Highlights of the 158th Stated Meeting of the Presbytery of Middle Tennessee

November 14, 2024

Below are the highlights of the reports received and actions taken at the 158th stated meeting.

The Presbytery of Middle Tennessee met in person on Thursday, November 14, 2024, at First Presbyterian, Dickson, co-hosted by Ellis Grove, Waverly. Attendees were greeted warmly by gracious host congregation members. Stated Clerk Mary Catherine Sevier provided a brief welcome and orientation for first time commissioners. In the absence of Moderator Elinor Foster, Past Moderator the Rev. Mark Bryan, Glen Leven, called the meeting to order and announced that a quorum was in place; corresponding members were seated and the agenda and the consent agenda were approved. Rev. John Smith, First Dickson, presided over worship which included lively and beautiful choral pieces from the First Dickson choir and the service of necrology at which the saints who departed during 2023 and 2024 were remembered with thanksgiving. Rev. Smith preached the sermon and reminded the gathering of its deep theological roots. Rev. Bryan re-convened the meeting after worship and welcomed first time commissioners. Among the actions taken and the reports received were:

* + Greetings and information were brought by Doug Marshall and Cindy Fisher from the Presbyterian Home for Children in Talledega, Alabama. The home works with children in foster care primarily.
  + Ministry Relations Advisor Lauren Rogers from the Interim Unified Agency, formerly the Presbyterian Mission Agency, introduced herself and informed the body of the Special Offerings and the materials available, particularly on the upcoming Joy Gift. She noted the following churches had participated in all four Special Offerings: Emmanuel, First, Clarksville, First, Cookeville, First, Franklin, First, Shelbyville, First, Spring Hill, Southminster, Westminster Fairfield Glade, and Westminster, Nashville.
  + Policies on Sexual Misconduct, Child Protection, Anti-Racism, and Harassment were adopted
  + Waivers of rotation of elders were granted to First, Lawrenceburg and Cripple Creek
  + The sacrament of communion was approved to be administered at UKirk Nashville during 2025
  + The 2025 parity schedule was approved
  + The 2025 Budget, including an increase from 3% to 5% of investment income was approved
  + Financial Policies and Procedures were approved with the exception of the paragraph entitled “Property”, which was deferred for consideration to the definite time of the February 8 Stated Meeting.
  + CRE Leonard Jordan presented the slate of committees, PJC, synod commissioners, and moderator, vice-moderator, and moderator-in-nomination. The slate was approved.
  + The Rev. Bobby Harding, chair of the Committee on Mutual Support, announced $1500 to The HERO Program and $1500 to The Well Outreach and $4000 to the Hill Pantry Annex at Hillwood PC.
  + The Rev. Erin Howton-Angel presented the report from the Commission of Ministry. Among the actions of the Commission were changes in status of several ministers, including approving terms of call for the Rev. Il Sun (PK) Kim at Nashville Korean, the Rev. Claire Berry at Historic Franklin, and the change to Installed Pastor of the Rev. Jule Nyhuis at Hillwood. The Rev. Kim was introduced. Rev. Howton Angel also noted the 2025 Minimum Effective Salary of $56,000.
  + The Rev. Guy Griffith presented Mr. Gage Arnold, Inquirer under the care of the First Nashville session and PMT and led his examination to be moved to candidacy. Mr. Arnold was unanimously approved to do so.
  + The Rev. John Hilley highlighted work of the Committee on Church Transformation and exhorted congregations to ask the committee and the larger presbytery for assistance before circumstances became untenable for their continued ministry.
  + The Stated Clerk reminded clerks of session of the need to either attend one of the four opportunities for in person minutes review or to use the opportunity for virtual review and complete said review by November 19th. She further reminded the body that statistics season was beginning shortly. Finally, she presented an amendment to the Manual of Operation and Missions, page 4, which updates the parity policy as required every five years. There was a motion and second to approve the amendment, and it carried unanimously.
  + The Rev. Terry Newland, Bridge Executive Presbyter, presented his report and offered thanksgiving for the service of 2024 Moderator Elinor Foster, RE at First Lewisburg, who was unable to be present. A token of appreciation which was to be presented will be presented to Ms. Foster in the coming weeks.
  + The Rev. Jane Herring presented the Administrative Committee’s report. Among the items received were the approval of the agenda and structure of the 158th Stated Meeting.
  + The Rev. Herring then reminded the body that the next item on the agenda was the first listening session of the visioning process which the presbytery voted to undertake at the August meeting.
  + Rev. Bryan announced a break, which took place in the First, Dickson Fellowship Hall. Participants enjoyed gracious hospitality, bountiful refreshments, and fellowship. Participants then gathered at tables; the leadership visioning team and consultants from Healthy Churches/Pneumatrix led the group through a series of exercises which sparked lively conversation. The body did not reconvene until after the listening session to ensure that all present had voice.
  + Vice-Moderator Jane Herring reconvened the group and led the body in a spirited time of prayer before taking a motion to adjourn, which was seconded and approved.

The 159th Stated Meeting will be held on February 8, 2025, at First, Shelbyville.

-- Mary Catherine Sevier, Stated Clerk