

PRESBYTERY OF SOUTHERN NEW ENGLAND
STATED MEETING OF THE PRESBYTERY ROUNDTABLE
April 22, 2021

The Roundtable of the Presbytery of Southern New England met via Zoom teleconference. The meeting came to order at 9:35 a.m., with opening devotions offered by the chair, the Rev. Julie Emery. Ms. Emery read the statement released by the Presbytery of the Twin Cities on Tuesday, in response to the guilty verdict in the trial of former police officer Derek Chauvin, who had been charged with the murder of George Floyd. Members of the Roundtable shared their own reactions to this news. When these reflections concluded, the members of Roundtable observed a moment of silence and were led in prayer by Ms. Emery.

A QUORUM was present.

Present were: Julie Emery (chair), Lisa Baker, J. C. Cadwallader, Stephen Hart, Dick Hasbany, Kirk Louis, John Merz, Deborah Packard, Jenny Peek, Chris Tate, and Clare Schimpf.

Also present were: *ex-officio* members Shannan Vance-Ocampo, General Presbyter; David Baer, Stated Clerk; and Andre Castillo, the nominee for President of the Board of Trustees.

The agenda for the meeting, distributed in advance of the meeting by the chair, was **APPROVED** with amendments.

Lisa Baker provided an update from the Martin Luther King Community Presbyterian Church. A suspect has been charged with three counts for the arson in December, including hate crime charges. The congregation held a meeting the night following the announcement of criminal charges. Ms. Baker reports that the congregation still feels pain over the crime committed against them, but that members have also expressed relief at the news of charges in the case. The building committee is in place and evaluating ministry priorities, in order to develop a plan for rebuilding the structure. There is ongoing asbestos abatement work, and the church is negotiating with its insurance company over a settlement. They plan to consult with the Rev. T. J. DeMarco, the pastor of the Woodbury Union Presbyterian Church in Warwick, which suffered a fire in 2018 and recently completed its rebuilding effort. Members of the Roundtable expressed their support for the church, and discussed possibilities for providing aid to the rebuilding project, and accompaniment for the congregation during the criminal trial.

Shannan Vance-Ocampo, the General Presbyter, gave her report, which was provided in writing. She highlighted the grants being made available by the Synod of the Northeast for presbyteries adapting to COVID-19. An application should be available for the Roundtable to act upon at the June meeting. She also shared some recommendations she developed with the Stated Clerk, David Baer, related to the resumption of in-person gatherings in the life of the Presbytery. One of the recommendations involves moving to hybrid (in-person and videoconference) meetings of the Presbytery. This would be most easily accomplished by outfitting particular churches with the necessary equipment, but the value of remote participation needs to be balanced against the value of having a wide variety of churches host meetings. Members of the Roundtable offered suggestions regarding the purchase of portable equipment to bring this capability to different settings. The Roundtable report to the Presbytery will provide an outline of the plans under discussion, and allow an opportunity for feedback.

The chair noted the responsibility of the Roundtable to nominate persons to serve on the Presbytery Nominating Committee. Chris Tate, the chair of that committee, noted that there are three vacancies in the class of 2024 and one vacancy in the class of 2023. The Roundtable **VOTED** to **PLACE IN NOMINATION** the Rev. Chris Tate to serve as chair of the Nominating Committee for 2021-2022.

The Personnel Committee chair, the Rev. John Merz, discussed the process of staff reviews,

noting that the Committee had requested but received little feedback from members of the Roundtable. He asked whether it was important to the Roundtable that the Personnel Committee have this feedback available, and if so, what would be the appropriate vehicle for this feedback. Members of the Roundtable expressed the difficulty they experienced in providing feedback for both the General Presbyter and the Stated Clerk, and suggested limiting the 360 review to once every other year, and in the interim providing appropriate staff support and opportunities for reflection on goals. Other members emphasized the importance of annual 360 reviews. Mr. Merz will relay this feedback to the Committee, and will update the Roundtable as it revises the review process.

The Roundtable welcomed the Rev. Andre Castillo, a member of the Board of Trustees who will be nominated to serve as the President, as the current President, Anne Marie Meyerhoffer, is departing for a call in Florida. The General Presbyter noted that it will be necessary for the Roundtable to appoint two members to work together with two of the Trustees and the Presbytery Bookkeeper on preparing a budget for the Presbytery. The Roundtable can act on this at its June meeting.

The General Presbyter announced that while she will be planning worship for the May Presbytery meeting, she was extending an invitation to others who might want to be part of a worship planning team. The Roundtable may be able to appoint this team at the June meeting.

The Stated Clerk, the Rev. David Baer, presented his report. At his recommendation, the Roundtable **VOTED** to **APPROVE** the minutes of the October 29, 2020, meeting of the Roundtable.

All 26 of the churches of the Presbytery participated in the churchwide annual statistical report. Mr. Baer provided a summary of the statistical information gathered from the Presbytery, which will be included in his annual report at the May Presbytery meeting. He worked with his counterparts from four other presbyteries—Northern New York, Northern New England, Boston, and New Castle—to offer a training event last night for clerks of session. A recording of the training will be made available as a resource for any who might be interested in learning about the ministry of clerks of session, or of ruling elders more generally.

Mr. Baer presented a draft docket for the May meeting of the Presbytery. Members of the Roundtable offered feedback on the docket, and on a proposal for ballot voting using Google Forms. The Roundtable **VOTED** to **AUTHORIZE** the Stated Clerk, the General Presbyter, the Moderator, and the Vice Moderator to finalize the docket for the May meeting.

The Roundtable adjourned with a prayer offered by the Rev. Shannan Vance-Ocampo at 11:20 a.m. The next meeting of the Roundtable will take place at 9:30 a.m. on Thursday, June 10, 2021.

Respectfully submitted,

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Rev. David A. Baer, Stated Clerk