



Presbytery of Boston Council Minutes

October 21, 2021

Attendance:

Voting: Jill Auger, Jane Wilson (Moderator), Ivy Jones Turner, Meagan Manas, Kathy Barnes, Katie Cole, Oscar Nebangwa, Mark Wells, SuYoung Kim, Kristin Rinehimer

Non-voting: T. J. DeMarco

Convene

The duly elected moderator, the Rev. Dr. Jane Wilson, opened the meeting with prayer via Zoom at 7:00 PM.

The moderator declared that a quorum was present.

The council approved the minutes from its last meeting which was held via Zoom on August 19, 2021.

Stated Clerk

Pilgrim

Pilgrim has decided that they do not wish to be part of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church. This means that they will revert to the Presbytery of Boston. They do not feel that the PC(USA) would be the right denomination for them, but do not want to join another reformed denomination. They may request that we dissolve them, and the congregational portion of their congregation will continue.

The council took some time to reflect on this process. The Stated Clerk will respond.

2022 Calendar

At our last Presbytery meeting, I invited members to give feedback on meeting time dates. I received feedback from one person who likes having council on Thursdays and one who would like to return to Monday. The same person who suggested Mondays requested returning to 4 meetings per year. I think this came out of a desire to build a stronger Presbytery community.

I think we should continue to meet on Thursday nights. Our attendance has been higher on Thursday nights. I don't see a problem with Thursdays.

The other question is virtual vs. in-person. I see two major upsides to virtual meetings. First, the virtual meetings are better attended. Second, our congregations have aged and there are less of them, making it difficult to find host congregations. The downside of virtual meetings is that it's harder to get to know one another virtually. I think this is especially true for elders who are attending for the first time and for ministers new to the Presbytery.

I suggest that we take a hybrid approach with three meetings. Two of these meetings should be on zoom and the third in-person. I suggest that council continue to meet nine times per year. Council will not meet during the months when we have a Presbytery meeting. Council should continue to meet via Zoom. Here is the calendar I recommend to council:

Council Meetings

January 20 – 7:00 PM
February 17 – 7:00 PM
April 28 – 7:00 PM
May 19 – 7:00 PM
June 16 – 7:00 PM
July 21 – 7:00 PM
August 18 – 7:00 PM
October 20 – 7:00 PM
November 17 – 7:00 PM

Presbytery Meetings

March 17 – 6:00 PM (In-person)
June 5 (Sunday) – Pentecost Celebration (Who will organize this?)
September 22 – 6:00 PM (Zoom)
December 8 – 6:00 PM (Zoom)

By-Law Change

Per the Presbytery vote, we need to add the personnel committee to our by-laws. I recommend the following addition to section 6 of our by-laws:

6.2.5 Personnel Committee

6.2.5.1 The personnel committee shall have a voting membership of at least three and up to six members represented as equally as possible across the membership of the Presbytery. The committee members shall be elected to three-year terms and may serve for up to two terms.

6.2.5.2 The personnel committee shall meet as a committee and with staff throughout the year to stay updated and address any concerns. The personnel committee shall review staff members annually. The personnel committee shall report its work to the Presbytery council at called council meetings.

Whitinsville Administrative Commission

The Whitinsville Administrative Commission is formed and has begun to meet. They will begin their work with the congregation by meeting with session on October 26. They have taken steps to prepare by discussing how to introduce themselves and their role. They will be careful to remain neutral throughout the time that they are addressing the conflict(s).

Anti-Racism Task Force

The anti-racism task force was thankful for attendance at their initial assessment. One concern was that few BIPOC members attended. This is partially because there are few BIPOC members in leadership. Their next step will be to intentionally reach out to BIPOC members and learn about their experience of the Presbytery. The anti-racism task force is poised to make a big difference in the Presbytery, and I am excited about their work. However, I think that their work will continue into 2023 because the task is big.

Administrative Manual Working Group

My initial plan was to move this project forward quickly. But given the work of the anti-racism task force, I think it needs to be a slower process. The policies that we adopt should be influenced by our anti-racism work. I plan to gather this group again soon to talk more about it.

Docket for December

The council reviewed a sample task force.

Moderator's Report

Jane Wilson

The moderator clarified some open questions:

- New England Glow will continue to be in contact with council through the Stated Clerk.
- The moderator will reach out to the Board of Pensions regional rep regarding specialized ministers.

Feedback for Anti-Racism Task Force

The council felt that anti-racism task force has begun with a great start.

Committee on Ministry

Jill Auger

The chair reported that Veronica Soto Feliciano will be moving on to a new position in Colorado. Also, Liz Walker will be retiring at the end of the year

Committee on Preparation for Ministry

Kristin Rinehimer

There may be another candidate presented to Presbytery at the upcoming meeting.

One of the concerns of the committee is the difficulty that individuals who speak English as a second language have with passing exams, as well as implicit bias with the exams and the process as a whole. The council entered a conversation about this.

Mission and Congregations

A member of Presbytery asked that the council revisit the decision to place the committee on mission and congregations on hiatus.

Katie Cole detailed how the potential work of this committee is covered by temporary groups that form throughout the Presbytery. She also pointed out that new growth, such as New England Glow formed without the oversight of this committee. Also, pastors have worked together in mutual support throughout the COVID pandemic.

Trustees

Oscar Nebangwa

No report.

Meagan Manas raised the possibility of council engaging in a process to envision how to best utilize the Needham building. Staffing a group like this could not happen until early in 2022 due to other time-consuming projects in the works right now.

Nominating

Sarah Hathaway

Nominating is working on filling spots on COM. There are still challenges to filling many positions at this point. The committee plans to have a slate to present to the Presbytery in December.

Personnel

Meagan Manas

Personnel followed up with Andy Parmelee regarding a second signer and learned that Ken Dewar has been serving unofficially in that role.

The committee has met with quarterly with staff, which staff has appreciated.

The personnel committee is concerned that without a presbyter the work is putting extra work on current staff.

The personnel committee has discussed the idea of having an interim presbyter who would help to guide a visioning process. The moderator asked that personnel submit a written proposal as a starting point to discuss this possibility

Committee on Representation

Kathy Barnes

This committee continues to gather data on the demographics of congregations of the Presbytery of Boston. Since August they have gathered a large amount of information. One challenge is that not all congregations submit accurate information in the statistical reports. The gathering of data is in process.

Old Business

There was no old business.

New Business

Clinton is still the address for the Presbytery, and they received the Youth Triennium information. The moderator will ask Jen Slater from New England Glow about serving as registrar.

Adjourn

The meeting adjourned with prayer at 8:40 PM. The next meeting of council will take place on November 18, 2021 at 7 pm via Zoom.

