

**Presbytery of Boston
Council
May 18, 2023**

Draft Minutes.

Present: *(PFR), Beverly Shank, Ken Grant, Kathy Barnes, Kate Carlisle, Ivy Jones Turner, SuYoung Kim.*

Call to Order

The regular monthly meeting of the Council of the Presbytery of Boston was called to order on Thursday, May 18, 2023, at 7:03 pm, with prayer by the Moderator, Kate Carlisle.

A quorum was electronically present.

The Council **VOTED** to approve the distributed Minutes of April 13, 2023.

The Council had a conversation about Samuel Caraballo and his assignment as Commissioned Pastor at Primera Iglesia, concerning some alleged delinquencies in his process. According to the Stated Clerk, an open examination of Elder Caraballo by the presbytery was done at the March 9, 2023, Stated Meeting. Debate was appropriately ended and the presbytery voted to assign him to this position. The Stated Clerk consulted with the synod Stated Clerk and was assured that this was sufficient. There were two delinquencies in the process, that of setting a term of service and assigning a Mentor, which the Stated Clerk and the Committee on Ministry admit should have been done. The COM has now accomplished these and intends to bring them to the September Stated Meeting for ratification. Of course, the presbytery may remove Sam as Commissioned Pastor at any time for any reason, if chooses to do so.

The Council **VOTED** to approve the distributed Agenda for this meeting.

Stated Clerk

The Stated Clerk gave a brief report. He attended the consultation with the Board of Pensions in Atlanta representing his presbytery (Geneva), and, since John Sweet was not able to represent Boston, he volunteered to report to Council on his behalf. First, he recommended that everyone visit the site -- www.seasonofrebuilding.pensions.org. The gathering was basically the Board informing participants of the current crisis in the medical side of the plan. (The pension side is doing fine, and is even offering an Experience Apportionment in the next few weeks.) Medical costs continue to rise, especially prescriptions. The Board may continue to address this as they have in the past, by raising the apportionment paid by churches... but this is becoming less sustainable as the percentage approaches 50%. Churches, especially small churches, cannot afford it. They are increasingly choosing to be served by Temporary or Commissioned pastors to

whom they do not need to pay benefits. This has negative effects in several ways. The brunt of the crisis also falls disproportionately on women and minority ministers. The Plan currently has a two-tiered structure which privileges the 30% of members who are Installed Pastors, which many are perceiving as unfair and awkward. The Board is open and receiving ideas and suggestions as to how to alleviate this set of challenges, and hopes, after a time of listening, to have a new Plan structure in place by January of 2025. (The Board is also aware that this is part of a *national* health care crisis; if we had national health insurance in this country there would be no reason to have this meeting. Churches could much more easily afford pastors.)

Personnel

Beverly reported, referring to her written report. They are talking to Ben about working on the website over the summer.

Treasurer.

The report of the Treasurer was sent out by e-mail.

Trustees.

Ken Grant reported, referring to the May 8 Trustees Minutes centering on the discussion around the Task Force working on securing presbytery treasury services. A company called Balanced Bookkeeping will be hired to do this work. They are also beginning the process of defining QuikBooks accounts and solutions. The Task Force is basically done at this point, after only 5 months. The Council **VOTED** to dissolve the Task Force.

Needham. On March 9, the presbytery voted to turn the property of the former Needham church over to Primera Iglesia and instructed the presbytery to move forward with the repair of the roof and the installation of solar panels. They met with Sung Jo Park of the Presbyterian Investment and Loan Program. The title to the property has been and is in the name of the presbytery. This is good because the roof and solar arrays will require a loan, which will go to the entity having the title. This is considered part of the mission of and benefit to Primera Iglesia, with energy to be utilized at a reduced rate by individuals who are in need of subsidy. They are looking at receiving a loan with a 5.1% interest rate, with a 1% reduction because of the energy production. The presbytery has the resources to support this and qualify for the loan. Both the bank and the denomination will likely require a project manager. There will be costs for the roof, solar panels, management, downpayment, and investment, to be offset by energy sales, paying back the loan, and government rebates. Now is the time to consider a Task Force dedicated to the rapid completion of the project in order to get the rebates before they are diminished. They intend to engage the prior task force, as well as the Primera Iglesia session, a legal team, energy experts, and seek a project manager. We should have another Council meeting with John Sweet (COM) and Drew Hanson (Needham TF) involved. The Council **VOTED** to call a Special Meeting of the Council (in addition to the regular June meeting). Rev. Carlisle will use a Doodle poll of Council to determine the date and time.

Committee on Preparation for Ministry

Rev. Hanson sent a written update. Candidate Brent O'Neil has been certified ready to seek a call.

Working Group Looking at the Synod Grant Application.

Deacon Jones Turner reported. The Working Group spent time working on the vision and role of the prospective staff member and timeline. This will be a multiyear grant opportunity, up to 3 years. A lot of questions still need to be explored, including setting a vision for the future, and determining the next steps in the presbytery. This new staff person would be leading a discernment process for the presbytery. Do we work towards growth, merger, or some combination? Even after the grant term is over we will have problems with funding the position. We are looking for a visionary who perhaps has the experience and skills of an interim pastor. They are in conversations to produce a draft version by June 16. They are aiming to have something ready for the June 22 Council meeting, so they may submit it to the synod before the end of July deadline. They want to assign the task of writing the proposal to someone who does grant writing. There is someone they have possibly in mind, which may involve a stipend. The Treasurer and Trustees noted a \$500 line in the budget, some of which might be available to a grant writer for this. Plus there might be more Council committee money available.

They will meet next on June 6. asked for any further insight about the role and future of the presbytery that people might have.

Moderator.

Rev. Carlisle anticipates resigning on May 30 as Moderator. Council Minutes have been requested to be put on the website prior to May 30. The Stated Clerk will copy Ben and Elder Jones Turner on the Minutes from tonight.

Yan has been awarded a 1001 sabbath grant, which will come through the presbytery to be disbursed.

The Moderator will be helping to coordinate the Boston Pride Parade.

The bookkeeper Task Force had done an e-mail vote to work with Balanced Bookkeeping; the Council **VOTED** to ratify that vote.

The Moderator met with Rev. Trina Portillo and Rev. So Jung Kim at the Presbyterian Mission Agency (PMA) to learn about a Locally Situated Action Team for our area. This is a temporary configuration of people related to a team from the presbytery for one of a list of specific purposes at the request of the presbytery. They will be using PMA staff to support what presbytery is trying to do. It does not cost the presbytery any money, but we do need to be clear about what we want and how it fits with what we are doing. It

might also involve partnerships with neighbor presbyteries, and New Worshiping Communities. It also might be more work than help, if we decide that. Do we as Council want to learn more, or have Dr. Corey Schlosser-Hall speak to Council so we can learn more? The Moderator will invite him for June 22.

New Business

We propose an in-person gathering on Saturday, June 24 (afternoon, but time is flexible) at Hartford Street Presbyterian Church, for a Service of Communion and a Cookout featuring cuisines of our congregations and New Worshiping Communities. We're calling it, "Come to the Table."

Our intention in this gathering is to center our immigrant and New Worshipping Communities (and their delicious food): the Chinese Fellowship, the Shekinah congregations in Natick and Abington (Brazilian food); as well as Cameroonian food, Korean food, Puerto Rican and Spanish food... all the delicious cuisines that make up the flavor of our presbytery. The broad invitation to everyone is to come, bring the food you love, and feast!

We propose Hartford Street Presbyterian Church because it has a parking lot and is roughly centrally located within our presbytery. We can fit people outdoors or indoors depending on weather. Plus, since we have a Shekinah congregation and a significant Cameroonian population, it is an easy request to provide Brazilian and Cameroonian food. However, we're open to other location proposals!

The Council **VOTED** to put the multi-cultural barbecue on the calendar.

Adjourn

The Council **VOTED** to adjourn with prayer by at 8:27 by Rev. Grant.

The Stated Clerk expressed his gratitude for the Council and their work over the last few months, as this will likely be his last meeting. There ensued the requisite Mets-Red Sox, Bills-Patriots banter, and well-wishing for all.

Attest:

Paul F. Rack
Interim Stated Clerk