

EPC MIDWEST PRESBYTERY
SUMMARY OF THE 182nd STATED MEETING
May 10-11, 2024

Please share this at your next Session meeting and with members as a way of staying connected. Also, please note that selected portions of the MWP Meeting are available for viewing on the MWP Website site: <https://midwestpresbytery.org/>

The 182nd Stated Meeting of the Midwest Presbytery took place at Oak Hill Presbyterian Church, Grand Rapids, MI. Moderator TE Rich Lanning opened the meeting with a word from Psalm 106 urging us not to forget the great works that the Lord has done!

Commissioners and online observers were welcomed, new presbyters and guests were recognized, and Host Pastor, TE Jeff Carlson, offered an opening prayer.

A quorum was declared representing 84TEs and REs present. In addition, there were 18 guests attending and additional 20 online Zoom participants. The Docket was approved without exception or addition, and Presbytery Minutes from the 181st Stated Meeting of the Midwest Presbytery were approved.

Program Committee

TE Aaron White introduced us to Dr. Robert Yarborough (Professor of New Testament, Covenant Theological Seminary) who spoke to us on “The Care of Souls,” referencing the Harold Senkbeil book of the same title. He gave one presentation on Friday afternoon, and another on Saturday morning.

Ministerial Committee

TE Jerry Van Auken directed our attention to the Ministerial Committee Report and introduced TE Andrew Winter to lead an examination of CP Jason Sewell (Faith Presbyterian Church, Rochester Hills, MI) for ordination. The exam was arrested and sustained with his exception to Westminster approved. The Presbytery approved his call as pastor of Faith Presbyterian Church, his terms of call, and his ordination/installation commission

Two other pastors had changes in their calls approved:

- TE David Tori (previously Assistant Pastor at Trinity EPC, Plymouth, MI) was approved as Associate Pastor at Trinity, with his terms of call and installation commission also approved.
- TE Ian Ferguson (Pastor at First Presbyterian Church, Paulding, OH) had his call dissolved, effective 5/18/2024 and had a new call approved as Assistant Pastor of Christ Covenant Church, Cincinnati, OH, effective 5/19/2024. His terms of call and installation commission were also approved.

TE Sean Carroll led examination of two candidates coming under care: Sarah Horton (at Ward Church, Northville, MI) and Trey Martin (at First Presbyterian Church, South Charleston, OH). Both were approved for candidacy, with TE Terence Gray appointed as Sarah Horton’s advisor and TE Glen Massey appointed as Trey Martin’s advisor. Moderator TE Rich Lanning asked questions of both, with each of them answering in the affirmative to all questions. TE Sean Carroll then issued a charge to the candidates, TE Aaron White prayed for them, and TE Rich Lanning declared them under care.

A trio of Omnibus Motions were approved:

Omnibus Motion #1:

Removing TE Scott Bearer and TE Luke Potter from membership in the MWP (at their request)

Approving moving the following retired TEs to the Associate Retired Roll:

- TE June Barrow TE Daniel Bloesch TE Ben Borsay TE David Horner
- TE Arthur Hunt TE Kurt Gebhard TE John Person TE Jerry Pitman
- TE Phil Rowland

Approving the dissolution of the relationship of TE Kevin Chen (Assistant Pastor of Knox EPC, Ann Arbor, MI) and moving him to the Pastors Without Call roll of the MWP Presbytery.

Approving the dissolution of the relationship of TE Jeremy McNeill (First Presbyterian, Bucyrus, OH) and transferring his membership to the EPC Presbytery of the West.

Approving TE Robert Tansill (Gateway Presbyterian Church, Findlay, OH) to moderate the Session at First Presbyterian Church, Bucyrus, OH.

Approving the dissolution of commissions for TE Terence Gray (Associate Pastor at Ward Church, Northville, MI), TE Jeff Moore (Pastor at Lebanon Presbyterian Church, Lebanon, OH). and TE Jason Huff (Assistant Pastor at Living Hope, St. Clair Shores, MI).

Approve dissolving, with thanks, the Administrative Commission for New City Church, South Bend, IN, should the way be clear (with the installation of ruling elders on Session).

Omnibus Motion #2:

- Approving the annual TE updates summary
- Approving the Annual Terms of Call and Work of the Midwest Presbytery Teaching Elders
- Approving the Terms of Call for the Midwest Presbytery World Outreach Global Worker families
- Approving TEs on the Retired Roll
- Approving Retired TEs on the Associate Roll

Omnibus Motion #3:

Approving renewal of out of bounds calls for TE Bill Lindner (Campus Pastor; Harderwyk Ministries, Holland MI); TE Jimmy McGuire, (Pastor, Christ Presbyterian, Novi, MI); TE Chuck Testas (Hospice Chaplain; Crossroads Hospice & Palliative Care; Cincinnati, OH); TE Wayne Uppendahl (Interim Pastor; Interim Pastor Ministries; Orleans, MI).

Motions were approved removing TE David Menzel from discipline in MWP effective immediately and removing him the MWP rolls effective immediately, so that he might become a member at the church his family is attending.

TE Michael Payne (TP for Knox EPC, Ann Arbor) was approved to Moderate Session and administer the sacraments.

After a time spent in executive session, a motion was approved directing the Stated Clerk of the Midwest Presbytery to communicate to TE X that ALL church planting activities must cease effective immediately until proper channels are followed, including assessment successfully completed, and his designation is approved as evangelist, and that the MWP appoint the Church Planting Committee as a supervisory commission as he considers planting a church.

Council

A motion was approved endorsing the nomination of TE Stephanie Poblentz (Lebanon Presbyterian Church, Lebanon, OH) for General Assembly's Next Generation Committee.

Assistant Stated Clerk RE Andy Warner gave the Finance Subcommittee Report for the first quarter (positive cash flow of \$1,766), which was approved. It also was noted that the 2023 Annual Review of the books and records of the MWP had been completed and no issues were identified.

Stated Clerk TE Pete Scribner shared about the departure of First Presbyterian Church, Trenton, MI, and led a brief discussion regarding the issues that led to it, and the need for us to be willing and able to openly and humbly discuss those areas where we have disagreement, speaking the truth in love, and doing so with grace.

RE Ken Chang (Presbytery of the West) introduced himself as a member of the Ad Interim Committee that composed the Pastoral Paper of Racial Lament and Hope, and encouraged us to look at the paper through a lens of empathy. After much discussion, a motion passed to overture the General Assembly, to postpone the discussion and vote on the approval of this letter until the 45th General Assembly so that the committee may take under consideration of the recommended edits from commissioners and presbyteries of the EPC, and that an updated letter be distributed by February 1, 2025, to give time for consideration by presbyters before the 2025 General Assembly.

Church Health Committee

Church Health is focusing largely on transitional pastors. To that end, TE Bill Teague talked to us about the "3 C's" (Committees, Coordinator & Coaches), and Andy Gilman led a panel discussion on the topic with:

- TE Steve Brown (North Oaks Community Church, Clarkston, MI)
- TE Ian Ferguson (First Presbyterian Church, Paulding, OH)
- TE Kelly Kurth (First EPC, Frankfort, IN)
- TE Rich Lanning (Christ Covenant Church, Cincinnati, OH)
- TE Peter Larson (Retired)
- TE SJ Winter (Faith Presbyterian Church, West Lafayette, IN)

Each of the panel members had participated in the Church Health/Transitional Pastor Workshop in April 2024.

World Outreach

TE Adam Reasner (St. Andrew EPC, Auburn, IN) opened with a reading from Psalm 113 and prayer, reminding us that our God is the God of the Nations! He gave an update on ministry to the Siberian Tatars. We have sent two families to them from MWP, and neither went the way we thought it would, but there is fruit being born!

A video was shared from Brad Buescher, EPC Director of Strategic Trips, highlighting several upcoming ministry trip opportunities.

Will Crooks from Children's Hopechest shared about their ministry of helping those in need without creating dependency by working through indigenous leaders and having an exit strategy. He highlighted three key elements to Hopechest:

1. They are about the Gospel of Jesus Christ
2. They are deeply committed to relationships (transformation is better than transaction)
3. They are committed to community development without creating dependency

TE Andrew Morton introduced one of our Global workers who shared about various state-side ministry efforts underway with various immigrant people groups.

TE Morton asked for continued prayer (and led us in praying) for Sonya Bain and the Bain family, Jim and Sally Foote (Sally is in failing health), and the seminary in Tyumen

We are sending TE Andy Gilman (First Presbyterian Church, Greenville, OH) to go to Kazakhstan, and he shared a little about what he will be teaching there. TE Morton led us in praying for TE Gilman.

Nominating Committee

The following slate of MWP Committee members was approved:

Ministerial Committee:

- TE Brandon Jolley (Hopewell Presbyterian Church, Hopewell, IN) 2025

Next Generation Committee:

- TE Andrew Morton (Ossian First Presbyterian Church, Ossian, IN) 2025
- TE Stephanie Poblenz (Lebanon Presbyterian Church, Lebanon, OH) 2026
- RE John Leopold (Warsaw EPC, Warsaw, IN) 2027
- TE David Tori (Trinity Presbyterian Church, Plymouth, MI) 2027

Next Generation Committee

TE David Tori (Trinity Presbyterian Church, Plymouth, MI) and TE Stephanie Poblentz (Lebanon Presbyterian Church, Lebanon, OH) shared about the work of this new committee, including the recent EPC Next Generation Summit held in St. Louis.

Church Planting Committee

TE Terence Gray (Ward Church, Northville, MI) gave the following SWOT Analysis of church planting in the Midwest Presbytery:

Strengths

- A few current plants
- Structure
- Professional Experience

Weaknesses

- Lack of a clearly defined, easily accessible, well-pronounced method
- Since we operate in pockets, successes don't spread, and failures reproduce
- Need mentors and coaches for current planters

Opportunities

- TEs, candidates and churches interested in planting
- Churches re-establishing network
- Church Planting Cohort (including TE Aaron Klein, TE Terence Gray, TE Sean Carroll & Detroit Church Planter, Micah Williams)
- Church Planting Assessment – November 2024
- Seven (7) Pre-Assessment Sessions

Threats

- Losing planters to more developed networks/denominations

Worship

We were led in worship both Friday night and Saturday morning by the team from Oakhill Presbyterian Church. TE Jeff Carlson (Oakhill) preached on Friday night, and TE Jeff Moore (Lebanon Presbyterian Church, Lebanon, OH) preached Saturday morning.

Stated Clerk's Report

Due to the late hour and the amount of time he had already spent speaking during other parts of the meeting, Stated Clerk TE Pete Scribner kept his comments brief. He introduced Patrick Coelho CFO from the OGA as a resource to us and thanking him for his attendance, and offered an exhortation from Acts 1, reminding us to not seek worldly power by worldly means, but rather to seek the glory of God by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Moderator TE Rich Lanning thanked everyone at Oakhill for being such wonderful hosts. He then thanked all in attendance for laboring well together throughout the weekend and rejoiced that the Lord is making us into a good team. We adjourned at 12:59 pm, with prayer and benediction from TE Lanning that the peace of Christ might reign and rule in our minds.