

Provisional Minutes

Sixth Stated Meeting of the New River Presbytery of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church

May 3-4, 2024

Rivermont Presbyterian Church

2424 Rivermont Avenue
Lynchburg, Virginia 24503

Friday, May 3, 2024

Learning Focus: NRP Identity

As the New River Presbytery continues in its second year, it seemed wise to the Holy Spirit and to us to spend time intentionally building and developing our identity as a Presbytery, in Christ. To this end we are seeking to focus on what it means for healthy Ruling Elders to be Evangelical, Missional, Reformed, and Presbyterian in a Presbytery that strives to encourage, enable, and equip disciple making churches to plant disciple making churches.

006-01 Call to Order and Prayer

Moderator Ruling Elder (RE) Gordon Miller called the Sixth Stated Meeting of the New River Presbytery to order at 1:00 p.m. and opened in prayer.

006-02 Welcome from Host Church

RE Bert Murphy, an active elder of the Rivermont Kirk Session welcomed the New River Presbytery. He briefly introduced the volunteer team helping to host the meeting, gave an orientation to the facilities guide and lead the NRP in prayer for the meeting.

006-03 Opening Worship and a Symphony of Prayer

TE Tom Clymer, Chaplain to the Presbytery led the New River Presbytery in an extended season of prayer which included a substantial and guided symphony of prayer in which he was assisted by TE Jeff Smith.

006-04 Declaration of Quorum

Stated Clerk TE Rufus Burton declared a quorum as evidenced by the following record of attendance.

ACTIVE TEACHING ELDER ROLL (BoG 19-2A1)

STATUS

**RULING ELDER
COMMISSIONERS**

Asbury Evangelical Presbyterian Church, West Field, North Carolina

CP Terry Collins

Present

RE Earl Collins

Bethel Evangelical Presbyterian Church, Claudville, Virginia		
TE Kevin Easter	Unexcused	Unexcused Unexcused
Bouldin Memorial Presbyterian Church, Stuart, Virginia		
CP Richard Burnette	Present	RE Marie Bryant RE Lemont Bryant
Buffalo Presbyterian Church, Greensboro, North Carolina		
TE Brian Marsh	Present	RE Frances Lucius RE Tim Webb
Christ Reigns Presbyterian Church, Winchester, Virginia (Mission Group)		
CP Alan Morrison	Excused	Unexcused
Cleveland Presbyterian Church, Abingdon, Virginia		
TE Rick Laney	Unexcused	Unexcused Unexcused
Downtown Presbyterian Church, Lynchburg, Virginia (Mission Group)		
TE Rich Brown (PCA Blue Ridge)	Present	
Elon Presbyterian Church, Madison Heights, Virginia		
TE Barry Tucker	Present	RE John Oblinger RE Tim Pague
Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Elkton, Elkton, Virginia		
TE Adam Snow	Present	RE Neil Lam
Falling Springs Presbyterian Church, Hot Springs, Virginia		
TE Mike Matlack	Present	RE Al Durham RE Mike Henderson
First Evangelical Presbyterian Church, Roanoke, Virginia		
Don Hardman (PCMA)	Present	RE Michael Ridenhour RE David Smith
First Presbyterian Church, Eden, North Carolina		
TE Brad Milks	Present	Unexcused
First Presbyterian Church, Martinsburg, West Virginia		
TE Rufus Burton (Stated Clerk)	Present	RE Joan Van Brunt RE Anne Turner

FORGE Community Church, Greensboro, NC (Mission Church)		
TE Eric Shipton	Excused	Excused
TE Tom Clymer (Chaplain)	Present	
Galatia Evangelical Presbyterian Church, Eagle Rock, Virginia		
TE Emily Hook	Present	Unexcused
Greenwood Evangelical Presbyterian Church, Covington, Virginia		
Vacant		Unexcused Unexcused
Hope Presbyterian Community Church, Waynesboro, Virginia		
TE Glen Holman	Present	Unexcused
Hurley Presbyterian Church, Hurley Virginia		
CP Curtis Stacy (Also Roseann)	Present	Unexcused
Lebanon Evangelical Presbyterian Church, Greenwood, Virginia		
Philip Rice (Stated Supply)	Present	RE John Stoke RE Wesley Lee
Mary's Presbyterian Church, Tazewell, Virginia		
CP Danny Whitt	Unexcused	Unexcused
Mebane Presbyterian Church, Mebane, North Carolina		
TE Jeff Smith	Present	RE Rob Latimer
Memorial Presbyterian Church, Greensboro, North Carolina (Now Operating as FORGE Community Church) See Above		
New Hope Presbyterian Church, Lynchburg, Virginia (Mission Group) (Now Operating as Downtown Presbyterian Church) See Above		
New Life Presbyterian Church, Salem, Virginia		
TE Camron Smith	Present	Unexcused
Northminster Evangelical Presbyterian Church, Madison Heights, Virginia		
TE David Garrison	Present	RE Mike Henderson RE John Lange
Norton Presbyterian Church, Norton, Virginia		
TE Michael Porter	Unexcused	Unexcused Unexcused

Perrow Presbyterian Church, Cross Lanes, West Virginia

Dismissed February 2024 (See 005-12C)

Piedmont Presbyterian Church, Callaway, Virginia

TE Brown Caldwell (Supply)

RE Ed Greer

Princeton Presbyterian Church, Princeton, West Virginia

TE Edwin Pettus

Present

Unexcused

Providence Presbyterian Church, Nathalie, Virginia

Vacant

Unexcused

Unexcused

Restoration Community Church, Winston-Salem, North Carolina

TE Gary McGhee

Present

RE Ken Trivette

RE Gordon Miller
(Moderator)

Reynolda Church, North Carolina

TE Alan Wright

Excused

RE Stephen Elmore

TE Chris Lawson

Unexcused

Kernersville, North Carolina

CP Barrett Johnson

Present

Clemmons, North Carolina

TE Brandon Williams

Unexcused

King, North Carolina

TE Chuck Estes

Present

Iglesia Reynolda, Winston-Salem, North Carolina

CP Amaury Hernandez

Unexcused

River Oaks Community Church, Clemmons, North Carolina

TE David Beaty

Excused

RE Mike Bost

TE Sonny Flowers

Present

TE Andrew Wild

Present

TE David Holcomb

Present

TE Brian Edmonds

Present

Rivermont Evangelical Presbyterian, Lynchburg, Virginia

TE David Weber

Present

RE Bert Murphy

TE Ron Cox

Present

RE Massey Ware

TE Brett Eubank

Present

RE Clay Atkins

TE Shane Whelan

Present

RE Warner Hall

RE Russ Matney

RE Andrew Shields

		RE Earl Weaver RE Wistar Nelligan RE Carey Roberts RE Rodney Suddith
Roseann Presbyterian Church, Roseann, Virginia		
CP Curtis Stacy (Counted with Hurley)	Present	RE David Brown RE Clarence Brown
Slate Mountain Presbyterian Church, Meadows of Dan, Virginia		
CP Jeff Dalton	Present	RE Bob Ashcroft
Stuart Presbyterian Church, Stuart Virginia		
TE Danny Redman	Excused	Unexcused
Thompson Valley Presbyterian Church, Tazewell, Virginia		
CP Danny Whitt (Counted with Mary's EPC)	Unexcused	Unexcused Unexcused
Walker's Creek Presbyterian Church, Marion, Virginia (Extinct)		
Walker's Evangelical Presbyterian Church, Pamplin, Virginia		
TE Robert Barnett	Present	RE Nick Waddell RE Sarah Waddell RE William Hogan
Warm Springs Evangelical Presbyterian Church, Warm Springs, Virginia		
TE Marty Fields	Present	Unexcused
Westminster Presbyterian Church, Bluefield, West Virginia		
TE Jonathan Rockness	Present	Unexcused Unexcused
Westminster Presbyterian Church, Burlington, North Carolina		
TE Powell Sykes	Present	RE Kathy Sykes RE Jeff Holt
Woodside Evangelical Presbyterian Church, Roanoke, Virginia		
Evan Grey (Candidate Under Care)		RE Barry Rakes
Wylliesburg Evangelical Presbyterian Church, Wylliesburg, Virginia		
TE Peter Smith (Supply)		RE Walter Welch

Teachers (BoG 9-5B)

(None)

Evangelists (BoG 9-C)

(None)

Administrative Members (BoG 9-5D)

(None)

Chaplains (BoG 9-5E)

(None)

Serving Outside the Boundaries (BoG 9-6)

TE Rob Buchanan (<i>RUN</i> Ministries)	Excused
TE Andy Koesters (Families Alive)	Present

Transitional Pastor Teaching Elders (BoG 19-2A1)

TE Benjamin Williams	Excused
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Pastors Without a Call (BoG 19-2A1)

(None)

Retired Teaching Elders (Active) (BoG 19-2A2)

TE Brown Caldwell (Counted with Piedmont)	Present
TE Bucky Hunsicker	Excused
TE Lowell Sykes	Present

Associate Teaching Elders (BoG 19-2B1)

TE Marina Gopadze

Inactive (BoG 19-2B1)

(None)

Retired Teaching Elders (Inactive) (BoG 19-2B3)

TE Clarence Brown	
TE Michael Brown	
TE Peter Smith (Counted with Wylliesburg)	Present
TE Robert Smith	
TE David Woods	

Teaching Elders Under Sanction (BoG 19-2B)

One

Officers of the Presbytery (BoG 19-3)

TE E Pettus	Moderator	Present*
TE A Koesters	Missional Director	Present*
TE R Burton	Stated Clerk	Present*
Mr B. Kanode	IT Director	Present
TE B Eubank	Treasurer	Present*

*(Counted with their ministry above)

Candidates / Ministers to be Examined

Evan Grey	Woodside
Levi Martin	Rivermont
Jason Whitner	Walkers

Guests & Observers

Elizabeth Gibson	Guest	Northampton Church Planting Network
Michell Munger	Guest	Northampton Church Planting Network
TE Olin Whitner	Guest	First Presbyterian, Pulaski, VA
Ruthann Whitner	Guest	First Presbyterian, Pulaski, VA
Judy Edwards	Observer	Berry Hill
Leigh Edwards	Observer	Berry Hill
Reed Edwards	Observer	Berry Hill
Ashby Whorley	Observer	Berry Hill
Rhonda Burnette	Observer	Bouldin Memorial
Mary McAlister	Observer	Elon
Justus Burton	Observer	First, Martinsburg/CRU
Barbara Hardman	Observer	First EPC Roanoke
Kathy Clymer	Observer	FORGE Church
Thomas Truslow	Observer	Lebanon
Jennifer Truslow	Observer	Lebanon
Giselle Caldwell	Observer	Piedmont
Barbara Pettus	Observer	Princeton
Brandon Staton	Observer	Restoration
Carolanne Bost	Observer	River Oaks
Shawn Morrison	Observer	Rivermont
Brenda Goin	Observer	Walker's
Debbie Hackey	Observer	Walker's
Kathy Jones	Observer	Walker's
Johnny Goin	Observer	Walker's
Charlie Hackney	Observer	Walker's
Theresa Barnett	Observer	Walker's
Susan Holt	Observer	Westminster – Burlington, NC
Lisa Smith	Observer	Wylliesburg

Numerical Attendance Summary

		Present	Excused	Unexcused	Total
Teaching Elders	(Full Members)	34	5	3	42
Teaching Elders	(Retired Active)	2			3
Teaching Elders	(Associate)	0			2
For Parity		36			46
Ruling Elders		46	4		
Officers of NRP		1			
Commissioned Pastors (counted as REs)		3	1	5	9
Candidates		3			
Guests		4			
Observers		26			
Total in Attendance		118			
Parity Report	TE/RE		36/49		

006-05 Approval of the Docket

Moderator Miller set before the Presbytery a motion to approve the docket.

Motion was sustained to Approve the Docket

006-06 Approval of the Minutes of the Fifth Stated Meeting of the New River Presbytery.

Moderator Miller set before the Presbytery a motion to receive the Minutes of the 005 Meeting (2/2-2/3 2024) as they had been submitted.

Motion was sustained to Approve the Minutes as they had been submitted.

006-07 Communications and Referrals

The Stated Clerk reported to the Moderator that the Ascending Overture excluding “Gay-Celibate-Christians” from office bearing (See 005-21) unanimously sent from the 005 Meeting to the 44th General Assembly had been successfully transmitted to the Stated Clerk of the Assembly.

006-08 Introduction of Guests and First Time Commissioners

Moderator Miller encouraged the presbyters to introduce their guests and for TEs to help introduce any first-time commissioners.

006-09 Moderator’s Report

Moderator Miller gave a brief report on his work, and encouraged the Presbytery my pointing to the signs of the presence of the Holy Spirit in the work of the Presbytery. The Moderator concluded his report by leading the Presbytery in a season of prayer.

006-10 Leadership Team Report

Moderator Miller asked TE Ed Pettus, Chair of the Leadership Team to help give a report to the Presbytery about the response our Ascending Overture (005-21) had received from other courts in the Church. Together they reported on a visit from the Stated Clerk of the Assembly, and two members of the National Leadership Team on 22 March 2024 at New Hope Church, in Salem, Virginia. The Leadership Team commended concerted prayer for the biblical sexual orthodoxy of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, and encouraged churches to send commissioners to the 44th General Assembly. The Chair concluded his report by leading the Presbytery in a season of prayer with particular focus on the concerns he had outlined.

On Motion, that the New River Presbytery Leadership Team be authorized to zealously equip, encourage, and enable the cause of the Ascending Overture.

Motion was sustained to authorize the NRP Leadership Team to zealously equip, encourage, and enable the cause of the Ascending Overture.

The Presbyters of the New River Presbytery were of one mind one heart and mind as they prayed fervently for the witness and integrity of the EPC. At the conclusion of his prayer TE Pettus ended his report.

006-11 Missional Director's Report

TE Andy Koesters began by briefly exhorting the NRP from Romans 12:1-8. He gave a report of his work, encouraged the NRP and highlighted the importance of our mutual connection in Christ. He encouraged the connectionalism of the body and highlighted several resources for congregations and Kirk Sessions:

- 1) The weekly NRP Prayer Meeting
- 2) The ruling elder training and equipping time at each NRP meeting @ 11:00
- 3) The EPC's national Church Health website epc.org/cpch/churchhealth/
- 4) The Church Health work being undertaken by each presbytery and the Church Health resources available to the churches of the NRP.

In particular, TE Koesters highlighted the self-assessment tools and church health resources available to Sessions on the NRP website, and encouraged the presbytery to engage in the missional process in order to more faithfully pursue great commission ministry. He concluded his report with prayer.

006-12 Stated Clerk's Report

TE Rufus Burton began his report by leading the New River Presbytery in singing the 124th Psalm, "Now Israel May Say." He reported on the swelling support of the NRP Ascending Overture (005-21) and encouraged the Presbyters in their continued faithfulness. After a brief report on the state of his work and urging the NRP to persist in decency and good order, the Clerk concluded his report with prayer.

006-13 World Outreach Committee Report (Part 1)

TE Jeff Smith, Chair of the World Outreach Committee opened the committee's report by leading the Presbytery in prayer for God's mission in the world, our missionaries, and our faithfulness in the work. He then introduced TE Robert Barnett who gave an update on the Kairos Course and encouraged Sessions and congregations to participate in the summer 2024 Kairos course.

TE Barnett, then introduced TE Brown Caldwell, who gave a report on the state of the work among the NRP's Engage 2025 Unreached People Groups. Brown noted that of the Three Billion unreached people on the planet, Two Billion play cricket. TE Caldwell also then explained the ways in which mission work in Central Asia was saving souls and reversing desertification. He was excited.

Of special concern to the World Outreach Committee were demonic attacks directed against one of our mission workers in Central Asia, TE Caldwell led the NRP in intercessory prayer for the missionary and encouraged focused intercessions for the work in Central Asia. After TE Caldwell concluded his portion of the report, TE Smith led the NRP in a brief prayer and concluded the first portion of his report.

Break

006-14 Church Development Committee Report

The Moderator gavelled the meeting back into order and invited the Church Development Committee to make its report. TE Chuck Estes opened the committee's report by reading Genesis 1:26-28 and encouraging the Presbytery to lean into the blessing of the Lord and multiplication of disciples. He then led the NRP in prayer for the work of church planting and church development. After a brief presentation on the committee's work and the progress of God's kingdom in the NRP, TE Estes introduced four topics and one recommendation:

A The Opportunities to serve with the Church Development Committee

TE Estes encouraged prayerful discernment of the Lord's call to this important work. He particularly outlined the benefits of service with the CDC.

B Recourses for Churches seeking Health, Vitalization, & Multiplication

He then re-introduced the presbyters to the REFOCUS Church health resources from the EPC, and pointed interested congregations to the introduction on the NRP website: nrpofepc.org/church-health/

C Church Planting and the prayers of NRP Networks

TE Estes gave an update on the work of Church Planting within the NRP and outlined the prayer, work, and discernment taking place in the college towns of the NRP. In order to aid the work, the CDC is making a \$500 grant available to each Network in order to help fund a "Network Event." To qualify for the grant, the Network need only hold an event and apply for reimbursement of up to \$500. The NRP is reminded that the Networks are:

C1 The Church Networks

Network		Churches
C1.1	1	Cleveland
	1	Hyley
	1	Mary's
	1	Norton
	1	Princeton
	1	Rosann
	1	Thompson Valley
	1	Westminster, Bluefield
C1.2	2	Falling Springs
	2	First EPC Roanoke
	2	Galatia
	2	Greenwood
	2	New Life
	2	Piedmont
	2	Warm Springs
	2	Woodside
C1.3	3	Asbury
	3	Bethel
	3	Bouldin
	3	First EPC Eden
	3	River Oaks
	3	Slate Mountain
	3	Stuart
C1.4	4	Elon
	4	Northminster
	4	Providence
	4	Rivermont
	4	Walker's
	4	Wyliesburg
C1.5	5	Christ Reigns
	5	EPC of Elkton
	5	First EPC Martinsburg
	5	Hope
	5	Lebanon
C1.6	6	Buffalo
	6	Forge
	6	Mebane

6	Restoration
6	Reynolda
6	Clemmons
6	King
6	Winston-Salem
6	Kernersville
6	Westminster, Burlington

D Funds Available for Members Needing Counseling

TE Estes then announced that the CDC had been able to find funding for confidential pastoral counseling for Minister Members and Manse families of the Presbytery who may need financial assistance to receive the help they desire. Those seeking to take advantage of the opportunity were encouraged to speak to the Chair of the CDC.

E Approval of the 8-Step Process for Receiving Churches

On Motion, in light of G.5-6 the CDC recommended the adoption of the following Eight Step Process to be the standing policy for examining and receiving churches that petition for membership in the New River Presbytery:

The Church Development Committee of the New River Presbytery (www.nrpofepc.org) has developed an 8-step process that we believe provides the best approach for everyone.

EIGHT STEP PROCESS FOR RECEIVING CHURCHES

STEP 1: A congregation will enter into a time of prayer, discussion and study of God’s word to discern if entry into the EPC is desired. This often begins at the level of a Governing Body (e.g. the Session) and then ultimately the congregation.

Early in the process a church may contact either the Chairperson of the NRP Church Development Committee, the Presbytery Coordinator, or the Stated Clerk of the NRP. Should the church desire a representative of the presbytery to visit to answer questions and share insight into the EPC (either at the Governing Body level or the Congregational level), the presbytery will gladly arrange for someone to meet with you. This can be done at any time during the process. You may also attend a Presbytery meeting to observe our fellowship.

Ministers and churches seeking to be received into the NRP should allow up to 12 months for the receiving process. Adequate time is needed for churches seeking dismissal from other reformed bodies.

Churches seeking dismissal may approach the process in a variety of ways. In many cases, the decision of where a church will go once dismissed is not clear to church leaders until well along in the process. This can take several months and is often done in an amicable manner between the church and the dismissing body. Yet in some instances, dismissal can create strife in the relationship between the church and the dismissing body.

STEP 2: At some point in the discernment process, a church must call a congregational meeting to vote to seek admission into the EPC. It cannot be only a Governing Body vote. If the vote carries, the church must complete the “Petition to be Received” (obtained from the NRP Stated Clerk, or by clicking [HERE](#)) and submit the completed application to the Stated Clerk. This is the official beginning of the reception process. In special circumstances (to be determined by the NRP Leadership Team), transitional membership may be helpful. **Transitional membership will be discussed on an as-needed basis.**

STEP 3: The church Session begins a course of study preparing for Elder Examination. A curriculum is given to church leaders to guide the study, which is usually led by the Pastor. The study guide (“Elder Exam Handbook”), developed by the Presbytery of the Alleghenies, can be found under the “Resource” page of the EPC website (<https://epc.org/downloads/>).

The EPC is Presbyterian, Reformed and Confessional. The course of study will allow Elders to explore our beliefs and prepare Elders to take the ordination vows of the EPC.

STEP 4: A congregation must send leaders of the church to **ReFocus Training**. This is a one day seminar that allows a church to examine itself, reset its goals and develop a plan of obedience to the Great Commission of the Lord. The **ReFocus Training** is arranged through the NRP Coordinator. A church must have at least 50% of the Session attend this important training.

(**ReFocus Training** resources may be accessed by clicking [HERE](#))

STEP 5: A face to face meeting will be held between the church leadership (Pastor(s) and Elders) and representatives of the NRP. The purpose of this meeting is to allow the NRP to have a more personal contact with the church and have a mutual time of interaction and encouragement. The meeting is part of the process and will allow the Presbytery to review with the Elders the Elder Training Process and ReFocus Training. Again, the goal is to help churches transition into the EPC as healthy, growing congregations. The Pastor calls the Chairperson of the CDC to arrange this meeting when the Elder Training and the Refocus Training are completed or nearing completion.

STEP 6: Active Ruling Elders will be examined by a team formed by the CDC. This is a three-to-four-hour examination and will be scheduled after the prescribed time of study. Examinations are usually scheduled about two weeks prior to a Presbytery meeting. A minimum of 75% of the Active Elders must participate in this examination.

STEP 7: At the successful completion of the examination process, a church is received at a Presbytery meeting as a full member church. This is a time of great joy and praise! We encourage the church to bring its elders and key leaders to the Presbytery meeting to share its experience and celebrate in the new fellowship.

STEP 8: The church will plan a time for “celebration of reception into the EPC” and for renewal of ordination vows of all Elders. At the church’s request, the NRP will send representatives to participate in the celebration and welcome the congregation into the EPC. Regarding the pastor, an NRP Administrative Commission will be assigned to lead an installation service.

Ministers will be examined separately, but often concurrently with the church. Ministers must contact the Chairperson of the NRP Ministerial Committee for additional information.

Motion was sustained to Approve the 8 Step Process as it had been amended.

TE Estes then concluded his report with an extended season of prayer for the health of the Sessions and congregations of the NRP, for the Church Planting efforts of the NRP and for the growth in grace of the Elders of the NRP.

006-15 World Outreach Committee (Part 2)

TE Jeff Smith, chair of the World Outreach committee began this section of his report by briefly introducing two important works.

A TE Smith presented TE Phil Thrash who presented the work of EPCWO and provided an update on the many ways families, groups, and churches can partner with World Outreach and walk alongside our global workers. TE Thrash particularly encouraged prayer, and highlighted an upcoming Taste of Pakistan event, and a mass evangelism event in Germany among the unreached. He concluded his portion by praying for the work.

B TE Smith then introduced TE Andy Koesters who is a domestic missionary with Families Alive. TE Koesters took the Presbytery to Ps 78, and Mark 10 in order to report on his work in Next-Gen Disciple making and encourage the presbytery to be intentional in its efforts to raise new leaders. TE Koesters then led the NRP in prayer for the next generation of disciples.

TE Smith thanked the presenters, thanked the NRP, and then led the NRP in prayer for our mission, our outreach, and the global work of the Church.

006-16 Stewardship Committee Report

TE Brett Eubank, Chair of the Stewardship Committee began his report by leading the Presbytery in prayer for the work of the Stewardship Committee and for the financial health of the NRP and her congregations.

After describing the ways in which the Stewardship Committee was working to advance the cause and purpose of the NRP, TE Eubank gave the following detailed report:

- 1) Of the 38 Giving Units in the NRP, 13 had started their 2024 giving cycle before the publication of the Stewardship Committee Report.
- 2) Per Member Asking gifts in 2024 are slightly ahead / largely comparable to giving levels in 2023.
- 3) Churches have begun to make the switch from Per Member Asking (PMA) to Percentage of Income (POI).

NRP Per Member Asking / Percentage of Income Comparison (through 3/31/2024)

Church	2023 PMA/ POI Given in 2024	2024 PMA/ POI YTD	Total in 2024
Asbury	\$0.00	\$544.00	\$544.00
Bethel	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Bouldin Memorial	\$299.00	\$0.00	\$299.00
Buffalo	\$0.00	\$805.00	\$805.00
Christ Reigns (MG)	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Cleveland	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Elon	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Elkton	\$0.00	\$2,000.00	\$2,000.00
Falling Spring	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
First Roanoke	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
First Eden	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
First Martinsburg	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Galatia	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Greenwood	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Hope	\$0.00	\$550.00	\$550.00
Hurley	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Lebanon	\$0.00	\$456.25	\$456.25
Mary's	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Mebane	\$1,200.00	\$0.00	\$1,200.00
Memorial/FORGE (MC)	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
New Life	\$0.00	\$437.50	\$437.50
Northminster	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Norton	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Piedmont	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Princeton	\$0.00	\$462.50	\$462.50
Providence	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00

Restoration	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Reynolda	\$0.00	\$3,255.24	\$3,255.24
River Oaks	\$0.00	\$5,220.00	\$5,220.00
Rivermont	\$0.00	\$4,464.99	\$4,464.99
Roseann	\$0.00	\$250.00	\$250.00
Slate Mountain	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Stuart	\$0.00	\$875.00	\$875.00
Thompson Valley	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Walker's	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Warm Springs	\$871.19	\$0.00	\$871.19
Westminster, Bluefield	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Westminster, Burlington	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Woodside	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Wyliesburg	\$0.00	\$300.00	\$300.00
Total	\$2,370.19	\$19,620.48	\$21,990.67

NRP Balance Sheet (through 3/31/2024)

ASSETS

Current Assets

Operating: Pinnacle Bank	\$20,730.54
Money Market: Pinnacle Bank	\$41,134.82
CD: Pinnacle Bank	\$102,305.01
Total Current Assets	\$164,170.37

LIABILITIES

	\$0.00
Total Liabilities	\$0.00

EQUITY

Unrestricted Net Assets

General Fund	\$58,229.03
Total Unrestricted Net Assets	\$58,229.03

Restricted Net Assets

Grace and Mercy Fund	\$2,281.33
Church Development Committee Fund	\$81,018.36
Chaplain Fund	\$575.39
Missions Fund	\$7,513.67

	Missionary Emergency Fund	\$4,576.62
	Women's Fund	\$4,352.56
	Church Health Fund	\$5,623.51
Total	Restricted Net Assets	\$105,941.34
Total	Equity	\$164,170.37
Total	Liabilities and Equity	\$164,170.37

New River Presbytery Income Statement (Through 3/31/2024)

Account	2024 YTD ACTUAL	2024 YTD BUDGET	VARIANCE
Income			
Per Member Asking	\$19,620.48	\$24,999.99	-\$5,379.51
Per Member Asking Prior-Year	\$2,370.19	\$0.00	\$2,370.19
Presbytery Offering	\$1,036.09	\$624.99	\$411.10
Individual Giving	\$375.00	\$249.99	\$125.01
Church Giving	\$2,250.00	\$249.99	\$2,000.01
GA Church Health Initiative	\$0.00	\$3,000.00	-\$3,000.00
Interest Income	\$1,907.55	\$375.00	\$1,532.55
Total Income	\$27,559.31	\$29,499.96	-\$1,940.65
Expenses			
Compensation			
Missional Director Stipend	\$9750.00	\$9,750	\$0.00
Stated Clerk Stipend	\$4,000.00	\$4,000	\$0.00
IT Director Stipend	\$1,500.00	\$1,500	\$0.00
Treasurer Stipend	\$1,500.00	\$1,500	\$0.00
Total Compensation	\$17,250.00	\$17,250	\$0.00
Personnel			
Travel-Missional Director	\$899.34	\$1,250.01	-\$350.67
Travel-Stated Clerk	\$1,219.58	\$1,250.00	-\$30.43
Office Expense	\$5.08	\$125.01	-\$119.93
Total Personnel	\$2,124.00	\$2,625.03	-\$501.03
Professional Fees			
IT Expenses	\$104.52	\$249.99	-\$145.47
Treasurer Expenses	\$327.88	\$249.99	\$77.89
Liability Insurance (D/O)	\$0.00	\$750.00	-\$750.00
Licenses/Fees	\$230.09	\$375.00	-\$144.91
Bank Fees	\$6.11	\$0.00	\$6.11

Total Professional Fees	\$668.60	\$1,624.98	-\$956.38
Committees/Commissions			
Commissions	\$0.00	\$125.01	-\$125.01
Executive Council	\$0.00	\$249.99	-\$249.99
Ministerial Committee	\$149.00	\$375.00	-\$226.00
Stewardship Committee	\$0.00	\$24.99	-\$24.99
World Mission (Outreach)	\$1,036.09	\$999.99	\$36.10
Presbytery	\$692.02	\$750.00	-57.98
Total Committees/Commissions	\$1,877.71	\$2,524.98	-\$647.87
Benevolence			
Minister's Assistance	\$0.00	\$125.01	-\$125.01
Commissioner's Assistance	\$0.00	\$125.01	-\$125.01
Benevolence – Other	\$0.00	\$125.01	-\$125.01
Total Benevolence	\$0.00	\$375.03	-\$375.01
Church Development Committee			
New Church Plant Support	\$0.00	\$3,750.00	-\$3,750.00
Church Planter <small>Assessment/Coaching</small>	\$0.00	\$375.00	-\$375.00
CDC Travel	\$0.00	\$500.01	-\$500.01
Church Planting Team Travel	\$0.00	\$125.01	-\$125.01
Church Health Team Travel	\$0.00	\$500.01	-\$500.01
Transitional Pastor Coaching	\$730.80	\$624.99	\$105.81
Church Revitalization	\$0.00	\$1374.99	-\$1,374.99
Presbytery Equipping	\$0.00	\$750.00	-\$750.00
Total Church Develop. Comm.	\$730.80	\$8,000.01	-\$7,269.21
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$22,650.51	\$32,400.03	-\$9,749.52
NET INCOME/LOSS	\$4,908.80	-\$2,900.07	\$7,808.87

TE Eubank then concluded his report with prayer.

006-17 Order of the Day

At the invitation of the Moderator, RE Gordon Miller, TE Brett Eubank introduced Jennifer and Grace Eaton, members of the Rivermont Presbyterian Church who encouraged the New River Presbytery by sharing the mighty acts of the Spirit in Lynchburg. A book study led the congregation to lean into hospitality and discipleship,

especially though the *In Rivermont for Rivermont* initiative. The report was exciting, and helped lead the Presbytery to multiply its praises to God.

After which Moderator Miller asked TE Eubank to lead the NRP in prayer over the evening meal.

Dinner Break

006-18 Evening Worship & Celebration of the Lord's Supper

A At 7:00, TE Ron Cox, Associate Pastor of the Rivermont Presbyterian Church called the New River Presbytery to worship. During the service TE David Weber, Pastor of Rivermont preached an expository sermon from 1 Corinthians 5:16-21 entitled "Our Reformed Identity." TE Cox presided at the Lord's Supper.

At the conclusion of worship, the Holy Spirit having fallen powerfully on the congregation, it was moved and seconded that Dr. Weber's sermon be recorded in the minutes of the New River Presbytery.

Motion was Sustained to Enter Dr. Weber's Sermon into the Minutes of the NRP.

B Our Reformed Identity
Dr. David Weber, Pastor, Rivermont Presbyterian Church, Lynchburg, Virginia
1 Corinthians 5:16-21

It is quite a privilege and an honor to preach this evening at the 6th meeting of the New River Presbytery. In some ways, it feels as though I am coming full circle in my journey with the Presbytery. As I have shared with many of you, I came into the Presbytery of the Mid-Atlantic in 2007 right here at Rivermont. I was a student at RTS in Charlotte and had been a member of St. Giles EPC for a handful of years. Like many of you, my journey into the EPC was not a straight line. The first half of my youth, I was not a member of a church. When I came to faith as an eleven-year-old, I was baptized and joined a Baptist church. My father was in the military, so we soon moved and our family began attending a United Methodist Church in Augusta, GA. Once in college, I was involved in the Methodist Student ministry at UGA called Wesley. Despite its denominational affiliation, most of the students were charismatic and baptistic in their theology. And that is where I was as well. During my time in college, I was introduced to the Reformed faith through the ministry and writings of John Piper. And through the providence of God, I showed up at RTS as somewhat of a theological mutt with very little knowledge of the Presbyterian church.

But I found a home at St. Giles and then in the Presbytery of the Mid-Atlantic and the EPC. Its adherence to the essentials and to the Reformed Faith, but liberty in nonessentials, gave me room to grow into the denomination. Following graduation, I was called to a small EPC church in Gaffney, South Carolina, Overbrook Presbyterian Church. And there in the fall of 2008, I was ordained and installed. For the nine years I

was there, our membership never grew above seventy, and if we had over fifty in worship, we felt like the Kingdom was coming. For those of you who remember our former Stated Clerk, Howard Shockley, he would drive up from his home outside of Greenville to mentor me those first several years. We would meet at Cracker Barrel, and over coffee and pancakes, he would share his wisdom and encouragement.

In 2017, the Lord called me to Rivermont, which has been quite a contrast in ministry from my time at Overbrook. However, despite the outward differences (of size, worship style, location, history), the core identity of these churches is the same. And it is this core identity that unites all EPC churches. The reason that we can have liberty in the non-essentials, the reason we can have charity in all things, is that we are united in the core of who we are in our Reformed identity. We call this core the Essentials of our Faith. But our unity is so much more than a mere adherence to the seven essentials as such, but it is the adherence to the doctrine and practice that are derived by good and necessary consequence from holding to these essentials. It is the expression of our faith in the Westminster Confession and Catechisms. It is the expression of our faith in our Presbyterian form of Government. It is the expression of our faith in our evangelical calling to the lost - to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is the expression of our faith to glorify God and enjoy him forever. And as members of this denomination, we are constantly called to protect and to live out these principles. That is, whatever our outward circumstances may be, ministry-wise, we are called to our Reformed Identity.

And I say all this because I love our Presbytery and our denomination. Therefore, it is the call of all elders, both Teaching and Ruling, to faithfully preserve what the Lord has so graciously given us.

In our passage for this evening, we come to the Apostle Paul's defense of his own ministry in 2 Corinthians 5. If you remember, Paul's letters to the church in Corinth are defenses of his own Apostolic calling and ministry. There are those who call themselves Apostles and who speak to the weakness of Paul's ministry. But Paul explains that his ministry is not to be evaluated according to the standards of men but rather according to the standards of God. And in particular, in our verse, not according to old creation realities but rather according to the new creation realities brought about through the work of Jesus Christ.

And this is a question that we must answer as well: "How will we, as ministers in the EPC, regard those who are in ministry or who seek to be ordained to the gospel ministry?" We might think of this personally, how will I evaluate my call? We might think of that relationally, how do I evaluate the call of others? And we might think of it denominationally, what are the standards of calling and ordination in the EPC? What is our Reformed Identity?

And to all these questions, what we will see in our passage is that if we would rightly evaluate ministry in the EPC, we must judge according to the power of the New Creation given to us in Christ.

[Hear now the word of the Lord 2 Corinthians 5:16-21...Blessed you are, Lord, great God. For the testimonies of the prophets, we bless you. For the statutes of your Law, we

bless you. For the gospel of Christ and the witness of the Apostles, we bless you, O glorious God. Grant us the Spirit of your glory and the brightness of your presence That we might read your Word and understand. Through Jesus Christ our gracious Lord. Amen]

Point One: Every Minister of the Gospel Must Be a New Creation (vv. 16-17)

Gilbert Tennent, in his provocative sermon “The Dangers of an Unconverted Ministry” delivered in 1740 amidst the Old Side/New Side controversy, said,

“It is impossible that an unconverted man should rightly discharge the work of the ministry to the glory of God.”

In this sermon, Tennent powerfully argued that many of the ministers of his day were unregenerate men, and that such men, no matter their wisdom, learning, professionalism, and eloquence, were not fit for ministry.

And while he preached from Mark 6:34, he could have just as well preached his sermon from 2 Corinthians 5. Look down at verses 16-17. There we read,

“From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.” (2 Corinthians 5:16–17 ESV)

The first thing we see in our text for this evening is that every minister of the gospel must be a New Creation. What do I mean by that? As you can imagine, my auto-correct does not like the repetition of the word creation, but it is important.

The verse begins by saying “from now on.” This means that there is something that has changed. We used to do something one way, but from now on, we will not do that anymore. And what is it that we will stop doing? We will stop evaluating, regarding, or judging believers according to the flesh. That means according to worldly standards of evaluation. Glory, influence, wealth, power. All things that are derived from the present realities. As Calvin comments on this verse, “...everything apart from regeneration...”

Paul acknowledges that at one point, we did judge people, even Jesus, according to the flesh. That means that there was a point when we would see the outward works of Jesus and judge who he was and what his ministry meant by the bare facts of what he did. Prior to his conversion, Paul knew the facts about Jesus. He had heard the claims of the gospel. But he was merely evaluating them according to what the eye of flesh could see.

But that changed when he was confronted by the resurrected Christ. He was headed to Damascus to destroy the spread of the gospel, but then Christ radically and irresistibly saved him. In a point of irony, his eyes were blinded by the revelation of Jesus Christ. He once regarded Christ according to the flesh, but now, by the miraculous intervention of God, he sees and regards him thus no longer.

So then, how do we regard? How do we see rightly if it is not by the flesh? Here Paul answers that question by saying “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ...New Creation!”

The Greek construction of this phrase is abrupt. And to smooth it out, our English translations supply the “he is a.” I do not object to this rendering; however, we must not miss the vital importance of the objective New Creation reality that is being addressed. For the Apostle is not merely saying that individuals who are united to Christ through faith are new creations individually. Rather, he is saying that there is an objective reality called the New Creation that has come into existence through the resurrection of Jesus Christ. And therefore, all who are united to Christ are now in said New Creation.

The term flesh is connected to all that is according to the Old Creation. To use covenantal language, it is our Adamic nature. Broken by sin and death. Held captive by Satan, the god of this world. But because of the work of Jesus Christ, a New Creation reality has broken into this present world. For Jesus Christ died and he rose again. And in doing so, he initiated the eschaton. That is to say, he brought the future New Creation into the present Old Creation world. So that now, the life of the world to come is present in all who by faith are in Jesus Christ.

It is as though an embassy of a foreign country has been planted in the middle of a hostile country and it provides escape for all who would flee to it for asylum.

It has been noted that Paul is drawing on the New Creation language of Isaiah 43. There Isaiah says,

“Remember not the former things, nor consider the things of old. Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?” (Isaiah 43:18–19 ESV)

To be joined to Christ by God’s grace through faith means that the life you now live is not rooted in the old creation but rather in the New Creation. This is what Paul means when he says elsewhere,

“I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.” (Galatians 2:20 ESV)

You see, if you are in Christ, it means that you have died to this world and you are now alive in the world that is to come. Seated with Christ in the heavenly places. And this is how we must regard ourselves and how we must regard one another, New Creation creations. For,

“The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.” (2 Corinthians 5:17 ESV)

We must begin here. Have you been born again? Has the old passed away and has the new come? How do you regard yourself? Where do you root your identity? Is it in the old, broken creation or the new, living creation?

This question of identity is so important because we do still live in this old creation, and it beckons us. We still have bodies that are broken by sin, and they tempt us. We have been born again; however, the body of our first birth has not yet been glorified, and it is weak. And therefore, we can easily regard ourselves according to the flesh. And it is easy to regard others according to the flesh. But if we continue to identify ourselves and others with the fallen old creation (whether it be a particular glory – such as Pharisaical Righteousness - or a particular sin – such as Homosexuality or Same-sex attraction), we deny the power of the new creation and the new birth. We deny that we are regenerate. If we claim an identity other than Jesus Christ, we deny the new creation. If we are unwilling to disavow ourselves from the old creation, we deny our citizenship in the new.

And therefore, it takes faith not to remember the former things as Isaiah calls us to do. It takes faith to believe that we have been crucified with Christ as Paul says. It takes faith to believe that the old has passed away and the new has come. For the eyes of flesh see the old brokenness, but the eyes of faith see a New Creation in Christ. If we would hold on to our essential identity as a denomination, we must not regard one another according to the flesh but according to the New Creation. Our Reformed identity means that we must be New Creation creations in Christ.

Point Two: Every Minister of the Gospel Must Know the New Creation Power (vv. 18-19)

We must maintain the new creation as the foundation of ministry. And this is why it is so very important that when candidates for ministry come under care and when they come for ordination, that they share their testimony, a witness that they have been born anew through union with Christ and are to no longer be regarded according to the flesh. The next thing that we see in our text is that we must regard ministry as a new creation power.

In 1 Corinthians, Paul explains the nature of his own ministry in these words,

“And I, when I came to you, brothers, did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling, and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.” (1 Corinthians 2:1–5 ESV)

It is so very tempting to evaluate ministry (both our own and others) from the perspective of lofty speech and wisdom. To evaluate the worth or power of a ministry by how it sounds and looks. This is a central problem in the Evangelical movement. We so often build ministries around powerful and gifted communicators and leaders. Those who rise to places of prominence tend to be those who are able to gather large crowds and not necessarily those who come in weakness and fear and trembling.

The problem is that such ministries that are built on human power do not remain. Rather, we are called to regard our ministry in a new creation power. Look at verses 18-19. There we read,

“All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ, God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.” (2 Corinthians 5:18–19 ESV)

The verse begins by saying “all this.” All what? Well, everything that we have just gone over. The New Creation in Christ. The new birth. The old passing away and the new coming. All of this is from God. To put it simply, salvation is from the power of God and not the power of men. And therefore, we must regard one another not by human accomplishment and wisdom but rather by the demonstration of the Spirit and of power. The power of ministry comes not from the minister but rather from the God who sends the minister. For salvation is from God.

And this is central to our reformed identity. Not what man can accomplish but what God has accomplished in Christ.

As we see, the aim of the gospel is to bring about reconciliation. That is, a restoration of the relationship between a holy God and sinful man. We understand by the word of God that Adam broke the covenant of life by eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and thereby plunged himself and all his posterity into a relationship of enmity with God. This is what Paul explains in Ephesians chapter 2,

“And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.” (Ephesians 2:1–3 ESV)

You were in the old creation, but God was not willing to allow his chosen ones to remain in this state of enmity under his wrath and curse. And therefore, he sent his Son Jesus Christ to reconcile us to himself, making peace by the blood of the cross.

As the text says, God has reconciled us to himself, not counting their trespasses against them. Of course, it will not be lost on us Presbyterians, but it must be highlighted that the work and the power of salvation is not at all in man but wholly and completely of God. It was willed by the Father, it was accomplished by the Son, and it is applied by the Spirit.

It is so very tempting to take the power of salvation into our own hands, either for glory or for despair. For glory, we will see our congregations growing and people coming to faith. We will receive compliments and accolades for what a great job we have done. And we will begin to think that maybe some of this is from me. From my gifts, my talents, my wisdom, and winsomeness. On the other hand, we may believe the power of salvation is in our hands for despair. Our churches are dying. No one is responding.

The elders are complaining. The budget is not being met. And you think to yourself, it is because I am a failure. If I were only more talented, I could turn this ministry around.

I had a lovely congregation at Overbrook. The people there loved me and my family well, and they loved the Lord well. But the church remained small. There were Sundays when we had less than two dozen people in attendance. And I began to despair. I told my wife, "I just don't think I am called to ministry. I can't seem to get any traction. The church isn't growing. I don't want it to fail under me." And I am sure that every minister here has felt this before.

How do we fight such thoughts of glory or despair? We look to 2 Corinthians 5:18 – "All this is from God." From start to finish, salvation is of the Lord. And therefore, we do not evaluate our ministry or the ministry of others by the outward success or failure, but rather by their reliance on the power of God alone to save.

And therefore, we must study, know, believe, and preach the doctrines of grace. We must be fully persuaded of God's sovereign election, of Christ's particular redemption, and of the Spirit's irresistible and effectual application of grace. There is no rod of discipline more humbling, and no medicine more comforting to the soul of a minister than the reality that all of salvation is of God.

Point Three: Every Minister of the Gospel Must Preach A New Creation Message (vv. 20-21)

This is our Reformed Identity: a new creation, a new creation power, and third, a new creation message. Look down at verses 18-21,

"All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ, God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake, he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." (2 Corinthians 5:18–21 ESV)

If we follow the thinking here, a minister of the gospel is a new creation, empowered by God, to proclaim a message of reconciliation.

A few things to note from these verses: First, ministers of the gospel have especially been entrusted with the message of God's sovereign reconciliation. (Those of you who are not ordained have also been given this message, but ordained ministers have a special calling to proclaim this message).

Second, we are ambassadors. We are not speaking our own message, but God is speaking through us. It is his power at work, as we have just noted. When you are preaching the word of God, it is God making his appeal through you, even as a president empowers an ambassador to speak on his behalf to a foreign nation.

Third, our call is to implore the lost to faith in God's reconciling work, to faith in the work of Jesus Christ.

Fourth, the crux of that message is the substitutionary life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, summarized in verse 21.

This verse contains the heart of the message that we must preach week in and week out. It is what makes a sermon a Christian sermon. It is what we heard Paul proclaim earlier in 1 Corinthians 2,

"I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified."

It is what theologians call the great exchange.

First, we must proclaim the message that Christ, who knew no sin, became sin. This means that on the cross, the spotless Lamb of God took on the guilt of sin. He became a curse for us. The sin of all God's elect was imputed or reckoned to Jesus Christ. Although he had never sinned, he died for sinners. He took the place of his sinful people and poured out his blood. And the wrath of God against sin was fully executed in the propitiation which is Christ.

Second, we must proclaim the message that through the death of Christ, all who believe become the righteousness of God. That is to say, the righteousness of Jesus Christ is imputed or reckoned to us; that is our new creation identity. And now we are forgiven by God and accepted as his children because he no longer regards us or judges us according to the flesh but according to the new creation. That is to say, he sees us as righteous because of the righteousness of Christ given to us.

This is the message of reconciliation that cannot be lost. We are justified by grace through faith, declared righteous according to the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. No longer in the old creation but a new creation.

And whether you are preaching from the Law or the Psalms or the Prophets. Whether you are preaching from the Gospels or the Epistles or Revelation, this must be your message. As Paul says in 1 Corinthians 1,

"We preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God." (1 Corinthians 1:23–24 ESV)

When we preach to our congregations each Sunday or gather to hear candidates for ministry preach at presbytery, this must be the message that is clearly articulated – be reconciled to God through the atoning work of Jesus Christ! For this message is our Reformed Identity.

Conclusion: Shall the Progressives Win (Again)?

On May 21, 1922, Harry Emerson Fosdick delivered what might be the most famous Presbyterian sermon of the 20th century, "Shall the Fundamentalists Win?" If you know the background, the "Fundamentalists" were seeking to impose new ordination standards on the mainline Presbyterian church. These included many of the very things that we call the seven essentials of the faith. However, Fosdick argued that there were sincere evangelicals who, in light of modern science, could not hold to such doctrines as the virgin birth, penal substitutionary atonement, and the bodily return of Jesus Christ.

Fosdick painted the Fundamentalists as intolerant conservatives who had arbitrarily drawn the lines of orthodoxy. And that to maintain unity, there needed to be a more liberal and tolerant approach to such issues.

The conservative Presbyterian pastor Clarence Macartney responded to Fosdick with his own sermon, "Shall Unbelief Win?" He argued that secularism had made its way into the church and if not addressed, would lead to "a Christianity of opinions and principles and good purposes, but a Christianity without worship, without God, and without Jesus Christ."

So who won? If we look at the mainline denominations, we see that the Progressives have clearly won the institutions. Fosdick's vision of a liberal and tolerant approach to such issues as are essential to the faith has led to denomination after denomination falling not merely into loose theology but into rank heresy.

Even this week, we have seen the UMC fall to the cult of the LGBTQ kingdom, the latest denomination to align themselves with the flesh and the old creation.

In the PCUSA, the Olympia Presbytery has tried to up the ante in this regard. They have recently proposed an amendment to the church's ordination standards. Quoting now from an article by Richard Burnett in the winter edition of 2024 of Theology Matters:

"The upshot of this amendment is that every ordination and installation of an officer in the PCUSA, whether teaching elder, ruling elder, or deacon, 'shall include' henceforth an examination of the candidate's willingness to affirm an unlimited number of sexual orientations, identities, and practices. Candidates would also have to 'guarantee full participation and representation' of 'our LGBTQIA+ siblings' in the church's 'worship, governance, and emerging life.'"

It is clear who has won these institutions.

And as we look to our own denomination, our beloved EPC, forged out of a desire to adhere to the fundamentals of our faith without exception, we must ask: Will the progressives win again, or will we hold fast to our Reformed Identity?

Last Presbytery meeting we unanimously passed an overture to the General Assembly that seeks to guard and preserve our reformed identity. But in response, there have been many calls to delay. There has been pressure to take our time. There are voices that echo Fosdick. They say, "Well-meaning evangelicals differ on such matters. We need tolerance to maintain our unity."

But I say to you, there need be no delay in this regard. The study has been done. The questions have been asked. We have seen where this goes. Therefore, we must hold fast. We must not delay or relent.

If we are to maintain the identity of our denomination, then we elders must not regard anyone according to the flesh but rather see with the eyes of faith that unbelief shall never win, but rather in Christ, we are more than conquerors. We must hold firm to the truth that Jesus spoke, that even the gates of hell shall not prevail against His Church.

Yes, there are battles to be fought. Yes, there are arguments to be made. But in the end, the church's foundation will not falter, for it is the unshakable rock of our salvation, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Shall the Progressives win? They never have won. For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world but forfeits his soul?

Our faith is not in the things that we see, but in the Power and the Message of the New Creation in the crucified and risen Christ! That must be our Reformed Identity!

Saturday, May 4, 2024

006-19 Call to Order and Prayer

Moderator Miller reconvened the meeting at 8:30 a.m., declared a quorum and opened the session in prayer.

006-20 Morning Devotion

Scott Whitner, Student Intern at Walker's Evangelical Presbyterian Church, Pamplin, Virginia was introduced by the Moderator. After a brief prayer, Mr. Whitner preached the morning sermon from the Gospel of Mark. At the conclusion of his sermon he led the Presbytery in a second season of prayer.

006-21 Ministerial Committee Report

TE Cameron Smith, Moderator of the Ministerial Committee led the Presbytery in prayer for the work of the Ministry and the ministry of the congregations of the NRP. He began his report by reminding the NRP of

- 1) The duties of the Ministerial Committee
- 2) Encouraging evangelical, missional, Reformed and Presbyterian ministry.

A Ministerial Committee Omnibus Motion

- 1 To excuse those who had requested to be excused because of hard providence: TE Rob Buchanan, TE Benjamin Williams, TE Danny Redman, TE David Beaty, TE Eric Shipton, TE Bucky Hunsicker, and CP Alan Morrison.
- 2 To excuse the sessions that had requested to be excused because of hard providence: Hope Community Church, Princeton, FORGE Church.

B Examination of Scott Whitner

Scott Whitner having been a member of Walker's Evangelical Presbyterian Church, Pamplin, VA for at least six months, and having been endorsed by that church's Session as a candidate to come under care of the Presbytery, was examined by the Ministerial Committee and recommended for approval as a Candidate Under Care. In accordance with G.11-2C, the Presbytery examined Scott in Christian experience and growth, motives for seeking ordination and personal call to ministry. At the close of the examination the Moderator put the question to the body: Shall Scott Whitner be approved as Candidate Under Care of the NRP.

The Motion was sustained to approve Scott Whitner as Candidate Under Care of the New River Presbytery.

The Candidate responded affirmatively to the constitutional questions posed by the Moderator (G.11-2C). Prayer for the Candidate was offered by the Rev. Dr. Olin Whitner, Scott's grandfather, and a charge to the Candidate was given by TE Robert Barnett. TE Robert Barnett was appointed to be Scott's advisor.

TE Smith then concluded his report with a brief prayer for the work ministry in the New River Presbytery.

Break

006-22 Westminster Standards Equipping Time

The Moderator reminded the NRP of the importance of the *Westminster Standards* for encouraging, equipping, and enabling disciple making churches to plant disciple making churches. Dr. Miller invited TE Marcos Ortega, Minister Member of the Presbytery of the Easter, and Member of the *Ad Interim Committee on Racial Lament and Hope* to the pulpit and equip the NRP. TE Ortega began by leading the NRP in prayer and then continued the NRP's Saturday morning Westminster Standards Equipping Time by exhorting the Elders of the NRP to greater faithfulness in their ministerial work. TE Ortega spoke about the *Standard's* clear anti-racism and encouraged the NRP to view the *Standards* as a present help in their reconciling work. At the conclusion of his presentation TE Ortega took questions from the floor and explained more about his work with the *AIC*. At the conclusion of his presentation TE Ortega led the NRP in prayer for the discipleship and reconciliation of the nations.

006-23 Expression of Thanks to the Host Church

The Moderator then led the Presbytery in an expression of thanks to the host church, and prayed for the ministers, deacons, elders, members, and friends of the Rivermont Presbyterian Church, praising God for their generous hospitality.

006-24 Date and Time of the Next Meeting

October 4th and 5th 2024, Westminster Presbyterian Church, Bluefield, West Virginia

006-25 Adjournment

Having been successfully moved, seconded, and sustained, Moderator Miller adjourned the 006th Meeting and closed with Prayer.

Respectfully Submitted,

/S/

Rufus T Burton, Stated Clerk