

Presbytery Reports Stated Meeting - May 23, 2023

Report of the Stated Clerk – National Capital Presbytery

Judicial Process

1. The Stated Clerk reports receiving a final decision on April 19, in the remedial case *Rev. Dr. Willie J. Keaton v. National Capital Presbytery* (Synod of the Mid-Atlantic #2023-1). The Permanent Judicial Commission of the Synod of the Mid-Atlantic found that NCP's Coordinating Commission lacked the authority to effect the dissolution between Dr. Keaton and Northeastern Presbyterian Church, and declared the action the Coordinating Commission had taken to do this on January 9, 2023, to be null and void.

The PJC declined to render an opinion as to the constitutionality of this presbytery's action to dissolve the pastoral relationship on March 28, 2023, since at the time it had not received a complaint challenging this action.

The full Decision and Order is attached to this report, and is reported to the Presbytery at the direction of the Synod's Permanent Judicial Commission.

In accordance with the Decision and Order, the Stated Clerk recommends that the Presbytery enter the full decision upon the minutes of this meeting. (Recommendation included in omnibus motion.)

2. The Stated Clerk reports that on April 25, he received a copy of remedial complaint filed by the Rev. Dr. Willie J. Keaton against NCP with the Synod of the Mid-Atlantic, challenging the Presbytery's dissolution of the pastoral relationship between Dr. Keaton and Northeastern Presbyterian Church at its stated meeting on March 28. The complaint was accompanied by a request for a stay of enforcement.

On May 3, the Leadership Council voted to refer the complaint to the committee of counsel appointed on March 1, consisting of the Elder Miriam Dewhurst (NYAPC), Elder John Hagner (St. Mark), and Rev. Stephen Smith-Cobbs. (Rev. David Gray, a former member of NCP's Permanent Judicial Commission, has been serving as an additional consultant to the committee.)

On May 4, the Stated Clerk received notice that the Synod had *denied* Dr. Keaton's request for a stay of enforcement, and ordered NCP to form a committee of counsel and file an answer to the complaint within 45 days. The committee of counsel is in the process of preparing an answer.

Resignations

1. The Stated Clerk reports receiving, on March 30, the notices of resignation of Elder Sandra Barrett and the Rev. Bernice Parker-Jones from the Administrative Commission for Garden Memorial Presbyterian Church. In accordance with the Presbytery's action establishing this

Commission, members are appointed by the NCP Moderator, who was notified of the vacancies, and who subsequently appointed Elder Carole Banks (Fifteenth Street) and Elder Lou Durden (Northminster) to the Commission.

2. The Stated Clerk reports receiving, on May 5, the notice of resignation of the Rev. Mary Beth Lawrence from the Administrative Commission for Boyds Presbyterian Church. In accordance with the Presbytery's action establishing this Commission, members are appointed by the NCP Moderator, who has been notified of the vacancy.

Synod of the Mid-Atlantic
PERMANENT JUDICIAL COMMISSION
Keaton v. National Capital Presbytery, Case, #2023-001

FINAL DECISION AND ORDER

Dr. Willie Keaton filed a remedial complaint with the Stated Clerk of the Synod of the Mid-Atlantic naming National Capital Presbytery as respondent. The complaint asked the Commission to declare that the Presbytery committed an irregularity when it terminated his pastoral relationship with Northeastern Presbyterian Church. Simultaneously with the filing of the complaint, Dr. Keaton also requested a stay of enforcement under Book of Order D-6.0103.

After the officers determined that the complaint satisfied the jurisdiction requirements of D-6.0305 of the Book of Order, the Commission granted the request for stay of enforcement of the action of the Commission on Ministry of National Capital Presbytery purporting to dissolve the pastoral relationship between the Northeastern Presbyterian Church and Rev. Dr. Willie Keaton. The Presbytery filed an answer to the complaint and an objection to the stay of enforcement.

Decision

After reviewing the documents filed by both the complainant and the respondent, the Commission is able to decide the case without further briefs or hearing. The Commission granted the stay of enforcement because the Commission on Ministry terminated the pastoral relationship under Book of Order G-9.0104 without showing that it had the authority to take that action without a vote of the congregation or the presbytery. In its motion to dissolve the stay, the Presbytery argues that the Commission's action was "was valid and proper" but admits it was not "complete." The Commission on Ministry did not, however, term its action as a recommendation or a beginning of a process but declared that it, "acting on behalf of the presbytery, has voted to dissolve the pastoral relationship between [Dr. Keaton] and Northeastern Presbyterian Church, effective January 9, 2023." That was an irregularity, and Permanent Judicial Commission declares it null and void. Because the action was invalid, the stay of the Commission on Ministry action is permanent.

In both its answer and its motion to dissolve, the Presbytery argues that subsequent votes of the congregation of Northeastern Presbyterian Church and National Capital Presbytery were sufficient to dissolve the pastoral relationship between Dr. Keaton and Northeastern Presbyterian Church. Because the Permanent Judicial Commission has not received a complaint challenging those actions, they are not presently before the Commission. Therefore, the Commission expresses no opinion as to their validity.

Order

IT IS THEREFORE ORDERED that the January 9, 2023 action of the Commission on Ministry of National Capital Presbytery terminating the pastoral relationship between Dr. Willie Keaton and

Northeastern Presbyterian Church is NULL and VOID and enforcement of that decision is permanently STAYED.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that the Stated Clerk of National Capital Presbytery report this Decision and Order to the Presbytery at the first meeting after receipt and that National Capital Presbytery enter the full Decision and Order upon its minutes and that an excerpt from those minutes showing entry of the Decision and Order be sent to the Stated Clerk of the Synod of the Mid-Atlantic.

Certificate

We certify that the foregoing is a true and correct copy of the Decision and Order of the Permanent Judicial Council of the Synod of the Mid-Atlantic of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) in Remedial Case 2023-001, Keaton v. National Capital Presbytery.

Dated this 17th day of April, 2023.


Ken Murchison, Moderator


Bill Reinhold, Clerk

NCP LEADERSHIP COUNCIL
Business Meeting Minutes - APPROVED

April 5, 2023

12:30 PM via Zoom

Sent by the Triune God to be agents of salvation, reconciliation, and justice, we empower and challenge our congregations to be Missional, Pastoral and Prophetic

Attendance: Elder Lee Bishop, Rev. Dr. Chris Deacon, Elder Miriam Dewhurst, Rev. David Douthett, Rev. Quinn Fox, Rev. Pat Futato, Rev. Dr. Diane Walton Hendricks, Elder Shani McIlwain, Rev. Neill Morgan, Rev. Dr. Sterling Morse, Rev. Nancy Neal, Elder Mike Rankin, Elder Le Quan Turner

NCP Staff: Rev. David Baer, Dina Bickel, Heather Deacon, Rev. John Molina-Moore, LaJuan Quander

NCP Staff: Excused: Rev. Tara Spuhler McCabe

Moderator Rev. Dr. Diane Walton Hendricks called Leadership Council to order at 12:30pm. The devotion was led by Rev. David Douthett and was based on the study, "Were You There?" from *Plenty Good Room: A Lenten Bible Study based on African American Spirituals* by Marilyn Thornton and Lewis Baldwin. The devotion ended in prayer.

LC approved the Leadership Council minutes from March 1, 2023 and March 19, 2023.

Stated Clerk, Rev. David Baer presented Leadership Council's calendar for 2023-24 and the presbytery meeting dates for 2024. There was discussion about the 2024 March Presbytery meeting currently scheduled for the week of Holy Week. The March 2024 meeting was moved from the fourth Tuesday of the month to the third Tuesday, March 19. The schedule was approved as corrected.

Motion: To approve Leadership Council's 2023-24 schedule and the 2024 Presbytery Meeting schedule.

Approved

Leadership Council Meetings:

- September 6, 2023
- October 4, 2023
- November 1, 2023
- December 6, 2023
- January 3, 2024
- February 7, 2024
- March 6, 2024
- April 3, 2024
- May 1, 2024
- June 5, 2024
- September 4, 2024
- October 2, 2024
- November 6, 2024
- December 4, 2024

Presbytery Meetings:

- September 26, 2023
- November 14, 2023
- January 23, 2024
- March 19, 2024
- May 21, 2024
- September 24, 2024
- November 19, 2024

LC Chair, Dr. Hendricks called on Moderator Elder Shani McIlwain to discuss the March 2023 presbytery meeting evaluations. Overall, the meeting was well run. Kudos to the new stated clerk, Rev. David Baer for his first NCP presbytery meeting. Some still wished the meetings were in person.

LC Chair, Dr. Hendricks called on General Presbyter, Rev. John Molina-Moore to give updates on Northeastern, Garden Memorial, new initiatives and attending to churches in need. Stated Clerk, Rev. David Baer, gave an update on Northeastern. The Committee of Council filed a formal answer to the complaint with the Synod and will wait for the Synod's PJC to respond. General Presbyter, Rev. John Molina-Moore and Stated Clerk, Rev. David Baer will follow up with Northeastern's congregation. The church plans to utilize the Church Assessment Tool in the fall.

General Presbyter gave an update Garden Memorial.

General Presbyter gave an update on the New Initiatives. The team of John Molina-Moore, Heather Deacon, Brian Clark, Le Quan Turner and Nancy Neal have a rough proposal for creating an additional staff person, drawn out of the New Growth Fund, to work and identify leaders and opportunities in our presbytery and bring it before CDC. Plan to do a search in the fall and have someone selected for the beginning of 2024. General Presbyter, John Molina-Moore gave an update on attending churches in need.

LC Chair, Dr. Hendricks asked for new business. The team of John Molina-Moore, David Baer and Diane Hendricks will write a new manual. They are looking for others to join in writing the new structure.

LC Chair Dr. Hendricks requested written reports from NCP committees. No questions were asked.

Leadership Council welcomed members from Personnel, Elder Lori Davis and Elder PJ Miller. LC moved to executive session.

The meeting closed with prayer at 2:00 pm.

Next Meeting: Wednesday, May 3 @ 12:30 via Zoom Devotion: _____

Reminders: April 20 – 10:30 AM – 2:30 PM [The Gathering: “Stewardship Through Storytelling” at Saint Mark Presbyterian Church](#)
May 7 & 8 – 6:00 PM -9:30 PM [Ally Training](#)
May 22 - 7:00 PM Action Item Dialogue
May 23 - 6:00 PM May Presbytery Meeting
June 4 – 3:00 PM The Gathering: [“At the River” Documentary](#) at Southminster PC co-sponsored by Burke Presbyterian Church and the Dismantling Racism Team

Installations

April 16 – 4:00 PM Rev.Taekhan Yoon (installation) at United Korean PC
October 28 - Fall Installation Service

NCP LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

Meeting Minutes - DRAFT

May 3, 2023

12:30 PM via Zoom

Sent by the Triune God to be agents of salvation, reconciliation, and justice, we empower and challenge our congregations to be Missional, Pastoral and Prophetic.

Attendance: Elder Lee Bishop, Rev. Brian Clark, Elder Miriam Dewhurst, Rev. David Douthett, Rev. Pat Futato, Rev. Dr. Diane Walton Hendricks, Elder Shani McIlwain, Rev. Neill Morgan, Rev. Dr. Sterling Morse, Elder Le Quan Turner

Excused: Rev. Dr. Chris Deacon, Rev. Quinn Fox, Rev. Nancy Neal, Elder Mike Rankin

NCP Staff: Rev. David Baer, Dina Bickel, Heather Deacon, Rev. John Molina-Moore, Tara Spuhler McCabe, LaJuan Quander

Guests: Gary Mears, CDC - New Things; Jeri Fields, Chair of CDC

At 12:30pm, Leadership Council (LC)'s meeting was called to order by LC Chair, Rev. Dr. Diane Walton Hendricks. Elder Lee Bishop opened in devotion based on John 6:35 which reminds us that God is our Provider and Jesus is the Bread of Life.

LC Chair, Dr. Hendricks, introduced the first order of business which included a consent motion to approve LC minutes from April 5, 2023 and amend LC minutes from February 1, 2023. The consent motion was approved.

LC Chair, Dr. Hendricks, welcomed guests, Rev. Jeri Fields, Chair of Church Development Commission (CDC) and CRE Gary Mears, Chair of New Things. Rev. Fields gave an overview of CDC's recommendation for a budget increase. Budget and Finance have concurred with the recommendation. The additional funds will come from the New Growth Fund. Two memos and a budget worksheet along with background information from Budget and Finance were presented to LC. The motion was moved and seconded. There was no discussion. The motion carried.

MOTION: To recommend that the Presbytery authorize a current year budget increase for the Church Development Commission in the amount of \$102,000. ***Approved***

Note that Rev. Fields will have to come before the presbytery to approve. The stated clerk, moderator and CDC chair, Rev. Fields will discuss whether CDC's budget increase will be an action item dialogue.

LC Chair, Dr. Hendricks called on general presbyter, Rev. John Molina-Moore to present the Chair recommendations for COM after Rev. Mary Austin's resignation as she accepted a call in another presbytery. The motion was moved and seconded. There was discussion and the motion carried.

MOTION: Leadership Council moves to approve the recommendation from Nominating Committee for Rev. Juli Wilson-Black as Chair and Rev. Carla Gorrell as Vice-Chair of the Committee on Ministry effective May 3, 2023. ***Approved***

Stated Clerk, Rev. David Baer reported on three items.

- Decision and Order in Keaton v. NCP – NCP received a decision and order in the remedial complaint that was filed against the presbytery. The complaint only concerns the actions of COM Coordinating Commission in January among other things regarding the action to dissolve the pastoral relationship between Rev. Dr. Willie Keaton and Northeastern Presbyterian Church. The synod's decision will be read at this month's meeting and NCP's stated clerk will include it in his clerk's report.

- Notice of new complaint – Keaton v. NCP – The stated clerk received a new complaint via email from Rev. Dr. Willie Keaton. NCP has not heard if the synod has accepted the complaint. If the synod accepts it, Rev. Baer recommends the complaint be referred to the existing investigative Committee of Counsel. The following motion was presented, moved and seconded. There was discussion and the motion carried.

Motion: If the new complaint is accepted, Leadership Council moves that the existing investigative Committee of Counsel be instilled. *Approved*

- May 23 Stated Meeting – The upcoming stated meeting will include considering the amendments. In this week’s TM, there’s info about the process on how to consider the amendments. NCP will also elect a moderator and vice moderator who will be installed in September in addition to consider a recommendation from CDC. Action items possibilities include the proposed amendments and CDC’s recommendation.

General presbyter, Rev. John Molina—Moore, gave an update on Northeastern, Garden Memorial, new initiatives, and churches in need.

Northeastern is in good hands with transitional pastor, Rev. Mark Greiner. He provides stability. The stated clerk and general presbyter will meet with the session during a Saturday retreat. A coach will work with them.

Rev. Moore gave an update on Garden Memorial. Heather Deacon, Director of Business Affairs, reported that the outstanding expenses, liens, legal fees, insurance, etc. in the amount of approximately \$50,000 will come from the Property Management Fund. The presbytery is the owner of that fund. It is replenished when properties are sold. Additionally, ACCP will also report on this, and Heather Deacon will report to Garden Memorial’s AC so there is complete transparency around monies being dispersed as it relates to the property and Garden Memorial. The general presbyter will inform LC about Garden Memorial’s property and any new developments.

The New Initiatives team met. They are creating a funding model to support a NCP staff position to identify locations for new initiatives around the presbytery. The draw will come from the New Growth Fund and will occur in the fall during the annual budgeting process. That money would be available beginning January 2024 and the hope is to have a person hired in the spring or summer of 2024. In the meantime, the team will create a position description, clear it with the personnel committee and begin the search. The team would also need sign off from CDC before the end of summer 2023 for approval at November’s presbytery meeting.

General presbyter, Rev. Molina-Moore reported that by the middle of the summer NCP will

have ten solo pastor churches, mostly smaller congregations with 100 members or less, who won't have pastors. We ask LC to pray for these churches and to think quickly and creatively on how to find leaders for these churches. Of these churches, 4 are fulltime positions and the others are ½ to ¾ time. Some ideas include considering a presbytery staff member to be hired to do the work – a transformational interim position in which churches would pay a portion of the interim's salary and the other portion would come from the presbytery, training CREs, shared leadership and merging congregations. The NCP staff and Congregational Transitions Commission are currently brainstorming.

The Nominating Committee met this morning and requested a liaison from LC who can call folks to serve on Nominating. Elder Shani McIlwain volunteered to be LC's liaison.

There was no new business. The meeting was moved and seconded to adjourn. Dr. Hendricks closed in prayer at 1:25pm.

Next Meeting: Wednesday, June 7 @ 12:30 pm via Zoom Devotion: _____

Reminders: **Ally Training**
Sunday, May 7, 2023 and Monday, May 8, 2023 from 6:00 pm to 9:30 pm
via Zoom – [Register HERE](#)

Stewardship through Storytelling – Part II
Thursday, May 18, 2023 from 7:00 pm -8:00 pm via Zoom – [Register HERE](#)

[“At the River: Struggle and Grace in the Segregated South”](#) – A
documentary film
Sunday, June 4, 2023 from 3:00 pm -5:30 pm at Southminster PC –
[Register HERE](#)

Ordinations/Installations

Sunday, June 4, 2023 – Rev. Billy Kluttz – First Presbyterian Church,
Arlington

Saturday, October 28, 2023 at 3:00 pm – **NCP Presbytery-wide
Installation Service** – Providence PC Fairfax – Dr. Jonathan Lee Walton,
president at Princeton Theological Seminary speaking