

Presbytery of New Covenant  
Stated Meeting (Draft Minutes)  
July 18, 2015  
Woodlands Community Presbyterian Church

Moderator Laurey Murphy called the meeting to order at 9:00 by welcoming everyone and asking for those in attendance to pass the peace one to another.

TE David Jones, pastor of WCPC, welcomed us to worship and reminded us that since this is an “Earth Care” congregation that worship would be paperless (no bulletins).

Worship opened with a piano rendition of “Come, Thou Fount” to invite us into a worshipful presence. David Jones and TE Charlie Hornes (WCPC) led us in worship. The opening hymn was “Come Sing, O Church In Joy” (GTG #305). We sang “Glory to God, Whose Goodness Shines on Me”(GTG #582) as a reponse of praise. TE John Wurster (Houston, St. Philip) introduces the preacher for the morning, TE Wil Howie who founded Living Waters for the World. Wil shared a message titles “Living Generously” from Matthew 14:22-33 and Luke 6:27-38. The summary of his message was, “Fear Not, Be Kind, Live Generously.” We celebrated the sacrament of communion by intinction served by elders of WCPC. We closed with the hymn, “For Everyone Born” (GTG #729).

Opening Business

A quorum was declared by the Stated Clerk, TE Lynn Hargrove. Tellers for the day were appointed: RE Robbie MacAllister (Houston, Pinecrest), RE Forbes Baker (Houston, Westminster), TE Fred Seay (Sugar Land, First), TE Brian Long (Katy, New Hope). The Parliamentarian appointed for the meeting was Jim Allison(Houston, Pines).

The docket as found in the meeting addendum was adopted. TE David Jones welcomed us to the Woodlands Community Presbyterian Church. First time commissioners were welcomed. Corresponding members were welcomed. They were Wil Howie (St. Andrew); Chris McRae (Arkansas), Phineas Washer (Mission), Kristin Galle (UCC), and Dan Saperstein (Palo Duro/Synod of the Sun). New Minister Members introduced themselves. They were Shelby Dies, Tom Sharon, Linda Sharon, Dan Walker, Emily Owen, Lucia Oerter, Hector Rivera-Velez, and Michael Sydnor. Visitors were asked to stand. The omnibus motion passed, which approved the minutes of the stated meeting of March 21 and the called meeting of May 19. Moderator Laurey Murphy made remarks about who we are as the Presbytery of New Covenant.

### Report of the Stated Clerk

Motions were made to dismiss, with our thanks, two administrative commissions. The first was to ordain and install TE Jonathan Britt as Designated Associate Pastor at Houston, St. Thomas. The second was to negotiate a settlement of the lawsuit with Houston, Windwood. Both motions passed by acclamation.

Motions were offered in the dismissal of Pearland, Peace to the Covenant Order of Evangelical Presbyterians. The motions, which were approved by acclamation, were:

Moved that, the Presbytery validate that the congregation of Peace Presbyterian Church, Pearland, Texas, has fulfilled the requirements for dismissal according to the Reconciliation and Dismissal Procedure of the Presbytery of New Covenant.

Moved that the congregation of Peace Presbyterian Church, Pearland, Texas, having met the requirements for seeking dismissal, is dismissed by the Presbytery of New Covenant to the Covenant Order of Evangelical Presbyterians (ECO) pending completion of the transfer to that body.

Prayer was offered by TE Jim Gill, the founding pastor of Peace Presbyterian Church, Pearland. The members of Peace who were present were called forward so that we could say “good-bye” upon their dismissal.

### Additional Errata

Packet, P. 15 – Dan Walker is from the Presbytery of Northern New England.

Packet, P. 23 – the compensation package for TE Marie Mickey was incorrect. The correct package is:

Salary was \$40,993 increasing to \$41,873; Housing Allowance was \$17,646 remains \$17, 676; Auto Allowance at IRS rate; Board of Pension is full participation (member only) at \$20,831.55; study leave allowance remains the same at \$1,725 with two weeks allotted; vacation of four weeks, reimbursement of Self Employment Contribution up to 7.65% was \$4,467, increasing to \$4,553. The annual review is set for July, 2015.

### Report of General Council

Moderator Laurey Murphy reminded us of the rules for debate prior to the report. She called on RE Shelly Hernandez, moderator of General Council who then introduced RE Mort McPhail

(Houston, Northwoods) who offered a rationale for the revisions to the Gracious Reconciliation and Dismissal Procedure. Mort has served on the writing team for the document.

Prior to taking a vote on the revisions we paused for our Order of the Day. Chris McRae, Executive Director for Solar Under the Sun, was our Keynote Speaker. The title of his presentation was “The Elephant in the Room.” He asked us to consider these questions: What preconceived ideas do you have in your baggage do we carry before entering a room in doing ministry? What prejudices do we carry? He reminded us that we should be sensitive with our dress, use of language (both words and with our bodies), in taking pictures, and welcoming food that is served. We also should: support of in-country partner; seek to serve and not self-glorify; think about why you are going in the first place; have a specific skill to offer; be a learner and disciple; be compassionate and kind and led by the Holy Spirit; follow through!

He helped us to understanding differences between the concept time and self, based on the book, “When Helping Hurts”. A capitalist view of time is Monochronic – “time is money.” Other populations view time as polychronic – “time is an unlimited resource” where relationships matter. Americans tend to be monochronic, many other cultures are polychronic.

#### Continuing the report of General Council

The motion was made to approve a “special rule” for today’s meeting for further revisions to the Gracious Reconciliation and Dismissal Procedure which would limit amendments to the procedure to those that have been received in writing at least 4 days prior to today’s meeting. This requires a 2/3 vote of the body for approval. *The motion passed with only one vote opposed.*

A motion was made to approve the revisions to the Gracious Reconciliation and Dismissal Procedure. An additional motion was made to approve the amendment offered by General Council replacing lines 151 to 154 with these words:

*The result of a congregation advisory vote on the question of dismissal shall be reported to both the congregation and to the Presbytery. Following that vote, unless the session votes to seek dismissal, it shall complete this Procedure by entering into a season of reconciliation and prayer in concert with the Presbytery. The Presbytery will not agree to reinstate the Gracious Reconciliation and Dismissal Procedure with the session for a period of at least three years following the advisory vote.*

The motion to approve the amendment passed.

The motion was made to approve the revisions to the Gracious Reconciliation and Dismissal Procedure as amended.

Question: RE David McCarty (Houston, First) asked if we are amending the current procedure, and asked the purpose of the redline document.

David offered a substitute motion to postpone the approval of the procedure to the November meeting. After discussion, he offered a substitute motion “to recommit to the writing team to supply the body with a complete statement of proposed changes to the existing procedure in red-line form.” RE Mort McPhail offered a response about the redline document and the clean version. *The substitute motion failed on a hand count vote.*

We were then back to the motion to approve the revision to the Gracious Reconciliation and Dismissal Procedure as amended. RE David McCarty (Houston, First) offered a statement in opposition to the motion. A written vote was called for using the salmon colored ballot, a vote in the affirmative would be “Yes”, against would be “No”.

We broke for lunch and the mission fair. Exhibitors included Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary, CUPS (Comunidades Unidas Por Salud/Communities United for Health), Heifer International, Houston Hope of the Nations, Living Waters for the World, The Pinemont Apartments, Seafarer’s Ministry; Solar Under the Sun, Texas Presbyterian Foundation, United Campus Ministry – Aggieland, and United Campus Ministry of Greater Houston.

We reconvened at 1:30 with the singing of “Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing.”

Moderator Laurey Murphy asked us to revisit the motions for the dismissal of Pearland, Peace, since the motions passed by acclamation. The reconsideration was because there was not an actual vote taken. *Both motions passed by voice vote.*

Continuing the report of General Council: Vote tally for approval of the revisions to the Gracious Reconciliation and Dismissal Procedure: 128 yes; 45 no; 1 abstention.

Report of the Vision Team: RE Shelley Hernandez, RE Ron Stenzel (Houston, Pines), and TE Shawn Kang (Houston, Pathways) offered an update of the work of the Vision Team. The process used so far was summarized which involved asking questions of congregations and committees:

- 1) Reflecting on your experience of being part of the presbytery, remember a time when you were the most engaged, alive and motivated.
- 2) What is the single most important value that makes our presbytery unique?
- 3) What are your three wishes for the presbytery?

#### 4) How can the presbytery help make these wishes come true?

Answers heard by the team are categorized under these headings: communication and collaboration; opportunities for education and enrichment; opportunities for service, mission and evangelism; emphasizing the “good news” of the PC(USA).

The Vision Team will be going back out into regional gatherings to ask if they have listened well and how these areas might be done differently in the presbytery in the near future.

#### Committee on Preparation for Ministry

TE Kevin Boyd (Houston, St. Paul) offered the report. TE Laureen Suba (UCMGH) gave words of encouragement to those who have completed the process of preparation for ordained ministry.

The motion was made to recommend and move that the following be elected to serve as Readers of Ordination Examinations: Teaching Elders – Jolene Currie (Hospice Chaplain); Kristy Forbes-Vits (Bellaire, ChristChurch); Kevin Boyd (Houston, St. Paul); Laureen Suba (UCMGH); alternate Laura Grice (Woodlands, WCPC); Ruling Elders – Bill Hargrove (Houston, St. Andrew’s); Julie Wells (Houston, St. Philip); Christy Craig (Houston, First); Jim Allison (Houston, Pines); alternate Kate Burkart (Houston, St. Philip). *The motion passed by voice vote.*

A Service of Candidacy was offered for Josh Young (Houston, Clear Lake) who has been an inquirer in the preparation process. Josh gave a statement about his motives for seeking ordination along with background about his life and Christian upbringing.

The motion was made that the committee recommends and moves that Josh Young be enrolled as a candidate. *The motion passed by voice vote.* Members of the committee, and Clear Lake Presbyterian Church were asked to come forward to stand with Josh while he answered the questions of candidacy. He answered the questions in the affirmative. Kevin offered a charge, and Laurey offered a prayer, and had us sing the Doxology.

#### Administrative Division Steering Committee

RE Jane Larkin gave an overview of the four subcommittees. She called on TE John Wurster (Houston, St. Philip), chair of the Ecclesiastical Affairs Committee, to offer the overture sent from the session of Houston, Pines, regarding G-2.0509. The text of the overture is found in the meeting packet on page 11. RE Jim Allison (Houston, Pines) spoke to the overture giving background about what was passed for the 2015/2017 Book of Order. There were speakers both for and against the overture. A voice vote was not conclusive. A standing vote was called for, and the moderator was unable to ascertain. The tellers were called forward to count the vote. The motion to send the overture to the Office of General Assembly passed 90-44. The Stated Clerk will send the overture.

Jane Larkin called on RE Dave Johnson (Houston, Clear Lake), chair of the Finance Committee, to report on the budget and an update of the expenses of our lawsuit defense. Dave offered an apology for not being prepared to answer questions at the March, 2015, meeting, and explained what has happened since that time with a clearer review. Dave explained a bit about the budget, with income received and expenses being in a deficit situation. There is a new format to report on cash flow. The Finance Committee will be more diligent in their reporting of the allocation of funds.

Questions were asked and answered about the budget and the legal expenses.

Dave introduced Stefanie Marsden from the Texas Presbyterian Foundation (TPF). She gave an overview of the work of TPF, and extended an invitation to two events this fall: September 22 at WCPC, September 23 at Houston, Clear Lake, to talk about “Your Generosity”.

#### Committee on Ministry

TE John Hirling (Houston, Westminster) offered the errata report for the salary of TE Marie Mickey (Bryan, First). He gave background about the Teaching Elder Ethics in Cases of Disagreement with Denominational Policies, Statements and/or Decisions in the Presbytery of New Covenant. The committee brought the motion to approve that document. A statement was offered against the policy. A written ballot was requested prior to the meeting. The yellow page of the ballot packet was used. The committee report continued while the ballots were counted.

The motion was made to approve the honorable retirement of TE Harland Merriam, former pastor of Beaumont, St. Andrew’s, effective May 31, 2015. John offered a tribute to Harland prior to the vote. The motion passed.

John called on TE Kevin Keaton, regional representative from the Board of Pensions, to give an overview of changes proposed based on questions being asked and answered across the PC(USA).

The vote on the teaching elder ethics document was 55 in favor, 86 against with 3 abstentions. *The motion fails.*

#### Ministries Division Steering Committee

RE Carlton Currie (Houston, First), chair of MDSC, announced the recipients of the Vision Initiative and Lynn Johnson Social Justice Grants. The Congregational Resourcing Team offered a skit to invite people to the “Engaging and Forming Disciples in a New Day” workshop on September 24, at Community of the Servant Savior. This will be led by TE Michael Waschevski, Associate Pastor of Programming and Pastoral Care at Fort Worth, First.

Carlton introduced TE Kathering Doehring (UCM-Aggieland) to share the work among the students in Bryan/College Station. She introduced Lauren Suba (UCMGH) and asked for help in getting the names of students at Texas A&M, Blinn and University of Houston. There will be a presbytery wide campus outreach on January 31, 2016, which will include the offering of moments for mission in congregations.

#### Nominating Committee

Committee chair, RE David Bell (Houston, Northwoods), had no report.

#### CONCLUDING THE MEETING

Greeting from the Synod of the Sun: TE Dan Saperstein, co-leader, brought greetings and informed us about the video competition with a grand prize of \$5000. Networking grants are available, and have distributed more than \$50,000. There are also scholarship funds available for students and conferences. They continue to address the fallout from last year's General Assembly, particularly the motion to reduce the number of Synods. There is a new network involving this presbytery regarding fossil fuel divestment, with a symposium on October 2-3 at Houston, Memorial Drive. He complimented the Presbytery of New Covenant on our work together and across the PC(USA).

General Presbytery TE Mike Cole offered more detail on the fossil fuel symposium. Information will be going out in the coming weeks.

There were no other announcements. The next meeting will be Saturday, November 21, at Houston, St. John's, which will include a congregational based mission fair.

Laurey concluded the meeting with prayer at 3:20 pm. A motion to adjourn was passed by a voice vote.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Lynn R. Hargrove  
Stated and Recording Clerk