Highlights of the 154th Stated Meeting of the Presbytery of Middle Tennessee

November 9, 2023

Below are the highlights of the reports received and actions taken at the 154th stated meeting. This meeting was especially notable **because the quorum was lost following lunch and all actions at that point are not valid until and unless ratified by a duly constituted quorum** either at a called meeting or the next stated meeting. Please watch for information in the coming weeks regarding this situation and please make plans to attend if at all possible.

The Presbytery of Middle Tennessee met in person on Thursday, November 9, 2023, at First, Clarksville. Attendees were greeted warmly by gracious host congregation members and enjoyed delicious refreshments during registration. Stated Clerk Mary Catherine Sevier provided a brief welcome and orientation for first time commissioners. Moderator Stephen Yates called the meeting to order and announced that a quorum had not yet been attained; the Rev. Greg Glover offered words of welcome and logistical information, and Moderator Yates announced that worship would commence. David Paduil, Ruling Elder at the Sudanese Church of Gallatin delivered the sermon, and music was provided by First Clarksville organist Hannah Cruse, John Sevier of Emmanuel, and the Sudanese Church choir. The Rev. Greg Glover led worshippers and presided over the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper while the Rev. Ray Thomas asked for concerns and celebrations and offered the prayers of the people. Following worship, Moderator Yates convened the meeting and announced that a quorum had been reached as presbyters had continued to arrive during worship. First time commissioners were welcomed and briefly introduced. The agenda and the consent agenda, which contained the minutes and roll of the 153rd Stated Meeting, were unanimously approved. Corresponding members were seated without objection.

Moderator Yates recognized the Executive Presbyter, Ray Thomas, who made remarks about the staff, his recently announced resignation effective June 1, 2024, and underscored the importance of the entire Presbytery cultivating the covenantal practices of love and trust as a PCUSA council. He then asked to recognize Ms. Debra Gentry of the Downtown PC, who spoke of her PNC’s experience with the Commission on Ministry and particularly her congregation’s liaison, Debra Van Derveer. Rev. Thomas recognized Frank Dimmock of the Outreach Foundation who spoke of the work of the Foundation across the African continent. Finally, Rev. Thomas introduced the Rev. Sally Hughes who introduced Ryan and Sam Moore who are ending their work at NaCoMe. Ryan Moore spoke of his work and offered thanks for the support of NaCoMe by the Presbytery.

Moderator Yates dismissed the gathering to lunch, which was a gracious and bountiful menu. Presbyters enjoyed the delicious food and warm fellowship provided by the staff and members of our hosts at First Clarksville.

Moderator Yates reconvened the meeting and believed that a quorum had again been reached, but during discussion of the proposed 2024 budget, it was discovered that a quorum had been lost. Upon the recommendation of the designated parliamentarian and his assistant, reports were received and actions taken with the proviso that actions be ratified either by called meeting or at the next stated meeting, The following information was received and the following actions were taken by the Presbytery with the caveat of needed ratification by a quorum of the presbytery at its next meeting, either stated or called:

* The Rev. Mark Bryan presented the Administrative Committee report. The Committee approved the Rev. Jane Herring and RE Elinor Foster’s attendance at the Moderator’s Conference and approved the Rev. Evelyn Graham and RE Mary Catherine Sevier’s attendance at the financial conference.
* The Committee recommended that boundary training be approved to be taken by all required persons through Praesidium. The Rev. Erin Howton Angel spoke to that recommendation, commenting that the training was accessible and would be provided by on demand module. The recommendation was approved.
* The Rev. John Hilley asked that as the Personnel Task Force and the Administrative Committee consider the transition in the wake of Rev. Thomas’s retirement that priorities and needs of congregations be carefully considered and addressed in the staffing model of the presbytery.
* The Rev. Evelyn Graham, PMT treasurer, presented financial reports to be filed and asked that RE Hal Sauer of the budget task force present the proposed 2024 budget. Following Mr. Sauer’s presentation, a motion was made to approve. An amendment to the motion was offered to include a 4% raise to the terms of call for Rev. Ray Thomas, as had been proposed by the Personnel Task Force. The amendment passed, and the amended motion to approve the budget also passed.
* The Nominating Task Force Chair, CRE Leonard Jordan asked that the standing rules by set aside to allow the Rev. Donovan Drake and Anders Hall, both of Westminster, Nashville, to serve on the Finance Committee. The standing rules require that members of the Administrative Committee and the Finance Committee be from different congregations. The motion to suspend was approved. CRE Jordan then asked that the slate of committee members, trustees, GA commissioners, PJC members, Synod commissioners, and UKirk Nashville board members be approved. The slate was approved.
* The Rev. Erin Howton Angel presented several items from the Commission on Ministry.
* Newly received ministers Austin and Sara Hill were introduced, as was the Rev. Jae Chung, interim at the Nashville Korean Church and newly approved member of the pulpit supply list Louise Sanford.
* Minimum Effective Salary for 2024 within the PMT is $53,680.
* Rev. Howton Angel announced that the COM dissolved the relationship between the Rev. Toby Mueller and Historic Franklin; the Revs. Jeanne Hunter of Lewisburg Bethberei and Mike Magee of First, Gallatin each concluded their ministries on October 31, 2023.
* RE David Paduil was commissioned to service as a CRE to the American Sudanese Church, Gallatin, and RE Rick Robinson was commissioned to service as a CRE to the Milldale Church.
* The Mattie Smith Memorial Administrative Commission was dissolved with thanks.
* The Rev. Claire Berry presented the Committee on Social Justice report with a high level review of the surveys completed by congregations across the presbytery.
* Stated Clerk Mary Catherine Sevier directed the attention of the presbyters to the supplemental reports, the highlights of which are below
  + The Committee on the Preparation for Ministry approved Gage Arnold as an Inquirer.
  + The Committee on Mutual Support approved a hunger grant to The Well and a technology grant of $5500 to the New Creation Church and reported to the Administrative Committee the creation of the Nueva Vida Food Bank task force.
  + The Committee on Church Transformation welcomed the LatinX taskforce to formally exist under the CCT, approved a Matthew 25 grant of $5000 to New Creation, and again emphasized its wish that the Personnel Task Force and the Finance Committee focus on staffing needs at the presbytery level to enhance church growth and transformational work.
  + The CCT announced that while Southminster and First Dickson are using Cyclicals seat passes with enthusiasm, several seat passes remain for other congregations. Interested congregations may contact the committee.
  + The Committee on Leadership Excellence is preparing a resource area for REs and TEs on the presbytery website. The committee is also beginning its planning for a Teaching Elder retreat.
  + The Personnel Task Force has codified its annual review process and conducted such reviews for the three presbytery employees. The task force is embarking on the transition in the wake of the Executive Presbyter’s announced retirement.
  + The 2024 parity schedule will be distributed to clerks of session.
* First, Lawrenceburg’s request to waive the session rotation requirement, G-2.0404 was approved.
* The request from UKirk, Nashville to receive the Lord’s Supper with Rev. Claire Berry presiding was approved.
* Jooyoung Kim, a Candidate under the care of the PMT, has requested a transfer to New Hope Presbytery. The request was approved.
* The Committee on Mutual Support’s request to amend the Manual of Mission and Operation to include the description of the Nueva Vida Food Bank was approved.
* The Presbytery of Middle Tennessee has been named a respondent in a remedial complaint filed with the Synod of Living Waters. The Presbytery is following the process as set forth in the Church Discipline found in the Book of Order, 2023-2025.
* The 155th Stated Meeting of the Presbytery of Middle Tennessee will be held on Saturday, February 10, 2024, by Zoom.

--- Mary Catherine Sevier, Stated Clerk