Mary Catherine Sevier
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Approved 2025.05.03

MIDDLE TENNESSEE PRESBYTERY
MINUTES OF ONE HUNDRED FIFTY NINTH STATED MEETING
FEBRUARY 8, 2025

The 159th Stated Meeting of the Presbytery of Middle Tennessee met in person at First Presbyterian Church, Shelbyville, on Saturday, February 8, 2025. Stated Clerk Mary Catherine Sevier provided an orientation for first time commissioners. Moderator Rev. Jane Herring called the meeting to order at 8:32 am.

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

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 Moderator also announced that the Stated Clerk had requested that the Rev. Dr. Guy Griffith, Westminster, Nashville, serve as assistant parliamentarian. There was no objection.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND CONSENT AGENDA

The moderator stated that the agenda and the consent agenda, which contained the minutes of the 158th stated meeting and a request from First Nashville for an exemption from rotating elders had been provided in advance. The moderator stated that the Stated Clerk wished to remove the report of the Committee on Leadership Excellence and wished to add the dismissal of the Decherd Presbyterian Administrative Commission. The corrected main agenda and the consent agenda 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-NINTHSTATED MEETING

THE PRESBYTERY OF MIDDLE TENNESSEE

AGENDA OF FEBRUARY 8, 2025

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, SHELBYVILLE, TN

8:00 am		Registration (Order of the Day in CAPS)
8:15 am		Orientation for First Time Commissioners – Mary Catherine Sevier(10 min)
8:30 am	•	CONVENE • Establishment of Quorum • Adoption of Agenda and Consent Agenda • Seating of Corresponding Members • Recognition of First Time Presbyters
8:40 am	•	Worship • Sermon: • Offering: Guatemala Partnership • Installation of Moderator and Vice-Moderator
9:25 am	3.	REPORTS (numbers indicate order in packet)
9:25 am		(1) Committee on the Preparation for Ministry – Lisa Hermann (10 minutes)
9:35 am	-	(2) Evelyn Graham (15 minutes)
9:50 am		(3) Nominating Task Force – Leonard Jordan (5 minutes)
9:55 am		(4) Commission on Ministry – Mickey Stuecke (10 minutes)
10:05 am		(5) PJC and Stated Clerk, Part 1: six amendments to Book of Order proposed by the 226th General Assembly (15 mins)
10:20 am		BREAK

10:40 am LISTENING SESSION WITH VISIONING TEAM (60 minutes)

11:40 am RECONVENE

(6) Administrative Committee – Chris Williams (10 minutes)

11:50 am

- (5) PJC and Stated Clerk, Part 2 – (20 minutes)
  - Vote on remaining amendments to Book of Order and Ecumenical Agreement

12:10 pm

- (7) Stated Clerk - Mary Catherine Sevier (10 minutes)

12:20 pm

- Committee on Church Transformation - John Hilley (5 minutes)

12:25 pm

- Committee on Social Justice-Henry Deaderick (5 minutes)

12:30 pm

- Committee on Leadership Excellence – Dave Nock (5 minutes)

OLD BUSINESS

12:35 pm

- (8) Consideration of language in PMT Property Policy
  Greg Glover, TE and Melinda Sanders, RE (10 minutes)

12:45 pm ANNOUNCEMENTS and ADJOURNMENT

160th Stated Meeting, Saturday, May 3, 2025
First, Pulaski
Closing Prayer

Adjournment

Consent Agenda

159th Stated Meeting, Presbytery of Middle Tennessee, February 8, 2025

Item #	Title
(1)	Approval of Minutes and Roll of the 158th Stated Meeting of November 14, 2024
(2)	Approval of Request by First, Nashville of Waiver of Session Elder term limitation, pursuant to G-2.0404

***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.**

Rev. Jim Moran, pastor at First Shelbyville, offered words of welcome and Moderator Herring commenced worship.

WORSHIP

Rev. Moran led worship with the Rev. Erin Howton-Angel, First, Allardt serving as liturgist. Rev. Moran delivered the sermon and reminded us all of our calling and obligation to become fishers and "catch people" by fulfilling our callings within our congregations and within the larger communities we serve. The offering was given to the Guatemala Partnership. Lovely music was provided by the First Shelbyville choir and their director/organist, Michael Hooper.

Following worship, the Moderator continued the morning's order of business.

COMMITTEE ON THE PREPARATION FOR MINISTRY

The Rev. Lisa Hermann, chair of the Committee on the Preparation for Ministry, presented a motion from committee to certify Candidate Mallory Hammond of First, Nashville as ready for examination for ordination pending a call. She highlighted Ms. Hammond's work in children's ministry at her position at First, Nashville. The motion was unanimously approved. Ms. Hammond was congratulated by the body and the many people present in support of her were recognized as well.

FINANCE COMMITTEE

Ruling Elder Hal Sauer of First Nashville, vice-chair of the Finance Committee, presented the following information and discussed the financial statements for the past quarter and the year of 2024. He noted that while pledges were somewhat under budget for 2024, so were expenses, and the Presbytery finished the year with an operational surplus. He noted the investment account continues to perform as expected.

NOMINATING TASK FORCE

CRE Leonard Jordan of St. Andrews Nashville made the report from the Nominating Task Force. He requested to amend the report which was approved without objection. The following individuals were nominated by the Task Force to serve on the Commission on Ministry: Amy Stoker, TE First, Pulaski, Class of 2026, CRE David Sadler, Priest Lake, Class of 2026, RE Susan Carey, Westminster, Nashville, Class of 2026, and RE Rob Tudor, Bellevue, Class of 2027. The motion was seconded and approved unanimously.

COMMISSION ON MINISTRY

The Rev. Stephen Yates, First Tullahoma and co-chair with RE Mickey Stueck of First, Lebanon, made the report from COM.

Receipt and Dismissal of Teaching Elders

The following individuals were received: the Rev. Jim Mays from Holston Presbytery, and the Rev. Chuck Taber from the Pines Presbytery. The following individuals were dismissed: the Rev. Laura Cheifetz to the San Francisco Presbytery effective November, 2024 and the Rev. Rachel Thompson Orfield to James Presbytery effective July 1, 2025.

Extensions of Contracts

The contract of CRE David Sadler at Priest Lake was extended to March 31, 2025 at the session's request. The contract of temporary supply Jason Loscuito at Glencliff was extended to July 31, 2025.

Dismissal of Calvary Big Lick PNC

The PNC of Calvary, Big Lick was dismissed at its request.

Approval of Recommissioning of CREs

Pending the submission of completed paperwork, the recommissioning of CREs Anne Keener at First Franklin, Laura Purtle at First, Spring Hill, and James Rountree at First, Dickson and Ellis Grove were approved for 36 months.

Approval to begin commissioning process and hire temporary supply at First, Fayetteville

A request from First Fayetteville to begin the process to re-commission former CRE Harold Dawkins for service and to allow RE Therese Howell to moderate the session during TE Bruce McVey's sabbatical was approved.

Approval of contracts for Temporary Ministers

Contracts between Chuck Taber, TE and Big Lick, Calvary and TE Eddie Bellis and First Franklin were approved.

MDP of Second, Nashville

The MDP of Second, Nashville was approved for the CLC.

Approval of Congregational Meetings

The congregational meeting to dissolve the relationship between Normandy PC and TE Tom Bagley (retiring) was approved to take place January 31, 2025, moderated by TE Gary Kelly. The congregational meeting to dissolve the relationship between First Lewisburg and TE Robert Montgomery (retiring) was approved to be held at a later date.

Approval for APNC

A request from First Nashville to form an APNC was approved.

Approval of Transitions Tool Kit, CRE renewal form, and Ministerial Compensation Policy

The updated Transitions Manual, now called the Tool Kit, the revised CRE renewal form, and the updated Ministerial Compensation Policy were approved.

Moderator of Christ, Alpine

Beau Carr, CRE in training, was approved to moderate the session of Christ, Alpine with TE John Smith as mentor.

Installation Commission of Il Sun Kim, Nashville Korean

The Installation Commission for Il Sun Kim at Nashville, Korean was approved and consists of Rev. Jane Herring, Emmanuel Presbyterian Church (Nashville, TN); Teaching Elder/Presbytery Moderator; Rev. Dr. Amy Stoker, First Presbyterian Church (Pulaski, TN); Teaching Elder Rev. John Smith(Dickson, TN); Ruling Elder Mickey Stueck, First Presbyterian Church (Lebanon, TN); Ruling Elder Yeon Su Na, Nashville Korean Presbyterian Church (Nashville, TN); Ruling Elder; Guest of the Commission: Rev. Moongil Cho, PMA (Presbyterian Mission Agency Staff, Teaching Elder; Rev. Jae Heung Chung, Teaching Elder (HR)

Installation Commission of Rachel Berry, Historic Franklin

The Installation Commission for Rachel Berry at Historic Franklin was approved and consists of The Rev. Jane Herring, Emanuel, Ms. Susan Henry, RE, Historic Franklin, the Rev. Stacy Ikard, Westlake Hills PC Mission Presbytery, The Rev. Marjorie Thompson, HR, The Rev. Mary Sellers Shaw, Validated Minister, the Rev. Dr. Guy Griffith, Westminster PC, Nashville, Ms. Nancy Morris, RE, Second PC, Mr. Doug Berry, RE, Westminster PC, Nashville.

CONSIDERATION OF AMENDMENTS 24-B AND 24-D THROUGH 24-M

The Stated Clerk and the PJC Moderator TE John Smith presented 11 of the amendments to the Book of Order which were proposed by the 226th General Assembly. Each amendment was presented along with comments from the PJC, which was tasked with studying the amendments and their possible implications for the Presbytery. Amendments 24-B, 24-D, 24-E, 24-F, 24-G, 24-H, 24-J, 24-K, 24-L, and 24-M were approved. Amendment 24-I was not approved. Moderator Herring directed the Stated Clerk to enter the information into the denominational portal.

LISTENING SESSION

Moderator Herring then recessed the meeting for a break with bountiful refreshments and the second of three listening sessions led by the Leadership Visioning Team. The attendees offered comments at each table group.

RECONVENING AND ADMINISTRATIVE COMMITTEE REPORT

Moderator Herring reconvened the meeting and recognized RE Chris Williams to make the Administrative Committee report.

159th Stated Meeting

The Committee approved plans and agenda for the 159th Stated Meeting, including the offering for the Guatemala Team, sermon by the Rev. Evelyn Graham, installation of the moderator and vice-moderator, and consideration of the proposed amendments to the *Book of Order.*

Request from the Leadership Visioning Team

The Committee heard a request from the Leadership Visioning Team to purchase Mission Insite. The Committee determined that the Team has access to Transition funds and advised the Team of its ability to purchase resources through requests to the Finance Committee for disbursement.

Giving Matters Profile

The Administrative Committee accepted with thanks the offer from the Nueva Vida Food Bank to draft a profile of the Presbytery for posting in the Giving Matters portal.

EP Nominating Search Committee

Chairman Williams brought a motion from the committee to charge the Nominating Task Force to bring a slate of nominations to form the search committee for the Installed Executive Presbyter to be elected at the May 3rd Stated Meeting. Chairman Williams noted that the search committee would be specifically charged with consulting with the Visioning Team and its recommendations. The motion was approved.

CONSIDERATION OF AMENDMENTS 24-A and 24-C

Moderator Herring recognized the Stated Clerk and the PJC Moderator who brought the remaining proposed amendments to the *Book of Order* to the floor. Mrs. Sevier asked that written ballots be used; Moderator Herring ordered without objection. Tellers were asked to pass out and collect ballots following discussion of each amendment, and each amendment's team of tellers counted the ballots. Amendment 24-A was approved; 24-C was not approved.

REPORT OF THE STATED CLERK

Installation of the Rev. Jule Nyhuis

The Stated Clerk received the minutes of the installation commission of the Rev. Jule Nyhuis.

MINUTES
Installation Commission for The Rev. Dr. Jule M. Nyhuis
Hillwood Presbyterian Church
Nashville, Tennessee

Saturday, 16 November 2024, 2:00 P.M.

The Installation Commission appointed by the Presbytery of Middle Tennessee to install the Teaching Elder **The Rev. Dr. Jule M. Nyhuis** as Pastor met at the Hillwood Presbyterian Church of Nashville, Tennessee, on 16 November 2024 at Hillwood Presbyterian Church at 2:00 P.M. Members present were:

Teaching Elders
The Rev. Jane Herring, Pastor of Emmanuel Presbyterian Church of Nashville
The Rev. Stacy Rector, Presbytery of Middle TN Minister Member at large
The Rev. Carrie Fraser, Presbytery of Middle TN Minister Member at large

Guest Pastor: The Rev. Dr. Brice Thomas, Minister with Standing, Southeast Conference of the United Church of Christ

Ruling Elders
Cynthia Palmer, Hillwood Presbyterian Church of Nashville
Frank Wade, Westminster Presbyterian Church of Nashville
Deb O'Brien, First Presbyterian Church of Nashville

Invitation to sit with the Commission:
The Rev. Dr. Brice Thomas, Minister with Standing, Southeast Conference of the United Church of Christ

The Commission was called to order by the Chair of the Commission Jane Herring and Cynthia Palmer was appointed Clerk of the Commission by the Chair. The Chair offered the opening prayer. The Order of worship for this Installation Service was reviewed with the constitutionally required elements for such a service found to be in place. By common consent the Order of Worship was adopted, and a copy of the printed program will be attached to these minutes.

The Commission recessed to the Sanctuary for the Service of Worship with the Chair presiding. The Sermon was preached by The Rev. Stacy Rector_. The constitutional Questions were propounded to The Rev. Dr. Jule M. Nyhuis by the Chair and they were answered in the affirmative. The Constitutional Questions were propounded to the Congregation by the Clerk of the Commission and answered in the affirmative by the Congregation. A prayer was offered by Deb O'Brien.

The Rev. Dr. Jule M. Nyhuis was duly installed as Pastor of Hillwood Presbyterian Church, Nashville

A Charge was delivered to the pastor by The Rev. Carrie Fraser and Frank Wade charged the congregation. The Service was closed with the Benediction pronounced by The Rev. Dr. Jule M. Nyhuis. The Commission was adjourned at the benediction of the worship service.

Respectfully submitted:

Cynthia Palmer, Clerk of the Commission

16 November 2024

Celebration of the Ministry of Hillwood PCUSA & Installation of The Rev. Dr. Jule M. Nyhuis

2:00 p.m.

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* indicates to stand as able

WELCOME ALL!!! IT IS GOOD TO BE TOGETHER TODAY!!

As you find a seat, welcome those around you – introduce yourself to any whom you do not yet know. See the Light of God alive in others.
All are welcome here!

Gathering Together

Welcome & Announcements — Cynthia Palmer, Clerk of Session Hillwood PCUSA

Igniting the Light & Grounding in Place — *from* Sarah Champion, Forest Walk with Me

Prelude — *Perfect Praise* — Dr. Sonja Rosse, HPC Minister of Music

Greetings from Presbytery of Middle TN & Declaration of Intent — The Rev. Jane Herring, Emmanuel PCUSA

*Call to Worship — Cynthia Palmer — *To Celebrate this Ministry* ~ written by JMN

Leader: Beloved of God, we come together to celebrate!
All: Gratefully we proclaim: God has been working mightily!
Leader: As followers of the Way, we proclaim God to be Love – embodied in Jesus, the Christ!
All: We have directed our lives according to the Way of Love. We take these moments together to celebrate and re-commit!
Leader: Representing the voice of Hillwood Presbyterian, I want you each to know that we express thanksgiving for all who celebrate together today! Friends, family, colleagues, and partners – here now, or present through prayer: thank you for your involvement, encouragement, guidance, and support!
All: When the work of Love expands through any individual life, hope in all the world increases! Celebrations like this urge us all along the path!
Leader: For years of walking together, working together, caring together, and readying ourselves for all that lies ahead; we praise God!
All: We praise God! For energy to face the challenges of each day! For steady Presence that gives us courage! For grit to keep going as followers of the Way no matter visible circumstances!
Leader: Together we surely can proclaim:
All: God, o God! How excellent is the work of Love throughout all the earth!
Leader: Alleluia! Let us worship God!
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***Song of Praise** *All Creatures of Our God and King* Alex Bonyata
Glory to God #15 HPC Musician

Centering Prayer Kali Wheeler, Small World Yoga

Receiving God's Word

Prayer for Illumination The Rev. Dr. Brice Thomas
Minister with Standing, Southeast Conference
of the United Church of Christ

A Presentation of Scripture Mark 2:13-22 The Rev. Dr. Brice Thomas

Scripture Reading Genesis 32:22-32 Nick Silvidi
Common English Bible HPC AV Tech & Young Adults

Leader: The word of God for the people of God.
All: Thanks be to God!

Sermon The Rev. Stacy Rector
Executive Director, Tennesseans for
Alternatives to the Death Penalty

Responding to God

Music *Order My Steps* Noel Bradley
HPC Vocalist

Installation of The Rev. Dr. Jule M. Nyhuis to Service

Sentences of Scripture Cynthia Palmer

Leader: As in one body we have many parts and each part has its own function, so all of us together with Christ are one body, and we belong to each other.
All: We have different gifts according to the grace God has given us.
Leader: If your gift is to hear God's Word,
All: Speak it out in faith.
Leader: If your gift is service,
All: Live to serve others.
Leader: If your gift is the heart of a teacher,
All: Teach what is true.
Leader: Let preachers preach with conviction, and givers give freely;
All: Let leaders work diligently for the people, and let those who serve the poor, serve gladly.
Leader: Let us not lack for enthusiasm, but be ardent in spirit,
All: Serving the LORD, rejoicing in hope, being patient in suffering and constant in prayer, supporting one another, and welcoming all.

Statement on Ordination & Installation Frank Wade, Ruling Elder Westminster Nashville

***Song of Praise** *All Creatures of Our God and King* Alex Bonyata
Glory to God #15 HPC Musician

Centering Prayer Kali Wheeler, Small World Yoga

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Leader: As in one body we have many parts and each part has its own function, so all of us together with Christ are one body, and we belong to each other.
All: We have different gifts according to the grace God has given us.
Leader: If your gift is to hear God's Word,
All: Speak it out in faith.
Leader: If your gift is service,
All: Live to serve others.
Leader: If your gift is the heart of a teacher,
All: Teach what is true.
Leader: Let preachers preach with conviction, and givers give freely;
All: Let leaders work diligently for the people, and let those who serve the poor, serve gladly.
Leader: Let us not lack for enthusiasm, but be ardent in spirit,
All: Serving the LORD, rejoicing in hope, being patient in suffering and constant in prayer, supporting one another, and welcoming all.

Statement on Ordination & Installation Frank Wade, Ruling Elder Westminster Nashville

***Profession of Faith** The Rev. Stacy Rector

Leader: As God calls some to particular forms of ministry . . . stand as you are able to re-make these baptismal vows. Trusting in the gracious mercy of God, do you turn from the ways of sin and renounce evil and its power in the world?

One: I do.

Leader: Do you turn to Jesus Christ and accept him as your Lord and Savior, trusting in his grace and love?

One: I do.

Leader: Will you be Christ's faithful disciple, obeying his Word and showing his love?

One: I will, with God's help.

Leader: With the whole church, let us confess the Christian faith. Do you believe in God the Father?

All: I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

Leader: Do you believe in Jesus the Christ, the Son of God?

All: I believe in Jesus the Christ, God's only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead.

Leader: Do you believe in God the Holy Spirit?

All: I believe in God, the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

Thanksgiving for Baptism The Rev. Carrie Fraser, Therapist & Spiritual Director & The Rev. Dr. Brice Thomas

Leader: The LORD dwells in you.

All: And also in you.

Leader: Let us give thanks to the LORD our God.

All: It is right to give our thanks and praise.

Leader: Holy One . . .

Constitutional Questions to the Installed The Rev. Jane Herring

Constitutional Questions to the Congregation Cynthia Palmer

Leader: Do we, the members of Hillwood Presbyterian Church, accept Jule as our pastor, chosen by God through the voice of this congregation to guide us in the way of Jesus Christ?

All: We do.

Leader: Do we agree to pray for her, to encourage her, to respect her decisions, and to follow as she guides us, serving Jesus the Christ, who alone is Head of the Church?

All: We do.

Leader: Do we promise to pay her fairly and provide for her welfare as she works among us; to stand by her in trouble and share her joys?

All: We do.

Leader: Will we listen to the Word she preaches, welcome her pastoral care, and honor her authority as she seeks to honor and obey Jesus Christ our Lord?

All: We will.

Prayer of Installation & the Lord's Prayer Deb O'Brien, Ruling Elder First Nashville

Leader: . . . as Jesus has taught us to pray together saying:
Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever. Amen.

Declaration of Installation & Welcome The Rev. Jane Herring

Charge to the Newly Installed The Rev. Carrie Fraser

Charge to the Congregation Frank Wade

Moment for Mission Erin Murray, *Flourish!* Project Manager

Receiving the Offering The Rev. Dr. Jule M. Nyhuis

Offertory *Jesus Loves Me (based on Clair de Lune)* Spencer McKee
arr. Fred Bock HPC Musician

A Special Offering will be received today in support of HPCs new vocational wellness & holistic human flourishing ministry called *Flourish!* Offerings given today can be **written as checks to Hillwood Presbyterian Church and mark on the memo line: *Flourish!*** These will be held in a reserve account to launch & implement *Flourish!* Offerings can be given by sending them in the mail to the church office at 6220 Hickory Valley Road, placing them in the offering plate when passed, or giving at: **www.hillwoodpc.org** (choose *Flourish!* line).

Follow Erin after worship for a tour of phase one of Flourish! – opening SOON!!!
flourish@hillwoodpc.org

***Doxology** Praise God, from whom all blessings flow; Glory to God #607
Praise Christ, all people here below;
Praise Holy Spirit evermore;
Praise Triune God, whom we adore. Amen.

***Prayer of Dedication** The Rev. Dr. Jule M. Nyhuis

***Charge and Benediction** The Rev. Dr. Jule M. Nyhuis

Song of Discipleship *God, Be the Love to Search and Keep Me* Glory to God #543

Postlude *A Bluegrass Medley* Alex Bonyata
HPC Musician

Go Forth to Love like Christ

ALL ARE INVITED TO CONTINUE THE CELEBRATION AT A RECEPTION IN THE PARLOR!

Death of Honorably Retired Teaching Elder Bill Barger

The Stated Clerk was informed of the death of the Rev. Bill Barger, Honorably Retired, on December 25, 2024.

Session Minutes Review, 2023

The following congregations participated in a review of 2023 minutes: Calvary of Big Lick, Downtown, Eastminster, Ellis Grove, First, Clarksville, First, Columbia, First, Cookeville, First Fayetteville, First Franklin, First, Hendersonville, First, Lawrenceburg, First, Lebanon, First, Lewisburg, First, McMinnville, First, Pulaski, First, Shelbyville, First Tullahoma, Harpeth, Historic Franklin, New Creation, Normandy, Northminster, Priest Lake, Second, Westminster, Fairfield Glade, Westminster, Nashville, Bellevue, Donelson, Emmanuel, Milldale, Trinity, First, Petersburg.

Permanent Administrative Commission

The Stated Clerk brought a motion to charge a Permanent Administrative Commission to work with congregations which are undergoing dissolution. The motion was seconded and approved.

Permanent Administrative Commission for Congregational Change

The Presbytery of Middle Tennessee (PMT) recognizes that more of our congregations are facing hard realities of declining membership and scarce resources. Sessions and congregations are exploring options that range from merger, yoking, or joint witness to dissolution and termination of ministry.

PMT further recognizes the exciting challenges and opportunities for new ministries as the Holy Spirit moves among congregations and the Presbytery in a connectional walk to further the Kingdom. PMT also acknowledges that in these times of transition and continuing ministry in different forms, congregations find themselves needing outside perspectives and experience, particularly if disposition of property (real, tangible, intangible, and personal) is required. PMT wishes to provide resources and support to congregations as they enter these times of transition, such as members of Presbytery who can offer perspective, guidance, and experience.

Therefore, the Commission on Ministry (COM), with the concurrence of the Administrative Committee, recommends that the Presbytery of Middle Tennessee create a Permanent Administrative Commission (PAC) to offer such guidance, including walking alongside in cases of dissolution, merger, yoke, or other means of continuing ministry. Congregations may request assistance in coordinating mergers/yokes, joint witness, or other alternative ministry, or they may request dissolution. Congregations may be considered extinct if they have abandoned their work under G-4.0205.

This PAC shall consist of no fewer than five individuals and no more than nine. They shall serve staggered terms of 3 years, and they may be re-elected to succeed themselves. The individuals will serve the following terms:

- Class of 2025: three individuals
- Class of 2026: at least two individuals and no more than three
- Class of 2027: at least two individuals and no more than three

These individuals shall be a mix of Teaching Elders and Ruling Elders and shall ensure diversity in demographics, geography, and congregation size.

When a congregation and its session either ask for assistance in deliberating a different method of ministry or considering dissolution, or the COM determines that a congregation may be extinct, the COM shall ask the PAC to convene. The PAC shall convene to select at least three and no more than four of its members to fulfill the PAC charge as set forth. These members shall assume the title of "PAC Team for [insert name of congregation]." Further, if COM perceives that tension exists between a pastor, the congregation, the session, and/or the Presbytery, it ordinarily sends the Mediation Team to visit and discern whether the team can resolve the matter. If the Mediation Team reports that it cannot create a resolution, the COM may ask the PAC to convene and select a team to begin work with the congregation. The Stated Clerk shall gather the PAC Team to review its responsibilities and procedures. The PAC Team shall elect its Moderator and Clerk, and that Clerk shall provide updates to the Presbytery through the Stated Clerk at each Stated Meeting. In all circumstances, the PAC Team shall be in contact with members and clergy of the congregation so that the perspective of the congregation is presented. In certain circumstances, the PAC Team may invite specific individuals to serve with it in an ad hoc capacity with voice but not vote through the process. In all situations, the PAC Team shall work to execute its responsibilities in consultation with the Session in question where possible and/or appropriate. Should a PAC member's home church be in question, that member shall recuse himself/herself/themselves but may be invited to serve in an ad hoc capacity with voice but not vote.

Charges to the PAC and its Teams:

If the PAC Team and the session determine that an alternative means of ministry is the Holy Spirit's urging for the congregation, the PAC Team shall report to COM and work with the COM leadership and congregational liaison to complete this process with another similarly led congregation or other initiative as appropriate.

1. If the PAC Team and the session determine it is in the best interest of the church to close, it shall walk alongside the session to:

a. **Provide pastoral care and honor the ministry of the congregation:**

- Plan, in consultation with the members of the church in question, a closing worship service to honor the life, ministry, and witness of the church. Members shall also be invited to a Presbytery Stated Meeting, where the ministry and history of the congregation shall be acknowledged, and prayers of thanksgiving shall be offered. This includes a checklist and suggested attributes of a closing service. The congregation is not dissolved until the conclusion of its final, Presbytery-approved closing worship service, and the Presbytery votes to do so at a Stated or Called Meeting. A sample service template is included in the Appendices, though not required.
- Provide or arrange pastoral care for members and assist them in winding up the affairs of the church, including transferring members according to the Book of Order. Transfers before dissolution shall be facilitated by the Clerk of Session, and transfers after dissolution shall be facilitated by the Stated Clerk.

b. **Process and facilitate the disposition of records:**

- Receive all session records, including but not limited to minutes, rolls/registers, congregational meeting minutes, Board of Deacons minutes, and legal/financial records. These records will be deposited with the Stated Clerk of Presbytery, who shall transmit them to the Presbyterian Historical Society.

c. **Assist in dissolving the corporation:**

- Ensure compliance with Tennessee Secretary of State and Department of Revenue regulations to terminate the corporation.

d. **Secure legal rights to property:**

- Work to obtain clear title and determine restrictions, stipulations, and liens, transferring the title to the Presbytery.

e. **Assume original jurisdiction if necessary:**

- Following Book of Order requirements, assume session powers and immediately notify the Presbytery through the Stated Clerk.

2. **Property Management:** Under G-4.02, all church property is held in trust for the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). The PAC Team shall:

a. **Secure physical property:**

- Change locks if keys are widely distributed.
- Update utility billing as necessary.
- Arrange caretaking services (e.g., landscaping, housekeeping).
- Collaborate with the Stated Clerk and Finance Committee to secure appropriate insurance coverage, terminating congregational insurance at the appropriate time.

b. **Address financial records:**

- Conduct a financial review of the Treasurer's records from the past 12 months.
- Identify all accounts, including checking, savings, investments, and endowments, and close them appropriately. Designate at least two PAC members as signatories if necessary.
- Determine any outstanding debts or obligations and oversee their discharge.

- Ensure issuance of tax receipts for current-year contributors.
- Transfer ownership of any financial instruments to the Presbytery or liquidate them in consultation with the Finance Committee.
- Transfer remaining balances to the Presbytery and close accounts following Presbytery financial policies, available on the Presbytery website

3. **Disposition of property:**
   - Consult with the session regarding equipment, memorials, and other personal property (e.g., furnishings, communion ware, hymnals).
   - Work in collaboration with the Finance Committee regarding property disposal, ensuring alignment with Presbytery initiatives. Property proceeds shall be used according to Presbytery financial policies, available on the Presbytery website as well as the priorities and initiatives of the Presbytery. The PAC shall also work to address the needs associated with columbariums and cemeteries.
   - Any sale/disposition of property of $25,000 or less may be approved by the PAC; transactions above $25,000 require the approval of the Presbytery.

4. **Policies:**

   The PAC will work in coordination with the Finance Committee to assure the Presbytery property policies are current and relevant to situations encountered by congregations and the PAC.
5. **Educational Opportunities:**
   - Provide educational sessions on mergers, yoking, or alternatives to dissolution in coordination with the Commission on Ministry and the Committee on Leadership Excellence.
6. **Reporting:**
   - Submit updates at every Stated Meeting while dissolution work is ongoing.
   - Provide a final report upon completing the dissolution process. Disband the PAC Team, retaining members for future needs.

Membership Recommendations:

- **Class of 2025:** Melinda Sanders, RE, Woodland

  Alan Kennedy, RE, First Nashville
- **Class of 2026:** Greg Glover, TE, First Clarksville

  Debbie Fraley, RE, First, Fayetteville
- **Class of 2027:** John Hinkle, TE, First, Murfreesboro

  George Crawford, RE, Westminster, Nashville

Succeeding classes shall be nominated by the Nominating Task Force and elected by the Presbytery.

Appendices:

- A. The Closing Service of a Dissolving Congregation
- B. Thoughts on Church Closures

Appendix A Closing Service of Dissolution or Vacating Building

Items to consider when planning the closing service celebrating the life and ministry of the congregation.

1. Set the date and the time for the service and determine possible inclusion of:

   a. celebration of the Lord's Supper

   b. use of the service for the "Vacating of a Church Building (including the Dissolution of a Church) in the *Book of Occasional Services*, a supplement to the *Book of Common Worship* or such other service as the AC and the congregation desire (attached)

   c. former pastors, members of session, and/or members of the AC as worship participants; identify person to give sermon

   d. familiar and favorite music of the congregation, including hymns, other special music, instrumentalists, and/or choirs or soloists.

   e. a brief history of the church, including the reason/s for the dissolution of this congregation.

2. With the session, determine where the proceeds from the Offering will go (often a local mission with a connection of some sort to the congregation)

3. If necessary, assist the session in arranging for ushers, elders to serve Communion, and parking lot assistants, designing and printing bulletins, preparing communion elements, and arranging for cleaning of the facility.

4. If appropriate, assist the session as needed if a reception or other hospitality is planned around the closing worship service. Typically, an AC does not have financial resources to assist with such an event, but the Presbytery feels strongly that the congregation and its ministry should be honored in whatever way they desire. If at all possible, the Presbytery will endeavor to contribute financial and human resources toward such an event.

Presbyterian FOUNDATION

A SERVICE OF WORSHIP ON THE OCCASION OF VACATING A CHURCH BUILDING [INCLUDING THE DISSOLUTION OF THE CONGREGATION]

When a congregation moves from a former building into a new place for worship, or when there is a dissolution of a church, a service may recall the memories and gifts of God that, for a time,
have been attached to a particular building. God's promised presence is not bound by space or time. God's promise is realized in particular ways, however, within our bounded existence.
While sorrow may accompany the departure from a cherished building, the occasion calls for thanksgiving for God's gracious gifts, past, present, and future.

Appropriate portions of the service should be conducted by the authority of the presbytery with the moderator or moderator's representative presiding. This liturgy is intended as a resource; for congregations and presbyteries, and should be adapted to the normal worship patterns of the congregation.

It is appropriate for elders, deacons, and others within the congregation to share in the leadership of the entire service.

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The moderator of the presbytery addresses the congregation:

As we gather for worship,
let us acknowledge with solemn joy
God's gift of this place, remembering
with gratitude
all who have worshiped here,
the faith professed at this font,
the gospel proclaimed from this pulpit, the
assurance received at this table.
Let us also reaffirm our faith in
our sojourning God
as this building is now transferred to other uses.
That which we have received from God
let us now return to God with thanksgiving.

CALL TO WORSHIP

GREETING
The presiding minister greets the people:

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

SENTENCES OF SCRIPTURE

The Lord God says:
For as the rain and snow come down from heaven and do
not return there, but water the earth. making it bring forth
and sprout,
giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater,

**so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not
return to me empty,
but it shall accomplish that which I purpose,
and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.** *[Isaiah 55:10,11]*

PRAYER OF THE DAY

God of power,
may the boldness of your Spirit transform us, may
the gentleness of your Spirit lead us,
may the gifts of your Spirit be our goal and our strength, now and
always.

Amen.

HYMN OF PRAISE, PSALM, OR SPIRITUAL

Among the appropriate selections are:

Holy God, We Praise Your Name
Glorious Things of Thee Are Spoken
I Greet Thee, Who My Sure Redeemer Art
All People That on Earth Do Dwell

CONFESSION AND PARDON

CALL TO CONFESSION

The Proof of God's amazing love is this: While
we were sinners
Christ died for us.
Because we have faith in him,
we dare to approach God with confidence. In faith
and penitence,
let us confess our sin before God and one another.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Merciful God,
we confess that we have sinned against you
in thought, word, and deed,
by what we have done,
and by what we have left undone.
We have not loved you
with our whole heart and mind and strength.
We have not loved our neighbors as ourselves.
In your mercy forgive what we have been, help
us amend what we are,
and direct what we shall be,
so that we may delight in your will
and walk in your ways,
to the glory of your holy name. Amen.

KYRIE ELEISON

DECLARATION OF FORGIVENESS

The mercy of the Lord
is from everlasting to everlasting.
I declare to you, in the name of Jesus Christ, you are
forgiven.
May the God of mercy,
who forgives you all your sins, strengthen
you in all goodness,
and by the power of the Holy Spirit keep
you in eternal life.

Amen.

THE PEACE

Since God has forgiven us in Christ, let us
forgive one another.
The peace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with us all.

The congregation may exchange signs of peace and reconciliation

THE WORD

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

Lord, open our hearts and minds by the
power of your Holy Spirit, that as the
scriptures are read
and your Word is proclaimed,
we may hear with joy what you say to us today.

Amen.

READINGS FROM SCRIPTURE

SERMON

AFFIRMATION OF FAITH
The Nicene Creed or *the Apostles' Creed*

HYMN
Among the appropriate selections are:

The Church's One Foundation Christ
is Made the Sure Foundation Behold
the Goodness of Our Lord
God, Whose Giving Knows No Ending

THE EUCHARIST

Communion should be celebrated in the congregation's normal manner.

Following the Communion of the People, the moderator
of presbytery, elders, deacons, and other representatives
of the congregation shall gather at the table.
All may stand.

LITANY OF PRAISE

The moderator leads the litany:

Eternal God,
whom the highest heaven cannot contain, much less
a building made by human hands,

hear our prayer.
For the Church universal,
of which this building has been a symbol,

we praise you, O God.
For all the saints who,
in times past and present,
have formed a congregation of your people and have
met in this place
to offer their prayers and praise to you,

we praise you, O God.
For those who have been made your children by
adoption and grace,
who in this place were cleansed of sin, buried
with Christ in the waters of baptism, and raised to
new and eternal life,

we praise you, O God.
For your presence
whenever your Word has been proclaimed and your
sacramental gifts of bread and wine received,

we praise you, O God.
For your blessing
upon each of your children, welcomed
and nurtured here,

we praise you, O God.
For all who came
to ask your blessing in marriage, seeking
to love with your love,

we praise you, O God.
For faithful stewards
who have lived for others, serving
you by loving neighbors,

we praise you, O God.
For all who were gathered from this place, having
lived this life in faith,
who now live eternally with you,

we praise you, O God.
For the knowledge that your church and
your ministry among us
will continue today, tomorrow, and forever,

we praise you, O God,
through Jesus Christ our Lord,
by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

When the congregation is being dissolved, the remaining members of the congregation may stand and be recognized.
The moderator may direct the clerk of session to transfer their membership to another congregation, releasing the official records and rolls of the church to the presbytery.

The moderator continues:

In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,
and by the authority of the Presbytery of N.,
I declare this building vacated
by the congregation of N. Church [and the
congregation dissolved].

HYMN(S)
Among the appropriate selections are:

Psalm 23
Our God, Our Help in Ages Past
Lift High the Cross
My Hope is Built on Nothing Less

The moderator leads a procession from the building during the singing of a hymn(s). Furnishings, including the pulpit or lectern Bible, baptismal and communion vessels, and paraments may be removed and carried out by ministers, elders, and members of

the congregation.
All gather outside the building for the charge and blessing. The moderator continues:

CHARGE

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord,
rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit.

BLESSING

The presiding minister gives God's blessing to the congregation:

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the
love of God,
and the communion of the Holy Spirit be
with you all.

Amen.

Portions of this service are adapted from *Book of Occasional Services* © 1999 Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), A Corporation, for the Office of Theology and Worship, and from *Book of Common Worship* © 1993 Westminster John Knox Press, and are reprinted by permission.

Thoughts on Church Closures from Dr. Christian Boyd, OGA ACC member and Stated Clerk, Presbytery of Milwaukee

Studies show that as the various denominations after WWII experienced the baby boom and expansion of congregations in the new suburbs, many congregations were overbuilt and structured with the idea that the population would decrease and did not fathom that the church membership would normalize back to pre-WWI, which per capita is historically the number of active members of a congregation since 1789. The path since the 80s has been to work harder and capture more of the market… using a business lens to evaluate success and the attraction model. I have also found that part of the root of existing congregations is not being supportive of new church developments or worshipping communities, and a siloing of congregations is unwilling to work with each other, let alone discuss mergers. To do so would mean fewer market shares and possibly a sense of failure. So, many congregations just tried to keep doing what they were doing, like a store with a product to sell.

The pandemic was the catalyst that quickened the life span of many congregations and highlighted the ones who have realized that they cannot keep up with the expectations of church growth, let alone sustainability. There are also not enough people with energy or interest post-pandemic to try something new and take risks. So, it is easier to dissolve a congregation than to recreate the organization, especially if the culture is set.

We will be dissolving many existing congregation in the next 10 years. There are many congregations that have inherited a campus that is too much for them to sustain, and they are reluctant to sell property and move to a space more appropriate and geared toward mission and ministry in a context (outward focused, and equipping disciples for everyday active ministry).

With that said, I am also reminded of what Rev Nadia Bolz-Weber told our presbytery when we had her for one of our meetings. Only the church has the Word and sacraments, and is the body of Christ in the world. There will always be the Church. How she is manifested changes through the generations. We just have to be willing and able to adapt.

Like when Jesus went to the fishers by the sea mending their nets, Jesus said, "Follow me." They had a choice to drop their nets and leave their boats behind and follow Jesus. What are our nets and boats, and are we willing and able to take the risk and drop them in order to follow Jesus… willing to "try to show the love and justice of Jesus Christ" in the here and now?

This is the transition within liminality, the "death" before resurrection as a "new creation".

Dissolution of the First, Decherd Administrative Commission

The Stated Clerk moved that the Administrative Commission charged with the dissolution of First, Decherd be dismissed with thanks and that its recommendation to sell the property be approved. The motion was seconded and approved.

DECHERD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, ADMINISTRATIVE COMMISSION
March 21, 2024
SCHEDULED MEETING OF ADMINISTRATIVE COMMISSION
Via Zoom

The meeting came to order at 1:00 p.m. with Steve Elkins, Moderator presiding.

Present: Tom Bagley, Charlotte Broyles, Ellen Hill

A correction was made to the Notes of Decherd PC Administrative Commission meeting of March 2, 2024. The amount paid by the Multi County Cancer Society per month for utilities was changed from $438 per month to $138.56 per month.

Steve Elkins reported that he had been in contact with the electric company, gas company and insurance agency. The electric company and the gas company will send future bills to the Middle Tennessee Presbytery office finance department.

Steve learned that the building insurance had been cancelled effective March 31, 2024 at midnight and because the cancellation had already been processed by the insurance company it could not be rescinded. The agent suggested that we reach out to the Presbytery to see if they had insurance that would cover the property because he did not think he would be able to write a new policy given the building would no longer be used. Steve talked with the person at the Presbytery office who handles insurance and she is looking into it. It was also pointed out that we might go back to the insurance agent and tell him that the building would not be vacant since the Cancer Society people would be there on a regular basis. Steve said he would do that if the Presbytery could not get coverage for the building.

Steve also reported that mud from the vacant lot next to the church had covered the floor of the fellowship hall during the last unusually hard rain. The Decherd church had contacted professional cleaning people who had cleaned it up. The lot owner had not installed environmental barriers when demolishing and removing the house that was on the lot.

Steve reported that Peggy Gipson and Karl Smith are both authorized signers for the Decherd PC checking account but that Karl's wife, Dottie, is now writing the checks and Karl is signing as Peggy has had a lose in her family. The Smiths told Steve that all bills were paid and there were no major bills outstanding. They reported that the account balance is approximately $10,000. Steve is going to determine how those funds can be transferred to Presbytery.

There are two people paid to do work at the Decherd PC. They are husband and wife. The husband is the grounds keeper and is paid $50 every time he cuts the grass. His wife is paid $200.09 per month to do custodial work. It was decided that we would ask them to continue through the month of April and possibly longer.

It was further decided to allow the Cancer Society to continue using the facility for as long as we could but that no firm commitment for a specific length of time could be made. The Cancer Society will be given as long a notice as possible regarding vacating the property but they need to be planning a move. Charlotte Broyles agreed to contact the Cancer Society and to give them the address to send the monthly utility contribution.

Steve said he would contact Mike Bradley and make plans to pick up the historical records and the financial records. Steve said he would transport the records to Mary Catherine Sevier since he sees her on a regular basis.

All had reviewed the photographs Charlotte Broyles sent of furniture that church members wanted to remove from the church. It was decided to allow those church members who had requested pieces to remove them but that it would be best if they were removed within a few weeks after the last church service on March 31, 2024. It was further decided that the locks would be changed on the church once pieces were removed.

All agreed that the letter Tom Bagley had drafted to send to the church members was very good and should be sent. Tom said he would do that on March 23 or 24, 2024.

The meeting was adjourned with the next meeting scheduled for April 18, 2024 at 1:00 p.m. via zoom.

DECHERD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, ADMINISTRATIVE COMMISSION
April 18, 2024
SCHEDULED MEETING OF ADMINISTRATIVE COMMISSION
Via Zoom

The meeting came to order at 1:00 p.m. with Steve Elkins, Moderator presiding.

Present: Steve Elkins, Tom Bagley, Charlotte Broyles, Ellen Hill

The Minutes from the March 21, 2024 meeting were approved as submitted.

Charlotte Broyles reported that Rev. Martin Nutter of the Faith Lutheran Church in Tullahoma had contacted her regarding the Decherd property. The son of a Decherd Presbyterian member brought up purchasing the church property as an outreach at a meeting of their Elders. Rev. Nutter said it was just an inquiry and that it had not been mentioned to the congregation. Charlotte told Rev. Nutter she would keep him informed as the disposition of the real property progressed.

Charlotte Broyles also reported that she had talked with the cancer support people and told them the Commission could not give them any guarantees on the length of notice they would be given but would keep them updated. The cancer support people are looking for a new location. Charlotte also gave them the name and address of where to send the utility contribution.

Steve Elkins reported that he and Dr. Mike Bradley had been through the historic records of the Decherd Presbyterian Church. Steve picked up the Session Minutes and delivered them to Mary Catherine Sevier for archives. Steve reported that there were other records such as Sunday school attendance records that may not need to be archived but he would pick them up, as well as the financial records, on the next trip.

Steve reported that he needed legal proof of his authority before he could make an address change with the post office. Mary Catherine is going to make that change online using the Presbytery credit card for proof of authority.

Additionally Steve reported that all bills were set up to be paid at the Presbytery office. He talked with David and Denise Floyd. They will continue to do the lawn and custodial work. Steve told them it would be necessary for them to invoice for the work as independent contractors and that they would be paid by direct deposit.

Steve said he would contact Chris Adams, realtor, to set up a meeting at the church property.

Tom Bagley volunteered to contact the members of the Decherd church to see if we could be any assistance with their transitioning to another church. Mike Bradley will furnish the contact information.

The meeting was adjourned with the next meeting to be scheduled when able to meet with Chris Adams, realtor.

DECHERD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, ADMINISTRATIVE COMMISSION
November 6, 2024
SCHEDULED MEETING OF ADMINISTRATIVE COMMISSION

Via Zoom

The meeting came to order at 4:08 p.m. with Steve Elkins, Moderator presiding.

Present: Steve Elkins, Tom Bagley, Charlotte Broyles, Ellen Hill

The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the Restricted Use Appraisal Report submitted by Thomas R. Carter dated October 1, 2024. All members agreed that the Appraisal Report presented a thorough evaluation of the Decherd Presbyterian Church property. Further the Commission agreed that given the Church was not located in a thriving community, the Appraisal Report concluded with a reasonable fair market value of $400,000. (The Restricted Use Appraisal Report is attached hereto and incorporated by reference.)

The Commission discussed the three entities that had expressed an interest in the property: Multi County Cancer Society that is currently housed in the Decherd Presbyterian Church building, Faith Lutheran Church via Rev. Martin Nutter located in Tullahoma and an individual inquiring for a Methodist group. The Commission decided to make the Presbytery aware of the three entities in its report and recommendation.

A motion was made by Tom Bagley and seconded by Ellen Hill that the Commission recommend that the Decherd Presbyterian Church property be placed on the market at a value no less than $400,000, the fair market value suggested by the Restricted Appraisal Report. The motion carried.

The meeting was adjourned.

REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION TO THE TRUSTEES OF PRESBYTERY OF MIDDLE TENNESSEE
DECHERD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, ADMINISTRATIVE COMMISSION
November 7, 2024

The Administrative Commission for the dissolution of the Decherd Presbyterian Church was formed on February 10, 2024. The congregation had already requested dissolution of its congregation and had set the date for the final service to be held at its church facility.

The Administrative Commission proceeded to wind up the affairs of the church, receive the records of the session and financial records and deposit the same with the Stated Clerk of presbytery, take possession of the real and personal property of the church, facilitate the transfer of accounts payable to presbytery finance, and arrange for all accounts and real property known to be in possession of Decherd Presbyterian Church be transferred to presbytery.

The Administrative Commission further honored the requests of the congregation members related to the disposition of objects, memorials and other property of the church and facilitated the transfer of the same.

The Administrative Commission reached out to the members of the Decherd Presbyterian Church with offers of assistance in finding new places of worship.

The Commission had three entities that had expressed an interest in the property: Multi County Cancer Society that is currently housed in the Decherd Presbyterian Church building, Faith Lutheran Church via Rev. Martin Nutter located in Tullahoma and an individual inquiring for a Methodist group.

The Administrative Commission conferred with Chris and Paula Adams, realtors, regarding the value and marketability of the Decherd Presbyterian real property. The Commission met the realtors at the property. After touring the property the Adams said they would try to establish a value based upon comparable properties. If they were not able to do so then they would recommend hiring a speciality appraisal group to give an opinion on best use and value. The Adams were not able to provide a value and recommended the Commission secure the services of Thomas R. Carter, Certified General Real Estate Appraiser.

The Administrative Commission secured permission and presbytery hired Thomas R. Carter. On October 1, 2024 Mr. Carter presented the Restricted Use Appraisal Report for the Decherd Presbyterian Church property. (The Report is attached hereto and incorporated by reference.) At a called zoom meeting on November 6, 2024 the Commission discussed the Restricted Use Appraisal Report and voted to make the following recommendation to the Trustees of Middle Tennessee Presbytery:

RECOMMENDATION:

The Decherd Presbyterian Church Administrative Commission recommends that the Decherd Presbyterian Church property be placed on the market at a value no less than $400,000, the fair market value suggested by the Restricted Appraisal Report.

Further, The Decherd Presbyterian Church Administrative Commission believes it has completed its stated charge and respectfully requests to be dissolved.

Respectfully Submitted,

Steve Elkins, Moderator
Charlotte Broyles, Clerk
Tom Bagley
Ellen Hill

Dissolution of St. John Isaiah 1:18 Team

The Stated Clerk moved that the Isaiah Team assigned to work with St. John be dismissed with thanks. The Team was not able to complete its work because the congregation and its leadership requested and were accepted into the CCCC denomination. The motion was seconded and approved.

The Presbytery of Middle Tennessee (the Presbytery) formed an Isaiah 1:18 Team (the Team) of Harold Dawkins, Moderator (RE), Denise Moran, Secretary (RE), and John Smith (TE) to engage the congregation of St. John Presbyterian Church (St. John) in a process of reconciliation or gracious separation under the Presbytery's *Policy Governing Dismissal of Congregations* (the Policy).

Meeting of July 10, 2024

On July 10, 2024, the Team met at St. John PC with Jim Lauria, pastor; Wayne Kourtney, elder; and Aaron Robertson, elder (the St. John delegation) to initiate the reconciliation process. With respect to St. John's attendees and their representation of the congregation, we learned the following:

- Mr. Lauria was raised Roman Catholic, baptized in the United Methodist Church, and ordained in the Pentecostal church. He has served St. John, starting as temporary supply, as their pastor for twenty-five (25) years;
- Wayne Kourtney was raised Roman Catholic, has been a member for the same length of time, and is the brother-in-law of Mr. Lauria. He identified himself as an elder;
- Aaron Robertson relocated to Tennessee from Colorado approximately three years ago with his family, started attending St. John in October or November of 2023, and identified himself as an elder. (Subsequently, we learned that Mr. Robertson and his family withdrew their membership from the church following our visit.)

Together, the St. John attendees agreed that they comprised the Session and represented the congregation in this matter.

The St. John delegation provided the following information to the Team:

- Members of St. John number approximately twelve (12) and the delegation stated that the members have spent several years in discernment about their decision to withdraw from the Presbyterian Church (PCUSA);
- When asked by the Team, the St. John delegation said that the decision to leave the denomination had already been adopted unanimously by the congregation;

- The congregation changed their name to "Christ the King Community Church;"
- As Christ the King Community Church (Christ the King), the congregation applied to the Credentials Committee of the Conservative Congregational Christian Conference (CCCC) for membership in their denomination;
- By letter dated May 23, 2024, the CCCC informed Christ the King of their vote to accept the congregation's application for membership and invited the church to participate in their 2024 Annual Conference. A copy is attached.
- The St. John delegation provided to the Team a copy of the *Certificate of Membership*, dated May 29, 2024, wherein the congregation was accepted into the CCCC denomination. A copy is attached.
- The St. John delegation mentioned that it was their desire to remove the St. John Presbyterian signage from the property.

Interim Period

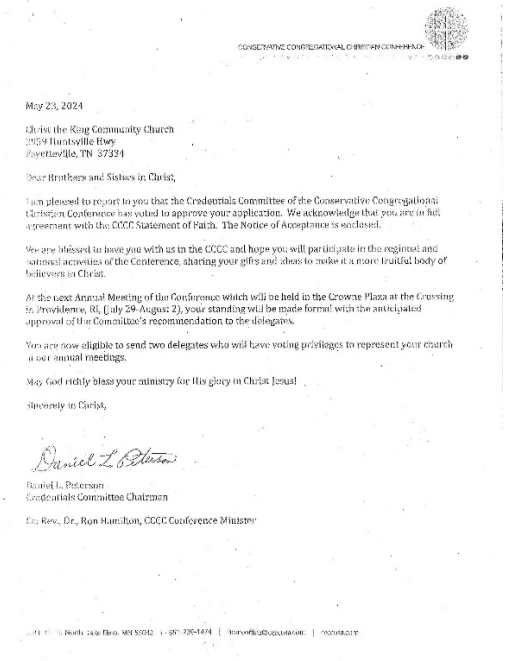
During the interim period (July 2024 – January 2025), the Team met for discussion of next steps, sought counsel from Presbytery, and met with the Presbytery's Finance Committee in September 2024.

Meeting of January 15, 2025

Following consultation with Presbytery, the Team, in addition to the Bridge Executive Presbyter, Terry Newland, met again with Mr. Lauria and Mr. Kourtney on January 15, 2025 at St. John P.C. The purpose of the meeting was to explain the process of dissolving the Isaiah Team at the next stated Presbytery meeting and the plan to move forward. The St. John delegation reiterated their position that the congregation was no longer a part of the Presbyterian Church (PCUSA) and provided their reasoning. The Team urged the St. John delegation to be in prayer and to be respectful to the next Presbytery group, which would be engaging the St. John delegation in 2025 concerning property issues.

Respectfully submitted,
Denise Moran

Attachments (2): Letter of Acceptance from CCCC – dated May 23, 2024
Certificate of Membership into CCCC – dated May 29, 2024



CONSERVATIVE CONGREGATIONAL CHRISTIAN CONFERENCE

May 23, 2024

Christ the King Community Church
2959 Huntsville Hwy
Fayetteville, TN 37334

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I am pleased to report to you that the Credentials Committee of the Conservative Congregational Christian Conference has voted to approve your application. We acknowledge that you are in full agreement with the CCCC Statement of Faith. The Notice of Acceptance is enclosed.

We are blessed to have you with us in the CCCC and hope you will participate in the regional and national activities of the Conference, sharing your gifts and ideas to make it a more fruitful body of believers in Christ.

At the next Annual Meeting of the Conference which will be held in the Crowne Plaza at the Crossing in Providence, RI, (July 29-August 2), your standing will be made formal with the anticipated approval of the Committee's recommendation to the delegates.

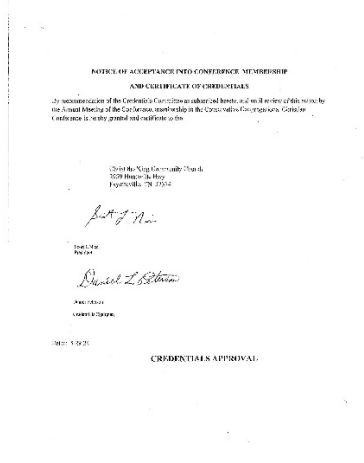
You are now eligible to send two delegates who will have voting privileges to represent your church at our annual meetings.

May God richly bless your ministry for His glory in Christ Jesus!

Sincerely in Christ,

Daniel L. Peterson
Credentials Committee Chairman

Dr. Rev., Dr., Ron Hamilton, CCCC Conference Minister



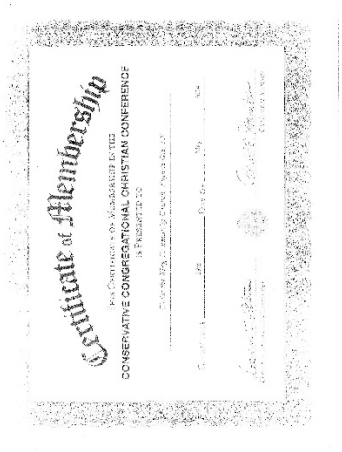
NOTICE OF ACCEPTANCE INTO CONFERENCE MEMBERSHIP
AND CERTIFICATE OF CREDENTIALS

By recommendation of the Credentials Committee as submitted herein, and on all review of this notice by the Annual Meeting of the Conference, membership in the Conservative Congregational Christian Conference is hereby granted and certificate to the

Christ the King Community Church
2959 Huntsville Hwy
Fayetteville, TN 37334

Daniel L. Peterson

CREDENTIALS APPROVAL



COMMENTS FROM THE COMMITTEE ON CHURCH TRANSFORMATION

The Moderator recognized TE John Hilley, chair of the Committee on Church Transformation. He noted that the committee has funds to use for Matthew 25 grants in the amount of $5000, and he praised the work of the worshipping community at La Nueva Vida. The Rev. Hilley then made the following comments and asked that they be included in the minutes:

Today we as a presbytery voted on an agreement to be in fellowship with the Episcopal Church.
Some of you may remember Martin Niemöller's famous quote spoken during the rise of the 3rd Reich in Germany. He said: "First they came for the Communists, and I did not speak out, because I was not a Communist. Then they came for the Socialists, and I did not speak out, because I was not a Socialist. Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out, because I was not a Jew. Then they came for the Catholics, and I did not speak out, because I was not a Catholic. Finally, they came for me, and there was no one left to speak for me."

We might need to update that famous saying of Niemöller. First they came for the Episcopalians (attacks on the religious liberty rights of Episcopalians after Episcopal Bishop Budde as the new president to "have mercy" on LGBTQ children and migrant workers) … then they came for the Catholics (Vance's attack on the Catholic Church assisting immigrants and refugees) … then they came for the Lutherans (the ELCA is one of our 'seven sisters" in the mainline Protestant church) as first Michael Flynn and then Elon Musk under the guise of DOGE spread disinformation, accusing them without evidence, of illegally taking taxpayer money and pledging to shut them down. The attacks ratchet up on Lutheran Family Services and their key work in the areas of immigration and refugee services and also nonprofits that the Lutherans (and all of us) work with to address foster care, adoption, head start, food pantries, elder care, resources for victims of domestic abuse, and more.
Rev. Hilley spoke about his experience at Downtown Pres and read the minutes of 1960 when the lunch counter sit ins were going on across the street from the church. No written record in the Session minutes (as the church was busy with surviving).

Rev. Hilley referenced the Statement from the Stated Clerk of the PCUSA.

"In the days since the election, many have asked what the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)'s voice and witness is and will be in the days, weeks, months and years to come.
We trust that presbyteries, congregations, and individuals who are members and participants of the PC(USA) have been discerning and planning how to show up and what specific actions might need to be taken to stand with and for those who are most vulnerable. We invite the whole church into this work of imagining ways that we can enflesh God's love and justice as good neighbors.

We also write to you as siblings in Christ and as elected leaders in this time of the life of our church, Stated Clerk of the General Assembly and Co-Moderators of the 226th General Assembly of the PC(USA), to remind us …
In every season we are called to be the Church, the body of Christ in and for the world, worshiping God and gratefully serving and acting in response to God's grace.
The Confession of Belhar speaks to this calling declaring:

- The church must stand by people in any form of suffering and need
- The church must witness against and strive against any form of injustice, so that justice may roll down like water, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream
- The church as the possession of God must stand where the Lord stands, namely against injustice and with the wronged
- The church must witness against all the powerful and privileged who selfishly seek their own interest and thus control and harm others.

Rev. Hilley stated that he is not asking the presbytery to enter discussion on our response to current actions of the current administration and encouraged each church to look at what might be its appropriate response in light of scripture and its context. He did ask that the minutes reflect that the matter of the church's witness in these times was acknowledged. Furthermore he encouraged that there are many people outside of our doors who are looking to see if we are going to say anything and just what we are going to do.

REPORT FROM THE COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL JUSTICE

The Moderator recognized RE Henry Deaderick, chair of the Committee on Social Justice, who recognized committee member Hannah Cruse to make the report. Ms. Cruse asked the body to let the committee know ways in which it can help congregations with educational programs and initiatives related to social justice and organizing responses to issues. She noted that the committee has begun to collaborate with the Committee on Mutual Support as well.

OLD BUSINESS

Amendment to Presbytery Finance Policies

The Moderator recognized The Rev. Dr. Greg Glover and RE Melinda Sanders, who were charged at the last Stated Meeting with bringing an amendment to the financial polices of the Presbytery. Dr. Glover presented the language and moved its approval. The motion was seconded. Mrs. Sanders offered an amendment to it which was also seconded. The amended motion was approved. The policy paragraph now reads:

Property: The Finance Committee, in conjunction with the Stated Clerk, maintains a list of all property held by the churches within its bounds, current debt obligations of each church, whether church property has been encumbered as collateral for loans, the approximate value of the property, and whether Presbytery is a co-signer or guarantor of the loan and thus contingently liable in case of a default. Unless exempted pursuant to G-4.0208, all churches must obtain Presbytery approval before buying with encumbrance, selling, or encumbering real property. The process to be followed is set out in Presbytery's Church Property Sale Policy (Appendix G). The policy contains a list of churches that were eligible and took advantage of the G-4.0208 exemption.

However, even churches that are exempt must abide by the requirements of the Trust Clause in the Book of Order since the exemption does not nullify the effect of the Trust Clause for any church. The Presbytery recognizes the churches in the Presbytery of Middle Tennessee that are exempt hold their property under the provisions of Chapter 6 of The Book of Church Order (PCUS, 1982-1983), which specifies that all property is held in trust for the benefit and use of the denomination and that upon dissolution of the congregation all property reverts to control of Presbytery. The Presbytery also recognizes that the laws of Tennessee regarding property held in trust apply to all churches, whether exempt or not, and that secular courts, such as the Chancery Court of the State Tennessee, do have the authority over congregations' transactions if that congregation should dissolve or seek to leave the denomination.

Churches, whether exempt or not, may not make any other council (such as the Presbytery) liable for their debts or obligations.

Furthermore, all congregations are required to include a clause in their encumbering transaction documents which specifically gives higher councils the right to unilaterally terminate any transaction, such as a long-term lease, if the property reverts to the higher council under the Trust Clause. Furthermore, all churches, whether exempt or not, must report all transactions involving property to the Presbytery one month prior to the congregational meeting to approve the transaction.

Churches that are exempt are subject to all rules about how decisions are made, reviewed, and corrected by the Presbytery, but are not required to seek consent or approval of any counsel above the level of the particular church in order to buy, sell, or mortgage the property of that particular church in the conduct of its affairs as a member church of the PC(USA). A copy of the full provisions of Chapter 6 (Property) of *The Book of Church Order* (PCUS, 1982-1983) is available on the Presbytery of Middle Tennessee web site.

ADJOURNMENT

Moderator Herring asked for any concerns or joys and led the body in a closing prayer. She then asked for a motion to adjourn which was seconded and approved. After announcing that the 160th Stated Meeting will be May 3rd, 2025, at First, Pulaski, she adjourned the meeting.

Mary Catherine Sevier
Stated Clerk