

Summary of the 170<sup>th</sup> Stated Meeting of the Shenandoah Presbytery  
Tuesday, May 10, 2016 at Front Royal Presbyterian Church, Front Royal, Virginia

The 170<sup>th</sup> Stated Meeting convened in the sanctuary of Front Royal Presbyterian Church, Front Royal, Virginia, with guest services provided by the host congregation of Front Royal Presbyterian Church.

In attendance that day totaled 170, with Voting Ruling Elders counted at 70 and Teaching Elders counted at 65, with the visitor total standing at 35.

Registration was up and running prior to the arrival of the Stated Clerk at 8:36 AM--great job Front Royal! The Presbytery arrived in what seemed to be a decent and orderly procession during the morning hour, having time to fellowship and dine lightly on snacks and beverages provided.

An opportunity for a brief tutorial of the presbytery meeting for First Time Commissioners was provided at 9:00 AM by the Transitional Presbyter and Stated Clerk. Five first time commissioners were in attendance; please note that this tutorial will be offered prior to each stated meeting of presbytery.

Promptly at 9:30 AM Moderator Cushwa called the body to order, offered a prayer of praise, and the presbytery worshipped together in the sanctuary of Front Royal Presbyterian Church. The worship was led by a presbytery-wide choir, a message delivered by TE Rachel Crumley (based upon the Stated Clerk's favorite disciple Thomas) and followed with the body partaking of communion.

Following a short break to format the sanctuary for the meeting of the day, the moderator called the body to order at 10:36 AM. At that time, the necessary "setting of the table" took place--quorum was determined to be present, the rules were announced, a greeting by TE Tom Biggs to the body, the recognizing of 8 first time commissioner ruling elders, assistant clerks TE Condro and Robertson were commissioned, the minutes approved, the docket approved, and with no additions to the business of the day offered, the body turned to the items of opportunities to be enacted for the presbytery.

Within the Stated Clerk's report a request for host churches was posted, with four dates listed. At the moment, the May and November dates are fully available, with a pending request for August in the works. If interested, let the presbytery office know--sooner than later! Noted within the report was the dismissal of an Investigative Committee among several other items.

In responding to the Stated Clerk's report request, a five member Administrative Commission was established, to continue in discernment with the congregation of Buckton Presbyterian Church. The newly named AC will continue to work of the Listening Response Team that has been in discernment with the congregation. The members of the AC are TE Maren Sonstegard-Spray (Winchester First) and TE Lisa Webb (Woodstock PC) and RE Adrian Burt (Front Royal PC), RE Eric Hulett (Tuscarora PC) and RE Donna Lanaghan (Burnt PC). Materials from the LRT's work were included in the docket materials.

The Presbytery, through the Omnibus Motion, excused those TE's who had requested an excused absence and received the minutes of the commissions to install TE Robertson, TE Wing and TE Allamon. In a moment of remembrance, within the minutes to install TE Wing is the line stating "*Harry Johns delivered the charge to the congregation,....*" which may be one of the last official actions of TE Harry Johns to be recorded in the minutes of this presbytery before his all-too-early death. May we continue to lift up the saints who have gone on before us.

The various statistical reports were included and received by the presbytery this day. Please notice that our total membership within our congregations at the end of 2014 was 14,080, and the 2015 reported membership stands at 13,585. The individual changes within each congregation are listed as well, with 19 congregations posting an increase in membership.

Our transitional presbyter spoke at 10:44 AM, stating he continues to preach in our congregations, noting 20 or so congregations have not scheduled a time in their pulpits for him to preach. The fall presents the clearest slot of dates to invite TE/TP Martin to preach. TE, this could be a free "day off" for you! We were also reminded to be good Presbyterians during the meeting, noting we are free to disagree but are mandated to maintain fellowship, respect and love for each other above all else.

At 10:48, TE Ed Dawkins, pastor at Front Royal Presbyterian Church welcomed the presbytery, and promptly noted the availability of restrooms throughout the facility! The promise of a wonderful meal was also presented (and delivered!). In addition, FRPC had provided a stained glass fish for all congregations present, lifting up an outreach ministry of FRPC. These fish are taken by members and given to various folks in various settings, reminding all of them (and us) that we are "*fishers of people*" and that, changing metaphors, the harvest is plentiful. Thank you FRPC for "*sendin' us fishin'!*"

A somewhat surprising glitch in the docket appeared, and we were able to move a couple of reports from the afternoon to the time before our first Order of the Day.

At 10:54 the Committee on Nominations brought their report, bringing forth names to continue staffing committees of the presbytery. The report continued with the announcement that Judy Hensley would have to step down as Vice Moderator due to health concerns, and this position will be filled as soon as possible. Thanks to Judy Hensley for serving, and prayers for recovery. A prayer for the Nominations Committee as its work continues.

The Committee on Educational Resources brought a verbal update to the presbytery at 10:58. They have six starting points or resourcing for the presbytery: Help with elder training; help with worship music and liturgy; confirmation class resourcing; interfaith dialogue tools; resourcing for technology uses and adult retreat possibilities. Also under their care and nurture is SPYCE, campus ministry and Camp Paddy Run. Our Order of the Day event for today, the presentation of Holy Cow Consulting is their offering of an educational component of each meeting.. The one item "missing" from their report is "us," meaning they are a committee that will be our network of success, so they have invited input, ideas and resourcing from the entire presbytery!

TP/TE Martin had forgotten an important ministry-in-development, so following CER's report, at 11:02 AM, he lifted up the new model for Commissioned Ruler Elder training, a joint venture with Union Presbyterian Seminary (Richmond/Charlotte campus), our sister presbyteries and the synod, all combining resources to lift up this program. The emphasis is to provide top-notch elders to be commissioned to serve congregations best suited for this ministry style. TE Bob Osborne and TE Roy Martin are our local contacts for more information about this new ministry.

TP/TE Martin then lifted up our commissioners to GA this year, and asked those in attendance to stand (TE Betty Dax, TE John Haney and RE MaryLou Cox were present and stood; RE Dave Thalman and YAD Isaac Haney were not present but will be there for us in Portland!). TP/TE Martin noted he will be there as well to support our commissioners and represent our presbytery. Let it be noted that while not mentioned, your Stated Clerk will also be there and working with and for our commissioners as well. Having not been

mentioned in the meeting, the Stated Clerk will investigate whether or not this omission implies his duties are then more of sightseeing and taking in the local atmosphere, or if, yes, he has to work. He will get back to the body on this one.

By 11:05 AM, with time still available, the moderator asked if Doug Sensabaugh could present the report from the Committee on Mission and Outreach, which they could do. The verbal report highlighted Saturday meetings, the examinations of missions within the presbytery and the great opportunity that lies before this committee. The Ethiopian Partnership is the first large ministry that the committee is working with to present to us at a later date.

The Moffett Grant is one of CMO's wonderful tools for ministry. RE Kate Brown of Falling Waters brought a report of the manner in which Moffett funds aided in a ministry at Falling Waters. In a shorter and less wonderful retelling of this great event, they have begun using their facility as a venue for a strong music ministry, a "Concerts in the Communities" as a way of reaching out to the community and to use their facility as a good neighbor. There are various music styles that have been there, secular and Christian, and the response from their neighbors has been wonderful. The committee continues to bring forth such examples of these creative ministries that our congregations can develop, and gain some financial support to kick-off such ventures.

Due to our Moderator making good use of time, the first Order of the Day was able to start a bit early, beginning five minutes early. The Committee on Pastoral Transitions brought several candidates and a couple of items for business for the body at this time.

The report contained a couple of items that were actually still in the development stages, and they were "removed" from the docket. TE Lisa Webb did ask for any input from the membership concerning those developing items so as to perfect them before they come back before the body. In the verbal reporting it was noted that 35 of our sister congregations are in some form of pastoral transition, so the committee has plenty of work before them.

At 11:13 TE Jonathan Bunker, serving as chair of the examination sub-committee of CPT stepped forward to present three candidates to begin ministry within our bounds.

First up was Debra McKune, being called to Falling Waters Church, to begin ministry June 5, 2016. For some reason TE McKune, when beginning to answer inquiries from TE Bunker, state that she "was nervous at the moment." She then introduced herself, referenced her bio in the docket, which was followed in a question concerning "Reformed baptism" as she understood it. TE McKune fielded a question from the floor concerning which congregation in the Ohio Valley was her favorite (there may have been a bias from the questioner in this inquiry). For the record, the question was answered. There were the normal steps taken to recognize anyone from the floor from the calling congregation, the signing of the Book of Obligation, and a welcome by the Moderator.

Next up was TE Harold M. Tongen, arriving from the Missouri River Valley Presbytery, to serve as interim of Moorefield Presbyterian Church. Within TE Tongan's response was the clear declaration that "I am not Canadian!" So be it. In the balance of the inquiry, a key theme surfaced, with TE Tongen reminding all of us that "Jesus chose us, and not the other way around" and because of that, our ministries are truly those of the Lord's! As is normal for us, a welcome from the Moderator, recognition of congregational members at the meeting, and the signing of the Book all were accomplished decently and in order.

Our third TE to come before us was/is Teri Summers-Minette, arriving from John Calvin Presbytery (that name sounds familiar!) and landing at Third Presbyterian Church Staunton as interim. Let us pause for a moment and remember the ministry of TE Harry Johns, the previous interim with this congregation who died not too long ago and way too soon.

TE Summers-Minnette was presented and introduced herself, answering inquiries from TE Bunker. Highlighted in these moments was the power of being present in life's journeys, and what outward signs of faith can bring to bear upon the chaos of the world that we may find ourselves. There was one question from the floor, and then, as standard and usual, the flow of moderator welcome, recognition of congregation members present and signatures posted followed.

At 11:48 TE Bunker prayed over the candidates. The balance of the CPT report was brought by TE Webb. As previously noted, pages 25-28 were not under scrutiny today. Turning to the request for commissioning authority for the CPT Exam Sub-committee, once presented, debate followed. A short time of discussion followed, with the acknowledgment that several examples of this were present in this meeting (TE Karen Greenawalt as the example). Concerns that a process normally reserved for the entire body has been transferred was stated in the discussion. The motion and conversation replied that all decisions of any committee, commission or presbytery meeting for that matter, could be overturned at a later date. That means, should the presbytery in the meeting following, by a 2/3 vote of presbytery, could rescind or amend the actions taken by the commission. When a voice vote was taken, there were a majority of "YES" votes and no "NO" votes.

Please note that within Recommendation A that was passed is the Interim Pastor Policy (page 22 of docket).

The second recommendation of CPT was presented, essentially an update of committee responsibilities over and against the previous model. This also passed with a voice vote of all "YES" and no "NO's".

A quick glance at the work of CPT would show one PNC up and running, three CAT reports received, four TE's transferred and eight contracts renewed, and six other actions involving congregations under the care of CPT. All of these actions are found in the docket material, so our thanks to CPT.

The Second Order of the Day began four minutes early, at 11:56 AM. TE Howard introduced our guest presenters from Holy Cow Consulting, founder J. Russell Crabtree and President Emily Swanson. The materials in the docket will be worth re-reading after this report is reviewed. The essence of this tool is, by quoting Emily Swanson's words, the "Marrying data with your story." In short, it isn't just numbers but stories that are guiding congregations in whichever direction they may be heading.

After the presentation, there was time for questions before our third Order of the Day (Lunch!). Six individuals brought questions or comments. One such question from TE Bethard was to compare/contrast a CAT process with Survey Monkey. The gist of the response is that while a good tool, most Survey Monkey results lack a comparison to other entities (benchmarking) and there is some concern on the level of expertise that can be present in the preparation of the questions to be asked. Another concern raised came from TE Fetterman and TE Wing, dealing with the questions themselves. One was how often are the questions "re-tooled" and then the ability to custom fit questions within the CAT tool. In short, re-tooling is beginning, and if questions become too specific to location, some benchmarking ability is lost. Several of our trained consultants brought questions on follow-up and on experiences.

At 12:43 PM, the Order of the Day (Lunch) was undertaken. TE Dawkins reminded us of the logistics of Front Royal PC, prayed for our lunch, and sent us on our way. The author of this report was one of the last ones to

find their way down to the fellowship, and even being near the end of the line, was greeted with a great meal and good company. A very heartfelt thank you to the folks and chef of FRPC!

Intercessory prayer was begun at 1:40 PM, led by TE McCrary.

At 1:45 PM the meeting convened with a panel discussion for our guests, HolyCow Consulting. One of the first items lifted up was a shortage of trained consultants from the more southern end of the presbytery. TE Carl Howard is the go-to person to reach out to if there is some interest in pursuing this important duty.

The panel consisted of Russ Crabtree, Emily Swanson, TP/TE Martin, TE Howard, RE Kim Kline, a trained consultant and perhaps most experienced of all of our consultants at this time (a challenge for others to step up, perhaps?).

RE/consultant Kline gave some insights into the process, and then questions came from several members of presbytery. An item of note is that CAT can be done with very small congregations, but the goal is to have EVERYONE take it. This tool also requires the congregation to be aware of the local demographics as well as the results of the CAT survey tool. There is a component labeled Community Assessment Tool in CAT, and responders that have very irregular attendance levels can also provide insight into the community, as they are “split between church and the world” more so than regular attendees. It was noted that for congregations that have “inactive” members the best way to get their input is far more pastoral-go and talk with them, don’t send a survey! (Thank you Russ for that reminder!).

By 2:15 the meeting moved to the report from CRM (Committee on Relational Ministry), with TE McCrary bringing the report. Items accomplished by CRM in normal processes include setting a slate of congregations for periodic visits, renewing 7 contracts between congregations and pastoral leadership, as well as perfecting internal procedural tools.

In bringing actions for presbytery approval, TE McCrary first presented CRM Duties, revised, for the manual, much as CPT did, providing a truer description of what CRM is to do. This passed by voice vote.

Wardensville Church was granted permission to sell “Pilgrim House” by the presbytery. This too passed by unanimous voice vote.

The presbytery then confirmed the terms of calls presented in the spreadsheet and supplemental reports for installed TE’s serving in the presbytery.

The last action authorized by presbytery “Give authority to the CRM to act between presbytery meetings to commission ruling elders for pastoral service.” All votes cast were “YES.”

At 2:20 PM CER chair Punker Robertson introduced Rev. Clayton Rascoe, the director at Massanetta Springs Conference Center. He is currently a member of the Presbytery of Eastern Virginia. He is looking forward to strengthening the ties between Massanetta and Shenandoah, stating the moving of the resource inventory to them as a prime example of mutual support.

Beginning at 2:24 PM, the CPA report was brought to the floor. The report summed up the proposed giving for 2016, noting a shortfall of \$60,044.08. To cover this shortfall, \$31,000.00 from the First Harrisonburg Lump Payment has been assigned to this gap, with \$24,800.00 to be transferred from the first payment amount of that settlement. The \$4,244.08 negative balance will be covered from a draw down on reserves. As a moment

of learning, within the shortfall of 2016 is the amount of \$5,588.40, which is the GA/Synod per capita costs, which presbytery MUST pay no matter what. There are three congregations who have submitted "0" responses to acceptance, and 52 congregations giving less than requested.

Items from CPA to be discussed and voted upon followed. The establishing of the search committee for the Associate General Presbyter was passed with all positive votes. The Salary for the position was passed with a majority of "YES" votes, noting what seemed to be two "NO" votes. It was clarified that the position of Stated Clerk will be rolled into the duties of the yet to be determined General Presbyter.

Also to note, and a thank-you given out as well, is that Larry Holsinger accepted the invitation for a three term as Presbytery Treasurer. This is not a paid position-thank you Larry!

When the clock reached 2:28PM, TE Olivia Haney brought the report that Kim Stroupe is celebrating her 30<sup>th</sup> year anniversary with the presbytery! From the humble hiring of receptionist to her current position of senior staff member and mentor to us all, Kim has been a true blessing to this presbytery. Kim would have chosen not to have been so named, and was reluctant to step into the limelight.

This then led to the 2:31 PM recognition of the pending retirement of Doug Sensabaugh. As of June 1, 2016, Doug will be retired. (Please note that Doug has accepted and is currently the chair of CMO, so it may be time to teach Doug what "retirement means," but maybe only after his term as chair is over!). A video presentation followed of Doug's time of service, and a gift was presented to him. And as is usual for us so often, we had to make Doug do some of the technology for his own retirement presentation!

CPM came to the floor at 2:49 PM. TE Elizabeth Lewis brought the report of CPM, bringing a report and a request. Their work included certifying one candidate ready for examination pending a call, and continuing as inquirers two persons.

CPM then brought a request for commission authority. This produced 15 statements/inquiries from the floor. In trying to summarize the points, one such statement is that request is essentially the same as CRT's commission authority, to act on behalf of presbytery if needed. Several voiced concerns centered on loss of forum for the floor of presbytery in these matters. It was noted, as elsewhere in this document, that commissions results are subject to review and possible change on the floor of the next meeting of presbytery, though a 2/3 majority would be required. Other questions centered on the number of individuals who will be a part of the commission process. For CPM 9 individuals will oversee this, for CPT a 5 member subcommittee will examine, and then the 12 member CPT will vote to sustain. Questions of how the process unfolds, the means of the exam itself, surfaced as well. In the end, a majority of "YES" votes were cast, with a small amount of "NO" votes cast.

By 3:12 pm CPC came to the floor of presbytery with their report. TE Coleman guided us through the ACTIONS TAKEN, and then brought forth the RECOMMENDATION that the Evangelical Presbyterian Church be considered as a denomination that, should presbytery so decide, could dismiss a congregation to them, adhering to all parameters of the Book of Order.

One of the first inquiries was "Didn't we do this already?" TE Peterson explained that each meeting of presbytery is "new" and can revisit any and all decisions of previous bodies. It is not permissible for any body/council to constrict this right of future bodies/councils. The issue today came as a new motion, as new business.

To clear up one other topic: The vote taken in the previous meeting of presbytery concerning the EPC occurred only once. There were individuals moving about during the initial count, which the assistant clerks brought to the State Clerk during the initial vote tallying. Although the initial tally was given, it was determined not to be reliable. With the same number of individuals in the room, a second vote took place, with the admonition that all pay attention to the process, and a clear and clean vote tally was secured. One meeting; one vote.

In the following discussion, thirteen individuals brought concerns and observations to be heard. With the moderator's assistance, a fair balance of "FOR" and "AGAINST" speakers were given voice. The best summary of the discussion centered on the ordination of women, with notices given that the Mid-Atlantic Presbytery of EPC had an additional requirement for women seeking ordination. Also noted in the discussion is that EPC is a Reformed body with a strong tie to the Westminster Confession as contrasted to other denominations deemed allowable. The concern over how "fast" to open the office to TE was lifted up-change begins most often slowly. Also raised was the concern that an EPC congregation with a 2/3 vote can leave the EPC to independence, which presents us with a concern that we become culpable in allowing a congregation to leave into independence, contrary to our rules. There was also the notation that in general the EPC is growing, and the number of women TE's and RE's is rising. One item raised was that we can't make other denominations "like us, because then they would be us," the implication being it seems that we should dismiss to the EPC. Finally, RE MaryLou Cox called for the question, was seconded and passed, with voting process being a standing vote and count for YES and then NO.

The final tally of the vote to accept the EPC as a denomination that we can dismiss a congregation into their care was 37 "YES" votes and 53 "NO" votes. The motion failed.

At 3:46, CPC, by common consent, the presbytery reduced the number of members of the Committee on Nominations from nine to six members.

The last item of business was the authorization of an Administrative Commission to work with the congregation of Pisgah Presbyterian Church in closing the congregation. TE's Patrick Pettit and Kevin Hand were named to serve, with the Stated Clerk, Transitional Presbyter and Moderator of the Presbytery to appoint a third individual to serve. The body voted "YES" in this matter.

At 3:52 PM the meeting adjourned with prayer.

Faithfully submitted,

Rev. Kerry Foster  
Stated Clerk  
Shenandoah Presbytery