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REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON STEWARDSHIP/OUR UNITED OUTREACH

I. REFERRALS

Referrals to this committee are as follows: The Report of the Board of Stewardship, Foundation and Benefits; The Report of the Our United Outreach Committee; the 2024 Line Item Budgets Submitted by General Assembly Boards/Entities and the Resolution from Reverend Luke Lawson and Reverend David Linski to General Assembly Instructing to Comply with the Approved Actions of General Assembly.

II. PERSONS OF COUNSEL

Appearing before this committee were: Reverend Jeff McMichael, Our United Outreach Development Director and representative, Mikel Davis (Our United Outreach Committee); Reverend Robert Heflin, Executive Secretary, Reverend Gary Tubb, Board Representative and Reverend Brittany Meeks, Administrative Assistant and Coordinator of Benefits (Board of Stewardship, Foundation & Benefits); Minister commissioners Reverend Luke Lawson and Reverend David Linski; Reverend Mike Sharpe, Stated Clerk and Mr. Jaime Jordan, Legal Counsel.

III. CONSIDERATION OF REFERRALS

A. THE REPORT OF THE OUR UNITED OUTREACH COMMITTEE

The committee met with the Reverend Jeff McMichael and Elder Mikel Davis. Reverend McMichael explained the new vision and strategy of the committee, “Sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ Together.” The Ambassador program has been making a difference in presbyteries giving. Right now there are seven (7) active Ambassadors and the committee are looking for people that would be interested to serve in this way. Elder Davis explained how OUO is responsible for allocating what each agency receives by percentage. It is a challenge to decide on percentages and balance out the needs since they do not know from year to year what they will actually receive. Their goal is to get sixty-five (65%) percent of churches giving to OUO this year. We support and encourage this goal and hope that all churches will consider giving to OUO. The committee hopes to show how churches are being impacted by OUO and that there is great value in giving to OUO. The committee also plans to focus on celebrating and saying thank you to those churches that are participating in OUO. Our committee commends all churches who currently have a commitment to giving to OUO. Our committee also wants to express our thanks for the hard work done by Rev McMichael and the OUO committee.

RECOMMENDATION 1: That Recommendation 1 of the Report of the Our United Outreach Committee, “that General Assembly adopt the following Our United Outreach allocations for 2025:

Amount to be Allocated	2,500,000.00	
Ministry Council	\$1,203,978	48.159%
Bethel University	120,398	4.816%
Children’s Home	72,239	2.890%
Stewardship	242,355	9.694%
General Assembly Office	192,636	7.705%
Memphis Theological Seminary		
/Program of Alternate Studies	168,557	6.742%
Historical Foundation	72,239	2.890%
Shared Services	287,395	11.496%
Contingency	12,040	0.482%
OUO Committee	92,044	3.682%
Comm. On Chaplains	13,990	0.560%
Judiciary Committee	13,196	0.528%
Theology/Social Concern	4,912	0.196%
Nominating Committee	4,021	0.161%
Our United Outreach Goal	\$2,500,000	100.000%,” be adopted

B. THE REPORT OF THE BOARD OF STEWARDSHIP, FOUNDATION AND BENEFITS

The committee met with Reverend Robert Heflin, Reverend Gary Tubb, and Reverend Brittany Meeks, the Board of Stewardship, Foundation and Benefits is responsible for the yearly audit which is on file in the General Assembly Office. That audit is carried out by Fouts and Morgan. They also manage the Endowment Fund and the Retirement Fund with Gerber/Taylor. The Board of Stewardship, Foundation and Benefits oversees the Ministerial Aid Fund as well as all of Cumberland Presbyterian Insurance Programs. The committee wants to express our gratitude and thanks to the staff of the Board of Stewardship, Foundation and Benefits for all of their diligent work. The report had no recommendations, was reviewed and concurred in.

C. 2024 LINE ITEM BUDGETS SUBMITTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY ENTITIES

We reviewed the 2024-2025 line-item budgets submitted by General Assembly entities and we concur in the report..

D. RESOLUTION FROM REV. LUKE LAWSON AND REV. DAVID LINSKI, TO GENERAL ASSEMBLY INSTRUCTING TO COMPLY WITH THE APPROVED ACTIONS OF GENERAL ASSEMBLY

The committee reviewed the following Resolution and met with the Resolution's makers:

Resolution from Rev. Luke Lawson and Rev. David Linski, to General Assembly Instructing to Comply With the Approved Actions of General Assembly

WHEREAS, The 189th General Assembly 2019 approved the recommendation (#9, page 325), which states: F. LINE ITEM BUDGETS SUBMITTED BY GENERAL ASSEMBLY AGENCIES: The committee recognizes the uncertainty involved in preparing budgets, and expresses appreciation for the hard work of all the agencies that submitted budgets to the 189th General assembly. To achieve a better sense of surety, as well as providing better transparency, the committee makes the following recommendation: RECOMMENDATION 9: Include, with the proposed Line Item Budget, the previous year's actuals for income and expenses.

AND WHEREAS, this recommendation was not put into action the following year at the 190th General Assembly 2021 and admitted by the Stated Clerk to be an oversight and to be fixed,

AND WHEREAS, this recommendation has never been put into action as approved by General Assembly and forgotten by later General Assemblies, even though according to the Handbook For Clerks, states: Each judicatory shall elect a stated clerk who shall preserve all minutes, documents, and papers committed to the office of stated clerk and submit these records to the next higher judicatory in compliance with that judicatory's rules and regulations. (3.1) (pg. 1),

AND WHEREAS, according to the Handbook For Clerks, states: The stated clerk shall perform the duties of the office of stated clerk during the meeting of the judicatory unless otherwise determined by the judicatory,

AND WHEREAS, most commissioners to General Assembly are unaware of prior decisions made by General Assembly because there is not continuity of commissioners serving consecutive years,

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Stated Clerk of General Assembly be told to comply with the actions of the 189th General Assembly and its recommendation,

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the General Assembly bylaw 15.02 which states: "Institutional Reports. In order to be considered for inclusion in the General Assembly budget, all denominational entities shall deliver to the Stated Clerk an annual report including a concise description of the organization's work during the previous year and a line item budget for the forthcoming year. Financial reports should be condensed as much as possible while conveying all essential information on the organization's operations. All denominational entities except academic institutions on a fiscal year are requested to maintain their books on a calendar year." Be amended to state: ..." "Institutional Reports. In order to be considered for inclusion in the General Assembly budget, all denominational entities shall deliver to the Stated Clerk an annual report including a concise description of the organization's work during the previous year, a line item budget for the forthcoming year with the corresponding line item actuals from the previous year. Financial reports should be condensed as much as possible while conveying all essential information on the organization's operations. All denominational entities except academic institutions on a fiscal year are requested to maintain their books on a calendar year,"

THEREFOR, BE IT RESOLVED, that if the actions of General Assembly be out of order with the current General Assembly bylaws that the Stated Clerk reports to the General Assembly that its actions are out of order,

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that if the actions of a General Assembly be unrealistic or impractical that the Stated Clerk and denominational entities report back to General Assembly reasons for inability to comply and an alternative

plan to comply with General Assembly as best as possible,

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that General Assembly encourage presbyteries to send delegates for consecutive years so that institutional memory can span multiple years.

RECOMMENDATION 2: That based on a request by the Resolution's makers, the General Assembly would accept the withdrawal of the Resolution from Reverend Luke Lawson and Reverend David Linski, to General Assembly instructing to comply with the approved actions of General Assembly.

Respectfully submitted,
The Stewardship/OUO Committee

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON CHAPLAINS/HISTORICAL FOUNDATION

I. REFERRALS

Referrals to this committee are as follows: The Report of the Board of Trustees of the Historical Foundation and The Report of the Commission on Federal Chaplaincies.

II. PERSONS OF COUNSEL

Appearing before this committee were: Mrs. Susan Knight Gore, Archivist, Historical Foundation; Ms. Kelly Shanton, Historical Foundation Board Representative; and Mr. Tommy Craig, representative, General Assembly Commission on Federal Chaplaincies.

III. CONSIDERATION OF REFERRALS

A. REPORT OF THE BOARDS OF TRUSTEES OF THE HISTORICAL FOUNDATION

The committee was privileged to hear from Archivist Susan Knight Gore and Ms. Kelly Shanton, Board of Trustees of the Historical Foundation representative. Ms. Gore highlighted the efforts of the Cooperative Project to scan and digitize some of the most fragile records of churches and presbyteries, as well as publications of the denomination. This work is a long process and continues still. Ms. Gore pointed out the Publication Series where they publish works of Cumberland Presbyterians for purchase, the proceeds of which go to the Historical Foundation Trust. Ms. Gore noted the \$500 prize for works written and submitted.

Ms. Gore discussed in depth acquisitions the Archives would like to have. These items from ministers and churches can be difficult to understand and overwhelm the archive. The first item to send in are books that include individual church history, and any written works about the general history of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church. Collections about ministers and minister production, like sermons, ordination certificates, funeral bulletins, and obituaries. Museum items: gavels from presbyteries, quilts, mugs, bulletins, etc.

The committee discussed the 100th anniversary of ministry in Colombia and the Colombian delegates asked what the historical foundation would want for the archive to remember such an event.

Ms. Gore discussed the care given to the birthplace memorial in Dixon, Tennessee. Two recent projects were: a sign installed by Montgomery Bell State Park and a new split rail fence was installed as the old one had fallen into disrepair.

As always, the continued work to preserve our history as Cumberland Presbyterians, both past history and present history, is of utmost importance and the committee appreciates the continued work of Mrs. Gore and the Historical Foundation.

The report was received and concurred in. There were no recommendations.

B. REPORT OF THE COMMISSION ON FEDERAL CHAPLAINCIES

The Chaplains/Historical Foundation Committee appreciated the opportunity to speak with Mr. Tommy Craig, representative for Commission on Federal Chaplaincies, about the important work of our federal chaplains. We discussed the involvement and work of Cumberland Presbyterian ministers in the larger group "Presbyterian Federal Chaplaincies." This group is the organization that consolidates the endorsement of Presbyterian Chaplains. It includes Presbyterian USA, Cumberland Presbyterian Church, Cumberland Presbyterian Church in America, and the Korean Presbyterian Church Abroad.

Mr. Craig asked the committee to remind presbyteries to think more deeply about how to support the Chaplains in their care. There were questions from the Colombian delegates about the requirements of becoming more involved with the chaplain program from both sides. There were also concerns about the societal issues in Colombia and a calling for training for chaplains to help in their circumstances as there is a need for chaplains in Colombia. What could the CP church do to help train ministers to be Chaplains in Colombia?

The committee appreciates the work of Mr. Craig and the Presbyterian Federal Chaplaincies. The work they offer the many service men and women in all their situations is greatly needed and they have our deepest gratitude. We also give great thanks and appreciation specifically to the Cumberland Presbyterian Ministers that serve in all of their different capacities within our military branches and the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).

The report was received and concurred in, and this committee makes the following recommendations:

RECOMMENDATION 1: That Recommendation 1 of the Report of the Commission on Federal Chaplaincies, “that each USA Cumberland Presbyterian Church be encouraged to provide an opportunity for their congregations to receive an offering on the last Sunday of May, or another special day, to support our ministry through the PFC,” be adopted.

RECOMMENDATION 2: That Recommendation 2 of the Report of the Commission on Federal Chaplaincies, “that congregations of both the Cumberland Presbyterian Church and the Cumberland Presbyterian Church in America encourage their individual churches and members in the United States to designate special days through the year to engage in prayer to hold up the chaplains and their families in the service to which they have been endorsed,” be adopted.

RECOMMENDATION 3: That Recommendation 3 of the Report of the Commission on Federal Chaplaincies, “that Presbyteries be encouraged to make special efforts to communicate with those members serving as chaplains from their presbytery to include more than just the actions of presbytery,” be adopted.

RECOMMENDATION 4: That Recommendation 4 of the Report of the Commission on Federal Chaplaincies, “that clergy and presbyterial committees on probationer care, in their discussions of a call for a ministerial candidate, be encouraged to include 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,” be adopted.

IV. CONCERN AROUND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AND TRAINING FOR INTERNATIONAL CHAPLAINCIES

There was much discussion among the committee concerning the differences between Chaplains in the USA and International Chaplains, specifically the understanding of how the two different groups are supported and trained. It is noted that there are many Chaplains in Columbia and a need for more, therefore there is a need for more training. Could PAS find new resources to train Chaplains?

There is also a desire to make sure we recognize chaplains across the denomination throughout the globe. The challenges of ministering to people in hospitals and law enforcement in countries other than the USA are very different than in the USA. There are also challenges for international chaplains working in the USA.

Considering all these things this committee makes the following recommendation:

RECOMMENDATION 5: 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.

Respectively submitted,
The Chaplains/Historical Foundation Committee

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON MINISTRY COUNCIL

I. REFERRAL

Referral to this committee was the Report of the Ministry Council and the Resolution to the 193rd General Assembly of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church for Healing and Reconciliation submitted by Reverend Patrick Wilkinson.

II. PERSONS OF COUNSEL

Appearing before the Committee were Mrs. Edith Old, Director of Ministries of the CPC Ministry Council, along with members of the Ministry Council: Matthew Gore (Interim Communications Ministry Team Leader), Reverend Elinor Brown (Discipleship Ministry Team Leader), Reverend Dr. Milton Ortiz (Missions Ministry Team Leader), Reverend Dr. Pam Phillips-Burk, (Pastoral Development Ministry Team Leader), and Jinger Ellis, (Manager of Administration and Finance, Missions Ministry Team), and Debbie Hayes (representative to General Assembly). Also appearing before the Committee was Reverend Patrick Wilkerson.

III. CONSIDERATION OF REFERRAL

A. REPORT OF THE MINISTRY COUNCIL

We acknowledge the hard work and dedication of all the members of the Ministry Council's four ministry teams, and its elected membership. We encourage General Assembly members to read the Ministry Council's detailed report as there is a great deal of information that will benefit local churches and presbyteries.

It should be noted that Children's Fest was held on June 1. The Stated Clerk's Report indicates it is scheduled for June 20, 2024. Severe thunderstorms cut out the power, but Children's Fest "Unplugged" continued without electricity. It was a very successful event.

We have cause to celebrate in 2025. The Cumberland Presbyterian Church in Colombia turns 100 years old in 2025. The Global Missions Team has prepared various events in which we all can participate and celebrate with our brothers and sisters in Colombia.

Events Scheduled for 2025

Inspirational Online Services

February 1 – Join MMT for an inspiring online worship service from Colombia (Spanish) and the U.S. (English), celebrating our mission's profound impact.

Opportunities for Celebration in the U.S.

February 4 – Denomination Day (promotional materials)

June 15-20 – General Assembly (worship)

July 6-11 – CPYC (cake)

July 10-13 – Women's Convention (special celebration)

October 14 – Day at the Park (cake)

Mission Trip Opportunities -- Celebratory Events in Colombia

June 27-28 – Pastor's & Leaders' Gathering in Medellin

August 15-18 – Women's Gathering in Pereira

October 10-13 – Young Adults' Gathering in Cali

Other International Events

July 31-August 5 – Asian Youth Gathering in Cambodia

Resources

Upcoming information in Missionary Messenger and Cumberland Presbyterian Magazine. Resources will be developed for pastors and church leaders.

RECOMMENDATION 1: That General Assembly plan for 2025 a celebration for the 100th anniversary of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church in Colombia.

B. RESOLUTION TO THE 193RD GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE CUMBERLAND PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH FOR HEALING AND RECONCILIATION PRESENTED BY PATRICK WILKINSON

The committee reviewed the following Resolution and met with the Resolution maker:

Resolution to the 193rd General Assembly of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church for Healing and Reconciliation

A resolution seeking reconciliation and healing between divided persons, churches, presbyteries, synods, positions of leadership, and generally throughout the denomination. Allowing the refocusing of our time, energy, and resources to improve broken and build new relationships as brothers and sisters in the Cumberland Presbyterian Church so that we can be united in the mission of the church and in following the commandments of Jesus Christ, to love God and love our neighbor.

All while being faithful to our callings to the Great Commission to go and make disciples throughout the world.

WHEREAS the Cumberland Presbyterian Church puts much emphasis and honors the fact that we are a “Global” and “Connectional” church; and

WHEREAS the Cumberland Presbyterian Church has a growing presence in at least 20 countries around the world; and

WHEREAS everyone represents a different culture with different theological beliefs that are partially developed through culture and personal experience; and

WHEREAS historically the Cumberland Presbyterian Church has developed its mission program and ministry, with initial help and development by the CPWM in the early days of CP Missions, by sending missionaries to educate and equip ministers who are native to the country of service. This has allowed these ministers to be the ones to go throughout that country to evangelize and minister to their own brothers and sisters that share their citizenship, culture, language, customs, practices and general way of life; and

WHEREAS this has allowed the church to develop in a way that allows for these cultures, languages, customs, and practices to be included in the worship practices and theologies of our international and global churches; and

WHEREAS through this mission program and strategy, we celebrate the success of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church internationally and globally as it grows; and

WHEREAS we often, when participating in mission trips, visits from international delegates and commissioners, General Assemblies and denominational events outside of the United States, we celebrate and embrace these differences; and

WHEREAS we have many different cultures and practices within the United States influenced by regions, ethnicities, social structures, social norms, and many other demographics within the Cumberland Presbyterian Church and the Cumberland Presbyterian Church of America; and

WHEREAS we are two denominations that share one Confession of Faith with some differences such as: the education process for ordination, ownership of church properties, and more; and

WHEREAS even with these differences we hold to the essential doctrines found in the Confession of Faith and have ministered together as two denominations and as a global church; and

WHEREAS it is impossible to have a one hundred percent concurrence and belief theologically and with ministerial and worship practices due to all our different cultures, languages, backgrounds, and ideologies, yet we have been able to minister and serve together as one church for over 200 years; and

WHEREAS there has been a growing and noticeable divide in our denomination rooted in political, theological, and biblical interpretation differences; and

WHEREAS there has been a great effort to build arguments and “sides” of difficult issues forcing people to choose to agree one hundred percent with one side or the other using comments like “you are either with us or against us”; and

WHEREAS a presbytery has been divided and others are currently considering leaving or plan to leave because they do not fully agree with the results of a failed attempt to reach the required threshold of required votes to adopt the proposed Constitutional amendments of the 192nd General Assembly; and

WHEREAS all ordained ministers promised and answered in the affirmative to questions IV and VI of 6.36 in the Constitution which states: “In participating as a minister in the judicatories of the church, do you promise to share in a responsible way in the decisions that are made, to abide by those decisions, and to promote the welfare of the church?” and “As God may enable you, do you promise to be zealous and faithful in maintaining the truths of the gospel and purity and peace of the church, irrespective of any opposition that may arise to you on that account”; and

WHEREAS all church deacons and elders promised and answered in the affirmative to questions III and IV to

“uphold the government of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church” and to “promote peace, unity, and purity of the church” in 2.92 of the Constitution; and

WHEREAS all probationers who are licensed promised and answered in the affirmative to question III of 6.203 of the Constitution to “promote peace, unity, and purity of the church”; and

WHEREAS when “promoting peace, unity, and purity of the church” we refer to the definition of the church found in 5.01 – 5.09 of the Confession of Faith,

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the 193rd General Assembly of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church adopt the following recommendations:

RECOMMENDATION 1: That the Cumberland Presbyterian Church reaffirm its identity as a “Global” and “Connectional” church – embracing the different cultural, linguistic translations, and theological beliefs found in our churches, and other judicatories – as we celebrate our different international and domestic identities as followers of Jesus Christ and Cumberland Presbyterians.

RECOMMENDATION 2: That the Cumberland Presbyterian Church be reminded of their vows and promises made by church members, licentiates, and ministers to uphold our governmental system and strive to promote peace, unity, and purity of the church by following Jesus’ example and his commandments to love God and neighbor.

RECOMMENDATION 3: That the 193rd General Assembly of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church enter a time of reconciliation and healing to mend and build relationships with a refocused purpose for mission and ministry.

RECOMMENDATION 4: That the 193rd General Assembly of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church adopt an initiative led by an outside party or consultant that specializes in conflict resolution – incorporating all levels and judicatories of the Church and for all members to facilitate reconciliation, healing, peace, unity, and purity.

Rev. Patrick Wilkerson Pastor of Shiloh CPC Red River Presbytery
Commissioner to 193rd General Assembly

RECOMMENDATION 2: That Recommendations 1, 3 and 4, of the above Resolution be denied.

RECOMMENDATION 3: That Recommendation 2 of the above Resolution be adopted.

The committee makes the following recommendations:

RECOMMENDATION 4: That the Cumberland Presbyterian Church reaffirm its identity as a “Global” and “Connectional” Church — embracing the different cultures, and linguistic translations found in our churches — as we celebrate our different international and domestic identities as followers of Jesus Christ and Cumberland Presbyterians.

RECOMMENDATION 5: That General Assembly of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church enter a time of reconciliation and request the Ministry Council to develop an initiative to the 194th General Assembly to address any issue that might divide the Cumberland Presbyterian Church.

Respectfully submitted,
The Ministry Council Committee

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON THEOLOGY AND SOCIAL CONCERNS

I. REFERRAL

Referral to this committee is as follows: The Report of the Unified Committee on Theology and Social Concerns, the Resolution presented by Commissioner Reverend Frank Ward, Midsouth Presbytery and the Resolution from Elder Karen Reid, Presbytery del Cristo.

II. PERSONS OF COUNSEL

Appearing before this committee were: Reverend Lisa Scott, Engrossing Clerk of General Assembly and representative for the Unified Committee on Theology and Social Concerns (UCTSC) appeared before the committee and shared the vision and work of UCTSC and answered questions. Reverend Frank Ward, Midsouth Presbytery, talked with us about his Resolution and answered questions. We thank them both for their time, attention, and thoughtfulness.

III. CONSIDERATION OF REFERRALS

A. REPORT OF THE UNIFIED COMMITTEE ON THEOLOGY AND SOCIAL CONCERNS

This committee wishes to express our thanks for the continued work of the Unified Committee on Theology and Social Concerns.

RECOMMENDATION 1: That the 193rd General Assembly affirm the excellent work of the UCTSC and encourage all congregations and presbyteries of both the Cumberland Presbyterian Church and the Cumberland Presbyterian Church in America to receive and utilize the forthcoming new workshop design on baptism.

B. RESOLUTIONS FROM REVEREND FRANK WARD AND ELDER KAREN REID

The committee did its work faithfully, respectfully, and humbly. In our conversations on difficult subjects, we agreed to disagree, when needed, agreeably. Our discussions were based on careful, faithful conversations, grounded in Jesus Christ and His word. We urge this General Assembly to do the same, such that future conversations, though difficult at times, might be “good faith” conversations always.

The committee reviewed the following Resolution:

A RESOLUTION SEEKING RECONCILIATION AND HEALING To the 193rd Meeting of the General Assembly of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church

WHEREAS amendments proposing changes to the Constitution of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church and the Cumberland Presbyterian Church in America were initiated for the purpose of excluding persons in same gender relationships from leadership as ministers and as elders; and,

WHEREAS voting tallies at these meetings of presbytery failed to reach the Constitutionally-required threshold for adoption of the amendments, thus leaving the Constitution unchanged; and,

WHEREAS debate concerning the proposed amendments has resulted in discord, disunity, confusion, unrest and hostility at all judicatory levels of the denomination; and,

WHEREAS committed Cumberland Presbyterians, like many other Christians, have arrived at their scriptural understanding concerning same gender relationships through fervent prayer, disciplined Bible study, insights shared with others in the covenant community, the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and myriad diverse experiences of and interactions with persons holding differing theologies and backgrounds; and,

WHEREAS the Cumberland Presbyterian Church has entrusted ministers with the sacraments and scriptures, congregations with determining who is capable of serving as elders, elders with the responsibility to prayerfully engage the congregation in mission fulfillment, and presbyteries with the right to determine who does and does not fulfill God’s calling to ordained ministry; and,

WHEREAS the Cumberland Presbyterian Church has withstood the storms of conflict and controversy for more

than 214 years including: slavery and civil war, attempted union in 1906, the role of women in church leadership, relocation of the seminary, social issues like abortion, threat of division through the Upper Cumberland Presbyterian movement, reinterpretation of the meaning of missions throughout the world, and many other challenges; and,

WHEREAS the Cumberland Presbyterian Church affirms in article 6.30 of the Confession of Faith that: The covenant community, governed by the Lord Christ, opposes, resists, and seeks to change all circumstances of oppression--political, economic, cultural, racial--by which persons are denied the essential dignity God intends for them in the work of creation; and,

WHEREAS the Cumberland Presbyterian Church asserts in article 6.32 of the Confession of Faith that: God gives the message and ministry of reconciliation to the church. The church, corporately and through her individual members, seeks to promote reconciliation, love, and justice among all persons, classes, races, and nations; and,

WHEREAS the Cumberland Presbyterian Church now has an opportunity to lead once again by refusing to allow our differing interpretations of scripture concerning same gender relations to become a divisive issue and prevent us from pursuing God's invitation to be disciples of reconciling love through Jesus Christ; and,

WHEREAS we also have an opportunity to set an example in a society that has lost sight of the value and nobility of compromise, of developing solutions to seemingly intractable disagreements that, in the end, recognize the sincerity and validity of each individual's commitment to a cause while facilitating work toward our common goal—that of making disciples and living the Good News in a world badly in need of good news; and,

WHEREAS immeasurable time and energy has been spent over the past five years defending or advancing one position versus another in this matter—plotting strategies toward achieving each's desired outcome;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the 193rd General Assembly of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church adopt the following recommendations:

RECOMMENDATION 1: That the Cumberland Presbyterian Church reaffirm its foundational commitment to its identity as a “Whosoever Will” denomination with a medium theology, affirming Jesus Christ as Lord and the role of individuals in responding to God's reconciling love; and,

RECOMMENDATION 2: That the General Assembly calls upon all Cumberland Presbyterians to: pray for unity in spirit and calling, turn away from that which divides us, listen and respond to the brokenness and hurt of all those who feel burdened by rejection and injustice; and, invite the wisdom of the Holy Spirit in hearing various viewpoints, especially those which differ from our own; and,

RECOMMENDATION 3: That the General Assembly affirm that given the variety of views on same gender relationships and sexual preferences, it is not appropriate to define either view as the policy of the church. Instead the General Assembly of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church recognizes that there is a wide range of views on this issue drawn from interpretations of the Confession of Faith, scripture and Christian faith. As it did regarding the questions of slavery and of women in ministry in the 19th century, and the question of abortion in the 20th century, the General Assembly allows for and affirms the exercise of individuals' freedom of conscience in matters of scriptural understanding and interpretation in all but the essential doctrines of our faith; and,

RECOMMENDATION 4: That the Cumberland Presbyterian Church reaffirm—as a means of moving forward in grace and with undivided attention to living the Good News in a world desperate for good news—its foundational principles, rooted in the Presbyterian form of government, that congregations shall have a right to call and/or ordain whomever they deem fit for positions of leadership within their own community of faith, that presbyteries alone may license and ordain whomever they deem fit for service in ministry, and conversely, that no congregation or presbytery may be required to call and/or ordain any person into any position of leadership they deem unfit for such service.

Rev. Frank Ward
Mid-South Presbytery
Commissioner to the 193rd General Assembly

RECOMMENDATION 2: That the Resolution presented by Reverend Frank Ward “A Resolution Seeking Reconciliation and Healing”, be denied.

The committee reviewed the following Resolution:

Resolution Seeking Forgiveness, Loving Kindness, and Unity Regarding LGBTQ Issues
in the Cumberland Presbyterian Church

WHEREAS in 1991, the General Assembly addressed the controversial issue of abortion by affirming the principle of individual Christian conscience as a means to maintain peace and unity within the church, and

WHEREAS attempts to deprive individuals of their freedom of conscience and enforce a single view on the controversial matter of same-sex relationships lead to disunity within the church, and

WHEREAS our Confession of Faith affirms that uniformity of belief is not required for unity, as paragraph 5.02

reads: “The church is one because her Head and Lord is one, Jesus Christ. Here oneness under her Lord is manifested in the one ministry of word and sacrament, not in any uniformity of covenantal expression, organization, or system of doctrine”, and

WHEREAS Cumberland Presbyterians hold a variety of views on LGBTQ+ identities and relationships, each representing equally sincere interpretations of the Christian faith, each seeking to be faithful to scripture, and each striving to be open to the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Therefore, be it resolved that the 193rd General Assembly of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church adopt the following recommendations:

Recommendation 1: The General Assembly calls upon all Cumberland Presbyterians to pray for the peace of the church, to repent of allowing this debate to divide us, to hear the pain of Christian sisters and brothers struggling with this issue, and to be open to the guidance of the Holy Spirit speaking through those who hold opposing points of view.

Recommendation 2: Acknowledging that members of our church will act on their convictions in both the public arena and within the church, The General Assembly affirms their prerogative to act in Christian conscience.

Recommendation 3: Recognizing that “God alone is Lord of the conscience” (CoF 6.02), the General Assembly reaffirms our existing confessional statement on Marriage and Family (CoF 6.15-6.22), allowing each minister and congregation to make their own decisions regarding LGBTQ+-related issues. According to our long-standing tradition, each church will continue to decide who they elect to be elders and deacons, who they call to be pastors, and who may serve in leadership positions within their church. Each presbytery will continue to decide whom they recognize as validly called by God to ordained ministry in the church. This recognizes the diversity of perspectives within our denomination and aims to reunite all Cumberland Presbyterians in love, as our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ loves each and every one of us.

Karen Reid, Elder Commissioner
Del Cristo Presbytery

RECOMMENDATION 3: That the Resolution presented by Elder Karen Reid “Resolution Seeking Forgiveness, Loving Kindness, and Unity Regarding LGBTQ Issues in the Cumberland Presbyterian Church”, be denied.

Respectfully submitted,
The Committee on Theology and Social Concerns
Reverend Cliff Hudson, chair
Elder MacKenzie Brooks, vice-chair

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION/CUMBERLAND YOUTH & FAMILY SERVICES

I. REFERRALS

Referrals to this committee are as follows: The Report of the Board of Trustees of Memphis Theological Seminary, The Report of the Board of Trustees of Bethel University, and the Board of Trustees of the Cumberland Youth & Family Services.

II. PERSONS OF COUNSEL

Appearing before this committee were: Courtney Banatoski, President and CEO Cumberland Youth & Family Services and Brian Martin, Chairman of the Board Cumberland Youth & Family Services, Rev. Dr. Robert Watkins, Interim President Bethel University, Dr. Perry Moulds, President Bethel University; Dr. Nancy Bean, Chairperson of the Board of Trustees of Bethel University; Rev. Dr. Jody Hill, President, Memphis Theological Seminary (MTS), Rev. Kip Rush, Moderator of Board of Trustees, MTS, Rev. Dr. Michael Qualls, Director Cumberland Presbyterian House of Studies and Director Program of Alternate Studies, MTS; Rev. Mike Sharpe, Board of Directors of the Cumberland Presbyterian General Assembly Corporation.

III. CONSIDERATION OF REFERRALS

A. THE REPORT OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF THE CUMBERLAND PRESBYTERIAN YOUTH & FAMILY SERVICES

Upon receiving the report and hearing discussion from representatives from Cumberland Youth and Family Services, the committee commends the Board, Courtney Banatoski, and staff for continued commitment to the 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. All of this with sensitive care to providing a safe environment to address challenges with a vulnerable and at-risk population.

RECOMMENDATION 1: That the General Assembly add Children’s Home Sunday back to the official calendar. In 2025 the date is March 9.

RECOMMENDATION 2: That the General Assembly encourage Cumberland Presbyterians to continue financial support, prayers, and volunteer service in this ministry to and with the most vulnerable.

B. THE REPORT OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF BETHEL UNIVERSITY

Upon receiving the report and hearing discussion from representatives of Bethel University, the committee commends the continued ministry and service of the University, faculty, and staff.

RECOMMENDATION 3: That the General Assembly express 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 their ministry in securing the leadership of the new President Dr. Perry Moulds. Furthermore, that the General Assembly expresses thanksgiving to Bethel University for the continued progress in the development of the Bethel campus including the new worship center, and the commitment to the education of students, with the intentional focus on spiritual and character development.

RECOMMENDATION 4: That Recommendation 1 of the Report of the Board of Trustees of Bethel University, “that this General Assembly welcomes Dr. Perry Moulds pledging to support him in prayer,” be adopted.

RECOMMENDATION 5: That Recommendation 2 of the Report of the Board of Trustees of Bethel University, “that General Assembly share Bethel University’s Mission and ask Presbyteries worldwide to support the university in its prayers, financial offerings and referral of students,” be adopted.

RECOMMENDATION 6: That Recommendation 3 of the Report of the Board of Trustees of Bethel University, “that Bethel University Sunday November 3, 2024 be announced and supported in denominational calendars, publications and social media,” be adopted.

RECOMMENDATION 7: That Recommendation 4 of the Report of the Board of Trustees of Bethel University, :that this General Assembly urge pastors, elders, and church leaders to discuss with their youth and adult learners the possibility of attending Bethel University,” be adopted.

C. THE REPORT OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF MEMPHIS THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Upon receiving the report and hearing discussion from representatives from Memphis Theological Seminary, the committee commends the seminary and its staff for plans that develop new options for making seminary education accessible, establishing the Cumberland Presbyterian House of Studies through the Baird/Buck Endowment, and exploring support through grant programs.

RECOMMENDATION 8: That the General Assembly extend appreciation to the leadership and staff of Memphis Theological Seminary 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.

RECOMMENDATION 9: That Recommendation 1 of the Report of the Board of Trustees of Memphis Theological Seminary, “that the General Assembly express its gratitude to trustee Rev. Dr. Yoong Kim and Rev. Rian Puckett for their faithful service to Memphis Theological Seminary and the Cumberland Presbyterian Church,” be adopted.

The committee reviewed the following Resolution from the Preliminary Minutes:

RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF MEMPHIS THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

WHEREAS, Over the last ten years, 19 Association of Theological Schools (ATS) have merged together and continue degree granting. 12 ATS schools have merged into universities and continue degree granting, 1 school was purchased by a non-educational entity, and there have been approximately 15 closures of ATS schools;

WHEREAS, when we examine the best available data related to those seminaries that are most likely to remain viable into the future, it is clear that the most sustainable model is a seminary embedded in a larger institution;

WHEREAS, Memphis Theological Seminary needs the authority of the General Assembly to merge or be acquired by another institution.

WHEREAS, the seminary and a merger or acquisition partner do not have the authority to negotiate terms of an agreement without the approval of the General Assembly;

WHEREAS, we need to be able to negotiate the seminary’s future with an institutional partner in the months immediately following this meeting of General Assembly and the Church has a mechanism to secure approval of negotiated terms on behalf of the denomination;

WHEREAS, section 1.01 of the bylaws of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church General Assembly Corporation states, “This corporation has been formed to serve and support the Church by holding real and personal property of the Church, employing staff to serve the Church, and performing other secular and legal functions.”

and

WHEREAS, section 5.13 of the bylaws of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church General Assembly Corporation states, “If the Board of Directors determines by a vote of three-fourths of all its members that an emergency exists of such magnitude as to threaten the work of the whole Church, or of all boards and other agencies of the Church, and that the emergency requires action before the next meeting of the General Assembly, then the Board of Directors shall exercise the powers of the Commissioners in such emergency.”

BE IT RESOLVED, that the General Assembly of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church authorizes the Board of Trustees of Memphis Theological Seminary to negotiate an acquisition or merger of the Seminary with another educational institution and consents for the Board of Directors of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church General Assembly Corporation to conduct any legal steps necessary to relinquish ownership of Memphis Theological Seminary.

RECOMMENDATION 10: That Recommendation 2 of the Report of the Board of Trustees of Memphis Theological Seminary, “that the General Assembly adopt the above Resolution authorizing Memphis Theological Seminary of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church to be acquired or to merge with another educational institution be approved,” be denied.

RECOMMENDATION 11: That we acknowledge the Report of the Board of Trustees of Memphis Theological Seminary that circumstances create a need for the Seminary to enter into acquisition or merger discussions with other educational institutions: that we express hope that the Seminary will be in those discussions with Bethel University; that we request that the Seminary to keep representatives with the General Assembly Corporation and the Pastoral Development Ministry Team apprised of acquisition or merger discussions, especially concerning the implications of such actions for the Cumberland Presbyterian Church; that the General Assembly Corporation defer consideration of any merger or acquisition until more information is available; and that the General Assembly plan a called meeting of the General Assembly to address a merger or acquisition at the appropriate time.

RECOMMENDATION 12: That the General Assembly express appreciation to Memphis Theological Seminary for reporting its intention to sell the Hilliard Hall on 184 E. Parkway South, which is presently unused and available.

RECOMMENDATION 13: That Recommendation 3 of the Report of the Board of Trustees of Memphis Theological Seminary, “that the third Sunday in August, (August 18, 2024 and August 17, 2025) be included in the General Assembly Calendar as Seminary/PAS Sunday, and that the General Assembly encourage 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 Cumberland Presbyterian Studies until the Chair in CP Studies is fully funded,” be adopted.

Respectfully submitted,
The Committee on Higher Education/Cumberland Youth and Family Services

**The
 Proceedings
 of the**

**ONE HUNDRED NINETY-THIRD
 GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

of the

CUMBERLAND PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

session held in

**DOUBLE TREE HOTEL
 EVANSVILLE, INDIANA**

on

June 16 - 21, 2024

At Evansville, Indiana and within the facilities of the Double Tree Hotel, there the seventeenth day of June in the year of our Lord, Two Thousand Twenty-four, at the appointed hour of two o'clock in the afternoon, Minister and Elder Commissioners from the various presbyteries, youth advisory delegates and visitors assembled.

On June 16th, prior to the start of General Assembly business session, Commissioners and visitors were invited to attend a "Hymn Sing and Testimony Service" at Morningside Cumberland Presbyterian Church in Evansville, Indiana, where the Reverend James Messer is pastor.

SECOND DAY – MONDAY – JUNE 17, 2024

The day began with orientation for Commissioners and YAD's at 9:00 a.m. with prayer offered by Moderator, the Reverend Mitch Boulton, Cornerstone Presbytery. The Reverend Michael Sharpe, Stated Clerk, led the orientation. He noted that this is the first General Assembly to not meet in conjunction with the Cumberland Presbyterian Women Ministries Convention. As part of orientation, Reverend Sharpe showed a brief video on *The Denominational Vision, Mission, and Strategic Framework*, which was adopted by the 192nd General Assembly. Following his remarks Reverend Sharpe invited Reverend James Messer, Co-host Pastor, (North Central Presbytery) to greet the Commissioners and YADs. Reverend Messer invited those present to visit the Host Table and provided information on the availability of airport shuttles for those traveling later in the week.

Once the orientation was concluded, the YAD's were dismissed to meet with Reverend Dr. Chris Fleming, Coordinator Adult Ministry. The Chairs and Co-Chairs of the General Assembly Committees met with Engrossing Clerk Reverend Lisa A. Scott for further orientation.

THE ASSEMBLY IS CONSTITUTED

The Moderator, the Reverend Mitch Boulton, called the assembly to order at 2:00 p.m. He made preliminary announcements to the General Assembly, offering words of appreciation and welcome to those present.

Moderator Boulton asked that the Commissioners and Youth Advisory Delegates be seated in the first three rows, with the fourth row reserved for representatives of the boards and agencies.

WELCOME, PASTOR HOSTS, LOCAL OFFICIALS

Moderator Boulton then invited North Central Presbytery Pastor Co-Hosts Reverend James Messer

and Reverend Jeff Biggs, North Central Presbytery to bring greetings to the Assembly. Both Pastor Hosts brought opening greetings, extending hospitality, and directing the Commissioners and visitors to local restaurants and local attractions. The Moderator announced that the meeting rooms for the Commissioners would not be available this afternoon.

He then invited Elder Leon Cole, member of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church in America (CPCA) General Assembly Executive Board, and Moderator of the Kentucky Synod of the CPCA to come to the platform. Elder Cole brought greetings from the CPCA, which met last week in Nashville, Tennessee. He prayed God's blessings on the General Assembly and its members in their work this week.

The Moderator introduced Reverend Paul Hancock, who brought greetings on behalf of the Haiti Council of Churches. Reverend Hancock shared the well-wishes and prayerful thoughts of those in Haiti. He spoke encouragingly of the continuing Christian witness, meeting educational, health care and spiritual needs of the Haitian people.

CONSTITUTING PRAYER

The Reverend Patrick Wilkerson, Red River Presbytery prayed the constituting prayer.

THE ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

The motion was made to adopt the agenda. The body voted to adopt the agenda.

REPORT OF THE CREDENTIALS COMMITTEE

The Elder JoAnn Shugert, Red River Presbytery, presented the Report of the Credentials Committee. There were forty-six (46) ministers, forty-two (42) elders, and twenty-one (21) Youth Advisory Delegates making a total of one hundred-nine (109) commissioners present at 2:00 p.m. On motion the report was concurred in, marked appendix "A" and filed.

ELECTION OF THE MODERATOR

Moderator Reverend Mitch Boulton declared the floor open for nominations for the office of Moderator of the one hundred ninety-third (193rd) General Assembly. Reverend Abby Keller (Presbytery of East Tennessee) nominated Reverend Dr. Larry Blakeburn, Presbytery of East Tennessee. Elder Keith Clement (Arkansas Presbytery) nominated the Reverend Nick Chambers, Arkansas Presbytery. Both nominees were previously endorsed by their respective presbyteries.

Reverend Andy McClung (Faith Cumberland Presbyterian Church, Bartlett, Tennessee) made the nominating speech in favor of Reverend Blakeburn's nomination.

The Reverend Dr. Larry Blakeburn came forward to make remarks, posing the question, "What does God want?"

Mrs. Martha Chambers (Arkansas Presbytery) made the nominating speech in favor of Reverend Nick Chamber's nomination. She is a former President of Cumberland Presbyterian Women Ministries and the nominee's mother.

The Reverend Nick Chambers came forward to make remarks, speaking on his spiritual heritage and how it has shaped his faith and service to God.

The body voted to place their names into nomination.

Moderator Boulton asked the body if they might proceed to a vote. The body voted to close nominations and proceeded with the election by written ballot. The Credentials Committee collected the ballots and counted them.

The Moderator asked the opinion of the Commissioners whether the Youth Advisory Delegates might read the recommendations versus the whole report. This is something that can be discussed at Thursday's business meeting.

While the ballots were being counted, the Moderator invited denominational and agency representatives to come forward. The Reverend Dr. Pam Phillips-Burk, Pastoral Development Ministry Team Leader introduced the Louisa Woosley Preaching Initiative Program Director, the Reverend Jen Newell (Tennessee-Georgia Presbytery). Reverend Newell then spoke of a March 2025 conference on preaching that will focus on helping pastors/preachers become better communicators of life-transforming Good News.

The Moderator then invited the Reverend Dr. Milton Ortiz, Missions Ministry Team Leader to speak. He introduced the new Director of Global Missions, Reverend Justin Richter. Reverend Richter (Presbytery of del Cristo) then spoke briefly about the denomination's work in nineteen (19) countries with

the hope of continued growth within the denomination globally.

The Moderator then invited the Reverend Elinor Brown, Discipleship Ministry Team Leader to come forward. She then asked Mrs. Cindy Martin to the platform. Mrs. Martin will be retiring from the Discipleship Ministry Team in September of this year after serving twenty-six (26) years of work in a variety of Christian Education/Discipleship roles. The General Assembly stood, offering heartfelt applause. She then expressed her thanks and appreciation.

Finally, the Moderator asked Mrs. Nancy Bean, Bethel University, to come forward. She then asked that the General Assembly thank Dr. Bob Watkins who has served as Interim President at Bethel University since late 2023. The General Assembly offered warm applause. Mrs. Bean then introduced Dr. Perry Moulds, the new President Bethel University to speak. He extended an invitation for those present to visit and encourage young adults to consider attending Bethel University.

The Moderator asked for the results of the Moderator election. Elder JoAnn Shugert, (Red River Presbytery) Credentials Committee Chair, reported the results of the Election of the Moderator. Forty-four (44) votes were cast for Reverend Dr. Larry Blakeburn and forty-three (43) votes were cast for Reverend Nick Chambers. Moderator Boulton declared the Reverend Dr. Larry Blakeburn Moderator of the one hundred ninety-third (193rd) General Assembly of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church.

ELECTION OF THE VICE MODERATOR

Moderator Boulton opened the floor for nominations for Vice-Moderator of the one hundred ninety-third (193rd) General Assembly. Reverend Larry Green (Murfreesboro Presbytery) nominated Reverend Nick Chambers, Arkansas Presbytery, The body voted to close nominations and elect by acclamation the Reverend Nick Chambers to be Vice-Moderator of the 193rd General Assembly.

COMMUNICATIONS

The Moderator announced there were no communications.

CORRECTIONS TO PRELIMINARY MINUTES

Corrected pages for preliminary minutes were provided to the Commissioners prior to the start of business. It was noted that there were no additional updates.

INTRODUCTION OF BOARD/AGENCY REPRESENTATIVES

The Stated Clerk announced that committees would be visited by board/agency representatives. As he announced the name of the committees, he asked the representatives to stand.

Bethel University	Bob Watkins/Nancy Bean/Perry Moulds
Commission on Federal Chaplains	Tommy Craig
Cumberland Youth & Family Services	Courtney Banatoski/Brian Martin
Historical Foundation	Susan Gore/Kelly Shanton
Judiciary	Bill Tally/Mitch Boulton/
Memphis Theological Seminary	Jody Hill/Kip Rush
Ministry Council	Edith Old/Debbie Hayes
Our United Outreach	Jeff McMichael/Mikel Davis
Stewardship/Elected Officers	Robert Heflin/Gary Tubb
Theology and Social Concerns	Lisa Scott

COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS AND REFERRALS TO COMMITTEES

Reverend Patrick Wilkerson (Red River Presbytery) presented, “Resolution to the 193rd General Assembly of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church for Healing and Reconciliation.” It was referred to the Committee on Ministry Council.

Reverend Donny Acton (Grace Presbytery) presented, “Memorial from Grace Presbytery, to General Assembly Instructing Presbyteries to Declare Their Position on the Issue of Marriages and Ordinations and Correct Errors of Immoral Practices.” He asked that YAD Eeve Stevens (Grace Presbytery) read the memorial. It was referred to the Committee on Judiciary/Elected Officers.”

Reverend Linda Snelling (Red River Presbytery) presented, “Resolution on Nomination Process for All General Assembly Board.” It was referred to the Committee on Judiciary/Elected Officers.

Reverend Luke Lawson (Grace Presbytery) and Reverend David Linksi (Grace Presbytery) presented a, “Resolution from Reverend Luke Lawson and Reverend David Linksi, to General Assembly Instructing to Comply with the Approved Actions of General Assembly.” It was referred to the Committee on Stewardship/Our United Outreach.

Reverend Cliff Hudson (Tennessee-Georgia Presbytery) presented a “Commissioner’s Resolution.” It was referred to the Committee on Judiciary/Elected Officers.

Elder Commissioner Karen Reid (Presbytery of del Cristo) presented a, “Resolution Seeking Forgiveness, Loving Kindness, and Unity Regarding LGBTQ Issues in the Cumberland Presbyterian Church.” It was referred to the Committee on Theology and Social Concerns.

Elder Andy Holloway (Presbytery of East Tennessee) presented a, “Resolution to the 193rd General Assembly of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church meeting in Evansville, Indiana, Regarding Ministers Officiating Same-Sex Weddings.” It was referred to the Committee on Judiciary/Elected Officers.

Reverend Frank Ward (Midsouth Presbytery) presented a, “Resolution Seeking Reconciliation and Healing,” It was referred to the Committee on Theology and Social Concerns.

RECESS

The Moderator called a ten-minute recess at 4:14. The meeting was called back into session at 4:23 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

At 4:25 p.m. recess was declared by Moderator Boulton until Thursday Morning at 9:30 a.m.

THE EVENING PROGRAM

The General Assembly of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church and visitors met at 7:00 p.m. at the Double Tree Hotel for a Worship/Communion Service under the direction of General Assembly Worship Director Reverend Paul Tucker (Nashville Presbytery), who also served as Worship Leader. The Music Director was Reverend Dave Parman (North Central Presbytery). The pianist for the evening was Venita Gross Hooper (North Central Presbytery). A String Quartet comprised of Rachel Hawf, 1st Violin, Tonia Hawf, 2nd Violin, Doug Hawf, Viola, Dave Parman, Cello, and Tim Norris, 5-string Bass also provided music. Singers from the Morningside Cumberland Presbyterian Church included Michele McConnell, Tracy Hurst, Kara Jo Hurst, Suzy Hanson, Rhonda Smith and Becky Keil. Soloist Jazmine Richardson brought special music, “The Summons”, before the installation service.

Following the prelude, the Becker Sisters [Becky, Beverly, Karen and Marie] from Morningside Cumberland Presbyterian Church opened the service with the song “Down to the River to Pray.” Reverend Tucker read the Scripture verse 2 Timothy 1:9 and then led the Call to Worship and opening prayer. Congregational hymns included: “10,000 Reasons,” “Love Lifted Me,” “My Savior’s Love,” “Have Mercy on Me,” and “We Will Say in That Day.”

Reverend Mitch Boulton, Retiring Moderator (Cornerstone Presbytery), read the Memorial Roll of the Ministers and Elders who have died during 2023 and through mid-year 2024. The Moderator asked the worshippers if additional individuals should be recognized. Worshippers shared those names and Reverend Boulton offered prayer. He then brought the sermon, “Holy Conversations.” Reverend Elizabeth Daniel (Nashville Presbytery) led a unison reading of the “Apostle’s Creed” as the Affirmation of Faith. The Sacrament of Holy Communion was served by Co-Celebrants Reverend Tucker and Reverend Boulton.

The following Commissioners provided Communion elements to the worshippers: Reverend Johny Montano and Reverend Rodrigo Torres (Cauca Valley Presbytery), Reverend Luz Maria Hebron (Andes Presbytery), Elder Akimasa Nakano and Reverend Masamori Taira (Japan Presbytery), Reverend Patrick Wilkerson and Reverend Linda Snelling (Red River Presbytery), Reverend Bernice Belt (Covenant Presbytery), Elder Tony Ward (Choctaw Presbytery), Reverend Paul Hancock (Hope Presbytery) and Reverend Melissa Goodloe (Cornerstone Presbytery). Reverend Ruby Mabely Micolta, wife of Commissioner Reverend Johny Montano, also took part in serving the Communion elements.

North Central Presbytery ushers for the evening service were Jack Smith, Don Findley and Cliff Gossman (Morningside Cumberland Presbyterian Church) and Susan Groves and Bill Nicholes (Good Prospect Cumberland Presbyterian Church).

Reverend Tucker gave the Invitation to the Table and Reverend Abby Keller (Presbytery of East Tennessee) gave the Prayer of Thanksgiving.

Reverend Boulton officiated the installation of Moderator Larry Blakeburn and Vice-Moderator Nick Chambers, outlining the duties and responsibilities of the Moderator and then asking them if they

would carry out those duties to the glory of God, while relying on the grace of God to carry out those duties. Each answered in the affirmative. Moderator Boulton then asked the General Assembly Commissioners if they would accept Reverend Dr. Larry Blakeburn as Moderator and Reverend Nick Chambers as Vice-Moderator. Those present in the congregation answered with an affirmative, “We do.” Reverend Boulton invited Reverend Tucker and the Reverend Judy Madden (Red River Presbytery), Vice Moderator of the 192nd General Assembly to take part in the prayer of charge and blessing for the newly installed officers of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church.

Moderator Elect, the Reverend Dr. Larry Blakeburn gave the benediction. Those in attendance were then invited to the reception honoring the newly installed Moderator and Vice-Moderator.

RECEPTION

Following the evening worship service, a “come and go” reception to honor the newly elected Moderator and Vice Moderator was held in the Grand Ballroom. Those in attendance were the newly elected Moderator, the Reverend Dr. Larry Blakeburn and the newly elected Vice-Moderator, the Reverend Nick Chambers and his wife, Andrea, as well as their six children. Commissioners and visitors extended their congratulations to both honorees, enjoying refreshments and a time of fellowship.

SECOND DAY – TUESDAY – JUNE 18, 2024

The General Assembly began its day with devotions in respective committees. Forty-six (46) ministers, forty-two (42) elders and twenty-one (21) Youth Advisory Delegates were in attendance in committees.

THE AFTERNOON PROGRAM

Our United Outreach (OUO) hosted a Lunch and Learn in Ballrooms A & B. The Reverend Jeff McMichael, Development Director for OUO served as master of ceremonies. He invited the Reverend Cliff Hudson (Tennessee-Georgia Presbytery) to bless the meal. Reverend McMichael thanked those in attendance at the luncheon for supporting OUO. He then presented a brief video on the 192nd General Assembly’s adoption of Denominational Vision, Mission and Strategic Framework. He stated the OUO vision and strategy is “sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ together.” OUO is the gateway through which individuals and churches contribute to the mission and ministries of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church and its boards and agencies. He emphasized that “if we increase participation we can do better.”

Reverend McMichael identified four goals for the coming year: (1) to meet the budget of \$2.5 million; (2) that all churches can and should give something, increasing the number of church contributing to sixty-three percent (63%); (3) increase the number of individual givers; and (4) send “thank you” letters to churches who contribute to OUO, highlighting through stories the ways their respective contributions have impacted individuals, congregations and the Church in mission.

Reverend McMichael asked Elder Mikel Davis, Chairperson of the OUO Committee, to make comments. Elder Davis emphasized that each individual Cumberland Presbyterian needs to be invested in Our church. He closed with the encouraging statement: “We can all do a little bit” which will provide additional funds to Cumberland Youth and Family Services, chaplains, missionaries, for example.

Reverend McMichael asked those present to pray for revival so that Gospel will be advanced and Cumberland Presbyterian churches will experience consistent growth. He then offered a prayer regarding those concerns.

Finally, Reverend McMichael invited the Reverend Kristi Lounsbury, Ministry Council’s Director of Congregational Ministries, to speak about the support and services that churches and clergy through OUO. He introduced her by saying that approximately forty-eight percent (48%) of the funding the Ministry Council receives is from OUO. She spoke about the range of ministries and programs that OUO funding makes available to the Ministry Council. She pointed out that there are other funding streams, but those funds are focused on specific ministries, such as the Stott-Wallace Missionary Offering which supports international missions or Lilly Endowment grants support the Engage Program, on congregational needs assessment and planning. She encouraged her listeners with the words, “You cannot out give God.”

THE EVENING PROGRAM

At 8:30 p.m., Commissioners and visitors participated in a Joint Reception honoring Women in Ministry and all who support them in ministry in Ballroom B. The event was jointly sponsored by Memphis Theological Seminary (MTS), Pastoral Development Ministry Team, Missions Ministry Team and Women’s

Ministry. The theme for the evening was “Holy Conversations Celebrations.”

The Reverend Dr. Pam Phillips-Burk, Pastoral Development Ministry Team Leader opened the event with words of welcome and appreciation for women in ministry and those who support them. She noted that this evening marked the twenty-second year in which women in ministry have been formally celebrated, adding that in 2003, in Nashville, Tennessee there were only seven women in attendance. She remarked that the evening would be a time to acknowledge each clergy woman in attendance, as well as offering a time for fellowship, refreshments and door prizes. She then invited the Reverend Dr. Jody Hill, President MTS to the podium. He too brought words of greeting and acknowledged the ways women in ministry have contributed to the leadership in Cumberland Presbyterian Church. He encouraged the attendees to consider enrollment in a Doctor of Ministry program at MTS and then introduced Reverend Dr. Christy Woodbury-Moore, Associate Dean of Doctoral Studies at MTS, who shared her call to the ministry and explained a new generalist Doctor of Ministries track being offered. She invited attendees to meet with her following the reception.

Reverend Zahrte, Director of Ministry with Women announced the recipients of the third-ever Clergy Woman of the Year Award. The international recipient is the Reverend Luz Maria Hebron (Andes Presbytery) and USA recipient the Reverend Lisa Oliver (Murfreesboro Presbytery). Both ministers were awarded plaques and distinctive stoles. Each minister expressed thanks to God and shared words of appreciation and thanks. Following the presentation, Reverend Zahrte encouraged ordained clergy women to become active in local Cumberland Presbyterian Women’s Ministries. Reverend Phillips-Burk took time to promote the Advent Retreat for Clergywomen, which will be held December 2-4, 2024, at Camp Maranatha, Scottsboro, Alabama. Reverend Dr. Hill offered the closing prayer.

THIRD DAY – WEDNESDAY – JUNE 19, 2024

The General Assembly began its day with devotions in respective committees. Forty-two (42) ministers, forty-four (44) elders and twenty-one (21) Youth Advisory Delegates were in attendance in committees.

THE AFTERNOON PROGRAM

“Action, Inspiration & Holy Conversations,” The Joint Banquet and Program, sponsored by Cumberland Youth and Family Services, Bethel University and Memphis Theological Seminary (MTS), was held in Ballrooms A & B, Double Tree Hotel. The welcome and blessing were offered by Elder Jo Ann Shugert (Red River Presbytery), who also served as moderator of a panel with Reverend Dr. Jody Hill, Memphis Theological Seminary President; Ms. Courtney Banatoski, Cumberland Youth and Family Services (CYFS), President and Chief Executive Officer, and Reverend Dr. Bob Watkins, Bethel University Interim President. Elder Shugert asked each panelist to respond to the question, “Where do you see God’s grace at your campus?” Reverend Dr. Hill responded that God’s grace is on display each day, notably in ways God has met material/financial needs in unexpectedly, but on time. Ms. Banatoski indicated that each day clients receive hope and healing services in addition to shelter. Reverend Dr. Watkins spoke with expectation of twenty-three (23) foot cross that will be raised atop the new 1,000 seat “Whosoever Will Chapel” soon. He added at the that the university has students from thirty (30) nations and not all are Christians. The opportunity to introduce those students to Jesus Christ is a testament to God’s grace.

The second question for the panelists was “Where do you see the action inspiring Holy Conversations?” Reverend Dr. Hill described the discernment process of MTS staff and administration and Board of Trustees in broaching the topic of sustainability, and the possibly of future merger or acquisition of MTS by another educational institution, while still adhering to the mission of the seminary to support the ministry of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church and serve as an ecumenical outreach of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church. Ms. Banatoski remarked that each day the staff at Cumberland Youth and Family Services engages in service ministry that speaks to God’s love and the love of Christians for the vulnerable and under-served communities. She explained that Holy Conversations have been part of the years-long process of CYFS being licensed as a foster care and adoption agency by the State of Texas. Reverend Dr. Watkins remarked that the use of theological and Bible language is encouraged on the campus by leadership and students. In addition, the chaplains at Bethel pray not only in chapels but at the doors of student rooms, inviting Holy Conversations.

Elder Shugert invited three individuals to the platform: Reverend Dr. Michael Qualls, Director of the Presbyterian House of Studies, MTS and Director of the Program of Alternate Studies (PAS); Dr. Perry Moulds, President, Bethel University, and Mr. Brian Martin, Chairman of the Board, Cumberland Youth and Family Services. They were asked to identify prayer needs in the coming year. Reverend Qualls asked that prayers be offered for students in the Program of Alternate Studies. Dr. Moulds asked that God give him

clarity in doing what is right toward Bethel University faculty, staff, administration and students. Finally, Mr. Martin asked that prayers be offered for those being served by Cumberland Youth and Family Services, for foster care families, that Cumberland Presbyterians would embrace the legacy of the Children's Home, demonstrated by intentional giving, and prayer for child welfare workers to find fulfillment in their work.

Elder Shugert closed the luncheon with words of thanks God for the contributions of panel participants and their respective institutions.