

**Presbytery of Boston  
Council  
August 17, 2023  
Draft Minutes**

*Present:* Trina Portillo (Past Moderator), Beverly Shank, Ken Grant, Kathy Barnes, Katie Cole, John Sweet, Drew Hanson, Lisa Carlin (Treasurer), Kate Carlisle (Stated Clerk)

**Call to Order**

The regular monthly meeting of the Council of the Presbytery of Boston was called to order on Zoom on Thursday, August 17, 2023, at 7:09 pm, with prayer by the past Moderator, Trina Portillo. A quorum was electronically present. Past Moderator, Trina Portillo, moderated the meeting.

Council **approved** the agenda without objection.

**Approval of minutes**

**Motion** made, seconded and **approved** to sustain the June Council minutes.

**Follow Up on LSAT discussion**

Council reflected on the conversation with Corey and So Jung at the June meeting, as well as additional info we have received from them, about a potential Locally Situated Action Team. The LSAT (or Boston Action Team aka BAT) would be a way to partner with PMA and focus on areas of ministry potential and growth. This is an opportunity to benefit from PMA staff and expertise in consultant and support roles. We would need to set clear goals and expectations in the process of developing a potential agreement. Discussion raised several questions:

- What are our priorities/main areas of focus?
- Are we excited about this? What are the areas of energy and enthusiasm in Council and Presbytery?
- How would the timing of the LSAT process relate to potentially receiving grant funding for and calling a Transitional Presbyter? Which comes first?
- Do we have enough bandwidth among Presbytery leadership for this?
- Could the LSAT process include bringing others into involvement? Building capacity and enthusiasm? Identifying and equipping more leaders and volunteers?
- How much time do we need to define our priorities? How many people do we need committed to a team?
- Some possible priorities/areas we're excited about - we need to think about the focus areas when thinking about who we want to ask to be part of this team:
  - new worshipping communities
  - ministries with youth and young adults
  - building enthusiasm, involvement, and Presbytery capacity
  - transition process to seeking a presbyter

**Motion** made, seconded and **approved:** to say yes to the LSAT; to invite Corey & team in the next 2-3 months to help us define the process.

**Personnel Report**

Beverly reported.

Updates from Ben Chicka:

- Meeting with Kate Carlisle to discuss respective roles, etc.
- Working on website update now that Tech Soup has verified PofB non profit status; this permits free Google access. Benefits include future email by gmail and discount on website updating.

- Still working on Network Solutions password issues that involve hosting
- Cancelling Vonage phone account also depends on resolving Network Solutions issue.

Ken Grant has been in touch with Donnie Dick. He also expects that he and Amy Fowler will soon meet with Patricia and Samuel from Primera Iglesia to discuss building stewardship transfer.

Stephen Rose of Personnel Committee has been working on the Synod grant which will be reported on elsewhere in the Council meeting.

Trina and Beverly will be meeting to discuss lining up future funding and organizational support for the GLOW position.

Chairperson Rev. Meagan Manas returns from sabbatical in September.

### **Treasurer's Report**

Lisa reported.

Lots of things are moving and falling into place. We are switching to Vision payroll (based in Fitchburg). We will be moving to biweekly payroll, and monthly for 1099 employees. Ken and Lisa are working on endowments. YAV money is being put into a high-interest CD. We've come a long way since March, and Lisa will have a good deal of information to bring to Presbytery in September.

Congregations may also be interested in working with the payroll and bookkeeping firms we are using - we have offered recommendations to some congregations based on our interview processes. All of the bookkeepers we interviewed are small firms that have some experience working with churches.

We are working as quickly as possible to have accessible info to share on Assets and P&L for the Needham building.

### **Trustees Report**

Ken has distributed the following written report, along with the July 31 endowment report:

The Trustees of the Presbytery do not request any action during this evening's Council meeting.

#### Items of interest as of August 17, 2023:

1. Lisa Carlin, Treasurer, is pleased to provide a draft narrative Treasurer's Report to the September Presbytery Assembly. This she points out is her first report since election as Treasurer.
2. A copy of the 31 July 2023 Endowment Report is available.
3. The lease between Presbytery and the Tobin Beaudet Schools has been executed.
4. The Trustees and Treasurer of the Presbytery have opened a Vanguard brokerage account and will transfer funds to it from Bank of America accounts dedicated to our YAV funds in the near future. This will permit investment of these funds at a higher return.
5. The Trustees will segregate the Needham funds in Bank of America accounts. This will facilitate a transition of stewardship to Primera Iglesia and simplify accounting and reporting.
6. The Trustees have received a request from Tobin Beaudet Schools to support their amendment of a special permit allowing the drop off / pick up of students at the property. The special permit was originally approved by the Town in 2019 and needs to be amended for use in 2023-2024.
7. The Trustees are reviewing a request from Tobin Beaudet Schools for repair of plumbing and may authorize repairs as appropriate.

8. Due diligence has been completed on the distribution to the First Presbyterian Church in Worcester of \$3,762.79 from the John Gilchrist Fund. This satisfies the church's loan from Presbytery, and it will be discharged.
9. Due diligence is underway for a similar grant from the John Gilchrist Fund to Clarendon Hill Presbyterian Church.
10. A grant of \$10,000 from the John Gilchrist Fund was distributed to the United Presbyterian Church of Whitinsville and a note thanking the Presbytery for its support was received from Lynne Walsh, Clerk of Session. The note said, in part, "It is help like yours that allow our church to see God's desire for us in this world as we move forward in our love, hope, faith and missions for Him."

The Trustees next meet on Monday, August 21, at 7:00 PM, via Zoom.

### **CPM Report**

Drew reported.

CPM met with a Candidate who was interested in becoming a CRE or otherwise receiving permission to serve communion. The Candidate has been referred to COM.

In September, CPM anticipates certifying Joe Welker ready to receive a call. As of yesterday, Joe began serving as Stated Supply at East Craftsbury Presbyterian Church in Vermont. As soon as he is certified, PNNE anticipates ordaining him to this role.

CPM is seeking exam readers for October; readers (both teaching and ruling elders) need to be reported to OGA by the end of August. Contact Drew if you are interested.

### **COM Report**

John reported.

John is researching how other Presbyteries have offered training for elders to be authorized to serve Communion when a Minister of Word and Sacrament isn't available. This is a simpler process than the CRE process and would support congregations who need more access to Communion. COM is working on a plan to bring to Presbytery. We would invite Sessions to name elders to attend an elder training and be authorized to celebrate communion in their congregations for one year.

Additional items COM is working on with the clerk are included in the clerk's report.

### **COR Report**

Kathy reported.

COR has not met since the last Council meeting, but has a meeting scheduled next week. The Nominating Chair and Stated Clerk will attend that meeting.

### **Nominating Committee**

Katie Cole reported.

Council nominates nominees for Nominating to Presbytery. Sierra Mink, affiliate member at Church of the Covenant, is interested in serving on Nominating Committee. Her bio was distributed.

**Motion** made, seconded, and **approved** to nominate Sierra Mink to serve on Nominating Committee.

Nom Com needs additional people to serve. The general task for Nom Com members is “here’s your list of people go talk to them.” Council spent a little time brainstorming possible other people to ask.

GA 226 is next summer. We did not have commissioners to GA 225, and T.J. began discussions about possibly changing the process by which commissioners are nominated. There is not time to revise the rules before we need to elect commissioners in December.

**Motion** made, seconded, and **approved** to take the following motion to Presbytery:

“to suspend Standing Rule E.20 to permit Nominating Committee (with assistance from Council, COR, the Moderator, and the Stated Clerk), to solicit candidates to be nominated at the December Stated Meeting of Presbytery for election to the 226th General Assembly (2024), as teaching elder and ruling elder Commissioners, Young Adult Advisory Delegate, and alternates. In the case of multiple nominees for a given role, those charged with reviewing candidates will consider the principles of unity in diversity and openness (F-1.0403-04) as well as those principles held up in Rule E.20.”

## Clerk’s Report

### Items for information:

- The Presbytery has a new mailing address: PO Box 559, West Roxbury MA 02132. Financial items should still go to the office at First Quincy.
- Related to updates in the 2023 *Book of Order*:
  - The BOO now mandates 12 weeks of family/medical leave in all terms of call. I am working with COM to send a reminder to Clerks and Pastors that the provision has taken effect.
  - The Church Discipline section, replacing the Rules of Discipline, is new. The Synod of the Northeast is planning a training for PJC members and others with Elder Flor Velez-Diaz, Manager of Judicial Process at the Office of the General Assembly. The two options most likely to work for Boston folks are the three-part Zoom series on November 1, 6, and 14 (6-8pm); or the one-day training in Albany on October 16 (9:30am-5:30pm). There are also in-person trainings that week in Skaneateles, NY and Hightstown, NJ. All PJC members are expected to participate, and it would also be helpful for PoB to have participants from COM, CPM, and/or Nominating. Please let me know if you want registration info.
  - We need to offer boundary training and CSA prevention training in the near future to be in compliance with the Book of Order and our own policies. I am working with COM on this. We may work with PSNE if this is something we can offer jointly, with outside experts providing the training. This will be mandatory for teaching elders as well as many others. More details to come.
  - I am hopeful that we’ll be able to bring drafts of one or both of the other newly required policies (anti-racism; (non-sexual) harrasment) for a first reading in December. To reach that goal, I’ll be connecting with the anti-racism task force in hopes of drafting a short-term policy that supports the ongoing work of that task force. If anyone is interested in working on a harassment policy, especially once other examples and templates become available over the fall, please let me know.
- All items for the September 14 Presbytery meeting should be to Ben Chicka by Wednesday, August 30. Please copy Ivy and me to assist in our preparations for the meeting. If there are additional time-sensitive items to come due to meeting schedules, please note in your initial report that an addendum is to come. Issues with the timing of committee meetings and Presbytery packet distribution are an ongoing issue, especially because Presbytery has only three stated meetings a year. We should discuss this timing in advance of the December 14 Stated Meeting.
- If you want paper copies of the 2023 Book of Order for yourself or committee members, please let me know. The Church Discipline section is entirely new and there are several other important changes. The pdf version can be found [here](#); the online annotated version is [here](#).
- Any proposed overtures to the 226th GA will be heard at the December 14 Stated Meeting of Presbytery. It would be helpful to know of any overtures coming to Presbytery by mid-November.
- I will be traveling the following dates:

- September 18-21: Mid-Council Leader Orientation in Louisville
- October 9-12: Polity, Benefits, and Mission Conference in St. Louis
- Approval of Presbytery meeting minutes: I was mistaken in bringing the minutes of the December and March Presbytery meetings to Council for “approval,” rather than review. It’s good practice for Council to review Presbytery minutes, but the Presbytery still needs to vote to approve them. Presbytery has not approved minutes from the December 2022 or March 2023 stated meetings or the called meeting in May 2023. I am still comparing meeting packets and minutes to make sure there are no additional outstanding minute approvals; I will bring all outstanding minutes to the September meeting if possible, and no later than the December meeting.

There were questions about the family medical leave change. This is not the same as FMLA, for which pastors aren’t eligible. Board of Pensions short term disability may be available for some. Churches are likely to have questions about how to pay for coverage, and we expect additional resources to be available over the coming months.

There might also be the possibility of ecumenical collaboration on boundary training offerings.

Council reviewed and discussed the draft agenda for the September 14 Presbytery meeting.

Council is considering changes to how we hold our meetings, discussed the possibility of moving to hybrid or in-person Presbytery meetings. The September meeting will be on Zoom only as previously planned. There was not consensus among Council members. Each option has pros and cons. In-person meetings offer fellowship, a deeper experience of worship, options for communication and building the bonds of affection before and after. Hybrid and Zoom meetings have logistical difficulties over in-person-only meetings but offers significant accessibility: distance, driving at night, immunocompromised folks, etc. Several of our churches continue to offer hybrid worship on Zoom. We will take poll at the September meeting about the three possible formats for meetings. How many people are willing to come in person? Is there a strong case to change what we’re doing? Will a clear consensus emerge?

Council will also plan to discuss additional potential changes to how Presbytery does business: days of the week, time, format of meetings, whether to add a fourth stated meeting each year.

### **Moderator’s Report**

No report from the Acting Moderator.

### **Old Business**

No old business.

### **New Business**

**Motion** made, seconded, and **approved** to support Yan Wang’s application for the 301 Grant, to be enrolled in Board of Pensions benefits for the coming year at no cost to CCF or the Presbytery.

**Motion** made, seconded, and **approved** to endorse the Chinese Christian Fellowship’s application for, and approve disbursement of, the New Worshiping Communities Investment Grant. This is a matching grant for \$30,000. Council will encourage Yan to apply for \$20,000 of the expected matching funds from the Synod, who is likely to receive the same application materials. We do not have a streamlined process for this or other grants. Council will need to work with Yan to apply for the anticipated \$10,000 of Presbytery funding for CCF, which may need to come from multiple places. Ken, Katie, and Drew are willing to work on this, along with Kate as clerk. This is a longer term opportunity; we will also want to provide support to other NWCs in seeking the substantial funding that is available from PMA, BoP, the Synod, etc. There is likely also an opportunity to seek individual donors.

The working group has distributed a final draft of the grant application for the Synod's Presbytery Support Grant. This grant application is for \$40,000, renewable for up to three years, and will "ask the Synod of the Northeast to support the calling of a Transitional Presbyter to provide this needed staff support and to guide a discernment process towards a more sustainable and Spirit-led future for the Presbytery of Boston.

**Motion** made, seconded, and **approved** to approve the grant proposal for application to the Synod, with minor edits as needed to fit the Synod's new grant portal.

Council is planning to create a work group to collaborate with Primera Iglesia on discerning towards their assuming stewardship of the building and on the repair of the roof (and other repairs) and solar project. Gathering potential members, including people from Primera Iglesia, Trustees, the original AC. There is interest from a potential Project Manager who may be able to join the work group in a few months.

### **Adjournment**

Motion to adjourn **approved** without objection. Katie closed the meeting with prayer at 9:50 pm.

The next regular Council meeting is October 19.

The next Stated Meeting of the Presbytery is September 14.