

Presbytery in Brief

137th STATED MEETING PRESBYTERY OF WESTERN NORTH CAROLINA October 24, 2023 @ Southminster Church

Our awesome God gifted us with the opportunity to gather in-person on this clear, crisp, glorious day, at the beautiful, recently remodeled Southminster Presbyterian Church, to do God's work in PWNC. Moderator Mark Stanley called the meeting to order at 9:06 a.m., with an appropriately simple Iona prayer of invocation, stressing justice, peace, and community. He also offered a sincere native land and indigenous peoples' acknowledgment.

Mark named Standing Committees, Bills and Overtures, and Tellers. He recognized John Pea and Larry Clark for the Resolution of Thanks, Tee Gatewood for leading the Prayers of Intercession, and this scribe for preparing the "PIB" document. He recognized 11 Elders attending for the first time.

Our superlative Stated Clerk Cam Murchison certified a quorum, gained approval for the meeting docket, and explained the Consent Agenda (which included reports from GC, the Malawi Leadership Team; Finance Committee; Building Hope; Report from Presbyterian Women) - it was then approved, with item #4 of the GC report removed from the Consent agenda.

The Holy Spirit guided host pastor Dan "no notes" Oedy, and Lauren Vanacore, to effectively concelebrate a wonderful, multi-media Worship Service with the Lord's Supper - surely pleasing and glorifying God. Dan conquered time constraint pressures as he powerfully preached about the need to "keep walking" with uncommon faith during uncommon times.

The silent majority remained silent during "Speak Out", with the exception of Alexandra Lusak, who questioned what appeared to be a weakening Presbytery Finance Report. On behalf of the Presbytery, Melvin Meares responded and elaborated on the situation. "Be generous, my friends".

Byron Wade introduced Dr. Salvador de la Torre, PCUSA Misson Co-Worker & Director of Nkhoma Synod Hospital, who gave a powerful, heartfelt talk on the history of the situation there – filled with hope, challenges, and successes.

Sarah Thornburg reported on General Council activities, gaining unanimous approval for the following three recommendations – 1) elect Ruling Elder Ken Murchison as Moderator of the Presbytery for 2025, serving as Vice-Moderator in 2024; 2) that a search committee be formed immediately to begin a search for the position of Stated Clerk for election no later than at the 7/27/24 PWNC meeting, and 3) to extend the terms of the current Stated Clerk, Cam Murchison, from 7/27/24 through 1/25/25, at which point the term of the newly elected Stated Clerk will begin. *(including a part-time paid service period for the incoming Stated Clerk, from 9/24 through 1/25, as the new clerk prepares to take over the role of Stated Clerk).* God bless you, Cam!

The item removed from the GC consent agenda earlier involved the closing of Clinchfield Presbyterian Church in Marion. The item had been removed in order to give the serious issue of a church closing more weight and importance, which further discussion and explanation helped accomplish.

Mark noted that Sarah has served the Presbytery faithfully for three years, as vice-moderator, then moderator, then General Council chair. Heartfelt thanks and applause were extended. Booyah!

(NOTE: Co-Moderator Dana Seiler moderated the balance of the meeting.)

Jim Taylor reported on some of the many important Committee on Ministry activities - *with a little singin' thrown in.*

He presented and gained approval for these Validations of Ministry: (through October 24, 2024) -

- Bill Buchanan, Executive Director, Youth Mission Co.
 - Robert Gamble, Executive Director, This Child Here.
 - Bob McCully, Treatment Director, Cherokee County Commission on Alcohol & Drug Abuse
 - Tommy Brown, Director, William Black Lodge in Montreat
 - Daniel Tipton, Chaplain, Four Seasons Hospice, Bereavement Department
 - Lisle Garrity, Leader for Sanctified Art.
 - Dennis Hysom, Executive Director of Presbyterian Federal Chaplaincies
 - Sarah Grace Montgomery, Pastor for Youth and Faith Formation at Brevard First UMC
- (The very active Validated Ministry Committee needs several more members.)

Jim introduced these new ministers received into our Presbytery:

- Kelley Connelly, from the Presbytery of the James, to serve as Associate Pastor at First Presbyterian Church of Highlands.
- Laurey Harrell, received as a Retired member from Charleston Atlantic Presbytery. (*So, what IS the proper pronoun for the Holy Trinity?*)
- Brad Simpson, received from Coastal Carolina Presbytery, to serve as Associate Pastor at First Presbyterian Church of Gastonia.

They each addressed the gathering, then went to the Clerk's table to sign the Book of Obligation. Jim also invited Lance Smith, received at the virtual meeting in January, to sign the Book.

2023 Pastor Terms of Call were referenced for further review.

Jim also recognized the following for milestones of ministerial service, each of whom were presented with certificates of appreciation:

25 Years Service

P. Edward Forsyth
Rebecca Young

50 Years Service

J. Samuel Hobson
Kenyon G. Meeks, Jr.

60 Years Service

R. Paul Kercher
David Nash

70 Years Service

Lee S. Feero, Jr.

Retired

Curtis Fussell
Tempe Fussell
Richard Boyce

Retired (cont'd)

Melissa Upchurch
Kitty Tompkins
Laura Long
Joan Martin

Merri Alexander then reported on the Preparation for Ministry Committee – Janice Kominski and Emily Beaver have been certified ready for examination by a presbytery for ordination pending a call; Ellen Settlemyre requested to be removed from the Preparation for Ministry process at this time; Erin Tolar has been ordained serving in a presbytery validated ministry; and Linzi Anderson is now an inquirer

Mary Jo Clark and Tommy Brown gave a clever, informative, serious and powerful Halloween-themed Peace and Justice Committee report, stressing the need to reduce gun violence. Prayers raised.

Peggy Ferguson reported on Nominating/Representation Committee, including gaining approval for our Commissioners for 2024 at the 226th General Assembly, to be held June 25-27, 2024 (online); and June 29-July 4, 2024, in Salt Lake City, Utah. Also, for a Synod Commissioner.

- teaching elder (minister) commissioners - Rev. Megan McMillan and Rev. Dr. Mark Stanley.
- ruling elder commissioner - Mr. Kerry Border

- Young Adult Delegate - Mairead “Maggie” Brock
 - alternate teaching elder commissioners - Rev. Leah Epps and Rev. Michael Poulos
 - with Moderator and COM Chair approval, to appoint a Ruling Elder commissioner(s) to replace a commissioner to the GA, should a commissioner(s) and/or alternate(s) be unable to attend.
 - with Moderator and COM Chair approval, to appoint a Ruling Elder commissioner yet to be identified as a delegate for a three-year term ('24-'26) for Synod of the Mid-Atlantic Stated Meetings.
- (PS - People, when Peggy calls you, please pick up the phone!)*

Jill Kimbirl gave a “glass half full” CE Committee report. APCE Conference Scholarships are available. She also invited everyone to visit the CE table.

David Germer and Beth Gunn reported on our active, effective Youth Committee - Middle School Retreat, 11/4-5; Faith and Sexuality, Morganton First, 2/10/24; Youth Delegation Guatemala Trip, 6/19-27/24; and various other Youth Leader events.

Sarah Robinson reported on the Guatemala Mission Team and Partnership, explaining and lamenting the limited visiting and networking possible during the October visit, as well as the history leading to the very volatile and dangerous current political climate there.

Our ever-active, ever-mobile, effervescent General Presbyter Byron Wade gave his report, reflecting on his first 3 years, and highlighting “mission, worship, and relationships”. He challenged us to seek and celebrate the possibilities and opportunities. He reported the Revisioning Task Force is still very active. He also lamented the lack of available ministers – especially for transitional pastorship.

(Between the sermon, the COM speakers, and Byron’s report, let’s just say that everyone who came to the meeting with a hunger for some good ol’ preachin’ all went away filled!)

Tee Gatewood offered a compassionate, powerful, relevant prayer of gratitude and intercession.

Dana blessed the meeting and the attendees, adjourning us at 12:18 PM with a benediction.

Respectfully submitted,
Rick Leissner, Scribe