

Stated Meeting

Saturday, September 21, 2024

In Person and via Zoom at 10:00 A.M.

Milton Presbyterian Church, Rittman, OH

Welcome time and breakfast were held prior to the opening of the Stated Meeting from 9:00 a.m. until 10:00 a.m.

Moderator, Rev. Li “Dolly” Dong opened the meeting with prayer and called the meeting to order. Stated Clerk, Alison Blondheim stated that a quorum was present. Rev. Dong asked for a motion to approve the docket.

**MOTION** made by Rev. Justin Hylden and seconded by Rick Hastings, CRE to approve the docket as printed on the MVP website. **APPROVED**

Rev. Alex Barnes, Pastor of Milton Presbyterian Church welcomed everyone to the Stated Meeting. He also invited everyone to visit ***The Server,*** a pro-bono coffee shop in downtown Rittman located at 51 N. Main St. that was sponsored by many of the churches in Rittman. Lunch will be available following today’s meeting here at the church.

**WORSHIP and COMMISSIONING SERVICE**

The worship service opened with a prelude played by the church organist.

Rick Hastings, CRE led the Call to Worship and Opening Prayer.

The hymn “Morning Has Broken” was sung.

GP, Rev. Matt Skolnik led the Prayer of Confession, Assurance of Pardon and Sharing of Forgiveness and Peace. The Gloria Patri was sung.

Tara Mitchell, CRE led the Prayers of the People and Lord’s Prayer.

Ava Skolnik (Matt Skolnik’s daughter) read the Scripture passage from Matthew 25:14-30.

Rev. Luke Choi, Board of Pension Representative gave the Message, “Good and Faithful Servant.”

The hymn, “There’s a Sweet, Sweet Spirit” was sung.

Examination of Roger Sibert a ruling elder at Central Presbyterian Church of Massillon was conducted prior to his commissioning service to become the interim CRE at Central Presbyterian Church. He shared his Statement of Faith (**Appendix 9.21.2024.1**) Roger was asked by Rev. Jeff Bergeson to share more about line 10 on his Statement of Faith. Roger referenced the writings of Dallas Willard and that we live in the Kingdom of God here on earth and will continue to once we leave earth. Rev. Alex Barnes asked Roger about any spiritual disciplines that Roger may practice. He stated that he reads the entire Bible through each year with daily readings and encourages others at his church to do so as well. He also encourages others in discipleship. Roger was then taken out of the room for further discussion and a vote for approval. Rev. Chris Stewart asked a question about commissioning pastors and what his training was. It was stated that Roger completed his CRE training 3 years ago and was going to be serving his home congregation.

**MOTION**: Rev. Mark Unrue made the motion and seconded by RE Don McDonald to approve Roger Sibert as CRE at Central Presbyterian Church of Massillon. **APPROVED**

Moderator Rev. Dong led the Service of Commissioning for Roger Sibert.

Communion was presided over by Rev. Matt Skolnik with assistance in serving by Rev. Jeff Bergeson, Rev. Justin Hylden and RE Donna Robertson. Rev Hylden offered the Prayer after Communion.

Closing hymn was “Be Thou My Vision.”

CRE Sally Fusek offered benediction.

There was a brief break before the business meeting began at 11:30 a.m.

Rev. Li “Dolly’ Dong, Moderator, welcomed everyone to the stated business meeting at 11:30 a.m. both in person and via Zoom. Rev. Alex Barnes reminded those in attendance that lunch was available following the business meeting.

**GA Commissioners Report**

Rev. Deborah (Deb) Bowsher and Tara Mitchell, CRE who were the MVP representatives to the General Assembly this past summer in Salt Lake City, Utah gave their GA Commissioners Report.

Deb opened with prayer. Photos were shown on the screen from the General Assembly. Their training began through Zoom. There were fifty (50) members per committee with two co-moderators and a parliamentarian. These meetings were conducted from June 25-27, 2024. There were sixteen (16) committees altogether. Tara was on the INT Engagement Committee. Deb was on the Reading of Synod Minutes Committee. The Plenary sessions were held July 29-July 4 in Salt Lake City, UT. Rev. CeCe Armstrong and Rev. Tony Larson were selected as the Co-Moderators of the 226th General Assembly. They are both from South Carolina. Both Deb and Tara enjoyed the experience and would do it again. Some highlights from the GA were that a Task Force was set up to assist with the Board of Pension changes. The Christian Zionism Overture that MVP sent to GA was approved. The Special Offerings will be going from four per year to three per year with some different focus. The Olympia Overture was divided into two parts-F-1.0403 (Book of Order) candidates to be examined will not be barred if their principles do not agree with the amendment.

General Presbyter, Rev. Matthew Skolnik (Matt) waived his presentation on **Moving the Church Forward** in the interest of time.

**Stated Meeting Minutes**

Moderator Rev. Li Dong asked for a **motion** to approve the Muskingum Valley Presbytery stated meeting minutes from May 22, 2024.

**MOTION** Approval of the stated meeting minutes from May 22,2024 **APPROVED**

Stated Clerk, Alison Blondheim, presented the MVP Statistical Report for 2023. A motion was asked to approve the MVP 2023 Statistical Report.(**Appendix 9.21.2024.2**)

**MOTION** Approval of the MVP Statistical Report for 2023 **APPROVED**

**Approval of the Proposed Synod of the Covenant Bylaw:**

**AMENDMENT TO THE SYNOD OF THE COVENANT BYLAWS**: **To approve the** Each at-large member shall be elected to serve terms of three years and may be eligible for re-election. However, no at-large members shall serve more than six consecutive years, and any at-large member who has served six consecutive years shall be ineligible for election as an at-large member for at least one year.

A. At-large members will have voice and vote on the committees to which they are assigned, as well as voice and vote at Synod Assemblies. 6

B. Each at-large member shall be a ruling elder or a teaching elder.

C. Each at-large member shall be a member of a presbytery or congregation within the bounds of the Synod of the Covenant.

D. No more than one (1) at-large member from each presbytery can serve simultaneously.

**following proposed amendment**: **To add** 40:80 In order to fulfill the principles of participation and representation, the Synod shall elect three ruling elders and three teaching elders as at-large members as follows: two people of African descent, two people of Asian, Asian American, or Pacific Islander (AAPI) descent, and 2 people from marginalized communities within the bounds of the Synod (member of another racialized identity, immigrants, those whose first language is not English). Two of those elected will be assigned to serve on the Leadership Committee, and the other four will be assigned, one each, to one of the other standing committees by the Nominating Committee.

Rationale: At the Annual Assembly in October 2023, Commissioners approved the following motion: To increase the number of Synod Commissioners by six. The composition of those six will be designated as follows: two Commissioners of African descent, two commissioners of Asian, Asian American, or Pacific Islander (AAPI) descent, and 2 Commissioners marginalized communities within the bounds of the Synod (member of another racialized identity, immigrants, those whose first language is not English). Two of these commissioners will serve on the Leadership Committee, and the other four will be assigned, one each, to other standing committees.

Constitutional Support: F-1.0403, G-3.0103, G-3.0401

NOTE: Per PCUSA Constitution, changes in bylaws or policies that alter the composition of synod membership must be approved by presbyteries that comprise the synod. If this amendment to the bylaws is approved, it will be forwarded to presbyteries within the bounds of the Synod of the Covenant for ratification. The results of those votes will be provided in the clerk’s report at the Synod Assembly in October 2024.

Some questions were asked prior to the motion being called.

**MOTION** Approval of the Synod of the Covenant Bylaws Amendment was **APPROVED**.

**Administrative Commission Report – Reedurban Presbyterian Church**

Rev. Tim Dyck, Moderator the Administrative Commission gave the Final Report for Reedurban Presbyterian Church. He outlined their AC’s recommendations. (**Appendix 9.21.2024.3**)

**MOTION** Approval of the motion coming from the Administrative Commission to accept the Final Report and dissolve the Administrative Commission once the new Session is elected, ordained, and installed. **APPROVED**

**Stated Clerk’s Report – Alison Blondheim**

Honorably Retired Pastors to be removed from MVP membership roll due to their death.

Rev. Dr. J. Edward Barrett – April 26, 2023

Rev. Dr. David Hartzfeld – March 23, 2024

Rev. Dr. William McClelland – June 11, 2024

**Session Minutes Review**

We have held three (3) Session Minutes Review Sessions to date with one more scheduled for Saturday, October 12, 2024, at Trinity Presbyterian Church in Zanesville. If a Clerk of Session has not attended or is planning to attend the remaining session, please contact Stated Clerk, Alison Blondheim for alternate arrangements. Thank you to First Presbyterian Church of New Philadelphia, Church of the Covenant, Canton, and First Presbyterian Church of McConnelsville for hosting those sessions already held.

**Boundaries Training**

Hopefully, if you needed to complete Boundaries Training this fall, you have signed up for one of the upcoming Boundaries Training Seminars. If you did not complete it in calendar year 2023, you are due in calendar year 2024, as MVP has a every 2-year rule even though the Book of Order mandates every 3 years. This is for all our installed Ministers of Word and Sacrament, Commissioned Ruling Elders serving at a designated ministry, Ministers serving as a long-term Supply Pastor, and Ministers from other denominations serving as a Pastor at one of the churches in MVP.

* **September 28** from 9:30am to 4:30pm Eastern Time   
  As of September 11, one seat is open. [Please contact us to request registration.](mailto:admin@leaderwise.org?subject=Sept%2028%20Boundaries%20SOTC&body=If%20space%20is%20still%20available%2C%20please%20add%20me%20to%20the%20registration%20list%20for%20the%20Synod%20of%20the%20Covenant%20Boundaries%20Workshop%20September%2028%20from%209%3A30am%20to%204%3A30pm%20Eastern%20Time.)
* **October 8 & October 9** from 1:00pm to 4:00pm Eastern Time  
  As of September 11, one seat is open. [Please contact us to request registration.](mailto:admin@leaderwise.org?subject=Oct%208%20%26%209%20Boundaries%20SOTC&body=If%20space%20is%20still%20available%2C%20please%20add%20me%20to%20the%20registration%20list%20for%20the%20Synod%20of%20the%20Covenant%20Boundaries%20Workshop%20October%208%20%26%20October%209%20from%201%3A00pm%20-%204%3A00pm%20Eastern.)
* **October 15 & October 16** from 16, 6:00pm to 9:00pm Eastern Time  
  As of September 11, this workshop is full.
* **November 7** from 9:30 am to 4:30pm Eastern Time  
  As of September 11, two seats are open. [Please contact us to request registration.](mailto:admin@leaderwise.org?subject=Nov%207%20Boundaries%20SOTC&body=If%20space%20is%20still%20available%2C%20please%20add%20me%20to%20the%20registration%20list%20for%20the%20Synod%20of%20the%20Covenant%20Boundaries%20Workshop%20November%207%20from%209%3A30%20am%20to%204%3A30pm%20Eastern%20Time.)
* October 8 and 9 from 1:00 pm to 4:00 pm
* The sign-ups are already available at [Synod of the Covenant — LeaderWise](https://www.leaderwise.org/sotc), which is linked from our website via [Equipping Leaders | Synod Of The Covenant (synodofthecovenant.org)](https://www.synodofthecovenant.org/equipping-leaders).

**Stated Clerk Travels**

I attended Antrim Presbyterian Church’s 200th Anniversary on June 16th. I traveled to France from July 1-9 with Christ Presbyterian Church’s Choral Tour which was a wonderful experience. I preached at Westminster Presbyterian Church of Wooster on July 14. I attended a 2 day retreat with other leaders from the 11 Presbyteries that make up the Synod of the Covenant in Monroe, Michigan in early August.

**Committee on Ministry Report – Rev. Mark Unrue**

**Examination of Katie Watson for CRE**

Katie Watson RE who was being examined to become a CRE at First United Presbyterian Church of Alliance read her Statement of Faith (**Appendix 9.21.2024.4**) She shared a little bit of her background and how she came to be at FUPC Alliance. Rev. Jeff Bergeson asked a question regarding her sharing of “I believe Christ is returning, gathering all He has saved.” Marilyn Dlesk, who has gotten to know Katie through CRE training, also spoke in favor of her. Rev. Chris Stewart asked of Katie her favorite Confession to which she replied the “Brief Statement of Faith.” Rev. Kathryn Ophardt asked about her background in different contexts and how she came to ministry. Katie responded that she had been extremely ill in January 2024, but God had other plans for her. She adopted a young son. She grew up in the Lutheran church where she could not serve in ordained ministry.

Rev. Justin Hylden from the CPM Committee got to know Katie through her CRE training. He shared about her serving communion down at the CA-Mexico border to Catholic Hispanic families. Rev. Lynn Shetzer shared about her getting to know Katie after he herself was serving as Interim Pastor at FUPC Alliance since Rev. James McCurdy’s retirement.

**MOTION**: Rev. Tim Dyck made the motion to approve Katie Watson as CRE at First United Presbyterian Church of Alliance. **APPROVED**

The commissioning service for Katie Watson will be Sunday, October 20, 2024, at 2:00 p.m. at First United Presbyterian Church of Alliance.

**Examination of Lisa Machar for CRE**

Lisa Machar read her Statement of Faith. (**Appendix 9.21.2024.5**) Rev. Justin Hylden asked Lisa about saints that have guided her life. She responded that both her grandmother and father-in-law had. Tara Mitchell, CRE warned her about not taking on too much and letting congregations do some things. Lisa has a background in working with domestic violence victims and sexual assault victims. Both Rev. Tim Dyck and Rev. Robert Meyer (HR) expressed their affirmation for Lisa with her serving as Supply Preacher at Reedurban Presbyterian Church while they were under the Administrative Commission.

**MOTION** Rev. Chris Stewart made the motion to approve Lisa Machar as a CRE. **APPROVED**

Rev. Tim Dyck prayed for her. Note: It will be up to the new Session to be elected at Reedurban Presbyterian Church if they will offer to have Lisa Machar become their CRE with her commissioning to be set at a later date.

**Other COM Business**

Jill Warner has been extended to become the CRE for Buffalo Cumberland Presbyterian Church in addition to her service as CRE at Rix Mills Presbyterian Church. Her commissioning service will be held on November 10, 2024.

COM approved the transfer of Rev. Kim Wadlington to Muskingum Valley Presbytery from Carlisle Presbytery. Her husband Rev. Derek Wadlington became a member of MVP when he became the Chaplain at Muskingum University in 2023.

**Committee on Preparation for Ministry (CPM)**

Rev. Justin Hylden introduced to new inquirers to MVP who are students at Ashland Theological Seminary. They are FeiFei Xu and Jiaxing (Young) Ouyang. We also have two other inquirers in MVP which are Tim Pollock, CRE and Na Yang. There are also three CRE students to continue prayers for: Marilyn Dlesk, Don McDonald, and Mark Nutter.

Edith Ophardt spoke about the upcoming workshop on “Church Leadership in Anxious Times” with Donna Robertson as the presenter. This will be held on Saturday, November 2, 2024, at Coshocton Presbyterian Church from 9:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Edith thanked all the teachers and participants in the Ruler Enhancement training this year.

**Nominating Committee**

Joan Brode made the following nominations to serve in the Presbytery.

Moderator Elect 2025 and Moderator 2026: Rev. Timothy Dyck

Committee on Ministry Liaison: Keith Taylor, CRE Class of 2027

Chair of Administration Committee: Dave Roger, RE Class of 2027

**MOTION** The motion came from the Nominating Committee to elect the above-named individuals. **APPROVED**

**Synod of the Covenant Report**

Tim Pollock CRE represented the Synod of the Covenant with a Power Point report. He spoke about the Matthew 25 grants that are available, and applications are due by the end of September. He talked about upcoming seminars on *Science of Church – Psychology of Polarization* to be held on October 8 and October 22 at 10:00 a.m. Tim works part-time for the Synod now in addition to his duties as CRE for Bloomfield Presbyterian Church.

**Retreat Ministry**

Donna Robertson RE shared about the upcoming “Pathway to Prayer” retreat to be held on Thursday, October 10, 2024, at the Perry Hills Outdoor Center. It will be from 9:00 am to 3:00 p.m. Cost is $11 for the day.

**Administration Committee**

Sheila Ellenberger, Chair of Administration, shared the purpose of grants. They are to equip existing or nurture new ministries. They are not really to be used for building purposes. However, the committee did approve a grant of $1,000 for an ADA bathroom at one of our churches. They awarded another grant for a suicide awareness workshop for our congregations.

Sheila reported on the Treasurer’s Report dated 8/31/2024 (**Appendix 9.21.2024.6**) since Mike Mast, Treasurer, was excused. Our income is low after two months into the current fiscal year but should catch up later in the year. A question was asked about the internet phone bill which was with the partnership churches in addition to staff.

**Board of Pension Updates – Rev. Luke Choi, representative**

In the interest of time, Rev. Luke Choi stated that congregational representatives could speak with him after the meeting if they had questions related to their individual situations on BOP changes for 2025. He did reference that the Income Protection Plan enhancement for 2025 will be going from 60% to 70% for disability pay. If changing plans, you will need to call and get pastor changed in the BOP system for 2025. The median salary will change to $70,000 next year for both MWS and CRE’s. His report was online on the website. **Contact** [**Lchoi@pensions.org**](mailto:Lchoi@pensions.org)

The Stated Meeting was adjourned with closing prayer by Rev. Li Dong, Moderator at 1:10 p.m.

**Remaining Presbytery Meeting Calendar for 2024**

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

**Presbyterian Meeting Calendar for 2025**

Saturday, March 15, 2025: Location to be Determined – 9:00 a.m. until 2:00 p.m.

Tuesday, June 17, 2025: Location to be Determined – 6:00 p.m. until 8:00 p.m.

Saturday, September 13, 2025: Location to be Determined – 9:00 a.m. until 2:00 p.m.

Tuesday, December 9, 2025: Location to be Determined – 6:00 p.m. until 8:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Stated Clerk, Alison Blondheim