

**PRESBYTERY OF SOUTHERN NEW ENGLAND
REGULAR MEETING OF THE PRESBYTERY ROUNDTABLE
October 10, 2019**

The Roundtable of the Presbytery of Southern New England met in the Smart 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, the Rev. Jinny Smanik.

A **QUORUM** was present.

Present were: Julie Emery, Virginia Smanik, J.C. Cadwallader, Stephen Hart, Barbara Riihimaki, and Dick Hasbany.

Present via Zoom teleconference were: Lisa Baker, Ruth Smalt, John Merz, Kevin White, and Chris Tate.

Also present were: ex-officio members Shannan Vance-Ocampo, General Presbyter; David Baer, Stated Clerk (via Zoom teleconference); Philip Phiri, Treasurer of the Presbytery; and Amanda Craft, Manager for Immigration Advocacy with the Office of Immigration Issues, part of the Office of the General Assembly.

Absent was: Sean Miller.

A **QUORUM** of the Roundtable was present.

The Rev. Jinny Smanik, co-chair of the Roundtable, presented “Grounding Virtues,” which she offered as guiding principles for conversations in this body and within the presbytery at large.

The agenda for the meeting was **ADOPTED** as presented.

The Rev. Shannan Vance-Ocampo, the General Presbyter, gave her report. She reminded the Roundtable of her recent work with the Brazilian Presbyterian Church, an immigrant fellowship affiliated with the Presbytery in Hyannis, Massachusetts, expressing her regret at what she described as multiple failures on the part of the larger church to welcome and support this community. Nonetheless, she also expressed joy at the growth of this fellowship and its faithful ministry. She reminded the Roundtable of a follow-up event to the spring anti-racism retreat to be led by Jessica Vasquez-Torres of Crossroads Anti-Racism.

Ms. Vance-Ocampo alerted the Roundtable to the difficulty presented by having committee meetings at 9:30 on weekdays, in terms of who is able to participate.

She introduced Amanda Craft, who reviewed the history the Office of Immigration Issues, which emerged out of a need to support clergy coming from overseas and needing help with immigration paperwork. Over time there has arisen a greater need for more general advocacy around immigration policy. The PC(U.S.A.) and its antecedent denominations have

been speaking out on immigration since at least the Chinese Exclusion Act (1893). She grounds her work in scripture—for example, Hebrews 13:2: “Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it.” God is revealed in new ways when we can sit together! She invited conversation on the intersection of immigration issues with the life of the Presbytery. Among the points of conversation:

- The First Presbyterian Church of New Haven has become a “sanctuary church,” offering safe harbor to immigrant families at risk of separation through deportation. The pastor, J.C. Cadwallader, noted that there are ten such congregations in Connecticut, from a variety of faith traditions. As a practical matter, this kind of shelter is not needed right now, but the congregation has begun helping those who have been recently released from immigrant detention in Bristol, Connecticut. In some cases, the promise of this kind of support makes it possible for detainees to be released in the first place.
- Ms. Craft praised the work of Presbyterian Immigrant Ministry (PIM), which she characterized as being unique within the PC(U.S.A.), in terms of its level of access to detainees through its chaplains. She challenged churches to explore how they might support detainees who are released within the bounds of the Presbytery of Southern New England.
- Ms. Vance-Ocampo raised the possibility of churches supporting immigrants through *accompaniment* in their interactions with the legal system and immigration authorities. Ms. Craft pointed out that cash bail for those in immigrant detention is often as high as \$10,000, which is a prohibitive sum for many immigrants. She challenged the church to combat the systemic racism present in this and other immigration procedures.
- Asylum seekers claiming refugee status cannot be released without a sponsor, and are often unable to work while their cases are in process. In the past, work authorization was granted within the first six months—now the time period is as long as twelve months. Ms. Craft contended that these burdens are being imposed for the purpose of deterring asylum seekers from exercising their rights under current law. How can churches help to lighten the burdens borne by these particularly vulnerable people?
- Access to legal counsel is vital for asylum seekers. Of those making a claim of asylum at the U.S. border, approximately 2% will be granted asylum. Those making a claim from Mexico virtually never succeed. Those making the claim from within the United States succeed 8% of the time, and those with legal representation succeed at roughly double this rate. This shows that it is important for those seeking asylum to have access to professionals who understand the laws and can help them navigate the legal process. Some presbyteries along the U.S.-Mexico border have retained attorneys to work on behalf of asylum seekers, though there may also be a need for such support in presbyteries like ours as well.
- There is a need for even basic awareness of immigration issues—for example, the location of detention centers within the bounds of the Presbytery.
- Immigration matters intersect with the anti-racism work the presbytery has been engaged

in.

- There is an active Cape Cod Council of Churches that is working effectively on immigration issues in that region, and Katia DaCunha, of the Brazilian Presbyterian Church, serves on their board. We should seek out and support existing ministries like this.
- The Rev. Alonso DaCunha, pastor of the Brazilian Presbyterian Church, reports that an emergent pastoral need is anxiety around Communion. Pastors in some other Portuguese-language Christian communities reportedly tell their congregants that those who are undocumented are unworthy to receive the sacrament. Alonso is working to get across the message that all are welcome at the Lord's Table.

The Roundtable discussed the possibility of creating a new team or structure of the presbytery in support of immigration advocacy. Ms. Craft stressed the importance of building trust with the immigrant community, as the foundation for all other ministry. Members of the Roundtable thanked Ms. Craft for her visit, and for her work with the Brazilian Presbyterian Church.

Ms. Vance-Ocampo stressed that the Presbyterian Immigrant Ministry should be able to finish the year, with the previously allocated support of the Presbytery.

The Personnel Committee reported that it was ready to form a search team for the Presbytery Communicator. Ms. Vance-Ocampo and Mr. Baer will serve on the team, *ex officio*, and Steve Crocco, of the Personnel, will represent the committee on the team. Upon the recommendation of the Personnel Committee, the Roundtable **VOTED** to **APPROVE** the Job Description for the Communications Manager (Attachment 1).

The Roundtable further **VOTED** to **APPROVE** the Job Description for the Chaplain to the Clergy (Attachment 2). (This is a volunteer position, though there is money in the Presbytery budget for reimbursement for certain expenses.)

The Roundtable **VOTED** to **APPOINT** the Rev. Terrlyn Curry Avery, Elder Lauren Tate (New Canaan: First), and Elder Steve Crocco to serve on the Communications Manager search team, *if the way be clear*.

The Rev. David Baer, the Stated Clerk, presented his report, which included a proposed docket for the November stated meeting of the Presbytery, for which he received suggestions from members of the Roundtable. He also presented an overture to the General Assembly from the Presbytery of Beaver-Butler (Attachment 3). The overture proposes an amendment to the Book of Order giving presbyteries the authority to establish minimum compensation standards with respect to pastoral severance. The Committee on Ministry recommends that the Presbytery concur with the overture. Lastly, Mr. Baer briefly recounted his experience attending the meeting of the Portuguese Language Presbyterian Council (PLPC) at Stony Point Center on October 1. The PLPC supports the work of the Brazilian Presbyterian Church fellowship in Hyannis, Massachusetts, as well as many other congregations and fellowships in the PC(U.S.A.). At the recommendation of the Stated Clerk, and upon motions properly made and seconded by

members of the Roundtable, the Roundtable **VOTED**:

- to **APPROVE** the minutes of the August 25 meeting of the Roundtable, as amended.
- to **RECOMMEND** that the Presbytery **CONCUR** with the overture from the Presbytery of Beaver-Butler.
- to **AUTHORIZE** the Stated Clerk to write a letter of gratitude and encouragement to the Portuguese Language Presbyterian Caucus.

At the suggestion of Ms. Smanik, the Roundtable engaged in conversation about Presbytery worship—what members value about it, what the purpose of worshiping together as a presbytery is, and how worship might be planned and structured.

Ms. Smanik is continuing to solicit notes of appreciation about Pam Garner, who will be finishing her work just before the November stated meeting. At that meeting we will be honoring Pam and her years of service.

The Roundtable adjourned at 1:40 p.m., led in closing prayer by the Rev. Julie Emery.

Respectfully submitted,

-signed-

Rev. David A. Baer, Stated Clerk

Job Description

Communications Manager

Title: Communications Manager

Purpose: To equip, support and articulate the mission of the Presbytery of Southern New England internally and externally through audience-appropriate and innovative communication.

Accountability: Accountable to the Personnel Committee through the General Presbyter.

Responsibilities:

- At the end of the first quarter of work, develop an overall communications plan for the Presbytery with input from the General Presbyter and Stated Clerk. Manage and modify communications plan and key audiences quarterly as needed to reach a wide audience in Presbytery and our partner ministries.
- Manage all media content and communications channels of the Presbytery, including but not limited to: social media, e-mail marketing and newsletters, website content, phone, video and relationships with outside technical vendors on behalf of the Presbytery.
- Monitor and share as appropriate: denominational, local, ecumenical, interfaith and other partner media content
- Provide support in planning, directing and coordinating online activities designed to increase the visibility of events and programs
- Manage scheduling of the Presbytery Zoom video-conferencing account.
- Manage online registration for quarterly meetings of the Presbytery and other events as directed by the General Presbyter.
- Manage Presbytery online database and directory, updating regularly in collaboration with the Stated Clerk.
- Manage the main PSNE email address and serve as co-administrator for the Google Drive

Attachment 1

- Share best practices with other communicators in the Presbytery including staff and volunteers.
- Collaborate with staff to utilize the website, e-mail list service and social media for communications purposes:
 - Draft/publish/recommend/review contents of website as needed.
 - Contribute marketing content E-News as needed.
- Manage yearly social media and web-based contracts on behalf of the Presbytery
- To perform such other duties as assigned by the General Presbyter which are consistent with the responsibilities of this position.

Term:

The workweek shall be 15 hours on a flexible schedule at \$25/hour and is reviewed annually. This person will work remotely and will be required to have their own phone and internet connection. There is a \$40/month technology stipend for all PSNE staff.

Evaluation:

Performance evaluations will be conducted at least annually, or more frequently as needed.

PSNE Chaplain to the Clergy

Job Description 2020

Title: Chaplain to the Clergy, Presbytery of Southern New England

Purpose: To serve as a chaplain to the minister members of the Presbytery for spiritual and emotional support.

Primary Duties:

To welcome new clergy with phone calls, greeting cards and invitations to lunches.

To provide a pastoral presence to clergy at special times (especially times of need) with cards, phone calls and prayers.

To coordinate informal clergy luncheons in various locations throughout the Presbytery's geographic bounds to serve as a vehicle for clergy support and collegiality.

To be available to parish, specialized, and retired ministers seeking short-term emotional and spiritual support, and to provide information on Board of Pension resources. (After an initial face-to-face visit, as able, additional contact will be conducted via phone.)

To offer a limited number of Bible studies, as time and interest permit.

To serve as a volunteer member of the Presbytery staff team, and maintain collegial relationships with the staff and officers of the presbytery.

Other Duties and Responsibilities:

- To regularly attend Presbytery meeting to serve as a visible sign of collegiality and support to Presbytery members.
- To provide feedback to the General Presbyter and the Round Table on general needs and trends that are discovered within the Presbytery.
- To notify the Committee on Ministry of any concern that could affect the well-being of a congregation. Such notification should be made either with the permission of the parish clergy or in such a way that confidentiality is not broken.
- To receive clinical supervision at least _____ from a trained professional.
- To maintain confidentiality at all times.

Accountability: The Chaplain to the Clergy is volunteer staff person of the Presbytery who reports administratively to the General Presbyter and is overseen by the Personnel Committee of the Presbytery. Additionally, the Chaplain receives clinical supervision by a trained chaplain supervisor.

Hours: _____

Term: This position is an at-will position that may be terminated by either party with or without cause. A vouchered stipend is provided annually for expenses related to the position.

Evaluation: The work of the Chaplain to the Clergy shall be thoroughly and constructively reviewed not less than annually by the General Presbyter primarily through the agency of the Personnel Committee with general feedback received from the clinical supervisor.

On establishing the authority of Presbyteries to define severance plans for installed ministers

The Presbytery of Beaver-Butler overtures the 224th General Assembly (2020) to direct the Stated Clerk to send the following proposed amendment to the presbyteries for their affirmative or negative votes:

Shall G-3.0303(c) be amended as follows: [Text to be added is shown as italic.]

G-3.0303 Relations with Sessions

c. establishing minimum compensation standards *including provisions for severance payments* for pastoral calls and Certified Christian Educators and Certified Associate Christian Educators within the presbytery.

Rationale for Overture from Beaver/Butler Presbytery 8/27/19

In 1993 the General Assembly Permanent Judicial Commission ruled in the case Saurbaugh v. the Presbytery of Great Rivers that “The *Book of Order* does not give the presbyteries power to require congregations to pay compensation upon dissolution of pastoral relationships.” (Remedial Case 206-13,11.094 attached)

In subsequent years the church has maintained that while a presbytery can have guidelines and policies concerning severance for ministers at the dissolution of a pastorate, the presbytery has no authority to enforce those policies.

This overture seeks to remedy that omission in the *Book of Order* by making explicit the authority of presbyteries to create and enforce severance policies by linking that authority to the power to set minimum wages and approve calls.

The overture does not attempt to set a national severance policy, but to clarify the presbytery’s relationship to both the session and the minister during times of transition.