



SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

193rd General Assembly Cumberland Presbyterian Church

Meeting June 17-21, 2024

Evansville, IN

Michael Sharpe, Stated Clerk

The following summary is NOT the authoritative document for guiding the Church's action. Only the General Assembly Minutes can serve that purpose.

ORGANIZATION

1. Elected the Reverend Rev. Dr. Larry Blakeburn, Presbytery of East Tennessee, as the Moderator.
2. Elected the Reverend Nick Chambers, Arkansas Presbytery, as the Vice Moderator.
3. Elected thirty-four people to serve on denominational boards and entities.
4. Re-elected Rev. Mike Sharpe as Stated Clerk and Rev. Lisa Scott as Engrossing Clerk.
5. The Elder Lewis Leon Cole, board member of the General Assembly Executive Board (CPCA) and Moderator of Kentucky Synod (CPCA), brought greetings on behalf of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church in America.

WORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

6. The opening worship/communion service was held on Monday evening. Retiring Moderator Reverend Mitch Boulton, Cornerstone Presbytery, delivered a sermon entitled, "*Holy Conversations*" based on 2 Timothy 1:9. The Reverends Mitch Boulton and Paul Tucker (GA Worship Director, Nashville Presbytery) served as co-celebrants of the Sacrament of Holy Communion. A brief service of installation of the newly elected moderator and vice moderator was part of the worship service.

7. Youth Advisory Delegates, Ellie Kennemer, from Robert Donnell Presbytery and Cosby King from Murfreesboro Presbytery, brought the devotionals on Thursday morning.

8. Reverend Paul Tucker, worship director for General Assembly, provided a closing devotional entitled "*More Holy Conversations*," based on Colossians 1:24-29.

OUR UNITED OUTREACH

9. Approved a goal of \$2,500,000 for Our United Outreach (OUO) for 2025.

10. The OUO Committee sponsored a *Lunch and Learn* meal during GA week. The Reverend Jeff McMichael, Development Coordinator for OUO, served as master of ceremonies. In his opening comments he announced the purpose of the luncheon: to educate, promote, and encourage those in attendance "to be part of something bigger than themselves."

11. Commends all churches who currently have a commitment to giving to OUO and encouraged all churches to consider giving to OUO.

12. Expressed thanks to the hard work done by Rev. McMichael (OUO Development Director) and the OUO Committee.

MINISTRY COUNCIL

13. Acknowledged the hard work and dedication of all members of the Ministry Council's four ministry teams and its elected membership.

14. Noted that the CP Church in Colombia turns 100 years old in 2025. To help celebrate, the Missions Ministry Team has prepared various events in which all can participate and celebrate with our brothers and sisters in Colombia.

15. In response to a call for the Cumberland Presbyterian Church to enter a time of reconciliation, GA tasked the Ministry Council with developing an initiative to the 194th General Assembly to address any issue that might divide the Cumberland Presbyterian Church.

COMMISSION ON FEDERAL CHAPLAINS

16. Instructed presbyteries in the United States to encourage each congregation to receive an offering on the last Sunday of May, or another designated day, to support our ministry through Presbyterian Council for Federal Chaplains.

17. Encouraged Clergy and Presbytery Committees on Probationer Care to include in their discussions of a call with a ministerial candidate, the call to chaplaincy as a call to pastoral ministry and explain that the

federal chaplaincies include other agencies beyond the branches of the military.

18. Encouraged presbyteries to make special efforts to communicate with those members serving as chaplains from their presbytery to include more than just the actions of presbytery.

19. That the General Assembly Office request additional information from Presbytery Clerks regarding types of chaplaincy work for those serving as non-military chaplains (e.g. hospital, hospice, school, first responder), and for those that serve as both pastor and chaplain for inclusion in the Chaplain section of the Yearbook.

MEMPHIS THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

20. Extended appreciation to the leadership and staff of MTS for their ministry during these challenging times for seminary institutions and as they explore a new vision while maintaining the integrity of Cumberland Presbyterian faith and theology.

21. Expressed gratitude to trustee Rev. Dr. Yoong Kim and Rev. Rian Puckett for their faithful service to MTS and the CPC.

22. Expressed appreciation to MTS for reporting its intention to sell the Hilliard Hall property, which is presently unused and available.

23. Acknowledged the Report of the Board of Trustees of MTS that circumstances create a need for the Seminary to enter into acquisition or merger discussions with other institutions and expressed hope that the Seminary will begin those discussions with Bethel University; and requested that the Seminary keep representatives with the GA Corporation and the Pastoral Development Ministry Team apprised of acquisition or merger discussions, especially concerning the implications of such actions for the CPC; that the GA Corporation defer consideration of any merger or acquisition until more information is available; and the GA plan a called meeting of the GA to address a merger or acquisition at the appropriate time.

24. Approved that the third Sunday in August (August 18, 2024 and August 17, 2025) be included in the Church Calendar as Seminary/PAS Sunday and encouraged all churches to share information about MTS and PAS and receive a special offering on that day, or on a more convenient day of the session's choosing. MTS leadership has committed to focusing these annual funds on growing the Baird-Buck Endowment for CP Studies until the Chair in CP Studies is fully funded.

BETHEL UNIVERSITY

25. Expressed appreciation to Dr. Walter Butler for his service as past President; the Rev. Dr. Robert Watkins for serving as interim President of Bethel University; the Board of Trustees for the ministry in securing the leadership of the new President Dr. Perry Moulds.

26. Welcomed Dr. Perry Moulds pledging to support him in prayer.

27. Asked presbyteries worldwide to support the university in prayers, financial offerings and referral of students.

28. That Bethel University Sunday – November 3, 2024, be announced in denominational calendars, publications and social media.

29. Urged pastors, elders, and church leaders to discuss with their youth and adult learners the possibility of attending Bethel University.

30. Called on Cumberland Presbyterians worldwide to support Bethel University in prayers, financial support and in recommending students.

CUMBERLAND PRESBYTERIAN YOUTH AND FAMILY SERVICES

31. Commended Cumberland Youth and Family Services and the staff for their continued ministry of serving various areas of family needs: residential care for children and families with single parents, supervised independent living, foster care and adoption, crisis intervention and counseling services.

32. Added Children's Home Sunday to the Church Calendar. In 2025 the observance date is March 9.

33. Encouraged Cumberland Presbyterians to continue financial support, prayers and volunteer service in this ministry to and with the most vulnerable.

HISTORICAL FOUNDATION

34. Expressed appreciation to Archivist Susan Knight Gore and the Historical Foundation for the continued work done to preserve our history as Cumberland Presbyterians, both past history and present history.

JUDICIARY COMMITTEE

35. Adopted the "Guidelines for Changes in Congregational Affiliation."

36. Interpreted the constitution (Const. 9.4c) by clearly answering the following questions regarding the oaths taken during the ordination of elders/deacons (2.92) and ministers (6.36) and adding the assembly's interpretive rulings to the Cumberland Presbyterian Digest:

Question 1: Regarding sections 2.92 and 6.36, questions I-VII, must a licentiate seeking ordination to the Ministry of Word and Sacrament or a layperson seeking ordination as a deacon or elder within the Cumberland Presbyterian Church answer in the affirmative to each of their respective constitutional questions?

The Constitution already states that the questions must be answered in the affirmative before ordination and we concur with the Constitution.

Question 2: Regarding sections 2.92 and 6.36, question II: is the entire Confession of Faith sections 1.0 through 7.08 “essential doctrines” for the Cumberland Presbyterian Church in faith and practice, or are some portions of the Confession of Faith “essential” and some portions “non-essential”? If some of the Confession is non-essential, which portions are essential? Who or what has the authority to determine which portions are essential?

We assert that the Confession of Faith and the Constitution do not contain nonessentials.

Question 3: If a minister, elder, or deacon duly ordained in the Cumberland Presbyterian Church willingly and openly preaches and teaches against our doctrine, should they be subject to disciplinary action by their proper judicatory?

According to the Constitution this question is addressed by the Rules of Discipline. 4.104.

37. Adopted the following:

Statement on Homosexuality

Whereas, in our society today, there are many issues which concern the people of God, one such issue being the rise in acceptance of and openness toward homosexual activity, and we, of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, believe there is a need to state clearly our understanding of the Biblical teaching about homosexual activity, and

Whereas, it is also our desire to set forth our position regarding the appropriate response of Christians and the church to this critical issue, especially in light of the trend in some Christian bodies toward the ordination of practicing homosexuals, and

Whereas, we believe the scripture of the Old and New Testaments to be the inspired word of God, the source of authority for faith and practice, and therefore, contemporary sexual attitudes and behavior are to be judged in the light of the Bible rather than the Bible being reinterpreted, modified, or overturned by current cultural trends in thought and behavior,

Be it resolved, that the General Assembly of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church go on record affirming that Biblical teaching makes it clear that the

practice of homosexuality is a sin, yet with the understanding that while God loves the sinner, He hates the sin, and His grace is available to all, “For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him” (John 3:17);

Be it further resolved, that since the practice of homosexuality is incompatible with a Christian lifestyle and since officers of the church must be “examples to the flock” the General Assembly go on record stating that the Cumberland Presbyterian Church does not condone the ordination of practicing homosexuals as Deacons, Elders or Ministers of Word and Sacrament; and

Be it further resolved, that the General Assembly state as its position that we, as Christians who are ourselves sinners redeemed by the grace of God, must reach out to those persons who are struggling with homosexuality, offering them Christian love, education, friendship, therapy and intercession to the end that they and we may experience true wholeness through the freeing, renewing grace of God in Jesus Christ.

As with any statement from General Assembly, any disciplinary actions arising from the interpretation of this statement must be conducted according to the Rules of Discipline.

(Note-this statement is a slight modification of an early statement adopted by the GA in 1996).

Statement to be distributed by the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly to all churches and ministers.

38. Referred to the Joint Committee on Amendments the following change to the Rules of Discipline, Section 2.5: “Each presbytery shall have a standing commission which shall be called the “disciplinary commission.” Each judicatory above the session shall have a standing commission which shall be called the “judiciary committee.” Notwithstanding that these bodies may be called “committees,” each of these standing commissions shall exercise the powers and responsibilities entrusted to it under these Rules and shall be authorized to deliberate upon and conclude any business submitted to it pursuant to these Rules. A judicatory may assign other duties and responsibilities to its judiciary committee or its disciplinary commission, with or without the authority to act upon or to conclude such other matters,” be received favorably and referred to the Joint Committee on Amendments.

39. Referred to the Joint Committee on Amendments a Memorial from Nashville Presbytery requesting that following be added to the Constitution as new section (2.97), to wit: “The Cumberland Presbyterian Church and the Cumberland Presbyterian Church in America

having the same Confession and Constitution, shall recognize and accept the ordinations of ministers, elders, and/or deacons should a person ordained to one of these offices transfer from one Cumberland Presbyterian denomination to the other”.

40. Approved plans by the GA Judiciary Committee to schedule a zoom meeting with leadership in Cauca Valley Presbytery to discuss the concerns that were expressed in the memorial that presbytery sent to the 192nd General Assembly.

OFFICE OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

41. Approved the Church Calendar dates for 2024-2025.

42. Encouraged all churches, presbyteries and denominational ministries to work towards the implementation of the Vision and Strategy Action Plan for the CPC as adopted by the 193rd General Assembly.

43. Formed a committee to explore the appropriate next steps in trademark registration of the words “Cumberland Presbyterian”.

THEOLOGY AND SOCIAL CONCERNS

44. Affirmed the excellent work of the Unified Committee on Theology and Social Concerns and encouraged all congregations and presbyteries of both the Cumberland Presbyterian Church and the Cumberland Presbyterian Church in America to receive the forthcoming new workshop design on baptism.

STEWARDSHIP

45. Expressed gratitude and thanks to the staff of the Board of Stewardship, Foundation and Benefits for all their diligent work.

MISCELLANEOUS

46. “Action, Inspiration & Holy Conversations”, was the topic of a joint luncheon & program sponsored by the Cumberland Youth and Family Services, Bethel University and Memphis Theological Seminary was held on Wednesday evening. Elder Jo Ann Shugert (Red River Presbytery) served as moderator of a panel discussion presented by Ms. Courtney Banatoski, Cumberland Youth and Family Services President and Chief Executive Officer; Rev. Dr. Robert Watkins Bethel University interim President; and Rev. Dr. Jody Hill, Memphis Theological Seminary President. The panelists shared information regarding their respective institutions and offered appreciation for the prayers and mission support given by Cumberland Presbyterians.

47. The Women in Ministry Reception was held on Wednesday evening, hosted by MTS/PAS CPWM

and the Ministry Council’s Pastoral Development Ministry Team. Clergy Women of the Year recipients were announced. The international award was presented to the Reverend Luz Maria Hebron (Andes Presbytery) and the USA award was presented to the Reverend Lisa Oliver (Murfreesboro Presbytery).

48. Commissioned a new missionary family to Spain: Rev. Edgar and Iris Straube and their children Maria, Lucas and Noah.

49. The following new denominational staff were introduced: Rev. Jen Newell, Louisa Woosley Preaching Initiative Program Director; Rev. Justin Richter, Director Global Missions. Recognition was also given to Mrs. Cindy Martin from the Discipleship Ministry Team after twenty-six years of service.

50. The General Assembly adopted a *Resolution of Thanks* presented by the Elder Michael Fare, Missouri Presbytery.

NEXT MEETING

51. The General Assembly adjourned to meet in Knoxville, TN on June 15-19, 2025.

Copies of the General Assembly Minutes when completed will be made available in the following formats:

- *Online:* www.cumberland.org/gao
- *A limited supply of printed copies will be made available through the Cumberland Presbyterian Resource Center (901-276-4581).*
- *Copies of the Minutes on jump drive format will also be available from the General Assembly Office. Contact Elizabeth Vaughn at: 901-276-4572, extension 226 or eav@cumberland.org*

2024 General Assembly Theme & Logo:

