

Presbytery in Brief

129th STATED MEETING - PRESBYTERY OF WESTERN NORTH CAROLINA

October 26, 2021 (via Zoom)

(Well, “Presbytery IN BRIEF” is counter-intuitive to a full 4-hour meeting!) Faithful Moderator Hal Bennett convened the meeting with a righteous, spirit-filled prayer of invocation at 9:01 a.m. He joyfully recognized first time Elders – 19 of whom introduced themselves, along with two corresponding members. To God, all praise, glory, and honor!

Hal also acknowledged the land and heritage of Native Americans in this region - Catawba, Sugaree, and Cherokee. He appointed and thanked Marie C. Palacios, Bob Forsythe, Cam Murchison, John Pea, and Luke Johnson for their extra help as Host, Co-Host or additional Standing Committees service.

Clerk-extraordinaire Cam declared a quorum (*interestingly, meeting attendance varied widely, with the Holy Spirit moving people in and out frequently*); 174 was the high point for attendees. Cam seamlessly gave some orientation; gained approval for a virtual meeting; got approval of Consent Agenda (including Guatemala Partnership, Mission Committee, Finance and Building Hope, and Synod of Mid-Atlantic Commissioner reports – and much more – *there’s a lot great stuff going on!!!*); covered several helpful pieces of info; and gave a concise Stated Clerk Report.

A nurturing worship service, including the Lord’s Supper, was gloriously celebrated. Worship leaders included David Bonnema and Dana Seiler, pastors at Unity Presbyterian Church; Reed Conley, organizing pastor at Artisan Church in Lincolnton; and several lay readers. The service included a beautiful regional video, a great video of the Artisan Church, and a wonderful sermon by David – covering a cautionary fishing tale about we humans always thinking we know best, planting churches, and positive examples of God at work. To God, be all glory, praise, and honor!

We had a quick small group breakout session to talk about positive success stories during the pandemic. Then General Council chair, Dick Larson, joyously nominated Mark Stanley as 2022 Vice-Moderator of Presbytery and 2023 Moderator of Presbytery.

Julie Hester reported on CE, emphasizing the return of the ever-popular Lenten Spiritual Retreat, to be held at William Black Lodge on March 25-26, 2022, and led by noted CE and artist Donna Chase from Greensboro First. She also reported on the recent CE “lunch & learn”, and CE Continuing Education opportunities.

Jason McDougald gave a positive, well done video report on Camp Grier and the impact of Building HOPE. Sarah Grace Montgomery gave the Youth Ministry report, discussing the July 23-27 Youth Triennium (application), Nov 6-7 Middle School Retreat, and Feb. 26 Faith & Sexuality Retreat. Noah McIntee reported on UKirk Ministries, provided a good video on the “Hillside Grind” at WCU. Esta Jarrett reported on Disaster Response in Canton, sharing a video that was scary, eye-opening, and heartwarming.

Dwight Christenbury, Preparation for Ministry, presented two wonderful prospects for progressing from Inquirer to Candidate status. Brandon Davis and Erin Tolar both gave strong statements, had powerful stories, and deftly fielded questions. Both were approved, then eloquently charged and fervently prayed over. The future looks a bit brighter now. Good stuff!

("Beam me up, Scotty!") Whit Malone and John Pea gave a literally out of this world COM presentation. John channeled a *unique* take on Capt. Kirk, reporting from the final frontier aboard the "SS C.O.M.". *("Houston, we have a problem!")*.

William M. Upchurch, Jr. gave a humble and heartfelt statement, answered questions, was approved as CP for Long Creek, then charged and prayed over. Rebecca Gurney was approved for nomination as Pastor at Reems Creek-Beech for a designated 2-year term.

Lynn Turnage was presented for ordination as Program Director at Montreat Conference Center. She gave a thorough call statement and a full sermon, showcasing her storytelling and other gifts, and her love of children. She was examined and approved for ordination, then charged and prayed for.

Approved for validated ministries: Tommy Brown, Director of William Black Lodge in Montreat. Joey Byrd, Chaplain in the U.S. Army. Bill Buchanan, Executive Director of Asheville Youth Mission. Lisle Garrity, Creative Director of A Sanctified Art. Joan Martin, Chaplain at Covenant Village, Gastonia, NC. Bob McCully, Treatment Director for Cherokee County Commission on Alcohol and Drug Abuse. Lynn Webber, Chaplain, J. Iverson Riddle Developmental Center. Robert Gamble, Executive Director for This Child Here, Inc. (also presented a video on his ministry). Lynn Turnage, as Director for Programs for Montreat Conference Center. David Bradley, as Pastoral Counselor, Marriage and Family Therapist. NOTE: All are approved through October 26, 2022. Praise be to God for these special ministries!

The following rule for temporary PWNC membership was approved: "When COM and its sub-committee on Examinations judges a minister of another Christian church is adequately prepared to serve in a validated ministry of PWNC, it may enroll such a minister as a temporary member of presbytery during the period of their service." This was primarily for Session moderator needs.

Billy Robinson and Jill Isola reported on Peace and Justice, featuring a video about a new Matthew 25 initiative on medical debt relief. A special collection is planned; more details to come. Also, Grace Covenant Presbyterian Church showed a video on their commendable efforts to end structural racism.

Charles Kincaid gave the Nominating/Representation Committee report, mainly about election of 225th General Assembly and Mid-Atlantic Synod Assembly Commissioners. Hal Bennett was elected Synod Commissioner for 2022-2024, along with G.A. Commissioners Rev. Dana Seiler, Rev. Dr. Keith Thompson, Collin Caldwell, and Sarah Thornburg. Alternate for GA is Rev. Dr. Whit Malone.

General Presbyter Byron Wade gave a positive report on his many and varied activities. He shared about videos, visits, lunches with pastors, "On The Western Front" activities, logo search, & Matthew 25 activity strategy.

Roger Wise offered up a covering, centering, earnest prayers of the people.

Hal adjourned the meeting at 1:01 P.M. and gave a Benediction.

This humble scribe would be remiss not to acknowledge the invaluable work and support of the ultra-competent Presbytery ladies and the rest of the staff and others who put in so much behind the scenes work and planning to make these meetings happen.

Next meeting – Saturday, January 29, 2022.

Respectfully submitted,
Rick Leissner