lot Three-R (3-R), Block Six (6), Cavitt's Southmore Addition, and containing approximately 1.02 acres of land, City of Bryan, Brazos County, Texas.

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Moments for Mission: Exhibitors were TE Paul Hooker (Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary); Rita Odom (Schreiner University, Kerrville); Dawn Dvoracek (University of the Ozarks); Trish Beach (CEDEPCA); TE Tomas Spath (The Institute for Civility in Government); and TE Jim Currie (Presbyterian Historical Society of the Southwest).

Keynote: Heath Rada, Moderator of the 221<sup>st</sup> General Assembly, invited commissioners into conversation, replicating sitting on the front porch of his house in Montreat, NC. TE Jon Burnham (Houston, St. John's) asked about the "call to the church"; TE Alex Cornell (Houston, St. Stephen) asked exciting and hopeful things are going on in the PC(USA); TE Carol Tompkins (At Large) asked about using technology at the General Assembly level to be used more effectively, and making the actual GA meeting more productive; RE Don Shaffer (Beaumont, St. Andrew's) asked about the aging of local congregations and about "The Fellowship of Presbyterians"; TE Craig King (Alvin and Dickinson) asked what we can do to help Heath; RE Ann Hardy (Houston, St. John's) voiced a concern with the Mission Responsibility Through Investment (MRTI) and asked how we become peacemakers after choosing sides; TE Kristi Click-Blankman (Houston, Spring Branch) talked about the Young Adult Volunteer program and asked for elaboration on the appointment of TE Larissa Kwong Abazia as Vice Moderator; TE Mike Cole (General Presbyter) asked about the 1001 New Worshipping Communities. Heath closed with stories of the complexity of the conflict in the Middle East and the refugee situation.

Moderator Laurey Murphy made announcements and Heath Rada offered a blessing before our lunch and the mission fair.

We reconvened at 1:30 with the hymn, "Every Time I Feel the Spirit" led by Rev. Jon Burnham.

Synod of the Sun: Laurey Murphy turned the next part of the meeting over to Shelley Hernandez. She called on RE Bart Henson (Houston, Memorial Drive) who is one of our two commissioners to the Synod of the Sun. Bart introduced Valerie Young, interim leader of the synod. He offered a report about the recent synod meeting, which included a short video. Highlights of the report were that there has been a restructuring of the synod staff, which freed up some funding for mission and scholarship; an explanation of the budget and funding; and the video competition to tell the story of the synod, the winner of which was shown (submitted by a congregation in Arkansas).

Administrative Division Steering Committee: RE Jane Larkin asked that the docket for the committee be altered. TE Fred Seay (Sugar Land, First), the chair of the personnel committee, introduced Helen Wolf, Editor for the presbytery, who is celebrating her retirement. Her family surprised her by standing with her as Fred offered words of encouragement to along with some parting gifts. The commissioners stood with applause to express their appreciation. Fred offered a prayer for Helen and her retirement. This concluded the report of the personnel committee.

Ecclesiastical Affairs Committee: TE John Wurster (Houston, St. Philip) introduced TE Becky Downs (Houston, John Knox) to explain the Parity Plan. The Parity Plan was approved. There were 5 overtures for approval. Shelley offered some guidance about the voting.

Overture 2016 – 1: On amending the Manual of Operations for the General Assembly (from Conroe, First) – TE David Green (Conroe, First) spoke as the overture advocate. This overture is offered as a concurrence to one that was submitted by the Presbytery of South Florida.

Overture 2016 – 2: On amending the Book of Order Section W-4.900 (from Bay City, First) – RE Syd Gilzow (Bay City, First) spoke as the overture advocate. This overture is offered as a concurrence to one that was submitted by the Presbytery of Kiskiminetas. A short debate for and against the motion was offered.

TE Mike Cole, general presbyter, was introduced to explain the next three overtures which deal with Climate Change and divestment from fossil fuel companies.

Overture 2016 – 3: On Faithful Engagement with the Issue of Climate Change (from Houston, Pines) – RE Jim Allison (Houston, Pines) spoke as the overture advocate. One commissioner spoke against the overture.

Overture 2016 – 4: On Faithful Response to Climate Change (from Atascocita, Atascocita) – RE Bill Bray (Atascocita, Atascocita) spoke as the overture advocate. There were no questions or debate.

Overture 2016 – 5: On A Constructive Alternative to Divestment (from Woodlands, Woodlands Community) – RE John Hathaway (Woodlands, Woodlands) spoke as the overture advocate. One commissioner spoke against the overture.

The tellers collected the marked paper ballots. While the votes were counted, we sang several favorite hymns. Joys and concerns were shared. Heath Rada offered prayers for the people. The vote totals were:

Overture 2016-1: 153 – 24	The overture was approved.
Overture 2016-2: 75 – 104	The overture failed.
Overture 2016-3: 114 – 61	The overture was approved.
Overture 2016-4: 132 – 45	The overture was approved.
Overture 2016-5: 148 – 29	The overture was approved.

Finance: RE Cathy Bliton offered information about the budget. There were no questions.

That concluded the ADSC report.

Committee on Ministry: RE Dick Black explained that TE John Hirling was to offer the celebration of the dissolution of Westminster, Houston, but he was unable to attend the meeting. TE Carol Tompkins (At Large) asked if we could pray for that congregation in their dissolution, and offered words of explanation about the difficulty of their decision. TE Mike Cole told the commissioners about the Church of the Redeemer who have moved into the lease space, funding for which is part of the legacy of Westminster, and then offered a prayer for both congregations.

Dick Black called on TE Ted Foote to offer an explanation for the motion for the Administrative Commission for Houston, Korean Young Nak. Questions for clarification were asked and answered, including explanation about an Administrative Commission which had been appointed in 2007. There were questions regarding the Book of Order sections on Administrative Commission. TE Paul Hooker offered an amendment to the motion which said this:

“Now, therefore: the Committee on Ministry of the Presbytery of New Covenant recommends that presbytery appoint an Administrative Commission (AC) to engage in this process to review, respond and assist in reconciliation within Korean Young Nak Presbyterian Church. ~~This AC shall be composed of 5 members and the~~

~~quorum shall be 3 members and shall assume original jurisdiction over the session. The AC shall use a translator for meetings with members.~~ *The AC shall be empowered to assume original jurisdiction from the session if, after according to the session full opportunity to be heard, the commission concludes that the session is unable or unwilling to manage wisely its affairs (G-3.0303e). The AC shall be composed of 5 members, approximately equal ruling and teaching elders, of which 3 shall be deemed a quorum. The AC shall make use of the services of a translator when members of the congregation are present at its meetings."*

The amended motion was seconded. Questions were asked and were answered by TE's who had served as recent moderators for the congregation. The question was called, and the amended motion was approved. The motion as amended was placed for approval. TE Tomas Spath (Houston, Woodforest), who is serving as the current moderator of the session, offered further explanation about the situation. He has spoken to all five of the session members who agreed to ask for the AC. The amended motion was approved. Ted Foote offered prayer for the congregation, the presbytery, and the Committee on Ministry.

Mike Cole made a motion to extend the docket time to 4:15 pm.

Committee on Preparation for Ministry: TE Kevin Boyd had no report beyond what was included in the meeting packet and addendum.

Ministries Division Steering Committee: RE Carlton Currie (Houston, First) asked the commissioners to look at the reports that are included in the meeting packet and addendum. He thanked the committee members for their work, and asked the commissioners to offer their thanks. He called on Margaret Swarts (Houston, St. Paul) to offer the motion to concur with the request of *Iglesia Latina Presbiteriana*, Houston, to be constituted and organized as a church in the Presbytery of New Covenant on a date to be set no later than March 19, 2016. The motion was approved. TE Isabel Rivera-Velez (Interim Pastor) shared a part of their story. TE Jim Gill (Baytown, Faith) offered prayer in English and Spanish for the congregation.

Nominating Committee: RE David Bell (Houston, Northwoods) offered the report found in both the meeting packet and the addendum. There were no nominations from the floor. The slate of nominees was approved.

There was no new business submitted by the deadline which is four days prior to the meeting.

Laurey Murphy offered closing remarks, where she placed the moderator's cross on Shelley Hernandez. She offered as a closing prayer Ephesians 3:20-21. The meeting adjourned at 4:14.

Reported Meeting attendance: 90 Teaching Elders; 105 Ruling Elder Commissioners; 1 Commissioned Ruling Elder; 7 Elders with Privilege by Virtue of Office; 4 Former Moderator/Stated Clerk; 1 Elected Presbytery Staff; 1 Fellow NACBA for a total of 209 Voting Commissioners; 37 Non-Voting

Respectfully submitted,  
Lynn R. Hargrove  
Stated and Recording Clerk