

Summary of the 173rd Stated Meeting of the Shenandoah Presbytery Saturday, February 11, 2017,
at Meredith Chapel, Sunnyside Retirement Community, Harrisonburg, Virginia.

The 173rd Stated Meeting of the Shenandoah Presbytery convened in Meredith Chapel at Sunnyside Retirement Community, Harrisonburg, Virginia, with the Community providing a warm welcome to the Presbytery. This meeting of Presbytery totaled 186, with 71 Ruling Elders, 73 Teaching Elders and 42 guests and visitors, all who gathered in the Chapel on a very warm February day.

As is our tradition and hope, registration opened at 8:30 a.m., with Sunnyside volunteers present and assisting arriving commissioners and guests to the assembly. The cozy entrance-way still provided space for the sign-in tables, snacks and drinks, information tables and familiar, friendly faces aplenty, and the care provided by our host community was exemplary.

The 9:00 a.m. hour offered a class for first time ruling elder training, with four first-time ruling elders in attendance. Worship began promptly at 9:30 a.m., with Candidate Gwen Carr bringing our message, and participants from the Sunnyside Community and others participating. As a good and faithful body of believers, this worship provided a time of sanctuary and preparation for the work ahead. Thanks to all who prepared, sang, read, preached and prayed.

Moderator Kate Lewis Brown brought the Body to order at 10:01 a.m. On this day, we had a wall-to-wall quorum present. Our moderator walked us through the prerequisites for our meeting this day, noting that our parliamentarian for the day was TE David Witt of Opequon, as parliamentarian TE John Peterson could not attend due to the death of his father. Prayers for John and his family.

The Stated Clerk, TE Kerry Foster, presented the Stated Clerk Report, noting there is still an opening to host Presbytery in November, 2017, and then moved to the recommendations. All were affirmed by the Body. A short synopsis of some included granting excused absences of TEs who had requested this before the meeting; receiving the financial summary of 2016; signing off on a grant request; adding names to the TEs requesting their names be placed on the inactive list; and affirming that Shenandoah Presbytery maintains the proper balance of REs and TEs who act as commissioners to the meetings.

Within the Clerk's report were the Administrative Commission's final report from the ACs working with Buckton Presbyterian Church and Buffalo Gap Presbyterian Church. In both findings, the majority of the membership of each congregation affirmed their relationship to and with the Shenandoah Presbytery and the Presbyterian Church USA. In each congregation, there was a strong sense of discernment, the fracture of some relationships, and finally a resolution to continue their ministry in their chosen locations as they have both been doing in the past. Prayers for the membership that stayed and prayers for the membership that sought belonging in other faith communities. Each AC was dismissed with our thanks. The Buffalo Gap Presbyterian Church hosted a re-dedication service on February 19, 2017. As a reminder, a similar worship service had occurred in the Buckton Presbyterian Church in the not-too-distant past.

With the minutes of the previous meetings were affirmed, a welcome by our host community given, and a reminder of the John Vest Seminar at Mt. Carmel Presbyterian Church given, the Committee on Preparation for Ministry began its report at 10:18 a.m.

RE Mary Lou McMillin, chair of CPM, was able to provide for the Presbytery a vital item of business concerning Temporary Pastoral Relationships (TPRs). The motion is as follows:

“CPM moves, that pursuant to G-2.0701 the Presbytery approve temporary pastoral relationships as “work in the mission of the church that is acceptable to the Presbytery” for ordination.”

Shenandoah had, in the past, affirmed such an action (Stan Farthing, Joan Wilson and Punker Robertson), but in a manner that provided an uncertain protocol. This motion was supported from the floor by TE Lisa Wilson,

appraising this action as “expedient, creative and a reality check for our ministerial settings.” The motion was passed with a unanimous voice vote.

In the midst of this needed parliamentary and policy action, Gwen Carr was presented to the Body for affirmation of her candidacy, answering questions from the chair of CPM, sharing a time of personal growth and a sense of call, and presenting herself quite well to the Presbytery. When the vote to affirm and sustain and to validate her ministry to and with the congregations of Craigsville and Buffalo Gap, a heart-felt unanimous voice vote of “YES” was the response of the Presbytery. Ordination is to be on March 12, 2017 at Craigsville Presbyterian Church, with the commission to install affirmed by Presbytery. The commission was affirmed at 11:03 a.m. in a separate action of Presbytery.

The Committee on Relational Ministry took center stage as 10:36 a.m. The first item of business was the recommissioning of Commission Ruling Elder Debi Barnett, serving the congregations of Hedgesville and Little Falls through April 30, 2017. The Moderator led the commissioning service, with CRE Debi Barnett affirming each charge, followed by a prayer by TE John Leggett, and then a charge presented to all by our Moderator.

10:42 a.m. brought a “mixed emotion” moment to the Presbytery: the retirement of TEs George Evans of Cooks Creek Presbyterian Church and TE and Chaplain of Sunnyside Paul O’Gorek. In honor of George Evans’ ministry at Cooks Creek, Brent Showalter shared a few memories and lessons, leaving the Body wondering if George was the second-best preacher at Cooks Creek. TE Paul O’Gorek reminded us all that in 1976 at Sunnyside Retirement Community, he was received into this Presbytery, and would retire from it in the same location (almost the same, this was a newer sanctuary!), and then prayed for all of us.

Sadly, at 10:57 a.m. we had to turn from celebrating God’s ministry with and through some of our own, and turn back to rules and regulations. CRM brought this item to the attention of Presbytery for discussion and action:

“That when requested by a session and/or moderator of a session for any congregation within Shenandoah Presbytery, all teaching elders who are members in good standing of Shenandoah Presbytery are authorized to administer the Sacraments and install ruling elders and deacons.”

This motion was approved by a unanimous voice vote.

Continuing with the report, other policies under the care of CRM were affirmed by unanimous vote (note each was presented and voted upon one at a time). The policies are the Strong Minister’s Program; Retirement Recognition of TEs at meetings of Presbytery; Periodic Visits Policy; Parental Leave Policy; Church Family and Medical Leave Policy; Salary Policy and Receiving Ministers From Other Denominations Policy. These policies are now in effect and will be a part of the Operation Manual of the Presbytery.

The Committee on Mission and Outreach began its report at 11:04 a.m. Their first action was to address their committee responsibilities and presented a policy re-write, which the Body affirmed with another unanimous voice vote.

CMO then invited Lisa Wilson, a member of Trinity Presbyterian Church, to address the Body to lift up the ministry of the Moffett Grant. Trinity operates a clothes closet, with a long history of success. Relevant figures include 623 families served, totaling 1,012 individuals. The grant will provide for the purchase of a washer and dryer as a part of this ministry.

11:11 a.m. brought to us Nominations and their report. Notable items were the additions to the Permanent Judicial Commission with TEs Beth McCrary, Bill Everhart and Andy Sale agreeing to serve. Nine other names were lifted up to serve various committees and polity positions, and all were affirmed.

11:16 a.m. and the Committee on Educational Resources came forward. Two ministries that CER affirmed as viable and vital ministries of this Presbytery were SPYCE and campus ministry. They will continue to be resourced by this committee. Jenna Smith is continuing to minister with SPYCE, and TEs Stephanie Wing and Scott Crannell leading campus ministry. TE Rich Cardot provided a “minute for mission” on some of the SPYCE activities, past and upcoming, such as the Senior High Lock-in.

11:27 a.m.: ORDER OF THE DAY

As per the docket, the Presbytery invited and recognized Vera White, Coordinator for the 1001 New Worshiping Communities (1001 NWC), a program of the PCUSA. 1001 NWC is a product of the General Assembly, 2012 (GA220-Pittsburg, PA). It is an all-agency wide initiative, with a goal of establishing 1,001 viable new worshiping communities throughout the nation.

The presentation began where many of our conversations begin, with “what/who we are, and our laments,” to turning to Scripture for guidance, and then hearing three examples of ministry, from an RV ministry, to blue-grass music in southwestern Virginia, to urban reaching out in northern New Jersey. The key item in these three endeavors, from the clerk’s point of view, were individuals seeing a harvest around them and answering the call to “go into the field.” As lifted up in the presentation, the Harvest is God’s Harvest, we are, or more honestly, could be, those who are blessed to gather in the Harvest. The presentation was based on Luke 10:2; imagine what we can accomplish when we add in the other 31,172!

There are many resources and tools available, and as the Committee on New Congregational Development was the visible “inviter” of Vera White, we can begin to vision with them!

Thomas Smith, Chaplain at Sunnyside, offered a prayer for our lunch at 12:30 p.m. We all retired to the Bethesda Theatre and enjoyed a lunch, fellowship time, and a lovely walk through a part of Sunnyside. During lunch, there was a space to meet and speak with Vera White as well.

The Presbytery returned from lunch, and at 1:30 p.m. Intercessory Prayers were lifted up during the Necrology Reading, with Scripture spoken, and the names of those we lost called out, acknowledging their ministries and our loss, all under the care of our Creator.

1:41 p.m. and the Committee on Presbytery Administration took to the center stage mike. In quick order the budget of the Presbytery for 2017 was moved and accepted by the Body, again with a unanimous voice vote. As of this writing, nine congregations had not responded to the asking letter of 2017.

At 1:46 p.m. the Stated Clerk took a quick headcount, with roughly 100 of the 183 who signed in present in the sanctuary.

CPA committee member TE Ann Held then asked RE Debbie Judy of Circleville Presbyterian Church to speak on behalf of the support given to the congregations of Circleville and Seneca Rocks, as they continue to look forward and build up their talents and the support of Presbytery in their search for pastoral leadership. There is a group of TEs and REs who are not members of these congregations but are providing a great level of leadership and support. A good commercial for all of us to hear.

TE Rachel Crumley was present to bring the report of the Coordinating and Planning Commission of the Presbytery at 1:52 p.m. CPC requested an addition/change to the Manual, section 4.2.11.1, essentially allowing vice-chairs of committees privilege to attend meetings of CPC when the chair cannot attend, with full voice and vote. This is a minor change, but a needed one. The Body agreed unanimously following a few grammatical tweaks of the motion.

CPC then presented TE Brad Langdon to serve on the Nominations Committee, Class of 2018, and the Body confirmed this individuals.

The Committee on Relational Ministry returned at 1:57 p.m. to present TEs Kate and Clayton Rascoe for membership into this Presbytery.

At 2:00 p.m. CPC brought forth the name of Jane Bensenhaver to serve on Nominations, having secured consent from her and she was approved.

At 2:05 p.m. the Moderator closed the meeting with prayer, and we were adjourned.

Respectfully submitted:

Rev. Kerry Foster, Stated Clerk