

Meeting called to order by the Moderator, Steve Yamaguchi, at 4 p.m. at First Presbyterian Church of Garden Grove.

Present: Anderson, Dykhuizen, Ewing, McCurdy, Hawkinson, Raine, Swidrak, Thornton, Sizer, Strommen, Winslow, Yamaguchi, Geckeler, Cramer. Excused: Bolsinger. Guest: Rev. John Furman and Rev. Michael Conan.

Meeting opened with devotions and prayer by Rev. Tom Dykhuizen.

Minutes Approved:

Council of November 1, 2011.

Presbytery of November 17, 2011.

BUSINESS

1. Overture from Lakewood Christ for “A Process for Discerning God’s Will”.

Rev. Michael Conan, Pastor of Lakewood Christ, presented to the Council the above document proposed as a replacement to the presbytery’s current policy “Procedural Guidelines: Property Issues” adopted in 2007. This overture had come to Council at its November meeting and action had been postponed to allow representatives of Council to meet with the Session to hear their concerns and the rationale for this proposal. That meeting was held in January.

The document, which has been referred to as one of “gracious separation” replace the existing policy with an 11 page document describing the process whereby a congregation could withdraw from the denomination with its property—including defining in advance what it would cost a church to leave. (3 years of per capita and two years of mission giving). The new policy was defined in terms of a response to “crisis of conscience” to the adoption of Amendment 10-A—as well as other issues (such as biblical authority, blurring of “essentials”, exhaustion from fights over non missional concerns).

The Council asked several questions of John and Michael and a very productive conversation ensued. Revs. Furman and Conan were then excused and the Council proceeded to debate and discuss the overture before them. After about 45 minutes, the Council concluded that the issues raised are complex, controversial, and not subject to easy resolution. As a result, the Council brings the following recommendation to the presbytery:

Recommend: that the Presbytery of Los Ranchos declare the overture in question a “Controversial Issue” and implement its “Controversial Issues” policy. Council further recommends declaring a “first reading” of the overture at the May meeting of Presbytery and that a vote be taken at the September meeting of Presbytery.

Rationale: Presbytery spent almost a year preparing and discussing and debating the existing policy. It was adopted as a compromise between the needs of presbytery and the needs of congregations. Proposing the replace that policy with a new one that Council unanimously felt introduces a number of controversial elements, requires presbytery to slow the process down to allow adequate time for education, reflection, and decision making. This proposed overture requires a full understanding of the historical basis for

the “trust” clause, the historical record of schisms in the church, the nature of Presbyterian ecclesiology, and what constitutes “fair and just” settlement. Providing such resources to presbytery commissioners; providing opportunities for forums and education events; and creating materials to assist commissioners in comparing the actual language of two documents, both of which exceed 10 pages, will involve some time. In addition, the General Assembly will be considering in early July, a proposal to allow for “non-geographical presbyteries” that may provide an alternative solution to the problems that led to the creation of this document. Hence the Council’s recommendation to postpone the actual vote until September.

2. Report from the Stated Clerk.

- ✓ Presbytery is involved in one continuing legal case. Insurance is providing legal counsel.
- ✓ A Remedial Complaint was filed against the action taken by the presbytery at its November meeting to create a Resolution regarding expectations of members. A three person Committee of Counsel was appointed by the Docket Committee of Council: Neal Wells (Attorney, St. Andrew’s), Rev. Emily McColl, Rev. Gary Watkins. A Hearing on preliminary questions will be held on February 25.
- ✓ Presbytery has received allegations of sexual misconduct against Minister 11-X. The Docket Committee of Council appointed the following Investigating Committee: Rev. Christ Pritchett (Moderator), Amy Pope (attorney and member of SMRT), Betsy Azariah (members of SMRT). In addition a member of SMRT has been assigned to the accuser and another to the accused. The IC also includes two members from the presbytery in which the alleged misconduct took place.

3. Trustees

2012-2013 PROPOSED BUDGET

Council heard a final report on totals for 2011 Income and Expenses indicating presbytery ended the year with a “surplus” of \$40,336. As a result, Council took action to utilize only \$50,000 of the \$150,000 from sale of South Gate property approved for balancing the 2011 budget. This will allow presbytery to carry a net asset balance of \$135,515 in to 2012 and, hopefully, \$172,802 in to the 2013 budget so that presbytery would end 2013 with a net asset balance of \$85,478. It also means there will be no need for any increase to 2013 presbytery per capita.

Recommendation: Presbytery Council recommends that the Presbytery of Los Ranchos approve the 2012-2013 Budget as proposed.

Office Space Needs Assessment. Bill Ewing will join two members of Trustees in engaging in an office space needs assessment to determine actual space needs in 2013 and following.

Treasurer. The Trustees elected Lanny Hawkinson Presbytery Treasurer.

4. Strategic Coordinating Team

A complete report of the actions, projects, and mission of the SCT are presented in a separate document.

5. Changes to Sexual Misconduct Prevention Policy.

Responding to a request from the Sexual Misconduct Response Team based on experiences in two actual situation, the Presbytery Council:

Recommends that the Presbytery of Los Ranchos adopt the proposed changes to the Sexual Misconduct Prevention Policy provided in Appendix A of this document.

6. Flipping the Presbytery Finances Team

Responding to action taken at the November meeting of presbytery, Presbytery Council **Recommends that the Presbytery of Los Ranchos elect the following individuals to the “Flipping the Presbytery Finances” team:**

John Lehman (St. Andrew’s, RE)
Leanne Strommen (Geneva, TE)
Lanny Hawkinson (La Mirada, RE)
Cheryl Raine (Garden Grove, TE)
David Morse (Trinity, RE)
Cheryl France-Moran (San Clemente, RE)

Council also authorized requesting from SCT up to \$5000 from Synod Stimulus Funds for contracting with a resource consultant for this group.

7. Elected Susan Thornton and Cheryl Raine as at large members to the Council Docket Committee. [This groups functions as an “Executive Committee” of Council.]
8. Adopted policy clarifying what constitutes “vouchered” in “Vouchered Reimbursable” accounts. See Appendix B of this document.
9. Approved February Presbytery Docket.
10. Meeting adjourned with prayer at 7 p.m.

Proposed Revisions to Sexual Misconduct Policy

The Sexual Misconduct Response Team brings to the Presbytery the recommendation for the following changes to the “Prevention and Response Policy: Sexual Misconduct” of the Presbytery of Los Ranchos:

Section III, B, 5 & 6. Strike the word “Chair” and replace with “representative”, and (in 5) delete “(or their designee)” so that it reads:

*When an initial report of sexual misconduct has been received, and at least two of the persons who are the Presbytery Pastor, the Chair of the Committee on Ministry (or their designee), the ~~chair~~ **representative** of the SMRT (~~or their representative~~) concur that if...*

Rationale: The SMRT functions without a designated “chair”; there needs to be flexibility to designate the best person for a particular situation.

Section III, B, 6.

In sentence 2, Insert the word “and” after “...with the accused”, and strike “and the Clerk of Session if the accused is pastor of a church” and insert a “.” after “Session”:

*“The Initial Response Team shall make contact with the accused **and** the accuser. ~~and the Clerk of Session if the accused is pastor of a church.~~”*

Rationale: In some situations, the need to contact the Clerk of Session at this stage of the inquiry is not only unnecessary but could be counter-productive. At some point, the Clerk/Session will be informed (see below) in order to insure a balance between transparency and confidentiality.

Section III, B, 6 Insert the following sentence before the present last sentence:

The Initial Response Team shall make a verbal report to Council and with the Stated Clerk as early as is practical.

Section III, B, 6 Insert the following sentence after the present last sentence:

As part of developing a response plan, the Initial Response Team shall consult with the SMRT regarding the advisability of involvement of representatives of the Session and whether it may be appropriate to request the involvement of an Investigating Committee.

Section III, B, 6 Delete the existing last sentence.

Section III, E, 1 Insert the words “...in consultation with” after the word “Team” so that it reads:

*If the Initial Response Team **in consultation with the SMRT** reasonably believes there is a factual basis for the allegations....*

Rationale for four above changes: the question of who should be informed at what point in the inquiry can be very sensitive. The intent is the have the IRT confer with the SMRT so that the wisdom of the larger group can prevail. Experience indicates that at some point, someone from the church—the Clerk of Session, the Personnel Committee, the Session—must be informed of the allegation(s) and the results of the inquiry so as to prevent the possibility of serial offenses because of lack of communication.

Section III, B, 11. Insert the following sentence before the existing final sentence:

If not previously informed, the report shall be shared by the SMRT with the Clerk of Session and/or Personnel Committee of the congregation served by the pastor.

Presbytery of Los Ranchos Reimbursement Policies

In order to fulfill our accounting responsibility for vouchered reimbursable expenses while attending conference or otherwise performing or representing Presbytery business, we are herewith providing the requirements for reporting such expenses:

1. Original receipts for all purchases are expected for reimbursement requests. In some cases, an exception may be made if electronic copies of original(s) are the only proof available.
2. Receipts must include itemized information on all purchases, including meal purchases in restaurants. Credit card receipts only, showing only totals, will not be accepted for reimbursement.
3. The following types of purchases are not allowed for reimbursement:
 - Alcoholic beverages or tobacco products
 - Rentals (other than short-term vehicles and equipment)
 - Capital equipment and upgrades over \$500
 - Construction, renovation/installation
 - Items or services on term contracts
 - Maintenance agreements
 - Purchases involving trade-in of ministry property
 - Telephones, related equipment, or services
 - Personal Medical expenses
4. Please use the official PLR check request form for all reimbursement requests. If you do not have this form, please request one be sent to you from Kathy Long, Accounting and Business Manager or Bonita Carr, Administrative Coordinator. The filled form, with supporting documents, may be scanned and emailed to Bonita or Kathy, or faxed to the presbytery office.
5. If you have any questions about the allowability of any incurred expenses, please contact Kathy Long at klong@losranchos.org, phone 714-956-3691 X123, or Bonita Carr at bcarr@losranchos.org, phone 714-956-3691 X122.