

**PRESBYTERY OF MIDDLE TENNESSEE  
MINUTES OF SPECIAL CALLED MEETING  
FEBRUARY 25, 2019**

A called meeting of the Presbytery of Middle Tennessee was held on Monday, February 25, 2019, at Westminster Presbyterian Church, Nashville, Tennessee. The meeting was called at the request of the Executive Presbyter Search Committee – Sally Hughes (Trinity), chair; Steve Douse (First Nashville); Donovan Drake (Westminster Nashville); Ed Lancaster (First Columbia); Melinda Sanders (Woodland); and the Committee on Ministry.

The meeting was called to receive reports from the Committee on Ministry and the Executive Presbyter Search Committee. In addition, the Administrative Committee had a change in the Presbytery's Mission and Operations Manual related to the call issued by the search committee.

Moderator John Hinkle, Jr. called the meeting to order at 9:30AM.

**WORSHIP**

Leading worship were The Rev. Heidi Hudnut-Beumler, Associate Pastor for Congregational Care (Westminster Nashville), and The Rev. Dr. Guy Griffith, Associate Pastor for Adult Education and Spiritual Nurture (Westminster Nashville). John W. Semingson, Director of Music Ministries (Westminster Nashville), served as musician for the service.

**DECLARATION OF QUORUM / ROLL**

The meeting reconvened after worship, and the Moderator declared a quorum was present.

The roll of commissioners, corresponding members, and visitors attending the presbytery meeting is attached (Attachment A).

**COMMITTEE ON MINISTRY REPORT**

The Rev. Stephen Yates, chair of the Committee on Ministry, presented the committee's report.

Sarah Bird / First Presbyterian Church, Nashville

The Committee on Ministry approved The Rev. Sarah Bird's call as Associate Pastor for Discipleship and Engagement at First Presbyterian Church, Nashville, and this was reported at the February 14, 2019 Presbytery meeting. The Committee on Ministry recommended the following commission to install Rev. Bird: Sunday, March 3, 2019, 11AM, First Presbyterian Church; Teaching Elders Stuart Gordon (First Nashville), chair; Josh Rodriguez (First Nashville); Rosanna Anderson (UMC Stewardship Ministries); Ruling Elders Courtney Masters (First Hendersonville); Jane Price (New Creation); Overton Thompson (First Nashville); Guest of the Commission Timothy E. Bird (Abingdon Presbytery). There were no questions or objections, and this was so ordered by the Moderator.

Examination of Ray Thomas

The Rev. Nolan Huizenga, chair of the Committee on Ministry's Examinations Task Force, introduced The Rev. Ray Thomas, a member of the Presbytery of de Christo, who has accepted a call as co- Executive Presbyter of the Presbytery of Middle Tennessee. Rev. Thomas spoke of his journey of faith, and responded to questions from Rev. Huizenga. There were no questions from the floor. Rev. Huizenga escorted Rev. Thomas from the sanctuary.

Rev. Yates moved the examination of Rev. Thomas be sustained, and the motion was seconded. There were no questions or objections, and this was so ordered by the Moderator.

The motion was made, seconded, and unanimously approved to receive Rev. Thomas as a minister member of the Presbytery of Middle Tennessee. Rev. Yates stated the call and related matters would be handled during the report of the Executive Presbyter Search Committee.

1 Rev. Huizenga and Rev. Thomas returned to the sanctuary, and the Moderator reported the  
2 Presbytery's decision.

### 3 **REPORT OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE COMMITTEE**

4 Ruling Elder Theresa Denton, Vice-Moderator and chair of the Administrative Committee,  
5 presented the committee's report

#### 6 Amendment to the Mission and Operations Manual

7 At the request of the Executive Presbyter Search Committee, the Administrative Committee  
8 recommended the following amendment to the *Mission and Operations Manual*, page 3, line 34, as  
9 follows (language to be added is underlined):

10 "The Stated Clerk of presbytery is also authorized to enroll as member of Presbytery (G-3.0301),  
11 any ruling elders serving as presbytery's Executive Presbyter, Moderator, Vice-Moderator,  
12 Moderator-in-Nomination, chairs of committees, members of the Administrative Committee,  
13 members of the Finance Committee, and the Moderator of Presbyterian Women."

14 There were no questions or discussion, and this amendment was approved by two-thirds vote.

### 15 **EXECUTIVE PRESBYTER SEARCH COMMITTEE REPORT**

16 The Rev. Dr. Sally Hughes, chair of the Executive Presbyter Search Committee, recognized the  
17 members of the search committee: Ruling Elder Steve Douse (First, Nashville); The Rev. Dr. Donovan  
18 Drake (Westminster Nashville); Ruling Elder Ed Lancaster (First, Columbia); and Ruling Elder Melinda  
19 Sanders (Woodland Nashville).

20 Dr. Hughes reported the search committee had extended a call to The Rev. Raymond Thomas  
21 and Ruling Elder Robin Thomas to serve as co-executive presbyters. The committee shared "Ten Things  
22 We Like About Ray and Robin." Dr. Hughes reported there were three common themes as the search  
23 committee considered this call: (1) there were no weaknesses in these candidates; (2) both were great  
24 individually, and even greater together – one sees the forest, and one sees the trees; and (2) Ray and  
25 Robin would be greatly missed – their presbytery wondered why they didn't think of this!

26 Dr. Hughes, on behalf of the search committee, moved that presbytery call co-executive  
27 presbyters. Dr. Hughes stressed the three key areas in which the presbytery served its churches and  
28 minister members: fostering connections of mutual support; leadership development; and church  
29 transformation. There was no discussion, and this was approved.

30 Dr. Hughes spoke of the terms of call. On the understanding that the work week for a full time  
31 executive presbyter would normally exceed 50 hours, each co-executive presbyter position will be three-  
32 quarters time, or approximately 40 hours per week. This will include, on most Sundays, visiting churches  
33 for worship and spending time getting to know the ministers and members of the congregation. The call  
34 will begin on April 22, 2019. Dr. Hughes moved approval of the terms of call as follows: \$68,000 each in  
35 salary / housing annually; \$2,000 each in 403(b) retirement payments annually; up to \$10,000 total for  
36 moving expenses; medical coverage for Raymond Thomas (currently \$18,800 annually); pension /  
37 disability contributions (currently \$9,024 for Raymond and \$9,600 for Robin); annual FICA payments  
38 (currently \$11,169 combined); professional expenses of \$5,000 each; four weeks of vacation and two  
39 weeks of continuing education each.

40 The search committee members responded to questions about the search process, the  
41 workload, and the sustainability of the financial package. A concern was expressed that the Presbytery  
42 did not have an opportunity to hear from Robin Thomas. The motion was made, seconded, and  
43 approved without objection to ask Robin Thomas to come into the meeting, share her faith journey, and  
44 respond to questions.

45 Robin Thomas joined the meeting, and spoke of her work with the Synod of the Southwest. She  
46 stated she began work with the synod in 2004, and felt called to be here to work with the Presbytery,  
47 with God's help.

1           There were additional questions concerning how to address the deficit budget. Search  
2 committee members reported the Thomases were good at stewardship, and spoke of their belief that  
3 this was a good investment.

4           There was no other discussion, and the terms of call as presented were approved.

5           The search committee recommended the following installation committee to install Raymond  
6 and Robin Thomas as Co-Executive Presbyters at the May 23, 2019 Presbytery meeting: Teaching Elders  
7 The Rev. Dr. Sally Hughes (Trinity); The Rev. Dr. Donovan Drake (Westminster Nashville); The Rev. Dr.  
8 John Hinkle (First Murfreesboro); The Rev. Warner Durnell (First Springfield); The Rev. Ashley McFaul-  
9 Erwin (Nashville CPE Partnership); Ruling Elders Steve Douse (First Nashville); Ed Lancaster (First  
10 Columbia); Melinda Sanders (Woodland); Barry Barnes (First McMinnville); Guest – Ruling Elder Conrad  
11 Rocha (Executive/Stated Clerk, Synod of the Southwest). There was no discussion, and this was  
12 approved.

13           The search committee requested they be dismissed, and its members reconstituted as a  
14 committee of support for the new co-executive presbyters for a period of one year. There was no  
15 discussion, and this was approved.

16           Dr. Drake spoke of the difficulty of leaving a call, and the excitement of a new call, and  
17 encouraged the presbytery to welcome the Thomases. The Presbytery offered applause and a standing  
18 ovation for Raymond and Robin Thomas, as well as their family.

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20           There was no further business, and the meeting was adjourned with prayer by Robin Thomas.

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24   Therese P. Howell  
25   Stated Clerk