

Mission Presbytery Stated Meeting Minutes  
June 14-15, 2024  
Hope Presbyterian Church, Austin  
**Motions in bold.**

Friday, June 14, 2024

Moderator Sheri Dittman called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m.

She declared a quorum. A quorum for a Mission Presbytery meeting is 12 minister members and 12 ruling elders from 12 different churches.

Sheri opened the meeting with prayer.

**A motion was made and seconded to approve the docket for the meeting. The motion passed.**

Sheri asked first-time commissioners to introduce themselves and which churches they represented.

Sheri introduced Rev. Kevin Keaton, Mission Presbytery's Board of Pensions Representative, as the only Corresponding Member for the meeting. Kevin is a member of New Covenant Presbytery (Houston).

Josh Robinson, Hope, Austin, and Emily Beghin, Round Rock, Round Rock, brought greetings from the host churches and gave the Land Acknowledgment.

Report of the General Presbyter, Sallie Watson

Well, I suppose you've heard the news by now. Saying goodbye to y'all as your presbyter is one of the hardest things I've ever done. But saying "happy trails" and starting retirement? A piece of cake!

(Sorry, but you know that's true) Paul stepped down from his work in March, and I've been way too envious of him for doing so. Except that he's made a very good house husband, so no complaints!

Y'all are in such good hands, as I said in my letter to you. Our staff is healthy and strong. Everyone is firing on all cylinders. Our operating budget is not in great shape, but I'm so grateful for the clarity we have now so that everyone knows the situation. We have a good mission statement and a good design for our work together, which the General Council reaffirmed at their May meeting. I'll let them tell you about the next steps from here, but I don't have enough words to express my gratitude for their strong leadership and can-do attitude. Fred and company, thank you.

It's been especially great to have Caitlin now working half-time as our Communications Director. And if you need any evidence of that, go check out our redesigned web page which went live yesterday! It's gorgeous. She worked hand in

hand with the communications team at the Synod to make sure all the details were there and that the layout made sense. Let's give her a big round of applause!

I understand there's going to be a party in Brownsville! Yes, I know it's a long way for the Nortenos to drive. But to paraphrase the immortal words of Lita Simpson, "It's as far from Austin to Brownsville as it is from Brownsville to Austin!" So I really hope that y'all will make an extra effort to be with us in October so that we can celebrate our time together and enjoy the hospitality of First Presbyterian, Brownsville.

I'm also looking forward to cleaning out my library! Not all of my professional books are going to fit in our house. So to get started, I have brought a great and large box of books for the Book Exchange table that the Connect Committee runs. This is kind of the "commentary box," so if you're looking for some good commentaries, be sure to drop by!

One thing I am *not* looking forward to is saying goodbye to our beloved colleague Ezequiel Herrera. But it must be. He is answering God's call to serve as Pastor for Mission for a congregation in - I can hardly bring myself to say it - New Jersey. We will take part in a service of dissolution tomorrow. But for now, I want to say, Ezequiel, you have been an amazing colleague. You have poured all of your energy, intelligence, imagination, and love into the Rio Grande Valley. Our love and prayers go with you, and we'll always be part of you because we got to ordain you. So I hope you will accept these small tokens from me and from your Administrative Commission. Let's show Ezequiel our thanks and love.

Please know that the Administrative Commission working with New Life/Nueva Vida is hard at work on plans for the future. As you can imagine, we have been spending a good amount of time on this. I joined Woody Paul from Boerne St. Mark to worship with them on June 2 and then meet with them to discuss the current state. They very much want to continue moving forward, so the AC is working to support them in doing so. We are contracting with a retired Lutheran pastor in the Valley, who is bilingual, to provide interim support for them while we figure out the next steps. Please keep this committed group of folks in your prayers during this transition.

Speaking once again of the newsletter, there's a video there that wants to know if you and your congregation would like to have \$50,000 for revitalization! You'll hear more about this tomorrow from John Roberts, but if you haven't seen the video yet, that's your homework before tomorrow morning. Another reason for that video is to say thank you for your generosity and stewardship in supporting Mission Presbytery. So that's where I'll end my remarks to you today: thank you.

#### Human Resources Committee, Nancy Reeves

Mission Presbytery has been blessed with Sallie Watson as our General Presbyter for the past eight years. While saddened by her departure, we are confident that the presbytery is well-prepared to move forward. The Human Resources Team

(HRT) conducted research on various models for transitioning to a new executive. After extensive discussion and prayer, the HRT recommended to the General Council that we proceed immediately with the search for a new General Presbyter.

The rationale for this decision is as follows:

1. The Presbytery is in excellent shape and does not need a period of healing from wounds or other issues.
2. We do not believe another mission study is necessary, as we have recently completed one. Hiring PneuMatrix to conduct a study would cost \$4,500, which the team feels would not be a prudent use of our resources. The General Council affirmed that our vision remains consistent, even as Sallie retires.

General Council agreed to a search for a Transitional General Presbyter (TGP). The TGP will be offered a three-year contract and could follow self if we discern it to be the right thing to do.

General Council completed a survey identifying the top four priorities for a new General Presbyter, which will be provided to the Transitional General Presbyter Nominating Committee (TGPNC).

The Committee on Representation and Participation (CORP) will present a slate of candidates for the TGPNC today. Upon election, the team will begin working independently of Sallie's input. Laurie Palmer will serve as the staff resource person for the Nominating Team.

#### General Council Report, Fred Gamble

General Council will bring a motion to the Presbytery meeting in Brownsville on October 18-19, 2024, to concur with Sallie's request that her relationship be dissolved. Regarding the election of a Transitional General Presbyter Nominating Committee, I invite Judy Ferguson forward with a report from the Committee on Representation and Participation (CORP) with a slate of nominees.

**Judy made this motion on behalf of CORP: I move the nomination of the following people to serve on the Transitional General Presbyter Nominating Committee:**

**RE BK Gamble**

**RE Lita Simpson**

**Rev. Nancy McCranie**

**Rev. Alan Constant**

**Rev. Brian Diebold**

Moderator Sheri Dittman asked if there were any nominations from the floor or any discussion, and hearing none, called for the vote. **The motion passed.**

**CORP moved the following nominations:**

**RE Kathy Green for the Serve Committee, Class of 2026;**

**TE Ann Brizendine for the Learn Committee, Class of 2025.**

Moderator Sheri Dittman asked if there were any nominations from the floor or any discussion, and hearing none, called for the vote. **The motion passed.**

Fred continued the General Council report.

On May 11, 2024, the General Council voted in favor of the Commission on Ministry's motion to form an Administrative Commission at the request of First Presbyterian Church, LaGrange, to transfer to the Covenant Order of Evangelical Presbyterians (ECO). We elected the following members: Rev. Amy Meyer, Ruling Elder Beaman Floyd, representing the Commission on Ministry, and Ruling Elder Pamela Geise, a member of FPC, LaGrange. To fulfill Mission Presbytery's Policy on Gracious Separation, we must elect a Trustee to join them in their work.

**On behalf of the General Council, Fred made a motion to add RE Trustee Alex Villalpando from the Mission Presbytery Trustees to the Administrative Commission for FPC, LaGrange.**

No nominations were taken from the floor after hearing that a trustee is required for this administrative commission. Sheri called for the vote, and **the motion passed.**

Stated Clerk's Report, Laurie Palmer

**Laurie brought two motions:**

- 1. To approve the excused absences for this meeting. There was a second, no discussion, and the motion passed.**
- 2. To approve the Mission Presbytery Anti-Harassment Policy. There was a second, no discussion, and the motion passed.**

Youth Connection Report, Emily McAllister and Neil McKown

Neil and Emily updated Mission Presbytery about youth events.

Guatemala Partnership, Steve Myers

Steve invited the partnership forward so they and Mission Presbytery could honor Edward and Silbia Esparza for their years-long commitment to selling Guatemalan crafts. The sales will end after this meeting. Rob Mueller prayed for the partnership and for the Esparzas.

Committee on Preparation for Ministry (CPM), Doug Dalglish

**On behalf of CPM, Doug made a motion that Mission Presbytery approve the enrollment of Colton Hedrick, a member of Hope Austin, as an Inquirer under our care. Hearing no discussion, Moderator Sheri Dittman called for the vote, and the motion passed.**

**On behalf of CPM, Doug made a motion that Mission Presbytery approve the enrollment of Boram Choi, a member of University, Austin, as an Inquirer under our care. Hearing no discussion, Moderator Sheri Dittman called for the vote, and the motion passed.**

**On behalf of CPM, Doug presented Rachel Finken, a member of University, Austin, and made a motion that she be enrolled as a Candidate.** Rachel gave a brief statement.

Moderator Sheri Dittman stated that when we examine for Candidacy, questions may only be asked about Christian faith, forms of Christian service undertaken, and motives for seeking ordained ministry. This is not an examination for ordination.

After the examination, Sheri called for the vote, and **the motion passed.**

Sheri asked the following questions of Rachel:

Do you believe yourself to be called by God to the ministry of teaching elder?

Do you promise, in reliance upon the grace of God, to maintain a Christian character and conduct, and to be diligent and faithful in making full preparation for this ministry?

Do you accept the proper supervision of the presbytery in matters that concern your preparation for this ministry?

Do you desire now to be received by this presbytery as a candidate for the ministry of teaching elder in the Presbyterian Church (USA)?

Matt Gaventa Rachel a charge. Alex Serna-Wallender prayed for her.

**On behalf of CPM, Doug presented Libby Janes, a member of First, Austin, and made a motion that she be enrolled as a Candidate.** Libby made a brief statement.

Sheri reminded the presbytery of the examination's parameters. After the examination, she called for a vote, **and the motion passed.** Sheri asked Libby the questions for Candidacy.

Elizabeth McLean gave Libby a charge. Amy Myhand prayed for her.

#### Commission on Ministry (COM). Jon Watt

COM had no motions for this meeting.

The packet includes COM's report and actions since the March presbytery meeting. The report also includes the approved annual terms of call and contracts spreadsheet.

Jon asked new ministers to Mission Presbytery to introduce themselves:

- Elizabeth Stites de-Steiguer, Chaplain, Peterson Regional Medical Center, Kerrville
- Jim Collier, retired, Austin
- Eunbee Ham, Pastor of Madison Square, SA, beginning July 1, will be introduced at another meeting.

COM honored two ministers for retirement:

- Jeanie Stanley spoke about Mike Murray, who also spoke.
- Gail Batman spoke about Naomi Ingram, who also spoke.

Jon ended the report by asking people who want to be on the pulpit supply list to let COM know. He provided a QR code for them to do so.

The presbytery went into recess until 9:00 a.m. Saturday morning.

Saturday, June 15, 2024

The meeting reconvened with worship.

Dan Milford was the preacher. Josh Robinson and Emily Beghin presided over Communion. The offering went to support youth going to Youth Triennium next summer and totaled \$1,729.

Board of Pensions Report, Kevin Keaton

After a brief break, Kevin Keaton, Mission Presbytery's Board of Pensions Representative, presented the changes to the plan in 2025.

Rio Grande Valley Report, Ezequiel Herrera

Ezequiel updated the presbytery about the work of the New Life community and showed a video. Ezequiel has accepted a call to be Pastor of Central PC, Montclair, NJ. His last Sunday here is June 16, 2024. The presbytery participated in a litany of dissolution and blessing led by the Administrative Commission for New Life.

Puentes de Cristo, Lety Martinez and Dan Bautista

Lety is the new Director of Puentes de Cristo. She spoke of his history and its plans for the future. Dan, a Puentes de Cristo board member, also spoke. They thanked Mission Presbytery for its ongoing support.

Presbyterian Women, Lori Black

Lori praised the March Spring Gathering at Mo-Ranch and updated the presbytery as to the plans for next year's retreat:

Fiscal Oversight, Sandy Nicholson

Sandy lifted out the financials in the packet to the attention of the presbytery. She reminded Presbytery that Mission Presbytery does not keep any Per Capita. We pass it straight through to the General Assembly. Our budget is dependent upon what the churches give in benevolence dollars.

John Knox Ranch, Henry Owen

Henry reported that summer camp is in session. 85 children and youth participated in Camp Braveheart, a bereavement camp sponsored by Hospice Austin. The presbytery was treated to a video of camp activities.

#### Connect Committee

##### Better Together Grants, Emily Owen and Erica Knisely

Emily and Erica gave the grants out, totaling \$51,000.

The recipients were:

- Central and Westlake Hills, Austin for Advocacy and Action for the Homeless, \$2,000.
- Divine Redeemer, El Divino Salvador, El Buen Pastor, JKR Bilingual Family Camp at John Knox Ranch, \$6,000
- Parkway, Corpus Christi; Presbyterian Children's Homes & Svcs, Christmas in July, \$2,000
- University and Faith; Austin; Collaborative Confirmation Retreat at John Knox Ranch, \$3,550
- First and Primera Iglesia, Brownsville, Community Food Pantry, \$12,000
- Crestholme and Grace, San Antonio, Community Through Gardens, \$2,000
- Hyde Park, First, Faith, APTS, Austin; Cte on Preparation for Ministry, Equipping Seminarians Through Expanding Internships, \$9,000
- Hispanic Ministries Mission Network and APTS; Raising Tomorrow's Leaders Today, \$6,000
- Treasure Hills, Gethsemane, San Benito, Second; Harlingen  
Love Our Neighbor: basic necessities for DFPS families, \$5,000
- FPC, Kerville; St. Mark, Boerne; Forest Hills, Helotes; Madison Square, UPC, SA;  
SAHCA Faith and Fellowship: Quarterly collaborative youth events, \$1,000
- Primera Iglesia, San Pablo, Getsemani, San Benito; Brownsville, Harlingen;  
Christian Latina Ambassadors, \$2,450

##### Connect, continued: Administrative Commission for Congregational Development and Vitality (ACCDV), John Roberts

John announced that the ACCDV would give three \$50,000 grants to churches who want help with revitalization. The grants will cover the costs of a consultant. Stay tuned for more information about this.

##### Learn Committee, Alan Roberts

Alan reported on the pre-presbytery workshops sponsored by the Learn Committee, which included ruling elder training, a CRE gathering, and a spiritual development class. Learn is committed to offering more events like these in the presbytery.

General Assembly #226, June 29-July 4, 2024, Salt Lake City

Moderator Sheri Dittman led the presbytery in commissioning our Commissioners, Advisory Delegates, and other participants.

Our General Assembly Commissioners are:

RE Dr. Carlos Baladez, Holy Trinity, and Candidate under care of Mission Presbytery

RE Teresa Ward, Wimberley, Wimberley

RE John Mallory, FPC, Kerrville

Rev. Kathy Anderston, El Divino Salvador Stated Supply, CC

Rev. John Roberts, Grace, CC

Rev. Kevin Jones, FPC, Lampasas

Young Adult Advisory Delegate: Marcela Salome-Hernandez, Madison Square, SA

Theological Student Advisory Delegates (TSAD):

Libby Janes

Dr. Janet Taylor

Non-voting participants:

Rev. Dr. Sallie Watson, General Presbyter for Mission Presbytery and Chair of the PC(USA) Stated Clerk Search Committee

Rev. Laurie Palmer, Stated Clerk for Mission Presbytery

There was a motion and second to adjourn the meeting, which Dan Milford, Moderator-Elect, did with prayer.

Minutes submitted by Laurie Palmer, Stated Clerk.



