

Highlights of 2016 Fall Stated Presbytery Meeting

By: Alexandra (Sandra) Hedrick, Presbytery Stated Clerk

Can I not do with you, O house of Israel, just as this potter has done? says the Lord. Just like the clay in the potter's hand, so are you in my hand, O house of Israel. Jeremiah 18:6.

The God who “remakes us, remolds us, and reshapes us” called us together on October 4, 2016, at Montgomery Presbyterian Conference Center (MPCC). Approximately 150 were in attendance. The morning offering for Presbyterian Disaster Assistance (PDA) was about \$1,320. One of our presenters was Kathy Broyard from Florida Presbyterian Disaster Assistance Network, who provided an update on the approaching Hurricane Matthew and encouraged our preparedness in coordination with one another.

The morning message - “God Does Not Give Up on Flawed People” (Jeremiah 18:1-10; Romans 8:28) - was brought by the Rev. Dr. Joe Rigsby of the Woodlawn Presbyterian Church in Jacksonville, Florida. Dr. Rigsby shared that God is constantly remaking us, remolding us, and reshaping us. Even when we are flawed and in a mess, and God’s reshaping feels painful, we are assured that the invisible hand of the Heavenly Father is making a beautiful vessel. God’s best work takes place when we are available, empty and yielding. We are called to start over, to let God make this a new presbytery, starting with us this very day!

Highlights of the presentations and actions during the meeting led by our Moderator Ralph Moulder included:

- We welcomed six teaching elder members: Matthew Benz-Whittington (Baptist Health); Ken Goodrich (Pastor, First Lake City); John Harris (Honorably Retired); Jessi Higginbotham (Interim Associate Pastor, Community); Jennie Thomas (Baptist Health); and Bill Weimer (Honorably Retired). Two other new members could not be present and will be introduced at the next meeting: Heong-Seok Cho (Pastor, Korean Presbyterian Church of Jacksonville) and Jack Swann (Honorably Retired).
- We recognized with gratitude the teaching elders who serve the church in validated ministries outside the congregation, such as teaching, chaplaincy and leading non-profit entities. It was also reported that four individuals have been enrolled as Inquirers for Ministry under the care of our presbytery: CJ Dates (Palms), Fred Lundy (First Gainesville), Forrest Foxworth (First Fernandina Beach), and Kevin Wright (Woodlawn).
- David Lee presented a heartfelt memorial resolution for Don Harris, who last served as Vice President of Foundation Services with Westminster Communities of Florida before his death on April 28. We approved several teaching elder retirements: Doug Ganyo (Associate Pastor, First Fernandina Beach); Peyton Hopkins (Associate Pastor, Community); Troy Lewis (Pastor, St. Giles); and Terry Lucarelli (Pastor, Lakewood). Lou Lothman, who is retiring as Executive Director of Pastoral Counseling Services, will continue as a part-time consultant in clinical services.
- Recognizing four years of dedicated work by Transitional Executive Presbyter Steve Benz, the Presbytery Council reported that his contract would not be renewed at its expiration on December 31. A motion to rescind the Council’s action was made, but the motion failed.

- The Presbytery Council also provided an update on the Discernment and Design process and presented the 2017 Asking Budget. We approved increasing the cap on our transition consultant's contract by an additional \$10,000, plus any amount received as anonymous designated donations.
- The MPCC Executive Director (Terry Patterson) and an Executive Operating Board member (Don Mossa) provided updates on the visioning process that has taken place. At the request of Trustee Murray Beard, the presbytery approved a plan to identify and elect new board members promptly due to the resignations that have occurred.
- Upon the recommendation of the Committee on Ministry, we voted to increase the effective salary portion of the minimum terms of call for full-time installed pastors from \$42,000 to \$43,000.
- The presbytery approved the sale of the property of the Fleming Island Presbyterian Church and gave the Administrative Commission for the church additional authority which includes the ability to cease operations and dissolve the congregation.
- We heard reports from two of the leaders of our Presbyterian Youth Triennium contingent and from the commissioners and young adult advisory delegate who attended the 222nd General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) in Portland, Oregon in 2016. Our Synod of South Atlantic commissioners provided written reports of the September 2016 meeting. Moderator Carol Graff brought us news from Presbyterian Women, and upcoming events for the Jamaica Ecumenical Mutual Mission were described by Co-Moderator Bob Bell. The Florida representative of the Thornwell Home for Children shared news about new ministries.
- We approved the Nominating Committee and Presbytery Council's slate of nominations for service on presbytery committees and commissions. Written reports were provided by other committees and commissions.
- We thank Montgomery Presbyterian Conference Center for the meal provided on the grounds. We were treated to roast beef, Italian chicken breast, cheesy squash, baked potatoes, cheddar garlic biscuits, salad with mandarin oranges, and two kinds of trifle.

The Winter Stated Meeting of the Presbytery of St. Augustine will be held at Fort King Presbyterian Church in Ocala, Florida on Saturday, February 4, 2017, beginning at 9:00 a.m.

A workshop for the session clerks of our congregations and others interested in polity (including an update on the proposed amendments to the Book of Order) will be held at First Starke on Saturday, November 5. Please contact Sandra Hedrick for more information - sandra@staugpres.org.

It will be my pleasure to answer any questions you may have about these brief highlights or to provide you or your congregation/session with more information. In addition, if you attended the meeting, I would love to hear your comments and suggestions. *I can be reached at sandra@staugpres.org or on my cell phone: 904-612-9766.* Transitional Executive Presbyter Steve Benz also welcomes your input and can be reached at steve@staugpres.org or 904-733-8277, ext. 125.

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