

**Synod Called Meeting
ZOOM Conference Call
February 16, 2023**

ATTENDANCE

First Name	Last Name	Presbytery		Status
Maggie	Alsup	Arkansas	Equipping	Commissioner
Jerry	Boles	Tres Rios	Empowering	Commissioner
Wynona	Bryan-Williams	Arkansas	Empowering	Commissioner
Dzandria	Chiphe	South Louisiana	Connecting	Commissioner
Jeff	Cranton	Eastern Oklahoma	Equipping	Commissioner
Sharon	Curry	Grace	Connecting	Commissioner
Ben	Davidson	Palo Duro	Empowering	Commissioner
Carol	Davis	New Covenant	Connecting	Commissioner
Ron	Fike	Cimarron	Equipping	Commissioner
Stephen	Hill	New Covenant	Equipping	Commissioner
Kristy	Rodgers	Eastern Oklahoma	Equipping	Commissioner
Bill	Rose	Tres Rios	Empowering	Commissioner
Janet	Ruark	Indian Nations		Commissioner
Nancy	Ruff	Palo Duro	Connecting	Commissioner
Seth	Saathoff	Mission	Connecting	Commissioner
Diana	Smith	Indian Nations		Commissioner
Sandra	Watson	Pines	Equipping	Commissioner
<i>David</i>	<i>Watson</i>	<i>South Louisiana</i>	<i>Connecting</i>	<i>Commissioner</i>
Polly	Williams	Grace	Connecting	Commissioner
<i>Arita</i>	<i>Battiest</i>	<i>Eastern Oklahoma</i>	<i>Connecting</i>	<i>Commissioner At-Large</i>
Danita	Nelson	Mission	Equipping	Commissioner At-Large
Minwoo	Kim	Eastern Oklahoma		Commissioner At-Large
Isabel	Rivera-Velez	New Covenant	Empowering	Commissioner At-Large
Carlos	Baladez	Mission		Commissioner At-Large

CORRESPONDING MEMBERS				
Laurie	Barker	Tres Rios	Pastoral Presbyter	Corresponding Member
Tim	Blodgett	Eastern Oklahoma	Moderator, EP Forum & Executive Presbyter	Corresponding Member
Barry	Chance	South Louisiana	Presbytery Stated Clerk	
Gordon	Edwards	Cimarron	Executive Presbyter	Corresponding Member
Lynne	Hargrove	New Covenant	Presbytery Stated Clerk & Executive Presbyter	Corresponding Member
Sandra	Hayes	Eastern Oklahoma	PW Moderator	Corresponding Member
David	Kemp	Palo Duro	Stated Clerk	Corresponding Member
Kay	Long	Tres Rios	Presbytery Stated Clerk	Corresponding Member
Leigh	McCaslin	Eastern Oklahoma	Presbytery Stated Clerk	Corresponding Member
Charlie	Smith	Indian Nations	Interim Presbytery Pastor	Corresponding Member
Sallie	Watson	Mission	General Presbyter	Corresponding Member
Richard	Williams	South Louisiana	Interim General Presbyter	Corresponding Member
STAFF				
Thomas	Riggs		Communication & Administration Coordinator	Synod Staff
Ernie	Higginbotham	Grace	Assistant Stated Clerk	Synod Staff
Kathy	Lee-Cornell	Grace	SPDR Director	Synod Staff

CO-OPTED				
Joshua	Kerr	Eastern Oklahoma	Grants & Scholarships Commission	
VISITORS				
Caly	Fernandez	Mission		Visitor
David	Kemp	Palo Duro		Visitor
John	Nelson	Tres Rios		Visitor
Steve	Shive	Grace		Visitor
Gregory	Cuellar			Visitor
ABSENT				
Marsha	Schendel	Mission	Connecting	Commissioner
Kathy	Thomas	Cimarron		Commissioner
Bok Soon	Egbert	South Louisiana	Equipping	Commissioner At-Large
Scott	Campbell	Palo Duro	Executive Presbyter	Corresponding Member
Stewart	Smith	Arkansas	Executive Presbyter	Corresponding Member
George	Wortham	Pines	Interim General Presbyter & Stated Clerk	Corresponding Member
Matt	Miles	Tres Rios	Vision and Outreach Presbyter	Corresponding Member
Blake	Brinegar	Arkansas	Presbytery Stated Clerk	Corresponding Member
Tracy	Evans	Indian Nations	Presbytery Stated Clerk	Corresponding Member
Laurie	Palmer	Mission	Presbytery Stated Clerk	Corresponding Member
Mark	Southard	Cimarron	Presbytery Stated Clerk	Corresponding Member

	Thursday, February 16, 2023
6:00pm	Welcome & Introductions – Kristy Rodgers, CT Moderator
	Acknowledgement of Land & People – Kristy Rodgers, CT Moderator
	Roll Call & Declaration of Quorum – Rev. Seth Saathoff, Moderator
	Seating of Corresponding Members & Visitors - Rev. Seth Saathoff, Moderator
	Adoption of the Agenda - Rev. Seth Saathoff, Moderator
	Arte de Lagrimas (Art of Tears) – Rev. Dr. Gregory Cuéllar
	Litany of Welcome & Opening Prayer
	Confession & Assurance of Pardon
	Scripture & Sermon – Rev. Dr. Gregory Cuéllar
	Offering
	Communion of the People – Rev. Minwoo Kim
	Benediction – Rev. Dr. Gregory Cuéllar
	Border Ministry Discussion – Rev. Gordon Edwards, John Nelson, Caly Fernandez
	Approval of Minutes – Rev. Seth Saathoff, Moderator · October 2022
	Acting Stated Clerk Report – Ernie Higginbotham
	Synod Moderator Report – Rev. Seth Saathoff, Moderator
	Personnel Committee Report – Rev. Jeff Cranton, Committee Moderator · Interim Synod Leader · Contract/Recommendation · Budget request/motion for SPDR travel expense · Synod Leader Search Committee
	Committee on Representation Report – Rev. Minwoo Kim, COR Moderator
	Financials – Rev. Seth Saathoff, Moderator · 2022 Final Quarter Reports · SPDR Budget · 2023 Final Budget

	Nominations – Ben Davidson, Vice Moderator
	Grants & Scholarship Report – Rev. Joshua Kerr, Commission Member
	Connecting Committee Report – CRE Arita Battiest, Committee Moderator
	Equipping Committee Report – Rev. Margaret Alsup
	Empowering Committee – Dr. Wynona Bryant Williams Networks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Solar Under the Sun – Elizabeth Brinegar · Synod Youth Workshop – Lisa Perkins · Hispanic Mission Ministries – Rev. Ezequiel Herrera · Network for Dismantling Racism – Erin Sorrels · SCOOP – Rev. Amy Meyers and Pat Osoinach
	Synod Partnership for Disaster Response – Rev. Kathy Lee- Cornell, Director

Welcome & Introductions – With our meeting framed in worship, Synod Moderator Seth Saathoff called the meeting to order at 6:10 p.m. CDT. Synod Leader/Stated Clerk Valerie Young led a short tutorial on navigating Zoom

Acknowledgement of Land & People – Coordinating Team Moderator Kristy Rodgers spoke to the sin of conquering and claiming land from those who inhabited in indigenously and those who forced others to move to this land via forced migration. Confessing that this is God’s land and we are merely stewards, Kristy invited us to consider how, sometimes in the name of God, we have not been God’s stewards. We are called to a restorative relationship with God and with others.

Roll Call & Declaration of Quorum – In accordance with the Bylaws, Sec. 3.1.3 whereby 50% or more of the elected commissions constitutes a quorum, a quorum was declared by the Acting Stated Clerk Ernie Higginbotham with 21 of 24 Commissioners present.

Seating of Corresponding Members & Visitors – Corresponding Members and Visitors were also acknowledged and seated. Vice Moderator Ben Davidson moved and Commissioner Jerry Boles seconded that Corresponding Members and visitors be seated and given privileges of the floor. Motion carried.

Adoption of the Agenda (*Attachment A*) – With the meeting agenda presented, Commissioner Polly Williams moved and Commissioner Sharon Curry seconded that the agenda be adopted. Motion carried

A Presentation by the Rev. Dr. Gregory Cuéllar – Dr. Cuéllar told the assembly about the work of Arte de Lagrimas. Arte de Lágrimas uses art to tell the human story of the refugee Central American children and youth crossing over the Texas-Mexico border.

Opening Hymn & Call to Worship – Moderator Saathoff invited the assembly to worship with an Opening Hymn. Commissioner Sharon Curry called the Assembly to Worship with a Litany of Welcoming the Stranger, inspired by Deuteronomy 10:19.

Confession & Assurance of Pardon – Moderator Saathoff led the assembly in confession and pronounced an assurance of pardon.

Scripture and Sermon – Rev. Dr. Gergory Cuéllar spoke from Isaiah 55:12-13, telling the participants of the Assembly how scripture points to a borderless faith. Following the presentation, an offering was collected for the work of Arte de Lagrimas.

Sacrament of the Lord’s Table & Benediction – Communion was celebrated, led by Commissioner Minwoo Kim. Our Benediction was led by the Rev. Dr. Gregory Cuéllar. Moderator Saathoff thanked Dr. Cuéllar for his presentation and message.

Discussion: Border Ministry Presentation – General Presbyter of Cimarron Presbytery Gordon Edwards spoke of the work of the Empowering Committee over the past six months, discussing on how the committee could be better partners to Presbyterian border ministries. The Committee gathered with some of these partners in the previous week to being the process of forming a Synod Border Ministries network.

John Nelson with the Tres Rios Border Foundation spoke about their ministry in the El Paso/Juarez area, including leading an encounter group of the Synod's EP Forum.

Caly Fernandez spoke of how Puentes de Cristo is celebrating 38 years of working around the Texas/Mexico border in the Brownsville and McAllen area. Through their community partners, they serve the colonias along the parters.

Approval of Minutes (Attachment B) – Moderator Saathoff presented the minutes from the previous Synod Assembly on October 2022 for approval. Without any additions or corrections, approval of the minutes for the Stated Meeting on October 2022 were moved by Commissioner Vice Moderator Davidson and seconded by CT Moderator Kristy Rodgers. Motion carried.

Acting Stated Clerk Report – Ernie Higginbotham reported there has been no Permanent Judicial Commission or traditional Stated Clerk activities since the last Assembly. Ernie reported one piece of correspondence from Mission Presbytery on January 23, 2023. The Presbytery's General Council made an "over and above" gift to the Synod of \$113,658.90.

Synod Moderator Report – Moderator Seth Saathoff commented on his expectations in coming into office and learning how to do this work without a Synod Leader/Stated Clerk at the beginning of his tenure. The transition time will present many challenges for the Synod, with challenge presenting opportunity.

One of those opportunities is to discern God's call for us, doing critical self-reflection. This could involve an Impact Assessment of our systems and structures in a post-COVID world. Rev. Saathoff also reported we have tentative plans to meet in person for Fall Assembly. Seth also recognized the effort and leadership of the Synod Staff.

Personnel Committee Report – Committee Moderator Jeff Cranton moved that the Synod elect Ernie Higginbotham as the Acting Stated Clerk from January 1, 2023 to March 15, 2023. Commissioner Jerry Boles seconded.

Jeff reported that this is a busy year for Personnel, tackling the challenges of a search for a Bridge Interim Synod Leader/Stated Clerk, work on discerning our identity and mission, needs for staffing, help the Synod committees assume responsibility for their ministries, work with committees to ensure current programming, work with the Synod Leader/Stated Clerk search team, and coordinate with the Synod Committee on Oklahoma Presbyteries.

The Personnel Committee moved the nomination of the Rev. Dr. Steve Shive to serve as the Bridge Interim Synod Leader/Stated Clerk before the Assembly. Rev. Shive is currently the Acting General Presbyterian for Grace Presbytery. The terms of call were presented in the Assembly packet. The motion carried (*Attachment C*).

The Personnel Committee has organized a Synod Leader/Stated Clerk Search Team according to the personnel policies of the Synod (*Attachment D*). This team is comprised of representatives from each presbytery has been formed with names presented in the packet. Moderator Cranton nominated the names presented to the Assembly for approval. Motion carried.

Committee on Representation Report (*Attachment E*) – Committee Moderator Rev. Minwoo Kim reported on behalf of the committee. The committee is working from the theme “Why BIPOC Churches are Keeping Silent” and will work towards better understanding in the coming year.

Coordinating Team Report (*Attachment F*) – Coordinating Team Moderator Kristy Rodgers reported on actions taken by the CT on behalf of the Synod. The last team minutes are included in the packet.

CT Moderator Rodgers called upon Sharon Curry, Moderator of the Grants and Scholarship Commission, to report on their ministry (*Attachment G*). Sharon reported on the various programs, ministries, and individuals who have received grants since the last Assembly. Rev. Josh Kerr, Commission member, reported on how the Commission has been working with M.Div. scholarship applicants to get all of their paperwork turned in when some may have been misplaced during the transition.

CT Moderator Rodgers called upon Commissioner Arita Battiest to report on the work of the Connecting Committee (*Attachment H*). The Committee is slated to meet for the first time in 2023 soon.

CT Moderator Rodgers pointed out the report from the Equipping Committee and thanked them for their work (*Attachment I*).

CT Moderator Rodgers called upon Commissioner Wynona Bryant Williams to report on the work of the Empowering Committee. Wynona expressed her thanks and pride for the work of the Border Ministries group (*Attachment J*).

CT Moderator Rodgers reporting for the Solar Under the Sun Network, pointed out an upcoming Solar School on May 4-7 at Ferncliff Camp and Conference Center (*Attachment K*).

Without a representative present, CT Moderator Rodgers mentioned the work Synod Youth Workshop. A video and flyer were presented, encouraging participation in SYW 2023 (*Attachment L*).

In the absence of a Network representative, CT Moderator Rodgers shared the report from the Network for Dismantling Racism in the packet (*Attachment M*).

CT Moderator Rodgers called upon General Presbyter Gordon Edwards to speak on behalf of the Special Committee on Oklahoma Presbyteries. Gordon talked about the make of the of the Committee and reason why this team was pulled together to talk about the future viability of Cimarron Presbytery and how that impact all of the Oklahoma presbyteries (*Attachment N*).

Financial Report (*Attachment O*) – Synod Moderator Saathoff presented the 2023 Final Budget for the Assembly’s consideration, pointing out a potential \$23,081.64 surplus at the end of the year. The net income for 2022 is approximately \$61,000. Vice Moderator Ben Davidson moved the adoption of the 2023 budget. Commissioner Sharon Curry seconded. Commissioner Jeff Cranton pointed out two additions to the budget. The first was a budget line item for SPDR travel expenses of \$2500. The second was the correction of an oversight in the personnel budget regarding a 8.5% Cost of Living Increase to the Administration and Communication Coordinator’s salary. This adds \$4785 to that salary line item. Motion carried.

Nominations – Vice Moderator Ben Davidson reported on the work Synod Committee on Representation, calling upon the Assembly to prayerfully consider candidates for the two open slots on the Committee.

Synod Partnership for Disaster Response (*Attachment P*) – Rev. Kathy Lee-Cornell, Director of the Synod Partnership for Disaster Response, reported on the mission and ministry of SPDR. Kathy told the Assembly that it’s been a busy disaster season in the Synod, with 6 of the 11 presbyteries reporting a major disaster. Kathy highlighted the following elements of the SPDR report:

There is a new set of resources on the Synod’s website under Disaster Recovery. There is even more pertinent information on the Synod’s blog as well.

Kathy also reported on another blog post that highlights a year recap of all that’s happened. \$94k has come in from PDA to support SPDR programming.

Kathy also highlighted that SPDR will broadly promote One Great Hour of Sharing, as it provides funds for much of the work of PDA.

There are six long-term recovery efforts going on in all four states of the Synod. Kathy encouraged church mission teams to assist in the recovery efforts.

A network of liaisons is being formed to communicate between presbyteries and people are bring recruited presently.

Imagine Event (*Attachment Q*) - Before the Assembly concluded, Commissioner Sharon Curry shared some information on an experiential event in New Orleans called *IMAGINE: Life on the*

Margins being planned for the month of June. Sharon discussed some of the details and encouraged the Assembly to consider attending and promoting.

With the Assembly's business concluded, Moderator Saathoff suggested that we allow soon-to-be Bridge Interim Synod Leader/Stated Clerk Steve Shive to offer the closing prayer and adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Jerry Boles moved this suggestion, Commissioner Jeff Cranton second. The motion passed and the Assembly was closed with prayer.