Highlights of the 157th Stated Meeting of the Presbytery of Middle Tennessee

August 8, 2024

Below are the highlights of the reports received and actions taken at the 157th stated meeting.

The Presbytery of Middle Tennessee met in person on Thursday, August 8 2024, at Second Presbyterian, Nashville. Attendees were greeted warmly by gracious host congregation members. Stated Clerk Mary Catherine Sevier provided a brief welcome and orientation for first time commissioners. In the absence of Moderator Elinor Foster, Vice-Moderator Jane Herring called the meeting to order and announced that a quorum was in place; corresponding members were seated and the agenda and the minutes of the 156th meeting and the called meeting of July 11th were approved. The Rev. Evelyn Graham, Second, Nashville and Ruling Elder Clee Lee presided at worship with the sermon by candidate for ordination Ashley Higgins on the hope we can have in God’s work. Music was provided by Second Nashville organist Stephen Cook and members of the Second Presbyterian choir. Following worship, attendees enjoyed a bountiful brunch break and fellowship. Vice-Moderator Herring convened the meeting and welcomed first time commissioners. Among the actions taken and the reports received were:

* Without objection, the Stated Clerk acted as moderator during the Administrative Committee report.
  + The Administrative Committee approved COM being chaired by co-chairs, serving staggered terms.
  + The Policy Compliance Committee is continuing its work, a team is being created to draft guidelines for the posting of events on the PMT website, and the insurance review team is working to confirm that PMT coverage is optimal.
  + The following resignations were reported and the Nominations Taskforce has been notified: Committee on the Preparation for Ministry: Dina Crigger, and Commission on Ministry: Rev. Tom Bagley. While previously reported, the Committee also accepted and expressed regret at the resignation of Heidi Hudnut-Beumler, TE of Westminster PC, Nashville.
  + The Covenant Agreement renewal between PMT Guatemala Task Force and the PQP was approved and recommended that Mutual Support present to the Presbytery for approval.
  + Congregations will have the opportunity to create their own accounts through PMT’s background check company.
  + The Administrative Committee approved a call for a meeting on July 11, 2024, to approve an offer of sale of the Central Presbyterian property in Culleoka, TN. The sale closed on August 1, 2024.
  + The Isaiah 1:18 Team formed to walk with the St. John PC in its request for gracious dismissal is moderated by Harold Dawkins, RE of FPC Fayetteville, along with Clerk Denise Moran, RE of FPC Shelbyville and Rev. John Smith, TE of FPC Dickson and Ellis Grove CP.
  + The Administrative Committee heard and approved the plans for the August 8, 2024, Stated Meeting.
  + The Administrative Committee presented a recommendation and moved to enter an agreement with Center for Healthy Churches/Pneumatrix to assist in a visioning process before beginning a search for the installed Executive Presbyter. The motion carried unanimously.
  + The Administrative Committee presented a recommendation and moved that negotiations begin to extend Rev. Terry Newland’s contract as Bridge Executive Presbyter. The motion carried unanimously.
* TE Evelyn Graham, treasurer and chair of the Finance Committee, presented the financial statements. While the overall budget remains in a shortfall with pledges under budget, the investment account remains very successful.
  + The Finance Committee designated $75,000 from Unrestricted Net Assets to offset the expenses of the transitional period as the Presbytery seeks to fill the installed Executive Presbytery position. These expenses shall include but not be limited to expenses for consulting by Center for Healthy Churches/Pneumatrix, additional staffing expenses as necessitated by the transition, and other anticipated and unexpected costs due to this transition.
  + The name of the Matthew 25 Food Project (3002-33) was changed to the Nueva Vida Foodbank Fund, and the remaining funds in the Pastor-to-Pastor designated fund, now discontinued, were moved to the Nueva Vida Foodbank Fund.
  + Jane Herring, TE at Emmanuel, resigned from the Trinity Task Force. The members of the task force are: John Hinkle, TE, First Murfreesboro, Evelyn Graham, TE, Second Presbyterian, Steve Douse, RE, First Nashville, and Allen Kenndy, RE, First Nashville. The Task Force had a productive and informational meeting with the Trinity session and its moderator, Sally Hughes. Trinity has signed a five-year lease with the Linden Waldorf School.
  + Due to the discontinuation of the Pastor-to-Pastor program, the Pastor to Pastor designated fund (3002-62) balance of $1,907.40 was moved into the Nueva Vida Foodbank Fund (3002-33).
  + The audit as required by the Manual of Operation and Missions is underway.
  + Brick Church Presbyterian Church was dissolved with thanksgiving for its long term ministry. The AC will continue its work with community members to discern disposition of the property.
* CRE Leonard Jordan of St. Andrews Nashville made the report from the Nominating Task Force. Sara Hill, TE member-at-large, was elected to fill a vacancy on the Committee for Leadership Excellence; Debra Gentry, RE at Downtown Nashville, was elected to fill a vacancy on the Committee on the Preparation for Ministry; and Dwight Fox, RE at First Columbia, was elected to fill a vacancy on the Commission for Ministry.
* TE Erin Howton-Angel, First Allardt and co-chair of the Commission on Ministry, noted the following:
  + The COM will host a THRIVE seminar on September 26 – 27, 2024, at Westminster Nashville.
  + The following ministers were dismissed: Rev. Adrian White to Mid-Kentucky Presbytery; Rev. Mark Mueller to Charlotte Presbytery; Rev. Mike Magee to New Covenant Presbytery
  + The Rev. Laura Cheifetz and Rev. Cynthia Schwartz were moved to Member-At-Large
  + The Rev. Claire Berry was approved as a bridge pastor at First Franklin from May, 2024 through August, 2024 with a salary of $8000
  + COM dissolved the relationship between Rev. Stuart Gordon and First, Nashville. Rev. Gordon’s status was changed to Member-At-Large
  + MDPS were approved for Historic Franklin and 5th Uniting in Springfield
  + The formations of a PNC at Second, Nashville and an APNC at First, Nashville were approved.
  + The contract extension to December 31, 2024, of Jason Loscuito, temporary minister at Glencliff, was approved.
  + Rev. Beth McCaw was appointed moderator of the Priest Lake session
  + Ashley Higgins, candidate for ordination, was examined on the floor of Presbytery and her ordination and her commission to ordain and installed were approved. She has accepted a call as Associate Pastor for Community Life at Westminster, Nashville.
  + David Sadler was examined, approved, and commissioned as a ruling elder to Priest Lake.
  + The Decherd Presbyterian Church was dissolved with thanksgiving for its long term ministry. The AC will continue its discernment of disposition of the property.
  + An Administrative Commission composed of TE Michael McLaughlin,First, Cookeville, RE Mike Koban, First, Nashville, and RE Mickey Stuecke, First Lebanon. This AC is charged with investigating the financial situation associated with the recently closed daycare at Southminster Presbyterian Church as well as with providing pastoral care to all concerned.
* The Rev. Bobby Harding, First, Murfreesboro, and chair of the Committee on Mutual Support, provided the following report:
  + A hunger grant of $4000 was provided to Second Harvest Food Bank
  + The latest trip to Guatemala was highly successful.
  + The Covenant agreement was renewed with the Peten Q’eqchi Presbytery
* The Rev. Claire Berry, director of UKirk Nashville, and clerk of the Committee for Social Justice, reminded the Presbytery of the resources on the Presbytery website relating to the committee.
* The Stated Clerk called attention to the supplemental report from the Committee on the Preparation for Ministry, which approved a grant to Priest Lake to defray some of the cost of the sponsoring an Inquirer. Priest Lake is the sponsor church of David Sadler, Inquirer.
* The commissioners and young adult advisory delegate to the 226th General Assembly reported on the experience of attending GA and on some of the actions taken.
* The Bridge Executive Presbyter reported on his experience so far with the presbytery; he has found his interactions positive, and he is pleased with the spirit moving through the presbytery as it proceeds through this time of transition. He complimented the work of the Stated Clerk and the Operations Coordinator.

Following the meeting, attendees were invited to optional breakout sessions including time to meet representatives from the various committees to learn about their work, time to get individual assistance from COM members with the new Board of Pensions benefits plan, and a time to ask questions of the GA commissioners and YAAD and learn more about various actions.

The 158th Stated Meeting will be held on November 14, 2024 at First, Dickson, and is co-hosted by Ellis Grove PC.

* + Lauren DesLauriers was withdrawn from our care at her request
* The Rev. Bobby Harding, chair of the Committee on Mutual Support, noted that hunger grants have been dispersed and recognized RE Dr. David Carlton and RE Lavona Russell to discuss the growth and success of the work in Guatemala through the partnerships the Guatemala Task Force has created, particularly the Basico Education program.
* RE Henry Deaderick presented information on an educational workshop on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to be held May 18th at St. Andrew’s Presbyterian Church
* Stated Clerk Mary Catherine Sevier drew the body’s attention to the supplemental reports from the Committee on Church Transformation and the Nominating Task Force. She also noted that a higher percentage of churches submitted at least one category of statistic this year, and she expressed appreciation to all clerks of session. The 226th General Assembly will take place in Salt Lake City from June 29-July 4.  Commissioners are: TEs Erin Howton Angel and Jane Herring, REs Carol Foster and Judy Venable, and YAAD AC Oeser. Additional attendees include Mary Catherine Sevier and John Smith.

The next stated meeting of the Presbytery of Middle Tennessee will be held in person at Second Presbyterian Church, Nashville on Thursday, August 8th.

--- Mary Catherine Sevier, Stated Clerk