

PRESBYTERY OF SOUTHERN NEW ENGLAND
REGULAR MEETING OF THE PRESBYTERY ROUNDTABLE
October 11, 2018

The Roundtable of the Presbytery of Southern New England met in the Covenant Room of the Westminster Presbyterian Church in West Hartford, Connecticut. The meeting was called to order with prayer and opening devotions at 9:40 a.m. by the Co-Chair of the Roundtable, Rev. David Van Dyke.

A **QUORUM** was present.

Present were: David Van Dyke, co-chair of Roundtable; Anne Carney, co-chair of Roundtable; Chris Tate, Moderator of the Presbytery (via video conference); Ruth Smalt, Vice Moderator of the Presbytery (via video conference); Doug Ray; Judy Cunningham; J. C. Cadwallader; Julie Emery; Barbara Riihimaki; Art Riihimaki; Lisa Baker (via video conference); Jenny Davis (via video conference); and Dick Hasbany.

Also present were: Ex-Officio members: the Rev. Shannan Vance-Ocampo, General Presbyter; and the Rev. David Baer, Stated Clerk.

Excused were: Virginia Smanik; Ralph Reynolds; Paulo Ribeiro; Virginia Smanik; and Tom Taylor, Treasurer.

The General Presbyter, the Rev. Shannan Vance-Ocampo, presented her report to the Roundtable. Ms. Vance-Ocampo gave an update on the situation at Valley Presbyterian Church. She has engaged in a lot of travel over the last ten days for various meetings scheduled by the General Assembly. With the old arguments around theology, sexuality, ordination, and marriage receding, the national conversation in the church is now about where we go from here in ministry—a far harder conversation, and one from which the previous arguments succeeded in distracting us. Larger congregations and immigrant congregations are experiencing growth, but the “messy middle” are experiencing stagnation or decline. Three main areas where the denomination will be focusing its energy are: (1) congregational vitality, (2) anti-racism work, and (3) root causes of poverty.

In our region, Stony Point is the last remaining conference center of the national church, which will be making large investments in it over the next few years. It happens that Stony Point has already been working on the new areas of concern for our denomination, and will serve as a kind of laboratory.

The new Stated Clerk of the General Assembly, the Rev. J. Herbert Nelson, II, is focusing on providing a broader range of resources to mid-council leaders. At what used to be called the “Fall Polity Conference,” mid-council leaders got to experience “Fear+Less Dialogues.”

The Pneumatrix program is having a slower start than anticipated, as we encourage congregations to take part. Up to seven congregations can take part. They must have stable pastoral leadership, not anticipating or having just experienced a transition, or in the midst of a

pastoral search.

The Mission/Vision Team has been trying to find a time to meet—hopefully they will meet next week. With the recent resignation of one member the team, there is an opportunity for someone else similarly situated, who has a relatively long history with the presbytery, to take part in this work.

Elder Judy Cunningham excused herself from the room for the report on the situation at Valley Presbyterian Church.

The Roundtable heard a report from J. C. Cadwallader, the co-chair of the Valley Presbyterian Church Administrative Commission. The Commission has been trained and is gathering information. They have identified appropriate contact people, have begun conducting interviews, and are working with the Presbytery attorney. Work in the sanctuary is nearly complete, but there are continuing concerns about air quality in the building. There are no functioning oil tanks yet, and therefore no heat.

Ms. Vance-Ocampo outlined the current expenses related to this work and attendant issues around them. The Committee on Ministry is addressing matters related to Ms. Crawford's departure from the church, and is providing ongoing support to her as she makes a claim for disability with the Board of Pensions and discerns possibilities for future ministry. The Synod has a budget line for presbytery support in emergency situations—Ms. Vance-Ocampo and Mr. Baer have applied for such a grant (letter sent on September 21, 2018) and are awaiting a response.

The Vice Moderator, the Rev. Ruth Smalt, gave her report. She will be participating in the installation of the Rev. T. J. Demarco as Pastor at the Woodbury Union Church in Warwick, on October 21.

The Stated Clerk, the Rev. David Baer, gave his report. The Roundtable **VOTED** to **APPROVE** the minutes of the August 9, 2018, meeting of the Roundtable. Mr. Baer presented a proposed docket for the November Stated Meeting of the Presbytery and received comments and suggestions from the members of the Roundtable. He also notified the members of the Roundtable that the Office of the General Assembly has published proposed amendments to the Book of Order, and suggested that the Presbytery vote on these amendments at the February meeting. A link to the amendments will go out in Getting Connected, and Mr. Baer will solicit feedback from committee chairs.

There was no report from the Moderator of the Presbytery.

Elder Judy Cunningham reported on her experience at Synod Assembly. She was encouraged at the attention given to young ministry leaders and youth at the Synod Assembly. Ms. Vance-Ocampo stressed that, following reforms to governance in the Synod, there is little work for the Synod Assembly to do. Much of the month-to-month work is handled by the Synod's Mission and Ministries Commission.

Elder Barbara Riihimaki gave the report on behalf of the Committee on Ministry. She

discussed a number of recommendations that the Committee will be bringing in their report to the Presbytery at the November Stated Meeting.

Elder Lisa Baker reported on the anti-racism training event provided by the Synod. She appreciated the focus on establishing a common vocabulary at the beginning, as well as the openness of the presenters to feedback from participants. The Rev. Julie Emery also participated in this training, and engaged the presenters in conversation about coming to the Presbytery to hold a training event for us. The expenses of a two-day training event for Presbytery leaders could be met with funds from a grant we have already received from the denomination.

The Roundtable **VOTED** to **APPROVE** an anti-racism training event for Roundtable, COM, CPM, and other interested people. The Committee on Representation will make the arrangements.

J. C. Cadwallader and Julie Emery reported on behalf of the Committee on Representation. The Committee is focused on reimagining its work and ways it can support and shift our Presbytery toward greater inclusivity. They would like to encourage a search for a broader corps of Presbytery leaders, especially from the many churches that do not currently have members serving on Presbytery committees. They hope that becoming a more inclusive community will increase everyone's enthusiasm for participating in the life of the Presbytery.

Elder Lisa Baker was asked to report on the work being done at MLK Presbyterian Church in Springfield. The congregation is excited, and grateful for the participation of people from around the Presbytery.

The Roundtable adjourned at 11:55 a.m., led in closing prayer by the General Presbyter, the Rev. Shannan Vance-Ocampo.

Respectfully submitted,

-signed-

Rev. David A. Baer, Stated Clerk