

MINUTES
Special Meeting February 21, 2008
PRESBYTERY OF GRAND CANYON

1. STATED MEETING

The Presbytery of Grand Canyon of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) held a special meeting on Thursday, February 21, 2008 at Celebration of Life Presbyterian Church in Mesa. The meeting opened at 2:00 PM with the lighting of the Peace Candle and the convening prayer.

Call to Order/Prayer/Lighting of the Peace Candle

The meeting opened at 2:00 PM as Moderator, Rev. Art Campbell invited a sharing of prayer concerns for peace in the world and then led in prayer. Following the lighting of the Peace Candle he offered the convening prayer.

2. AGENDA/QUORUM/INTRODUCTIONS

Those attending for the first time were introduced. There were no Corresponding Members present to be enrolled. The Stated Clerk was present, a quorum was reported; upon motion the Agenda was approved.

3. PROCEDURAL MOTIONS

Presbytery VOTED that the roll for this meeting be established by the signing of roster sheets at the Registration Desk.

Presbytery VOTED that the Presbytery grant to the Moderator the authority to grant privilege of the floor to persons for the purpose of reporting to this meeting.

4. ROLL

4.1 MINISTERS PRESENT

Baer, Doug	Johnson, Bruce	Proudfoot, Charles
Baker, Brant	Keim, Sue	Pulido, Gloria
Blincoe, Robert	Lineweaver, Thomas	Saylor, Mary
Borden, John	MacLeod, Duncan	Schlesinger-Devlin, Justin
Bruening, James	McCabe, Norma	Simmons, Robert
Campbell, Arthur	Meredith, Ralph	Spence, Edward
Citron, Dr. Suzanne	Moe, Kenneth	Uhley, James
Engstrom, C. Bud	Moe, Michelle	Van Arsdale, David
Hicks, David	Muenich, Karen	Watkins, W. Gale
Hicks, Mae	Page, Kenneth	Weir, J. Kyle
Hillman, Lorelei	Palmer, Theron	Willett, Kristin
Holmes, T. Ewen	Parker, Gayle	Witte, Cathy
Huusko, David	Poling, John Clark	

4.2. CHURCHES PRESENT

Bethany	Kathryn Owens
Celebration of Life	Lois McFadden, Helen Branyon
Chandler	Jim Miller
Church of the Master	Elva Davies
Desert Hills	Ron Brockman, Jacqy Kilgore
Emmanuel	Joan Caddow
Fountain Hills	John Bivens
Gilbert	Grace Mossman
Heritage	Perry McCown, Jerry Muenich
Historic First	Barbara Petersen
Horizon	Sharon Clark
John Calvin	Betty Blunk
Kayenta	Milinda Benallie
Memorial	Mary Lynn Walters
Mesa, First	Graham Walker, Robert Schultz

Miller, Joedd	Ramsdell, Richard	Ulrickson, Paul
Miller, Joan	Reinhold, Ruth	Valle, Paula
Miller, Craig	Remer, James	Van Dyke, P. James
Miller, Jerry	Rhoades, Francis	Vautier, Grif
Moranville, Thomas	Roberts, Margaret	Vautier, B. Holly
Moser, Paul	Robertson, John	Voth, John
Moxness, N. Michael	Roop, David	Walker, George
Murman, Kimberly	Rosson, Roland	Walker, David Glenn
Nielsen, chard	Sabbagh, John	Wallace, David
Noble, James	Sadongei, Martha	Watkins, William
Nord, Bernard	Schafer, MacHenry	Watkins, Donald W.
Nord, Alice	Schenck, Jed	Wayne, Richard
Olagues, Jose'	Schlotzhauer, Wesley	White, Frank
Oppenhuizen, Kathleen	Schumacher, Bruce	White, Haydn
Park, Francis	Sheane, J. Kenneth	Williamson, Donald
Parker, Thomas	Siekmann, Eugene	Windsor, Charles
Pfeffer, William	Song, Seok Min	Wintz, Michael
Phillips, Norman	St. John, Valerie	Wintz, Susan
Phillips, Beverly	Stenner, Henry	Wright, Douglas
Porter, Don	Stevens, Charles	Wright, Eugene
Pratt, Edward	Sturtevant, Allan	Yost, Wilson
Prichard, Jack	Swicegood, Terry	Young, Alvin
Rae, Robert	Thom, Francis	Young, Patricia
Ramirez, Julio	Thomas, James	Zabriskie, Richard
Ramos, G. Derney	Tilly, Mark,	Zelle, Trina

4.8. CHURCHES EXCUSED

Arizona Korean	Federated Community	Lehi
Betania	First, Leupp	Mingus View
Blackwater	First, Maricopa	Mohawk Valley
Central	First, Sacaton	Parker Valley
Christ	First, Sun City	Peoria, First
Christ	First, Tuba City	Pinnacle
Community, Alpine	Wickenburg, First	Salt River
Community, Lake Havasu	Yuma, Frist	Trinity, Chinle
Community, Payson	Fort Defiance	Trinity Prescott
Community, Pinetop	Fort McDowell	University
Community, Springerville	Ganado	Vah-Ki
Community Wellton	Gila Crossing	Verde Valley
Community, Yarnell	Goodyear Village	Wickenburg, First
Crosswinds	Guadalupe	Winslow
Desert Palms	Indian Wells	Yuma, First
Faith	Kingman	

**5. AGENDA Special Meeting - Presbytery of Grand Canyon
Celebration of Life Presbyterian Church, Mesa February 21, 2008**

- 1:30 p.m. Registration
- 2:00 p.m. **ASSEMBLE IN GOD'S NAME**
- Lighting of the Peace Candle
- Convening Prayer Art Campbell
- Introduction of those attending for first time
- Enrollment of Corresponding Members
- Establishment of a Quorum
- Approval of the Agenda – Approval of the Administrative Commission
- Approval of Procedural Motions
- Welcome by Celebration of Life Presbyterian Church Shelly Moe
- Restatement of the Purpose of the Meeting Art Campbell
- COM Recommendation and Motion..... Shelly Moe

- Discussion / Debate
- Voting on the Motion
- Moderate announcement of members appointed Art Campbell
- Expression of Thanks..... Art Campbell

GO IN GOD’S NAME

Adjournment with Closing Prayer

The mission of the Presbytery of Grand Canyon is to celebrate and proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ by:

- *nurturing each congregation and minister member,*
- *assisting and challenging each congregation to engage in ministry and mission with other congregations and denominations*
- *developing and redeveloping worship communities*
- *being a connectional, communicative link in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)*

Isaiah 43: 18-19

Do not remember the former things or consider the things of old. I am about to do a new thing now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert. (NRSV)

6. NEW BUSINESS

There was none.

7. WELCOME

Rev. Shelly Moe welcomed presbyters to Celebration of Life Presbyterian Church which has been a mission oriented, inclusive congregation since its beginnings in 1974. They strive to live out their understanding of the Scriptures through providing creative worship, fostering spiritual growth, enabling healing, promoting justice, and reaching out to people in need. Of the many ministries they support, since 2004 their major focus has centered on a project of support for those who are both seriously mentally ill (SMI) and homeless in Maricopa County.

8. RESTATEMENT OF THE PURPOSE OF THE MEETING

The Moderator explained that in accordance with the information provided with the Call to this Special Meeting, it had been called only for the purpose of acting on the recommendation of the Committee on Ministry for the approval of an Administrative Commission to John Calvin Presbyterian Church; no other business would be conducted.

9. REPORT OF THE STATED CLERK

Provided for Informational Purposes

At the January 19, 2008 Presbytery Meeting Presbytery APPROVED that the following letter and report of the October 6, 2007 Investigating Committee to the Stated Clerk concerning a Request for Vindication under the provisions of the Rules of Discipline (D-9.0000) be entered into the minutes of the Presbytery of Grand Canyon Stated Meeting of January 19, 2008.

October 6, 2007 Investigating Committee

Presbytery of Grand Canyon

Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

January 8, 2008

Elder Richard Coffelt
Stated Clerk
Presbytery of Grand Canyon
4423 N. 24th Street, Suite 200
Phoenix, AZ 85016

Re: Report of the October 6, 2007 Investigating Committee
Justin Schlesinger-Devlin Request for Vindication

Our investigating committee was appointed in order to respond to a “request for vindication,” provided for in our Rules of Discipline, submitted to the Presbytery by Reverend Justin Schlesinger-Devlin. He stated that he has been harmed by rumors and gossip concerning him that are circulating within John Calvin Presbyterian Church.

After conducting twenty interviews with individuals and examining documents submitted to us, we make the following observations:

The majority of church members are fully supportive of their pastor, and until quite recently, were unaware of any rumors or gossip concerning him. The rumors that have circulated concern: 1. his fidelity to the Word of God, especially in his preaching; and 2. his personal behavior. With regard to the second area, we have not been able to pinpoint the original source of the few comments reported to us. We do not believe that there is any substance to them. Our only response is to remind all members of the church of the clear Biblical admonition concerning the importance of guarding our speech.

In the first area, Justin Schlesinger-Devlin's fidelity to the Word of God, we found that there are some church members who believe that he has neglected to emphasize some important matters. While they do not accuse him of teaching false doctrine, they believe that he has not given proper attention to the call for true repentance. They claim that in his strong emphasis on the free grace of God, he has failed to call for a costly response to that grace. Those who believe that repentance is missing in his preaching have a strong sense of the prophetic ministry of a fellow church member (a former member of Session), and believe that Justin is not sensitive to this prophetic ministry.

The majority of those we interviewed believe that Justin Schlesinger-Devlin's preaching is consistent with Reformed theology. The theological disagreement is partly a difference in emphasis between grace and repentance. But there may be a more substantive matter at stake. The question might be asked, "Is our repentance something that we offer to God, in effect meeting God halfway? Or is our repentance itself a gift of grace, made possible only through the redemptive work of the Holy Spirit?" We realize that there are diverse viewpoints within our tradition. In this matter we believe that the pastor's emphasis on grace is a faithful expression of Reformed theology.

We are concerned that those who sincerely disagree with their pastor, whether it is a mere difference of emphasis or a more substantive matter, have been quick to speak about him in a dismissive way. There is a vast difference between recognizing a sincere theological disagreement, and concluding that a pastor is not preaching the Word. We hope that they will strive, insofar as their consciences will allow them, to "go the extra mile" in support of their pastor, and to allow God to speak to them through his ministry. Should their consciences not permit them to do this, we hope that they will "further the peace, unity, and purity of the church" by keeping silence or peaceably withdrawing.

We are also concerned that the pastor, and his numerous supporters, may have made errors of judgment. In the heat of tension leading to higher levels of conflict, it is difficult to maintain healthy relationships and to refrain even from the appearance of using improper methods. Those who disagree with the church leadership continue to need pastoral care. We hope that the majority of the congregation who appreciate their pastor's ministry will reach out in compassion toward those who have been more critical, and that all of their actions will be marked by integrity.

Finally, we strongly recommend that the Presbytery continue its involvement with this congregation. We recommend the establishment of an administrative commission for this church. Since there is substantial division within the Session in the matters discussed above, we question their ability to lead the church. We hope that the Committee on Ministry will pay very close attention to this church in the next few months, and will give serious consideration to all possible ways in which the Presbytery may further its peace, unity, and purity.

In response to the charge given to us, we report that we find no reason to file charges against Reverend Justin Schlesinger-Devlin. Rather, we vindicate him from the rumors or gossip that may have injured him.

Yours in Christ Service,
S/ Elder Amy Davis-King
On Behalf of the Investigating Committee

Cc: Rev. James Bruening
Elder Carolyn McBurney
Rev. W. Gale Watkins

10. APPROVAL OF COMMITTEE ON MINISTRY RECOMMENDATION AND MOTION

After opportunity for discussion and debate, and on recommendation of the Committee on Ministry, Presbytery APPROVED that in accordance with Form of Government G-9.0503a (4) an Administrative Commission, made up of seven (7) members, to John Calvin Presbyterian Church

which is reported to be affected with disorder for the purpose of inquiring into and settling the difficulties therein. That in accordance with G-11.0103(s) the Presbytery assume original jurisdiction of the session and appoint this Administrative Commission to act as the Session of John Calvin Presbyterian Church with the full power of a session with respect to all of the session responsibilities for mission and government outlined in G-10.0102 (a) through(s). The Presbytery authorizes the Moderator of the Presbytery to appoint the Members of the Commission.

Specifically the Commission is charged with the following:

1. to serve as an instrument of the presbytery for promoting the peace and harmony of the John Calvin Presbyterian Church congregation and session, especially in the matters outlined in the Report of the October 6, 2007 Investigating Committee which vindicated the installed pastor “from the rumors or gossip that may have injured him”
2. to mediate differences and reconcile persons, to the end that difficulties may be corrected if possible, that the welfare of John Calvin Presbyterian Church may be strengthened and that the unity of the body of Christ may be made manifest
3. to work with the installed pastor in his continuing ministry to the congregation
4. to work with and include the currently serving session elders as of the date of the assumption of original jurisdiction of the session in all aspects of the mission, government and spiritual oversight of the congregation
5. to work with and include the currently serving session elders as of the date of the assumption of original jurisdiction specifically in working through all of the areas highlighted in the Report of the October 6, 2007 Investigating Committee which vindicated the installed pastor “from the rumors or gossip that may have injured him”
6. to assist the congregation and “currently serving elders” in determining the future ministry direction for John Calvin Presbyterian Church and its most effective witness to the broader community

Notwithstanding the above specific charges this commission is empowered with wide discretion as to its manner of inquiry into and approach to settling the difficulties.

In completing its work the Commission shall comply with all of the applicable provisions of the Form of Government with respect to the work of Administrative Commissions. This Commission is directed to report on its work, findings, actions taken to settling the difficulties therein and any recommendations to the Presbytery at its June 7, 2008 Stated Meeting or at an earlier specifically called meeting of the Presbytery.

Background and Rationale

In the Consent Agenda for the November 10, 2007 Stated Meeting, the Stated Clerk reported that the Rules of Discipline D-9.0000 provide for a request for vindication which is a request made by a member of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) who feels injured by rumor or gossip to investigate erroneous, inaccurate or inflammatory statements made about him or her in order to "clear the record." A request for vindication is a public process. The name of the person requesting vindication is reported at the time of the naming of the Investigating Committee (IC) which has the responsibility to make an inquiry into the facts and circumstances. The report of an IC formed as a result of a request for vindication includes sufficient information to give a clear picture of facts and circumstances. On September 24, 2007 the Stated Clerk received a request for vindication from the Rev. Justin I. Schlesinger-Devlin in which he outlined that malicious and disparaging remarks about him were being made by an elder in his church who is not currently serving on the session. As a result of the request and in accordance with Presbytery of Grand Canyon Bylaw B-7.0200, the following four persons were appointed to an Investigating Committee: Rev. James Bruening (HR), Elder Amy Davis-King (Palo Cristi), Elder Carolyn McBurney (Mission del Sol) and Rev. W. Gale Watkins (Pastor – Westminster).

The report of the October 6, 2007 Investigating Committee in the matter of Rev. Schlesinger-Devlin's request for vindication was included as an Addendum to the Consent Agenda at the January 19, 2008 Stated Meeting as Paper (P-3). The report vindicated Rev. Schlesinger-Devlin from the rumors or gossip that may have injured him. The report also highlighted division that exists within the session on the matters outlined by the Investigating Committee. The Investigating Committee recommended the establishment of an administrative committee for the church.

On January 12, 2008 the Investigating Committee met with Rev. Shelly Moe, incoming Committee on Ministry (COM) Chair and the Stated Clerk to present their written report of January 8, 2008 with particular reference to their recommendation concerning an administrative committee.

As a result of the Investigating Committee's letter report and recommendations, the Committee on Ministry discussed the reported difficulties at its January 22, 2008 monthly meeting and took the following action: (1) Requested that a Special Meeting of the Presbytery of Grand Canyon be called at the earliest possible date for the purpose of the Committee on Ministry's recommending to the Presbytery the appointment of an Administrative Commission with original jurisdiction of the Session of John Calvin Presbyterian Church, and (2) Requested a Special Meeting of the Session of John Calvin PC be called for the purpose of meeting with representatives of COM to discuss the appointment of an Administrative Commission and the decision of COM in this matter.

A Special Meeting of the Session was held on Monday evening January 28, 2008 at which time Shelly Moe, COM Chair; Ken Moe, Executive Presbyter; Bud Engstrom, COM Partner / Cluster Representative and Dick Coffelt, Stated Clerk met with 8 of the 9 session members (the 9th elder who was not present sent her letter of resignation from the church and denomination with a request that the letter be read at the meeting). Following a time of questions, answers and discussion, the Session approved the following motion: "The session concurs with the Committee on Ministry recommendation to form an Administrative Commission assuming original jurisdiction to work with the Session of John Calvin Presbyterian Church to resolve conflicts within the Session."

11. ANNOUNCEMENT OF MEMBERS APPOINTED

In accordance with the Committee on Ministry's motion which authorized the Moderator of the Presbytery to appoint the members of the Commission, Rev. Art Campbell announced that the following people have been appointed to serve:

Rev. Jim Bruening	Elder Mark Fullerton (Church of the Master)
Rev. Bruce Johnson	Elder Amy Davis-King (Palo Cristi)
Rev. Sue Keim	Elder Lois McFadden (Celebration of Life)
Rev. Ed Spence	

12. NEXT MEETING

The next Stated Meeting of Presbytery will be March 28-29, 2008 at Mountain View Presbyterian Church in Scottsdale.

13. EXPRESSION OF THANKS/ADJOURNMENT

Moderator, Art Campbell expressed thanks to Shelly Moe and Celebration of Life Presbyterian Church and all those who were so helpful in arranging this meeting. Following prayer and the benediction, the meeting was adjourned at 2:15 PM.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The Presbytery Council, acting on its delegated authority, approved the Minutes of the Presbytery of Grand Canyon's Special Meeting of February 21, 2008 at the Council Meeting of March 6, 2008.

S/ Richard E. Coffelt

March 6, 2008

Richard E. Coffelt, Stated Clerk

Date: _____