

Presbytery of New Covenant Stated Meeting
July 19, 2014 9:00 am
Covenant Presbytery Church, College Station, TX

Moderator RE John Jo (Houston, Korean Central) called the meeting to order at 9:00 am. We began with a service of morning prayer led by TE Barrett Ingram (Navasota, First). We read the names of those elders, deacons and trustees who died in 2013.

The stated Clerk, Lynn Hargrove, declared that a quorum was present. TE Steve Spidell made a motion to adjust the docket to move the report of the General Council to the morning, which included the revisions to the Gracious Reconciliation and Discernment Procedure. The motion was seconded. A voice vote was not conclusive. A hand vote was not conclusive. The tellers were appointed prior to a standing vote. The vote was 98 to 98, so the motion failed.

Tellers were: RE John Wurster (Houston, St. Philip), TE Kevin Boyd (Houston, St Paul), Charlie Fairchild (Houston, Spring Branch), Jeannie Flowers (Houston, St. Philip).

The proposed docket as found in the addendum was approved.

9:30 am **OPENING BUSINESS**

TE Callie Candee extended a welcome on behalf of Covenant Presbyterian Church, College Station. We welcomed new commissioners, corresponding members (TE Dan Saperstein, TE Hector Rodriguez, and Sherry Kenney from the Presbyterian Foundation). There were no new minister members to be introduced. The omnibus motion was passed to approve the minutes of the March, 22, 2014, stated meeting of the presbytery. Moderator John Jo shared scripture and a devotional. TE Paul Hoang (Korean, Young Nak) was nominated to serve on the nominating committee. This nomination comes from the recent past moderator, the current moderator and the moderator elect. He was elected.

9:40 am **REPORTS OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY COMMISSIONERS**

RE Julie Wells (Houston, St. Philip) served as the emcee for the commissioners present: RE Forbes Baker (Houston, Westminster), TE Jackie Hannan (Atascocita, Atascocita), RE Ann Hardy (Houston, St. John), RE Jody Harrington (Houston, Memorial Drive), RE John Hathaway (Woodlands, WCPC), TE Sam Jun (Houston, Pines), TE Steve Oglesbee (Houston, Clear Lake), RE Nancy Penney (Conroe, First), and TE Helen DeLeon (Webster, Webster) (by video). TE Dan Alexander (Waverly and Trinity, First) was not present as he had a funeral to officiate. Also, YAAD Clay Shupak (Lufkin, First) was not present. Each commissioner reported on the committee on which they served as well as the plenary sessions. The committees covered were: Social Justice; BOP/PF/PILP/PPC; Mission Coordination; Theological Issues; Church Polity and Ordered Ministry; Mid Council Issues; Marriage and Civil Unions; Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations; and Immigration and Environmental Concerns.

A time for questions was offered. TE Greg Han (At large) asked about the state of interfaith relations with the PCUSA. TE Joe MacDonald (Livingston, First) asked about how the GA decides to offer and Authoritative Interpretation or an amendment to the Book of Order. RE David McCarty (Houston, First) asked how (in committees or plenary sessions) an AI is offered that modifies rather than clarifies the constitution. When the time of questions concluded, RE Julie Wells closed this portion of the meeting with prayer.

RE Jim Keith (Houston, Clear Lake) was invited forward to share a celebration of ministry on behalf of the Seafarer's Ministry at the Port of Houston.

Moderator John Jo asked people to share around the tables what is the biggest issue from General Assembly that will affect their congregations.

11:10 am REPORT OF THE STATED CLERK

Stated clerk TE Lynn Hargrove stated that the report began on page 10 of the presbytery packet. She made two motions regarding the dismissal of Grace Presbyterian Church of Houston.

Motion: To validate that the congregation of Grace Presbyterian Church, Houston, Texas, has fulfilled the requirements has fulfilled the requirements for dismissal according to the Reconciliation and Dismissal Procedure of the Presbytery of New Covenant. The motion passed.

Motion: Having met the requirements for seeking dismissal, the congregation of Grace Presbyterian Church of Houston, Texas, is dismissed to the ECO: Covenant Order of Evangelical Presbyterians pending completion of the transfer to that body.

RE Ann Hardy asked why the value of the property was not included in the financial settlement. TE Jeff Smith, who served on the negotiating team, answered the question with the explanation of the additional voluntary contribution which has been added since the Reconciliation and Dismissal Procedure was approved. Grace began under the original Reconciliation and Dismissal Procedure which included only the per member fee and funding for a new church development. The negotiating team met for more than 7 hours and agreed on a tithe of operating expenses as the basis for the payment.

TE Steve Spidell asked about dismissing to ECO to which Stated Clerk Lynn Hargrove and Moderator John Jo offered an answer.

The motion passed.

Moderator John Jo asked the commissioners from Grace to stand and to hold hands. The other commissioners were asked to stand and to lay hands on each other as he offered prayer for the congregation of Grace in their dismissal from the PCUSA.

11:18 am THE WORD – Kathleen Davies

Kathleen Davies invited us to worship at Community of Servant Savior where she is being called as Designated Pastor. Her sermon theme was "Overcoming the World".

Questions about the sermon: TE Katie Cummings asked about the prayer of illumination and the reading of the scripture. TE Dean Pogue asked if Kathleen would read the text and offer a one minute summation of what it means to her. Kathleen was using the lectionary passages from both last week and tomorrow (Matthew 13 and Romans 8) as a synthesis. TE Dean Pogue asked if the sermon was presented to the Examinations Committee prior to the presbytery meeting. TE Debbie Cenko suggested that the folks in New England had done a disservice, and that we expected a sermon, not a statement of faith. TE Jim Gill called for the question.

RE Greg Feigh moved that we sustain the sermon portion of the exam. TE Laurey Murphy commented that our exams committee expects a sermon that includes a prayer for illumination, a reading of scripture and a sermon. The sermon portion was sustained.

Questions from the floor were asked: TE Sam Knight asked if permission has been granted for Kathleen to be working in the field prior to the examination. TE Helen Rose Moore raised a point of order about using the microphones. TE Guinn Blackwell Eagleson answered that our presbytery has allowed people on site, and affirmed the “kick ass sermon”. TE Mike Cole answered that COM did approve Kathleen’s work in the field. TE Sam Knight asked if Kathleen holds a universalistic view that all will be saved. Kathleen answered that life is much better with Jesus, and that every knee will bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. Sam asked a follow up question about the salvation of the world. Kathleen answered that the salvation of the world is actually for the world. TE John Hirling was asked to come forward to recommend and move, on behalf of the Committee on Ministry, that the examination of Kathleen Davies, candidate for ordination, be sustained. The motion passed.

11:55 AM Mike Cole introduced the New Covenant International Student Fellowship at Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary as the offering recipient. He offered prayer of thanks and a blessing for the lunch meal.

We enjoyed fellowship over the lunch hour where we ate box lunches from Jason’s Deli.

1:00 pm After singing our reconvening hymn, “How Great Thou Art” (#467 in the Presbyterian Hymnal)

THE WORD – Brian Long

RE Greg Feigh (Houston, Pathways), chair of examinations, introduced Brian Long. Brian is nominated to serve as Designated Pastor of Katy, New Hope. After a prayer for illumination, Brian preached a sermon based on James 2:1-17. After an opportunity for questions about the sermon, the sermon portion of the examination was sustained. Questions from the floor were entertained. Greg Feigh asked Brian about what he would say as the invitation to the Lord’s Table. TE John Hirling, chair of Committee on Ministry, recommended and moved that the examination for ordination of Brian Long, a candidate for ordination, be sustained. The motion passed.

Moderator John Jo announced that \$4267 was collected for the Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary New Covenant International Student Fellowship.

ADMINISTRATIVE DIVISION STEERING COMMITTEE: RE Jane Larkin (Houston, St. Philip), chair of the Administrative Division, stated that she had no report.

MINISTRIES DIVISION STERRING COMMITTEE: RE Jody Harrington (Houston, MDPC), chair of the Ministries Division, announced the recipients of the Vision Initiative Grants and the Lynn Johnson Social Justice Grants. The names of the recipients are found in the presbytery packet on pages 84 and 84. A team of Jody Harrington, TE David Leard (Houston, Northwoods), RE Carlton Currie (Houston, First) and TE Mark Downs (at large) review the applications for the grant funding. \$32,600 were awarded for Vision Initiative Grants, and \$10,500 for the Lynn Johnson Social Justice Grants. The recipients were asked to stand and be recognized.

1:35 pm THE WORD – Brandon Gaide

RE Greg Feigh, chair of the examinations committee, introduced Brandon Gaide who is nominated to serve as Associate Pastor of Memorial Drive Presbyterian Church. After a prayer of illumination, Brandon preached using 2 Corinthians 2:12-17, "The Aroma of Christ". Questions were invited about the sermon portion of the exam, which was sustained. Questions from the floor completed the examination. Greg Feigh asked "In your statement of faith you say that the role of scripture is to comfort and confront. Please explain what you mean by that." TE John Hirling, chair of COM, recommended and moved that the examination for ordination of Brandon Gaide be sustained. The motion passed.

2:00 pm REPORT OF THE NOMINATING COMMITTEE

RE Gayle Smith (Houston, First) placed these names in nomination (found on page 9 of the addendum report): COM Congregational Life (class of 2016) RE James Hooper (Houston, Pinecrest); Outreach (class of 2016) RE Laurie Kluth (Houston, St. Stephen). No nominations were made from the floor. The nominations were approved.

REPORT OF THE GENERAL COUNCIL

TE Laurey Murphy (Houston, Spring Branch), moderator of General Council, asked the members of General Council to stand and asked the commissioners to thank them. The report of the council begins on page 37 in the meeting packet. She lifted item 2a for approval by the body: The General Council recommends that "The only amendment on the floor for the first reading and discussion will be the changes proposed by the General Council. The presbytery will have four months to reflect on the proposed revisions and suggest additional amendments as NEW BUSINESS (subject to the 4 day rule) prior to the second reading." Questions of clarification were asked. The motion passed.

Laurey Murphy called on RE Mort McPhail (Houston, Northwoods), RE Jody Harrington (Houston, MDPC), and TE Katie Cummings (At Large) to explain the revisions suggested by the writing team. TE Steve Oglesbee (Houston, Clear Lake) asked what the three most substantive changes are that council is proposing. 1) Reconciliation is the primary goal of the process; 2) clarification of the financial settlement at the end of the process, recognizing changes in both civil and ecclesiastical laws; 3) that the presbytery as a body is different from the discernment teams, and has responsibilities imposed by the Book of

Order that must be fulfilled. The process is still gracious and reflects concern as well as the desire to follow God's will. The first reading was concluded with no further questions.

Laurey Murphy talked about the two lawsuits pending against the presbytery – one brought by Houston, Windwood, and the other by Houston, First. She cautioned the commissioners that there is a limit to what can be said about these legal matters. TE Ted Foote (Bryan, First) asked a question about the privilege of the assembly that needs to come before the body, and suggested that the body could go into executive session to discuss these legal matters. He suggested that the body should not be dismissed with providing only written reports. Laurey answered that there would be the possibility of a called meeting of presbytery to finalize any settlement of either of the legal actions. TE Steve Spidell (At large) expressed that he has a number of concerns about the discernment process, which included both Houston, First and Houston, Grace. He challenged the leadership of presbytery to stand up for the presbytery as much as being gracious to those who want to leave. TE Kristy Forbes Vits (Bellaire, ChristChurch) asked a question about the litigation with Houston, First. The July 14th court date was postponed until September, to allow the parties to pursue settlement discussions. The hearing will be rescheduled. No final settlement would be made without the approval of the presbytery. TE Ted Foote expressed a concern about what he has heard that the settlement is about the property. He reiterated the concern for the more than 600 members that voted to stay in the PCUSA. Stated Clerk Lynn Hargrove reminded the body that it is the responsibility of all gathered to be caring for these congregations, not just the staff of presbytery.

2:35 pm THE WORD – Kristi Click

RE Greg Feigh introduced Kristi Click, candidate for ordination, who is nominated to serve as Designated Associate Pastor of Houston, Spring Branch. She opened her sermon with a prayer for illumination using the passage from John 20:19-31 as the basis for her sermon. Questions were invited regarding the sermon. None were asked. The motion was made to sustain the sermon portion of the examination. The motion passed. To conclude the examination for ordination, questions were invited. Greg Feigh asked "How would you go about nurturing spiritual discipline in the life of others?". RE Jim Keith reminded all of the candidates that they were fortunate that TE Ben Stewart was not in attendance to ask his questions. TE John Hirling, on behalf of the Committee on Ministry, recommended and moved that the examination of Kristi Click, candidate for ordination, be sustained. The motion passed.

COMMITTEE ON MINISTRY

TE John Hirling reported the action of the dissolution of the call between TE Katie Cummings and Houston Grace. He then placed this motion for the approval of the commissioners:

The committee recommends and moves that the Rev. Dr. James M. Gill be installed as Pastor of Faith Presbyterian Church, Baytown, Texas. This action requires a 75% vote of the members of the presbytery present and voting (G-2.0504c). John explained that a change in the Book of Order allowed this action to be possible. TE Helen Rose Moore (Webster, Webster) asked about the process that the

congregation went through to call Jim as pastor. The motion passed by more than the required 75% of voting members present.

TE Kevin Keaton (at large), regional representative from the Board of Pensions, reminded the presbytery commissioners that there are changes coming up from the Board of Pensions with regard to the medical plan dues. Complying with the requirements of "The Call to Health" can lower the dues increase from 1.5% to 1%, but they must be completed by September 30, 2014.

TE John Hirling called on General Presbytery Mike Cole to recognize Guinn Blackwell-Eagleson. John Hirling placed this motion for approval: The committee recommends and moves that the Rev. Guinn Blackwell-Eagleson be granted honorable retirement. The motion was approved. Mike offered the service of retirement, and Guinn was offered time to make remarks about her ministry. She was the first woman to be ordained to the ministry of Word and Sacrament 31 years ago.

3:27 pm REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON PREPARATION FOR MINISTRY

TE Kevin Boyd (Houston, St. Paul) referred to the committee report which is in the addendum. There is one recommendation for approval, which was to approve ordination examination readers for 2014-2015:

Teaching Elders: Jolene Currie, Kristy Vits, Kevin Boyd and Christa Brewer

Teaching Elder Alternate: Barrett Ingram

Ruling Elders: Bill Hargrove, Julie Wells, Bob Patterson and Jody Harrington

Ruling Elder Alternate: Kate Burkart

The readers of ordination exams were approved.

3:30 pm MOTION TO ADJOURN

As there was no new business received, the motion to adjourn was passed. Moderator John Jo closed the meeting with prayer.

Respectfully submitted,

Lynn R. Hargrove

Stated and Recording Clerk

Attendance:

Voting Commissioners

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|----------------------------|-----|-----|
| Elder Commissioner | 102 | |
| Minister Member | 79 | |
| Elder with Privilege | 10 | |
| Elected Staff | 1 | |
| Fellow NACBA | 1 | |
| Former Moderator | 6 | |
| Commissioned Ruling Elder | 2 | |
| Certified Church Educator | 1 | |
| TOTAL VOTING COMMISSIONERS | | 202 |

Non-Voting

| | | |
|----------------------------|----|----|
| Inquirers | 5 | |
| Staff | 2 | |
| Other Church Professionals | 2 | |
| Corresponding Members | 2 | |
| Visitors | 47 | |
| TOTAL NON-VOTING | | 58 |

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| TOTAL ATTENDANCE | | 260 |
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