



Stated Meeting
Saturday, February 10, 2024
via Zoom at 10:00 A.M.

Rev. Li “Dolly” Dong, Moderator, welcomed everyone to the stated business meeting at 10:00 a.m. via Zoom. She opened with prayer.

Ruling Elder Alison Blondheim, Stated Clerk, declared a quorum was present and online.

MOTION Approval of the docket as presented online. **APPROVED**

General Presbyter, Rev. Matthew Skolnik (Matt) explained some rules on Zoom etiquette.

Worship

Matt read a prayer submitted by Rev. Lynn Shetzer. Rev. Eniko Ferenczy read a prayer.

Matt gave some background on the Israel-Palestine Conflict. Rev. Deborah Bowsher read Psalm 83. Matt shared some of his experience in Ukraine. He had a video that he wanted to show regarding the Israel-Palestine Conflict, but there was some objection to viewing it by some in attendance, so it was not shown during the meeting, but the link was available on the MVP website for anyone who wished to view it on their own. It had been encouraged to view it on one’s own prior to the stated business meeting.

Ruling Elder Cathy Piekarski read Genesis 32:22-32 on Jacob wrestling with God. This was followed by a Prayer Time which was opened by CRE Rick Hastings and followed by Rev. Jeff Bergeson, Rev. Kathryn Ophardt with Rev. Matt Skolnik closing out the prayer time.

Necrology

Rev. Mark Unrue read the list of ordained Pastors, Elders and Deacons who had passed on to their heavenly home in 2023. He closed out the time in prayer. (Necrology List-Appendix 2.10.2024.1)

Stated Meeting Minutes

Moderator Rev. Li Dong asked for a **motion** to approve the Muskingum Valley Presbytery stated meeting minutes from December 5, 2023.

MOTION Approval of the stated meeting minutes from December 5, 2023, was made by Rick Hastings, CRE and seconded by Tim Pollock, CRE. **APPROVED**

Proposed GA Overture

Ruling Elder Nahida Gordon from Wooster Westminster Presbyterian Church presented a PowerPoint on “Christian Zionism.” The proposed General Assembly Overture had been emailed out to all on the MVP Email List prior to the stated meeting. (Complete Overture with Rationale -Appendix 2.10.2024.2) The major proponents of the overture are as follows:

- A. Reject Christian Zionism

- B. Study document to increase our understanding of Christian Zionism as it exists today.
- C. Call upon the General Assembly through Office of World Mission to work with our partners across the world who are also confronting the spreading of Christian Zionism.
- D. Call upon people of faith to advocate for a just peace with full and equal human rights for all the people in Palestine and Israel.

There was a time for debate on the proposed overture. Rev. Jeff Bergeson asked some questions on the overture. Rev. Charles Hardwick, Synod of the Covenant Executive, spoke to the question. David Knight from the Congress Community Church spoke against the overture. Cathy Piekarski asked about the video that was not shown earlier in the meeting. Rev. Michael Wallace spoke in favor of the overture. Rev. Deborah Bowsher asked about the process of GA overtures and Rev. Hardwick explained the process of GA overtures. Bill Weiss, a member of Wooster Westminster spoke on why he was in favor of the overture. Martha Meadows, a member of John Knox Presbyterian Church asked some questions about it and was responded to by Rev. Michael Wallace. Rick Hastings, CRE made some statements. Rev. Dr. Michael Smith asked what was “Christian Zionism,” as he was not familiar with the term. Nahida Gordon tried to answer his question on that. Matt Skolnik used an example related to family. Also, speaking were Rev. Ben George and Dana Bonezzi, a member of Wayne Presbyterian Church.

Rev. Deborah Bowsher called for a motion to end debate and it was seconded. Moderator Dolly Dong asked for a vote on ending the debate. A vote was taken by raising one’s hand by those eligible to vote. The vote to end debate was 27 – Yes and 2 – No. **Motion Approved**

Moderator Dolly Dong went back to the original motion of approving sending the overture to the 2024 General Assembly for consideration and vote. A vote was taken by raising one’s hand by those eligible to vote. The vote to send the proposed overture to the General Assembly was 26 – Yes and 6 – No. **Motion Approved**

Rev. Eniko Ferenczy offered prayer after the vote was taken. Dana Bonezzi led in a singing of “Bind Us Together.”

Administrative Commission Report

Preliminary Report from the MVP Administrative Commission with Reedurban Presbyterian Church was presented for information. (Appendix 2.10.2024.3)

First Reading of Proposed Bylaw:

CHAPTER I: THE PRESBYTERY

Section 1 The Bylaws set forth herein are the provisions for the governance and operation of the Council called Muskingum Valley Presbytery (hereafter “Presbytery”), a member presbytery of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), a Reformed denomination.

Section 2 The Presbytery is a non-profit corporation that is organized and existing under the laws of the State of Ohio and exercises ecclesiastical jurisdiction over the PC(USA) congregations in Ashland, Carroll, Columbiana, Coshocton, Harrison, Holmes, Guernsey, Southern Medina, Morgan, Muskingum, Noble, Perry, Richland, Stark, Tuscarawas, Washington, and Wayne counties.

Section 3 The Presbytery is an organization formed exclusively for religious purposes within the meaning of Section 501(c)(3) of the United States Internal Revenue Code of 1986 (as

amended) and shall be operated exclusively for the religious purposes set forth in the Presbytery's Articles of Incorporation.

Section 4 These Bylaws shall at all times be subject to the provisions of the Bible and the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Applicable provisions in the Constitution shall take priority over any provision in these Bylaws. These Bylaws are also subject to the Ohio Revised Code and the Articles of Incorporation of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) on file with the Secretary of State.

Motion to replace Chapter 1: The Presbytery - Section 2 with the proposed following wording:

Rationale for the change – After an Office of General Assembly study of maps within all of the Presbyteries in the Synod of the Covenant it was found that our geographical boundaries were off as stated in our current bylaws.

Section 2. The Presbytery is a non-profit corporation that is organized and existing under the laws of the State of Ohio and exercises ecclesiastical jurisdiction over the PC (USA) congregations as follows:

The geographic district of the Presbytery of Muskingum Valley consists of the counties of Ashland, Carroll, Columbiana (the townships of Franklin and Hanover), Coshocton, Guernsey, Harrison (the townships of Franklin, Freeport, Monroe, Morefield, Nottingham, and Washington), Holmes, Medina (the townships of Canaan, Guilford, Rittman City, and Seville Village), Morgan, Muskingum, Noble, Perry, Richland (excluding the township of Sharon), Stark, Tuscarawas, Wayne, and Washington (excluding the township of Grandview), all in the state of Ohio.

Committee on Ministry Report

See updated Terms of Call (attached Appendix 2.10.2024.4)

Stated Clerk's Report – Alison Blondheim

Installation Commission

On January 7, 2024, a small Commission from MVP which included GP, Rev. Matt Skolnik, Moderator, Rev. Li Dong, Stated Clerk, Alison Blondheim, and Rev. Dennis Allison (HR) went to Cambridge Presbyterian Church to install Rev. Jeffrey Bergeson as the Pastor of Cambridge Presbyterian Church. Cambridge Presbyterian Church came about last summer when First Presbyterian Church and Unity Presbyterian Church merged to become Cambridge Presbyterian Church and chose Rev. Bergeson to become their Pastor. He had been the installed Pastor at Unity Presbyterian Church.

Session Minutes Review

We will again hold Session Minutes Review sessions for 2023 Session Minutes. These will not be scheduled until later in the summer of 2024. I will need a couple of churches willing to host us, preferably one church in the northern part of the Presbytery and one in the southern half .

General Assembly 2024 – Salt Lake City, UT - June 29 – July 4, 2024

MVP Mission Council approved the nomination of Tara Mitchell, CRE as the Ruling Elder Commissioner for General Assembly 2024 in December since we did not have a nomination at the time of the December MVP Stated Meeting. Rev. Deborah Bowsher was approved as the Teaching Elder Commissioner at the December MVP Stated Meeting.

Statistics for 2023

The deadline for entering your church's statistical information for 2023 to be inputted on the Office of General Assembly website is February 15, 2024. You will go to <https://oga.pcusa.org/section/churchwide-ministries/stats/statistical-reporting-faq/>

Please let Stated Clerk, Alison Blondheim, if you need assistance with any of it. She can provide your User ID and Password. It is important that these be completed each year. After 2/15/2024, you will need to provide Alison with your statistics so that they can be inputted.

Boundaries Training

Synod of the Covenant through LeaderWise will offer four Zoom opportunities of Introduction to Boundaries Training for up to forty participants each in 2024. (This includes training on sexual misconduct but NOT Childhood Sexual Abuse Prevention training.). Here are the dates:

- Tuesday and Wednesday April 9 and 10, 1:30 to 4:30 pm
- Saturday September 28, 9:30 am to 4:30 pm
- Tuesday and Wednesday October 15 and 16, 6:00 to 9:00 pm
- Thursday November 7 9:30 am to 4:30 pm

If you did not take Boundaries Training in 2023, you will need to take it in 2024.

Board of Pensions Conference

There will be a 2-day Board of Pensions Conference to be held in Philadelphia on April 30 – May 1, 2024, to discuss the changes to the Board of Pension Plans for Teaching Elders and others who are part of the BOP plan. We will update with the changes as we learn about them. We hope to have someone from MVP attending the conference, possibly Stated Clerk, Alison Blondheim and COM Chair, Rev. Mark Unrue.

Committee on Ministry

Motion to dissolve the pastoral relationships that Rev. Ben George and Rev. Michael Wallace have with Christ Presbyterian Church in Canton, OH, effective May 31, 2024, as they enter into a joint Designated Co-Pastoral leadership model at Christ Presbyterian Church starting June 1,

2024. The designated term of service is 4 years. At the end of the third year, the pastors, the congregation, and the presbytery shall determine if the designated pastorates should transition into Called and Installed positions at the end of the fourth year. The session of Christ Presbyterian church, in conjunction with COM shall review SMART goals annually, and as needed, to ensure that the new pastoral structure has a well balanced and robust focus on equipping the saints for the work of ministry, local mission, and administrative leadership. (Terms of Call for both Pastors-Appendix 2.10.2024.5)

Motion as presented above was **Approved**.

Commission on Preparation for Ministry (CPM)

Edith Ophardt, who Chairs CPM reported on the Elder Enhancement Workshops beginning in February and being held at First Presbyterian Church of Uhrichsville. Anyone can register for any of the workshops. Participation in these workshops can be applied toward the CRE program in the future. There are not enough applicants to begin CRE training in 2024 as originally planned.

Rick Hastings, CRE asked about Elder Communion training. There is a lack of anyone able to serve communion at Beverly Presbyterian Church.

Nominating Report

Joan Brode gave the Nominating Report.

The committee would like to elect Tara Mitchell, CRE as Ruling Elder Commissioner for GA 2024.

MOTION Approve Tara Mitchell, CRE to serve as Ruling Elder Commissioner for GA 2024.
APPROVED

The Financial Report was presented by Mike Mast, Treasurer. It was received as presented with no additional questions. (Financial Report Appendix 2.10.2024.6)

Rev. Matthew Bruce who was recently hired by the Synod of the Covenant spoke on the "Cultivating the Gift of Preaching." The Synod of the Covenant recently received an Eli Lilly Grant to assist with training up to 140 preachers across the Synod to preach. He is looking for candidates from each of the 11 Presbyteries in the Synod. He would like up to thirty-five participants a year. The application process will begin in March and continue until April 5, 2024. The program will use Biblical interpretation and training on technology.

Other Upcoming Events:

Rick Hastings, CRE announced that Barlow Presbyterian Church will be hosting a Scottish Heritage Day on April 27.

Rev. Ben George announced that Christ Presbyterian Church will be hosting a poverty simulation training on Tuesday, April 23, 2024, from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m.

The Stated Meeting was adjourned with closing prayer by Rev. Ben George at 12:30 p.m.

Upcoming MVP 2024 Stated Meetings – SAVE THE DATE

Wednesday, May 22, 2024, at 6:00 P.M. at Trinity United Presbyterian Church, Zanesville

Saturday, September 21, 2024, at 10:00 A.M. at Milton Rittman Presbyterian Church

Wednesday, December 11, 2024, at 6:00 P.M. Canton Christ Presbyterian Church

Respectfully submitted by Stated Clerk, Alison Blondheim