

PRESBYTERY OF TAMPA BAY, INC.
Stated Meeting
Thursday, August 27, 2020; 8:30 a.m.
via Zoom

MEETING SUMMARY

Call to Order & Prayer

The Moderator, Ruling Elder Jonathan Owen, called the August 27, 2020, Stated Meeting of the Presbytery of Tampa Bay (PTB) to order at 8:30 a.m. The meeting served both as a meeting of the ecclesiastical governing body of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and a meeting of the Presbytery of Tampa Bay, Inc., a non-profit corporation of the State of Florida.

The Moderator formally opened the meeting with prayer, noting that he would hold off on certifying a quorum or approving the docket until after greetings and worship.

Greetings from the 224th General Assembly (2020) and Land Acknowledgment

Ruling Elder Elona Street-Stewart, Co-Moderator of the 224th General Assembly (2020) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and Synod Executive of the Synod of Lakes and Prairies brought greetings from the General Assembly and offered a land acknowledgment recognizing Indigenous Peoples in whose traditional territories we now reside.

Greetings from Host Church

John Fullerton, Pastor of First Presbyterian Church, Lakeland, FL, brought greetings from the church where we were scheduled to meet before COVID-19 limited our ability to gather and where much of the worship service was conducted for the meeting.

Worship

The Presbytery then moved to worship, with portions of the service recorded at First, Lakeland, and our guest preacher, Rev. Dr. Margaret Grun Kibben, joining us via Zoom. Worship also included the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, with Rev. Tim Sizemore, Pastor of Beacon Hill Fellowship, Lakeland, a joint congregational witness of the PC(USA) and the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship presiding at the table. Ruling Elders Rachel Gibson and Terry Dennis, Rev. Sarah Bishop, and Hadley Owen (PTB Young Adult Advisory Delegate to the 224th GA) also participated in the service, with music provided by the Fine Arts Ministries of First, Lakeland.

The morning offering was dedicated to the Native American Church Property Fund commended by the 224th General Assembly (2020) to all our councils for attention this year. By the end of the day, First Lakeland had reported receiving \$1300 in online gifts for the Fund in response to this invitation.

Following worship, Stated Clerk William Wildhack, declared that a quorum was present, including at the time at least 74 teaching elders and 56 ruling elder commissioners from congregations.

Before moving into other business, the Moderator reminded all participants of the procedures that would be used to seek recognition, speak, and vote during the meeting in the Zoom environment, and asked First-Time Commissioners, Corresponding Members, new Minister Members and other invited guests to seek to be recognized and then introduce themselves to the presbytery.

Coordinating Team (Part 1)

Rev. Loli Reiter, Chair of the Coordinating Team (CT), moved on behalf of CT, and the presbytery approved by more than two-thirds, adoption of the proposed “Special Rules of Order and Standing Rules for Electronic Meetings of the Presbytery of Tampa Bay” for use in this and any other electronic meetings of the Presbytery of Tampa Bay conducted before a regular or special meeting may be convened in person to formally adopt rules for future electronic meetings.

The docket for the remainder of the day was then approved by unanimous consent, and corresponding members were also seated by unanimous consent.

Consent Agenda

The Presbytery adopted the Consent Agenda by unanimous consent, granting requests for excused absences and receiving reports without motions or oral presentations from the Board of Trustees and our commissioner to the most recent stated meeting of the Synod of the South Atlantic.

Commission on Ministry (COM) (Part 1)

Commission chair Rev. Laurie Palmer called attention to COM’s decision not to increase the minimum salary for pastors in 2021 while at the same time recommending that congregations consider any federal Cost of Living Adjustment for 2021 when announced, and encouraged congregations to provide alternate and creative ways to affirm their pastor’s work as they continue serving “with energy, intelligence, imagination, and love.” She also reported on COM celebrating with First Presbyterian Church of Tampa on its upcoming move to a new location in Tampa, noting the support of other churches in area and First’s “solid and well-executed” plan.

On behalf of COM, Laurie moved, and the presbytery approved, that an administrative commission be appointed “to come alongside Lake Alfred Presbyterian Church at its session's request to walk alongside the session and congregation as they discern their future ministry.” The motion did not include any delegated powers.

The Presbytery then took time to recognize the upcoming retirements of Rev. C. Alan Harvey, Associate Pastor at First Presbyterian Church of Winter Haven and Rev. Robert Shaw, Pastor of Temple Terrace Presbyterian Church in Tampa. Following presentations from each church and the retiring ministers in turn, the Moderator (a member of First, Winter Haven) prayed for Rev. Harvey and Rev. Palmer prayed for Rev. Shaw.

Committee on Nominations & Representation (CNR)

Rev. Loli Reiter moved the following nominations on behalf of CNR, and after an opportunity for nominations from the floor, the presbytery elected the following persons to the commissions, boards, and terms listed:

- **Commission on Ministry:** Susan Kalkbrenner, EFW-W, 2022; Jacqueline Ward Williams, EFAA-W, 2021; Ann Marshall, EFW-E, 2021
- **Commission on Preparation for Ministry:** Marsha Clark, EFW-W, 2022
- **Board of Trustees:** Les Totten, EMW-W, 2021
- **Board of Florida Presbyterian Disaster Assistance (FLAPDAN):** Ruling Elder Chuck Berkins, Ruling Elder Alayne Berkins, and Rev. Sally Campbell-Evans.

Commission on Ministry (Part 2): Examination for Ordination

On behalf of COM, Chair Laurie Palmer moved and, following a brief meditation preached by the candidate, an examination, and further discussion, the presbytery voted to approve Rebecca R. Higman for ordination to ministry of the Word and Sacrament. Following the vote, Rev. Dawn Conti, Rebecca Higman's pastor at First Presbyterian Church in St. Petersburg, prayed for Rebecca and her new ministry.

Commission on Church Vitality (CCV)

Chair Andy Walton introduced a video showing how some of our churches and ministries have used COVID-19 Emergency Grants and other resources in support of ongoing ministry. Through mid-August, CCV distributed \$525,861.51 in COVID-19 grants to more than 40 ministries, missions, and partners in the Presbytery, and an additional \$70,000 through CCV's regular grant program. He also mentioned that CCV is offering grants to cover costs related to denominational Matthew 25 materials for congregations.

Report of Commissioners to the 224th General Assembly (2020)

Following a brief comment from Ruling Elder Commissioner (REC) Kitty Rawson, our commissioners and Young Adult Advisory Delegate (YAAD) introduced their report by presenting the following poem from General Assembly Item of Business 00-29: *On the Church in This Moment in History - Responding to the Sin of Racism*.

Sally Speer (REC)

A knee on a neck
Laying bare for all to see
The evil of
Callous
Soulless
Entitled power
Choking the life from
God's beloved
Just because.

Andy Walton (Teaching Elder Commissioner)

We know what must change.

Will we, church?

We have written many
true, significant,
sometimes even sincere
words.

Laurie Palmer (TEC)

We have confessed

Belhar, C '67, Barmen...

Enough words?

Never enough witness.

Hadley Owen (YAAD)

We know we must change.

Will we, church?

Kairos

Each commissioner and YAAD Hadley Owen then offered comments on their experience.

Bills & Overtures Committee

Ruling Elder Kitty Rawson, chair, moved and the presbytery approved that the Moderator be directed to appoint a task force to begin work needed in response to the challenge to all Presbyterians and especially to presbyteries as expressed in *Item 00-29: On the Church in This Moment in History – Responding to the Sin of Racism and a Call to Action* as approved by the 224th General Assembly (2020).

Commission on Preparation for Ministry (CPM)

Commission chair Rev. Paul Suich moved on behalf of CPM, and the presbytery approved by more than the three-fourths majority required that an alternative means of examination for the standard ordination exam in the areas of Worship and Sacrament be approved for Jeff P. Davis, a candidate for ministry under the care of this presbytery. As approved, an oral examination conducted by a committee of two ministers of Word and Sacrament and one Ruling Elder will be conducted.

Coordinating Team (Part 2)

CT Chair Loli Reiter informed the presbytery that CT had decided it will not be recommending any change in the presbytery portion of the per capita for 2021. She then moved and presbytery approved that:

The Presbytery of Tampa Bay commits itself to being a Matthew 25 Presbytery, putting intentional effort into each of the three focuses of the Matthew 25 Invitation:

- **Building congregational vitality by challenging congregations and their members to deepen and energize their faith and grow as joyful leaders and disciples actively engaged with their community, seeing new disciples engaged in ministry and longstanding believers develop in faith as the gospel of Jesus Christ is shared in word and deed.**
- **Dismantling structural racism by fearlessly applying our faith to advocate and break down the systems, practices and thinking that underlie discrimination, bias, prejudice and oppression of people of color.**
- **Eradicating systemic poverty by acting on our beliefs and working to change laws, policies, plans and structures in our society that perpetuate economic exploitation of people who are poor.**

On motion from CT, the presbytery also approved the following dates for Stated Meetings of the Presbytery in 2021 (with locations to be announced later):

- Thursday, April 29, 2021
- Saturday, August 14, 2021
- Thursday, December 2, 2021 (late afternoon/evening)

Treasurer's Report

Ruling Elder Terry Dennis reported on per capita and mission giving and expenses in this time of pandemic, noting challenges but also the availability of reserves to cover shortfalls for now, and pointed out that this will be the fifth straight year of unchanged per capita at the presbytery level.

Associate Presbyter for Emerging Ministries

Libby Shannon indicated that this is the final week of summer cohort gatherings, and another series can be offered if the interest remains high. She also described financial and/or published resources available through CCV for anti-racism, COVID-19 relief, Matthew 25 programs in congregations, and continuing education for pastors (free or at minimal expense), and concluded by celebrating the growth of "Emerge: A New Worshiping Community" in New Port Richey in partnership with Church on the Bayou in Tarpon Springs.

Coach & Coordinator Report

Patrice Hatley spoke of the positive texts she is receiving for volunteers to participate in our social justice programs. She challenged ruling elders to ensure their pastors take meaningful time off, especially given the unanticipated demands resulting from the COVID pandemic. She asked each of us to commit to being our "best church member" by being kind to staff, by contributing financially, by being faithful and sharing the good things, and by becoming

comfortable with being uncomfortable. Recognizing candidate Rebecca Higman's message, Patrice encouraged us to stop "shoulding" all over ourselves.

Updates & Greetings

The presbytery heard updates and greetings from

- Rev. Joyce Lieberman, Synod Executive and Stated Clerk of the Synod of South Atlantic,
- Teresita Matos-Post, Executive Director of the Beth-El Farmworker Ministry,
- Matt Shick, Acting Executive Director of Cedarkirk Camp & Conference Center,
- Clark Simmons, regional church consultant with the Board of Pensions, and
- Robert Hay and Kyle Nolan, Ministry Relations Officers from the Presbyterian Foundation.

Stated Clerk

Stated Clerk Bill Wildhack referred to his report reminding pastors and clerks of the annual need to submit reports on compensation for ministers and certain other church staff the presbytery and that the annual review of session minutes would be addressed soon. He also thanked temporary clerks appointed to assist him with this meeting, including Ruling Elder Kathy Sandy, Clerk of Session at Village Presbyterian Church in Tampa, Rev. Ginny Simmons Ellis, former stated clerk of this presbytery and transitional pastor at St. John Presbyterian Church in Tampa, and Rev. Jody McEwen of Lutz Community Church to back me up on a couple of things.

173 ministers, ruling elders, corresponding members, and other guests registered for the meeting today, with 160 total attending at least portions of the meeting.

Adjournment with Prayer

With no other business pending, Vice Moderator Bobby Musengwa expressed his thanks to everyone who participated in the Zoom meeting or watched the live stream on YouTube, and adjourned the meeting with prayer at 1:20 p.m.

The next meeting of the Presbytery of Tampa Bay is set to be held using Zoom on Thursday, November 12, 2020.