

MINUTES

CALL to ORDER and DECLARATION of a QUORUM

Moderator Cyril Hollingsworth called the meeting to order at 10:03 am and declared a quorum. Temporary Stated Clerk Leslie Belden took minutes in the absence of Clerk Cindy Lanphear.

OPENING TIME AND PASTORAL CONCERNS:

Prayer joys and concerns included Fern Davis's health had a mixed report – there is no obstruction in either kidney, but restricted blood flow in her kidneys - perhaps stage 2 kidney disease; Janis Walmsley, who is at the doctor today; Katie (Cyril's daughter) who is doing better; John Arnold, whose mother died; Chip Hatcher's father will be moving into a nursing home; farmers and those affected by the flood waters. Chip Hatcher shared a devotional based on a writing by Rachel Held Evans, in *Searching for Sunday*, called "Breath," and opened the meeting in prayer.

THOSE ATTENDING:

D.C. Adams (zoom for part of the meeting), Susan Arnold, Bill Bailey, Bill Branch, Phil Butin, Charles Cook, Fern Davis, Sid McCollum, Chip Hatcher, Cyril Hollingsworth, Dari Rowen, Lacy Sellars, Barbara Verdery, Lindy Vogado (zoom for the first part of the meeting), and Jane Webb. Staff support Temporary Stated Clerk Leslie Belden and General Presbyter Stewart Smith were also in attendance.

EXCUSED ABSENCES:

Carol Clark, Don Eilbott, Charlie Harwell, Sue Johnston, Cindy Lanphear, Sandy Puryear, Bill Walmsley, and Ed Wilkinson. Jim Pedersen was absent without excuse.

CONSENT AGENDA:

Motion to approve the Minutes of May 7, 2019. Approved.

EXAMINATIONS AND PASTORAL RELATIONSHIPS WITH CONGREGATIONS:

- Stacey Hammons—for ordination and validated ministry as Chaplain at Presbyterian Village Little Rock

Stacey is a member of Second Presbyterian Church in Little Rock. She was examined by the Central Arkansas Examinations Subcommittee, who sustained the examination. **Motion to approve the Chaplaincy of Presbyterian Village as a Validated Ministry. Approved. Motion to recommend that the Presbytery of Arkansas examine her for ordination on the floor at the June 8, 2019**

meeting of Presbytery, and enroll her as a member of Presbytery pending her ordination. Approved. Information concerning her ordination service will be recommended to the Coordinating Team at their June 24 meeting for their approval. The Coordinating Team has the authority to elect an Administrative Commission and the corresponding motions associated with the service.

- Krista Denne---update

The congregation of First Presbyterian Church of Clarksville elected a Pastor Nominating Committee, and the COM had given the PNC permission to bring Krista's name before the congregation without a search. **Motion to recommend that Presbytery approve the call of MWS Krista Denne' as Pastor of First Presbyterian Church of Clarksville, Arkansas, with the following terms of call for a 30 hour per week call:**

Salary	\$9,300
Housing	\$12,800
Auto Allowance	\$500
Education	\$1,500
Tax Reimbursement	\$3,500
Total	\$36,600

4 weeks vacation, 2 weeks continuing education, the church will furnish pastoral supply when Krista is gone for softball, a sabbatical leave at the completion of seven years of ministry to be approved by the Committee on Ministry in the fifth year, and parental leave of six weeks.

- Fern Davis shared her work gathering information on the Presbytery's Commissioned Ruling Elders. The schedule for covenant renewals is a part of that information, as well as forms for the covenant and who is serving as mentors for the CREs. See attachment to these minutes.

STATED CLERK REPORT

Temporary Stated Clerk Leslie Belden shared a revised version of the Background Check Policy, in which the term "in-active" was replaced with "serving in a pastoral capacity." After discussion Lacy Sellars offered the change from "a pastoral capacity" to "any pastoral capacity," and members of the COM liked the change in language. Leslie will take this revision to the Coordinating Team for their consideration and will bring back any additional changes or thoughts to the COM at the next meeting. Revisions to the Ministry Manual will not be brought before the Presbytery until the March 2020 meeting.

GENERAL PRESBYTER REPORT

Cleburne Avenue, West Helena: Stewart updated the COM on Cleburne Avenue Presbyterian Church, West Helena. The AC that was elected to work with all congregations seeking to close is traveling to West Helena with Stewart and Leslie

this Thursday to meet with them. The session wishes to gift the building to the Rescue Mission so that they may house women and children in need of housing.

First, Marianna has only three members and Helena is also struggling. The good news in the Delta is that Forrest City is getting ready to call the pastor with whom they've been in conversation for many months whose spouse was affected by the government shutdown. There will be an examination for that candidate soon. Also Wynne has a candidate that they are interested in, so there will be two Delta congregations with called pastoral leadership.

Candidate Max Hill has a call to serve as the UKirk Chaplain in St. Louis working with two campuses. Giddings Lovejoy Presbytery will not ordain someone who hasn't had CPE and Max hasn't had CPE so they want us to examine and ordain him. We will need to have a special called meeting of Presbytery for the purpose of examining and ordaining Max Hill. The ordination service would immediately follow the examination, concluding the meeting. The date of the meeting will probably be in August and hopefully be announced at the June 8, 2019 meeting. The meeting and ordination will probably be at Second Presbyterian Church of Little Rock.

Motion to call a special called meeting of Presbytery for the purpose of examining and ordaining Candidate Max Hill sometime in August at Second Presbyterian Church, pending successful completion of the examination by the COM's Examinations Subcommittee. Approved.

Stewart asked for guidance on whether the COM should be involved in the termination or non-renewal of a temporary pastoral relationship. Stewart shared that he has explained to a session member that a session doesn't need the COM to discontinue a temporary pastoral relationship, but the COM could help for example if there was mediation needed. The COM also can be of assistance as the a session considers the "what next" process. Committee discussion included what happens with the termination of a called position. If a relationship deteriorates then the COM assists a called pastor with a severance package, but that is not the case with a temporary pastoral relationship. It was also expressed that having liaisons involved as soon as possible is a good thing. The church in question is Bull Shoals and Cindy Saul is their Stated Supply. Considering Cindy's experiences with congregations in Spring River and Newport and now some apparent difficulty with Bull Shoals, it was suggested that due consideration be given regarding any additional congregational service and what might be needed if such possibility arises for her. The issue of whether and how the COM might get involved or not is not a simple proposition. For example, when the pastor is still there, does the session have to invite the COM to become involved? What if the pastor requests COM involvement? If the congregation is without pastoral leadership, COM involvement is not as complicated, with the COM wanting to be of help and having the ability to communicate directly with the session.

Items to Discuss, Report, Consider:

- Process of examinations and approval by COM, of exam, of Covenant, of Terms of Call—issue: when does congregation move ahead?

Cyril explained that there have been times when a congregation approves the terms of call prior to the COM approving them. This should not be the case, which means that the COM must be more proactive in approving the terms of call. Cyril wanted to know how much involvement the whole committee wants in the process – does approving the terms of call need to be approved by the liaisons, the Examinations Subcommittee, or the whole entire COM, before the congregation votes on them. **Motion that: (1) The Examinations Subcommittee examine, receive the Statement of Faith and approve the terms of call, receiving all the paperwork required, and (2) The COM as a whole will make the recommendation to the Presbytery on the call itself, and being enrolled in the Presbytery if not already a member, and (3) the congregation may vote on the call following the Examinations Subcommittee approval. Approved.**

As a normal pattern the liaisons should be the conduit for getting the following information needed to the Examinations Subcommittee:

- Proposed Internal Policy: Calling as Pastor Someone Currently Serving the Congregation

Cyril explained the proposed internal policy that Cyril developed in response to the situation with Krista Denne,' which is included as an attachment to these minutes. This policy would only go into effect for a called position rather than a temporary pastoral relationship. The *Book of Order* requires the election of a PNC in any and all called positions, and a $\frac{3}{4}$ vote of Presbytery to approve a call of someone currently serving in a pastoral role, whether the current position is temporary or called, in the case of an Associate Pastor. The proposed policy encourages a thorough search while not mandating it.

If the session, or PNC if one is already elected, believes that God is calling a pastor currently serving, there would be a process outlined, with the COM determining that in certain specific cases there would not need to be a thorough search. This adds flexibility to our understanding of the way that a PNC works. There must be a PNC elected, and the congregation must vote on the person proposed by the PNC, but the PNC doesn't necessarily have to put together an MIF and conduct a search in every case. It was suggested that the word "ordinarily" needs to be inserted before the word "should" when referring to whether a thorough search be conducted.

There was also discussion on how truncating the work of a search, such as not doing the mission study for an MIF, is sometimes not in the best interest of a congregation. COM members believe that periodic mission studies are to be encouraged, whether as a part of a pastoral search or not, but ordinarily a pastoral search encourages a congregation to do one. The

discernment process that the COM will need to go through in determining whether to allow a session/PNC to utilize a shortened process will need to be careful and prayerful. It was also brought up that the need for a ¾ vote of Presbytery assists with checks and balances.

COM members were encouraged to look at the proposed internal policy more closely between meetings and will review it again at the July zoom meeting.

- Update: Examinations of Ministers From Another Denomination

Cyril shared that a group consisting of Cyril Hollingsworth, Don Eilbott, Lindy Vogado, Phil Butin, Jane Webb, Stewart Smith and Leslie Belden had a zoom meeting to discuss the issues around the examinations of ministers from other denominations. Leslie took notes and that group will continue to look at that process.

- Stated Supplies as Opposed to Called Pastors?

The COM can approve a pastor as Stated Supply or other temporary pastoral relationship but a called pastor must be approved by the Presbytery. A called pastor must be enrolled in the Board of Pensions while a pastor serving in a temporary pastoral relationship does not if serving less than 20 hours a week. Sometimes a congregation may be encouraged to continue with a temporary pastoral relationship rather than attempt to call and install their temporary pastor and go into the process of determining whether a PNC be elected and whether a thorough search must take place.

CONSIDERING COM LIST OF CHURCHES-- REPORTS, INFORMATION, ISSUES

Holiday Island: D.C. Adams reported that Bradley Rito wishes for his service of installation to be on July 14, 2019, and D.C. has told him that he is required to attend the monthly Cluster meetings for his first six months at Holiday Island. The information for the installation service will be addressed at the June 24, 2019 Coordinating Team meeting.

Mountain Home: ELCA pastor Mike Clark, who is a Temporary Member of Presbytery, is their Transitional Pastor, and they have determined that they cannot afford to call a full-time pastor. Mike is frustrated with their lack of desire to move things forward. D.C. believes that Mike is doing a good job as their Transitional but that no one within the congregation is working on moving toward the future. It was suggested that Mike be encouraged to give them notice that he will only remain for a specified length of time so that they will be pushed to rev up their search. Mike is being paid \$34,000 per year when he is working only two days a week plus Sundays, which is a good salary for a part-time position.

Lincoln/Mt. Comfort/Huntsville: Cyril shared that Dan Wooley is the called part-time pastor at First, Lincoln and the Stated Supply at Mount Comfort. Phil Butin and Barbara Verdery have been working with those two congregations. Phil

explained that Dan has been at Lincoln for about 15 years, during which time he was full-time until the past three years. The church had \$250,000 in the bank when he was called as their pastor and is now down to \$40,000. After a congregational pastoral review Dan has decided to dissolve the call at First, Lincoln. Kelly Pearson, who served as the CRE at First, Dardanelle, is willing to serve temporarily as their CRE. There is an elder in the church who is interested in being trained as a CRE to be their future CRE. Phil believes that the change from ordained pastoral leadership to CRE leadership could encourage other members to not be so reliant on the pastor. They are also discussing mission ministry in the community, as led by Michelle, the elder who is interested in becoming a CRE. Becky Purcell has agreed to serve as Michelle's mentor.

At Mt. Comfort, Dan became the part-time Stated Supply three years ago. His energy began to wane after a year or so. Mt. Comfort also did a congregational pastoral review but the results were more mixed than at Lincoln, so they decided to continue the temporary pastoral relationship for six months, after which time they would review the covenant.

Barbara Verdery is the liaison at First, Huntsville. Barbara explained that Phil Butin learned through Dan that, without consulting with the liaison, the session at First, Huntsville is considering a covenant with Dan as their pastor. Dan needs benefits and Huntsville has benefits built into their salary package. Because Phil has been working closely with Dan in the Lincoln and Mt. Comfort situations, he will be involved with Barbara regarding Huntsville. Among things to be considered are the need for the session to contact references and the Lincoln and Mt. Comfort congregations and to be very specific with Dan about the expectations that they have of their pastoral leadership, while building in the means to evaluate that pastoral leadership regularly.

Harmony, Clarksville: Bill Bailey and Chip Hatcher are working with Harmony. The last they heard was that the session and Cindy Lanphear visited with Marci and all parties seem satisfied at this time.

First, Jacksonville: Dari Rowen is one of the liaisons, serving with Lindy Vogado, and shared that a candidate for their position preached last Sunday and that they are interested in having a conversation with that potential pastor. Susan Arnold asked if there was still an effort for First, Jacksonville to share pastoral leadership with First, North Little Rock/Argenta. It was reported that there has been a lack of good communication between the two – when First, NLR/Argenta hired a part-time Stated Supply, Michael Vinson, First, Jacksonville, believed that First, NLR/Argenta was no longer interested in working together with them.

First, Pine Bluff: Dari Rowen, Moderator of the AC elected to work with First, Pine Bluff, shared that the AC met with the session on May 19 as a sort-of introductory meeting. There will be follow-up. There are no current conversations with Central Presbyterian Church. Discussion involved the possibility of the AC taking original jurisdiction if it is determined that the session is incapable of making decisions. Dari expressed that she believes that First, Pine Bluff, will be more

willing to discuss possibilities of a different model of pastoral leadership – or perhaps a relationship with Central Pine Bluff – when John Landis leaves. Bill Branch said Presbyterian Disaster Assistance is wanting to work with all three Presbyterian congregations to address the recent tornado and current flooding impacts on the community, and he hopes that will encourage them to work together in other ways.

Mount Vernon, Pea Ridge: Jane Webb reported that she is going to their upcoming session meeting and that Brian Timmons, the Methodist pastor serving them part-time, is interested in being examined by the Examinations Subcommittee.

Grace, Little Rock: Sid McCollum and Cyril Hollingsworth met with the session at Grace and the congregation is in the process of electing a PNC.

NEXT MEETING[S]/PRESBYTERY MEETING[S]:

- July 2—Zoom
- Presbytery—Second, Little Rock, on June 8, 2019.

CLOSING PRAYER:

Bill Branch charged the members of the COM as a closing prayer at 2:07 pm.