MINUTES

Presbytery of Sheppards and Lapsley

Synod of Living Waters

Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

Stated Meeting

May 14, 2016

**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 14, 2016 at South Highland Presbyterian Church, Birmingham, Alabama.

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

The meeting was called to order at 9:45 a.m. by Moderator Jim Toomey, who opened the meeting with prayer.

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

# ORGANIZATION

**Adoption of the Docket**

The docket was adopted by common consent.

**Seating of Corresponding Members**

Dr. Heath Rada, Moderator of General Assembly

**Recognition of First-time Elders and Visitors**

The Moderator recognized all first-time elders who were introduced to the body.

The members of UKirk, Birmingham were recognized. Six of their members joined us today.

The Moderator nominated Rev. Terry Tingle to fill a vacancy on the Nominating Committee, Class of 2017. The recommendation of the Moderator was approved.

We were welcomed to South Highland by Head of Staff, Ed Hurley\*. A proclamation was adopted by the session of South Highland welcoming Dr. Rada to South Highland.

Gifts were presented to Dr. Rada from South Highland.

**Teaching Elders**

Ministers Present (35) Excused (70) Absent (18)

Abernethy, Barrett E

Acton, Ben P

Adams, Nan E

Alexander, Frank HR E

Anderson, Mike P

Atkerson, Rick P

Bang, Yo Chang E

Bird, Shelaine P

Booth, Ben HR E

Brock, Sam P

Brooks, Richard , HR E

Brown, Taylor, HR E

Broyles, Vernon, HR E

Bruchey, Wayne HR E

Burgess, Sid, HR P

Carl, Bill P

Carleton, Rhon HR E

Carter, Clyde HR P

Casey, Lydia P

Chandler, Doris E

Chaney, Patsy HR P

Chinula, Donald A

Cho, Timothy A

Clark, Molly HR E

Clayton, Susan P

Clendenin, Monty HR E

Coker, Jeff HR P

Copeland, Brian E

Crutchfield, Bob HR E

Dantzler, Bill HR E

Davis, Becky A

Duke, Mickey HR E

Durham, Charles HR E

Durham, Erica E

Edwards, Robert E

Ephraim, James A

Epting, Bobbie A

Feagin, Debbie P

Frease, Matthew A

Free, Zana A

Genau, Joe E

Goodlet James P

Goodrich, Cat P

Goodrich, Elizabeth E

Hanna, Richard P

Harmon, Dawson, HR P

Hay, Robert P

Hayes, Jeff A

Hibbard, Norman HR E

Homer, John HR E

Hoop, Cathy E

Hurley, Ed P

Hurst, Clyce HR E

Inman, Robert F. HR E

Japhet, Catherine A

Jeong, Junmo A

Jones, Steve P

Kang, JD E

Kelso, Hugh, HR E

Kesler, Randy E

Kim, Sung Woong A

Kim, Young A

Knox, Harold HR E

Laney, Susan, HR E

Love, Bill, HR E

McCarter, Neil HR P

McClendon, Bruce E

McClure, John A

McCollum, Sid, HR E

McCormick, Mark A

McElrath, Pete HR E

McElveen, William HR E

McLaughlin, Wayne, HR E

McKean, Mac HR E

Moon, Hak Bae A

Mullins, Bill HR E

Mylalsingh, Emerson HR E

Newland, Terry E

Northen, Margaret HR E

O’Neill, Elizabeth E

Oh, Jyung, Ho A

Oliver, Catherine P

Patton, Finley HR E

Patton, Roger HR E

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, Leanne E

Reed, Kathy E

Reed, Nick E

Scarbrough, Leeann E

Scrivner, Joe P

Sellers, Lou Ann P

Shelton, Jack HR E

Seitz, Craig, HR E

Sims, Charles HR E

Slane, Joe P

Speaker, Cary HR E

Stanford, Jim HR E

Stephens, Dan E

Stephens, Gerald HR E

Taylor, Sherwood HR E

Thompson, Ben HR E

Tice, Lisa E

Tingle, Terry, HR P

Todd, Taylor E

Truesdell, Jim P

Turner, Lucy P

Wade, Lindsey A

Waters, Dana HR E

Watson, Cody P

Webster, J. Shannon P

Wells, Jim, HR E

Wilkins, Jay P

Wills, Bill HR P

Winter, Rachel P

Winter, Tom HR P

Winton, Carlton, HR E

Yarboro, Jonathan P

**Commission Ruling Elders with Vote**

Present (3) Excused (1) Absent (5)

Arellano, Ben P Haynes, Ernie A

Bonner, Jeff P Harrison, John A

Dodson, Beverly P Sauser, Bill A

Eich, Sharon A. A Veasey, Lin E

Emerick, Robert A

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

**Present (**8**) Excused (1)**

Carter, Eva P Jenkins, Tyler E

Frennea, Rick P Toomey, Jim P

Hamrick, Debbie P

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

Jenny Thagard P Bill Stribling P Dotty Lessley P Bill Christians 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-nine churches in Presbytery of Sheppards and Lapsley. Forty-one Commissioners were present.

Alexander City First (1) Nancy Coley

Annemanie Arlington (1) NR

Anniston Church of the Covenant (1) Janet Bain

Anniston Church of the Good Shepherd (1) NR

Anniston First (1) Lee Merrill

Anniston First United (1) NR

Anniston Korean (1) Randal L. Kennedy

Auburn First (2) Harriette Huggins

 NR

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) Patrick Satterfield

Birmingham Edgewood (1) Ken Smith

Birmingham Fairfield Highlands (1) NR

Birmingham First (1) Mark Aldridge

Birmingham First United of Forestdale (1) NR

Birmingham Five Mile (1) Charlotte Bruce

Birmingham Independent (5) Kathy Thomson

 Fairy Southerland

 Lee Walthall

 Edward Wilson

 Scott Ward

Birmingham Korean (1) NR

Birmingham Mountain Brook (1) Frank Minter

Birmingham Oakmont (1) Judy Mann

Birmingham Riverchase (1) Sandra Vaughn

Birmingham Second (1) Miriam Blackburn

Birmingham Shades Valley (1) Ray Mcintosh

Birmingham South Highland (2) Bob Hunter

 Lee Cleveland

Birmingham Southminster (1) Natalie Reed

Birmingham Westminster (1) NR

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) NR

Gardendale Gardendale (1) NR

Goodwater First (1) NR

Green Pond Green Pond (1) NR

Jacksonville First (1) NR

Lafayette Lebanon (1) NR

Leeds Leeds (1) NR

Livingston First (1) Wayne Harrison

Magnolia Rock Springs (1) NR

Marion Junction Marion Junction (1) NR

McCalla Shepherd of the Valley (1) NR

Montevallo Montevallo (1) NR

Montgomery Calvary NR

Montgomery Immanuel (1) NR

Montgomery Korean (1) NR

Montgomery Memorial (1) Kathy Sweezey

Montgomery Westminster (1) John Rylee

Moundville Saint James (1) NR

Northport Bethel (1) Kathryn White

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) Barbara J. Fears

Selma Pisgah (1) NR

Selma Valley Creek (1) NR

Springville Springville (1) NR

Sylacauga First (1) Patsy Shuttleworth

Talladega First (1) Bobbie Howard

Troy Williams Memorial (1) NR

Trussville Cahaba Springs (1) Christy Little

Tuscaloosa Brown Memorial (1) Charles Nash

Tuscaloosa Covenant (1) Rush Watson

Tuscaloosa First (3) Christy Beem

 Susan Haynes

 NR

Tuscaloosa Korean (1) Duke Park

Tuscaloosa University (1) Cathy Andreen

Tuskegee First (1) NR

Tuskegee Ramsay Memorial (1) NR

Tuskegee Institute Westminster (1) Judith Baldwin

Union Springs Union Springs (1) Shirley Varner

Wetumpka First (1) Jimmy Wilson

We were called to worship by Judith Baldwin who led us in a reading based on Psalm 77. The body joined in singing *Lord, You have Come to the Lakeshore*.

We were led in confessing our sins by Lydia Casey\* who then assured us of God’s pardon.

Moderator Rada prayed the Prayer for Illumination and read scripture from Luke 9:57-62 then proclaimed God’s word in a sermon titled *The Time Is Now*. “My beloved followers, the time is now to do what I have asked you to do and that is to love one another. It is time to become a new church. Give up the former ways and become the new body of Christ to which we have been called.” Dr. Rada complimented this presbytery for seeking a new way of doing church. According to research, church membership is declining and becoming more secular because it is no longer necessary in today’s society to belong to a church. Yet the PCUSA is alive and well. While membership is declining in the PCUSA, it is declining in fewer numbers than other mainline denominations and mega churches in particular.

~ We must seize the opportunity to come to a newer, fuller sense of God’s understanding. We should avoid negativity and mean spiritedness at all times.

~ Temper your own views with other brothers and sisters and live in ambiguity in this time of change and to affirm among us that we do indeed have different points of view. Now we see through a mirror dimly but then we shall see face to face. Express and listen, then share honestly.

~ Resist the urge to fall back onto parliamentary procedure in order to cut off discussion bearing in mind that the unity of the church is above dotting i’s and crossing t’s.

~ Rely on the presence and the guidance of the Holy Spirit to move in the life of this denomination and this world. Carefully planned policy and procedure can often interfere sensing the Holy Spirit.

~ Risk in a spirit of faithfulness. We often think that things are cut in stone. If things you risk don’t work, they can be changed.

~ We are called to proclaim the lordship of Christ to say that Christ alone is the Head of the Church. We need to own up to our faith in Jesus. Do not be ashamed of the good news of the gospel. Use Jesus as a unifier, not a divider. Stop saying what it is that divides us but focus on what unites us. We can learn to love one another.

The body joined in singing *We Come as Guests Invited*.

The offering collected today will be divided evenly between CPM and the Presbyterian Home for Children. Ms. Heather Batey shared the gift of music with us. Prayers of thanksgiving for the gifts received were offered to God by Cathie Bonner.

Ed Hurley\* and Heath Rada presided at the Lord’s Table today. After all were served, prayers of gratitude were offered.

Robert Hay\* and Elder Eva Carter (Westminster, Birmingham) were commissioned to the office of General Assembly Commissioners to the 222nd General Assembly that will meet in June of this year. Other commissioners who were not in attendance today are Leanne Pearce Reed\*, Elder George Miller (First, Tuscaloosa) and Noah Foster (YAAD) and Rachel Mathews (TSAD).

The body was invited to pass the peace of Christ to one another.

Moderator Rada was called forward to issue his *Call to the Church* and shared of the work that has been done during his tenure as Moderator of the 221st General Assembly. He invited questions from the floor and encouraged folks to be honest and entertain questions and comments as they would talk with family with no questions too big or too small.

Moderator Rada shared that what he is hearing among members is that we should “disagree agreeably.” There is an increased desire to see this as our goal rather than giving up and leaving. We should be compelled to follow our conscience and continue to search for ways to serve God together. There appears to be a goal staying together through the love of God.

What is the church doing specifically to protect and support Christians in war torn regions? The Syrian Lebanon Evangelical Church has a strong relationship with PCUSA. We are sending people to that region who are dedicated and knowledgeable about the intricacies of the area. There is a very intentional plan to work in ways that they are able to work within government regulations. There are times of retreat that are offered to pastors and workers. While we use respect and caution, we do not operate out of fear.

Divisive issues that face this assembly are:

~ fossil fuel divestment-but there are folks who are solidly behind not using divestment as a tool.

~ what do we do and what actions can we take on divisive issues where no longer a simple majority rules?

~ key positions have been vacated or will be vacated soon

~ the Way Forward Committee has been formed to give us a reconciling body rather than a divisive one

What is the Moderator’s job?

~ Moderate the meetings of General Assembly

~ to be an Ambassador for the PCUSA for the two year term

The Mexican church has severed its relationship with the PCUSA here but there are mission co-workers along the border who continue to work in Mexico but not through the church in Mexico. There are training programs that are teaching young people a trade in order to keep them out of the drug cartels.

Moderator Rada’s plans for life after General Assembly are to take advantage of a great deal of rest and then enjoy some time to play in Portland and along the coast of Oregon. He has also been approached to serve on a variety of boards.

The Vice Moderator’s health continues to improve after a diagnosis of cancer.

The legal fees associated with the 1001 Worshipping Communities debacle have now been paid in full. So often we are known as a church divided over our beliefs. We should be vocal and celebrate what we are doing.

The meeting was temporarily suspended to enjoy lunch together.

The meeting called back to order at 1:00pm.

**Good News from our Churches**

1. Neil McCarter\* spoke of news from the potential of uniting Covenant and University churches. Much has been learned.

2. Jeff Bonner, member of South Highland, but a CRE at Gardendale, told of a church bazaar at Gardendale where a raffle was held with 50% going to the Children’s Home and 50% to the raffle winner. More money was raised than ever before.

3. Patsy Chaney and Wayne Harrison reported that there was a yard sale at the Livingston church and money raised will go toward a prayer garden.

4. Scott Ward from IPC had lunch with folks who shared where they lived and what they do. The folks at IPC are thrilled to have Bill Carl as pastor. There is also a renewed hunger for the word of God. The Word is perfect, trustworthy and has the power to heal.

**Executive Council Report** – Lou Ann Sellers\* [full report appears as Appendix A]

1. The Executive Council, in accordance with Article V of the By-laws of Living River: A Retreat on the Cahaba, Inc. and approval by the Board of Directors, moves approval that Section 7 of the By-laws of Living River be amended with the following addition:

“The Board may select non-members of the Board to serve on such committees in addition to Board members as follows: a) Such non-members shall be nominated by the Governance committee to the Board upon recommendation to the Governance Committee by the respective designated committee. b) The characteristics provided by Section 2 of these By-laws applicable to Board nominees shall be taken into consideration when selecting such non-board nominees to serve on committees. c) Approval of such nominees shall be required by the Board at a regularly scheduled meeting.” **Approved**

2. Second Vote on Standing Rules -- Amend SR-4.0101b 5 to read:

At the first meeting of the year, the incoming moderator will nominate three persons for election to the Bills and Overtures Committee to serve for a period of one year. The nominations will consist of one male teaching elder, one female teaching elder, and one ruling elder. ~~One of the three will be a racial/ethnic person.~~ ***The three nominees shall not all be from the same race or ethnicity.*** If by reason of absence or other circumstance, a member cannot serve at a given meeting, the moderator will nominate for election a replacement to serve at that meeting only. **Approved**

3. U-Perk Development Grant for $15,000. Licensed under the 501c3 umbrella of FPC, Tuscaloosa and operating as an LLC. Coffee will be served and there will be a cooking school operated there as well. Fund raising is currently underway. **Approved**

4. Stillman College Initiative – the college was begun 140 years ago by a pastor in this presbytery. On May 19th we will celebrate 140 of educating students. Our presbytery is a part of this celebration. Dr. Condoleeza Rice will keynote the evening. The event is sold out but there is a waiting list that your name may be added to. Support has been overwhelming and all gifts are appreciated.

5. Report from Volunteer Mission Coordinator – Ralls Coston (see Appendix B)

He has visited 31 of the churches in the presbytery to date and is posting stories on the presbytery website.

**Transitional Presbyter Report**

*Role of the TP:*

1. *to assist and oversee maintaining current on-going programs and services of the PSL;*
2. *to assist and guide the study and evaluation of current programs and services and development of long range goals and priorities;*
3. *to assist and guide creation of a proposed permanent staffing structure;*
4. *to serve as the leader/coordinator of the present staff team;*
5. *to fulfill all constitutional responsibilities of the chief administrative position in the PSL.*

Who are we? Who is God calling us to be? For the time being, based on the Statement of Purpose adopted two years ago, listening and discerning now, we are called to “***partner with and equip present and emerging PC(USA) faith communities in central Alabama to serve Christ and our neighbors.***” This “identity statement” summarizes our purpose in our Standing Rules by describing ways of relating to each other, congregation to congregation, Presbytery to Sessions, Presbytery to teaching elders; by affirming that God has not given up on our congregations and that God is stirring new communities to life in our midst; and by calling us to join God already at work in our neighborhoods, to identify the neighbors, near and far, for whom God’s heart breaks.

The Executive Council has sought to discern the gifts, skills, and resources necessary to live out this statement. Their discernment is reflected in this “word cloud” which presents the relative significance of descriptive words.

The Spirit is moving through this Presbytery as we are willing to experiment with new forms and ministries, to be resilient as we learn from our experiences, to be flexible in a changing culture and church.

I give thanks for the opportunity to share this ministry with you.

**Stated Clerk’s Report** – Tom Winter\*

For Omnibus Motion:

1. 1. Approval of the minutes of the February 18, and April 4, 2016 presbytery meetings.
2. 2. To record the reading of Session minutes for Center Point, Second, Cahaba Springs,

 Springville, First-Alexander City and Green Pond.

1. 3. Approval of excuses received for today’s meeting.

**Approved**

**Action Required:** Upon advice from the Board of Trustees, that no further action be taken at this time concerning Bryan Memorial Church. **Approved**

For Information:

1. 2015 Statistical Report is attached. Membership decreased by 398. 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.

1. Based on our loss, we have received a per capita credit from General Assembly of $1,331.44.
2. To record receipt of reports from the following Administrative Commissions:

 Westminster Montgomery, and Korean Tuscaloosa (Appendix C)

1. The following dates and locations are listed for the reading of Session minutes. Clerks are to bring their original minutes with the Session Review Sheet completed. All times are 10:00 a.m. until Noon.

 May 28—Church of the Covenant, Anniston

 June 18--First-Wetumpka

 July 23—Covenant, Tuscaloosa

 July 30—Chapel in the Pines—Birmingham

1. The August presbytery meeting is going to be a business meeting only at Edgewood Presbyterian on Thursday, August 18, with a starting time of approximately 1:30 p.m.

**Living River** – Keener Hudson

John Erdman has resigned his position as Executive Director of Living River effective July, 2016. He will remain throughout the entire summer camp season. He will continue to pursue accreditation for LR through the ACA. In addition, in the time John remains, he will continue to work on the accounting system being developed.

**Presbytery Camp Video**

A very well produced video about the camping program at Living River was debuted. There are scholarships available for any children or grandchildren who wish to attend.

**Commission on Ministry** – Ben Arellano

1. Approved Temporary Pastoral relationship between Rev. Clyde Carter and Westminster, Birmingham
2. Annual report of remuneration for Minister Members is attached.
3. Approved validated ministry for Catherine Oliver as Spiritual Director.
4. Approved requests from University Presbyterian Church, Tuscaloosa and Covenant Presbyterian Church, Tuscaloosa to independently hold congregation meetings for the purpose of seeking congregational approval to merge churches into one congregation, occupying the Covenant Presbyterian Church space; if the way be clear.

Action Required:

* 1. Examination for call and transfer of membership for Rev. Lant Davis, Mountain Brook. Salary and Housing $55,000; BOP $20,075; Business/Professional Expense and Continuing Education of up to $1000; Travel $2,000; Moving Expenses (up to) $5,000. Total Package $83,075. Commission date: July 10, 3:00 p.m., at Mountain Brook Presbyterian. Commission consists of: Rev. Dr. Jay Wilkins, Rev. Dr. Clyde Carter, and Rev. Lydia Casey. Ruling Elders are: Jim Toomey (Presbytery Moderator, First-Birmingham), and Dr. Norton Montague (Mountain Brook). Sitting with the commission: Paul Romjue (Independent). See Appendix D
	2. Examination for call and transfer of membership for Rev. Paul Sherwood, Oakmont Presbyterian church. Salary and Housing $65,500; Auto $1,500, Cell phone $500; BOP $24,750; SECA $6,180; Con-Ed $2,000, Books and supplies $250;

Total Package $100,680. Moving Expenses (up to) $8,000. Commission date:

May 22, 4:00 p.m., at Oakmont Presbyterian. Commission consists of Rev. Dr. Jay Wilkins, Rev. Robert Hay, Rev. James Goodlet. Ruling Elders: Eva Carter (Westminster-Birmingham) and Glenn Thomas (Oakmont). Sitting with the commission: Ruling Elder Beverly Dodson (Oakmont). See Appendix E

* 1. Examine for membership in PSL Rev. Lindsey Becker as member-at-large. She will be serving as a Chaplain at Children’s Hospital. See Appendix F

The three candidates for membership were examined and the **examinations were sustained**. Sid Burgess offered prayers for these three newest members of the Presbytery of Sheppards and Lapsley.

* 1. Vote on request from First Presbyterian Church, Tuscaloosa to suspend the Standing Rules on their search for an Associate Pastor, to call Candidate Neeley Lane, when ordained, as Associate Pastor. **Approved**
	2. Appoint Administration Commission for Ramsay Memorial. Members consist of: Ben Arellano (Memorial and Trustee), Rev. Nick Reed, Rev. John Brock and Mary Dalrymple (First-Auburn). Administrative Commission Powers are attached as Appendix C.2). **Approved**
	3. Approve the Rev. Bobbie Epting for honorable retirement effective July 1, 2016. **Approved**

7. Approve the Rev. Joe Slane for honorable retirement effective Jan 31, 2017. **Approved**

**Commission on Preparation for Ministry** – Bill Christians

**For Information**:

INQUIRERS CHURCH INSTITUTION

Bennett Alldredge FPC, Tuscaloosa Princeton

Courtney Bowen IPC, Birmingham Louisville

Rachel VanKirk Mathews FPC, Tuscaloosa Columbia

Alfred Rose First, Birmingham Graduate (Union)

Mary Sellers Shaw IPC, Birmingham Vanderbilt Divinity

Caitlin (Avery) Smith University, Tuscaloosa Univ. of Alabama

 (accepted at Louisville)

Alexandra Stewart FPC, Tuscaloosa Maryville College

 (accepted at Columbia)

CANDIDATES

Micah Dowling Cahaba Springs, Trussville Graduate (Columbia)

Rebecca Mann Immanuel, Montgomery Graduate (Columbia)

Leigh Ann Min FPC, Birmingham Graduate (Columbia)

FOR INFORMATION:

1. The commission enrolled Alexandra Stewart of First Presbyterian, Tuscaloosa, as an Inquirer.
2. The commission enrolled Caitlin (Avery) Smith of University Presbyterian, Tuscaloosa, as an Inquirer.
3. At its May 9 meeting, the commission will be examining Candidate Micah Dowling to determine his readiness to be certified to receive a Call.

FOR ACTION:

The commission recommends that Inquirer Courtney Bowen of Independent Presbyterian, Birmingham, be approved by Presbytery for advancement to Candidacy (Appendix G). The examination was sustained and Courtney was moved from Inquirer to Candidate. Courtney responded to the constitutional questions and prayers were offered for her in continued education and ministry.

**Nominating Report** – Rush Watson

\*Clergy \*\*Moderator

**Personnel**

Name Class

Jonathan Yarboro\* 2016

Rachel Winter\* 2016

Linda Harris, Westminster, Bham 2017

Mark McCormick\* 2017

Elizabeth Goodrich\* 2018

Eva Carter\*\*, Westminster, Bham 2018

**Finance**

Name Class

Shannon Webster\* 2016

Don Andress, First, Auburn 2016

Charlie Pritchett, Oakmont 2017

Jean Russell, Oakmont 2017

Rick Reed, Southminster 2018

Lydia Casey\*\*\* 2018

**2016-2017 SLPYC**

**2017**

Nate Burt, FPC-Bham

Riley Byars, FPC-Tuscaloosa

Cal Devine, FPC-Tuscaloosa

Marion Dukes, IPC

AJ Fleet, Oakmont

Mary Frances Garner, SHPC

Luke Griffin, Chapel

Emma Grace Jones, IPC

Evan Klugh, FPC, Auburn

Ellie Noden, IPC

**Mary Glenn Agee, FPC-Tuscaloosa**

**Virginia Beasley, IPC**

**Alex Rutledge, FPC, Bham**

**2018**

**Annabelle Beavers, FPC-Tuscaloosa**

**Mary Evelyn Beavers, FPC-Tuscaloosa**

**Lakin Coulter, IPC**

**Jessie Kate Joiner, FPC-Tuscaloosa**

**Frances Lehman, FPC-Tuscaloosa**

**Maria Potts, FPC-Tuscaloosa**

**Adults**

**2017**

Emily Roberts, FPC, Bham

Ben Acton, Southminster

Patrick Riley, Southminster

**2018**

Laura Bannon, Southminster

Catherine Goudreau, IPC

Patti Winter, FPC, Bham

**2019**

**Caitlin Neighbors, FPC, Tuscaloosa**

**Nick Reed, FPC, Auburn**

**Neeley Rentz-Lane, FPC, Tuscaloosa**

Staff: Robert Hay, Associate Executive for Nurture

Those in **BOLD** are new applicants for SLPYC.

SLPYC slate Approved.

**Trustees Report** – Bill Stribling

See Appendix H

**Presbyterian Women** – Dotty Lesley

See Appendix I

**English as a Second Language** - Eleanor Wright

See Appendix J

**New Business**

**Congo Ministry** – Charles Nash

See Appendix K

**Small Church Ministry Events** – Neil McCarter\*

See Appendix L

The meeting was closed with prayers offered by Daniel Killelea.

The next stated meeting of the Presbytery of Sheppards and Lapsley will be held on August 18, 2016 at Edgewood Presbyterian, Birmingham.

Respectfully Submitted,

The Rev. Tom Winter, Stated Clerk

**Appendix A**

**Report from the Executive Council to Presbytery** May 5, 2016

At the recent Kenya Mission Network meeting held this past February in South Carolina, our PC(USA) partners in the Presbyterian Church of East Africa explained that African Christians use the term “Christian/Muslim Relations” rather than “Christian/Muslim Dialogue.” The African way of thinking is this, ***“If relationship is good then dialogue is possible.”*** Your executive council is mindful that good relations between congregations and their presbytery’s commissions and councils is the environment from which we strive to carry out God’s mission in our particular setting.

In this regard, executive council (EC) is continuing its task of discerning a new staffing model for presbytery which will bring life to our identity statement derived with your input, **“*to partner with and equip present and emerging PC(USA) faith communities in central Alabama to serve Christ and our neighbors.”*** Working also within our presbytery’s budget, EC hopes to present a staffing model for your review at the August meeting of presbytery.

Enabling “good relations” means listening and encouraging the ministry our congregations are embarking upon. Volunteer Mission Coordinator Ralls Coston has been traveling the presbytery – and will continue to do so - meeting and becoming familiar with your missional activities and learning how we might support one another better across the presbytery.

At the request of Stillman College, the presbytery has been involved in the Stillman College Initiative, which has planned the 140th Anniversary Event being held at Stillman College on May 19 with keynote speaker Dr. Condoleezza Rice, former Secretary of State. Established in 1876 as the Tuscaloosa Theological Institute by pastor, Dr. Charles Stillman, Stillman College has become a vibrant, undergraduate institution. EC agreed to a $20,000 sponsorship from the King Trust Fund allowing 20 persons, including 10 Stillman student leaders of various campus organizations, to represent the presbytery at the May 19th event. If members of your congregation are interested in supporting Stillman College and hearing Dr. Rice speak, individual tickets may be purchased for $140.00 from the College.

EC, on occasion, also listens when relationship is broken and no reconciliation can be achieved. With sadness, the EC voted to accept the Trustee’s recommendation to take no further action towards Bryan Memorial at this time.

Yet, let us rejoice in the ways ministry is emerging in new and interesting ways within the bounds of our presbytery. The UKirk college ministry at the University of Alabama is requesting a grant from presbytery towards start-up costs for UPERK, a coffee shop **community cultivating change** for a better world – for all people, by young people. EC has already approved a $20,000 grant and is asking presbytery to approve the final $15,000 at this meeting. The new Birmingham UKirk is thriving under its student leadership with the oversight of an EC task team. EC also approved a grant request from First Pres Auburn as it seeks a PC(USA) General Assembly Mission Fund to cover start-up costs to house a health and wellness program for young adults with disabilities in partnership with the Social Work Department of Auburn University.

Grace and peace! Lou Ann Sellers, Moderator of Executive Council

**Appendix B**

**Volunteer Mission Coordinator**

Ralls Costen

Since I started as Volunteer Mission Coordinator in mid-February, 2016, I have focused on two activities. The first is to contact all the churches in the Presbytery, obtain a story of a mission project for each church, and post these stories on Presbytery’s website. The purpose of this is for churches to swap ideas for mission projects, and to encourage each other. I try to go out to the churches and get to know the ministers and the churches. So far, I have attempted to contact 27 of the 73 churches in Presbytery. Eleven mission stories have been posted onto the Presbytery website at pslpcusa.org. I try to write how the mission projects are organized, how long the projects have been going, how many people have been served, and the purposes of the projects. I am obtaining mission stories from both large and small churches.

While reading these mission stories, I have observed the wide variety of mission projects the churches in this presbytery do. Some churches send workers overseas. Others serve local populations. Many of the projects directly serve individuals, such as church workers teaching kids to dance, or talking to a mentally challenged individual at a church sponsored meal.

Churches have found ways to increase their limited resources by partnering with other churches that are not Presbyterian, and by obtaining resources from local government. Even large churches get volunteers from other churches to help in their projects.

One of the hopes in sharing these mission stories was that churches would get ideas from each other and adjust these ideas to their own circumstances. Also, it was hoped that churches would work together with other churches in the presbytery on projects too large for one church. I have found this is already happening in some cases. Often, the churches are working with other local, non-Presbyterian churches. Some of these relationships with other churches have endured for over 20 years.

The other activity I have focused on is disaster preparedness. While I am visiting the churches, I am looking at the resources of the churches. I am observing which churches have kitchens, laundry facilities, and showering facilities. I desire to meet those in this presbytery who are interested in serving in disaster mitigation. I want this presbytery to be ready to serve when a disaster strikes.

I intend to continue to collect stories of the churches’ mission projects and to publicize more of the good things our churches are doing. In addition, I intend to continue to work on disaster preparedness. And, of course, I will be keeping up with the ongoing mission projects of this presbytery, such as the Congo Mission Fund and the ESL classes.

**Appendix C**

Commission Members: Rev. Dr. Charles Durham, Rev. Dr. Mark McCormick, RE Claire Nichols, CRE Ben Arellano

1. The Commission met with Ruling Elders Duke Park and Jung Ja Chwe, and Teaching Elder Rev. Sung Kim on February 4, 2016.

2. The agenda included:

 a. Calling a Congregational meeting for the purpose of electing two at-large members to nominate at least two members to comprise a nominating committee with the purpose of electing two elders to serve on the session. This would provide KPCT with a Session of three Ruling Elders.

 b. To call a congregational meeting to vote on the nominees put forward by the Nominating Committee.

 c. Discussion of the circumstances around attempts of schism by three sitting RE’s and a person representing himself as an ordained Teaching Elder in the PC(USA). The discussion revealed approximately 30-40 members have left the congregation which included three sitting Session Members.

 d. The Commission sought information and clarity about an unauthorized Session Meeting seeking to dismiss Rev. Kim.

 e. Discussion of the financial impact of this schism. Of course giving has been impacted budgets, to include mortgage payments and the pastor’s financial package has been negatively impacted.

3. Developments subsequent to the February 4th meeting:

 a. Two Elders have been installed, including Dr. Park, and Mrs. Chewe.

 b. KPCT will furnish the Board of Trustees balance sheets to determine how KPCT may be assisted on their mortgage payment obligations.

Plan: The Commission will continue in a supportive role in assisting the congregation to navigate and negotiate their financial difficulties as well as the well being of the True Church.

Respectfully submitted:

Rev. Dr. Charles Durham Rev. Dr. Mark McCormick

Ruling Elder Claire Nichols Ruling Elder Ben Arellano

Appendix C.2

Authority of an Administrative Commission

According to our policies as outlined in The Response Review Commission Process approved at the August 19, 2010 Presbytery Meeting, an Administrative Commission maybe invested with following powers:

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. To confront the advocates for schism.

5.E.4. 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. To assume original jurisdiction in any situation it determines the session is unable or unwilling to manage wisely the affairs of its church (G3.0303e).

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.).

**Appendix D**

**Lant B. Davis – Faith Journey**

I first experienced the love of God through my parents. Mother was raised in the Presbyterian Church. When she married Dad and they moved to Birmingham (his hometown), she joined his Southern Baptist church. They were members of a “church plant” in East Lake, which soon moved to some property that my father, a real estate broker, had located for them. That church was full of loving evangelicals, and I learned from their example the importance of Scripture and of faithful stewardship in the life of the church. At the age of eight I made a public profession of faith in Jesus and was baptized, yet as I grew into my teenage years the sermons tended to make me wonder whether I had enough faith to merit salvation.

In college at Duke University I experienced different ways of being Christian. During this time of social and political unrest, I saw for the first time how Christian ethics could apply outside the bounds of one’s personal, moral life. On Sunday mornings I worshipped at the Duke Chapel, where the sermons, delivered by a Scots Presbyterian and a succession of United Methodists, were about social justice, peacemaking, and racial reconciliation. I sang in the chapel choir and for the first time was exposed to the great works of sacred music, which became for me a central spiritual practice. On Friday evenings I attended the Baptist Student Union. The resident minister there was an American Baptist, who modelled non-judgmental hospitality. From college I proceeded straight to law school. These were my most unreligious years. Yet even there God continued to add new faith experiences. My roommate was Catholic, and my best friend was Jewish: I learned to respect their faith traditions, too.

When in 1979 I returned to Birmingham to practice law, I first attended the Baptist church where I had been raised. Although the same loving people were there, somehow it did not feel “right.” So I began shopping for a church. The decision to become a Presbyterian became easy when Amanda and I met and were married. She was a lifetime member at Independent Presbyterian Church, and I loved the choir’s music. Scott McClure’s sermons, while evangelical, also addressed many aspects of Christian discipleship. They dealt not only with becoming a Christian, but also with being a Christian. I could not have explained it at the time, but this church felt “right.”

Over the next sixteen years at Independent, while my church involvement increased, I had a growing sense that God was calling me away from the practice of law to something else. When I finally discerned a call to ministry, Amanda and our son Lee graciously agreed to move to Kentucky, where I enrolled in Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary. There I learned why the Presbyterian Church had that “right” feeling for me: in the calculus of personal salvation, God’s sovereign grace and mercy make up for the weaknesses in our own belief and faith. Secure in God’s love, we can stop worrying and instead focus on following Jesus.

For four years after seminary I served Louisville Seminary as assistant to the president. My faith in God’s plan for my life was tested, as, due to an unexpected presidential resignation, I served a different president each year. When Amanda finished her doctoral studies, we searched together for a professional home. To our surprise that was Terre Haute, Indiana, where I have enjoyed almost eleven years of rewarding and happy ministry. Now it is time to move back to Birmingham, where we can be close to my 91-year-old father, who, since Mother’s death in 2010, has lived alone. I am thankful to God that, “if the way be clear,” the move will not end my service as a pastor. I look forward to new challenges and joys in ministry in Birmingham.

**Lant B. Davis – Statement of Faith**

I am amazed by the created cosmos, from bumblebees to black holes; and I believe God created it all in sovereign love. I do not understand, but I believe, through Scripture and through the Church’s historic confessions, that this creating, loving, sovereign God is communal—three “persons” moving in Trinitarian unity—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

In love God created us good and has sought to be in communion with us. God created us with wills of our own, and too often we use our freedom in selfish ways that undermine community. But God has been patient, taking the initiative to teach us love and justice—first through a particular people, the descendants of Jacob. Inspired by the Holy Spirit, those Israelites wrote the hallowed stories, poetry, law, instruction, and critique in which the people were given to know themselves and God. Yet, the Israelites (indeed, all humanity) continued to resist God’s love and truth.

Still not giving up on us, God came to us in person. The eternal and creative Word of God, which had been announced in Torah and interpreted by the prophets, took on flesh and became truly human in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, born of Mary. This mystery, too, is beyond my understanding, but I accept it in faith. Jesus was the one long-promised to Israel, the anointed one who would save God’s people and begin the reign of God on earth. Jesus is our ideal pattern as humans, showing us how to love God and one another, meeting the needs of “the least” among us. He unflinchingly called humans not to trust in things that neither endure nor satisfy, but rather to place our trust in God alone. His way, God’s way, opposes many destructive human systems; and those systems—religious, economic, military, and political—fought back against Jesus. He was falsely arrested, unjustly tried, and cruelly executed. On the third day after his death, and against all expectations of his followers, God raised him from death to life. I believe this based on the recorded behavior of his followers, who prior to his death were a craven and dull bunch, but who after his resurrection were fearlessly committed to the way that he had taught. After giving his disciples final instructions, Jesus soon “ascended” to the Father. No longer bodily, but now through the Holy Spirit, he is alive and active in the world.

Just as he did so long ago, Jesus still offers life and health and peace. When the Holy Spirit speaks to our hearts and we in faith accept Jesus for who he is, asking his forgiveness and putting him in charge of our lives, we are saved from our past and made alive for God’s future. As believers saved by the faith of Jesus, we are called by God into the Church, where collectively we become the physical body of Christ in the world and God’s partners working for the repair of the world, confident of that day when the power of evil finally will be broken and God’s love and justice will govern the world and all those who live in it.

**Appendix E**

**Faith Journey – Paul Sherwood**

 I was raised by parents in a middle class American family in Atlanta. I was the first of four children, three boys and a girl. Church was a large part of our lives with regular attendance on Sundays, active participation in Scouting, choirs, and youth groups. I remember the love of a kindergarten teacher and the patience of an eighth grade Sunday School teacher. Confirmation class was an event which I took very seriously. As I moved through high school, I remained active in church and youth group. During college I continued to worship weekly in a Presbyterian church. While at a college chapel service, I remember confirming in my heart, my faith in Jesus Christ. I married while finishing a degree in Chemical Engineering at Georgia Tech. After college graduation, I accepted my first job with a pharmaceutical manufacturer. Wherever my family moved, we would seek out a church community for worship, education, fellowship, and service.

 During my industrial career, I worked with several companies in corporate engineering and manufacturing supervision roles. During that time my family was blessed with four children. Then I accepted a position with First Presbyterian Church of Marietta as Director of Administration. Within two years of moving, my family experienced a traumatic time. My wife left me to raise the four children alone. My prayer life was never stronger. God carried me through this difficult time with the support of friends and my church family. Four years later, I married Amy, who I had met at a Presbyterian singles event. After twenty years of marriage, we are happy that all four children are married and having their own children.

During my service in Marietta, I sensed a call to pastoral ministry and investigated seminary. I realized that I had been greatly blessed by God and that I was called to do more. I was admitted to Columbia Theological Seminary. I graduated with my called to pastoral ministry confirmed. I have served churches in Augusta, Georgia and Athens, Texas. In both churches, I was blessed to see God working to strengthen the faith and mission within the congregation. I can see God’s hand in every stage of my life.

I consider it a privilege to serve God, helping to develop disciples for Christ, while leading worship and ministry. My task is simple, continue to strengthen my own faith and the faith of others. I pray that God may continue to use my pastoral leadership in effective service for His kingdom and His people.

**Paul Sherwood - Statement of Faith**

I believe that God was revealed as the eternal Creator by God’s self, to the patriarchs and to Israel through acts in Old Testament times. God was revealed to first century witnesses through the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, God’s Son. God is revealed today to those who seek Him through scripture, by church tradition, and by the revelation of the Holy Spirit. The scriptures stand as the true witness, by which we understand the unique communion of Creator God, Son, and Holy Spirit.

I believe that Jesus Christ was human and divine. He reveals the will of God for our lives. God’s intention for authentic human life was demonstrated by Jesus’ life of obedience. The more I want to live a life following Christ, the more I realize the need for God’s grace.

As I consider my community and world, I see the sins against God’s creation and against God’s human creatures. I may exercise my free will to either seek God and his will or to ignore the evidence of God and live a selfish life. Whatever I choose, I cannot escape my sin and do not deserve God’s blessings. The good news is that Jesus calls me to fulfill God’s will for myself, my community, and for all of creation. I respond to the call to faith by believing in my heart that Jesus Christ is Lord. God grants forgiveness of sin to me when I respond to the grace of Jesus Christ, ask for forgiveness, and seek to align my life more closely to the examples of Jesus.

I believe that my eternal life is assured by my relationship with Jesus Christ and the grace of forgiveness. I may live with love and confidence, without fear, because God demonstrated power over death through the resurrection of Jesus. I may live with joy in my heart because Christ my Savior has come, and I faithfully look forward to his return with glory and power.

I am privileged to experience life in the Kingdom of God even now, as I live a life seeking God’s will in the world. I need the Holy Spirit to reveal God’s purposes for my life through the scripture, through worship, and through fellowship with other believers. God has gifted me and sets me apart as a disciple of Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit empowers me beyond my own ability for works of witness, worship, and mission.

Worship is the responsive act of praise, prayer, humility, and hearing God’s Word. We express our love of God by worshiping together as the body of Christ. We bear witness to the world by our public worship and by going out in mission and ministry. The sacraments are observed as holy acts of worship for Presbyterians. Baptism is the sign of the individual’s acceptance into God’s family. Through The Lord’s Supper, the faithful in the community are spiritually strengthened and refreshed as they look toward Jesus’ sacrifice and seek communion with God through the Holy Spirit.

As the body of Christ, the church is responsible for making the Gospel known to others. I must find for myself and help others to find, their part in God’s mission to the world.

**Appendix F**

**Lindsey Becker**

**Faith Journey**

I was baptized as an infant into the United Methodist Church but was raised in the PC(USA) from an early age. As my earliest memories are of Presbyterian experiences, I think it’s safe to say I can still claim being a cradle Presbyterian. As a member of St. Charles Avenue Presbyterian Church in New Orleans, I was privileged to grow up in a strong and loving community of believers. My pastor and mentor, Dr. Frampton, was a constant source of wisdom and support. He helped me grow in my faith and talents by encouraging me to lead Sunday School classes as early as middle school. I always went to church with my family but participated in a way that left my own footprint.

What I learned most from that church was the importance of personal relationship and the sacredness of safe space. As someone who has a mental health history, I did not have the courage or belief in myself that so many other people have. If it were not for the people of my church, it is likely that I would never have realized my gift and love for ministry. They claimed my call before I did because they took the time to know me as a person and engage in relationship in a way that didn’t allow me to disappear.

But, as they helped me realize my sense of call, they gave me the safe space to figure myself and my faith out. I was able to make mistakes and feel the safety that allows us to push past fear and learn from them. They were patient, loving and accepting when I walked away from my Christian faith for over a year in high school. Dr. Frampton allowed and encouraged my heretical questions that would probably have me rushed out of the office in some other churches. My parents shared wonder and respect - instead of fear about when I would still go to church - but chose to participate in a way that allowed me to remain authentic to where I was in my faith struggles. My youth director had developed a relationship of trust with me so I felt comfortable accepting her invitation to Montreat even when I didn’t believe in God.

The Montreat trip we took my junior year became the ultimate safe space for me. Everyone from my small group leader to my home youth group let me feel comfortable living out loud the vulnerability of being without faith. By the end of the week, I came home and confidently claimed being a Christian. It wasn’t because someone preached to me or “told me about Jesus.” It was because I had the safe space to discover God and be Christian “my way.”

That faith was put to the hardest test just months later. When Hurricane Katrina scattered my friends and my life, it also violently exposed the inefficiency and compassionless nature of our society. I was repulsed by the official responses (or lack thereof) to my people suffering and in urgent need of help. I was grieving and the ‘Christian’ responses that took the airwaves ranged from mediocre to downright infuriating. While it is easy to logically remember that most Christians and God would not say that a natural disaster was sent as punishment for ‘the gays,’ Katrina is a reminder of just how those statements still send deep ripples of pain through your heart.

But, most importantly to my faith, I found myself at odds with the more ‘mild’ statements. I couldn’t bring myself to accept ideas like, “If God brings you to it, God can bring you through it.” I wanted to scream every time someone said they were praying for us. When you are in the midst of such a crisis, you are made painfully aware of how often people of faith pull out statements that sound hollow and routine. How, as suffering happens over and over and over, they say the same things over and over and over then move on. It was so invalidating, silencing and alienating. These are not the things I experienced Christ and faith to be through my church.

In that struggle and the angry tears that consumed me for weeks, my faith took a huge step. Desperate to find hope, I continued to watch what was happening to my hometown. What gave me hope was action. It was the people who defied FEMA restrictions and took great risks to help. (After Katrina, you’ll be hard pressed to find a New Orleanian that doesn’t think Sean Penn and his boat are worthy of sainthood.) It was the people who showed up to the Astrodome to help our refugees. It was the churches that continue to this day to send people to help rebuild.

Faith isn’t about sitting in the comfort of your space and observing those around you. Faith is what instills a compassion so deep within you that you can manage the fear of moving outside of your comfort zone. Faith is a prayer that doesn’t end at “amen” but carries into your next act. Faith is the daunting task of intimately engaging with others in a way that is Incarnational. It is in this way that we are able to make God’s kingdom real here and now.

This was when I first realized my call. I didn’t yet know what it would look like but I knew that I had to explore it. I made the difficult decision to let go of my dream to go to Texas A&M (gig ‘em) and become a large animal veterinarian. Instead, I went to Trinity University and got a bachelor of arts in comparative religion. Every semester, my interest in theology and religions grew. I knew I needed more. Dr. Frampton, in his infinite wisdom, encouraged me to go to Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary. I couldn’t have had three better years of my life than those years I spent getting my MDiv. While in the middle of my first unit of CPE, I discovered a ministry that is a perfect fit for me. As a chaplain, I have the daily opportunity to practice my faith in a way that is compassionate, active and uniquely relational. God’s call has brought me to Birmingham as a chaplain at Children’s of Alabama, where I have been blessed to have already served parents, children and staff for over a year. My work there affirms my call as it has continued to grow my faith and bring out my unique skills for this specialized ministry.

**Lindsey Becker**

**Statement of Faith**

As someone raised in the Reformed tradition, I developed a strong belief in the Church being a place of constant reformation. As a community called to embody Christ in an ever evolving world, we have the amazing yet sometimes overwhelming task of constantly seeking to transform ourselves and the world around us. As members of the Church, we are a covenant community seeking to engage relationally in a way that shares glimpses of God’s promise.

The sacraments are a reminder of how the long-standing traditions of the Church will never be outdated or obsolete because the Church has a living and breathing tradition that inspires action. By participating in baptism and the Lord’s Supper, we are participating in an outward sign of an inward grace. Baptism is a beautiful reminder of the grace that is found in loving community. Before I was old enough for anyone to know me, an entire community was ready and willing to embrace me and have faith that my journey belonged in the Church. That is the greatest act of grace. We see God’s grace further in the Lord’s Supper. As we gather at the table, we remember how Christ embodied the grace of God even in death. In bread and cup, we encounter grace in one another, in a shared meal, and in the hope of God’s promises.

The cross not only became a symbol of just how deep God’s grace is for us but, in knowing of Christ’s resurrection, I am reminded that death is not the end of my story. Grace is not just a gift but a reminder that God’s love breathes life and transformation into everything.

When I think about God breathing life into us, I think of the Holy Spirit. As an agent of transformation, the Holy Spirit daily realizes the power of the Incarnation within each of us. It is what takes the words of Scripture and turns them into revelation so that we can continue to learn about the great mystery of God. It helps us move from standing in awe to action. It guides, lifts and deepens our prayers so that we do not stop at “amen.”

The Holy Spirit is how the life, death and resurrection of Jesus is not simply a story that remains in history, but is brought to present reality. The Incarnational Christ, who entered into our world and took the huge risk of becoming intimately connected to our humanity, continues to be personally and intimately connected to each of us. Christ’s ministry of love, faith and mercy never ceases because the Holy Spirit enables us to participate in the work of Christ

In knowing Jesus, I know of God’s faith in me and love for me. God, in an outpouring of love, is my Creator. The mystery of God is great but I can always claim with confidence that I am fearfully and wonderfully made. We are all tied together in the act of Creation. To live a life of faith in God is to act in ways that remind ourselves just how fearfully and wonderfully made each one of us is as God’s creation.

All of these beliefs are merely glimpses into the vast wisdom of faith yet somehow all of it can be found in one place – Scripture. Scripture is full of experiences, human journeys, personal stories, and testaments that span thousands of years. In these living words, we find God. Through Scripture, we can begin to wrestle with and find answers to questions about our salvation, God, ourselves, and the world around us.

**Appendix G**

**COURTNEY BOWEN**

**Faith Statement**

 I believe that God is sovereign, always present, and gratuitous in love for all of Creation. God is transcendent and infinite, yet in deeply personal relationship with creation - not just corporately but with individuals as well. God has been intimately involved in human history, in covenantal relationship, as testified to in the scriptures, which are the unique and authoritative witness to God’s self revelation and love for the world, most fully revealed in Jesus Christ, who is our savior. Because sin permeates humanity, both corporately and individually, we “fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). There is nothing we ourselves can do to make up this gap. We can not earn justification on our own. However God, in love and mercy, does not reject us, but in the person of Jesus Christ, through his dying and rising, saves us from sin and death and promises us new and eternal life. In our covenantal life with God, we are called to respond faithfully to the saving acts of Christ through the Holy Spirit by living in ministry and service to others, reflecting the life and actions of Jesus that are revealed in the scriptures. Just as Jesus lived among sinners, the poor and marginalized, those sick and stigmatized, we are also called. We recognize that sin has corrupted not only our individual lives, but also human systems and institutions and we strive to work for justice, peace and compassion, transforming our societies to more faithfully reflect the values and love shown by Christ. We are not strong enough to do this on our own, but rely on the power of the Holy Spirit, which is God within us and among us, transforming our hearts and minds so that we can live more faithful lives, looking beyond ourselves and our own desires to the needs and suffering of others. Our work of compassionate ministry extends beyond humanity to all creation, as we strive to live as faithful stewards of the many blessings and resources we have received from God. This entails living in a manner that does not excessively and recklessly use up what has been entrusted to us, but instead, seeks to live wisely and in conservation of God’s many blessings. Through the Holy Spirit, we seek to live in a way that intentionally looks beyond our own self interests and reflects God’s wisdom, love and justice for all God’s good creation.

**COURTNEY BOWEN**

**Faith Statement**

 I believe that God is sovereign, always present, and gratuitous in love for all of Creation. God is transcendent and infinite, yet in deeply personal relationship with creation - not just corporately but with individuals as well. God has been intimately involved in human history, in covenantal relationship, as testified to in the scriptures, which are the unique and authoritative witness to God’s self revelation and love for the world, most fully revealed in Jesus Christ, who is our savior. Because sin permeates humanity, both corporately and individually, we “fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). There is nothing we ourselves can do to make up this gap. We cannot earn justification on our own. However God, in love and mercy, does not reject us, but in the person of Jesus Christ, through his dying and rising, saves us from sin and death and promises us new and eternal life. In our covenantal life with God, we are called to respond faithfully to the saving acts of Christ through the Holy Spirit by living in ministry and service to others, reflecting the life and actions of Jesus that are revealed in the scriptures. Just as Jesus lived among sinners, the poor and marginalized, those sick and stigmatized, we are also called. We recognize that sin has corrupted not only our individual lives, but also human systems and institutions and we strive to work for justice, peace and compassion, transforming our societies to more faithfully reflect the values and love shown by Christ. We are not strong enough to do this on our own, but rely on the power of the Holy Spirit, which is God within us and among us, transforming our hearts and minds so that we can live more faithful lives, looking beyond ourselves and our own desires to the needs and suffering of others. Our work of compassionate ministry extends beyond humanity to all creation, as we strive to live as faithful stewards of the many blessings and resources we have received from God. This entails living in a manner that does not excessively and recklessly use up what has been entrusted to us, but instead, seeks to live wisely and in conservation of God’s many blessings. Through the Holy Spirit, we seek to live in a way that intentionally looks beyond our own self interests and reflects God’s wisdom, love and justice for all God’s good creation.

**Appendix H**

**TRUSTEE REPORT TO PRESBYTERY**

FOR PRESBYTERY ACTION: NONE

FOR INFORMATION:

1. After exchanging letters with the Attorney for Bryan Memorial and a review of past action concerning that congregation's departure from the PCUSA Trustees have concluded that no more time or money be invested in this effort.

2. Creative ideas for use of Trinity and Robinson Memorial sale revenue were discussed. This is an ongoing process hopefully occurring all across the Presbytery. As funds become available recommendations will be made to Executive Council for Presbytery action.

3. Interest in congregations merging has raised questions about how property should and would be treated. Coming soon, a white paper expressing the Trustees interpretation of the Book of Order and current PC(USA) policy.

4. Presbytery remodeling continues and will be completed in early May.

5. Ongoing issues:

* First, Tuskegee is waiting for Committee on Ministry to either formally close the church or discover that it has already been done.
* Harper Chapel is listed for sale.
* St. James, Moundville possibly has one worshiper. Establishing contact with the remaining member is difficult. Effort continues.

**Appendix I**

PW Report

Dotty Lessley, Moderator

Greetings from PW!

It seems so strange for me to be writing this report. I am truly blest to represent the PW of Sheppards and Lapsley. But, I must admit, I still feel as if Carolyn Jordan should be writing this report. Many of us are still numb by her sudden death.

Carolyn was an excellent leader! She taught me just how important it is to serve with grace and humility. I will personally cherish serving with her as a voting representative at the 2016 Churchwide Gathering of Presbyterian Women.

The Presbyterian Women of Sheppards and Lapsley contributed all Fall Gathering 2015 offerings and individual memorials in Carolyn’s honor. These monies supported three missions of Presbyterian Women that were dear to Carolyn. They were:

Presbyterian Home for Children $726.75

Columbia Friendship Circle $725.00

Mission Haven $725.00

The Annual Spring Gathering was held at First Presbyterian Church in Talladega, AL on Saturday, March 12, 2016. Rev. Leeann Scarbrough was our Worship Leader. The day was filled with information, presentations, worship, music, wonderful food and fellowship. It was wonderful hearing from Columbia Friendship Circle Scholarship Recipient, Barrett Payne; John Erdman from Living River; Belinda Dickinson from the Congo Partnership; and hearing about the Alabama/Mississippi Conference from Anne Thomas. The highlight of the day was having the pleasure of hearing the Hope Academy Choir sing some beautiful selections!

Mark your calendars for these upcoming events!

* Presbyterian Women Synod of Living Waters Triennial Gathering: June 8 – 11, 2016 at First Presbyterian Church in Franklin, TN.
* 222nd General Assembly: June 18 – 25, 2016 in Portland, OR.
* Alabama/Mississippi Conference for Presbyterian Women: July 13 – 15, 2016 at South Highland Presbyterian Church in Birmingham, AL.
* PW Cluster Fall Gatherings:
	+ Anniston Cluster: August 6, 2016 at TBA
	+ Birmingham East/West: August 20, 2016 at Shepherd of the Valley Presbyterian Church in McCalla, AL
	+ Montgomery/Eufaula: TBA
	+ Tuscaloosa: TBA

As I embark on this new journey with PW, I am thankful for the spirit of Carolyn Jordan guiding my steps. I know I can’t be another Carolyn. She was truly one of a kind! But, I can follow her wonderful example. Thank you, Carolyn Jordan, for being my mentor and friend!

**Appendix J**

**ESL PROGRAMS**

This report covers mid-January through mid-April.

Our two ESL programs (English as a Second/Other Language) accommodate students among four different levels. Initially, we enrolled only Hispanics. Now both ESL centers, Independent in Birmingham and Oakmont in Hoover, also have speakers of Chinese, French and Arabic. These students come from different cultures, but all work to improve their English speaking ability. One of our classes has Middle Eastern students. Since January, the class has been reading "I Am Malala," a memoire by the youngest Nobel Peace Prize recipient. They recently viewed a movie based on the book, along with students from other classes.

In May, we will celebrate our 4th anniversary with a covered dish dinner, and probably a piñata for the children. Some students have attended our classes since 2012. It is a joy to see the English competence they have achieved over four years.

Finally, our volunteer tutors are always well prepared and dedicated to achieving positive results for our students. A special thank-you to them for the time and love they they give to this endeavor.

Dr. Eleanor Wright

**Appendix K**

 Congo Partnership Team

 Presbytery Report for May 14, 2016

The Congo Team is pleased to announce we are getting very close to the $80,000

needed to build the first of two schools in the DRC. We are grateful to all of you who have helped with this fundraising up to this point. There have been some really great fundraisers and some generous people. We look forward to speaking and visiting with many more of our churches.

We recently received a new video from Gwenda Fletcher regarding the schools. It will be put on the Presbytery's site in the Mission, Congo section. I hope you will take a few minutes to see it. It is 16 minutes in length.

There is an International Conference at Montreat on September 9th celebrating the work of the

southern church in creating the American Presbyterian Congo Mission. The work was begun 125 years ago on April 18 of this year. We hope some of you will attend. Registration information is available on the Montreat web site. Go to events and you will find it in listings for September.

Thank you for your continuing support of the mission of this Presbytery.

 Together in service,

 Belinda Dickinson, Moderator

 Congo Partnership Team

 PSL

**Appendix L**

**Report of Small Church Ministries Task Force**

Do any of you know why the 24-second shot rule was instituted by the owners of the NBA in the 1950’s? At that time the fan following was diminishing and the owners sought to determine why. What they found out was that the fans thought the games were boring. First-half play was exciting but the team which was in the lead played the second half more slowly and less enthusiastically to try to maintain the lead. The owners instituted the rule; games became more exciting and the number of fans in the seats increased. Surprise, though, was that the new rule was not popular with the players. Needless to say, the rule is still in the rulebooks.

Why tell you this? Paul Grier, one of the leaders of the event, “Project Regeneration,” sponsored by the Small Church Task Force, offered this vignette as a means of leading the 50 leader and pastors of the small churches in the Presbytery into the reflection on the matter of *A Clearer Look at Today’s Church.* He pointed out that today’s congregations (of all sizes) face significant challenges among which are noticeable decline in church attendance, population loss or change in demographics in the particular church’s local community, financial struggles, too much building for dwindling numbers to maintain, and general aging of the church’s membership. He further delineated for the group that the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) finds itself experiencing many, if not all, the factors for decline in membership. Do you know that 85% of congregations in the United States have plateaued or are declining and that 55,000 congregations nationwide will close between 2000 and 2020.

The typical member in a Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) congregation is:

63 years old; female and married and college-educated; upper middle class; attends at least 2-3 time per month; gives $2000+ per year to her congregation; makes a financial pledge; has been a member for 17 years in current congregation; doesn’t work (51%)—often is a retiree. The typical pastor is often male, younger, better-educated, not as affluent although this trend is changing quickly. One of the conclusions Mr. Grier urged the gathering to observe is that leaders and pastors of churches of all sizes need to be in communications with the members better than we do. In short, asking for financial gifts demands less reluctance on the part of a church’s leadership for the benefit of a church’s life and ministry.

Robert Hay, Jr., the other leader of this event, offered some vignettes of three churches in the country which illustrated the challenges facing the church today. He urged that leaders talk honestly about those items of concern that leaders have avoided in the past and present. He also encouraged those present to take advantage of the Online Financial Health Assessment too that the Presbyterian Foundation offers as a service to the churches which will help leaders, members, and pastors in their discernment efforts to help with understanding where a church is in its current life and possibly what can be done in the future.

The facts cited above in this report are stated on a hand-out given to the participants at this event. The group heartily endorsed this event as well as enthusiastically supported the reality that the next three sessions need to occur.

The Small Church Ministries Task Force will be meeting again soon to set the date for the next session of “Project Regeneration.” The location will be a lunch meeting at Riverchase Presbyterian Church.

Neil McCarter, Moderator