

Highlights of 2015 Spring Stated Presbytery Meeting

By: Alexandra (Sandra) Hedrick, Presbytery Stated Clerk

“We are mortals just like you, and we bring you good news!” (Acts 14:15)

Called together in our common bond through Jesus Christ our Lord, the Presbytery of St. Augustine met for our Spring Stated Meeting on May 5, 2015 at Montgomery Presbyterian Conference Center (MPCC).

The Lord provided a beautiful spring day for us to worship, offer mission service on the MPCC property, enjoy food and fellowship, and discern God’s will for this presbytery as we conducted our business. There were approximately 160 people in attendance, including about 30 visitors. This was Rev. Cynthia Montgomery’s first meeting as our moderator.

The morning message - “Who Are We?” - was brought by Reverend Jermain Gibson of Covenant Moravian Church in Kingston, Jamaica. As recorded in Chapter 14 of the book of Acts, when a man in Lystra heard the good news of Jesus Christ, he walked for the first time in his life! When the crowds saw what Paul and Barnabas had done, they thought that they must be gods, but Paul responded strongly, saying, “we are mortals just like you!” Rev. Gibson shared that we are not God and that we do not need to compete with God. We are mere mortals, but we have received the gift of salvation and the awesome gift of being God’s servants and God’s friends!

The morning offering for MPCC was nearly \$1,500, and we had the opportunity after worship to tour the MPCC property, offer our service on various indoor and outdoor projects, and greet one another around a generous table of snacks and beverages that included blueberry scones and an assortment of fresh fruit!

Highlights of the presentations and actions during the meeting included:

- We welcomed Cheryl Gans, who has been examined to be a member of the presbytery and will be ordained on the afternoon of July 12 at Fort King Presbyterian Church. Ruling Elder Dothlin Myers spoke about the new co-pastor relationship that Cheryl will share with Debbie Pangrass at Marion Oaks Presbyterian Church and the special gifts that Cheryl brings to the ministry of the church.
- We remembered and celebrated the life of three teaching elders who died since our last presbytery meeting: Lester L. Hale, W. Richard McEuen, and Timothy F. Simpson. A prayer of thanksgiving was offered for their lives and their ministries.
- The Belhar Confession was approved as an addition to the Book of Confessions of the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) by a vote of 78/8/1.
- Presentations were made by Clark Simmons (Board of Pensions), Kathy Broyard (Florida Presbyterian Disaster Assistance Network), and Dennis Reid (Thornwell Home for Children).

- We approved the request of the Presbytery Discernment and Design Steering Committee to hire a consultant for the purpose of working with the committee in fulfilling its purpose, which is to find the presbytery's identity, mission and focus and to make recommendations regarding the structure and funding necessary to bring about the new vision. The presbytery has granted up to \$30,000 for this purpose.
- We also approved the request of the Executive Operating Board of MPCC that the presbytery provide up to \$30,000 from its reserve funds in order to hire a professional fundraising firm that will undertake a visioning and capital campaign feasibility study.
- Individuals were elected to fill three committee vacancies: Diane Watkins (RE - Fernandina, First) for the Mutual Mission Committee, and Martha Valent (RE - Lakewood) and Sabrina Crosby (RE - San Mateo) for the Committee on Preparation for Ministry.
- We approved guidelines for nominating presbytery commissioners to the 222nd General Assembly (GA) and distributed applications. Applications are due August 21 (a copy of the application may also be obtained on our website at <http://www.staugpres.org/news-events/general-assembly/>).
- We approved changes to the Manual of Operations relating to the work of the Bills and Overtures Committee and a clarification/expansion of the voting membership of the presbytery.
- MPCC, the Presbyterian Women, and the Mutual Mission Committee all made reports of past and future activities, and we saw photos of work done recently in Jamaica. Shernett Smith, Executive Director of Jamaica Ecumenical Mutual Mission (JEMM), was welcomed as a visitor.
- The 2015 minister terms of call were approved, and recent changes to the pastoral relationships within the presbytery were noted and approved.
- The delicious lunch provided outdoors included fried catfish and lemon baked chicken, yellow rice with sweet peas, squash and carrots, hushpuppies, garden salad, and two wonderful desserts: Mississippi mud cake and lemon bars.
- The Fall Stated Meeting of the Presbytery of St. Augustine will be held at MPCC on October 6, 2015 beginning at 9:00 a.m. At that meeting, the "presbytery in mission" service will be to assemble cleanup buckets for Presbyterian Disaster Assistance. More information will be provided soon about this opportunity for service.

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.*

Respectfully Submitted,
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