

May 2013

PRESBYTERY MEETING REFLECTION

By Sheppards & Lapsley Moderator, Neil McCarter

When commissioners to this meeting received the packet, the perception may have arisen that the meeting appeared to be rather “routine.” Consequently interest in and about the meeting may have been less than enthusiastic. However the course of the meeting proved otherwise because of these factors. Please read and ponder over them:

- In worship, the Rev. MaryAnn McKibben Dana preached on John 2:1-11. Her sermon was entitled, “The Hour Has Come.” She challenged the body to remember that we are the “sign” of the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the world.
- Jonathan Yarboro, Moderator of Council, informed the commissioners that Council is aware of the reality that the Presbytery seems to be adrift at the moment. There are several perceptions which validate this perception. Among the perceptions is the lack of leadership which is provided by an executive presbyter in place, but Council has decided not to pursue searching for a person to fill that position until other matters are addressed. Council is aware that a change is needed in how the presbytery becomes more effective in fulfilling its mission and ministry. The work of the Vision Task Force has been suspended for the time being, but the work of the Systems Task Force continues. Discussion with Jill Hudson, Mid-Council Resource Person at the General Assembly Office, is occurring now to help guide the deliberations on creating a new strategy for the work of the Presbytery. The body approved the appointment of Tyler Jenkins to serve as Treasurer of the Presbytery.



May Presbytery Meeting Speaker
MaryAnn McKibben Dana

- Richard Brooks offered the report of the Trustees. The body adopted these items: 1. The Edgewood Church’s securing a loan from General Assembly in the amount of \$85,000 which will be used for capital improvements; 2. Chapel in The Pines entering a lease agreement with Bluff Park Community Church for usage of space for worship and fellowship by the lessee; 3. Providing a quit-claim deed so that discussion about ownership can occur with an unsubstantiated entity about property on Vanderbilt Road still listed by the court house in the name of the old Birmingham Presbytery; 4. Wetumpka Church’s request to enter into a land-swap contract with the City of Wetumpka.
- Elizabeth Goodrich, Stated Clerk, reported that a communication from the Presbyterian Mission Agency had been received. It contained the information that Bennett Alldridge, a member of First-Tuscaloosa, has been selected by the Presbyterian Mission Council to serve in mission on behalf of the PC(USA) as a Young Adult

Volunteer in South Korea, August 2013 to July 2014. A training event for clerks of session and reading of session minutes will occur on June 8 from 9:00 AM to Noon at the Presbytery Office.

- Susan Haskell, Moderator of the Commission for Preparation for Ministry, informed the body that three of its candidates have graduated from seminary. Two of them, Barrett Abernethy and Mike McCracken, have received calls: Barrett to First Church, Livingston; and Mike McCracken to the church in Wynne, Arkansas. Lukata Mjumbe, who has received a grant for further study, will pursue that study at Princeton. Drew Bonner has withdrawn from the process.
- Leeann Scarbrough, Moderator of the Commission on Ministry, conducted the examination of the following persons: Barrett Abernethy for Ordination and Installation; Bruce McClendon for Installation at First Church, Alexander City; Charles Webster as a member of Presbytery to become the Transitional Pastor at First-Auburn; and Yoo Chang Bang as a member-at-large who serves as Parish Associate at Montgomery Korean Church. The examination for these four persons was sustained. The transfer of Thomas Boone to the Presbytery of The East, ECO, was approved. The body also approved the retirement of Jim Wells, effective April 9, 2013. Charlie Durham offered the prayer for the ministry of these persons. The body also approved the appointment of an Administrative Commission to

assist the Eastminster and Grace churches with the process of merging the two congregations. The request for this Commission originated within the two churches.

- Robert Hay, Benga Harrison, Charlie Durham, Ed Hurley, and Shannon Webster presented the report from Living River. They reported on the work which has been done at Living River and appealed to all present to continue the push to raise the funds to complete the first phase of needed buildings at the site. Robert Hay also emphasized the Summer camping season and how LR will be incorporated into the activities of the campers. He also reminded the body that campers come to camp when they are told about and invited to camp.
- Shannon Webster offered a moving presentation entitled, "COURAGE AND CONVICTION: First Presbyterian Church of Birmingham and the Civil Rights Era." He concluded by inviting the assembly to sing with him the song (Shannon wrote the lyrics and the music.), "Peace of the City: In Memory of Dr. Ed Ramage."
- Neil McCarter, Moderator of the Nurture Division, reminded the commissioners to return to their respective churches and tell prospective campers about the Summer camps. He also reported that the retreat for those servants in small churches was successful. Jenny Thagard informed the group about the changed format for THE MAIN EVENT which will occur August 9-10. Again, this leadership and development training event promises to be a highlight in the life of the Presbytery. The Rev. Dr. Ken McFayden from Union Presbyterian Seminary in Richmond will be the keynoter. The body approved the nominees for the service on the

various entities of the Presbytery as presented by Dana Waters, Moderator of the Nominating Committee.

- Elizabeth O'Neill, Moderator of the Mission Division, reported the following: four scholarships of \$500.00 each are being offered to members of churches to attend the Big Tent Event in Louisville, August 1-3; workshops on Revitalizing Local Mission, Developing a Hunger Ministry, and Living Waters for the World will be offered at THE MAIN EVENT; churches are invited to receive the Pentecost Offering on May 19th; recognized Paige Miller, a member of University Presbyterian Church, for the honor of her receiving CARE International's "I Am Powerful" Award. Paige is an advocate for women and girls in the developing world. The Division is helping to organize a trip to Congo in the next 12-18 months.
- Lydia Casey, Moderator of the Development Division, informed the body that the Division had approved providing \$1900.00 (an amount which will be matched by Synod) to keep *MissionIncite* accessible to the churches of the Presbytery. In addition, up to \$2000.00 was approved for scholarships for churches/individuals to attend development-related conferences.
- Lin Veasey, CRE to the Church of The Covenant, served as Prayer Listener for this meeting and offered an eloquent closing prayer.

Perhaps this reflection has been long on matters which dealt with the docket for the meeting. In one sense, then, the perception that the meeting was "routine" is valid. On the other hand, it was was anything but routine as the body heard reports about and acted on matters which are vital and important to the mission and ministry

of the churches in the Presbytery and to the mission and ministry of the Presbytery itself. In this way, we are continuing to be the "sign" of the Gospel of the Good News of Jesus Christ as the Rev. Dana challenged us to be. May God continue to abide with and provide guidance for the Presbytery as we move into the unknown future.

Grace and Peace,
Neil McCarter, Moderator