MINUTES

Presbytery of Sheppards and Lapsley

Synod of Living Waters

Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

Stated Meeting

May 11, 2017

**GOD CALLS US TOGETHER**

The Presbytery of Sheppards and Lapsley of the Synod of Living Waters of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) met in the Stated Meeting on May 11, 2017 at First Presbyterian Church, Auburn, Alabama.

Throughout these minutes, Teaching Elders are indicated by an asterisk (\*).

The meeting was called to order at 9:45 a.m. by Moderator Shannon Webster\*, who opened the meeting with prayer.

# ORGANIZATION

On advice of the Stated Clerk, a quorum was declared by the Moderator.

**Adoption of the Docket**

The docket was adopted as amended by common consent.

**Seating of Corresponding Members**

**Recognition of First Time Commissioners and Visitors**

**Teaching Elders**

Ministers Present (43) Excused (63) Absent (20)

Abernethy, Barrett P

Acton, Ben P

Adams, Nan E

Alexander, Frank HR E

Anderson, Mike A

Angelini, Betty P

Atkerson, Rick E

Bailey, Michael P

Bang, Yo Chang P

Becker, Lindsay A

Bird, Shelaine A

Booth, Ben HR E

Brock, John A

Brooks, Richard , HR E

Brown, Taylor, HR E

Broyles, Vernon, HR P

Bruchey, Wayne HR E

Burgess, Sid, HR E

Carl, Bill P

Carleton, Rhon HR E

Carter, Clyde HR P

Casey, Lydia E

Chandler, Doris E

Chaney, Patsy HR E

Chinula, Donald A

Cho, Timothy A

Choomack, Jim HR E

Clark, Molly HR E

Clayton, Susan E

Clendenin, Monty HR E

Coker, Jeff HR E

Crutchfield, Bob HR E

Dantzler, Bill HR E

Davis, Becky A

Davis, Lant P

Dippenaer, Vic E

Duke, Mickey HR E

Durham, Charles HR E

Durham, Erica E

Edwards, Robert E

Ephraim, James E

Epting, Bobbie HR E

Feagin, Debbie P

Frease, Matthew A

Free, Zana P

Genau, Joe P

Goodlet James P

Goodrich, Cat E

Goodrich, Elizabeth P

Hanna, Richard E

Harley, Patrick A

Harmon, Dawson, HR P

Hay, Robert, HR E

Hayes, Jeff A

Hibbard, Norman HR P

Homer, John HR E

Hoop, Cathy P

Hurley, Ed P

Hurst, Clyce HR E

Inman, Robert F. HR E

Japhet, Catherine A

Jeong, Junmo P

Jones, Steve P

Kang, JD E

Kelso, Hugh, HR E

Kesler, Randy A

Kim, Sung Woong A

Kim, Young A

Laney, Susan, HR E

Lays, Brian P

McCarter, Neil HR P

McClendon, Bruce P

McClure, John A

McCormick, Mark E

McElrath, Pete HR E

McElveen, William HR E

McLaughlin, Wayne, HR E

McKean, Mac HR E

McLeod, James P

Moon, Hak Bae A

Mylalsingh, Emerson HR E

Newland, Terry P

Northen, Margaret HR E

O’Neill, Elizabeth P

Oh, Jyung, Ho A

Oliver, Catherine E

Patton, Finley HR E

Patton, Roger HR E

Pearce-Reed, Leanne P

Penson, Gozie HR E

Pope, Sam HR E

Porter, Mary HR E

Price, Sandra HR E

Pyburn, Richard, HR E

Rains, Tom HR E

Reed, Kathy P

Reed, Nick P

Rentz-Lane, Neely A

Scarbrough, Leeann P

Scrivner, Joe E

Seitz, Craig, HR E

Sellers, Lou Ann P

Shelton, Jack HR E

Sherwood, Paul P

Shin, Dongouk A

Sims, Charles HR P

Slane, Joe, HR E

Speaker, Cary P

Stanford, Jim HR E

Stephens, Dan E

Stephens, Gerald HR E

Thompson, Ben HR E

Tingle, Terry, HR P

Truesdell, Jim P

Turner, Lucy P

Wade, Lindsey P

Waters, Dana HR E

Watson, Cody E

Webster, J. Shannon P

Wells, Jim, HR E

Wilkins, Jay P

Wills, Bill HR E

Winter, Rachel P

Winter, Tom HR P

Winton, Carlton, HR E

Yarboro, Jonathan P

**Commission Ruling Elders with Vote**

Present (5) Excused (0) Absent (5)

Arellano, Ben P Haynes, Ernie A

Bonner, Jeff P Harrison, John A

Dodson, Beverly P Sauser, Bill P

Eich, Sharon A. A Thomas, Roger A

Emerick, Robert A Veasey, Lin P

**Executive Council Members/Presbytery Officers w/Vote**

**Present (**5**) Excused (3)** Carter, Eva P Rick Reed E

Jane Clayton P Judy Rogers P

Frennea, Rick E Jean Russell E

Debbie Hamrick P Toomey, Jim P

**Christian Educators, Presbyterian Women and Trustees Moderator w/Vote**

Jenny Thagard P Bill Stribling P Dotty Lessley P

**Elders**

Number in parenthesis by church name indicates the number of commissioners authorized. “NR” indicates that the church did not have elder representation. There are seventy-six churches in Presbytery of Sheppards and Lapsley. Thirty-seven Commissioners were present.

Alexander City First (1) NR

Annemanie Arlington (1) NR

Anniston Church of the Good Shepherd (1) NR

Anniston First (1) Tom McNaren

Anniston First United (1) NR

Anniston Korean (1) NR

Auburn First (2) Jim Parker

Carolyn Williams

Bessemer Good Hope (1) NR

Birmingham Bold Springs (1) NR

Birmingham Bryan Memorial (1) NR

Birmingham Center Point (1) NR

Birmingham Chapel in the Pines (1) NR

Birmingham Edgewood (1) NR

Birmingham Fairfield Highlands (1) NR

Birmingham First (1) Mark Aldridge

Birmingham First United of Forestdale (1) NR

Birmingham Five Mile (1) NR

Birmingham Independent (5) Scott Ward

Lee Walthall

Jean Shanks

Beverly Krannich

NR

Birmingham Korean (1) NR

Birmingham Mountain Brook (1) Frank Semmes

Birmingham Oakmont (1) Brenda Carter

Birmingham Riverchase (1) NR

Birmingham Second (1) Mary Clyde Teague

Birmingham Shades Valley (1) Ray McIntosh

Birmingham South Highland (2) Mark Garner

Cathie Bonner

Birmingham Southminster (1) Linda Carey

Birmingham Westminster (1) Lorino Hendricks

Cuba Cuba (1) NR

Camden New Trinity (1) NR

Carbon Hill First (1) NR

Dadeville First (1) Evelyn Pangburn

Dadeville Woods (1) NR

Eufaula First (1) Ruby Burggrabe

Gardendale Gardendale (1) Rodney Mewbourne

Goodwater First (1) NR

Green Pond Green Pond (1) NR

Jacksonville First (1) Carolyn Padgett

Lafayette Lebanon (1) NR

Leeds Leeds (1) Charles Gabbert

Livingston First (1) Jack Key

Magnolia Rock Springs (1) NR

Marion Junction Marion Junction (1) NR

McCalla Shepherd of the Valley (1) NR

Montevallo Montevallo (1) Jane Clayton

Montgomery Calvary Charles Ford

Montgomery Immanuel (1) NR

Montgomery Korean (1) NR

Montgomery Memorial (1) Kathy Sweezey

Montgomery Westminster (1) NR

Moundville Saint James (1) NR

Northport Bethel (1) NR

Odenville Odenville (1) NR

Opelika Korean NR

Oxford Dodson Memorial (1) NR

Phenix City First (1) Thomas Peavy

Piedmont First (1) NR

Plantersville Mount Pleasant (1) NR

Reform First (1) NR

Selma Northern Heights (1) NR

Selma Pisgah (1) NR

Selma Valley Creek (1) NR

Springville Springville (1) NR

Sylacauga First (1) Sally Holland

Talladega First (1) Frank Hubbard

Troy Williams Memorial (1) NR

Trussville Cahaba Springs (1) Janet Prevatt

Tuscaloosa Brown Memorial (1) Charles Nash

Tuscaloosa First (3) Susie Engelke

Amy Perkins

NR

Tuscaloosa Grace (1) Darryl Thornton

Tuskegee First (1) NR

Tuskegee Ramsay Memorial (1) NR

Tuskegee Institute Westminster (1) Elizabeth Offem

Union Springs Union Springs (1) Pam Salter

Wetumpka First (1) Jeff Glass

We were warmly welcomed by Kathy Reed\*, pastor of First-Auburn. We were called to worship by Charles Ford, praising God for all God’s wonders. The body joined in singing *He Came Down*. The Rev. Lant Davis called us to confess our sins then assured us of God’s pardon.

The Rev. Rachel Winter read from John 13:12-35 and shared with the body a message titled, *By THIS Everyone Will Know That You Are My Disciples*. The passage begins with Jesus having washed the feet of his disciples. He instructed them to wash the feet of others. Jesus told them that one of his disciples would betray him. His new commandment was that as he has loved us, we are to love one another.

The world is a dangerous and fearful place now. The hatred of those who are *different*, has caused, it seems, a loss of innocence and joy. Rachel shared her feelings of *just shutting down*, of hiding her head under a pillow. Where is hope? We were reminded that kindness is more than a virtue, it is a source of strength. Kindness causes us to act out of love, not fear. We will only be successful in addressing addiction or other diseases, when we realize that every life matters. Listening to each other, when we assume good and not the worse, pausing before we act or speak. We are told to choose love … always. It is the world’s oldest medicine. When kindness is manifest in our lives and our souls, it can’t help but heal us in these challenging times. Every person that we meet is dealing with something so we are to recognize that every life is important and valuable and worthy of love. When we stop assuming the worst in people but look instead for the good everyone wins. That is where healing happens. We have been so greatly loved. Return love. The world is locked in a battle of love and fear. Choose love. Fight to make love win. “I give you my new commandment, that you love one another and by this they will know that you are my disciples.”

The offering that was collected will be divided equally between the Discretionary Fund of the Presbytery and CPM for the use of the candidates.

The Rev. Nick Reed and the Rev. Jun Mo Jeong invited us to the Lord’s Table. Those gathered received communion by intinction. After all were served we joined in singing *Jesu, Jesu, Fill Us with Your Love*.

**Discussion and Vote on General Assembly Amendments**

The Stated Clerk moved that we vote on the Amendments before us by consent agenda. A request was made that the Stated Clerk lead us through the amendments.

16 B, C, D, and G were removed from the Consent Agenda and voted on separately.

16 B – Parity – Approved 5 nays

16 C – Ministry Titles – Approved 2 nays

16 D – Relationship to the PC(USA) of a Person Who as Renounced Jurisdiction of the Church – Approved 3 nays

16 G – Access to the Lord’s Table – Approved 6 nays

16 A, E, F, and H remained in the consent agenda and were approved.

**Stated Clerk and Omnibus Motion**

For Omnibus Motion

1. To approve the minutes of the February 24, 2017, presbytery meeting.
2. To approve requested excuses for today’s meeting.
3. To record the receipt of minutes of commissions to install Michael Bailey as Pastor of First, Tuscaloosa; Cathy Hoop as Pastor of Grace, Tuscaloosa; and Dong Ouk Shin as Pastor of the Korean Church, Birmingham.
4. To record receipt of the minutes of the Administrative Commission for Westminster and Memorial churches in Montgomery.

1. **Action Item**: “The Administrative Commission for Westminster-Montgomery and Memorial is: Rev. Jonathan Yarboro, Charles Ford (Calvary), Nena Sherman (Immanual) Rev. Bill Sauer

1. To record receipt of the minutes of the Administrative Commission for First, Tuskegee.

1. **Action Item**: “That First Presbyterian Church, Tuskegee, be dissolved.”

The Omnibus Motion **items A, B and C** were approved by consent.

**Item D** was approved

**Item E** was approved with stories of the wonder of First, Tuskegee and the community of faith that they provided to that area for so many years and we gave thanks for the ministry of this church. Having completed their work there was a motion to dissolve the commission.

For Information

1. 2016 Statistical Report is attached. Membership decreased by 426. Per Capita billing is based on these reported statistics. Those churches failing to report will continue to have their per capita billed on the basis of the last reported statistics.
2. Based on our losses, we have received a per capita credit from General Assembly of $3,337.50.
3. The 2015-2016 Session Minutes for Westminster, Birmingham, have been read and approved without exception.
4. Schedule for the reading of session minutes: The final reading will be Aug. 26 at

First-Wetumpka from 10 a.m. until Noon. Clerks are reminded to fill out checklists for their own minutes before having them reviewed by other clerks. If you need a checklist, please contact Tom Winter or Linda Burrowes.

1. Thanks from the Presbyterian Children’s Home for the gift of $20,000.
2. The November meeting of presbytery will be on November 9 at Living River.

**News from the Churches**

Bev Dodson shared that at **Green Pond** would celebrate 128 years of ministry and they will celebrate together later this month. She also encouraged those who may be interested in the CRE program to apply. Funds were available to assist those applying.

Shannon Webster\* shared the news of the tree falling on First Presbyterian Church, Birmingham, but the good news was thanks for great insurance. He reflected on the Montevallo church that also suffered loss from a tree that feel on their sanctuary. We will receive a $5,000 grant from PDA thanks to Jay Wilkins\*.

Ralls Coston, **Volunteer Mission Coordinator**, reported that he has been visiting churches in the presbytery (35 in the past year) to invite them to serve Christ through giving. September 7th the presbytery will begin to build a Habitat house that will take about 6-7 weeks to complete. There are plenty things to do on site. We need to have about $50,000 prior to do the build. He also share about SDOP, a program that began in the 70’s, designed to address issues faced by our churches. The presbytery has become a certified chapter of SDOP.

**Living River** – Betty Angelini\* and Lee Walthal

There are so many things happening at Living River. [see Appendix B]

**Transitional Presbyter Report** – Jay Wilkins\*

I give thanks to God for my two years serving this Presbytery! This time of transition has seen the Presbytery live into the new Standing Rules with a Statement of Purpose and reformed Executive Council organization. We have participated in “open space” conversations and have focused the identity of the Presbytery around these words: ***“partner with and equip present and emerging PC(USA) faith communities in central Alabama to serve Christ and our neighbors”****.* We have approved a financially sustainable staff plan moving into 2018. The Executive Council is planning conversations about specific describable differences God is calling the Presbytery to make at this time in this place.

I have heard it said again and again that we need to become more effective in “telling our story.” As I look back on the past two years, I can tell a story of this Presbytery using our imagination and taking risks to join God at work in our communities in new ways:

* We have partnered with and equipped transforming and emerging campus ministry programs in Birmingham, Tuscaloosa, and Jacksonville.
* The Small Church Task Team partnered with The Presbyterian Foundation and small churches in seeking financial stability.
* Nine congregations have partnered with the PneuMatrix consultants and adaptive change apprentices to discern adaptive changes needed, rather than simply quick fixes.
* We have partnered with First Tuscaloosa and the Synod of Living Waters in seeking the well-being of Stillman College.
* The Congo Team is partnering with many congregations and members to “Educate a child, transform the world” through raising funds for building two schools in the Congo.
* Our Mission Coordinator has renewed partnerships locally and nationally, reviving the Presbytery’s Self-Development of People Committee and securing its certification.
* The Presbytery’s partnership with Habitat for Humanity is being revived and commitments by congregations are being received.

Our “Statement of Purpose” concludes: “***the Presbytery of Sheppards and Lapsley will itself need to be transformed by the Holy Spirit as it creates new structures, redirecting its mission, reconnecting its members and refreshing its leaders to better serve God’s people in this time and place.***” The Spirit of the risen Christ is on the loose in this Presbytery as risks are being taken for new life and ministry in our midst.

The meeting was temporarily suspended for lunch.

The Moderator called the body to resume the work of the presbytery.

**Administrative Commissions**

After several attempts to re-establish some means of communication between the only remaining known member of First Presbyterian Church, Tuskegee, Jimmy McGhar, and the Presbytery of Sheppards and Lapsely, it is the recommendation of this commission that the congregation formerly known as First Presbyterian Church, Tuskegee be dissolved. There has been no gathering of a congregation, meeting of Session, or any other means of congregational life for over ten years. There are no minutes or records of any kind to be found. All records were apparently destroyed during a burglary many years ago.

Mr. McGhar has taken it upon himself to maintain and lease the church property for at least the last fifteen years. There is no evidence of any fraud or misuse of funds. The property is occupied by a congregation and the facility is maintained properly according to their verbal reports. Efforts to obtain a copy of any lease agreement or accounting of maintenance funds failed.

The Administrative Commission requests that COM proceed with dissolving the congregation and referring the matter of the church property to PSL Trustees. Mr. McGhar has adamantly expressed an unwillingness to even have a conversation about resolving the property matter. There is no clarity regarding the listing on the property deed and efforts to obtain such information failed.

Rev. Nick Reed Mrs. Nancy Washburn Rev. Jonathan Yarboro

**Executive Council** – Jim Toomey

**For Information**

1. We have been involved in planning a pilot program for developing measurable goals to be used by the various committees and task teams of the presbytery. The idea is to improve our effectiveness and our communications presbytery-wide. Our goal is to keep the process as simple as possible. Member of council will be attending upcoming committee meetings to ask the question, “What do you do and how can you measure your progress?” We will use the results collected to get agreement on the next steps. Watch for more on this project.

2. Patrick Riley (Southminster) and Judy Rogers (Montevallo) were appointed by Council in March to the Living River Board. We are excited about their involvement on this important body.

3. The March summary of Income and Expenses is attached. We are running a deficit but it is less than we budgeted through March 31, 2017.

4. The Small Church Task Force will hold a shortened version of the leadership training event for leaders and pastors of smaller membership churches after the summer meeting of presbytery on August 17 at Shades Valley.

**For Action**

Approve the attached Response Review Policy, as amended. Changes are in bold on page numbers of document in the upper right corner bottom p. 5 top p. 5, bottom p. 6. [see appendix A] Approved

**Equip, Nurture and Connect** – James Goodlet

**Nominating** - Cathy Hoop\*

**John Knox Manor Board, Montgomery:**

Cary Speaker, Moderator

J. Benoit – Southminster, Birmingham

Jim Foster—South Highland, Birmingham

John Robinson—South Highland, Birmingham

Leland Keller—South Highland, Birmingham

Mike Wade—Shades Valley, Birmingham

Tom Reynolds, Oakmont

Sherry Neilsen—First-Birmingham

Keener Hudson—First, Anniston

Lee Walthall—IPC, Birmingham

Erin Kellen -- Emmanuel, Montgomery

Ben Arellano -- Memorial, Montgomery

Ed Brummal -- Memorial, Montgomery

**Westminster Apartments Board, Anniston:**

Cary Speaker, Moderator

J. Benoit—Southminster, Birmingham

Jim Foster—South Highland, Birmingham

John Robinson—South Highland, Birmingham

Leland Keller—South Highland, Birmingham

Mike Wade, Shades Valley, Birmingham

Tom Reynolds—Oakmont, Birmingham

Sherry Neilson—First, Birmingham

Keener Hudson—First-Anniston

Lee Walthall—IPC, Birmingham

Monty Clendenin\* -- Anniston

Larry Dawson -- Anniston

**Trustees**

**Bryan Memorial Presbyterian Church**

**Motion:** To dissolve Bryan Memorial Presbyterian Church due to disaffiliation from the Presbyterian Church, USA. (G-40206) Approved

**Grace Presbyterian Church, Tuscaloosa**

**Motion:** To approve purchase of approximately ¾ acre lot just to the north of the existing parking lot at the corner of Prince and Hargrove road, pending approval of the congregation.

A called meeting of the congregation has been scheduled and will fall between the date of the Trustee meeting (April 19) and the Presbytery meeting (May 11). Approved

**Independent Presbyterian Church, Birmingham**

**Motion:** To approve sale of property at 513 Park Avenue; Hoover, AL 35226. (G-40206)

This property is adjacent to the Fresh Air Farm. Approved

**First Korean Presbyterian Church, Tuscaloosa**

**Motion:** To abey loan payments on the church's loan from Presbytery for one year. To review the loan again in April 2018. Approved

Trustees have reviewed the financial reports from the church and agree that repayment of the loan will worsen the financial condition of the church. By next April it is hoped payments can resume.

**Commission on Ministry** – Ben Arellano

**Information Items:**

1. Approved First Eufaula’s MIF.

2. Approved Charles F. (Chuck) Kukal, who is a formerly Ordained PCUSA Pastor, (who

surrendered his ordained status without prejudice to the Presbytery of Baltimore), to serve

as Stated Supply for 90 days at Bold Springs. COM will assess the possibility of making an

arrangement for a more permanent tenure subject to further examination.

3. At the request of the Executive Council, COM has updated and forwarded descriptions of

responsibility for COM members. COM will continue to work on responsibilities for COM

members assigned to pastoral care.

4. Approved transitional pastor relationship between Rev. Lindsey Wade and Montevallo

Presbyterian Church.

5. Encourage Teaching Elders and CRE’s to participate in the June 8 seminar on “Effective

Pastoral Leader.” Flyer is attached.

**Action Items:**

1**.** Approve the terms of call and commission for Leanne Pearce Reed for Shades Valley

Presbyterian, effective May 1, 2017. Installation: June 11, 2017, at 4:00 p.m., at Shades

Valley. Terms of Call: Effective Salary $65,000; BOP $23,725; Travel $1,000; Con Ed

$2,500; Books $3,000; Business & Professional Expense $3,000. Total Package $101,697.

Commission: Teaching Elders Joe Genau, and Lindsey Wade. Ruling Elders Eva Carter

(Westminster Birmingham), Pat Goodman (Southminster), and Fletcher Harvey (Shades

Valley). Approved

2. Examine and approve Rev. Christopher Scott as Member-at-Large. Statements attached.

Approved

3. Examine and approve Rebecca Mann for Ordination as a Teaching Elder with a call to a Tent

Making Ministry of First-Wetumpka. Ordination and Installation: May 21, 2017, at 3:00 p.m., at

First Wetumpka. Commission: Teaching Elders Jonathan Yarboro and Mary Porter. Ruling

Elders Ben Arellano (Memorial); Gwen Gray (Immanuel); Lindy Mastin (First-Auburn).

Statements attached. Approved

4. Approve Patrick Harley’s installation commission: Commission: April 23, 2017; 2:00 p.m.;

Highland Hall at Independent Presbyterian. Teaching Elders: Shannon Webster, Cat Goodrich,

Joe Genau and Ben Acton. Ruling Elders: Eva Carter (Westminster-Bham); Betsy Panhorst

(First-Auburn). Approved

5. Recommend to Presbytery an Administrative Commission for Shepherd of the Valley

Presbyterian, and add an additional Ruling Elder to the Ramsay Memorial Commission. Both

congregations are seeking release from the PCUSA to Presbyterian Fellowship and Evangelical

Presbyterian Church respectively. Names will be given at the Presbytery meeting. Bev Dodson,

chair, Lant Davis and James Findley (Westminster) Approved

6. Approve Eve Pangburn (First-Dadeville) to serve on the Ramsay Memorial Administrative

Commission.

7. Approve the 2017 Remuneration of Ministers – attached Approved

**Commission on Preparation for Ministry** – Joe Genau\*

**FOR INFORMATION**:

INQUIRERS CHURCH INSTITUTION

Bennett Alldredge First, Tuscaloosa Princeton

Mary Sellers Shaw Independent, Birmingham Vanderbilt

Caitlin (Avery) Smith Grace, Tuscaloosa Louisville

Alexandra Stewart First, Tuscaloosa Columbia  
Samuel Turpen Edgewood, Birmingham Columbia

CANDIDATES

Courtney Bowen IPC, Birmingham Louisville

Rebecca Mann Immanuel, Montgomery Graduate (Columbia)  
Rachel VanKirk Mathews First, Tuscaloosa Columbia

Leigh Ann Min First, Birmingham Graduate (Columbia)

**FOR ACTION:**

1. The commission recommends that Inquirer Bennett Alldredge of First Presbyterian, Tuscaloosa, be approved by Presbytery for Candidacy. Approved  
   (statements attached).
2. Approve an Alternative Assessment of Theological Competency for Candidate Leigh Ann Min. She has been unable to pass the written exam, but the CPM believes, in consultation with those who have worked with Leigh Ann, that she possesses the requisite competency, and that an alternative assessment would demonstrate that.  
   The assessment will be an oral examination consisting of three sections – with the same breakdown as the written exam. The assessment will have a time limit of three hours. The CPM will appoint a group of three to choose questions, with guidance from the Presbyteries’ Cooperative Committee on Examinations. That group will administer the exam and provide the CPM with a written assessment and in-person feedback.

In accordance with G-2.0610, this motion requires approval by a three-fourths vote.

This is not about lowering the standards but rather offering a way in which this particular candidate is most able to effectively respond to the questions on the ordination exam. While CPM is not intended to be a gatekeeper but will close the gate to those who they believe not intended to be ordained to ministry in the PC(USA).

**New Business**

None

**Closing Prayer and Dismissal**

Elizabeth O’Neill offered prayers of thanksgiving for the work of this presbytery asking that we stay to close to you, remembering the joy and hospitality offered here, knowing that our charge is to love one another. Always. Choose. Love.

The next stated meeting will be held on August 17, 2017 at Shades Valley Presbyterian Church in Birmingham.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Thomas Winter

Stated Clerk

**Appendix A**

**Commission on Ministry**

Response/Review/Commission Process

For addressing Conflict Situations

Within the Presbytery of Sheppards and Lapsley

Including churches seeking withdrawal

The goal of this process will always be reconciliation and continued relationship for all persons and congregations within the presbytery. The following process outlines the steps we will use as a Presbytery to respond to conflict situations within our congregations or where our congregations, or leaders within, find themselves in conflict with their ordination vows to be governed by our church polity and to abide by its discipline. Inasmuch as this process is an exercise of the pastoral responsibilities of the Commission on Ministry (COM), it shall be initiated without undue delay prior to securing legal counsel. Background material and denominational policy and procedures as related to the situation involved should be secured from the Stated Clerk and studied in detail before meeting with any pastor/session/congregation.

Section One – Composition and Training

Ordinarily, a substantial number of persons shall be trained to be members of the appointed RESPONSE TEAMS, appointed REVIEW TEAMS and nominated ADMINISTRATIVE COMMISSIONS. The ideal situation would be insofar as possible to recruit from each of our six clusters to assure representative from the total presbytery, plus eliminating undue travel for some members. To the extent practicable, the group shall be balanced with an equal number of Teaching and Ruling Elders to facilitate balancing of RESPONSE TEAMS, REVIEW TEAMS and ADMINISTRATIVE COMMISSIONS. When it is necessary to ask Presbytery to appoint an ADMINISTRATIVE COMMISSION, the nomination of individuals from outside the group with special skills, training or experience in mediation and negotiation may be required. Nominations from the group for an ADMINISTRATIVE COMMISSION shall be in accordance with the composition outlined in (G-3.0109b). This composition requires an equal number of Teaching and Ruling Elders except when the commission consists of an odd number, in which case the additional member may be either.

Section Two – Process Outline

The process is based on the use of three delegations from the Presbytery: The RESPONSE TEAM, the REVIEW TEAM and the ADMINISTRATIVE COMMISSION. It may not be necessary in any particular situation to use all three delegations. What follows in this Section Two are general guidelines for these delegations.

2.A When the COM or other leadership of the Presbytery become aware, either through formal session or congregational action or through informal contacts with church leaders or members, that a conflict exists within the church or that a congregation is in serious disagreement with the governance of the denomination, the General Presbyter shall offer a pastoral visit by a RESPONSE TEAM. Team members will be selected by the Moderator of the COM, ordinarily, from a group of previously trained members. The General Presbyter will be the team leader unless other circumstances intervene. A written progress report will be provided the Moderator of COM within three days of the initial visit and each visit thereafter.

2.B In the event the RESPONSE TEAM’S efforts are unsuccessful and it will take a deeper effort to handle the conflict, including that steps toward separation from the denomination appear to be in process, the Moderator of the COM will appoint a REVIEW TEAM to visit, study and recommend appropriate action. The decision to appoint a REVIEW TEAM shall be immediately communicated by letter to every member as appropriate in the situation and the team shall be appointed within 15 days of that notification. It shall complete its work within 45 days and thereafter submit a final report to the Presbytery through the COM within 15 days if the situation is urgent or at the next Stated Presbytery Meeting as warranted.

2.C If at any time in the process either the RESPONSE TEAM or REVIEW TEAM determine that the situation is such that a move toward separation/withdrawal is the work of a special interest group and not representative of the congregation, the team with notice through the Moderator of the COM shall immediately request that the Moderator of Presbytery nominate an ADMINISTRATIVE COMMISSION (AC), ordinarily, from the trained group as quickly as possible, to be elected by the Presbytery at either a special called meeting or a stated meeting. The REVIEW TEAM, if it meets the composition required by the Book of Order, may be nominated by COM to the Presbytery to become the ADMINISTRATIVE COMMISSION.

2.D In the event of a Pastor, Session and/or Congregation filing any civil action including a temporary restraining order (TRO), this process will be followed in as far as possible working through the COM. Legal action on the part of the Presbytery should not take place until the RESPONSE TEAM has had an opportunity to investigate and determine reason for the civil action or TRO and make an informed recommendation to Presbytery as to how to proceed.

2.D.1 Any legal action or TRO shall be carefully read in its entirety before a decision is recommended.

2.D.2 In the event the action contains a property issue, the deed will be secured and the wording carefully analyzed and previous Presbytery minutes will be searched for any property ownership determination before a decision is recommended.

Section Three – The Response Team

A RESPONSE TEAM shall be appointed by the Moderator of the COM, ordinarily, from the trained group. The General Presbyter shall lead the team unless other circumstances intervene.

3.A The purpose of this RESPONSE TEAM is to engage either the leaders of the congregation, or the congregation as a whole (as circumstances dictate), in a time of prayer and conversation aimed at understanding the conflict and identifying steps toward reconciliation. Team size shall be dictated by the anticipated scope of effort, e.g. meeting with several small groups will require a bigger team than meeting with a session only. If during the initial visit, the RESPONSE TEAM determines that progress can be made toward reconciliation through continued dialogue, the RESPONSE TEAM will continue that dialogue as needed.

3.B A written progress report will be provided the Moderator of the COM within three days of the initial visit and each visit thereafter.

Section Four – The Review Team

A REVIEW TEAM shall be appointed by the Moderator of the COM, ordinarily, from the trained group when all efforts of the RESPONSE TEAM toward a satisfactory solution to the situation or reconciliation efforts seem to have stalemated.

4.A PURPOSE AND AUTHORITIES: The REVIEW TEAM is appointed to study the situation, to gather facts, and to recommend appropriate action to the Presbytery through the COM.

4.A.1 To request records of the session. (G-3.0108b) “If a higher governing body learns at any time of any irregularity or delinquency by a lower governing body, it may require the governing body to produce any records and take appropriate action.”

4.A.2 To look at whatever records may be relevant (i.e., how money is held, title to property, insurance documents, mortgages, endowments, or any loan documents, corporate officers, corporate articles, bylaws, charters—especially changes in any of these). The REVIEW TEAM will be careful to look for recent changes or modifications to articles of incorporation, bylaws, or deeds. The Presbytery shall be entitled to see such changes in legal documents (G3.0108b).

4.A.3 To determine, after reviewing the proceedings of the lower governing body or from any other information as may come to its attention, whether (a) the proceedings have been faithful to the mission of the whole Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) (G-3.0108a) and/or (b) the lawful injunctions of a higher governing body have been obeyed (G-3.0108a).

4.A.4 To give directives on behalf of the Presbytery.

4.A.4.a “It is ordinarily sufficient for the higher governing body to record in its own proceedings, and in those under review, its approval, disapproval, or correction. If necessary, the higher governing body may direct the lower governing body to reconsider and correct an irregularity or cure a delinquency.” (G-3.0108c)

4.A.4.b The type of directive will depend on the issues (examples: don’t call a congregational meeting, don’t transfer assets, don’t encumber property, don’t elect new officers, etc.).

4.A.5 To recommend whether an ADMINISTRATIVE COMMISSION should be nominated and elected (G-3.0109b).

4.B COMPOSITION: The REVIEW TEAM shall consist of five to seven members, ordinarily, selected from the trained group and balanced as evenly as may be practicable between Teaching and Ruling Elders.

4.C COMMUNICATION: The REVIEW TEAM shall keep all concerned parties informed. This list is not all inclusive but may include such as those listed below.

4.C.1 Send a letter to the session using measured but firm wording outlining task and process.

4.C.2 Send a non-threatening, explanatory letter outlining task and process to all members of the congregation as warranted by the situation being investigated.

4.C.3 The team shall have “one-on-one” conversation with the pastor.

4.C.4 Keep in communication with the COM.

4.C.5 Before any recommendation is made regarding disposal of property, the Presbytery Trustees will be consulted.

4.D The functions of this Team shall be reviewed and changed as necessary by the COM when legal action is involved.

4.E DURATION OF WORK: It is expected that the REVIEW TEAM shall move as quickly as practical and shall complete its work with 45 days.

Section Five – The Administrative Commission

5.A DUTIES AND AUTHORITIES: When circumstances so require, the Moderator of the COM shall nominate and the Presbytery elect an ADMINISTRATIVE COMMISSION to work with any congregation that has not been able to resolve issues using the first two phases of the above process. The primary task of the ADMINISTATIVE COMMISSION is to attempt to “settle the difficulties (G-3.0109b; G-3.0303d3)) and it is understood that the COMMISSION may be given authority to assume original jurisdiction of the session (G-3.0303e).

The COMMISSION shall be guided by the specific duties and authorities given it by Presbytery for this particular situation and shall keep written records of its activities. The COMMISSION shall keep the Presbytery informed of actions taken **at each presbytery meeting** and shall make recommendations directly to Presbytery for any actions that require Presbytery approval, **within six months of the formation of the AC.**

5.B ELECTION: The proposed membership and commission (i.e., charter) of this group shall be reported to the Presbytery by the Moderator of the COM in the form of a written motion for approval and election. This may be the current membership of the Review Team if a Teaching or Ruling Elder.

5.C STAFF SUPPORT: The ADMINISTRATIVE COMMISSION shall be staffed by the Stated Clerk of the Presbytery. All contacts with General Assembly Staff will be handled by the Stated Clerk and/or the General Presbyter.

5.D FINAL REPORT: The Presbytery shall receive the final report of the ADMINISTRATIVE COMMISSION (or REVIEW TEAM), act on any remaining recommendations, and dismiss the COMMISSION at the completion of its work. The final report shall be filed with the Stated Clerk.

5.E General Rules: The following general rules apply to the selection and election of an ADMINISTRATIVE COMMISSION:

5.E.1 The COMMISSION elected for this purpose shall not include these persons: the Stated Clerk, General Presbyter, Moderator or Moderator elect of Presbytery, the Moderator of the COM or any member of the PJC.

5.E.2 The Presbytery may delegate to the COM the authority to add, remove or replace members of the COMMISSION when it is apparent that some member(s) need relief or in order to bring in persons with new skills or gifts to the process. Such a replacement shall be reported to the Presbytery. The Presbytery may delegate to the Moderator of the COM authority to grant permission to the COMMISSION (or REVIEW TEAM) to contact legal counsel or other professional authorities for temporary consultation on specific maters.

5.E.3 A quorum of the COMMISSION shall be a majority of its elected members unless the Presbytery fixes the quorum at a higher number.

5.E.4 The powers of the COMMISSION are determined by the Presbytery at the time of the election or at a later date if deemed necessary by the body. After election, the COMMISSION has full authority of the Presbytery to execute the limited powers granted it. (G-3.0109b). Those limited powers may include:

5.E.4.a To determine whether a schism exists within the congregation

(G-4.0207).

5.E.4.b To determine which members represent the true church (G-4.0207).

5.E.4.c To confront the advocates for schism.

5.E.4.d To make recommendations to the presbytery to dissolve pastoral relationships, or when requisite authority is given by the Presbytery, to dissolve pastoral relationships (G-3.0109b5).

5.E.4.e To assume original jurisdiction in any situation it determines the session is unable or unwilling to manage wisely the affairs of its church (G-3.0303e). See attached document “Original Jurisdiction by the Presbytery”.

5.E.4.f To freeze the assets of the church (real and liquid).

5.E.4.g To secure the building, grounds and other property of the church for the use and benefit of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

5.E.4.h To determine if and when a meeting of the congregation is appropriate for the purpose of voting to withdraw from the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

5.E.4.i To call that congregational meeting, and provide the moderator and clerk for that meeting.

5.E.4.j To report results of congregational vote to the Presbytery.

5.E.4.k To authorize oversight of the church, its ministry, its property, assets and records to a viable faction of the congregation that has been identified as the true church within the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

5.E.4.l To propose to the Presbytery the recommendation for the disposition of the property held by or for the church and the assumption of the liabilities of the church in the event there is no viable faction of the congregation that has been identified as the true church within the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

**5.E.5 Following the work of, and at the recommendation of the Administrative Commission a mutually agreed upon mediator, hopefully a Christian mediator, be chosen to mediate the terms of departure (1 Corinthians 6: 1-6).**

**5.E.6 If the Administrative Commission is unable to engage a congregation in mediation then the Presbytery, acting upon the recommendation of the Administrative Commission, has the right to pursue legal action.**

**ORIGINAL JURISDICTION BY THE PRESBYTERY**

Section G-3.0303e of the *Book of Order* gives the presbytery authority to take jurisdiction from the session of a congregation and act in its place. This is a procedure of last resort that the presbytery may use when all other conflict-resolution efforts have failed. In a Christian community, hearing one another out with forbearance and persuasion is the better way.

There are times when quarreling elders may need to be reminded that the price of obstinacy is that presbytery may take original jurisdiction for a time. This reminder may help to persuade them to accept sound advice and less intrusive Interventions.

The following outline will guide stated clerks in understanding how to advise the presbytery when taking original jurisdiction is proposed.

1. INVESTIGATION NECESSARY. There must be a thorough investigation of the circumstances. See the decision in Jose A. Cao, et al., v. The Presbytery of New York City, Remedial Case 191-12 (Minutes, 1979, Part I, pp. 116-117), in which the judicial commission found that the presbytery action to take the place of the session was invalid.
2. OPPORTUNITY FOR HEARING. Presbytery must give a session full opportunity to be heard before removing it as a session. In the case of Stuart H. Merriam, et al., v. The Synod of New York, Administrative Case No.2 (Minutes, 1963, pp. 305-312), the decision emphasizes the serious character of an action to take the powers of session and the importance of the opportunity to be heard.
3. PRESBYTERY DOES NOT DELEGATE HEARING. Session must be heard by the presbytery, not its administrative commission. In a deliverance in response to a request asking for clarification of the limits of the authority of presbytery to delegate its powers to committees or commissions, the 207th GA (1995) said at Section 21.130: "This drastic step is sometimes required by a serious crisis in the life of a congregation. Such an action, affecting the lives of many people and often causing confusion and resentment, should always be approved by the whole presbytery."
4. OWNERSHIP OF BUILDING AND AUTHORITY TO DISPLACE. Presbytery's ownership of the building does not carry with it the authority to displace the session of the congregation using the property. Protection of the authority of the session extends to small and weak churches that may in some ways be dependent upon the presbytery's help. In The Church of the Covenant v. The Presbytery of New York City, Remedial Case No. 3 (Minutes, 1974, pp. 310-313), the judicial commission found that the presbytery had exceeded its authority when it authorized its administrative commission to make management decisions that are within the discretion of the session without following the procedure set out in the Form of Government.
5. RE PER CAPITA, Refusal of a session to pay the per capita assessment is not in itself grounds for presbytery to remove the pastor and dismiss the session. This was the holding in Westminster Church v. Presbytery of Detroit, Remedial Case No.5 (Minutes, 1976, pp. 228­231 ). The judicial commission held in Session of Central Church v. Presbytery of Long Island (Minutes, 1992, pp. 179-180): "A church may neither be compelled to pay nor punished for failure to pay any amounts pursuant to" a per capita system for financing the operations of a governing body.

CHURCH LAW & PROCEDURES/Original Jurisdiction CL - 3 September 2005

**Appendix B**

Living River Report

Presbytery Meeting

May 2017



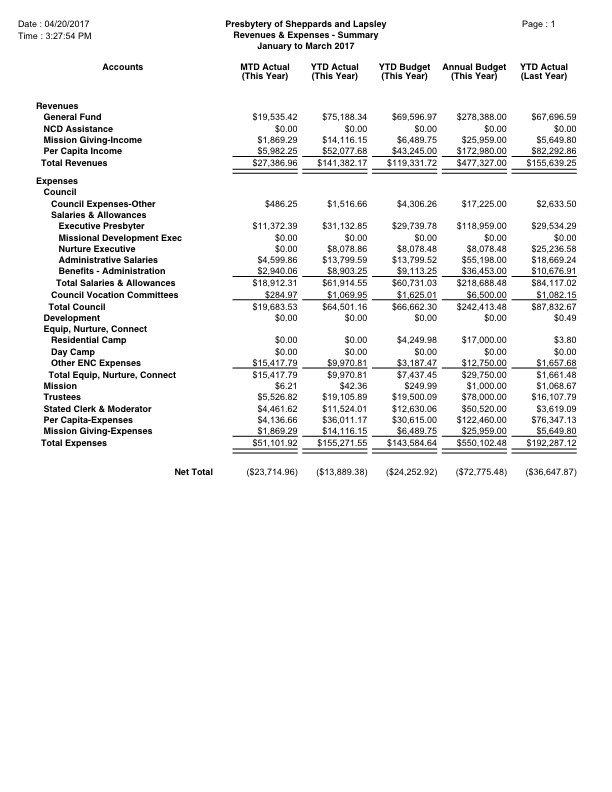
When you think of summer camp you probably think of S’Mores

* Summer Camp enrollment is continuing- More campers have enrolled for this summer than this time last year-but there is always room for S’More *Register on line at www.livingriver.org*
  + Scholarship funding is available!
* Summer staff are being hired but there is always room for S’More
  + We are working with Columbia and Princeton Theological Seminaries to offer contextual field education opportunities to MDiv students.
  + Do you know College Students that are looking for an 8 week experience from Mid-May to Mid-July that will provide invaluable life experience, faith formation and resume building. *Email* [bangelini@livingriver.org](mailto:bangelini@livingriver.org)
* Summer camp curriculum is “Branching Out: Connecting With Jesus”. We can all use S’More Jesus in our lives-camp is a great place for contributing to the faith formation of campers and staff
* Living River is in the process of submitting foundational grants to help support S’More

Facilities and Ministries:

* + Adult Lodge
  + Swimming pool
  + Pavilion
  + Outreach ministries
  + The work of the Cahaba Environmental Center
* The Cahaba Environmental Center is serving S’More students and schools
  + Enrollment is increasing each season
  + Through PSL congregational support, school students from marginalized communities are receiving the gift of God’s creation and its exploration
    - Please support this unique ministry of God’s creation with prayer and S’More support
* S’More Retreat opportunities are available for the fall and winter
  + Consider holding a Day retreat or One or Two night Retreat to
    - Increase congregational care and community
    - Provide space for leadership visioning
    - Retreat from busyness of life and associated technology
  + We all need S’More space and time to listen for God’s still small voice
* Rev. Betty Angelini, Living River’s Executive Director, is available to provide a Minute for Mission or bring God’s Word through leading a Sunday School class or Wednesday evening program or preaching during worship. Please call 412-596-3166.

**Appendix C**



**Appendix D**

**Faith Journeys and Statements of Faith**

**Faith Journey Statement of Christopher Scott**

I grew up in a suburb of Denver, CO. My family did not attend church regularly; my parents wanted my younger brother and I to form our own opinions regarding church and God. Looking back at my childhood, I believe God was warming my heart at an early age. I remember a sense of joy during the times I did attend church. And while attending a high school youth rally with my girl friend’s youth group one evening I realized my need for Jesus Christ, for the forgiveness of my sins and his ever presence in my life. Within a week or so of my public confession I went to my local ***B. Dalton*** bookstore and purchased my first Bible. I sat in my bedroom and read that Bible for hours at a time. God was filling my mind and heart with his everlasting truth and love.

It wasn’t until after college though that I began regularly participating in the life of a local Church. My then fiancé and I were set to marry in January 1996 at Trinity United Methodist Church. And in order to become members and receive the member discount on wedding fees, we attended their class on the basics of the Christian faith. God called me back to himself through that class and I confirmed my faith in Jesus Christ and was baptized in August 1995. Soon afterward, my now wife Kathy and I joined a young married couples group, married as planned, and have been off and running together in our 21-year and counting faith journey ever since.

A few years after our wedding Kathy began to hear God calling her to military chaplaincy, ultimately the US Air Force. Soon afterward, God began to move and work in my life in ways that showed me he was calling me to ordained ministry also. While Kathy was attending Denver Seminary I audited a couple of classes. And when Kathy received active-duty orders, I felt it was time to stop working as a software engineer and start my seminary studies. I graduated from Fuller Theological Seminary’s Northwest campus in June 2009 under the care of the Olympia Presbytery.

While in seminary, God drew me to the Presbyterian Church. The inquirer- candidate preparation process proved invaluable to me in affirming my call. Along the way I have had invaluable pastor-mentors who have guided me along the way. Through them God has shown me the value of the PCUSA government structure of representation and connectedness. Although I’m still prone to the idea that I can save myself, God has also shown me that his grace and mercy are so reconciling that my salvific efforts are fruitless. Thanks be to God!

My first call was to Fraser Memorial Presbyterian Church in Sumter, SC where I was installed June 2013. Since starting seminary, we’ve moved five times in ten years thanks to God and the US Air Force. I’ve now served in small semi-rural churches and large multi-pastor churches. At each station I’ve had the opportunity for fruitful ministry, and I expect my time will be similarly fruitful in the Presbytery of Sheppards and Lapsley.

**Christopher Scott Statement of Faith**

I know God as the three-in-one God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God created the heavens, the earth, creatures, and all peoples, and called all that he created good. God continues to create each day and he maintains authority over all creation. God gives people the special purposes of representing him in caring for creation and in relating with all people so that all may live whole peaceful lives. But like Adam and Eve we all sin, rejecting God and his purposes, leaving us unable on our own to fully live out his purpose. Sin shatters life and relationships. God rejects all our sin, while steadfastly loving his creatures. Thanks be to God!

I believe that God came to earth as the person known as Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus came as God’s Christ to reveal God to people, to show us how to live as God intends, and to save us from our sin. While Jesus lived on earth he did not sin; he completely fulfilled God’s purposes. Jesus’ innocent death overcame our sin and liberates us to live into new life. By this gift we are set free! God raised Jesus from the dead, and promises to raise all whom by faith believe in Jesus as Savior and Lord. Jesus’ promise gives me hope in living abundantly forever with God, beginning today. Jesus has now gone to heaven where he reigns as Lord over all creation.

God has not left us alone. His Holy Spirit is his gift enabling us to live the liberated life Jesus reveals and God intends. The Spirit dwells in us as believers, giving us the ability to confront and reject all sin and to embrace life in service to others. The Spirit worked through people to write the scriptures we call the Bible, where God also reveals himself and his saving message. Today the Spirit guides us in our daily choices, when we interpret the Bible, and when we read the faithful historical examples of biblical interpretation found in our Book of Confessions. The Spirit enables us to trust all of God’s promises. And, the Spirit remains our companion even if we doubt God. Through the Spirit’s work we are members of the Church—God’s children, the Covenant community, the body of Christ, a priesthood of believing servants.

Jesus gave the Church the two sacraments of baptism and communion. The Spirit uses baptism to show us that God reaches out to us to give us new life in Christ, even before we believe. Baptism signifies that in Christ we are cleansed and sealed by the Spirit and initiated into the Church. Likewise, the Spirit uses the bread and wine of communion as a real meal with Jesus, nourishing all believers. We eat the bread and drink the cup in memory of Jesus’ death and to celebrate our new relationship with God through Jesus. At the Lord’s Supper we proclaim not only Jesus’ death but also that he will return.

Jesus has tasked the Church with learning, living, and sharing God’s story with all people. We do this when we gather and worship God each week: confess our sins, hear God’s story, and respond to God’s good news with songs of praise and our tithes and offerings. We also do this by telling God’s story to others in deed and word: in feeding the poor, in clothing the naked, in visiting the sick, and in proclaiming God’s love for the world and in finding life abundant through Jesus Christ. When Jesus returns he will gather his brothers and sisters, giving them renewed bodies to live forever with him in the new heavens and new earth. He will reset creation whole and peaceful.

**Faith Narrative – W. Bennett Alldredge**  
My time spent with church, both the PC(USA) and the church universal has been one marked by providence. Although I am what you might call a “cradle Presbyterian,” neither of my parents were raised in the Presbyterian church. I attribute a major source of growth in my faith to my experiences with camps and conferences. It is through my time spent as a counselor with Living River that I first began to feel a call to ministry. I felt and witnessed the power of the Holy Spirit moving within me and the youth who attended the camp, and it was a joy to see how their lives and faith were influenced by our shared time, in worship, fellowship and small group study. Equally, my time spent as a conferee at Montreat has shaped my theological understanding as well as my sense of call.

My experiences with the Young Adult Volunteer program in South Korea and New Orleans were invaluable and deepened my sense of call. I was able to experience firsthand the joy and pain of our Christian siblings living in abject poverty, amidst the aftermath of foreign intrusion, among the memories of destructive floods and with the dread of a disappearing homeland. I was also able to witness how God is present and at work in these situations, and I was humbled by the mutual showing of God's love for myself as well as those with whom I was present.

My time at seminary has been transformative and insightful. Princeton features a diverse student body with students across the ecumenical and theological spectrum, and I have been able to learn from each as we seek to be in community with each other and seek to learn from and with one another. I have been moved and fulfilled by my theological education, and have been able to learn and understand more deeply our heritage and internal history as Presbyterians and members of the church universal.

Chaplaincy and Clinical Pastoral Education has played a significant role in how I understand myself and the way in which God works through me. I have felt fulfilled in supplying peaceful presence and witnessing the power of God in the short encounters I have with patients, living with joy and pain.

**W. Bennett Alldredge - Statement of Faith**  
I believe in God, God's son Jesus, and the Holy Spirit. Together these 3 persons are 1 in the Holy Trinity. The trinity is both 1 and 3, distinct and yet also whole.

I believe God sent God's son Jesus, who was both fully human and fully God, to preach good

news to the poor, release those in captivity, teach by word and deed, bless the children, heal the sick, forgive sinners, and call all to repent and believe the gospel. I believe Jesus suffered and died on the cross for our salvation.

I believe in God, whom Jesus called Father. God created the world as a good creation. God made every person equal in God's image, every race and people, to live as one community. God acts with justice and mercy to redeem God's creation. God acts with justice and mercy when we exploit our neighbor, and when we exploit God's creation for personal gain. God forgives and acts with grace toward us, forever reminding us of God's love for us. I believe in the sustaining and revelatory power of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit provides insight into the revelation of God throughout time.

I believe the Bible is God's Word, which was made incarnate in Jesus Christ. The Old and New Testaments together form God's Word, and they complement each other. The Old Testament is incomplete without the New, as is the New Testament incomplete without the Old. The Bible is the revealed Word of God, but it contains words written by humankind, and is therefore influenced by time, place, author and context. It is the role of the church to therefore interpret the Bible in light of literary and historical context, and to listen to the ways that God continues to speak to God's people through the words of Scripture.

I believe the mission of the church is to glorify God while living in righteous community. The church is called to love, seek and name injustice, proclaim the good news, and work for peace as we live in the tension of the already and not yet. The sacraments are the church's way of ministering to the world, and they bring together those who seek to learn and work together as members of an imperfect body, renewed by the mysterious sustaining power of Christ's body and Christ's blood.

**Faith Journey - Rebecca Mann**

I am a single woman, mother of three adult children and grandmother of five. I was raised in Perry, Florida, member of a Methodist church, as one of seven daughters of a band director/church choir director. I have fond memories of a house filled with music, laughter, hugs, and delicious food prepared by my mom. My dad had a motto, ‘I must learn to be in the right place at the right time with the right preparation and the right attitude’. He said each instrument has equal value in making music. These things resonate deeply with my belief in God, who in sovereign love has created all things good and each one equally in his image.

Early experiences of worship and bible study revealed God’s presence and love at work in my life; An artist’s rendition of the Easter story while drawing an oil pastel; questions in Sunday School after hearing stories of Christian Martyrs asked if **we** would die for the Lord. My response surprisingly came from deep within, ‘Yes!’

As 1950’s idealism merged into 1960’s violence, I questioned the validity of my father’s motto. Who defined ‘the right’ place or time which society honored? It seemed each one was definitely **not** considered equally valuable. Our family struggled with the disease of alcoholism and I later realized that something more than music was needed for healing.

I graduated high school and entered Troy University confused about my direction and unsure about why I needed an education. I quit after one year to get married although not ready. In those times I read the bible but was not in church. I met a woman who gave me a Bible with the wish, ‘may you continually walk in his light and know his unending love’ written inside. I know God sent her to me during my time on detour.

My marriage was turbulent, but I had three children to care for and time passed. I found a home with the Presbyterian Church. I joined and was baptized, joined the choir and PW, taught Sunday School, led youth group and an afternoon tutoring group. I could not do enough, so a mentor suggested I go on an Emmaeus Walk to discern God’s will. While there I experienced a call to seminary. Praying for guidance, I learned that I was called to persevere and returned eager to share God’s love. I worked, sought counseling, and served the church as Lay Pastor and Christian Educator. Again I sought God’s will at a Columbia week-end, but the time was not right. I returned to life as usual, yet the call never assuaged. I met and had a conversation with Dr. Shirley Guthrie, who encouraged me to go to seminary. The time was right. God lead me through that time of **huge** transition: completing my History degree at Troy University while working as tour guide at the Rosa Parks Museum, grieving the death of my sister, getting a divorce as my marriage failed, and moving to Columbia Theological Seminary. I learned to translate Greek and Hebrew, which broadens my interpretation and allows me to share God’s Word more fully at the nursing home and at work, where it is needed in a stressed, hurting world. I also learned skills for older adult ministry from CPE class at the Psyche Unit of Wesley Woods Geriatric hospital. I learned the value of simply being present and trusting God to reveal what needs to be said and done. It is a joy to follow the Lord wherever he leads and is at work spreading joy in the midst of pain. I am called and delighted to serve as one who teaches, preaches, and helps other love.

**Faith Statement - Rebecca Mann**

I believe in God, who in sovereign love created all good, and each person in God’s image. God is immanent and also transcendent. God is revealed in scripture, the story of the Jewish people, through Jesus Christ, and in the church. God finds us in our pain, provides for us, and gently reminds us that hope is not lost. As with Elijah, who became exhausted and discouraged after defeating the prophets of Baal; God provided for him and gently asked, ‘Why are you here?’. Then God revealed what Elijah could not have known. The mission would go on. Scripture describes God as Judge **and** loving Savior, powerful Lord **and** suffering servant, King **and** Friend, Almighty God **and** human; at the same time. God is more powerful than anyone or thing in creation including that which causes destruction. All depend on God for existence. There is no need to fear because evil itself will one day come around to serving God. The triune God; Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are continually at work reconciling and restoring all creation to its original holiness. God is for us and with us in all things, desiring happiness and wholeness for individuals and peace, justice, and freedom for all nations. God has invited us to join the reconciliation.

I believe in Jesus Christ, God incarnate, fully God and fully human. To know him is to know God. Conceived by the Holy Spirit, he was a Jewish man who suffered as any human. He accomplished the divine will not by defeating enemies and achieving political power as expected of the Messiah, but through **facing** defeat. Jesus revealed the depth of God’s love and compassion for humanity so tormented by sin; and showed that God is really WITH us and FOR us in ordinary human suffering and failure. Through Christ, we are equipped to face life’s harsh realities rather than *escape*. Christ, God incarnate, became weak and powerless so that human life would be affirmed and protected. Jesus came and died for the sake of the world God loves so much to fulfill God’s desire that we have salvation and freedom from sin, and be freed to love and be loved. God required nothing of us **before** forgiveness was given through Christ’s sacrifice. Loved just as we are, Christ willingly gave his life for us. God raised Jesus from the dead. He went from suffering servant to risen Lord, and was given unlimited power to be with and for us until his return. Hope has been restored and his promises still empower us. Jesus has done for us what we could not do for ourselves, and is truly the way, the truth, and the life. All authority in heaven and earth has been given to him. Jesus is Lord.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the creative, life-giving Spirit of God, who freely gives new truth, goodness, and beauty. The Spirit ends oppression and gives hope. The Holy Spirit empowered Jesus to begin his ministry, and also empowers us by revealing to our minds and sealing upon our hearts the promises we were given through the truth of Christ in our relationship with God: peace of conscience, assurance of God’s love, joy of the Holy Spirit, grace to persevere, and hope for glory. The Spirit helps us to see the new things God is doing each day and to trust God, and be fully present to him as Jesus was. Christ promised that the Holy Spirit would be our guide in carrying on God’s mission until his return.

**Congo Partnership Team May, 2017, report to Presbytery**

The Congo Partnership Team is happy to report good increases in our fund raising  
for the Baolonga School in the Kasai. These students currently meet in a dilapidated mud brick building with a dirt floor. Thanks to the Presbytery trustees for $20,000 toward our need for  
$85, 000. This generous gift brings our balance to $53,000. We have expectations for another  
ten to fifteen K from one of our churches. This will increase our fund to at least $63,000. We  
give thanks to our Presbytery and churches for their commitment to missions and to the Congolese Presbyterian Church. Without their work, education for the children of Congo would be much less likely to be available. As Presbyterians, we recognize the importance of education for making a difference in the lives of the students and in producing leaders for the country.

We continue to visit churches and tell the story. Dean Vandegrift continues her necklace ministry. We recently did a presentation for our friends at Riverchase Methodist Church. It is a real blessing to us to share the story with others.

Please pray for our Congolese friends in their daily struggles. Together in service,

Belinda Dickinson, Moderator Congo Partnership Team

**MAIN EVENT SUBCOMMITTEE**

MAY 2017

The Main Event was held February 24-25, 2017. Tom Long, the Bandy Professor Emeritus of Preaching; Director of the Early Career Pastoral Leadership Program at the Candler School of Theology at Emory University was the keynote speaker and preacher. Thirty presenters moderated twenty-seven workshops on a variety of topics. One hundred and one participants registered before the event for Friday and Saturday’s events. Seven individuals registered on Saturday.

Many thanks to the Planning Team of Catherine Oliver, Cathy Hoop, Elizabeth Goodrich, Joe Geneau, Pat Goodman, Patsy Chaney, Patti Winter, Barrett Abernethy, Tammy Strickland, Linda Coogan, Terry Tingle, Jay Wilkins, and Eva Carter.

The Planning Team has not met to evaluate the event and make future plans. We welcome new members to our team. You are invited to contact Jenny Thagard to be added to our small, but mighty group…jthagard@fpctusc.org.

**Small Church Task Force – Neal McCarter**

On Saturday, April 1, 2017, thirty leaders and pastors of smaller membership churches gathered at Riverchase Church for the fourth and last session of Project Regeneration. This effort was a cooperative venture of the Small Church Task Force and the Presbyterian Foundation.

Paul Grier, one of the keynoters, reviewed for the group the focuses of the previous sessions and then began by stating the format for this session. That format is: “Plan A: Business as Usual”; “Plan B: Reinvention”; “Plan C: The 11th-Hour Plan: What Is Plan C if Plan B Doesn’t Work?”.

If a church decides to keep on with business as usual, then Mr. Grier cited several trends regarding church life that are current:

1. “In the last decade, median weekend worship attendance in U. S. congregations has declined (from 129 to 80”;

2. “7% of US congregations have a membership of 400 or more; yet half of U. S. churchgoers attend such a congregation.”;

3. “Most [US] congregations are small, but most people are in large congregations.”;

4. “A great majority of the nations’ churches report a decline in attendance, while churches attracting 400 people or more on Sundays are dramatically increasing their market share.”;

5. “Rapid growth remains a hallmark of very large congregations, with a median growth rate of 26% over five years.”;

6. “Small churches can be more personal, but large congregations often excel at creating small groups offering regular spiritual support to groups of individuals with shared experiences and interests. Young adults . . . are more likely to find a network of close friends they can rely on for spiritual growth in a larger congregation.”;

7. “Random factoid: 1/3 of all US bookstores have closed in last ten years; but those that remain are doing well and better than before.”

(These citations are from a handout given to participants. Attribution of sources can be found on handout.)

For Plan B, Mr. Grier outlined these important aspects that need to be implemented:

--Acknowledge identity, and name competition: for the visitor or new member; for the charitable gift; for congregational leaders.

--Keep score: use Foundation’s “Online Financial Health Assessment”; Identify key operating metrics: what really drives the engine (economics) of the church; know your members meaning who are key givers in range of categories. Bar charts may be helpful. (Note: Observation of standards of confidentiality is valued and practiced.)

--Identify someone who’s done what you want to do;

--Monitor progress towards goals.

--Define and observe operational triggers.

Regarding Plan C, Robert Hay, Jr. invited the group to divide into smaller groups to discuss the following questions: “Where are you?”; “What do you see is your plan?”; “What obstacles do you see in your plan?”

Mr. Grier addressed the matter of follow-up sessions. He stated that the Foundation is willing to work individually with those congregations whose future seems fragile; to participate with Presbytery in events and training sessions for sustainability of ministry of smaller congregations; to conduct future annual updates with smaller membership congregations of the Presbytery.

Mr. Hay distributed flyers for “Stewardship Kaleidoscope: Real Tools for Real Ministry” which will occur at TradeWinds Island Grand Resort in St. Peter Beach, Florida, September 25-27, 2017. This event is for pastors, lay leaders, presbytery staff and anyone who is looking to learn more about stewardship in today’s church context. There will be over thirty workshops from which participants can choose to attend. For registration and more information, go to the following: [www.stewardshipkaleidoscope.org](http://www.stewardshipkaleidoscope.org/).

The Task Force, pending Executive Council’s concurrence, is planning to conduct a shortened version of the leadership training event in January for leaders and pastors of smaller membership churches after the Summer Meeting of Presbytery in August. Presbytery will meet in August at the Shades Valley Church in Birmingham.