

Consent Agenda

158th Stated Meeting, Presbytery of Middle Tennessee, November 14, 2024

Item #	Title
(1)	Approval of Minutes and Roll of the 157th Stated Meeting of August 8, 2024
(2)	Approval of Anti-Racism Policy
(3)	Approval of Harassment Policy
(4)	Approval of Sexual Misconduct Policy
(5)	Approval of Safe Church (Child and Youth Protection) Policy
(6)	Approval of Request by First, Lawrenceburg and Cripple Creek of Waiver of Session Elder term limitation, pursuant to G-2.0404
(7)	Approval of request from UKirk Nashville to administer the sacrament of the Lord's Supper during the year 2025. Ordained individuals invited by the UKirk Nashville board of trustees will preside.

*A consent agenda provides a mechanism to use the meeting body's time efficiently. These items will not be considered individually UNLESS any member requests that one or all the items be removed from this consent agenda.

**MIDDLE TENNESSEE
MINUTES OF ONE HUNDRED FIFTY SEVENTH STATED MEETING
AUGUST 8, 2024**

The 157th Stated Meeting of the Presbytery of Middle Tennessee met in person at Second Presbyterian Church, Nashville, on Thursday, August 8, 2024. Stated Clerk Mary Catherine Sevier provided an orientation for first time commissioners. In the absence of Moderator Elinor Foster, Vice-Moderator Jane Herring called the meeting to order at 9:04 am.

**DECLARATION OF QUORUM / STATEMENT OF PROCEDURES / FIRST TIME
COMMISSIONERS / CORRESPONDING MEMBERS**

Vice-Moderator Herring declared a quorum was present. The Presbytery's Mission and Operations Manual and the *Book of Order* provide for the seating of corresponding members and teaching and ruling elders with voice and those with voice and vote. Any ruling elder serving as presbytery's Moderator, Vice-Moderator, Moderator-in-Nomination, chairs of committees, members of the Administrative Committee, members of the Finance Committee, and the Moderator of Presbyterian Women, are enrolled as members of presbytery and shall have voice and vote. Ruling elders commissioned to particular pastoral service and ruling elders who have previously served as presbytery moderator, within five years of completion of his/her term of service, are enrolled as members of presbytery with voice and vote. Any ruling elder serving as a committee representative to a particular meeting of presbytery in the absence of the chair shall have the privilege of voice and vote for that particular meeting of the presbytery. Persons certified in church service who are ruling elders shall have the privilege of voice and vote at all meetings of the presbytery, during their term of service in ministry in the presbytery of Middle Tennessee. Persons certified in church service, who are members of congregations in the Presbytery of Middle Tennessee, shall have the privilege of voice at all meetings of the presbytery during their term of service in a congregation or other ministry validated by the presbytery. Should a question arise concerning the enrollment of any person, the presbytery may resolve the matter upon the recommendation of the Permanent Judicial Commission. Corresponding members were seated without objection and are listed with the roll (Attachment A). The Vice-Moderator also announced that the Stated Clerk had requested that TE John Smith of FPC Dickson and Ellis Grove serve as assistant parliamentarian and assistant stated clerk. There was no objection.

**AGENDA, CONSENT AGENDA, MINUTES OF 156th STATED MEETING,
AND MINUTES OF JULY 11th CALLED MEETING**

The vice-moderator stated that the agenda and the consent agenda, which contained the minutes of the 156th stated meeting and the July 11th called meeting, had been provided in advance. The agenda and the consent agenda containing the minutes were approved without objection.

The Presbytery of Middle Tennessee is a community of churches and church leaders whose role is to guide and support the work of its constituents, striving to build up the body of Christ through connections of mutual support, creating a culture of leadership excellence and church transformation.

THE ONE HUNDRED FIFTY-SEVENTH STATED MEETING

THE PRESBYTERY OF MIDDLE TENNESSEE

AGENDA OF AUGUST 8, 2024

SECOND PRESBYTERIAN, NASHVILLE

- | | | |
|-----------------------|----|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 8:30 am | | Registration (Order of the Day in CAPS) |
| 8:45 am | | Orientation of First Time Commissioners – Mary Catherine Sevier(10 min) |
| 9:00 am | 1. | CONVENE <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Establishment of Quorum• Adoption of Agenda and Consent Agenda• Seating of Corresponding Members• Recognition of First Time Presbyters |
| 9:10 am | 2. | Worship <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sermon: Ashley Higgins, Candidate for Ordination• Offering: 50% to CPM Inquirer Sponsorship Support; 50% to Miss Martha’s Ice Cream Cranking (Martha O’ Bryan Center) |
| 10:10 am-
10:30 am | | BREAK |
| 10:30 am | 3. | Reconvene/REPORTS (numbers indicate order in packet) |
| 10:30 am | | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• (1) Administrative Committee- Jane Herring (30 minutes) |
| 11:00 am | | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• (2) Finance Committee – Evelyn Graham (15 minutes)<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Report from the Brick Church PC AC |
| 11:15 am | | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• (3) Nominating Task Force – Leonard Jordan (5 minutes) |
| 11:20 am | | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• (4) Commission on Ministry – Erin Howton-Angel (25 minutes)<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Ordination Examination of Ashley Higgins○ Commissioning Examination of David Sadler○ Report from the Decherd PC AC |
| 11:45 am | | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• (5) Committee on Mutual Support – Bobby Harding (5 minutes) |
| 11:50 am | | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Committee on Social Justice – Claire Berry (5 minutes) |
| 11:55 am | | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• (6) Stated Clerk Report – Mary Catherine Sevier (10 minutes) |
| 12:05 am | | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Executive Presbyter’s Report – Terry Newland (5 minutes) |
| 12:10 am | | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• (7) Report of the GA Commissioners (20 minutes) |
| 12:30 pm | | ANNOUNCEMENTS and ADJOURNMENT
158 th Stated Meeting, Thursday, November 14, 2024, First Dickson, (co-hosted by Ellis Grove, Waverly
Closing Prayer
Adjournment |

***Here are the ways to give to today's offering: ▲ send a check to the Presbytery office (1113 Murfreesboro Rd, Suite 106, #216, Franklin, TN 37064)**

▲ go to the presbytery website, www.pbymidtn.org, and click the "Give Now" button

▲ scan the QR Code below which will take you to the donation page



12:30 pm – 2:00 pm OPTIONAL BREAKOUT SESSIONS with boxed lunches available for pre-order

- A. COM members discuss the Board of Pensions changes to the benefits plan. Come with your specific questions and get one-on-one help with determining the various paths available for your congregation
- B. Meet with the Commissioners to the GA for specific Q and A about the experience, the process, and the specific amendments on which we will be asked to hold ratification votes
- C. Meet the Committees: What are all these committees, teams, and task forces? Enjoy some time getting to know the volunteers who have heard God's call to serve our presbytery – and begin listening for His call to you!
- D. Just for fun—sign up for an indoor pickleball tourney! Depending on the number, we will enjoy a pick up game, a round robin, or an all out bracketed tournament! No experience, racquets or balls required – just bring your favorite court shoes!

WELCOME

157rd Stated Meeting, Presbytery of Middle Tennessee, August 08, 2024

Consent Agenda:

Item #	Title
(1)	Approval of Minutes and Roll of the 156 th Stated Meeting of May 11, 2024
(2)	Approval of Minutes and Roll of the Called Meeting of July 11, 2024

***A consent agenda provides a mechanism to use the meeting body's time efficiently. These items will not be considered individually UNLESS any member requests that one or all the items be removed from this consent agenda.**

The Rev. Evelyn Graham, Interim Pastor at Second, Nashville, offered words of welcome and worship commenced.

WORSHIP

Rev. Graham and RE Cleo Lee led worship with Candidate for Ordination Ashley Higgins delivering the sermon on miraculous hope through God. The offering was shared between the Martha O'Bryan Center and the CPM's fund to help churches who are sponsoring candidates and inquirers. Music was provided by members of the Second Presbyterian choir and organist Steven Cook.

Following worship, there was a break for fellowship, and the Vice-Moderator reconvened the meeting at 10:34 am.

ADMINISTRATIVE COMMITTEE

Vice-Moderator Herring designated the Stated Clerk as Moderator without objection while she presented the following report from the Administrative Committee.

COM Co-Chairs

The Administrative Committee approved COM being chaired by co-chairs, serving staggered terms.

Policy Compliance TaskForce

The Policy Compliance Committee is continuing its work.

Website Guidelines

A team is being created to draft guidelines for the posting of events on the PMT website.

Insurance Review Team

The insurance review team is working to confirm that PMT coverage is optimal.

Resignations

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.

Covenant Agreement between Guatemala Task Force and PQP

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.

Background Check Availability for Congregations

Congregations will have the opportunity to create their own accounts through PMT's background check company.

Approval of Called Meeting

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.

Isaiah 1:18 Team—St. John PC

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 PC

August 8, 2024 Stated Meeting Plans.

The Administrative Committee heard and approved the plans for the August 8, 2024, Stated Meeting to be held in person and to convene by 9:00 am and conclude by 12:30 pm. Optional lunch and breakouts will be available.

Center for Healthy Churches/Pneumatrix

The Administrative Committee presented a recommendation 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 Committee moved that PMT hire the Center for Healthy Churches/ Pneumatrix (CHCP) for a visioning and discernment process for the mission of the presbytery and possibly to engage a second process to help find candidates to be considered as the next executive presbyter. The motion was out of committee and did not require a second. An amendment was proposed:

That PMT hire the Center for Healthy Churches/ Pneumatrix (CHCP) for a visioning and discernment process for the mission of the presbytery ~~and possibly to engage a second process to help find candidates to be considered as the next executive presbyter.~~

The Amendment was seconded and discussed. It passed unanimously. The motion was then voted upon:

That PMT hire the Center for Healthy Churches/ Pneumatrix (CHCP) for a visioning and discernment process for the mission of the presbytery.

The motion carried unanimously.

Bridge Executive Presbyter's Contract

The Administrative Committee presented a recommendation and moved that negotiations begin to extend Rev. Terry Newland's contract as Bridge Executive Presbyter. The motion did not need a second and following discussion the motion carried unanimously.

The Administrative Committee report being concluded, the Stated Clerk returned the gavel to the Vice-Moderator.

FINANCE COMMITTEE

The Rev. Evelyn Graham, chair of the Finance Committee, presented the following information and discussed the financial statements for the past quarter. She noted that the investment account is somewhat up, expenses are somewhat under budget, and giving is approximately \$25,000 under the pledged amount.

Matthew 25 Food Project

The name of the Matthew 25 Food Project (3002-33) was changed to the Nueva Vida Foodbank Fund.

Designated fund 3002-62

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).

Trinity Task Force Report

Jane Herring, TE Emmanuel, resigned from the Trinity Presbyterian Task Force. She was replaced by Evelyn Graham, TE Second Nashville. Other members include John Hinkle, TE Murfreesboro, Steve Douse, RE Nashville First, Allen Kennedy, RE Nashville, First. The Trinity Presbyterian Task Force met with the Trinity Presbyterian Session and Sally Hughes, TE Trinity, the moderator of the Trinity Session on July 23, 2024. A 5-year lease was signed by Trinity Presbyterian Church and the Linden Waldorf School effective July 1, 2024.

New Designated Fund

The Finance Committee has approved a new designated fund for \$75,000 from Unrestricted Net Assets-Other (which currently has a balance of \$1,034,630) for expenses associated with the transitional period for finding a new EP. 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.

Brick Church Administrative Commission Report

The Rev. Amy Stoker, chair of the Brick Church AC, presented the following report. The Commission, composed of Rev. Stoker, TE at First, Pulaski and moderator; Rev. Jim Moran, TE at First, Shelbyville and clerk; Carol Foster, RE at First, Fayetteville; and Chris Williams, RE at First, Pulaski, has assumed original jurisdiction pursuant to its charge after numerous failed attempts to contact known members. The Commission wishes to work with any known members and the Brick Church community in the property disposition, but it has found that worship has not been held since 2018 and that the congregation is extinct through its session's abandonment of its work. The AC moved that the congregation be dissolved with thanks for its long ministry. The motion carried unanimously.

NOMINATING TASK FORCE

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.

COMMISSION ON MINISTRY

The Rev. Erin Howton-Angel, co-chair of the Commission on Ministry, presented the following report.

Thrive Seminar

The COM will host a THRIVE seminar on September 26 – 27, 2024, at Westminster Nashville.

Members Dismissed

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

Members moved to Member-at-Large status

The Rev. Laura Cheifetz and Rev. Cynthia Schwartz were moved to Member-At-Large

Bridge Pastor, First Franklin

The Rev. Claire Berry was approved as a bridge pastor at First Franklin from May, 2024 through August, 2024 with a salary of \$8000.

Pastoral Relationship Dissolution

COM dissolved the relationship between Rev. Stuart Gordon and First, Nashville. Rev. Gordon's status was changed to Member-At-Large.

MDP Approvals

MDPS were approved for Historic Franklin and 5th Uniting in Springfield.

PNC and APNC Approvals

The formations of a PNC at Second, Nashville and an APNC at First, Nashville were approved.

Contract Extension

The contract extension to December 31, 2024, of Jason Loscuito, temporary minister at Glencliff, was approved.

Moderator of Priest Lake Session

Rev. Beth McCaw was appointed moderator of the Priest Lake session.

Ordination Examination of Ashley Higgins

Rev. Howton-Angel presented Ashley Higgins, candidate for ordination, for examination for ordination and moved the approval. Ms. Higgins's faith statement is included in the permanent record, and she spoke to her sense of calling and spiritual life. After a brief period of questions, Rev. Howton-Angel escorted her from the room. After a brief discussion, the motion carried unanimously. Ms. Higgins was welcomed back and congratulated. Rev. Howton-Angel moved the approval of her commission to ordain and install. This motion also carried unanimously. The commission is composed of: Teaching Elders: Heidi Hudnut Beumler, Westminster Nashville, Mark DeVries, HR, PMT; Ruling Elders: Elinor Foster, FPC Lewisburg or her designee, Susan Weathersby, Westminster Nashville, Becky Campbell, FPC Nashville, Amy Wilson, New Hope Presbytery, Liz Setser, Salem Presbytery. Guest of the Commission: the Rev. Dr. Kenda Creasy Dean, Kingston United Methodist Church, Princeton, NJ. The ordination will take place Sunday, September 15, 11:00 am, Westminster Presbyterian Church, Nashville. Ms Higgins has accepted a call as Associate Pastor for Community Life at Westminster, Nashville. Her terms of call are included in the permanent record.

Ashley Higgins Statement of Faith 08/2024

I believe that God is the author of all creation and that God calling it all "good" is supremely important in understanding how God views his creation. I believe God has a particular affection for the lowly and that it is the responsibility of all followers of God to repent to both God and neighbor for the ways we perpetuate broken systems. In response to repentance, we then work with God to bring redemption, physical and spiritual, to our pockets of the world for the sake of the gospel and to the Glory of God.

I believe that Jesus Christ is God who put on flesh and that it is the single most sacrificial, loving act God could have ever done for all of creation. I believe that in Jesus Christ we are undeservingly gifted a clear image of God and what it looks like to be not just a believer in God but a follower of God. I believe that Jesus' death and resurrection means that I don't have to continually work to be "good" but that I am redeemed- as is all of humanity.

I believe that through the Holy Spirit, God has proven again the depths of God's love and desire to be in relationship with all of humanity and that this allows me to be a part of the story. I believe that God's breath in my life has physical and spiritual implications for the ways in which I invite others into God's story of redemption.

I believe that scripture is the Word of God which reveals the Truth of who God is. I believe that the sacraments are the most ordinary of elements, gifted by God through Jesus to the people of God, as signs of the ongoing work of the Spirit in our midst. Through both scripture and the sacraments, we are invited to celebrate and join in God's ongoing work in the world with gratitude- connecting us with followers of Christ throughout the history of the Church.

I believe that God is someone who cares deeply about justice and reconciliation. I am deeply formed by Liberation Theology and its emphasis that liberation for the marginalized is liberation for us all.

In this season of life, I am much more formed and wooed by theology which points to the work of God in this world, the saving grace of Jesus Christ, and our response of gratitude (and not shame). I am compelled by theology that centers the Holy Spirit at work in our lives for the sake of the gospel (not my good deeds at work in my life for the sake of my salvation.)

In all of this, I believe that my response to God's graciousness toward me is gratitude in the form of word and deed, in ways big and small. And above all, I believe that "my" statement of faith is not an individual practice

but one lived in community, that I am but one member of the Church universal, and that God calls us to live out our personal faith not individually but collectively.

Pastoral Call
(For Pastor, Co-Pastor, Associate Pastor)

The Westminster Presbyterian Church of Middle Tennessee, belonging to Middle Tennessee Presbytery, being well satisfied with your qualification for ministry and confident that we have been led to you by the Holy Spirit as one whose service will be profitable to the spiritual interests of our church and fruitful for the Kingdom of our Lord, earnestly and solemnly calls you,

Ashley Higgins
(name)
to undertake the office of
Associate Pastor for Community Life

of this congregation, beginning (TIBD), promising you in the discharge of your duty all proper support encouragement and allegiance in the Lord.

That you may be free to devote (part-time- 25 hrs./week) to the ministry of Word and Sacrament among us, we promise and obligate ourselves to pay you in regular monthly payments the following effective salary and following vouchersed expenses (all in tabs which are agreed to):

Effective salary		Reimbursable expenses (by voucher)	
Cash Salary	\$ _____	Automobile expense (____ per mile)	\$ <u>950.00</u>
Fair rental value of manse	\$ _____	Business/professional expenses	\$ <u>950.00</u>
Housing Allowance	\$ <u>30,000.00</u>	SECA Supplement (up to 50%)	\$ _____
Utilities Allowance	\$ _____	Continuing Education	\$ <u>1,875.00</u>
Deferred Compensation	\$ _____	Other allowances-Cell	\$ <u>1,200.00</u>
Other allowances	\$ _____	Moving Costs (up to)	\$ _____
Total	\$ <u>50,000.00</u>		

Full medical, pension, disability, and death benefit coverage under the Board of Pensions

Paid Vacation 16 days
Paid Continuing Ed 3 days

We further promise and obligate ourselves to review with you annually the adequacy of this compensation.

In the seventh year of service, the congregation will provide for a three-month Clergy Renewal Leave, continuing the salary and benefits for that period, and providing for pulpit supply in the pastor's absence.

In testimony whereof we have subscribed our names this 14th day of July, 2024

Cheryl Foltz Sumner White
Erin Higgins Dana Steggo

Having moderated the congregational meeting which extended this call for ministerial services, I do certify that the call has been made in all respect according to the presbytery policy and the Form of Government, and that the persons who signed the foregoing call were authorized to do so by vote of the congregation.

Vote of the congregation at the meeting was _____ in favor of the candidate and _____ opposed.

approved by COM on
2024.06.11

Mary Catherine Sawyer
Shirley Clark

(signed) Virginia C. Reynolds
Moderator of the meeting

Ashley Higgins - Past Home
Associate Pastor
11/29/2024

Commissioning of Ruling Elder David Sadler to Priest Lake Presbyterian Church

Rev. Howton-Angel moved the examination and approval of commission to Priest Lake, Nashville of RE David Sadler. Mr. Sadler joined Rev. Howton-Angel on the floor of Presbytery and spoke briefly about his spiritual autobiography, statement of faith, and sense of calling. Following a period of questions, Rev. Howton-Angel escorted him from the room. After discussion, his commission was approved unanimously. Rev. Howton-Angel escorted him back to the meeting, and Vice-Moderator Herring propounded the constitutional questions. CRE Sadler was congratulated by the attendees.

Brief Statement of Faith – David L. Sadler

God is the ruler and creator of all. God provides for all our needs and blesses us richly. Through sacrificial love, God gave us the greatest teacher of love, Jesus Christ. It is through him that believers have salvation. Jesus was the human form of God on earth and taught us to love radically. The Holy Spirit, the final part of the trinity, blows through us and around us. The Spirit moves us and guides us in our life journey. The Spirit allows us to feel God's presence even though we cannot see God. The Holy Spirit convicts me to listen for God in my daily life and act in obedience when I listen to God. Believing in the Trinity provides me the means to fulfill my calling from God and be an obedient follower by loving others.

The scriptures are the divinely inspired Word of God. By reading and studying them both in private and group settings, we learn how God has loved creation and is a source of constant presence in our lives. The church provides a community for believers to gather in worship and learn more about God. The church is an outlet for us to use our gifts and talents to love others through service and being present in times of celebration and mourning. I view the church as a safe place to have doubt and bring questions to God. The church provides a means of support for believers in their faith journey. Through our involvement in church, we are fed spiritually and grow closer to God and to each other.

The sacraments provide a reminder of God's presence in our lives. Communion for me is the greatest reminder of Jesus's sacrificial death for my salvation. I feel closer to God when I celebrate the sacraments. When I see a baptism, I am reminded of the new life God has provided to me. We as believers cannot live life without being aware of God's presence in all aspects of our lives.

Spiritual Autobiography– David L. Sadler

I grew up in a family very active in the Presbyterian church. My grandfather was a retired PCUSA pastor and both parents were ordained elders. I professed my faith at age 9 and completed Communicant's class. After becoming a member of First Presbyterian, Springfield I served on the Worship Committee. I enjoyed learning in Sunday School each week and had the opportunity to explore different faiths thanks to my wonderful teachers who took us to different worship services. I remained active in church during college, yet at times, I was questioning some of my beliefs. This seems to be a natural phase as a young adult discerning whether one's beliefs are his own or simply accepted and assumed beliefs from family. My faith journey continued at the Presbyterian Student Fellowship (now known as UKirk) at Middle Tennessee State University. I was feeling the call to go into ministry; however, I was resistant at the time as I was questioning whether I had a genuine calling to ministry or just wanted to honor my grandfather's influence on me. I got married immediately after graduating from college and was blessed with three wonderful children. As I was teaching them about God and helping them grow in their faith, I realized that God was calling me to answer the call to go into ministry. At a session meeting in 1999, a letter was read from the presbytery about an opportunity for elders to be trained to be lay pastors. Without hesitation I raised my hand and was enrolled in training. During the trials I have experienced, I have seen the hand of God at work and the spirit guiding me along the way.

Report from Decherd Presbyterian Church Administrative Commission

Rev. Howton-Angel recognized the Rev. Tom Bagley, TE at Normandy PC and member of the Decherd AC along with RE Steve Elkins of First Murfreesboro, moderator, RE Charlotte Broyles of First Tullahoma, clerk, and Honorably Retired TE Ellen Hill. Rev. Bagley reported that the session of Decherd had requested an AC in order to be dissolved. The AC has walked alongside the session and congregation. A closing service of thanksgiving was held March 31, 2024, and the AC has steadily worked to help members transfer if they wish, and other tasks associated with dissolution. Following the assumption of original jurisdiction, the AC moved that the Decherd congregation be dissolved with thanks for its long ministry to the Decherd and Franklin County community. The motion carried unanimously. Rev. Bagley noted that the AC would begin the work of discernment of property disposition.

Approval of Southminster Presbyterian Church Administrative Commission

Rev. Howton-Angel next moved on behalf of COM that PMT charge an AC with the authority to investigate fully, including financial records, session minutes, relevant records, and other documents as well as emails relating to operation of the childcare program; provide fully any pastoral care to pastor and congregation, and assume original jurisdiction, if necessary, following all guidelines as stated in G-3.0303(e). Further, the COM chair and co-chair are charged with nominating the membership. Those nominated are Michael McLaughlin, TE, FPC Cookeville, Mike Koban, RE, Westminster, and Mickey Stueck, RE FPC Lebanon. Rev. Howton-Angel noted that the session and moderator of Southminster had requested support from presbytery. The motion carried.

Southminster Presbyterian Church, Nashville– Administrative Commissionⁱ

The Commission on Ministry, following thoughtful deliberation of the request for support from the installed minister and moderator of Southminster, recommends that the Presbytery of Middle Tennessee create and empower an administrative commission for Southminster Presbyterian Church, Nashville, with the following powers and responsibilities:

1. To visit and walk alongside the session of the Southminster Presbyterian Church in Nashville.
2. To provide full pastoral care to the staff, session and congregation members, and members of the childcare community.
3. To investigate fully including financial records, session minutes, relevant records and documents as well as emails relating to the operation of the childcare at Southminster Presbyterian Church in Nashville.
4. If the commission determines that the session is unable or unwilling to manage wisely its affairs, the administrative commission shall assume original jurisdiction, with the full powers of the session. This step will not be taken without fully satisfying the requirements of G-3.0303(e)ⁱ.
5. The commission shall be empowered to perform all administrative and other tasks necessary to fulfill its charge and to carry out the responsibilities delegated to it.
6. This administrative commission shall report to COM and to the Presbytery at each stated meeting.
7. Membership in this administrative commission shall be by appointment of the Co-Chairs of COM in consultation with the Stated Clerk and Executive Presbyter of the presbytery. Should additional members be needed, the Co-Chair of the COM in consultation with the Stated Clerk and Executive Presbyter shall recommend those individuals to the Presbytery for approval.
8. The commission shall begin its work immediately upon its creation by the presbytery. That date is August 8, 2024.
9. The commission shall be composed of three members who shall be:

- 1) The Rev. Michael McLaughlin, TE, FPC Cookeville
- 2) Mike Koban, RE, Westminster, Nashville
- 3) Mickey Stuecke, RE, FPC Lebanon

N.B. As we seek to live our mission and responsibility as a connectional denomination, we must rely on our polity in uncertain or disordered times. The presbytery, under the *Book of Order*, is given the authority to establish administrative commissions.

G-3.01 A commission is empowered to consider and conclude matters referred to it by a council. The designating council shall state specifically the scope of the commission's powers and any restrictions on those powers.

G-3.01b. *Administrative Commissions*

Administrative commissions are designated to consider and conclude matters not involving ecclesiastical judicial process, except that in the discharge of their assigned responsibilities they may discover and report to the designating council matters that may require judicial action by the council. Functions that may be entrusted to administrative commissions include, but are not limited to:

(5) (by presbyteries, synods, and the General Assembly) visiting particular councils, congregations, or agencies over which they have immediate jurisdiction reported to be affected with disorder, and inquiring into and settling the difficulties therein, except that no commission of a presbytery shall be empowered to dissolve a pastoral relationship without the specific authorization by the designating body (G-2.0901);

Further, an administrative commission may

G-3.0303(e). assume original jurisdiction in any situation in which it determines that a session cannot exercise its authority. After a thorough investigation, and after full opportunity to be heard has been accorded to the session, the presbytery may conclude that the session of a congregation is unable or unwilling to manage wisely its affairs, and may appoint an administrative commission with the full power of session. This commission shall assume original jurisdiction of the existing session, if any, which shall cease to act until such time as the presbytery shall otherwise direct.

Administrative commissions are not recommended lightly and without great deliberation.

COMMITTEE ON MUTUAL SUPPORT

The Rev. Bobby Harding, TE at First, Murfreesboro and chair of the Committee on Mutual Support, presented the committee's report.

Hunger Grant

A hunger grant of \$4000 was made to Second Harvest Food Bank.

Guatemala Task Force Visit and Renewal of Covenant Agreement.

The latest trip to Guatemala was highly successful. Rev. Harding moved that the Covenant Agreement with the Peten Q'eqchi Presbytery be renewed. After discussion, the motion carried unanimously.

COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL JUSTICE

The Rev. Claire Berry, UKirk Nashville, made the report from the Committee on Social Justice, reminding the Presbytery of the resources available on the website.

REPORT FROM THE STATED CLERK

Mary Catherine Sevier, Stated Clerk, delivered the following report.

Grant to Priest Lake PC from the Committee on the Preparation for Ministry

The Committee on the Preparation for Ministry will use monies from its designated fund, 3002-32, to defray up to 50% of the cost of sponsoring an Inquirer or Candidate upon request from the sponsoring congregation.

Criteria for Nomination to Synod Commissioner

Pursuant to the Manual of Operation and Missions, the Stated Clerk reports the following criteria for nominees as a Synod Commissioner:

- Teaching and ruling elders and young adults will ordinarily only be elected once to serve as commissioners to General Assembly or Synod from the Presbytery of Middle Tennessee.
- Teaching elders who have been members of the Presbytery of Middle Tennessee for at least seven years.
- Teaching and ruling elders who have a history of active involvement in the work of the Presbytery.
- Ruling elders from churches who have not sent a representative to Assembly or Synod in four years or more.
- A balance between women and men, teaching and ruling elders, and young adults from churches outside the Nashville area and those within the Metro Nashville area.

- Prior General Assembly and Synod alternates, and Presbytery moderators, will be given consideration as Commissioners.
- The ability to work effectively with technology and materials from the General Assembly and Synod committees and plenary sessions, understanding that stamina and energy are required.
- The ability to understand and the willingness to communicate the work of the General Assembly and Synod to the Presbytery and the ability to understand and the willingness to communicate the work of the Presbytery to the General Assembly and Synod. The Stated Clerk shall keep a cumulative list of commissioners, alternates, and young adult advisory delegates to General Assembly and Synod, for the use of the Nominating Task Force, to ensure compliance with the criteria.

Permanent Judicial Commission Roster

Pursuant to the Book of Order 3.0602(b), the Stated Clerk reports the following individuals make up the Permanent Judicial Commission roster.

Class of 2024	Class of 2026	Class of 2028
Bill Carver, RE First Franklin	Michael Bradley, TE HR	Bill Russell, RE FPC Spring Hill
Christi Enschede, RE Historic Franklin	James Hudnut-Beumler, TE Vanderbilt Divinity School	Walt Tennyson, TE Alive Hospice
Sharon Warfield, RE Westminster Nashville	J.B. Smith, RE FPC Pulaski	Terry Denton, RE Emmanuel PC

REPORT OF THE BRIDGE EXECUTIVE PRESBYTER

The Moderator recognized the Rev. Terry Newland to make the report of the executive presbyter. Rev. Newland noted the good work he is seeing across the presbytery and the warm relationships between members. He expressed his optimism at the work being done. He expressed appreciation for the work of the Stated Clerk and the Operations Coordinator.

**REPORT OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY COMMISSIONERS
AND THE YOUNG ADULT ADVISORY DELEGATE**

Commissioners to the 226th General Assembly Carol Foster, RE of First Fayetteville, Jane Herring, TE of Emmanuel, Erin Howton-Angel, TE of First, Allardt, and AC Oeser, YAAD of Westminster Nashville presented a report along with written comments from Commissioner Judy, RE of Calvary Big Lick. The group presented the work of their respective assigned committees and reflected on the pride and inspiration they felt in attending the gathering. They noted that Rev. Howton-Angel served as Moderator of the Bills and Overture Committee, and the Rev. John Smith of First, Dickson and Ellis Grove was elected to Board of Chaplaincy and served as tech support and parliamentarian during the General Assembly. They also noted that they were hosting a break out session following the Stated Meeting for individuals to ask specific questions about proposed amendments to the Book of Order and other actions of the Assembly.

ADJOURNMENT

The Vice-Moderator asked for new and unfinished business. There was none. The Vice-Moderator asked for a motion for adjournment, which was made, seconded, and approved. The Vice-Moderator closed with prayer and adjourned the meeting at 12:27 pm after announcing the 158th stated meeting will take place November 14, 2024 in person at First Dickson co-hosted by Ellis Grove.

Teaching Elders

_E_Adams, Chris
 _E_Anderson, David
 _E_Anderson, Rosanna
 _P_Angel, Erin Howton
 _E_Angel, Jonathan
 _E_Arnold, Judith
 _P_Bagley, Tom
 _E_Barger, Bill
 _P_Berry, Claire
 _P_Berger, Will
 P_Boaz, Stephanie Hanson
 _P_Bradley, Michael
 _E_Bray, Linda
 _P_Bryan, Mark S.
 _E_Bryant, William T.
 _E_Burgener, John "Bo"
 _E_Caldwell, Elizabeth
 _E_Canon, Amelia
 _E_Carrell, Len
 _P_Casner, Paul
 _E_Catoe, Lee
 _E_Cejka, III, Joseph
 _E_Cheetham, John T.
 _E_Cheifetz, Laura M.
 _E_Chiquimia, Teddy
 _E_Coates, Coleman Lewis
 _E_Cox, Meredith
 _E_Crawford, John
 _E_Crumpler, David
 _E_Danner, Charles
 _P_Davis, Michael
 _P_DeVries, Adam
 _E_DeVries, Mark
 _P_Drake, Donovan
 _E_Durnell, Warner R.
 _E_Early, Kim Maphis
 _E_Early, Robert
 _P_Edington, Sherard
 _E_Eisenmenger, David
 _E_Fraser, Carrie
 _E_Gasser, Anna D.
 _E_Gay, Andy
 _E_Gerber, David
 _E_Gilliam, Elizabeth
 _E_Gilliss, Martha Schull
 _E_Glover, Gregory
 _E_Glover, Leslie
 _P_Gordon, Stuart
 _P_Graham, M. Evelyn
 _P_Griffith, Guy D.
 _E_Gung, Justin
 _E_Gunter, Keith
 _E_Hamman, Jaco
 _E_Handlson, Pat
 _P_Harding, Bobby
 _E_Harrell, James E.
 _E_Hassall, Harry S.
 E_Hermann, Lisa C.
 _P_Herring, Jane
 _E_Hill, Austin
 _E_Hill, Ellen
 _P_Hill, Sara
 _E_Hilley, John R.
 _P_Hinkle, Jr., John
 _E_Hodgson, Peter
 _E_Hoehst, Jeanne'
 _E_Hudnut-Beumler, Heidi
 _E_Hudnut-Beumler, James
 _P_Hughes, Sally
 _P_Huie, Scott
 _E_Hunter, Jeannie
 _E_Jarvis, Jennifer
 _E_Johnson, Charles N.
 _E_Jones, Todd B.
 _P_Kane, Jeff
 _E_Kang, Se Bong
 _E_Kang, Shin
 _E_Kaufman, John E.
 _E_Kelly, Gary
 _E_Kidd, David
 _E_Kim Eun Joo
 _E_Klein, Candice
 _E_Kneff, Sarah Bird

August 8, 2024 Stated Meeting Roll

_E_Knight, Carole
 E_Kramer, Claire Harris
 _E_Lancaster, Jimmie
 _P_Larson, John
 _E_Leftwich, Phil
 _E_Lewis, John
 _E_Lipsey, McCurdy
 _E_Logan, Gail
 _E_Magee, Michael J.
 _P_McCaw, Beth
 _E_McClure, Annie
 _E_McCormack, Robert E.
 _E_McCullough, John
 _E_McKinsey, Sally Ann
 _P_McLaughlin, Michael D.
 _P_McVey, Bruce
 _E_Moffatt, III, Charles L.
 _P_Montgomery, Robert
 _E_Moore, Ryan
 _P_Moran, James A.
 _E_Muse, Perry
 _E_Musgrave, John
 _E_Musick, Steve
 _E_Nally, Sara
 _E_Neil, Richard
 _E_Newsom, Ernest B.
 _E_Nichols, James A.
 _E_Nyhuis, Jule
 _P_Orfield, Rachel Thompson
 _E_Paddon, Richard
 _E_Page, Fred
 _E_Paterik, Roy
 _E_Patton, Tom
 _E_Pentecost, Mike
 _E_Picard, John Paul
 _E_Ramirez, Lilia M.
 _P_Randleman, Sandra
 _P_Rector, Stacy
 _E_Richardson, W. W.
 _E_Ritchie, Jeff
 _E_Ritchie, Megan
 _E_Rodriguez, Josh
 _E_Rogers-Vaughn, Annette
 _E_Rouquie, Richard
 _E_Salyer, Carson
 _P_Salyer, Janet
 _P_Sasser, Zach
 _E_Sawyer, David
 _E_Schultz, Harris
 _E_Schwartz, Cindy
 _P_Shaw, Mary Sellers
 _E_Skelly, John J., III
 _E_Smathers, Mike
 _E_Smith, Jimmy D.
 _P_Smith, John A.
 _E_Smith, Shane
 _P_Smith, Shawn Thomas
 _E_Soderquist, Ann
 _E_Stauffer, Aaron
 _P_Stoker, Amy B.
 _E_Tate, Carol
 _P_Tennyson, Walt
 _E_Thomas, C. S. (Steve) III
 _E_Thomas, Ray
 _P_Thompson, C.J.
 _E_Thompson, Marjorie
 _E_Todd, John
 _P_Traylor, Leslie
 _E_Tuck, Janet
 _P_Tyndall, Thomas B.
 _E_Vasquez-Paredes, Gustavo
 _E_Venable, III, Sid
 _E_Wallace, Morgan
 _E>Weingartner, Robert J.
 _P_Wellman, Will
 _E_White, Jack
 _E_White, Linda
 _P_Wilson, Amos L.
 _E_Yang, Sunggu
 _P_Yates, Stephen
 _E_Zeigler, Richard

P - Present

E – Excused

A – Absent

I - Inactive

Ruling Elder Commissioners

<u>Church</u>	<u>Represented By</u>
Alexandria, Liberty Hill	
Allardt, First	
Alpine, Christ	
Ardmore, Bethany	
Belfast	
Bethpage, Oak Grove	
Brentwood, Brentwood First East	1. Lavona Russell 2.
Harpeth	1. 2.
Buffalo Valley	1.
Clarksville, First	1. Phillip R. Kemmerly 2. Douglas Young
Macedonia	
Columbia, First	1. 2. Mary Beth Cotham
Westminster	Jackie Shrago
Cookeville, Double Springs First	1. 2.
Post Oak	
Cowan, Fellowship	
Crossville, Calvary	1. 2
Dechard	
Dickson, First Pond	
Fairfield Glade, Westminster	1.
Fayetteville, First	1. Dan Tice 2. Harold Dawkins
St. John	
Franklin, First	1. Jason Coleman 2. John Korab 3. Philip Ott
Historic	1. 2.
Gallatin, First	1. Fran Young 2.
Sudanese	1. 2.
Hendersonville, First	1. 2.
New Creation	1. 2.
Hermitage	1. Sharon Bragg 2.
Lawrenceburg, First	1.
Lebanon, First	1. Margaret Ann Trail 2. Mickey Stueck
Spring Creek	

<u>Church</u>	<u>Represented By</u>
Lewisburg, Bethberei First	1. 2.
Lynnville, First	
Manchester, First	
McMinnville, First	1. Ray Goode
Milton, Hopewell	
Mt. Pleasant, First	
Murfreesboro, First	1. Paul Lane 2. Patsy Coleman
Northminster	
Nashville, Bellevue	1. Larry McElroy 1. Bob Downing 2. Lynn Edwards
Donelson	1. Jill York 2.
Downtown	1. Denny Harris
Eastminster	1. 2.
Emmanuel First	1. Barbara Halverstadt 1. David Wood 2. Hal Sauer 3. 4. 5. 6. 7.
Glen Leven	1. Margie McCullough 2. Ronnie Townes
Glenclyff Hillsboro	1. 1. 2.
Hillwood	1. Bob Cooper
Korean	1. 2. 3.
Priest Lake Second	1. David Nock 1. Priscilla Coe 2. Alan Fey
Southminster	1. Jenn Maxwell
St. Andrews	1. Charles Jordan 2.
Trinity	1. Sissy Leech
Westminster	1. Jim Barr 2. Travis Self 3. 4. 5.
Woodland	1.
Normandy	1. Karen Riley

<u>Church</u>	<u>Represented By</u>
Old Hickory Petersburg, First Pulaski, Brick Church First	1. 2.
Readyville, Cripple Creek Shelbyville, First	1. Jim Ikard 2.
Smyrna, First	1. 2.
Sparta, Blue Spring Hickory Valley Robinson Chapel Spring Hill, First	1. Geoff Lackey 2.
Springfield, First	1.
Milldale Thompson Station, Bethesda Tullahoma, First	1. Brad Sturgin 2. Joyce Hiebert
Watertown, First Waverly, Ellis Grove	

Commissioned Ruling Elders

Leonard Jordan, St. Andrews; Anne Keener, First Franklin,
Rick Robinson, Milldale, Rhonda Banasik, FPC Clarksville,
Kevin Whitehead, Westminster Columbia, David Paduil,
Sudnese Nuer American PC

Ruling Elders, Voice and Vote:

Mary Catherine Sevier, Stated Clerk; Presbyterian Women
Diane Thurston;

Moderator within five years of office:

Corresponding Members, Voice, without Vote:

Terry Newland, Shepards and Lapsley

Visitors:

Linda Goode
Nancye McElroy
Ashley Higgins
David Sadler
Robert Francis
Jeff Binns
Nyawel Kuei
Stan Herring
Ed Branding
Bob Young

Policy Against Sexual Misconduct of the Presbytery of Middle Tennessee

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Statement on the Policy Against Sexual Misconduct

"To those called to exercise special functions in the church—deacons, ruling elders, and ministers of the Word and Sacrament—God gives suitable gifts for their various duties. In addition to possessing the necessary gifts and abilities, those who undertake particular ministries should be persons of strong faith, dedicated discipleship, and love of Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Their manner of life should be a demonstration of the Christian gospel in the church and in the world. They must have the approval of God's people and the concurring judgment of a council of the church." G-2.0104a.

Sexual misconduct in the church is an abuse of authority and power, breaching Christian ethical principles by misusing a trust relationship to gain advantage over another for personal gratification in an exploitive and unjust manner.

It is the policy of the Presbytery of Middle Tennessee ("PMT") that church members, church officers, certified employees, non-member employees, and volunteers, its congregations, and entities maintain the integrity of the ministerial, employment, and professional relationship at all times in service to the Presbytery. Persons who engage in sexual misconduct are in violation of the principles set forth in Scripture, and also of the ministerial, pastoral, employment, and professional relationship. It is never permissible or acceptable for a church member, officer, employee, or volunteer to engage in sexual misconduct.

Application of Policy

This policy applies to all church members, church officers, certified employees, non-member employees, and volunteers in service to and within the Presbytery of Middle Tennessee.

Definitions

For the purpose of this policy the following definitions shall apply:

1. **Abuse:** verbal, physical, emotional, or sexual violation of a child, youth, or member of a vulnerable population
2. **Criminal Background Check (CBC):** the procedure used by a qualified agency to check the background of Ministers of the Word and Sacrament as part of the call process or reception into the Presbytery, potential employees of the Presbytery, ruling elders to be commissioned for pastoral service, and persons entering the inquiry / candidacy process, for criminal activity.
3. **Sexual misconduct:** comprehensive term used in this policy to include:
 - a. **Child sexual abuse:** includes, but is not limited to, any contact or interaction between a child and an adult when the child is being used for the sexual stimulation of the adult person or of a third person. The behavior may or may not involve touching. Sexual behavior between a child and an adult is always considered forced whether or not consented to by the child. In the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the sexual abuse definition of a child is anyone under age eighteen.

- b. **Sexual abuse:** as defined in the *Book of Order*. "Sexual abuse of another person is any offense involving sexual conduct in relation to (1) any person under the age of eighteen years or anyone over the age of eighteen years without the mental capacity to consent; or (2) any person when the conduct includes force, threat, coercion, intimidation, or misuse of ordered ministry or position." (D-10.0401c.)
 - c. **Sexual harassment:** unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment when:
 - i. submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment, or their continued status in an institution;
 - ii. submission to or rejection of such conduct is used as the basis for employment decisions affecting such an individual;
 - iii. such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance by creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment; or
 - iv. an individual is subjected to unwelcome sexual jokes, unwelcome or inappropriate touching, or display of sexual visuals that insult, degrade, and/or sexually exploit any person.
 - d. **Rape** or sexual contact by force, threat, or intimidation.
 - e. **Sexual conduct** is offensive, obsessive or suggestive language or behavior, unacceptable visual contact, unwelcome touching or fondling that is injurious to the physical or emotional health of another.
 - f. **Sexual Malfeasance:** the broken trust resulting from sexual activities within a professional ministerial relationship that results in misuse of office or position arising from the professional ministerial relationship.
 - g. **Misuse of technology:** use of technology that results in sexually harassing or abusing another person, including texting or emailing suggestive messages or images to persons with whom one has a ministerial relationship. It is never appropriate to view pornography or sexually explicit material on church property. When this includes a person under the age of eighteen, it is considered child abuse. There is never an expectation of personal privacy when using technological equipment owned by a church or church entity or within the context of ministry.
9. **Accused:** the person against whom an allegation of sexual misconduct is being made.
 10. **Accuser:** the person claiming knowledge of sexual misconduct by a person covered by this policy. The accuser may or may not have been the victim of the alleged sexual misconduct.
 11. **Victim:** the person alleged to have been harmed and/or abused by a person covered under this policy.
 12. **Advocate:** a person appointed by the chair of the COM, in consultation with the Executive Presbyters and the Stated Clerk during the investigative process of sexual misconduct. The advocate provides support, and emotional and physical presence to the person for whom

they are advocating.

13. **Mandated Reporter:** a person who is required by law to report any and all suspected incidents of child abuse, including child sexual abuse, that comes to their attention. While State laws may vary, the policies of the PCUSA require all persons ordained in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) (Deacons, Elders and Ministers of Word and Sacrament) to report all suspected incidents of child sexual abuse to ecclesiastical and civil authorities (G- 6.0204b, G-6.-0304b, G- 6.0402b).

Rape or sexual assault is a crime in every state and shall be reported to civil authorities and to the Stated Clerk.

14. **Minister:** The term "minister" includes: Ministers of the Word and Sacrament as defined in the *Book of Order*, G-2.0501. Ministers serving PMT churches under the Formula of Agreement remain under the jurisdiction of their denomination, and the Presbytery may participate in their judicial process if necessary.

Interpretation of Policy

The Presbytery of Middle Tennessee has adopted and may in the future adopt additional policies concerning Workplace Harassment, Child and Youth Protection, and Antiracism, which may overlap to some extent with the policies set out here. These policies shall be interpreted consistently with one another, but, if there are conflicts or inconsistencies, the stricter policy shall apply.

Policy Against Sexual Misconduct

1. Sexual misconduct in any form is never permissible. It is a violation of the principles set forth in Scripture as well as of ministerial, pastoral, employment, and professional relationships. Sexual misconduct by persons in ordered ministry violates the ordination vows of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and the PMT Code of Ethics for Clergy and Other Church Professionals.
2. Ministers received by PMT, commissioned pastors, and employees of PMT are required within one year of reception to attend a seminar on the issues of sexual misconduct offered by PMT or another source satisfactory to the Committee on Ministry.
3. Thereafter, every three (3) years all persons subject to this policy shall attend a seminar offered by PMT or another source satisfactory to the COM on the issues of sexual misconduct, as defined herein, including, but not limited to boundary training and child sexual abuse prevention.
4. Each congregation and organization in PMT is responsible for developing a policy for its officers, members, non-member employees, and volunteers which is consistent with this document. It is incumbent on each PMT entity to ensure compliance with its policy.

Responsibilities and Roles in Policy Implementation

Availability of Policy and Procedures

1. Every person subject to this policy shall be given a copy of the policy and be required to sign an acknowledgment of receipt. Such signature indicates the person's agreement to abide by the terms of this Policy Against Sexual Misconduct.
2. This policy shall also be available to all church members and to the public.
3. PMT employees shall receive and sign this document as a supplement to the personnel policies.
4. This policy will be sent to every Clerk of Session annually.

Management of Allegations of Sexual Misconduct by Ministers

1. Resource Documents

The responsibilities, structures and procedures for responding to allegations of sexual misconduct are mandated

- a. by the *Book of Order* in the Rules of Discipline, and
- b. by PMT policies.

2. Liability and Insurance

PMT and its congregations shall periodically obtain from their insurance agents, confirmation that their liability insurance policy covers sexual misconduct liability for its programs and activities.

3. Record Keeping

PMT will include in every employee's personnel file, the application for employment, any employment questionnaires, reference responses, and other documents related to this policy including a signed receipt for receiving the Policy Against Sexual Misconduct. Files for ministers, commissioned pastors, certified personnel, inquirers, and candidates will include documents related to this policy, and a signed receipt for receiving the Policy Against Sexual Misconduct.

Pre-Employment Screening for Prospective Incoming Clergy

1. Reference Checks

Pre-employment screening includes specific questions related to previous complaints of sexual misconduct. PMT reviews the Sexual Misconduct Self- Certification of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Personal Information Form when interviewing persons seeking ministerial calls.

The Office of the Co-Executive Presbyters is responsible for reference checks to ascertain whether persons being considered have any history of sexual misconduct. The Co- Executive Presbyters report to the Pastor Nominating Committee chair and / or the Committee on Ministry either that there was no reported sexual misconduct, or that the COM should inquire into reported sexual misconduct. A written record of conversations and correspondence with references will be kept in the minister's/employee's personnel file.

The person within the PMT authorized to provide a reference is obligated to give truthful and complete information regarding complaints, inquiries, and administrative or disciplinary action related to sexual misconduct by the applicant. The applicant shall be given an opportunity to correct or respond to information obtained from a reference check.

2. Background Checks

Screening for prospective ministers, commissioned pastors, PMT employees, and inquirers and candidates also includes a mandatory Criminal Background Check performed by a private investigative firm which will access the misdemeanor and felony conviction records of courts in the United States, as well as the Federal and state sexual offenders registries. The criminal background check is based on the last seven years' residential history of the applicant.

The Stated Clerk provides the necessary background check forms and releases. Upon receipt of the executed forms, the Stated Clerk orders the background check, which the Presbytery pays for. The completed background check is reviewed by the Stated Clerk, who also notifies the appropriate persons of the results. The Presbytery's Background Check Policy (Appendix A) details the process in the event of a negative report. The completed report is securely archived.

Education

The PMT has a commitment to offer, provide resources for, and to publicize educational opportunities aimed at preventing sexual misconduct in the church.

PMT staff, ministers, inquirers, candidates, and all persons and committees working with the issue of sexual misconduct and boundaries, including local congregations, will be invited to read the resources and attend sexual misconduct prevention seminars.

Policy on Response to Allegations

Allegations of sexual misconduct, abuse, and / or harassment shall be reported to the Stated Clerk, and where applicable, to the civil authorities. The investigative process is detailed in the Rules of Discipline of the *Book of Order*.

Code of Ethics

I have been given a copy of the Policy Against Sexual Misconduct of the Presbytery of Middle Tennessee and will abide by it. I understand that abuse of children, youth and members of vulnerable populations is a serious matter and I am willing to do my part in the prevention of abuse while a member of the PMT. I understand that violation of this policy is grounds for dismissal from my position.

Print Name _____ Date _____

Applicant's Signature _____

Appendix A

COMMITTEE ON MINISTRY PRESBYTERY OF MIDDLE TENNESSEE POLICY ON BACKGROUND CHECKS

“The Church’s ministry is a gift from Jesus Christ to the whole Church. Christ alone rules, calls, teaches, and uses the Church as he wills, exercising his authority by the ministry of women and men for the establishment and extension of God’s new creation. Christ’s ministry is the foundation and standard for all ministry, the pattern of the one who came “not to be served but to serve” (Matt. 20:28). The basic form of ministry is the ministry of the whole people of God, from whose midst some are called to ordered ministries, to fulfill particular functions. Members and those in ordered ministries serve together under the mandate of Christ.” G-2.0101

“The Church’s ordered ministries described in the New Testament and maintained by this church are deacons and presbyters (ministers of the Word and Sacrament and ruling elders). Ordered ministries are gifts to the church to order its life so that the ministry of the whole people of God may flourish. The existence of these ordered ministries in no way diminishes the importance of the commitment of all members to the total ministry of the church.

The government of this church is representative, and the right of God’s people to elect presbyters and deacons is inalienable. Therefore, no person can be placed in any ordered ministry in a congregation or council of the church except by election of that body.

Ordination to the ministry of deacon, ruling elder, or minister of Word and Sacrament (also called teaching elder) is unique to that order of ministry.” G-2.0102

The Committee on Ministry of the Presbytery of Middle Tennessee seeks to fulfill its responsibility to the churches, sessions, and teaching elders by ensuring quality pastoral leadership that is Presbyterian and Reformed. Background checks are required as an additional assessment of a candidate’s character and fitness, so that the presbytery through its COM, the congregation through the pastor nominating committee, and the candidate through prayer and discernment, are all guided towards the movement of God’s will for the Church.

The Committee on Ministry strongly encourages its churches to develop and utilize similar policies for its employees and volunteers.

A. Purpose and Scope

The Presbytery of Middle Tennessee adopts this policy so that Pastor Nominating Committees, the Committee on Ministry, and the Committee on Preparation for Ministry may make informed decisions about those persons seeking membership or employment in the Presbytery of Middle Tennessee. This policy reflects the presbytery’s commitment to exercise appropriate diligence and oversight to its churches and ministers. Its purpose is to:

1. Implement policies intended to prevent abuse of children and other abuses of authority;
2. Discover and verify background information provided by all candidates and teaching elders seeking membership or employment in the Presbytery of Middle Tennessee; and
3. Accomplish these purposes without limiting or compromising the existing authority of the Committee on Ministry to recommend termination of a call or employment based on reasons wholly unrelated to the findings (or lack thereof) of a background check pursuant to this policy.

Effective the date this policy is adopted, the Presbytery will conduct background checks as part of the clearance process for all teaching elders seeking to become members of the Presbytery; ruling elders seeking to be commissioned; candidates; and applicants for Presbytery staff positions.

Background checks will also be required for teaching elders transferring within the bounds of the presbytery. Exceptions to background checks for teaching elder members of the Presbytery of Middle Tennessee may be made on a case-by-case basis by the Committee on Ministry.

B. Required Background Checks

The following background checks will be required:

1. Presbytery-to-Presbytery reference checks (usually handled by the Executive Presbyter)
2. Criminal Record History, to include both Federal and state sexual offenders registries
3. Education
4. Employment History
5. Motor Vehicle Record

Records and histories will be for the past seven to 10 years; pre-employment screening will include specific questions related to previous complaints of sexual misconduct contained in Personal Information Forms or revealed through the background checks.

C. Persons Authorized to Order Background Checks and Review Reports

The Executive Presbyter will ordinarily perform the presbytery-to-presbytery check; either the COM chair or the Stated Clerk will order the remaining background checks (2 - 5). Normally, the Stated Clerk will receive, review, and retain (with parameters defined) the background checks, providing a summary when necessary.

D. Process and Cost of Background Checks

The Committee on Ministry shall select and engage a firm to conduct these checks that is experienced and recognized as a timely and reliable source.

The Presbytery will conduct background checks as part of the clearance process. The Presbytery will pay for background checks.

E. Procedure

1. Prospective members and employees of Presbytery shall be informed during the interviewing and selection process that a background check will be conducted and asked to sign a consent and release form to authorize it.
2. Copies of the consent and release form will go to the Stated Clerk. A background check will be initiated upon receipt of the form.

3. Background check reports will be sent to the Stated Clerk, who will consider the results of the presbytery-to-presbytery reference check and the background check report, as well as the PIF / resume to determine if any of the following are present:
- a. Pending criminal or civil proceeding of any kind;
 - b. Conviction of any criminal offense;
 - c. A deferred adjudication on any offense;
 - d. A judgment against the candidate in a civil case;
 - e. A pending ecclesiastical disciplinary proceeding;
 - f. A judgment or act of censure entered in an ecclesiastical disciplinary proceeding;
 - g. An alternative form of resolution agreement approved by a permanent judicial commission in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) or equivalent body of another church resolving an ecclesiastical disciplinary proceeding;
 - h. Any inconsistency between the background check report and the educational, employment, and criminal background information provided by the candidate;
 - i. Allegations of sexual misconduct that did not result in criminal charges will be considered on a case-by-case basis. The COM chair, in consultation with the Executive Presbyter and the Stated Clerk, shall investigate the allegations and make a determination on whether to proceed with the candidacy.

Where appropriate the Executive Presbyter and the COM Chair will counsel both the prospective candidate and the Pastor Nominating Committee.

4. The Committee on Ministry will take into account the failure of a candidate to volunteer critically important information regarding criminal or misdemeanor history. A formal interview process shall be established with the Executive Presbyter and the COM chair, who will decide on the next steps and document those findings.
5. Should an otherwise qualified candidate be unwilling to sign a release, the candidacy shall not proceed.
6. A teaching elder, candidate, or potential employee who believes that information in the report is inaccurate, misleading, false, or incomplete, shall have the right to dispute it with the investigative firm and the Committee on Ministry.
7. These reports will be kept in a secured file in the Stated Clerk's office.
8. If the background check report discloses no relevant information or inconsistencies, the Stated Clerk will notify the COM Transitions Team liaison and the chair of the church's PNC of that fact in writing. The Stated Clerk shall retain evidence of the completion of the background check process; the background check report will be archived in a secure file.
9. If the background check report discloses relevant information or inconsistencies:
- a. *Notice to Candidate* - If a background check report or presbytery-to-presbytery reference check discloses the existence of any information or inconsistencies, the Stated Clerk shall promptly contact the candidate and inform him/her of such information or inconsistencies. The Stated Clerk shall also provide him/her a copy of the background check report.

b. *Response by Candidate* - Within ten (10) days of the notification in 9a, the candidate shall deliver to the Stated Clerk a letter confirming or denying the information contained in the report, along with any evidence relevant to support the candidate's position.

c. *Continuation of Candidacy* - Upon receipt of the candidate's letter and supporting evidence, the Stated Clerk, the Executive Presbyter, the COM chair, and/or the PNC (as provided herein) shall determine whether the person's candidacy will continue using the following criteria:

(1) *Conviction or Other Final Disposition in Case Involving Any Criminal Offense or Sexual Misconduct*

(a) If the background check confirms that the candidate's personal history contains a conviction or deferred adjudication for any criminal offense or any other criminal charge involving sexual misconduct, the candidacy shall be terminated and the candidate notified in writing and, if applicable, the chair of the PNC shall be notified in writing.

(b) If the background check confirms the candidate's personal history contains (i) a judgment against or settlement involving the candidate in a civil case involving sexual misconduct; or (ii) a judgment, act of censure, or alternative form of resolution agreement resolving an ecclesiastical disciplinary proceeding involving sexual misconduct, the candidacy shall be terminated and the candidate, and if applicable, the chair of the PNC, shall be notified in writing.

(2) *Pending Criminal Charges, Civil Complaint Involving Any Offense, Sexual Misconduct, or Ecclesiastical Proceeding*

If the background check confirms the existence of any pending criminal, civil or ecclesiastical proceeding against the candidate involving any criminal offense or sexual misconduct, the Stated Clerk shall advise the COM Chair, the candidate, and the chair of the PNC (if applicable) in writing that the candidacy will be suspended. The candidate may submit written information to the PNC and the Stated Clerk regarding the charges. The PNC shall advise the COM Chair and the candidate as to whether it wishes to await final disposition of the charges or to discontinue its consideration of the candidate.

(3) *Cases Involving Matters Other than a Criminal Offense or Sexual Misconduct*

If the background check confirms that the candidate's personal history contains matter(s) other than a criminal offense or sexual misconduct, the Stated Clerk shall prepare a summary of the relevant information in the background check and the information provided by the candidate and deliver such summary to the candidate and, as applicable, the COM chair and the PNC chair. Upon request of the members of the PNC chair, the Stated Clerk shall provide copies

of specific documents to the members of the PNC for review during a PNC meeting attended by the Stated Clerk. At the conclusion of such meeting, the Stated Clerk shall collect all copies of such documents from the PNC members and shall destroy them.

The Stated Clerk, the Executive Presbyter, the COM Chair, and the PNC chair (in the case of a candidate seeking installation in a parish) shall determine whether the person's candidacy will continue, based on its consideration of all relevant factors, including, but not limited to, the following:

- (a) The nature and seriousness of the matter;
- (b) The relationship of the matter to the purpose of the church;
- (c) The extent to which call or employment might offer the opportunity to engage in similar activity;
- (d) The age of the candidate at the time of her/his commission of the crime or engagement in the activity that is the subject matter of the proceeding;
- (e) The time elapsed since the candidate's last engagement in the activity that is the subject of the engagement; and
- (f) Other evidence of the candidate's fitness including letters of recommendation from law enforcement, prosecution, probation, or other persons of good community standing and reputation who may have been in contact with the candidate.

(4) *Inconsistencies in Employment or Education Information*

If the background check confirms that the candidate's personal history is inconsistent with the educational or employment information provided by the candidate, the Stated Clerk shall advise the COM chair, the candidate and, if applicable, the chair of the PNC, of that fact in writing and shall deliver to them copies of the background check, all documents provided by the candidate, and other relevant information. The Stated Clerk, the Executive Presbyter, the COM Chair, and the PNC chair (in the case of a candidate seeking installation in a parish) shall determine whether the person's candidacy will continue, based on its consideration of all information received, including but not limited to the following factors:

- (a) The nature and seriousness of the inconsistency;
- (b) The relationship of the inconsistency to the purpose of the church; and
- (c) Other evidence of the person's fitness or veracity including letters of recommendation from persons of good community standing and reputation.

F. Timing of Background Check

1. *Candidate seeking installation in a church:* At the request of a PNC, the Executive Presbyter makes presbytery-to-presbytery reference checks on the candidate the PNC wants to interview. The PNC selects its top candidate. The selected candidate is informed that a background check will need to be performed before proceeding any further. The PNC sends the candidate's name, email address, and a copy of the candidate's Personal Information Form to the Stated Clerk, who then sends to the candidate a form requesting permission to perform the background check. Once the background check is clear, the Stated Clerk will let the PNC know if it can proceed, and will inform the COM chair and the Examinations Task Force chair that there is a candidate to examine. This process also applies to Teaching Elders transferring within the bounds of the Presbytery and to Ruling Elders being commissioned.
2. *Candidate seeking membership not in connection with installation in a church:* Background checks will be performed at the time the person submits his/her name for membership. A presbytery-to-presbytery reference check will be done first. If cleared, the candidate, or sponsoring entity / employer shall provide the Stated Clerk a fully-executed authorization and release form, and a copy of the candidate's Personal Information Form.

If the background check is clear, the candidate will be examined by the COM Examinations Task Force. The Examinations Task Force will make a recommendation to the COM regarding the candidate's membership in the Presbytery of Middle Tennessee.

"To those called to exercise special functions in the church—deacons, ruling elders, and ministers of the Word and Sacrament—God gives suitable gifts for their various duties. In addition to possessing the necessary gifts and abilities, those who undertake particular ministries should be persons of strong faith, dedicated discipleship, and love of Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Their manner of life should be a demonstration of the Christian gospel in the church and in the world. They must have the approval of God's people and the concurring judgment of a council of the church." G-2.0104a.

The Commission on Ministry is guided by the Book of Order in its work and seeks to ensure the best leadership for the Presbytery of Middle Tennessee.

Adopted by the COM: June 8, 2010

Adopted by the Presbytery of Middle Tennessee: October 21, 2010

Amended by the Presbytery of Middle Tennessee: February 2, 2013

Amended by the Presbytery of Middle Tennessee: May 17, 2014

Revised January 2017

Revised 2024.08.07
Approved by PMT:

Safe Church Policy

(Child and Youth Protection Policy)

Presbytery of Middle Tennessee

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Policy Statement

It is the intention of the members and staff of the Presbytery of Middle Tennessee (“PMT”) to provide a safe and stable environment for all children, youth, and members of vulnerable populations entrusted to our care. A safe and stable environment includes a formal, written policy to help prevent the occurrence of abuse or neglect of children, youth, or members of vulnerable populations.

Thus, the following policy and procedures are for the protection of our children, youth, members of vulnerable populations, employees, volunteers, and our entire community of faith at PMT.

Application of Policy

This policy shall apply to all current and future workers, compensated and/or volunteer, who will have the responsibility of supervising the activities of children, youth, and members of vulnerable populations.

Definitions

For the purpose of this policy the following definitions shall apply:

1. **Child:** any individual under the age of twelve (12)
2. **Youth:** any individual who is twelve (12) to eighteen (18) years old or still in high school.
3. **Minor:** any child or youth 0-17 years old
4. **Adult:** any individual at least eighteen (18) years of age
5. **Worker:** any adult who serves as a volunteer and/or paid person given the responsibility of working with or caring for children, youth or members of vulnerable populations, whether on a regular ongoing basis, or intermittently as needed.
6. **Teen Worker:** any worker at least twelve (12) years old or older, but under the age of eighteen (18) enlisted to assist with the care of children
7. **Abuse:** verbal, physical, emotional, or sexual violation of a child, youth, or member of a vulnerable population
8. **Criminal Background Check (CBC):** the procedure used by a qualified agency to check the background of adult volunteers for criminal activity
9. **Members of vulnerable populations:** anyone who has difficulty speaking for themselves and/or is at a higher risk for experiencing verbal, physical, emotional, or sexual abuse due to a disability or mental illness

10. **Sexual misconduct:** comprehensive term used in this policy to include:

- a. **Child sexual abuse:** including, but not limited to, any contact or interaction between a child and an adult when the child is being used for the sexual stimulation of the adult person or of a third person. The behavior may or may not involve touching. Sexual behavior between a child and an adult is always considered forced whether or not consented to by the child. In the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the sexual abuse definition of a child is anyone under age eighteen.
- b. **Sexual abuse:** as defined in the *Book of Order*: “Sexual abuse of another person is any offense involving sexual conduct in relation to (1) any person under the age of eighteen years or anyone over the age of eighteen years without the mental capacity to consent; or (2) any person when the conduct includes force, threat, coercion, intimidation, or misuse of ordered ministry or position” (*Book of Order*, D-10.0401c).
- c. **Rape** or sexual contact by force, threat, or intimidation.
- d. **Misuse of technology:** use of technology that results in sexually harassing or abusing another person, including texting or emailing suggestive messages or images to persons with whom one has a ministerial relationship. It is never appropriate to view pornography or sexually explicit material on church property. When this includes a person under the age of eighteen, it is considered child abuse. There is never an expectation of personal privacy when using technological equipment owned by a church or church entity or within the context of ministry.

Worker Selection and Screening

1. All paid workers will be required to complete an interview process.
2. Whether a paid worker or a volunteer, each worker desiring to work with children, youth or members of vulnerable populations will also be required to complete a Code of Ethics and Application to Work with Minors and Members of Vulnerable Populations form.
3. For paid workers working with children, youth, or members of vulnerable populations, references from the interview process will be checked. For volunteers, the church member listed on the Application to Work with Minors and Members of Vulnerable Populations form will be contacted.
4. Any prospective worker who has prior incidents of perpetrating child sexual abuse, or any kind of abuse of children, youth, or member(s) of a vulnerable population should not be allowed to serve in any capacity where they would have contact with children, youth, or members of vulnerable populations.
5. Criminal background checks will be performed on applicants for paid positions after the applicant has signed the Background Investigation Consent Form, and within sixty days of being enlisted as a worker. Criminal background checks will be performed on these workers every three years, or as deemed necessary. (Only qualified representatives of the church will have access to the criminal background check report.)
6. Workers must be free of physical and psychological conditions that might adversely affect the health of children, youth, or members of vulnerable populations in their care, including contagious illness or disease.
7. A personnel file will be kept for each worker, which includes all applications and reference checks.
8. No volunteer will be allowed to work with children, youth, or members of vulnerable populations until they have been a member of the church or a regular attendee for a minimum of six (6) months.
9. At the applicant's request, the church shall allow the applicant to review their criminal history record transcript at the church, but in no event shall the church allow the applicant to retain and/or copy their transcript.
10. This policy applies to all workers who work with children, youth or members of vulnerable populations, whether on an on-going basis or intermittently as needed.
11. Teenage workers who serve in the children's ministry will be required to complete an Application for Teens Working with Minors or Members of Vulnerable Populations form and go through the worker training. The only step in the process they are exempt from is the criminal background check.

Worker Training

Each new worker will be given a copy of this policy. New workers will also be required to attend an annual training which familiarizes them with this policy. All workers must complete the training every three (3) years.

Acts and Omissions in Violation of This Policy

The following acts or omissions are violations of this policy and will not be tolerated or accepted during any program:

1. Sexual advances, sexual activity, sexual abuse, or insinuation of sexually abusive conduct with, in the presence of, or in association with a child, youth, or member of a vulnerable population.
2. Abusive conduct including infliction of bodily injury and/or mental or emotional injury to a child, youth, or member of a vulnerable population.
3. Physical neglect of a child, youth, or member of a vulnerable population, including failure to provide adequate supervision in relation to the activities of PMT.
4. The presence or possession of pornographic materials at any function of PMT.
5. The presence, possession, or being under the influence of any illegal or illicit drugs.
6. Being under the influence of controlled substances to the point of impairment while leading or participating in a function for children, youth, or members of vulnerable populations sponsored by PMT.
7. Any person who directly observes or obtains evidence of any act which itself would be a violation of this policy and does not report such act.

Any person who directly observes or obtains evidence shall immediately report it to the designated program staff after the safety of the child, youth, or member of a vulnerable population involved has been assured.

Worker Supervision

1. The church, including all staff and volunteers, will adopt and endeavor to consistently maintain the “two adult rule,” which means at least two (2) adults must be present at all times in classes and other settings of children, youth, or members of a vulnerable population. Additionally, the church will strive to have at least one volunteer of each gender present. In those cases where only one (1) adult is providing care/leadership, any doors without windows must be left open at all times.
2. In any case where only one (1) adult is available to provide care or leadership, classes could be combined for more adult leadership or moved to a more public space.
3. The “two adult rule” applies in cases of transportation for church activities. Two adults are required to be in the vehicle transporting children, youth, or members of vulnerable populations from the church to the event location and back. A solo adult may transport children, youth, or members of vulnerable populations, with prior permission of parents or guardians.
4. At overnight events, parents or guardians of minors will be required to submit a list of medication(s) that their child(ren) take. If child(ren) are able to administer the medication(s) themselves, they may do so with the supervision of adult workers. If an adult must administer the medication(s), parents must provide specific instructions.
5. When accompanying children to the bathroom, workers should wait outside, or if the child needs assistance, leave the door ajar.
6. Church staff will supervise on an ongoing basis and make unannounced visits into classes or other programming from time to time.
7. In counseling sessions with minors, parental permission shall be obtained prior to a paid worker meeting privately with a minor, or the “two adult rule” shall be used in that instance. Prior permission may be granted by parents to cover a particular time period (i.e., a school year) for their child to receive counseling from a particular staff person.
8. Parental permission shall be obtained in advance for involvement in church sponsored programs. Permission forms may be obtained for an entire school year for regular programming such as Sunday School, Children’s Worship, and Youth Group.
9. Use a “check-in/check-out” procedure for all children age five and younger.
10. Orientation and training of volunteer workers will be conducted annually and will include an explanation of procedures to reduce the risk of abusive situations.

Guidelines for Working with Members of Vulnerable Populations (MVPs)

1. Workers will strive to create and maintain open channels of communication with MVPs and their parents/guardians.
 - a. An initial meeting will take place during which the staff person can assess with the parents/guardians any supports or accommodations needed for the MVP to fully participate in the life and ministry of the church.
 - b. Paid and volunteer workers who work with MVPs will, as necessary and in cooperation with their parents/guardians, communicate with other participants and their parents/guardians about the needs and gifts of MVPs.
 - c. Paid and volunteer workers who work with MVPs will continue to communicate with their parents/guardians regarding any needs, concerns, and progress that arise in the course of ministry.
2. Paid and volunteer workers will strive to offer supports and accommodations for MVPs as appropriate, including but not limited to:
 - a. The Buddy System: a parental or non-parental adult volunteer who is dedicated to attending to the needs of an MVP for the duration of a particular program.
 - b. Buddy Talks: a discussion with the MVP's peers, led by a staff person and/or the MVP's parents/guardians, that explains the differences an MVP experiences and educates the children on ways to be inclusive and kind.
 - c. Alternative options for activities that might prove challenging for an MVP who is participating in Sunday School, Children's Worship, or special events.
3. Staff will train all volunteers who work with MVPs in the guidelines of this policy and the specific needs and gifts of individuals with whom they work.
4. Youth MVPs are welcomed and encouraged to serve in the ministries of the church, including volunteering with children. Any Youth MVPs who serve in the children's ministries shall attend volunteer training, which may be modified to meet their needs as necessary. Adult workers who serve alongside Youth MVPs shall be made aware of their needs and gifts so as to work with them in a way that protects the dignity and safety of all individuals present.
5. If a safety issue arises due to the actions of an MVP, a staff person or volunteer will remove the vulnerable individual from the unsafe situation and immediately contact their parents/guardians.

Code of Ethics

While acting as a worker (paid or volunteer) with children, youth or members of vulnerable populations at PMT the following rules shall apply.

1. Smoking or using tobacco products of any kind in the presence of minors is prohibited.
2. Using, possessing, or being under the influence of alcohol, illegal, or illicit drugs will not be tolerated.
3. Workers shall not abuse anyone, including:
 - a. sexual advances, sexual activity, sexual abuse, or insinuation of sexually abusive conduct with, in the presence of, or in association with a child, youth or member of a vulnerable population
 - b. abusive conduct including infliction of bodily injury and/or mental or emotional injury to a child, youth, or member of a vulnerable population
 - c. physical neglect of a child, youth or member of a vulnerable population, including failure to provide adequate supervision in relation to the activities of PMT
 - d. the presence or possession of pornographic materials at any function of PMT
 - e. the presence, possession, or being under the influence of any illegal or illicit drugs
 - f. being under the influence of controlled substances to the point of impairment while leading or participating in a function for children, youth, or members of vulnerable populations at PMT
4. Workers must treat all people with respect, regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, ability, class, gender, age, sexual orientation, and gender identity.
5. Workers shall not use profanity in the presence of children, youth, or members of vulnerable populations.
6. Workers will strive to be positive role models for children, youth, and members of vulnerable populations as they fulfill essential functions of their job.
7. Workers will strive to avoid being put in a situation in which they are alone with a child or youth (other than their own), or a member of vulnerable population.

Response Procedures

When a volunteer worker becomes aware of or reasonably believes that a potentially abusive incident has occurred, they shall follow the procedures listed below:

1. Secure the immediate safety of the child.
2. Contact the Child Abuse Hotline at 877-237-0004 or in non-emergency situations, use the online form at <https://apps.tn.gov/carat>.

Reporting Procedures

Upon receiving notification of a suspected incident of abuse, the appropriate staff person should follow the procedures listed below:

1. The Department of Child Services (DCS) should be notified immediately.
2. All efforts in handling the incident, including conversations whether formal or informal, should be documented and kept on file.
3. The church insurer, attorney and appropriate denominational officials should be notified as deemed necessary.
4. When a child is involved, notify parents unless otherwise directed by DCS.
5. Public statements to the press or to the congregation regarding the incident should be made only from a prepared statement and only by the Head of Staff or his or her delegate. Safeguard the privacy of all involved.

Insurance

PMT shall obtain a sufficient level of liability insurance coverage that would cover abuse and sexual misconduct claims. If available, the presbytery should have the levels of coverage which are required for limited immunity.

Conclusion

PMT must actively take steps to prevent abuse and be prepared to deal appropriately with accusations if they arise. Some may think that PMT is too small, or that in our church community everyone knows each other too well to be concerned with these problems. It is important to remember that abuse often happens in family contexts and is perpetrated by individuals known by the person abused. Silence about this issue harms potential victims. This is a difficult reality that the people of God must face.

Forms

Code of Ethics

I have been given a copy of the Safe Church Policy of PMT and am willing to abide by it. I understand that abuse of children, youth and members of vulnerable populations is a serious matter and I am willing to do my part in the prevention of abuse while serving at PMT. I understand that violation of this policy is ground for dismissal from my position.

Print Name _____ Date _

Applicant's Signature _____

Incident Report Form

Reason for report _

Date of incident _____ Class/Group _

Name of person submitting report _

Name(s) and Age(s) of Children, Youth or Member(s) of Vulnerable Populations involved

Briefly describe what happened (continue on back if necessary): _

What action did you take? _

Has the incident been resolved? [] Yes [] No Explain:

Has the parent/guardian been notified? [] Yes [] No

Names of witnesses, if any: _

Signatures of witnesses (if possible): _

Report submitted to: _

Application to Work with Minors and Members of Vulnerable Populations

This form is to be completed for any position (paid or volunteer) involving the supervision or care of children, youth and/or members of vulnerable populations.

Name _

Last First Middle
ID or Driver License # _____ Date of Birth _

Present Address _

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _

Phone _____ Email _

Current Occupation _____ Work Phone _

Have you ever been arrested for or charged with, or are you under probation for, or convicted of any kind of abuse? Yes No. If yes, please explain.

Is there any fact or circumstance involving you or your background that would call into question your being entrusted with the responsibilities of the position for which you are seeking?

Yes No If yes, please explain.

Briefly described why you would like to volunteer with children, youth and/or members of vulnerable populations.

How long have you been a teaching elder member of PMT or a member of a congregation within PMT?

Name a non-related church member who can speak to your character and qualifications for working with children, youth, and/or members of vulnerable populations:

I have been given a copy of the Safe Church Policy and am willing to abide by it. I understand that abuse is a serious matter and I am willing to do my part in the prevention of abuse while serving at [church name].

Signature _____ Date _

Background Investigation Consent

I, _____ (applicant's complete name), hereby authorize PMT to complete a background check following its background check policy. I further authorize the company performing such check to release information regarding any record of charges or convictions contained in its files, or in any criminal file maintained on me, whether said file is a local, state, or national file, and including but not limited to accusations and convictions for crimes committed against minors, to the fullest extent permitted by state and federal law. I do release the company performing such check and PMT from all liability that may result from any such disclosure made in response to this request.

Full Name (printed)

Signature

Date

Approved by PMT:

Policy Against Workplace Harassment of the Presbytery of Middle Tennessee

Statement on the Policy Against Workplace Harassment

The Presbytery of Middle Tennessee (“PMT”) is committed to the principles of fair and equal employment opportunity and strives to protect all people who seek and hold employment from being subjected to harassment in the workplace. Every church should provide an enjoyable work environment to the extent reasonably possible, free of harassment, including harassment based on a person’s race, color, national origin, age (over 40), sex, pregnancy, religion, creed, disability, veteran’s status, or any other category protected by state and/or federal civil rights laws.

Workplace harassment, including, but not limited to, sexual harassment, that is severe and pervasive can be illegal. Other behavior, such as bullying, can be inappropriate in the workplace and violate this policy even if it does not rise to the level of illegal harassment.

Workplace harassment is defined as any unwelcomed verbal, written or physical conduct that either degrades or shows hostility or aversion towards a person that (1) has the purpose or effect of creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment; (2) has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an employee’s work performance; or (3) affects an employee’s employment opportunities or compensation. Such conduct may be illegal if it is based on a person’s race, color, national origin, age (over 40), sex, pregnancy, religion, creed, disability, veteran’s status, or any other category protected by state and/or federal civil rights laws.

Petty slights, annoyances, and isolated incidents (unless extremely serious) will not rise to the level of illegality. To be unlawful, the conduct must create a work environment that would be intimidating, hostile, or offensive to reasonable people.

Offensive conduct may include, but is not limited to, offensive jokes, slurs, epithets or name calling, physical assaults or threats, intimidation, ridicule or mockery, insults or put-downs, offensive objects or pictures, and interference with work performance. Harassment can occur in a variety of circumstances, including, but not limited to, the following:

- The harasser can be the victim's supervisor, a supervisor in another area, an agent of the employer, a co-worker, or a non-employee.
- The victim does not have to be the person harassed but can be anyone affected by the offensive conduct.
- Unlawful harassment may occur without economic injury to, or discharge of, the victim.

Application and Administration of Policy

This policy applies to all church members, church officers, employees, non-member employees, and volunteers in service to and within the PMT.

Prevention is the best tool to eliminate harassment in the workplace. Churches adopting this policy are encouraged to take appropriate steps to prevent and correct unlawful harassment. They should clearly communicate to employees that unwelcome harassing conduct will not be tolerated. They can do this by establishing an effective complaint or grievance process, providing anti-harassment training to their managers and employees, and taking immediate and appropriate action when an employee complains. Churches should

Approved by PMT:

strive to create an environment in which employees feel free to raise concerns and are confident that those concerns will be addressed.

Interpretation of Policy

The PMT has adopted and may in the future adopt additional policies concerning Sexual Misconduct, Child and Youth Protection, and Antiracism, which may overlap to some extent with the policies set out here. These policies shall be interpreted consistently with one another, but, if there are conflicts or inconsistencies, the stricter policy shall apply.

Orientation and Training

Each congregation and organization in PMT is responsible for developing a policy for its officers, members, non-member employees, and volunteers which is consistent with this document. It is incumbent on each PMT entity to ensure compliance with its policy.

Antiracism Policy of the Presbytery of Middle Tennessee

Background

In June 2022, the 225th General Assembly passed an amendment to the Book of Order that was approved by a majority of the presbyteries in July 2023. **Book of Order Section G-3.0106 Administration of Mission** states:

“All councils shall adopt and implement the following policies: a sexual misconduct policy, a harassment policy, a child and youth protection policy, and an antiracism policy. Each council’s policy shall include requirements for boundary training which includes the topic of sexual misconduct, and child sexual abuse prevention training for its members at least every thirty-six months.”

This policy is designed to meet the Book of Order requirements for an Anti-racism Policy for the Presbytery of Middle Tennessee (“PMT”).

Purpose

Personal and institutional racism have historically existed and continues to exist in the church and world. Combatting racism in the PC(USA), its councils, and our communities is a legal and moral imperative.

In the church, PC(USA), and its councils there are disparities between racial demographics and the communities in which the church continues its ministries.

The purpose of this policy is to eliminate all forms of racism from the PMT and its member churches.

Definitions

The following definitions have been adapted from the Government Alliance on Race and Equity at www.racialequityalliance.org

Anti-racism: the practice of identifying, challenging, and changing the values, structures, and behaviors that perpetuate systemic racism.

Individual racism: pre-judgment, bias, or discrimination by an individual based on race. Individual racism includes both privately held beliefs, conscious and unconscious, and external behaviors and actions towards others.

Institutional racism: occurs within institutions and organizations that adopt and maintain policies, practices, and procedures that often unintentionally produce inequitable outcomes for people of color and advantages for white people.

Structural (or systemic) racism: encompasses the history and current reality of institutional racism across all institutions and society. It refers to the history, culture, ideology, and

Approved by PMT: _____

Adapted with thanks to Presbytery of Western Kentucky

interactions of institutions and policies that perpetuate a system of inequity that is detrimental to communities of color.

Anti-racism Policy Guidelines

These guidelines are designed to dismantle the individual, institutional, and structural racism that exists in the church.

Policy Communications: The Presbytery of PMT shall adopt a public statement against racism, post it in the office, publicize it in presbytery documents, and other communications. The public statement shall read:

“The Presbytery of Middle Tennessee shall follow the Foundations of Presbyterian Polity as expressed in The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and rejects all forms of racism as destructive to the Foundations of Presbyterian Polity as expressed in the Book of Order Chapter One, The Mission of the Church.”

Leadership and Administration: As stated in the Book of Order *F-3.02 Principles of Presbyterian Government*, this policy shall apply to *F-3.0201 One Church*, *F-3.0202 Governed by Presbyters*, and *F-3.0203 Gathered in Councils*.

Discipline: Failure to comply with this policy shall be subject to Book of Order *Section D-1.0000 Principles of Church Discipline*.

Training: All officers, staff, and committee leaders in the Presbytery of Middle Tennessee shall be trained in this policy at least every 36 months. The Presbytery office shall keep training records for those trained and the date trained.

Part I of the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), Book of Confessions includes the Confession of Belhar approved at the 222nd General Assembly in 2016. Section 10.6 of the Belhar Confession summarizes the church’s position on racism.

“Therefore, we reject any doctrine which, in such a situation sanctions in the name of the gospel or of the will of God the forced separation of people on the grounds of race and color and thereby in advance obstructs and weakens the ministry and experience of reconciliation in Christ.”