

PMRV Committee/Commission Reports to Presbytery For August 12, 2023 Presbytery of Missouri River Valley Stated Meeting

Social Justice and Peacemaking – Rev. Carolyn Grice, Chair

Greg Carlson was excused. Carolyn ordered copies of Presbyterian Outlook's issue on gun violence for each committee member. Those unable to attend the meeting can pick them up at the Presby Hut.

Carolyn Grice convened the meeting with the opening prayer and read the covenant, at 11:35am, at the Presby Hut.

Following the check in Carolyn introduced Amy Dalton, Executive Director of the Center and Library for the Bible and Social Justice (CLBSJ).

The CLBSJ is an organization linking activists and scholars for Bible-based Justice. It *connects biblically informed activists and justice-oriented scholars through a research library and educational programs in order to develop an empowering use of the Bible for enacting social justice today*. The website is clbsj.org.

The Research library is housed at Stony Point Center in NY. Some of the program offerings include: Lenten Bible Detox; Scholar Activist encounters; Black August- This August we will run our third annual "Black August" series, focused on "Black Bible Scholarship and Social Transformation." I'm so pleased that Johnson C. Smith Theological Seminary is a co-sponsor this year. Details have not yet been released but folks can register for the first event to get updates:

<https://clbsj.org/events/2023/08/03/black-bible-scholarship-and-social-transformation/>

Amy provided the following links for more information on events.

<https://clbsj.org/events/>

<https://clbsj.org/events/lenten-detox/>

<https://clbsj.org/events/2021/03/25/lenten-detox-ericka-dunbar/>

During the check in Kevin Bushnell mentioned the Palestinian efforts. Amy wanted to follow up with him about his idea regarding a scholar-activist encounter focused on Palestine. She explained the Lenten Detox. It is to *support collective healing with the bible and strengthen and reclaim the bible for justice and peace*.

It is designed to engage biblical scholars to help understand the context of various texts. (She was not aware of the controversy regarding the Bible Exegesis exam question on Judges 19 of last December. She thought there may be some parallels between their process and ours (ordination exam committee). Amy shared that as their experiment has progressed, they have incorporated embodiment practices to support the process of coping and healing.

One board member, Sr. Shariva Vernice Meytung has been integral to that aspect of their work. Amy wondered if the situation itself provides an opportunity to share about these themes with the general public in a way that supports public literacy about challenging texts like the Judges 19 text. Depending on the committee's goals, that might be something we could collaborate on.

(There was a reference to a book by Phyllis Trible -Texts of Terror.)

This program also brings in activists' perspectives especially from communities being harmed by misuse of texts through patterns of misinterpretation and misuse.

The program also wants to reclaim the bible for earth justice.

During the discussion the question came up about the role of women and Amy discussed Martha and Mary. She provided further clarification. Another detox-related note: I think my comments on the Martha and Mary text were a little incomplete - her writing focused on how the text seems to normalize women being divided from one another, with one caste (mostly white, first world) getting to ascend to the realm of learning and teaching, while others (mostly women of color) experience their

responsibilities in the "kitchen" reified and added to. This is another example of how it's not always the overtly offensive texts that might be playing into cycles of harm and pain.

Covenant Network-Bob Keefer provided a brief update. Essentially, he's waiting for a meeting to discuss the event. More info to follow when it becomes available. The date is 8/26/23.

Here's an update from Bob: Planning meeting will be via Zoom next week. Gary Eller will also participate from our Presbytery, and I suggested he invite Cleveland Evans as well.

Sponsorship would mean simply endorsing the event. Money is welcome, and we may want to consider that later. In the meantime, the Network will pay for Brian to come to Lincoln and there will be a registration fee, mostly to pay for lunch and to get an accurate count of probable attendance. Missouri River Valley, Homestead, Central Nebraska, and Plains & Peaks Presbyteries all involved to make it an all-Nebraska event. Plus, the parts of Iowa in our Presbytery; I suspect no one from Colorado in P&P Presbytery will come, but who knows?

A grant request from New Life PC was reviewed. The committee voted to give \$750 to the Pratt Street Project.

The next meeting will be August 1st.

Self-Development of People (SDOP) – Rev. Carolyn Grice, Chair

Self-Development of People has received a \$5000 allocation from PC(USA).

Calvin Crest Camp, Conference and Retreat Center – Craig Huffman, Director

The Calvin Crest Board of Directors met at their regularly scheduled meeting on July 8, 2023 at Calvin Crest. Topics of discussion were as follows:

- Summer Camp—a quick recap of staffing, facility and programmatic elements of Calvin Crest's summer camp opportunities with a more in-depth analysis in the fall with the benefit of some time and space. We also discussed the upcoming groups that use this space for their own programming throughout the rest of the summer months.
- Property Transfer—with the August Presbytery meeting coming soon, we discussed the final details involved with the transfer of property as well as the steps needed going forward to ensure everything is in place for the future. There was discussion that this transfer of property is a step in the long history of the ministry of Calvin Crest as opposed to some sort of ending or new beginning. The desire to remain a part of our Presbyterian heritage is strong.
- Family Fun Day and Instadium—We continued to make plans for our upcoming Family Fun Day and Instadium on August 19-20 and are excited to welcome the friends and family of Calvin Crest back to camp for an end-of-summer celebration.
- Future Events—A Men's Retreat is in the works for May 2024 and there is discussion of additional opportunities for creative programming throughout the year.

Faith Education Leadership Development (FELD) – Shelli Dart, Chair

FELD has reviewed and authorized several requests for funding to attend Calvin Crest and Synod School.

Administrative Team (AT & MT)

Joyous Gold Star ☆ Report: Admin & Moderator Teams (from joint meetings)

- **Admin Team (AT):** Nancy Ross-Hullinger, Sally Carlson, Gregg Miller, Pat Shipley, Sarah Dickinson/notetaker
- **Moderator Team (MT):** Marcia Cline & Matt Coplen; absent with notice- Suzanne Gorhau

We honor the 2023 theme: The Joy of being a Team!

Here are some highlights from when Admin Team met jointly with the Moderator Team in June & July

As usual: We have super full meetings and good discussion!

Discussion included:

- **Debriefing** about:
 - **5/16/23 LT mtg** Marcia did such a great job!
 - **Leadership Team** business
 - **LT Membership** – We have valued Becky and Christine’s leadership on LT and will miss them! We wish them well. We are reaching out a FELD Leader and a CPM leader and hope to have them on board in July. Update: Jay Cline will represent CPM through the end of 2023.
 - **LT July 18 Meeting prep**
 - In person at Gethsemane
 - Docket for the July LT mtg includes:
 - PMRV Aug mtg prep
 - We’ve been revising and updating the August docket.
 - Suggested offering designation: Calvin Crest
 - Approved several announcements for the mtg.
 - Earmarked reports from Calvin Crest and Nominating
 - Focus: Joy of Being a Team – 9:45-11:15/ Candace Adams, presenter

Other Updates

- **Stated Clerk** – as of June AT/MT mtg: 27 of 42 Clerks have completed minutes review
- **Policies/Polity** – Synod task force (which includes Pat) working on. Social Media policy done. Working on: Child protection, Harassment, Anti-racism; After Synod works on and reviews (9/11/23), PMRV will continue process
- **Synod** – Developing Boundary Training videos – for Session level training
- **Homestead/Central NE conversation** – Pat met with clerks at Synod meeting in May; no further action needed
- **New Worshipping Communities** – (Nancy, Sally, Suzanne, Sarah) learning other presbyteries’ best practices

Admin then met separately just briefly

AT/MT meets next: 7/10/23 1:30 PM via Zoom & 8/7/23 1:30 Zoom

Other Administrative Reference

- **August 2023 Presbytery meeting – Friday 8/11** Pastor/Educator Retreat **Sat 8/12** Meeting w/ Retreat Learning Component. Candace Adams will be the Friday/Saturday retreat/trainer again. Topic: The Joy of Being a Team
- **Vision & Hub 2023** (approved by LT December 20, 2022 and in the PMRV mtg materials for Feb. 2023 mtg) We won’t forget about the commitments we made since we strive to be good stewards.
- **2024 Presbytery meetings** – 2/22/24 (Zoom) 4/13/24 (in person) 8-16&17/24 Calvin Crest 11/7/24 Zoom
- **Process for LT** – We endorsed this concept: As much as possible, anything that goes on the LT docket – especially things that require fruitful discussion, let items bounce into MT/AT first to tease out angles of what is being discussed and also include a “Read Ahead” for LT members. (so that we aren’t discussing important topics “cold”)
- **PMRV Notes from 2021** what undergirded the Vision/Structuring – approved by PMRV
- **Process & Polity** Respect for all voices discerning God’s way.

- *We presuppose fellowship united in covenant relationship and our ministry is not designed to work without trust and love. (BOO G-1.0102) - not be overly governed by ways that blind us to God's new ways.*
- **Continue to be Reformed by the Holy Spirit** Living into world transformed by COVID-19 & a society facing many challenges we will embrace our living theological tradition and be the Body of Christ together in support and response. We will steward the gifts of energy, intelligence, imagination, and love with gratitude for all the grace and guidance God always supplies for reformation in our midst. Value robust conversations, richer understandings, and deeper relationships in order to be authentic, real-time witnesses to God's kin-dom.
- Toward culture more vital, just, and effective. -Example: Does this [discussion] matter to an immigrant fellowship? Is it worth translation? Or does it reinforce Presbyterian status quo? ☪

Stewardship of Resources (SOR) – Rev. Gregg Miller, Chair

Report submitted with Presbytery materials.

Commission on Preparation for Ministry (CPM) – Al Zimmerman, Moderator

Members - Present: Al Zimmerman, Norm Roberts, Christine Dempsey, Jay Cline, Pat Shipley

Excused: Diane Greenfield, Shelli Latham

Guests: Regina Jeanpierre, David McBride

Minutes--Approved *

Ongoing Business

Inquirers:

- Jessica Schoepner – Planning to take the Bible content exam. Was not able to meet with us due to a family emergency. We need to visit with her to determine how she will take the necessary polity classes.
- Regina Jeanpierre -Met with us today. She is enrolled at Bethel Seminary. She has a (MA) Masters in teaching from Grace University. She is pursuing a DM from Bethel. Attracted to Bethel through Mark Strauss. It is a hybrid program. She attends twice a year. Her doctoral thesis is focusing on Presbyterian Pastors and the support that they receive in the church. In our first meeting, we talked about how she could benefit from the support of the CPM. Christine will send inquirer forms. She says that she would like to begin that official process.
- **CP Trainees:**
 - Kathy Padilla (West Hills)-No report
 - Linda Reffert (1st Bellevue is Congregation of Care) -No report;
 - Jackie Marcum (Missouri Valley – Congregation of Care)-Will be taking a break from her CP studies to concentrate on her Doctorate studies.
 - David McBride (First Presbyterian)
 - Met with us for the first time. He is feeling called to preach with the CrossRoads Ministry – He is board member there. He is an elder at first. He is very interested in taking the next steps to become involved in the CP program. Pat encouraged him to look into the FELD scholarships. Pat will send the information regarding Synod school (and completed this during the meeting)

Topic 3: Psychological exams

- A motion was made by Jay to pay for the Psych exams for Kathy and Linda out of the CPM budget which includes both the presbytery and congregation contributions.
- While we do expect congregations to pay 1/3, presbytery 1/3 and individual trainee 1/3, we were slow at letting the congregations know and they did not have the money in their budget.
- We need standard practice for informing congregations of this responsibility.
- We did discuss that we need to add this to the manual and send an introductory letter to congregations with a follow-up later so that they not caught off guard.

Topic 4: Background checks on CP

- COM has a form for those seeking to preach
- PCUSA Book of Order now has language that requires background and boundary training for all church leadership.
- Synod wants background check at the beginning of the process and every 3 years
- So far, the Synod does not have a standard instrument for boundary training and background checks.
- CPM suggests that we require training with a certificate while candidates are under care. NO MOTION made here.
- We need to have COM and CPM work together to select a boundary training program and certificate for our candidates and trainees.

Topic 5: New CP introduction letter

Personnel Committee – Kathy Moore, Elder, Chair

No report.

Worship and Spirituality Committee – Rev. Suzanne Gorhau, Chair

No report.

Mission and Evangelism – Rev. Matt Coplen, Chair

Members present for the June 27th meeting – Matt Coplen, Carolyn Grice, Cindy Harvey, and Rebecca Nichol

Update from Committee:

The Nicaraguan Partnership will present at our next Presbytery meeting in August at Calvin Crest. They will be re-introducing themselves to us and letting us know about the exciting opportunities related to an upcoming visit from our Mission Partners in Nicaragua.

We are making plans to hear from our Immigrant Fellowships during our November Presbytery meeting on Zoom.

Items of Information:

- The committee approved a Matthew 25 grant for New Life Presbyterian Church and their Pratt Street project. The amount of the grant was \$2,500.
- The committee approved a mini-grant for New Life Presbyterian Church and their Pratt Street project. The amount of the grant was \$2,000.
- The committee approved a Matthew 25 grant for First Presbyterian, Omaha and West Hills Church for the 2023 Hand Up for Housing Walk. It is great to see two of our congregations partnering together and we know they would welcome more churches joining them in the future planning of the walk.
- The committee approved a request from the Arabic Fellowship for \$5,000 to be used as a stipend for Rev. Emad Tawadrous. This is the practice of the fellowship for the last three years.
- As we look to the last five months of 2023, there are still monies available in the Matthew 25 and mini-grant funds and we will soon have our Komarek grant process underway. Please keep an eye on the Thursday email blasts for information.

Mission/Community Garden at Church of the Master

Thank you to Cindy Harvey for hosting the committee meeting on June 27th. The reason we met at Church of the Master was to learn more about and see first-hand the community garden of the church

and the garden mart which operates on Sunday mornings. The garden began 20+ years ago when one of the church's pastors asked the Board of Deacons what they imagined might be done with the grounds of the church, besides just being beautiful. One of the answers was the garden. The community garden now features almost 80 (100 square foot) plots and right now teems with vegetables, flowers, and berries. Many people have multiple plots and most of the gardeners share produce with the Garden Mart. Purchases at the garden mart help fund a variety of mission projects related to hunger in the Greater Omaha area.