Highlights of the 153rd Stated Meeting of the Presbytery of Middle Tennessee

August 10, 2023

The Presbytery of Middle Tennessee met by Zoom on Thursday, August 10, 2023. Stated Clerk Mary Catherine Sevier provided a brief welcome and orientation for all attendees. Moderator Stephen Yates called the meeting to order, and first time commissioners were warmly welcomed and briefly introduced themselves. The agenda and consent agenda were adopted. Worship followed with candidate for ordination Delilah Jane Phillips preaching the sermon on “whataboutism”. She offered timely and scriptural reassurance that God is able to handle the difficult questions facing our world. Vickie Rhea of Calvary, Big Lick served as liturgist, while the Rev. Bobby Harding led the prayer for the offering which was designated for the Centsability fund. Ray Thomas, Executive Presbyter, led the prayers of the people. Claire Cope, pianist, provided lovely music for the service. Delilah Jane Phillips provided the benediction.

Moderator Yates called the meeting back to order after worship. The following information was received and the following actions and reports were heard and taken by the Presbytery:

* The Rev. Ray Thomas, Executive Presbytery, gave his report and reminded the Presbytery that the stewardship workshop entitled Creating a Culture of Generosity Workshop, to be held on Saturday, August 19, at First Presbyterian Church, Nashville, 9:30 a.m.-3 p.m. Rev. Thomas announced that the neighborhood luncheons were drawing with a close with the last one being held at FPC Cookeville on Wednesday, August 17. Finally, Rev. Thomas announced that two young leaders approached him with the concept of a Presbytery-wide youth group for LGBTQ+ youth and allies. The concept has been endorsed by the Committee on Mutual Support and the Committee for Social Justice. Rev. Thomas welcomed anyone with concerns or comments to come to him and added that he looks forward to these important conversations.
* The Rev. Evelyn Graham, chair of the Finance Committee, gave an update on the Presbytery’s financial state, announcing that it is strong, with spending and income in line with budget and investments growing.
* The Rev. Leonard Jordan, chair of the Nominating Task Force, nominated the following individuals for vacancies in various committees. The nominees were approved by individual votes. The Rev. Mark Bryan will serve on the Administrative Committee in the Class of 2024, the Rev. Jim Moran will serve on the Finance Committee in the Class of 2024, and the Rev. Adam DeVries will serve on the Committee for Social Justice in the Class of 2024.
* The Rev. Erin Howton-Angel, chair of the Commission on Ministry announced that the Rev. Carol Tate had been moved Honorable Retirement on January 1, 2023. Rev. Angel introduced Ruling Elder Terry Denten who offered a meaningful reflection on Rev. Tate’s many accomplishments, including her work on the music faculty of Centre College. Ms. Denton concluded with the Mary Oliver poem “The Gardener.” Rev. Tate expressed her gratitude for her years of service.
* The Reverend Howton-Angel led the examination of Delilah Jane Phillips, candidate for ordination, and the presbytery approved the ordination. The commission to ordain was received and approved.
* The Rev. John Hilley, Chair of the Committee on Church Transformation, reminded the Presbytery of the ongoing initiative with Cyclicals, which will provide consulting services to individual congregations. The Rev. John Smith offered thoughts on his congregation’s recent use of one of 10 seat passes available to presbytery congregations.
* Ruling Elder Henry Deaderick, Chair of the Committee for Social Justice, announced that the committee’s letter to state legislators has been well received and publicized.
* The Stated Clerk reminded commissioners of the supplemental reports, including one from the Committee on the Preparation on Ministry announcing the designation of Kimberly Dillard as an Inquirer.
* The 153rd Stated Meeting of the Presbytery of Middle Tennessee will be held on Thursday, November 9, 2023, in person at First Presbyterian Church, Clarksville.

--- Mary Catherine Sevier, Stated Clerk