

Summary of the 177th Meeting of the Midwest Presbytery

September 16-17, 2022

(Please share this at your next Session meeting and with members as a means of staying connected!)

Our 177th meeting came to order at 1:15 p.m. with a word of prayer by the Moderator, TE Pete Scribner. He introduced Pastor Rob Hock who welcomed us to Southport Presbyterian Church. His whole staff worked very hard to facilitate our meeting with music, sound, a great meal and snacks to keep us going.

About 65 commissioners and several visitors and observers attended the meeting; in addition, about 30 joined us online via Zoom. Following the recommendation of the Council, we had notified all churches that we would change our online participation to observation and communication only (via Chat), but would no longer extend voting privileges online. After prayer and establishing a quorum, we approved the docket and got underway.

World Outreach.

Footprints: J&N joined us online and reported the return of many to in-person worship at Holy Trinity Church. Certificates will soon be given to Bible School graduates; Musical outreaches have been offered by a premier organist and a string Quartet that have drawn more interest.

TE Stephen Kelly reported progress in fulfilling his call to train Muslim background converts. His work takes him to the Netherlands, Yemen, Egypt, the West Bank and other places. He is engaged with refugees, helps plant house churches and coordinates the distribution of resources to people in need.

TE Mark Vanderput reminded us that the EPC World Outreach Team has a new Master Plan. He asks us to prayerfully engage in the mission of God to unreached people based on the words of Romans 10:14.

The MWP World Outreach Committee is offering registration scholarships to the Urbana Mission Conference which takes place December 28-31, 2022 in Indianapolis. These are available on a first come basis.

TE Adam Reasner introduced Global Workers David and Wendy Adamson. They are trained counselors who do member care for World Outreach partners in Thailand. They ask us to pray with Ephesians 3:16-19 in mind.

Ministerial Committee.

Two candidates came under the care of the Midwest Presbytery. Mark Ordus (Ward Church in Northville) and Chris Holmberg (Calvary Church in Flint) gave testimonies of saving faith in Jesus Christ and a call to ministry in the EPC. We welcomed them and charged from 2 Timothy 2:14-19. Both were assigned advisors who are already engaged in mentoring in their lives.

Three candidates came to be examined for ordination. Each had fulfilled all the requirements presented to them including a written examination administered by the General Assembly and an oral examination before the Ministerial Committee. Mark Perkins has been called to serve as Assistant Pastor at Trinity Church in Columbia City, IN. David Tori has been called to serve as Assistant Pastor at Trinity EPC in Plymouth, MI; and Josh Fellrath has been called to serve as Assistant Pastor at Kirkmont Church in Beaver Creek, OH.

Each candidate was examined at Presbytery in the five areas required in the Book of Order. These include Theology and Sacraments; English Bible; The Book of Order; The History of the Church and the Reformed Tradition; and the Nature of the Office of the Teaching Elder. In addition, exceptions to the Westminster Confession of Faith were presented and approved. Each examination was sustained. The Terms of Call and the Installation Commission details were approved. Commissioners laid hands on the three candidates for ordination and they were then prayed for by members of the Midwest Presbytery.

Other Ministerial Committee actions included the approval of the dissolution of the pastoral call of TE Luke Potter to New City EPC, South Bend, IN based on his resignation; the approval of TE Brian Guinto's call to be changed from Associate Pastor to Pastor at New City Church, South Bend, IN; the approval of TE Bill Teague to move to the active retired roll; the removal of Chaplain Jared Dilley from the roll of the Midwest Presbytery per his request.

The Midwest Presbytery went into an Executive Session. Discussion and decisions were made after which a motion was made to come out of Executive Session. Due to the confidential nature of the Executive Session, the minutes are recorded separately.

Program Committee.

Care for the Pastor's Spouse was the topic featured at this meeting of the MWP. Kristen Humiston and Kim Hock were the presenters. They also fielded questions during a panel discussion that followed.

Kristen mapped humanity's course from Creation Delight to Destruction in the Fall. Disconnection leads to disgust. This disconnection manifests itself in many dimensions of life – including one's inner life, marriage, parenting and church leadership. What do we do with the mess? "Your relationship with God's delight holds the key to transformation in all of your relationships. Delight is your super power for thriving in ministry life."

Kim Hock focused in on the traumas that she and many other pastors' spouses have experienced. Some of these traumas preceded ministry involvement. These past traumas formed neuropathways from body to brain that bypassed logic and reason. When high stress, negative comments, criticisms arise our desire for relationship is challenged, we fall back into isolation or disconnection. Three ways to help pastors' spouses were presented: (i) Provide for pastoral families financially; (ii) Protect us from toxic people; and (iii) Connect us with therapists that will heal and give us enough time to overcome the long-term traumas we've experienced.

Church Health Committee.

During this "Pilot Year" the Church Health Committee called TE Bill Teague to serve as chairman. He led the members to affirm a definition of Church Health and then to identify the work we've been asked to fulfill as collaborators connected to the General Assembly. Church Health Committee will work on evangelism, revitalization and transitional pastor training and deployment. The GA asked the committee to search for a coordinator. This led to the approval of Andy Gilman. He will not only present training in all three focus areas, but will also identify and train coaches in all MWP three states (IN, MI, and OH). He will also follow through with churches that have received grants from the Oakland Avenue Fund to see how well the proposals are working out. The Church Health Committee works with the Ministerial Committee in a collaborative way to welcome new churches and assist churches in need of support.

Church Planting Committee

TE Terence Gray presented a video taken at 5point7 Church on the occasion of the dedication of their new basketball court. Pastor Brian Evans was trained in the Residency Program at First Presbyterian Church of Trenton, MI. Friends from Lebanon OH, Owosso, MI and other churches supported this church plant. Terence said we have the vision, and the gold standard model for church planter training. We need to replicate the pattern and plant churches in all three states represented in the Midwest Presbytery.

Nominating Committee.

The Nominating Committee fulfilled its responsibility to bring forth a slate of commissioners to serve on the committees of the Midwest Presbytery. This is a daunting challenge given the COVID-19 restrictions we have all experienced and the declining engagements at many churches. Thankfully, the chairman, TE Kelly Kurth brought forth a healthy slate of names to serve as Officers, Council and Committee Members. The need for more Ruling Elder participation on committees still exists. Please contact TE Kelly Kurth.

Budget and Finance Sub-Committee

The Treasurer, RE Chris Ockerman, presented a financial report of income and expenses. He explained the plans for the annual budget for 2023. While we will run a deficit budget again in 2023, he reported that we have sufficient reserves to cover the deficit. A brief presentation was made of the GA approved percentage of Income (POI) approach. The Midwest Presbytery is doing its own research on the impact of POI vs PMA budgeting at the GA and presbytery level. For the present, the Midwest Presbytery will rely on Per Member Asking at the present \$13.00 per member rate (unchanged from 2022). The 2023 budget was approved.

Other Approvals

The minutes of the 176th Midwest Presbytery meeting were approved.

The By Law changes facilitating the creation of the Church Planting Committee and Church Health Committees were approved.

The By Law changes concerning committee duration, reelection and the added year for the moderator to serve on council were all approved.

Worship

We enjoyed two worship services and three sermons by candidates for ordination. We also were led into a time of communion after a meditation based on Psalm 88 presented by Moderator Pete Scribner.

Closing Prayers

The Stated Clerk highlighted many instances of “The Best of Times” and asked for prayers for those who must weather “the worst of times.” He led the commissioners in a closing time of prayer and included bidding prayers for pastors’ spouses, for TE BJ Newman’s call to active duty, for missionaries in need of member care, for healing for the church in Memphis whose dear member was murdered. We closed the 177th Midwest Presbytery meeting with the singing of Isaac Watts’ Hymn, “O God Our Help in Ages Past”.

Passing the Gavel

At the conclusion of the meeting TE Pete Scribner passed the gavel to RE Bruce Shown who will moderate the Presbytery in 2023. Thanks to God for giving us two leaders zealous for the glory of God.

Yours in Christ

David Brown, Stated Clerk

Andy Warner, Assistant Stated Clerk