

Mission Presbytery Meeting Minutes  
June 10-11, 2022  
*These are considered a rough draft until  
the General Council votes to approve them on 9/17/2022*

**The Presbytery Meeting convened at 4:00 p.m. in  
Margarite B. Parker Chapel, Trinity University, San Antonio, Texas**

Moderator Rev. Nancy McCranie called the meeting to order with prayer.

A quorum was present.

Nancy asked for a motion and second to approve today's docket and it was approved.

She invited first-time commissioners to stand and be welcomed.

She introduced Corresponding Members:

Synod of the Sun Leader and Stated Clerk, Valerie Young; and

Stan Larson, ECLA, Interim Pastor at First PC, Cuero.

**Being the Beloved Community in Sorrow and Joy:**

The Moderator led the presbytery in a moment of discussion and prayer.

"Usually at a presbytery meeting, as your moderator, I would welcome you, say a prayer, and then we would launch right into business as usual. However, the times *we have lived through and are living in* demand something different. To begin with, let us all take a deep breath. You may want to place a hand on your heart to connect with your body, inviting your whole self to settle. May we really be here together as people who know togetherness is not a given and proximity to one other is not something to ever take for granted.

Friends, we have been through some **THINGS**. We simply are not the same people we were in March of 2020. We have experienced so much loss and uncertainty. Layers upon layers of it. As if a global pandemic was not enough, we have been witness to horrific racial injustice, a violent insurrection, an ongoing war in Ukraine, a shortage of baby formula, and unrelenting gun violence including in our own backyard. Layered upon all of that were the very personal losses experienced by us and those we love: An unwelcome diagnosis; relationships that frayed and sometimes fractured; the struggles of our children; the increasing frailty of our parents. It has all felt like too much. In the midst of all this sorrow, we have also experienced moments of pure joy. There were babies born; proud, hopeful new graduates; beautiful, beaming newlyweds; job promotions. There was art, music, literature, delicious food...all the joys that make sorrow bearable.

Sharing those things across zoom, however amazing that technology is, left much to be desired. Much of what we have carried and celebrated we have done with few people to bear witness, few to help shoulder our sorrow and magnify our joy. It is important to acknowledge what we have lost. The way to move with and through grief, says someone who has spent her life up close to it, is not to ignore it, sugar coat it, rush through it, or try and skip over it. It is rather to feel it, honor it, and name it. To bear witness to it without judgment. To allow our

losses it to break our hearts, yes, but to break them open wide, making room for more compassion, more justice, and mercy, more love.

In a few moments, I am going to invite us to turn to someone nearby and reflect together on these three questions:

**What is lost?**

**What is left?**

**What is possible?**

As a way of modeling what I mean, allow me to share my answers:

1. **What is lost?** For me, a sense of solidity in the world around me. So many things I took for granted have been called into question; institutions, relationships, how to keep myself and those I love safe. The world feels less solid, stable, and safe to me now.
2. **What is left?** What is left for me is surrender. Surrendering the illusion of control again and again and again. Doing what is mine to do and giving the rest to God. In the words of a favorite old hymn, *on Christ the Solid Rock I stand all other ground is sinking sand*.
3. **What is possible?** What is possible is a recalibration of my priorities. I know without a doubt that what matters more than anything is love. So I am recalibrating. This means setting better boundaries around my time, attention, and energy. I am being intentional about saying *I am sorry, I forgive you, I hear you, I love you*. I am trying to hug more often, forgive more quickly, speak up more readily. In spite of feeling less sure of the world around me, I am feeling more sure than ever about the Love that will not let us go. In that faith, there is rest and hope.”

#### **4:30 p.m. Order of the Day: Commission on Ministry**

The Rev. Monica Smith gave the Commission on Ministry Report.

- Anyone serving in a congregation in any way must take the Boundaries Training which is now available. If you are required to take it, you have received an email and information has been posted in the Mission Presbytery newsletter.
- Please also keep an eye on opportunities for service that are listed in each Presbytery newsletter. We have churches searching for stated supplies, interim pastors, and other staff positions. Additional information for each position is available on the Presbytery website.
- Terms of Call Spreadsheet is in the packet. Send updates and corrections to the Sated Clerk.

The presbytery examined two candidates for ordination.

1. Rachel Watson:

On behalf of the COM, Rev. Smith presented Ms. Watson for examination. She completed a Master of Divinity degree from Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary and is under care of New Covenant Presbytery. She has been certified ready to receive a call and has been called as Stated Supply Associate Pastor at University in Austin.

Ms. Watson’s materials are in the meeting packet.

COM has sustained her examination with the Examinations Team. Mission Presbytery examined Ms. Watson in the areas of Christian faith, theology, Sacraments, and government. Monica asked the first question: What are the most important components of life-long faith formation? After answering, Moderator McCranie opened the floor for questions.

Ms. Watson's examination was closed.

Rev. Smith made this motion: "On behalf of COM, I move that Rachel Watson's examination be sustained and she be enrolled, pending ordination, as a member of Mission Presbytery." The presbytery approved the motion.

## 2. Jonathan Freeman

On behalf of the COM, Rev. Smith presented Jonathan Freeman for examination for ordination to the Ministry of Word and Sacrament. Mr. Freeman's materials are in the addendum report. He completed a Master of Divinity degree from Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary and is under care of Northeast Georgia Presbytery. He has been certified ready to receive a call and has been called as a Pastoral Resident at First, Austin. COM has sustained his examination with the Examinations Team. The presbytery examined him in the areas of Christian faith, theology, Sacraments, and government.

Rev. Smith asked Mr. Freeman the first question: Why is it important to include a Prayer of Confession in a worship service?

Upon answering Moderator McCranie opened the floor for questions.

The examination was closed.

Rev. Smith made this motion: "On behalf of COM, I move that Jonathan Freeman's examination be sustained and he be enrolled, pending ordination, as a member of Mission Presbytery." The presbytery approved the motion.

Rev. Smith introduced new minister members of Mission Presbytery. Their materials are in the packet and addendum packet for this meeting.

1. Patrick Dennis is transferring as a member-at-large from the Presbytery of the James. Rev. Smith invited Rev. Dennis to say a few words about how he hopes to serve Mission Presbytery. Rev. Patrick hopes to take a Chaplain position with Christus in the fall.
2. Sarah Dennis is transferring as a member-at-large from the Presbytery of the James. She has taken a position at University Methodist Church, SA, as Pastor Director of Student Ministry. Rev. Smith asked Rev. Dennis to share how she is serving in Mission Presbytery.
3. Jim Currie, who is Honorably Retired, is well known to many of us and transfers from New Covenant Presbytery. Rev. Smith asked him to say a few words about transferring to Mission Presbytery. Executive Secretary of the Historical Society of the Southwest.

Rev. Smith prayed for all those who were examined and welcomed into the presbytery, ending her report.

Moderator McCranie invited Emily Owen, Pastoral Care Committee, forward to celebrate the Honorable Retirements of Rev. Efrain Buenfil and Rev. Richard Powell.

Moderator McCranie closed this portion of the presbytery meeting with prayer, to be reconvened at 9:00 AM the next morning.

## **SATURDAY, JUNE 11**

Moderator McCranie reconvened the meeting with prayer and introduced the Rev. Dr. Alex Serna-Wallender, University Chaplain, Trinity University so that we could welcome the presbytery. Valerie Young, Synod of the Sun Leader and Stated Clerk, spoke to the presbytery about the new Disaster Assistance Synod position. Someone's been hired and they'll be able to make an announcement soon. Valerie also told the presbytery about the Communications Services Plan, which can help with church websites. Here's the link for information: <https://www.synodsun.org/csp>

The presbytery moved into a time of worship. The Rev. Dr. David Evans preached the sermon. The General Assembly Meeting Commissioners and alternate were commissioned, as was Sallie Watson, chair of the PCUSA Stated Clerk search committee. Mission Presbytery's GA Commissioners are RE Peter Crouch, Rev. Naomi Ingram, CP Sheri Dittman, RE Bob Orr, Rev. Brain Diebold, RE Lidia Serreta, and RE Carlos Baladez, alternate. The offering was designated for the Youth Connection Committee to make disaster kits. David Evans and Rev. Consuelo Donahue presided at the Communion Table. Youth at presbytery served as Liturgists.

The presbytery returned to the business portion of the meeting.

General Presbyter Rev. Dr. Sallie Watson presented her report. She:

- expressed how glad to be in person for this meeting;
- is back on the road, visiting regions and congregations;
- grieves that Uvalde is the second mass shooting within the bounds of Mission Presbytery since she moved here six years ago;l
- reported about the Synod Partnership for Disaster Recovery—a person has been hired and will be announced soon;
- Rev. Watson invited the Rev. Gin Courtney to give the Mission Forward report;
- encouraged the presbytery to give to the New Life Faith Community led by Ezequiel Herrera, RGV Evangelist. 1001 New Worshipping Communities (PCUSA) will match up to \$25,000 at the end of the year. You can give on the Mission Presbytery website.

Sallie Watson asked Rev. Gin Courtney to give the Mission Forward report.

The Mission Forward Team was named by General Council to lead the Presbytery in creating a new mission and vision. One person was named from each of our regions: TE Bobby Hulme-Lippert (Austin), RE Edwin Arendela (Corpus Christi), RE B.K. Gamble (Hill Country), RE Lety Martinez (Rio Grande Valley), TE Virginia Courtney (San Antonio), and RE Bill Wilkinson (Victoria). They were led in their work by the Rev. Dr. Laurie Ferguson, an experienced consultant who has worked with numerous presbyteries and presbyters throughout the PC(USA). Stated Clerk Laurie Palmer and General Presbytery Sallie Watson staffed the work of the team. Edwin, unfortunately, had to step down and was replaced by RE Liz Anzaldúa.

The team worked over the course of several months, looking at the Presbytery from every angle. Along with financial resources and volunteer resources, the team considered the demographics and geography of Mission Presbytery as well as its history. Then in April, the

team met with members of General Council in an overnight retreat at Mo-Ranch to share their findings and to work with them to craft a new mission.

At its meeting in May, General Council unanimously approved the following as the mission of Mission Presbytery:

***As Mission Presbytery, we connect diverse leaders and congregations by providing opportunities for worship, learning, and service so that all can flourish through God's grace.***

The vision statement grows directly out of this mission. *This is who we aspire to be:*

- *We live out our connection with intention, respect, support, and challenge so that 100% of our congregations and leaders are engaged in some way.*
- *We reach out to our communities so everyone has a welcome seat in our presbytery.*
- *We are a generous, worshipping, and welcoming presbytery. Others want to join us and learn from us because of the way we live out the Great Commandment.*

The team still has some work before it; we will be working on four goals that grow from the mission and vision statements. These statements, as well as the forthcoming goals, will inform changes to our committee structure and funding priorities. More details will be presented at the October meeting of the Presbytery.

#### **Stated Clerk Laurie Palmer gave her report.**

Rev. Palmer made a motion to approve the excused absences for this meeting. The motion was seconded and approved.

She encouraged the presbytery to read the rest of her report in the addendum and sign up for the e-newsletter that goes out every Thursday and listen to the Sun Spots podcast that the Synod produces.

Rev. Palmer asked the Rev. Jim Rigby to speak on behalf of the Committee on Representation and Participation.

#### **Order of the Day:**

##### **Rev. Malcolm McQueen gave the report for the Committee on Preparation for Ministry.**

Rev. McQueen made a motion to enroll Leslie Hartman (First, Palacios) as an Inquirer. The motion passed. Rev. McQueen made a motion to enroll Rachel Finken (University, Austin) as an Inquirer. The motion passed.

The presbytery took a break.

##### **RE Dr. Carols Baladez gave the General Council report.**

Dr. Baladez led the presbytery in cheers!! He reported that General Council supports the work of the Mission Forward team and encouraged us to think about the future of Mission Presbytery.

General Council approved :

- sending Live Oak, Leander funds for support out of the Church Development and Evangelism line item in the budget;
- having an intern work with Ezequiel Herrera in the RGV;
- sending resources to Uvalde in the aftermath of the shootings on May 24, 2022;

- elected the following to unexpired terms: TE Kurt Simon to fill an unexpired term on the COM, Class of 2022; TE Alex Serna-Wallender to fill an unexpired term on the CPM, Class of 2024; TE Erica Knisely to fill an unexpired term in the PCC, Class of 2024; TE Scott Nowack to fill an unexpired term on the HMK Trustees, Class of 2024
- approved the offering for the presbytery worship service to go to YCC for supplies for disaster kits, which youth will assemble at Main Event at JKR, September 23-25, 2022;
- the sabbatical request by General Presbyter Sallie Watson for March-May 2023. Additionally, the GC approved Monica Smith to provide part-time coverage in Sallie's absence.
- the Better Together grant requests as presented by the Stewardship Committee. The grants will be given at the presbytery meeting.

**Rev. Ezequiel Herrera, Rio Grande Valley Evangelist, updated the presbytery on his ministry with the New Life Faith Community.**

This is the newest worshipping community in Mission Presbytery, with its inauguration Sunday on Marcy 13, 2022. It is nesting at First Korean PC, McAllen, TX.

The community is coalescing in worship, study, fellowship, and mission. They have a Bible study every Wednesday night. New Life is one of ten sister churches in the RGV that submitted a Better Together Grant application with Puentes De Cristo. The Texas A&M AgriLife Program has provided gardening classes. Northwoods PC, Houston youth group came with its leaders with a new playground and we assembled it together. We will host a Blessing of the Pets service in partnership with Cross Roads PC, SA on June 25, 2022.

New Life Faith Community is seeking to raise \$25,000 by the end of 2022 to which the Presbyterian Mission Agency through 1001 New Worshipping Communities will match.

**Rev. Kevin Jones gave the Stewardship Committee report.** Rev. Jones celebrated and presented the following Better Together grants, which were approved by General Council on May 21, 2022:

- ❖ Feeding Jesus Together: Cestholme PC, SA, and Iglesia Adventista Food Pantry in SE San Antonio \$9,500
- ❖ Solar Power for Communities: St. Andrew PC, Divine Redeemer PC, and Holy Trinity, all in SA, and Shepherd of the Hills, Austin— Training for Guatemala Projects \$17,178
- ❖ Good Samaritan Fund: FPC and Covenant PC, Austin; FPC Cuero, Austin ISD, PCHAS, Casa Marianella, Communities in Schools— grants to families in need, \$9,500
- ❖ Somo Uno en Cristo: El Buen Pastor, Austin; Everlasting Hope, Taylor; FPC Lockhart; Memorial PC, San Marcos; San Marino; FPC, New Braunfels, Mo-Ranch, and others—scholarships for the Intercultural Youth Conference at Mo-Ranch. \$6250
- ❖ Puentes de Cristo Garden Ministry: Puentes de Cristo; Primera Iglesia, Brownsville; New Life Faith Community McAllen; Texas A&M Agrilife Extension, and 10 other churches—food security for RGV families, \$5,000.
- ❖ RR-GT Afghan Resettlement Circle: Round Rock PC; FPC and San Gabriel PC, Georgetown; Grace PC, RR—to settle refugee families, \$10,590

Total Distribution \$58,018

**RE Lori Black and CP Sheri Dittman gave the Presbyterian Women's report.**

The Presbytery Women's Synod Gathering is July 21-23, 2022 in New Orleans, LA. There is still time to register. A flyer is in the meeting packet.

In March, PW had a Spring Gathering at Mo-Ranch. Next year it will be on March 24-26, 2023 at Mo-Ranch. The presbytery is divided into clusters, and each cluster has a representative, who would be glad to meet with the congregations.

**Rev. Katy Walters gave the Youth Connection Committee report.**

Youth at Presbytery happened at this meeting, overnight at University PC last night. They served as liturgists in the morning worship service. The Youth Leadership Team encourages you to join the team. Information is in the report. Main Event will take place at JKR on September 23-25, 2022. The offering from the morning worship will be used to purchase supplies for disaster kits, which the youth will assemble at Main Event.

**Rev. Rob Mueller and Rev. Chad Lawson gave the John Knox Ranch report.**

Under the excellent leadership of Executive Director Henry Owen, summer camp registration is the highest it has been in at least 15 years.

- As of May 15, 908 campers are registered for resident/day camp!
- Day Camp is FULL and most weeks have a waitlist.
- Resident Camp is 93% full with a wait list for most weeks.
- There are very limited spots available for the first Mini-camp (June 4-7) and for the last week of camp (July 31-August 6). If you have a camper interested, sign up today.
- We have a full summer staff who began their training on Monday, May 16<sup>th</sup>.
- Andy Watson, program director, has partnered with Mission Presbytery congregations to have volunteer chaplains each week of resident camp.

In late 2021, we completed our strategic plan which has been presented to the Presbytery. We have many projects in the works for the future of John Knox Ranch's ministry, including....

- The construction of tiny houses to accommodate families visiting the Ranch
- Solar Panels on the Meeting House (Thanks to a grant we received!)
- Creating a Legacy giving group named "Limestone Legacy"
- Working towards an endowment fund for the future of JKR

How you can help the Ranch

- **Donate your time!** Are you, or do you know, a civil engineer, engineers in general, willing to donate time to JKR's ministry? If so, please contact Henry Owen at [jkrdirector@missionpby.org](mailto:jkrdirector@missionpby.org). We could use your expertise.
- **Pray for JKR's ministry!** Pray for all who will experience summer camp ministry at JKR, staff, counselors, campers, and families.
- **Thank a counselor!** Send a note of gratitude to the leadership of JKR! You can mail it OR you can just email [jkrdirector@missionpby.org](mailto:jkrdirector@missionpby.org) your note to be shared.
- **Purchase a book and support camp scholarships!** JKR Committee member Rob Mueller, along with Krin Van Tatenhove, authored a book featuring John Knox Ranch's ministry entitled *Holy Ground: The Power and Influence of Christian Camps and Retreat Centers*. Copies are available at the Presbytery meeting in the exhibit hall or on the John Knox Ranch store website. The cost is \$10 and all proceeds benefit camp scholarships.

**RE Caly Fernandez and Rev. David Dierksen gave the Puentes de Cristo and Presbyterian Borderlands Ministries report.** Dave is on the Immigration Task Force. Inform, educate, and serve—we are providing you resources about what is going on at the border and ministry possibilities there. They invited us to serve at the border. Caly had two workgroups last week. They are looking for a workgroup in July.

Caly spoke of PBM—four ministries within it. Puentes de Cristo is a Matthew 25 ministry. She wants Mission Presbytery to be a part of border ministries in a variety of ways.

1. **Puentes de Cristo's website is live!** Visit our website to learn more about our programs and ways to get involved at [www.puentesdecristo.org](http://www.puentesdecristo.org)
2. **Borderlands**
  - a. **Bringing the Border Home** – Puentes will be developing informational 3–5-minute videos of the South Texas Border to showcase our work and partnerships along the Texas-Mexico border. These videos will be shared on the Puentes de Cristo Facebook page and website.
  - b. **Matamoros, Mexico**
    - Puentes is working with Gaby Zavala from the Resource Center of Matamoros in developing the infrastructure at the Santa Rosa Migrant Respite Camp in Matamoros. This camp is a project led by Gaby Zavala and supported by Puentes de Cristo, Team Brownsville, Angry Tias & Abuelas and Sister Norma Pimentel from Catholic Charities.
    - Synod of the Sun has donated \$7,800 to purchase cabin tents for the families arriving at the Matamoros Respite Migrant Camp.
    - Puentes has partnered with a Licensed Clinical Social worker to provide counseling services to asylum seekers who have experienced trauma and violence.
    - Puentes received a donation from the Methodist Healthcare Ministries to provide health education at the migrant camp in Matamoros.
  - c. **Centro Jubileo de Chiapas – Huixtla, Chiapas.** Puentes in partnership with Rev. Edman Lopez have begun construction of a migrant resource center, shelter, and children's ministry in Huixtla, Chiapas.
  - d. **Shelters in Reynosa are at maximum capacity and need our help with donations.** The Reynosa Encampment was shutdown down suddenly without any warning to the NGOs or shelters in Reynosa. Within hours all the shelters took in hundreds of people at once. Some shelters have run completely out of food, water, and toilet paper. Below is a list of the shelters in Reynosa, Mexico that need our help.
    - Senda de Vida under the leadership of Rev. Hector Silva  
<https://www.ministeriosendadevida.com/giving>
    - The Kaleo Shelter in partnership with the Sidewalk School  
<https://www.kaleointernational.org/en/reynosa/>  
<https://sidewalkschool.org/support>
  - e. **Team Brownsville** at the Brownsville Bus Station needs Volunteers. Please contact Andrea Rudnik at (956) 455-7154. To learn more about volunteer opportunities with Team Brownsville visit their website at <https://www.teambrownsville.org>
3. **Healthy Lifestyles of the RGV:** The second phase of the Healthy Lifestyles program focuses on gardening. Puentes has plans to set up 10 community gardens in the Rio



Grande Valley this summer. We are currently working with Rev. Ezequiel Herrera to set up a garden at New Live Faith Community Church, located at 10600 N. Ware Road, McAllen. The community garden located at Puentes de Cristo is thriving.

4. **Colonias Program:** Puentes de Cristo has **fed 650 families** since January 2022. Our community partner Border Missions in Hidalgo donates fresh produce weekly. Rev. Ezequiel Herrera provides pastoral care and the Community Health Workers from Texas A&M Colonias Program coordinates health care services for women and children. The Migrant Health Program provides information on community resources and nutrition classes thru the Podemos Juntos program.

**Certified Educator Melissa Kirkpatrick gave the Faith Formation Committee report.**

This is the newest and smallest committee of Mission Presbytery, seeking to find ways to help us deepen our faith lives, and hope to be a conduit to connect our congregations to resources. They seek to shape a new vision for faith formation.

The Moderator/Moderator-Elect invited the presbytery to give "Minute Announcements."  
What's going on in the life of your congregations that we need to hear?

There was a motion and second to adjourn the meeting with prayer, which Moderator-Elect, RE Fred Gamble offered.

These minutes were submitted by Laurie Palmer, Stated Clerk.