

PRESBYTERY REFLECTION

By Sheppards and Lapsley Moderator, Susan Clayton

NOVEMBER 2019

HOST: OAKMONT CHAPEL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Highlights of the November Presbytery meeting



The Lord's Supper
Rev. Paul Sherwood and
Rev. Lou Ann Sellers



Greg Goodwiller,
Synod Executive



PSL Musicians Revs
Yarboro and McLeod



Patti Winter,
Nominating Moderator

God Calls Us Together



The Presbytery of Sheppards and Lapsley met for its Stated Meeting on Thursday, November 14, 2019 at Oakmont Chapel Presbyterian Church in Hoover, AL. We received a very warm welcome from Oakmont Chapel's members and staff, who provided us a hospitable place to gather, delicious food for morning snacks and lunch, and many volunteers with ready smiles. Special thanks to their pastor, Rev. Paul Sherwood for welcoming us to their sacred space!

The meeting opened with prayer by the Moderator, The Rev. Susan Clayton.



The presbytery engaged in a very meaningful worship service, which included the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. As has been our custom in 2019, our Anti-Racism Committee planned and led worship for us. It was our privilege to hear our guest preacher, The Rev. Dr. Bernard LaFayette, a Civil Rights Movement activist, minister, educator and lecturer and an authority on the strategy of non-violent social change. Dr. LaFayette delivered a powerful message to the presbytery using Psalm 23 as his Scripture passage for the day. He entitled his sermon, "The Shadow of Death."

Following worship, the presbytery engaged in small group discussion around issues of white privilege, facilitated by the Anti-Racism Committee.



After these small group discussions, the Anti-Racism Committee presented their report, detailing their recent work. The Executive Council of the presbytery recently approved moving the Anti-Racism team from the status of a Task Force to a permanent Committee of the presbytery. The Committee presented one item for action: That the Presbytery accept the invitation from the Presbytery of Saint Andrews in Mississippi to participate in an Anti-Racism partnership between our presbyteries, to begin with a joint meeting and racism journey encounter in Sumner, MS in 2020. The presbyteries will seek funding from Synod to support this gathering. This motion was approved by presbytery.

Presbytery Business



The business meeting reconvened following lunch with the report of the Commission on Ministry given by Rev. Jamie McLeod. We examined, approved and welcomed three new clergy colleagues to the presbytery: Sam Turpen for ordination; Caroline Barnett from Heartland Presbytery as Associate Pastor for First, Auburn pending her examination for ordination by her home presbytery; and Andy Spaulding for ordination and installation as Associate Pastor for First, Tuscaloosa. It is a joy to welcome new ministers to labor among us!

Ministry Within our Presbytery



The Executive Council report followed, given by Ruling Elder Jane Clayton of the Montevallo church. Council moved the adoption of the 2020 budget of presbytery. This motion was approved. Presbytery Moderator Rev. Susan Clayton then presented a Resolution of Thanks for our retiring General Presbyter, The Rev. Dr. Jay Wilkins, and presented him with his certificate of Honorable Retirement. Jane Clayton reported that there are four applications for the position of

Transitional Presbyter and that interviews will commence soon.

We welcomed our new Synod Executive, The Rev. Greg Goodwiller from Mississippi, who brought greetings from the Synod of Living Waters.

Our Volunteer Mission Coordinator, Ralls Coston, gave a report of the many good mission activities happening in our churches and in our region of Alabama. The churches of the presbytery are alive and well and providing meaningful service to those in need in their communities by sharing the love of Jesus Christ in word and deed.

We also heard from Belinda Dickinson of the Congo Team about their recent participation in the Congo Mission Network meeting and the good work being done in Congo. We are still raising money for the fund in memory of Jerry Vandegrift and contributions are encouraged and welcomed!



Doug Marshall, President of the Presbyterian Home for Children in Talladega told us of new ministries with adults who are deaf and/or blind who will now enjoy housing and social work services at the Home, in addition to the ongoing work with women and children. We give thanks for the good work of the Presbyterian

Home for Children.

Our General Presbyter, Jay Wilkins, gave his final report as our Presbyter before his retirement at the end of the year. Jay presented a document of "Separation Ethics" since he will remain in the area after his retirement. We are deeply grateful for Jay's five years of service and ministry among us and wish him much joy in his retirement. We are grateful he will remain in our midst.

The Stated Clerk's report contained reports on two Investigative Committees, one of which had concluded their work. In addition, presbytery approved an overture from the Session of Shades Valley Presbyterian Church with concurrence from the Sessions of Grace, Tuscaloosa; First, Birmingham; Southminster, Birmingham; and Immanuel, Montgomery; to develop a policy to mandate regular participation in healthy boundaries training for Ministers of Word and Sacrament, Commissioned Ruling Elders, and Certified Christian Educators engaged in active ministry within the bounds of our presbytery, with the policy to be presented for approval at the February 2020 meeting of Presbytery. The motion was approved.

We also heard Good News from a number of our churches about the ways in which they are living out their call to be faithful disciples to Jesus Christ in their contexts. We are grateful to God for our common calling and for our connectional church. We are stronger in our witness together. Thanks be to God for all the Spirit is accomplishing in and through our churches!

Grace and Peace,

Susan Clayton, Moderator

