

Presbytery of New Covenant
Draft Minutes
March 21, 2015

THEME: "Engaging Our Community"

Meeting Location: St. Philip Presbyterian Church, 4807 San Felipe, Houston, TX 77056

Moderator TE Laurey Murphy (Houston, Spring Branch) called the meeting to order at 9:00 am, by opening worship with the passing of the peace. TE Keatan King (Houston, St. Philip) presided with the assistance of Sasha Arlinghaus, Margaret Fair, and Shirley Ann Frautschi, the choir and music staff from St. Philip. TE Gradye Parsons (Stated Clerk, PCUSA) brought the message for the morning. The necrology report for 2014 was acknowledged by the placing of white carnations on the communion table. The morning offering was \$2787.98 for the Presbyterian Historical Society.

OPENING BUSINESS: Moderator Laurey Murphy asked if we had a quorum. A quorum was declared. The sanctuary was full with people standing along the side aisles. The proposed docket as found in the addendum was adopted. TE John Wurster (Houston, St. Philip) welcomed us to the church, and explained the locations of different parts of the building facility that would be used during the day.

First time commissioners were welcomed, as well as corresponding members: TE Gradye Parsons (Stated Clerk of the PCUSA), TE Sue Hyde (Presbytery of South Dakota), TE Hector Rivera-Velez (Mission Presbytery), TE Lemuel Garcia (Mission Presbytery and Austin Theological Seminary). New minister members were asked to introduce themselves and sign THE BOOK: Keith Uffman (Webster, Webster), Ed Wolf (Galveston, First), Ebenezer Boateng (Redeemer Ghanaian NCD), Young Song (At large), Charles Teykl (HR), Cynthia Wunder (Jasper, First). Visitors Sherry Kenney (Presbyterian Foundation), Candace Hill (Congregational Publishing PCUSA), and Tricia Pogue (MO-Ranch) were introduced.

After lifting Item 5 for a separate vote, the Omnibus Motion was approved. The Omnibus included the approval of the minutes of the November Stated Meeting of the Presbytery of New Covenant, and amendments 14-B Special Committee to Review the Preparation for Ministry Process and Standard Ordination Exams (Item 06-12) parts one and two; 14-C Child Protection Policy – On amending G-3.0106 (Item 08-14); and 14-D Minimum Composition of a Presbytery – On Amending G-3.0301 (Item 06-06).

Nominations to the Nominating Committee: Class of 2017: TE Shelley Craig (HR), Class of 2015: Cindy Houlihan (Houston, Pines). No nominations were made from the floor. The nominees were approved.

Report of the Stated Clerk: Found in the packet and the addendum. Additional errata were pointed out:

Page 12, packet – bottom of the page – "When a presbytery concludes that there are good AND ..."

Page 13, 14-D – First paragraph – First line starting "The minimum...." middle of the line - "tem" should be "ten".

Page 20, addendum – ADSC should be MDSC

Page 30, in the legal description: Lot 3 should be Lot 2R

Ecclesiastical Affairs: TE John Wurster introduced the amendments lifted out for voting by the presbytery. Moderator Laurey Murphy reminded the body of the rules of debate in Presbytery of New Covenant. RE Julie Wells (Houston, St. Philip) was asked to be the timekeeper.

14-A Renunciation of Jurisdiction – On Amending G-2.0509 (Item 06-05) – yellow ballot

Ann Hardy, who served as a commissioner to the 221st GA, was given voice for this item. There were people who spoke for and against.

Tellers were appointed: Tellers: TE Mark Plunkett (Houston, Heritage), RE Lynn Schulenberg (Katy, New Hope), RE William Howard (Houston, St. Philip), and TE Rachel Young (Houston, Clear Lake)

14-E Interreligious Stance – On Amending G-5.0102 (07-02, Recommendation 2) – green ballot

There was no discussion.

14-F – Marriage – On Amending W-4.9000 (Item 10-02) – salmon ballot

There were speakers for and against the amendment. Laurey asked for a time of prayerful silence as the ballots were collected.

Announcement: There were five cars that needed to be moved from Via Yia Mary's (a neighboring restaurant) parking lot.

During the counting of the three ballots, we sang "All Creatures of Our God and King". General Presbytery Mike Cole offered the "State of the Presbytery" address, reminding us that we are to share the "Good News." Then we moved to the Fellowship Hall for the keynote address by Rodger Nishioka, on "The Eight Trends that Change and Challenge Ministry." TE Caressa Murray (Director of Youth Ministries for the presbytery) introduced two members of PYCC, who offered a blessing before the lunch, which was served family style around tables.

Reconvening in the Sanctuary: at 1:20 pm

Reported Attendance: 112 minister members, 120 elder commissioners, 3 commissioned ruling elders, 5 elders with privilege by virtue of office; 9 former moderators/stated clerks; 1 elected presbytery staff; 1 fellow – NACBA; TOTAL 251 voting commissioners; no count available for visitors

Ballot results for Amendment Voting

14-A: 97 in favor, 139 against, 1 abstention – amendment fails

14-E: 181 in favor, 53 against, 0 abstention – amendment passes

14-F: 128 in favor, 114 against, 2 abstentions – amendment passes

This concluded the report of the Ecclesiastical Affairs Committee.

We stood to sing #543 “Christ Surround Me” (*Glory to God* hymnal).

Committee On Ministry: TE John Hirling (COM moderator) told the commissioners where to find the reports. He introduced RE Greg Feigh (Houston, Pathways), who chairs the committee on examinations. He introduced Jonathan Britt, candidate for ordination/installation, to preach his sermon for ordination. His sermon text was: Mark 11:1-11, a Palm Sunday text.

Question about the sermon: TE Kathleen Davies (Houston, Community of the Servant Savior) – It seems that you have a familiarity with the Holy Land that I do not. Have you traveled there? The answer was “yes”, and that it “had made a big impact on his faith”.

The sermon portion of the examination was sustained.

Questions for the candidate:

How have you seen the Holy Spirit at work in your life? “Through the communities in which I have been involved.”

John Hirling moved that the examination be sustained and that Jonathan Britt be ordained to the position of teaching elder in the PCUSA. Many people gathered around Jonathan as prayer was offered. Jonathan is called to the position of Designated Associate Pastor at Houston, St. Thomas.

The Committee on Ministry moved that the congregation of Baytown, Faith, be granted permission to elect TE Richard Kleiman as Pastor Emeritus. The motion was approved.

TE Lynn Hargrove (stated clerk) offered a service of retirement for TE Mark Stoub, who has served the congregation of Bay City, First.

Celebration of Ministry: Sherry Kenney informed the commissioners some of the basics about the Presbyterian Foundation. Sherry represents the foundation in Colorado, the four states of the Synod of the Sun, and a sliver of Nebraska.

General Council: TE Steve Oglesbee (Houston, Clear Lake) offered the General Council report. He serves as vice moderator of the council.

Motion: to withdraw the revised Gracious Reconciliation and Dismissal Procedure that was offered as a first reading at the November, 2014, stated meeting of the presbytery. The motion passed.

Motion: to approve the newly revised Gracious Reconciliation and Dismissal Procedure (March 21, 2015) as a first reading. Steve introduced RE Mort McPhail (Houston, Northwoods) who offered comments about the latest revisions.

Question: Why has the presbytery ignored the current state of the law in the state of Texas? There was a comment that followed the question, and seemed to serve as an answer.

A voice vote was inconclusive. A standing vote was called for. The motion passed.

Motion: to approve the sale of the manse of Bryan, First. TE Ted Foote (Bryan, First) offered a reminder of the correction to the lot number. The motion passed.

Motion: to approve an Administrative Commission to mediate the lawsuit with Houston, Windwood, with the power to agree to a court mediated settlement of the lawsuit. Members of the AC are Moderator TE Laurey Murphy (Houston, Spring Branch), Moderator Elect RE Shelley Hernandez (Houston, Pathways); Chair of Administrative Division Steering Committee RE Jane Larkin (Houston, St. Philip), Chair of Finance RE Dave Johnson (Houston, Clear Lake), General Presbytery TE Mike Cole, and Stated Clerk TE Lynn Hargrove. Their tasks would not include the power to dismiss the congregation from the PCUSA. The motion passed.

Ministries Division Steering Committee: Chairperson RE Carlton Currie (Houston, First) reminded the commissioners of the opportunities through the Vision Initiative and Lynn Johnson Social Justice grant funds. The application deadline is April 30, 2015.

Celebration of Ministry: Peace Beyond Understanding, Jasper, TX – TE Cyndi Wunder (Jasper, First) explained the initiative in Jasper to heal racial relationships.

Administrative Division Steering Committee: Chairperson RE Jane Larkin (Houston, St. Philip) introduced RE Dave Johnson (Houston, Clear Lake), chair of the finance committee, who offered the following:

Motion: to approve the presbytery budget for 2015.

Question: Why is the cost of litigation not included in the budget? It is not part of the operating budget.

Question: Are there restricted funds for the cost of litigation? Those costs are outside of the operating budget.

Question: Under miscellaneous funds, there have been monies included in the past. Where are they now? Those are related to properties owned by the presbytery.

The motion passed.

Motion: to approve the establishment of a “New Life Fund”. The motion passed.

Nominating Committee: Chairperson RE David Bell (Houston, Northwoods) offered the reports which were found in the packet and the addendum. There were no nominations offered from the floor. The nominees were approved.

Committee on Preparation for Ministry: Chairperson TE Kevin Boyd (Houston, St. Paul) had no report.

There was no new business. The meeting adjourned with prayer at 2:46 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Lynn R. Hargrove
Stated and Recording Clerk