

Synod Stated Meeting
Metairie Ridge Presbyterian Church | New Orleans, LA
November 5-6, 2024

Welcome & Introductions –Synod Moderator Ben Davidson called the meeting to order at 1:30 p.m. CT, opening the meeting with prayer.

Acknowledgement of Land & People – Loretta Credo, member of Metairie Ridge Presbyterian Church, acknowledged the Native American peoples who lived on the land that is now called Metairie. Historical inhabitants of Metairie area included the Chitimacha Tribe, with Atakapa, Caddo, Choctaw, Homa and Natchez Tribes inhabiting Louisiana. Loretta also noted that PC(USA) leaders met with leaders of the Pointe au Chien Tribe on the day before the Meeting. Isabel S. Reivera-Velez, Commissioner, also mentioned the ancestral homelands of the Alabama Coushatta, Anadarko, Biloxi, Caddo, Chickasaw, Karankawa, Kichai, Muskogee, Shawnee, Tawakoni, and Tonkawa. We declare our respect for these children of God and our desire to honor them and the truth of their lives and history.

Roll Call & Declaration of Quorum – In accordance with the Bylaws, Sec. 3.1.3 whereby 50% or more of the elected commissioners constitutes a quorum, a quorum was declared by Synod Leader/Stated Clerk Mitch Miller. 17 of 28 Commissioners were present (*Attachment A*).

Seating of Corresponding Members & Visitors – Corresponding Members and Visitors were also acknowledged and seated. Seth Saathoff moved and David Watson seconded that the Corresponding Members and visitors be seated and given privileges of the floor. Motion carried.

Adoption of the Agenda – With the meeting agenda presented, Stacy Clopton moved and Ron Fike seconded that the agenda be adopted. Motion carried (*Attachment B*).

Approval of Minutes – Moderator Davidson presented the minutes from the previous Synod Assembly on February 27, 2024, for approval. Without any additions or corrections, approval of the minutes for the Stated Meeting on October 2022 were moved by Seth Saathoff and seconded by David Watson. Motion carried (*Attachment C*).

Synod Leader/Stated Clerk Report – Synod Leader Mitch Miller reported to the Assembly. He reported that it has been a busy few months since our last meeting and he has visited quite a few of the Presbyteries since becoming the SL/SC. (*Attachment D*).

Synod Moderator Report – Moderator Ben Davidson reported to the Assembly, telling the stories of serving as Moderator for 2024. Ben highlighted that the Synod has been responding to its call during the transition to our new SL/SC, going with the strengths that we have.

Highlights of 2024:

Calling Mitch Miller as our Synod Leader/Stated Clerk

We committed to increase our support of SPDR.

We committed to increase support of the Hispanic Mission Ministries Network.

We committed to support our smaller congregations with lay leadership.

We committed to increase our support of the Synod Youth Workshop and the Grants and Scholarship Commission.

We are going to move forward with a Border Ministries Network.

Coordinating Team Report (*Attachment E*) – Coordinating Team Moderator Seth Saathoff reported on actions taken by the CT on behalf of the Synod. Conducting the business of the Synod between gatherings, the CT took action to onboard the new SL/SC, worked on the Synod finances with Bill Wiles, committed to the continuing support of the three Oklahoma presbyteries as they discern their future together, planned this Assembly, and served as the de facto Nominating Committee.

Personnel Committee Report – Committee Moderator David Watson reported to the Assembly. Personnel is moving forward to the hiring of a part-time Administrative Assistant and providing help for SPDR. A group has been put together to interview the candidates and will move forward.

Committee on Representation Report (*Attachment F*) – Committee Moderator Minwoo Kim reported on behalf of the committee. The focus of the committee has been on communication. Communication between the Korean and Hispanic congregations and the Synod, with the suggestion that the Synod be more proactive in providing translation for Synod functions. Minwoo reported that the committee has only four of the needed six people and are seeking additional members.

Empowering Committee Report – Committee Moderator River-Velez reported on behalf of the Committee. Isabel reported that Empowering supports the Network for Dismantling Racism, the Hispanic Missions Ministry Network, Synod Youth Workshop, and is working to the creation of a Border Ministries Network.

Commissioner Leah McFaddin reported on Synod Youth Workshop (*Attachment G*), highlighting an increasing attendance and scholarships presented.

Commissioner Carlos Baladez and Lisa Almon reported on the work of the Hispanic Missions Ministry Network, highlighting the HMMN Leadership Workshops taking place throughout the Synod and via streaming.

Commissioner Kristy Rodgers reported on the Network for Dismantling Racism, mentioning that the Network continuing with its mission under new challenges. This includes a partnership with

Rev. Jermaine Ross Allen with the PCUSA's newly created Center for Repair of Historical Harms to gather our stories and historical harms and share them broadly.

Connecting Committee Report – Committee Moderator David Watson reported to the Assembly. David reported that the work of the Committee centers around the Covenant Partners, including Austin College, who will renew their Covenant Agreement with the Synod at this Assembly.

Equipping Committee Report (*Attachment H*) – Committee Moderator Kristy Rodgers reported on behalf of the Committee. Focusing on creating Elder Training and Suicide Prevention Training, the Committee is looking forward to contributing to our upcoming Synod School.

Commissions/Entities

Grants and Scholarship Commission Report (*Attachment I*) – Commission member Lisa Almon reported on behalf of the Commission. Lisa reported that the Commission gave out over \$92k in 2024. She also reported that there are a number of openings in the committee.

Synod Partnership for Disaster Response (*Attachment J*) – In the absence of Kathy Lee-Cornell, Director of the Synod Partnership for Disaster Response, Moderator Davidson reported on SPDR. Ben talked about the amazing work of SPDR and how well it is received throughout the Synod and the Assembly watched a presentation about the Liaison Program. SL/SC Miller reported on the great need for disaster preparation and recovery, with 1/3 of all disasters in the US in 2023 occurred in the Synod of the Sun. Mitch reminded the Assembly that we are in the final year of the three-year program and that it is important that this program continue on beyond that initial commitment.

Oklahoma Tri-Presbyteries Report – Corresponding member Tim Blodgett, General Presbyter of Eastern Oklahoma Presbytery, reported on the work of the Oklahoma Presbyteries Task Force. This group has been about the work of discerning and designing a plan to create a new Oklahoma presbytery. In many ways, the three presbyteries have already begun living in ministry together in programs in ministry.

Nominations – Moderator Davidson introduced Commissioner Ron Fike from Cimarron Presbytery to be the Vice-Moderator of the Synod in 2025. By unanimous vote, Ron was elected Vice-Moderator.

TPF Update on Funds Investment – Rick Young, President of the Texas Presbyterian Foundation spoke about the mission and ministry of TPF, the dangers of “not asking” and about the gift of legacy gifts. Celebrating their 50th year, TPF offered to each presbytery to pay for one of the meals at a Presbytery meeting.

Presentation of the 2025 Preliminary Budget (*Attachment K*) – Treasurer Bill Wiles presented for consideration the 2025 Budget. Bill opened with the idea of bringing a Joe Park from Horizons Stewardship to the Synod to talk about how we maximize giving. Bill took the Assembly through the budget with a new format.

On behalf of the Coordinating Team, Moderator Davidson moved the approval of the budget. The budget was approved.

Signing of Covenant Agreement (*Attachment L*) – Connecting Committee Moderator David Watson and Austin College Senior Associate Vice President Suzanne Crouch presented the renewal of a Covenant Agreement with Austin College. After signing the agreement, Suzanne spoke of how Austin College continues the Covenant made at a child's Baptism. Thanks to a generous gift, Suzanne reported that Presbyterian students can attend Austin College tuition-free.

Installation of 2025 Moderator – In the space of worship, Commissioner Sharon Curry was installed as the 2025 Moderator of Synod of the Sun by the Rev. Alonzo Johnson, the Coordinator for the Self-Development of People program.

Following her installation, Sharon shared her vision for the Synod in 2025, redefining the many roles that we have, take a good look at our structures and discern where God is taking us to next. Sharon extended an invitation for the members of the Assembly to decide in what manner they would like to serve in the coming year. Sharon wants to restart our Commissioned Pastors Network and rebuild the Grants and Scholarship Commission.

With the Assembly's business concluded in prayer, the meeting was adjourned.