

January 12, 2010

QUICKLINE First Presbyterian Church, Mineral Ridge

A brief summary of the meeting of Eastminster Presbytery

Eastminster Presbytery held its stated meeting at the First Presbyterian Church in Mineral Ridge at 5:00 p.m. Moderator Scott Parker shared prayer concerns for Rev. Debby Dockstader injured in a fall, and asked for comfort for the family of Elder Chris Stefanski, former Moderator of the presbytery, and for the family of Rev. Tom Niccolls. The meeting was convened with prayer by Moderator Scott Parker. Host Pastor Mark Phillips welcomed the presbytery.

Stated Clerk Dale Riley read a letter from the Struthers Presbyterian Church that it had voted on January 10, 2010, by a 97% majority to withdraw from the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). It was moved and seconded that, in response to the Struthers letter, an administration commission be formed to communicate with the Struthers congregation in consultation with the Board of Trustees and the Committee on Ministry and make recommendations to Eastminster Presbytery. Elder Carole Rummell, The Rev. Carolyn Griffeth, and General Presbyter Dan Schomer provided background information and a time-line relating to the actions of the Struthers session and congregation.

The Consent Agenda included the following actions: That the March 9 offering be used to purchase Presbyterian curriculum for the Resource Center; that Christ Church in Youngstown be given permission to sell their manse; that the following persons be co-opted to the following committees for 2010—Rev. Sue Tinker (Preparation for Ministry), Elder Monty York (Mission), Elder Peggy Richmond (COM), Rev. Henry Pearce (COM), Elder Ray Rubrake (COM); and that the Vision Statement of Eastminster Presbytery be amended.

General Presbyter Dan Schomer thanked the Rev. Ross Jackson for his year of service as Stated Clerk and presented him with a “Coffee with Calvin” mug as a thank you gift. He then commented on the Struthers situation and expressed distress at the harm that was done to the reputation of the presbytery and the PC(USA) through the use of local media by the Struthers Church attorney who repeated the false statement that the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) does not believe in the divinity of Jesus Christ. The General Presbyter shared that such behavior harms all of our churches and provides a horrible witness that repels rather than attracts people to the church. He stressed that any church or minister who has serious concerns about actions of the presbytery, the denomination, and their future relationship with the PC(USA) can and should speak with him or officers of the presbytery and should refrain from contacting an attorney.

Diane Garthwaite brought greetings from Presbyterian Retirement Services and commended the quality of Park Vista, Lake Vista, and Rockynol Presbyterian Retirement Communities within the bounds of Eastminster Presbytery.

Presbytery Worship focused on the Baptism of the Lord and included the Renewal of Baptism. Rev. Meta Cramer served as liturgist, Rev. Mark Phillips delivered the sermon, and Bradley Bonam served as organist. Rev. Dan Schomer presented a Memorial Moment in celebration of the life of Rev. Tom Niccolls and the hope of the resurrection.

Committee Moderators and Presbytery Officers Elder Dale Riley (Stated Clerk), Rev. Carolyn Griffeth (Vice-Moderator), and Elder Marilyn Stroble (Moderator) were installed. Former Moderator Scott Parker presented Marilyn with the moderator’s stole and gavel and Marilyn moderated the remainder of the meeting.

J.B.M. Camp Director Doug Hoffman encouraged all churches to pick up their cookie boxes and to distribute the 2010 J.B.M. brochures to prospective campers. Doug also encouraged the youth of Eastminster’s churches to attend IGNITE, a youth rally at the Champion Church on February 27 from 6:00 to 10:00 p.m.

Resource Center Coordinator Lorraine Jones introduced new resources to the presbytery including Tending to the Holy by Bruce and Katherine Epperly, Your Whole Life: The 3D Plan for Eating Right, Living Well, Loving God by Showalter and Davis, and a 77 minutes video about youth and faith entitled “Soul Searching.” All resources are available in the Resource Center.

Elder Jane Stoffer, reporting for the Congregational Resources Committee, expressed her appreciation for the ministry of Rev. Tom Niccolls and commended the study of the resource "Steadfast Hope: The Palestinian Quest for Just Peace," in the churches of the presbytery. Christian Educator Marian Bauer spoke about the value of the 2-cents-a-meal program and provided information about the Youth Triennium to be held July 20-24.

Trustees Moderator Rusty Cowden share with the presbytery that the Trustees had secured legal counsel through Stefanski and Associates of Canfield and had accepted the offer for pro bono legal services from the Weil Gotshal legal firm through the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Rusty called the attention of the presbytery to the pay-up sheets for both mission and per capita giving in 2009. It was noted that the presbytery has reached its projected income for mission thanks to extra commitment giving by several of its churches, but that per capita giving remains at 86%. Rusty informed the presbytery that a special meeting of the presbytery would be requested for Committee Night (February 9) for the purpose of acting on a request from the Kent Presbyterian Church.

Hudson Commission Moderator Reford Nash announced that the commission has given the Presbyterian Church of Hudson (PCUSA) permission to form a session. Hudson Pastor Sue Tinker share with the presbytery that the membership rolls of the congregation have been established at 66 members. Sue reported that the congregation is now sharing worship, fellowship, and office space in the facility of St. James Episcopal Church in Hudson.

Mission Committee Moderator Elmarie Parker introduced Joanne Kramer, the new Director of Barberton Area Community Ministries (BACM). BACM is celebrating its 20th anniversary of assisting low-income families in the greater Barberton area with basic human necessities. BACM was established by First Presbyterian Church of Barberton and continues as a mission project supported through general mission giving of Eastminster Presbytery. Elmarie called the attention of the presbytery to a variety of mission interpretation materials in the packet and commended to the presbytery the World Mission Initiative Conference.

Synod Commissioners Rev. Joe Atkins and Elder Mary Beth Hudlund recreated the golden age of radio to tell the story of the most recent Synod Assembly. They told of a \$10,000 Synod grant to Presbyterian Disaster Assistance, reported on the election of a Search Committee for a new Transitional Executive for the Synod, and encouraged churches of Eastminster Presbytery to apply for the Frank Clark Grant for capital improvement.

Coordinating Council Moderator Ruth Cole, at the request of the Mission Visioning Council, presented Overture 004 submitted by the Synod of Rocky Mountains to the 219th General Assembly for concurrence by Eastminster Presbytery. The presbytery voted to concur with this overture that would provide comprehensive guidelines for those synods that wish to downsize and share staff and mission with other synods.

The Committee on Ministry brought the following recommendations and the presbytery took the following actions: approve the dissolution of the pastoral relationship between the Rev. Larry Myers and the Kinsman Presbyterian Church; appoint Rev. David Black as the moderator of the Kinsman Session; approve the validated ministries of Rev. Victor Wan-Tatah and Rev. David Shriver; provided exceptions for rotation of elders for numerous small congregations; and move Rev. Rein Krone and Rev. Mark Merritt to the inactive roll of ministers. The presbytery considered the merits of a paper on Ethical Conduct for Ministers presented by the Committee on Ministry and a substitute document presented by Rev. Henry Pearce. After considerable discussion, action was postponed.

The Nominating Committee placed in nomination and the presbytery elected the following:
Commissioners to the 219th General Assembly: Rev. Mark Ruppert, Rev. Elmarie Parker, Elder Jean Garrett (Akron Firestone Park), Elder Jeannie Monroe (Youngstown First), and Youth Advisory Delegate Sarah Bender (Salem First).
Synod Executive Search Committee: Elder Trella Johnson (Vienna).

The meeting was adjourned with prayer by Moderator Marilyn Stroble at 9:00 p.m.

A special meeting of Eastminster Presbytery will be held at the Goodyear Heights Presbyterian Church in Akron on February 9, 2010, at 7:15 p.m. The next stated meeting of Eastminster Presbytery will be held at the New Covenant Presbyterian Church in Akron on March 9, 2010, at 5:00 p.m.