

PWCFP CT January 10, 2015

St. Mark's Presbyterian Church, Altamonte Springs

MINUTES

Meeting called to order with lighting of Christ Candle by Karen Hamilton, Moderator.

Rosellyn Calvert gave the devotion and opening prayer.

Minutes of the October, 2014 meeting were approved as distributed.

The Treasurer's report from Alice Hoelzer-Hawthorne was presented by Brenda Tomkins. Following the report, Brenda resigned as treasurer. After discussion Jennifer Jonas was nominated as treasurer. M/S/P.

Officer reports:

Moderator Report

10/12 Attended Dan Turk's presentation on Madagascar at Park Lake Pres.

10/14 Attended Mission Haven meeting, toured the 3 homes and 6 apartments PW operates and volunteered 3 hours at Mission Haven

10/15 Attended Columbia Friendship Circle meeting and met the recipients of the PW Columbia Friendship Circle recipients.

10/16-17 Attended the Presbyterian Women Synod of South Atlantic fall meeting at Columbia Seminary, Decatur, Georgia.

10/19 Attended the AIR Guatemala presentation at Park Lake Pres. sponsored by Orlando Pres. and Installed Officers for St. Mark's PW Fall Retreat

10/21 Met with Kay Laws to retrieve District Coordinator 2 notebook.

10/25 Attended the fall retreat at NorthLake Pres.

10/27 Attended the 2015 Annual Gathering Meeting at Maitland Pres.

10/28 Attended the Fall Festival of Tables Thank Offering at Wekiva.

10/30 Attended the Duvall Home Fall Gathering Update.

11/5 Brenda Tompkins and I retrieved Treasurer records from Alice Holzer- Hawthorne

11/11 Attended PW Coordinating Team meeting at Wekiva Pres. and then continued to the Presbytery Council Meeting at St. Marks Senior Center, Orlando

12/2 Attended Presbytery Meeting at First Pres. Leesburg

12/6 Installed Officers at Maitlnd Pres' Winter Brunch with Mr. & Mrs. Santa Claus.

12/13 Attended the Boars Head Pagent at Oakland Pres.

12/18 Met with Brenda and Alice to review treasurer procedures.

12/21 Attended farewell luncheon for Alice at Oakland Pres.

1/6 Attended Wekiva 2015 Annual Gathering Planning Meeting

Becky Stewart's concerns for PW at our October 4th CT Meeting were given to Dan Williams, Executive Presbyter, Central Florida Presbytery via email by Jill Bolander-Cohen. Dan's October 13th responses were then shared with the PWSOSA CT on October 16th and I shared them with all of you on October 20th as follows as Jill's Justice & Peace Report.

From: Jill Bolander Cohen [<mailto:jillbolandercohen@live.com>]

Sent: Wednesday, October 8, 2014 1:25 PM

To: Dan Williams

Cc: Jill Bolander Cohen; Karen Hamilton; Sheila Louder

Subject: HELP...We are having Presbyterian Women Issues

Good Afternoon Dan,

The Moderator of the PW Central Florida Presbytery, Karen Hamilton and the women on the PWCFP coordinating team are having some serious issues and we need your guidance and advice. Please read the email correspondence below. This past Saturday the PWCFP council met and heard reports back from their districts. They were saying pastors were informing the women of the church that they were disbanding PW in their churches and the money was to go into the general fund. Also reported is one of our pastors told his PW group that our Horizons Bible Study was not good and they should not be doing it. This Bible Study and every Horizon Bible Study is a three year process for

approval. PW rate and vote on content, so for a comment like this to be made is not good, period! Needless to say their are a bunch of upset women in our CFP.

I contacted Sheila Louder, Pam Snyder's counterpart on the CCT Church wide team; Sheila is the Justice & Peace Vice Mod.

She told me this is happening all over the country and has become a huge problem. Now that churches are leaving the denomination and the ladies are sitting on money the pastors and sessions are thinking up ways to go after their funds. PW is a registered 501c3 but that is only for the Louisville office not the individual churches. Sheila advised me to let the women know they need to register with the state and obtain an EIN number and start their own bank account if they don't already have one. The problem is many of the churches don't want to relinquish the monies because there are large numbers, Vero Beach PW alone has over \$80,000 at their disposal.

How can we let the pastors know this is unacceptable behavior on their part, telling the women they are disbanding their circles, shooting down a nationally approved Bible Study and trying to take their money. This is the kind of nonsense that causes people to stop giving and attending church.

Please advise us on what our course of action should be.

Thanks so much,

Jill Bolander Cohen

In your email, you asked several questions that deal with the relationship of a local Presbyterian Women's gathering to the session of a particular church. These questions are:

1. Can a Session disband a PW gathering?
2. Can a Session direct that PW's money be deposited in the congregation's general fund?
3. Can a Session direct what Bible study materials the PW can/cannot use?

Presbyterian Women is the current incarnation of groups that existed in our antecedent denominations, United Presbyterian Women and Women of the Church. These groups were set up as independent organizations within the Presbyterian Church, with a structure of oversight and accountability that mirrored the system of session, presbytery, synod, and General Assembly. Since the 1988 union of these two bodies, local PW gatherings are to be established by the bylaws recommended in the PW Manual provided by the national organization. Once established according to these guidelines, Presbyterian Women of the Congregation becomes an independent organization, albeit one that has some relational responsibilities with the session.

A session has the "responsibility for governing the congregation and guiding its witness to the sovereign activity of God in the world, so that the congregation is and becomes a community of faith, hope, love, and witness" (G-3.0201). (It should be noted that PW's purpose is congruent with this.) A session has oversight responsibility for that which occurs within the congregation: "Each council shall review annually or biennially, based on the body's meeting frequency, the proceedings and actions of all entities related to the body, all officers able to act on behalf of the body, and lower councils within its jurisdiction (G-3.0108a).

Admittedly, things get a bit murky at this point, as to what the extent of the session's authority is in such matters. However, common sense suggests the following:

1. When a PW chapter is established, a session has authority to approve its creation as an organization or entity within the congregation. That is, the session acts to permit PW to be organized and to meet within the congregation, including using its facilities.
2. The PW chapter organizes itself according to the bylaws recommended by the national PW. This is an important step, as it makes the local gathering of PW more than merely an organization or entity of the congregation. It is also an entity established under the guidance of and related to the national PW body, through the presbytery and synod levels of PW.
3. PW of the Congregation should make annual reports to the session (for the annual meeting of the congregation), and have its financial records reviewed annually. (See G-3.0108a.)

If all of these steps have been/are being followed, then particularly because of #2, a session cannot simply act to dissolve the PW chapter within its congregation. Such a decision can only be made by the membership of the local chapter, with the concurrence, or at least input, of the PW of the Presbytery. (To me, this is a parallel to where a congregation only can be dissolved by the action of a presbytery.) If the session and the PW are at odds over some matter, it seems to me the only action the session could take is to prohibit PW from meeting in the congregation's facilities. If the session desires to potentially alienate a number of its members and start what could be a protracted season of conflict within the congregation, taking such an action would seem to be an excellent way to do so.

Short version to question #1: once session gives its approval to the formation of a PW group within the congregation, and the gathering is structured according to the national guidelines, the session lacks the authority to dissolve the group.

The second question, about whether the session can direct PW's money to be deposited into the General Fund or any other account not established by the PW organization, connects to the fundamental principle that offerings must be used for the purposes for which they were given. PW has a long-established tradition of support via pledges from members and various special offerings (Birthday, Least Coin, etc.), often supplemented by other fundraising activities. It seems to me that the only way this money could wind up in the funds overseen by the session is for the PW group to direct it to happen, such as by the membership voting to make a contribution towards some congregational effort. (PWs in congregations I have served have made generous contributions towards projects like rebuilding a pipe organ or installing a new roof.) If a PW gathering, in consultation with presbytery PW, votes to disband, it will need to stipulate as to the disposition of all remaining funds, such as that they be turned over to the session. Since my opinion is that a session cannot unilaterally disband a PW chapter contrary to the wishes of its members and oversight of the larger PW organization, it cannot act to take any or all of its funds. This would constitute making use of funds for reasons other than that for which they were given.

The third question is whether a session can direct a PW as to the Bible Study materials it may use. One responsibility that all councils of the church have is "warning and bearing

witness against error in doctrine and immorality in practice within the congregation and community” (G-3.0201c). Congruent with this, the session has authority over the curriculum that will be used in the educational ministry of the congregation under its direct control and oversight, such as in Sunday School. However, PW is an organization that stretches beyond the local congregation, and decisions as to what materials are to be used for a PW Bible Study is an issue for the PW to determine.

It is my opinion that the session can suggest, recommend, or even strongly urge that the local PW not use a particular study, in fulfillment of its responsibility to warn against error (as the session sees it). But, in my opinion, the session cannot direct PW to not use a particular study, or to use only a particular study. There are several long-standing principles of Presbyterian governance that speak to this issue, such as:

- God alone is the Lord of the conscience. (F-3.0101a)
- There are truths and forms with respect to which [people] of good characters and principles may differ. And in all these we think it the duty both of private Christians and societies to exercise mutual forbearance toward each other. (F-3.0105)
- That all Church power, whether exercised by the body in general or in the way of representation by delegated authority, is only ministerial and declarative ... no Church judicatory ought to pretend to make laws to bind the conscience in virtue of their own authority. (F-3.0107)

Think of this in terms of the session’s relationship to members of the congregation. The session can advise, urge, warn, etc., its members about certain books, movies, TV programs, and the like, but it cannot direct its members to refrain from reading/viewing such materials. The only possible exception I can see is for some level of judicial process to be undertaken, which in these areas I would suspect would be dismissed as asking for relief for which a permanent judicial commission lacked authority to grant.

I am sorry that this response is rather lengthy. As I always do in such circumstances, I ask you to note the disclaimer that follows my signature. Please let me know if you have concerns or questions with anything I have written.

Dan

Daniel S. Williams, Executive Presbyter/Stated Clerk, Central Florida Presbytery

Vice Moderator Martha Kiser

I attended dinner at Wekiva on 10/28/14 for the Thank Offering. Activities limited due to continued illness.

Cultural Diversity Jennifer Jonas

On October 7th I attended a Suicide Prevention Class at the Mentor Network.

On October 14th, I attended the Miriam Circle Presbyterian Women Meeting at the Maitland Presbyterian Church.

On Monday, October 27th I attended the PWCFP Planning Team Meeting at the Maitland Presbyterian Church. The purpose of the meeting was to plan for the upcoming Annual Gathering that is being held on January 24th.

On Wednesday, November 19th, I attended a meeting of the Zonta Club of Central Florida. The purpose of Zonta is to empower women through Service and Advocacy which aligns with the mission of PW.

On Tuesday, November 9th, I attended the Miriam Circle Presbyterian Women Christmas Gathering.

Global Mission Report Barbara Joyce

October, I attended Cuba Leadership at the Presbytery offices. During that meeting we completed a format to follow in regards to our partnership with the Central Cuba Presbytery in Santa Clara, Cuba.

Nine people went to Cuba the first week of Dec.

I forwarded information from the Presbytery about the ongoing projects in Madagascar that PW supports to the District Coordinators. At the Presbytery meeting I was inducted as a member of the Mission Development Committee and appointed Chair of the Global Mission Committee. I had a meeting with Randy Simpson and Diane Watkins, who went to Cuba, about their trip. It was a total success. The group broke up into 4 different groups to visit all 13 churches in the Presbytery. This format will be followed on future trips due to its success.

BIRP which is a cluster of Presbyterian churches in Brevard County is currently planning a trip to Cuba to install a water treatment system for Living Waters. Each system costs \$20,000, which includes installation and travel for the team. This would be a great project for PW to become involved with in the future.

District 5 Jean Evans

Forwarded all messages and information to all D 5 churches. Attended Wekiva's Festival of Tables for their Thank Offering.

District 6 Eleanore Kaney

In Nov. I attended a fund raising luncheon at Park Lake. Lydia circle donated the money raised to Fern Creek Elem School to use for needed items for the students. Also in Nov. I attended the Festival of Tables at Wekiva Pres. Park Lake PW put an Angel Tree with gift suggestions for Harbor House and Mrs. Russell's Home. The coordinating team donated enough money to buy 18 cd players for the Russell Home. Requests from the people. In Oct. I attended a craft show at Grace Covenant church. They work all year to make items to sell. This is how they fund their budget wishes. In Dec. I attended the Annual Gingerbread House event at Park Lake. The money raised went to Habitat for Humanity. Sent out the reg. form for the Annual Gathering to all the churches in my district. I have heard back from two churches. Two members of the PW at Park Lake knitted 46 scarves for Thornwell Children's Home.

District 7 Beth Timmons

Cocoa PW – we have 4 Circles using the Horizons Bible Study, with about 35 women who attend. We help children at the Cambridge Elementary School by providing clothing and school supplies. We contribute to the House of Moses (ACE) and Thornwell Home. We collect funds for Blanket Plus (CWS), Least Coin, 2 cents a meal (PATH), Thank Offering, and PW Mission Pledges. PW Gathering Christmas Brunch was held in December. 1* PC Titusville PW gave to all PW missions and used the Horizons Bible Study. They had lunch out at "Chocolate" in December. St Luke's PW meets monthly and uses the Horizons Bible study. They went to lunch at Victoria's.

District 8 Becky Stewart

I forwarded announcements and letters to all of the District 8 churches concerning the Annual Meeting in January. I personally delivered Registration Forms to 5 of my churches also.

I delivered the Samaritans Shoe Boxes for PW at First Presbyterian in Vero. I also attended their Christmas Event, Christmas Tree Lane. This was the 60th anniversary of this event that is a large fund raiser for their PW. This year their net profit, from the event, was around \$7,500 with all of that money going to the numerous missions they support. First Pres., Vero has lost one of their circles and I am working with their Moderator to find another person to step up to help form and lead a Circle to replace the one they lost. I installed new officers at First Presbyterian in Sebastian and went out to lunch with around 50 ladies after the installation. I continue to talk to Spring Lake, even though their PW has been dissolved. A small group of ladies within the Church continue to make Heart Pillow and they were dedicated in November. These pillows are sent to the hospital for patients that go through major heart procedures.

Presbyterian Women were invited by Presbytery Council to present the "Good News" at the December 2nd meeting of Presbytery at First Pres., Leesburg. Laura Viau put together the powerful powerpoint presentation which she will also share at our 2015 Annual Gathering. PW display boards were also set up in the reception area to further share "Good News." Rosellyn Calvert, Parliamentarian, presented the changes to be voted on at Annual Gathering. These included

changes in guidelines for Vocational Scholarship applications and standing rules for funding to major events – Synod and National gatherings.

Because Jennifer Jonas will be the new treasurer, there is a need for a new Interpreter for Cultural Diversity. Brenda Tompkins will return to the Search Committee Coordinator position.

Old Business

1. Discussed the 2015 Annual Gathering to be held at Wekiva Presbyterian Church, January 24.
2. Discussion of funding for Annual Gathering in Minneapolis, June 18-22. CT members who have attended quarterly meetings and filed reports will be eligible for up to \$1000.

New Business

1. 2015 Proposed Budget presented and approved.
2. 2017 PWCFP proposed calendar tabled for March meeting.

Next PWCFP CT meeting will be March 14, 10 am, First Presbyterian Church Titusville.

Meeting adjourned with prayer.

Respectfully submitted,

Gayle Schmidt, Acting Secretary.