

Highlights of 2015 Fall Stated Presbytery Meeting

By: Alexandra (Sandra) Hedrick, Presbytery Stated Clerk

“The spirit of the Lord speaks through me, the Lord’s word is upon my tongue.” 2 Samuel 23:2

The Lord called us together for our Fall Stated Meeting on October 6, 2015, at Montgomery Presbyterian Conference Center (MPCC). The theme was “the Mission of the Church,” and visible signs of the church in mission in our communities were placed at the Lord’s Table and all around our meeting space. The morning offering for Presbyterian Disaster Assistance (PDA) was nearly \$1,400.

In the inviting fall weather, approximately 120 teaching elders and commissioners and 25 visitors registered and began a time of visiting that would resume during a fellowship break and again as they enjoyed a lunch on the grounds. Many of the past moderators of the presbytery attended the meeting and were recognized just before the worship service with individualized name tags and a clap offering.

The morning message - “King David: The Credits” (2 Samuel 23:8-39) - was brought by the Rev. Dr. Josh Braley of the Bethlehem Presbyterian Church in Archer, Florida. As Josh led us deeper into God’s word, he pointed out that when King David speaks his last words on his deathbed, you would think that scripture would follow those words with a eulogy about King David and his many accomplishments. Instead, there is a list of his loyal, brave and courageous friends (reminding Josh of the long credits at the end of a Hollywood movie). David’s kingdom was a blessing because of the work of many people together, as a team. Josh shared how God’s grace has recently been at work in his life in the way that the whole presbytery supported him and his wife Laurel after their twins were born prematurely earlier this year. He encouraged us to always remember the importance of togetherness as our presbytery serves Jesus Christ, stronger together than we could ever be alone.

Highlights of the presentations and actions during the meeting led by our Moderator Cynthia Montgomery included:

- We elected the commissioners and the young adult advisory delegate (YAAD) who will attend the 222nd General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) in Portland in 2016 (and their alternates). We also elected individuals to be a part of our committees and commissions, re-elected the stated clerk, and approved her renewed contract.
- We welcomed three new teaching elder members: John Diller, pastor of our Orange Park church, Holly Inglis, associate pastor of our Palms church (who will be installed at 5:45 p.m. on October 18), and Marcia Graham, an honorably retired member transferring to us from Newton Presbytery.
- We met two inquirers for ministry and approved their move to candidacy: Meagan Findeiss, who is attending Austin Theological Seminary, and Bailey Pickens, who is attending Yale Divinity School.
- We approved retirement resolutions for three of our members: Carol DiGiusto, Larry Seymour, and Eriberto (Eddie) Soto.
- 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.

- In addition to receiving the 2016 Asking Budget, we approved a new investment policy proposed by the Administration and Finance Committee. We also approved a new policy relating to nomination of synod commissioners and a change to the Manual of Operations that establishes a separate Representation Committee.
- The MPCC Executive and Associate Directors (Terry Patterson and Previn Moore) and Vice-Moderator of the Executive Operating Board (Don Mossa) provided updates on the success of the summer camping programs, renovations at MPCC, and the visioning process that is taking place.
- Moderator Patti Phillips brought us news from Presbyterian Women, and Moderator Richard Kirk described upcoming events for the Jamaica Ecumenical Mutual Mission. He also introduced Dave Tuttle of Presbyterian Social Ministries, which has recently received a grant for its work in the community from the “Together in Mission Fund” in connection with its relocation to the campus of our Murray Hill church.
- Additional presentations were made for our Youth Workers Network (Breanna Sooter of our Riverside church and Wilson Kennedy of our Palms church) and the purpose and work of Presbyterian Disaster Assistance (Milton Fulton of our Hodges Boulevard church).
- Updates were received from the Discernment and Design Team and each of the commissions and committees of the presbytery that did not make oral reports.
- We approved a DREAM grant proposal made by the First Presbyterian Church of Gainesville for its work in the community done in partnership with the Showers of Blessings Harvest Center.
- The lunch provided outdoors included fried chicken and orange marmalade pork loin, hash brown casserole, California-style vegetables, salad, yeast rolls, banana pudding and Milky Way Cake.
- After lunch, many of the attendees got to work assembling PDA clean-up buckets. In all, 35 completed buckets (some donated and some assembled on site) were delivered to a designated PDA storage site that very afternoon, with another 25 to be completed and delivered soon. These buckets will be available for use in South Carolina as needed in the coming weeks.

The Winter Stated Meeting of the Presbytery of St. Augustine will be held at First Presbyterian Church of Gainesville, Florida on Saturday, February 6, 2016, beginning at 9:00 a.m.

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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