

Community and Commitments:

A Summary of the January 20, 2018, Meeting of the Presbytery of the Twin Cities Area

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Community and Commitments might be the two words that best summarize the work of the Presbytery of the Twin Cities Area at its stated January 20 meeting. Embedded in those two words are details and actions largely shaped by the work of our committees and members.

We formed ourselves in community through opening worship, led by moderator the Rev. TJ Parlette, and a choir and men's quartet from our host church, Trinity Presbyterian Church in Woodbury. Guided by a Psalm and a call story from the gospel of Mark, we asked ourselves what might hold us back when Jesus calls us.

In "*nurturing our covenant community and the commitments we make*" — one of the headings that shaped the docket — Presbytery heard a powerful invitation from Anna Kendig, chair of the Committee on Ethics, to work to achieve 100 percent compliance by teaching elders in our boundary training by the end of 2018. In a *#metoo, #churchtoo* era, Kendig said, "Our words, our conversations, are not enough. (I)f our 'virtues' as a church, as a presbytery matter, they matter because they are founded in our actions." There was a boundary training session already last Monday, attended by about 20 people; the next Committee on Ethics-sponsored training will be Monday, April 16. Look for registration information soon.

Within this work of "nurturing community," treasurer Steve Robertson pointed the Presbytery to new resources that aid in the interpretation of per capita, a funding mechanism we use together to support the work of the wider church. Mission and Witness chair Brenda Alexander announced a Presbytery-wide mission trip to Louisiana, in collaboration with Presbyterian Disaster Assistance, for April 7-15. You can find all the details at <http://bit.ly/2DDGIsM>. And Presbyterian Investment and Loan Program president Jim Rissler was present to hand out 1 percent rebate checks to six congregations holding PILP loans, a reward (of more than \$16,000 in total)

made possible by the faithful payments of congregations and by Presbytery investments in PILP.

The Presbytery also made intentional time to honor those important moments for individuals in their life and ministry. We heard the faith statement and asked questions of Brittany McMillan, and then approved her for ordination and installation as associate pastor of Westminster Presbyterian Church in Austin (tentatively set for late March). We received an extensive interim report from the Administrative Commission for the closing of the Presbyterian Church in LeSueur, and marked the 152 years of faithful ministry of that church. (Its final public worship service will be Sunday, January 28, at 1:30 p.m., and all are invited.) And we publicly celebrated with Denise Dunbar-Perkins and Frank Vardeman as they moved to honorably retired status. And, of course, the Committee on Ministry reported out its usual high volume of work in about 20 seconds through the consent agenda. These are important moments in the life of our church, and we celebrate them as a Presbytery with intention and joy.

Part of our commitment as a Presbytery to the wider church is preparation for the 223rd General Assembly, to be held in June. We voted to send an overture to General Assembly asking them to urge the Board of Pensions “to include 12 weeks of paid parental leave as part of the benefits package of all employees covered under their plan.” And we asked our Bills and Overtures committee to re-work some of the language of two other overtures that advocate for this same parental leave through changes in our Book of Order; we’ll look at these revised possible overtures again in March. All three of these possible overtures originated in the Presbyterian Church in Oronoco. We’ll also look in March at a possible overture from Cherokee Park United Church around climate change.

We also sat and talked, directly with each other, at the invitation of the Presbytery Leadership Team. Following a joint report of the PLT and the executive presbyter about a continuing emphasis on the building of community, PLT convened the presbytery for about 30 minutes around a series of questions focused on the relationship between Presbytery and congregations, and among congregations. The data was collected, and those 12 pages of single-spaced notes will be used by the PLT to shape future vision and mission of the Presbytery.

And then, of course, we shared a meal together, acknowledging that part of our work as a Presbytery is the simply building of relationships through conversation. Thanks, Trinity Presbyterian Church, for a great lunch and all your hospitality.

You can find the full docket and (soon) the minutes of the meeting on the Presbytery website. We didn't take many votes at this meeting, one commissioner said in departing. But in the work we did, past commitments were honored, new ones were made, and community was deepened; and in doing so, we were Presbytery for each other.