

MINUTES
Evangelical Covenant Church Ministerium Annual Meeting
June 22, 2022
Kansas City, Missouri and Virtual Access

2022 MINISTERIUM OFFICERS

Rev. Taylor Burgoyne, President
Rev. Dieula Previlon, Vice President
Rev. Laurie Cornell, Secretary
Rev. Ruby Varghese, Vice Secretary
Rev. Eric Hedberg, Treasurer
Parliamentarian serving this Annual Meeting: Rev. Anne Jorgensen

Agenda 1. The meeting was called to order at 9:05 am (CST) by President Burgoyne. He welcomed everyone and noted that this 2022 meeting is our first in-person gathering in three years; along with a first ever hybrid meeting. The hybrid format has given us the largest attendance and access to date, which is a significant gift. A total of 616 individuals were registered for this Annual Meeting. He offered thanks to Covenant Events team; Convene/AGM team; hotel staff; Ministerium, IPG production team; Covenant Ministries of Benevolence; National Covenant Properties; and Rev. Karen Figueroa and Rev. Juana Nesta for their Spanish Translation.

Agenda 2. The opening prayer was offered by Vice President Previlon. She introduced Pastor Josef Rasheed, who led us in a beautiful time of worship through songs and prayer.

Agenda 3. Training on voting technology was led by the AGM Convene Staff.

Agenda 4. Organization of the meeting included the following:

Agenda 4b. Quorum call handled first - quorum was reached.

Agenda 4a. Parliamentarian Jorgensen offered a motion for the Adoption of the Standing Rules, and she then summarized the rules. No discussion.

Vote: For: 391 (100%) Against: 0 Abstain: 4

VOTE: STANDING RULES ADOPTED

Agenda 4c. A motion was made by President Burgoyne for the Approval of Agenda, including Consent Agenda. No discussion.

Vote: For: 394 (99.5%) Against: 2 (.5%) Abstain: 4

VOTE: AGENDA APPROVED

Agenda 4d. The Consent Agenda was summarized by Secretary Cornell. She reported on the Approval of the 2021 Ministerium Annual Meeting Minutes by the Executive Committee of the Ministerium, at the November 2021 meeting. The members of this Executive Committee are: Chair or President of each regional Conference, Presidents on the Mosaic Commission (Covenant Asian Pastors Association, Indigenous Ministers Association, Asociacion Latina De La Iglesia Del Pacto Evangelico. African American Ministers Association), President of Advocates for Covenant Clergy Women, President of Covenant Chaplains Association, Executive Minister of Ordered Ministry and Develop Leaders, Chair of the Board of Ordered Ministry, Dean of NPTS, President of the ECC, and Ministerium Officers. She also noted the list on the Agenda that included the Parliamentarian – Anne Jorgensen; the Sergeants-at-Arms – Mary Peterson, Scott Ruark, Sally Carlson, Steve Wong, Karl Helvig; and the Tellers for this meeting - AGM Convene Staff members. The Consent Agenda also included the Financial Report written by Treasurer Hedberg.

Agenda 4e. Good Standing Review was offered by Vice Secretary Varghese. Maintaining Good Standing includes paying annual dues; completing Covconnect Profile form and keeping it updated every three years; completing the Vocational Growth Tool each year; and maintaining regular, healthy connections, including participation at Midwinter, Ministerium Annual Meeting, conference retreats and Annual Meetings, regional cohort gatherings, and other Continuing Education opportunities. She noted that being in Good Standing allows each of us to access any needed denominational resources or services, and creates the possibility for serving in leadership roles within the Ministerium and denomination.

Agenda 4f. Greetings from colleagues who could not participate in the 2022 Annual Meeting were read by Secretary Cornell. She spoke of the long-standing relational commitment in the Ministerium of sending written greetings to the gathered Annual Meeting community, by any member who is not able to participate. This is not a rule, but a strongly encouraged optional courtesy. She appealed to the entire Ministerium to make every reasonable effort to participate each year, as important decisions and votes which shape our shared life, happen at each Annual Meeting.

Agenda 5. Proposed Changes to the Bylaws of the Covenant Ministerium

NOMINATING COMMITTEE

ARTICLE I

Election

Current:

Section 1.1. The chairpersons of the regional ministerial associations shall constitute the nominating committee of the Covenant Ministerium. The president of the Covenant Ministerium

shall designate the chairperson of this committee. They shall convene annually at the Midwinter Conference and shall present to the annual meeting of the Covenant Ministerium a ballot in printed form, with two candidates for each office to be elected. Additional nominations may be made from the floor. When there are more than two nominees for any position and no candidate receives a majority vote on the first ballot, the two candidates receiving the highest number of votes shall stand as candidates on the subsequent ballot.

Proposed:

Section 1.1 The chairpersons of the regional ministerial associations, and the presidents from each of the ethnic associations of the Evangelical Covenant Church (as defined by Article XV of the bylaws of the Evangelical Covenant Church) and the presidents of ministerium associations, approved by the ministerium, shall constitute the Nominating Committee of the Covenant Ministerium. The Nominating Committee shall convene virtually as needed to select nominees. The Nominating Committee shall elect a chair and secretary from among its members to serve a one year term at the Fall Executive Committee meeting.

Section 1.2 The nominating committee will solicit names for consideration from the Covenant Ministerium.

Section 1.3 The nominating committee shall present to the annual meeting of the Covenant Ministerium a ballot in written form, with two candidates for each office to be elected. The nominees shall be submitted to the officers of the Covenant Ministerium no less than 45 days prior to the annual meeting of the Covenant Ministerium. Additional nominations may be made from the floor. When there are more than two nominees for any position and no candidate receives a majority vote on the first ballot, the two candidates receiving the highest number of votes shall stand as candidates on the subsequent ballot.

Reasons for Proposed Changes:

- *To include a broader spectrum of diversity in the nominating process which better reflects the growing mosaic of the Covenant as well as the voices of female clergy and chaplains.*
- *To establish requirements related to reporting the names of nominees to the Covenant Ministerium which will facilitate greater familiarity with the candidates, thus helping all to make more informed choices when votes are cast.*
- *Removes the requirement for convening at Midwinter as not all members of the Nominating Committee are able to attend every year. By allowing for virtual meetings we increase accessibility and increase the likelihood of fuller participation.*
- *Clearly delineates both the term length for the Chair and Secretary as well as the process for election.*
- *Allows the Nominating Committee to choose its own leadership.*

AGENDA

Current: *Nothing.*

Proposed:

Article VI - Agenda

Section 6.1 The agenda for the annual meeting of the Covenant Ministerium will be made publicly available to the Covenant Ministerium no less than 30 days prior to the annual meeting of the Covenant Ministerium. The agenda shall include the nominees for officer positions.

Reasons for Proposed Changes:

- *To establish a required deadline for publishing the agenda for the Covenant Ministerium which sets clear expectations for communication.*
- *Serves the Ministerium in its discernment work by establishing a minimum amount of time to consider business items which will be before the body at our meeting.*

President Burgoyne offered an introduction and summarized the rationale for the proposed changes included above.

Agenda 5a. Changes in the Bylaws for the Ministerium Officers Nominating Committee include eliminating existing requirement that the Officers Nominating Committee meet at each Midwinter; proposing that the Committee be able to meet virtually, as well as allowing the Committee to choose its own Chair. A significant addition is the inclusion of the Presidents of the Mosaic Commission (CAPA, IMA, ALIPE, AAMA), and the Chairs of Covenant Chaplains Association and the Advocates for Covenant Clergy Women.

Additionally, the changes encourage the Nominating Committee to seek names from the entire Ministerium Community. Also, there is a proposal to set an official deadline of 45 days prior to the AM for the ballot being prepared, so that adequate time to process and pray is honored. President Burgoyne expressed gratitude to the Executive Committee of the Ministerium for working toward these goals and process changes during the past year.

No discussion followed. The vote on item 5a required a 2/3 majority vote to pass.

Vote: For: 441 (93.2%) Against: 32 (6.8%) Abstain: 10

VOTE: COVENANT MINISTERIUM BYLAWS CHANGES APPROVED

Agenda 5b. This proposed Bylaws changes also added the requirement that the Agenda for the Covenant Ministerium Annual Meeting be published 30 days prior to the Annual Meeting, so that all have ample time to prepare.

No discussion followed. This motion required a 2/3 majority to pass.

Vote: For: 483 (99.38%) Against: 3 (.62%) Abstain: 4

VOTE: COVENANT MINISTERIUM BYLAWS CHANGE APPROVED.

Agenda 6. Recognition of Ministerium Executive Committee Members who have completed their terms of service was led by Secretary Cornell. She named Bryan Murphy, President of the African American Ministers Association; Liz Jensen, President of the Southeast Conference MA; and Sumit Sen, Chair of the Pacific Southwest Conference MA as those finishing their terms. She expressed gratitude for their service, leadership and significant contributions to the shared work on the Executive Committee.

Agenda 7. Memorials were scheduled to be read by Rev. Bryan Murphy. Bryan had become ill, so this agenda item was postponed.

Agenda 8. Ministerium Budget for 2022-2023 was presented by Treasurer Hedberg. He expressed appreciation for regional Treasurers and conference administrators, along with the Develop Leaders team, especially Bethany Saldana, who has overseen so many details related to documentation of Good Standing for the Ministerium, including Dues records. Collecting Dues has been smooth this past year, and a large percentage of our credentialed clergy have paid dues!

Treasurer Hedberg noted that since he lives in Canada, and since the border has been closed related to the COVID pandemic, he expressed gratitude for a colleague in Washington who has picked up checks and other mail in his U.S. P. O. Box in Washington, and sent them to him in Canada!

He noted that that this year's proposed budget reflected a commitment to prioritize access issues, related to pastors who are bi-vocational and/or serve in under-resourced church settings. We have chosen to increase the budget for translation; Antiracism cohorts; Minister's Crisis Fund; and other expressions of leadership financial assistance. Treasurer Hedberg also stated that moving things to online events due to the pandemic and to improve access has reduced costs during the past year.

Discussion followed: It was observed that Midwinter Scholarships for pastors and chaplains were cut. Treasurer Hedberg explained that the line item actually is a return to the previous year's amount. The past year's expenses were larger than normal in that category because payments which belonged to a previous year were included in the past 2021-2022 accounting, due to checks written in a previous year but not cashed until the following year. The

increased Officer Stipends line item was questioned, with concern about those stipends being increased, while financial investment in other leadership roles appeared to be decreased.

A proposed amendment to the motion of the 2022-2023 budget was presented, to increase the Midwinter Scholarships line item from \$10,000 to \$20,000. The second portion of the motion was a request to include wording associated with the Officers Stipends, that those amounts be “as needed”. The motion was seconded. Discussion on the amendment followed.

Request was then made to separate the two parts of the amendment for the motion. Parliamentarian Jorgensen noted that: *Robert’s Rules requires that we honor this request, so the motion to amend will be divided into two votes.*

Discussion continued with a concern about Officer Stipends being received only as needed, noting that there is a great variety of ministry settings across our Ministerium and difficult to determine who qualifies as “needing” the stipend. It also was noted that creating a system to verify the category of “needing” the Officers Stipends seemed too cumbersome. A question was asked about how common it is for volunteer leadership roles in the ECC to receive stipends. Treasurer Hedberg noted that the Officers didn’t have comprehensive information on other roles and stipends, but reiterated the recommendation of this line item, related to the extensive amount of work and responsibility in the roles.

Debated ended at 20 minutes. Motion to extend debate for 20 minutes was offered. There was a second. This vote required 2/3 majority to pass.

Vote: For: 87 (23.08) Against: 290 (76.92%)

VOTE: MOTION TO EXTEND DEBATE NOT APPROVED

Vote on the first half of the amendment to the motion: Officers Stipends will be received, as needed, up to \$25,000 total for all Officers for each year of leadership.

Vote: For: 193 (49.49%) Against: 197 (50.51%) Abstain: 15

VOTE: AMENDMENT NOT APPROVED

Vote on the second half of the amendment to the motion: Scholarships for pastors and chaplains for Midwinter raised to \$20,000 from the \$10,000 in the proposed budget.

Vote: For: 225 (64.29%) Against: 125 (35.71%) Abstain: 9

VOTE: AMENDMENT APPROVED

Motion to adopt the 2022-2023 Ministerium Budget as amended. (While waiting for the vote to open, a point of clarification was stated. One leader’s perspective was that many volunteer leadership roles in the ECC do not include Stipends.)

Vote: For: 396 (86.46%) Against: 62 (13.54%) Abstain: 7

**VOTE: MOTION TO ADOPT THE AMENDED BUDGET FOR 2022-2023
APPROVED**

Agenda 9. Greetings from Serve Globally Nominee, Rev. Grace Shim

Rev. Shim shared that as a Therapist and Missionary, this Nomination to this leadership role was unexpected. She expressed gratitude for the affirmation reflected in this call. She described her perspective of this moment in history as a time of longing for whole persons to bring the whole gospel to the whole world. She noted a collective and global longing for wholeness, in all of our lives and on behalf of all whom we serve. She spoke of who the world needs gospel news and whole persons who communicate that good news. Rev. Shim lamented that so much in our world is fractured, and declared this call to our Ministerium and beyond: “The whole Church taking the Whole Gospel to the Whole World through Whole persons.” She invited us to be the light, salt and the love of God to the world!

Agenda 10. Reports from ECC Educational Institutions were given.

Agenda 10a. Centro Hispano Estudios Teologicos (CHET)

Academic Dean Karen Figueroa spoke of gratitude for the partnership in the Covenant, through the past 32 years of ministry. CHET celebrated 147 graduates last year. Currently, 60% in student body are women theologians. She noted that there are many challenges for the students at CHET, and expressed gratitude for the faculty and for the IGNITE program in the PSWC, as well. CHET received a grant to help enhance quality theological education. Dean Figueroa asked for prayer for the leadership challenges, with CHET President Juan Martinez on medical leave. Finally, she noted that five Ordinands in the ECC this year are connected to the CHET community.

Agenda 10b. North Park University

President Mary Surridge reported that Rev. Dr. Dennis Edwards has been unanimously approved for the nomination and appointment to the position of Dean of North Park Theological Seminary and Vice President for Church Relations. This role as Dean is the senior administrative role of the seminary. President Surridge noted that his faith and professional history include years of pastoral ministry; administration; and then a move to theological teaching and scholarship. She expressed her great hopefulness about the ways his innovative thinking and pastoral presence will enrich the NPTS community. Rev. Dr. Edwards will contribute greatly to the preparation of students for ministry, service, and leadership throughout the Covenant.

President Surridge also offered deep thanks to Rev. Dr. David Kersten for his remarkable and outstanding leadership for many years.

Agenda 11. Dean of North Park Theological Seminary Nominee, Rev. Dr. Dennis Edwards

Agenda 11a. Rev. Dr. Edwards offered a description of his life and call. He referenced several chapters of his life story in order to note that he has been shaped in an ecumenical way, and finally found his home in the Covenant. He is drawn to two leaders from the Scriptures: Ezra, who was committed to “*study, do it and teach the law*”; and Paul’s ministry to the Thessalonians, as a group that Paul “*held in his heart.*” Rev. Dr. Edwards has grown to know himself as a pastor/scholar. He spoke of Theological Education as being essential and yet, noted the challenges at this point in history. He described his plans and hopes for NPTS, expressing a desire to be a catalyst for growth.

Agenda 11b. Vote on Nominee – President Burgoyne invited any questions of Rev. Dr. Edwards. There were several strong, warm statements of affirmation for Rev. Dr. Edwards! A question was asked about how we can support him? He responded by encouraging us to offer the gift of NPTS as a resource to develop theologically educated members of the Covenant Church community, beyond professional clergy.

Vote: For: 482 (99.18%) Against: 4 (.82%) Abstain: 4

VOTE: NOMINEE APPROVED

Agenda 12. Executive Minister of Develop Leaders and Ordered Ministry Nominee, Rev. Herb Frost

Agenda 12a. Rev. Frost expressed grateful for this denominational family which has nurtured and embraced his extended family. He spoke of gratitude from Rev. Lance Davis, the former Executive Minister of Develop Leaders and Ordered Ministry. He described his current heart and mind as a way to help us know him. Recently, God gave him the word “heal.” That word was for his own life, and also for the Covenant Church as a whole. Using a principle of physics, he noted that the best way to go from a current state to a desired state, is to recognize how resistant forces respond to movement. Our first instinct is to push harder, which actually doesn’t work best. Instead, to move toward a desired state, resistant forces need first to be pulled down. Then, a clear, healthy path becomes possible. Self-justification is one of those resistant forces that not only leads to condemning God and others, it also leads to missing the chance/ability to be a good neighbor. (Luke 10 – story of the Good Samaritan)

Rev. Frost expressed belief that God is inviting us into a place of generous and curious orthodoxy, as we read and are shaped by the Scriptures and

conversation together as a Ministerium. He noted that the Church does well, when we, as leaders are healthy and do well.

Time was given for questions. Rev. Frost was asked if he views LGBTQ sisters and brothers as neighbors, along with all other groups of people in the world. He responded with a strong “yes.”

Agenda 12b. Vote to concur with the Nominating Committee on Rev. Herb Frost as the Nominee for Executive Minister of Develop Leaders and Ordered Ministry.

Vote: For: 385 (81.91%) Against: 85 (18.09%) Abstain: 26

VOTE: NOMINEE APPROVED

Agenda 13. Address from ECC President Rev. Dr. John Wenrich.

President Wenrich spoke of the desire for us to increase access to this meeting, through the hybrid format, and he celebrated the response and participation around the Ministerium. He reminded us that we embrace and embody God’s mission to see more disciples among more populations in a more caring and just world – this is our individual and collective work of the Ministerium. President Wenrich shared his appreciation for all members of this Ministerium. He expressed the honor of leading and serving these past four years, and asked for prayer as he seeks discernment about the next season of life and ministry. President Wenrich offered deep appreciation to Rev. Dr. David Kersten as he retires from the role of Dean of North Park Theological Seminary and Vice President for Church Relations, and affirmed his innovative and courageous leadership of NPTS, along with the recent role of Interim Executive Minister for Develop Leaders and Ordered Ministry.

Agenda 14. Prayer for lunch offered by Vice President Previlon.

Agenda 15. Lunch Break

Agenda 16. Address from Nominee for President of the ECC, Rev. Tammy Swanson-Draheim.

Rev. Swanson-Draheim expressed gratitude for our in-person reconnection! She acknowledged that we all have been leading in such a difficult time, related to the pandemic and beyond. We all are exhausted, weary, grieving and experiencing loss. In the letter to the Romans, Paul wrote that God’s presence and glory that will be revealed in us, through our terrible suffering, pain and sadness.

Rev. Swanson-Draheim spoke of her core values in life and leadership: being rooted in Christ; grounded in the Scriptures; guided by the Spirit, unapologetically focused on mission; and loving people well. She enjoys

challenges and chooses opportunities to tackle difficult situations, noting that they drive us to our knees and remind us of who God is. She offered other descriptions of who she is: determined in her commitments and able to keep things in perspective. She is a verbal processor; seeks the wisdom of others, and has high respect for communal decisions. Teamwork is her preference as a strong model for leadership. She enjoys leadership and is both a realist and eternal optimist. In addition, she spoke of her commitment to the Covenant and the Mosaic; to Covenant gender righteousness; and to honoring our Covenant history. Rev. Swanson-Draheim expressed her belief that God may be up to something new in our Covenant family. Working together, by the guidance of the Spirit, is the posture for a new season in our Covenant and beyond.

Agenda 7. Memorials

This agenda item was moved from earlier in the morning. Rev. Juana Nesta read the Resolution of Sympathy, which named the pastors, missionaries and spouses who have died in the past year. She then led a moment of silent prayer and reflection.

Agenda 17. Report on the State of the Ministerium

President Burgoyne spoke of the resources and gifts for the ECC, found in the Ministerium as a whole, and residing in each of us as leaders and clergy. He celebrated the significance of our hybrid meeting format, allowing many more voices and wisdom from the Ministerium to contribute to our shared discussions and discernments. He noted the weighty and numerous challenges we all have faced in the past three years, since a turbulent Annual Meeting in 2019: Racial injustice; hate crimes, directly especially toward Asian Americans; Immigration issues; discovery of First Nation children's gravesites in Canada; political polarization, including an attempted insurrection; COVID global pandemic and its consequences of relational isolation, as well as the necessity for new forms of community life in the Church; and the pandemic's consequences of many forms of economic turmoil. He called all of us to pay attention to self-care, in the midst of the above.

Finally, President Burgoyne named the Covenant denomination's crisis of trust that is present in this moment, born of many factors, including the painful Ministerium Annual Meeting of 2019, along with a significant number of senior leadership transitions this year. He spoke of the essential need for us to find a way to reestablish honest, mature trust in one another if we are to move forward as a Covenant family. He charged us with the call to be a family built on trust in God and respectful trust in one another.

Agenda 18. Report from the Board of Ordered Ministry

This report was given by Chair, Rev. Sharon Anderson. She gave a summary of the calling of the Board of Ordered Ministry, as they serve on behalf of the whole Ministerium and Covenant. They serve through *Credentialing*, as they endorse and forward names of those seeking to be credentialed; through *Care*, as they offer support, resources, and prayer while walking with pastors in times of need; through *Discipline*, as they create a space of accountability to the commitments and vows we all have made as credentialed clergy; and through *Development*, as they provide resources for learning, growth and development. BOOM exists for the health and well-being of all pastors, individually, and for the collective health of the ECC. She spoke of the holy and hard work on this Board.

Chairperson Anderson named the 25 members of the Board: 14 elected members - 12 clergy, 2 lay persons; 7 Ex-officio members – Executive Minister of Develop Leaders/Ordered Ministry, Dean of NPTS, President of CHET, Council of Superintendents representative, Covenant Executive Board representative, Ministerium President, ECC President; and 4 advisory members from the Develop Leaders team (she offered deep gratitude to that team!)

She named current Board projects, including: The Board of Ordered Ministry served as the Nominating Committee seeking to discern a Nominee for the role of Executive Minister of Develop Leaders/Ordered Ministry. In addition, they conduct Credentialing Interviews and provide Continuing Education resources. She listed current priorities as a Board: developing trust and supporting transition in leadership. A third priority includes clarifying practices of the following: Care and Discipline – seeking a gracious, confidential and truthful process; Theological Dissent; and Adaptive Pathways for Credentialing.

Agenda 19. Ministerium Officers Election

Agenda 19a. There were online connection difficulties which prevented Rev. Dierdra Clark, Chair of the Officers Nominating Committee, from giving the overview of the nominating process. Rev. Susan Cosio was prepared to be a backup in describing the process. She reported that this committee worked diligently to honor the existing Bylaws as written. She noted that the regional chairs/president and all members of the Mosaic Commission, along with the representatives from ACCW and the CCA participated in this past year's nominating process, in anticipation of the vote on the proposed changes in the Ministerium Bylaws at this meeting. They carefully considered each nomination, and there were individuals considered for the two roles with broad representation throughout the Covenant.

Agenda 19b. Nominees for Vice President of the Ministerium were Rev. John Fanous and Rev. TJ Smith. No nominations from the floor were presented. No discussion.

VOTE: Fanous: 179 (43.24%) Smith: 235 (56.76%)

ELECTED: TJ Smith as Vice President

Agenda 19c. Nominees for Treasurer of the Ministerium were Rev. Fil Nesta and Rev. Sandy Norris. No nominations from the floor were presented. No discussion.

Vote: Nesta: 168 (36.6%) Norris: 291 (63.4%)

ELECTED: Sandy Norris as Treasurer

Agenda 20. Vocational Service Awards, 2021-2022 were announced by Vice President Previlon. The following pastors were honored for their service in the denomination:

Jeffrey D. Anderson,
Debra R. Auger
Tim J. Bock
James K. Bruckner
Christopher L. Carlson
Pauline N. Carlson
Douglas N. Cederberg
David J. Chatel
Edward E. Coleman
Rose M. Cornelious
Laurie A. D. Cornell
Jeffrey A Crafton
Timothy H. Dally
Dale A. Dalman
Robert J. DeYoung
Lillian J. Dwight
Cynthia L. Ekstrand
Krisann Jarvis Foss
Stanislava Gadeliya
Kreig A. Gammelgard
Stephen R. Graham
David T. Green
Terri L. Gunderson
Carl E. Hammer
Christopher W. Haydon
Douglas E. Johnson
Keith B. Johnson
Rajkumar Boaz Johnson
Timothy B. Johnson
Letha J. Kerl
Jonathan E. Kramka
Andrew E. Larson
L. Dawn Lindholm
Richard J. Lindholtz

Guy D. McCaslin
David J. McCowan
Garth McGrath
Sheryl D. Noren
Randy A. Phillips
Philip E. Print
David G. Robinson
Jose Sanchez Rodriguez
Albert B. Schoffmann
Marc D. Strobel
Steven P. Swanson
Dwain D. Tissell
Brian K. Woodson
Michael J. Zabel

Agenda 21. Women in Leadership Awards 2021-2022 were announced by President Burgoyne. Rev. Dr. Catherine Gilliard received the “She Leads” award; Rev. Dr. Rose Lee-Norman received the “She Preaches” award; and Rev. Barbara Ettinger received the “She Advocates” award. He gave thanks for all who contributed to the process of selection, and offered deep gratitude for each of these three women. Rev. Dr. Gilliard and Rev. Ettinger offered personal words of gratitude. Rev. Dr. Lee-Norman was unable to be present and sent a statement of gratitude to be read.

Agenda 22. Recognition of Outgoing Ministerium Officers

Agenda 22a. President Burgoyne gave thanks for the lives and gifts of the outgoing Officers, Rev. Dieula Previlon and Rev. Eric Hedberg, naming all that they have contributed to the Ministerium and the Covenant Church as a whole.

Agenda 22b. Words of farewell were offered by Vice President, Rev. Dieula Previlon. She expressed gratitude for the Ministerium choosing to give her this role three years ago and quoted Psalm 46:5 as a core statement of her life and faith. She gave thanks for the Officers who walked with her through huge moments of grief and loss, as well as the current Officers who have listened well to her passions, heart and lived experience as a black woman.

As a Covenant colleague and a trauma therapist, she offered core encouragements for personal and professional growth and maturity. She called on us to do our work on issues in each of our lives, including: identity, relational dynamics and personal, emotional pain. Rev. Previlon called colleagues who are people of color to speak, lead, and work to let their voices be known and heard. She honored all women leaders who have gone before us on the journey. She reminded men to become aware of power that they may take for granted, and called them to use that power to help all of God’s children

flourish. She closed by naming that we are friends on the journey together, invited by God to love God and love our neighbors, in all ways!

Agenda 22c. Words of farewell were offered by Treasurer, Rev. Eric Hedberg. He offered reflections on things he has learned; things he'd hoped for in the role; challenges and sadness that he experienced; as well as joy and encouragement that unfolded. He also gave thanks for the work of God's Spirit in his life and in the collective story of the Covenant Ministerium, and celebrated the abundance of heart, talent and giftedness throughout the Ministerium.

Rev. Hedberg described how redemptive it has been to grow under the leadership of women and people of color, noting the space of power and privilege in his own story as a white man, and the many resources that he has always enjoyed. He then shared what he has learned of pain and injustice in the stories of others, which has given him deep, loving desire to be a safe person for all others, and to help create safe spaces for all his colleagues. He has made a commitment to listen to those whose voices have not always been heard.

Break for 15 Minutes

During the break a motion was communicated to suspend the Standing Rules and place Agenda item 25 as the next item of business on the agenda. President Burgoyne asked that this motion be removed, due to practical needs of all who were prepared for the process of voting on credentials, including respecting those candidates who were lined up in the room for the presentation and vote. The motion was not withdrawn; was seconded and required a 2/3 majority to be approved.

Vote: For: 117 (29.77%) Against: 276 (70.23%) Abstain: 6

VOTE: MOTION NOT APPROVED

Agenda 23. Recommendation for Approval of Candidates by the Develop Leaders and Ordered Ministry Team.

Danielle Ng and David Kersten led the recommendations from the Regional Ministerial Associations and the Board of Ordered Ministry for each category of credential. Danielle Ng offered appreciation from the whole team for the hours of service offered by the COMS (Committee on Ministerial Standing) teams in each of the conferences within the denomination.

During one section of the voting, Rev. Dr. Kersten noted that the ECC Ministerium includes approximately 1800 active credentialed clergy and 2500 total clergy including retired and inactive. During the past year, the Develop Leaders and Ordered Ministry team had direct resourcing conversations with 1254 of our credentialed clergy members. He expressed gratitude for the

significant ministry of care and guidance that was represented in that large number of conversations.

Agenda 23a. Licenses for 2022-2023

Vote: For: 431 (100%) Abstain: 1

VOTE: APPROVED

License for Mauricio Dell’Arciprete – Second by Joel Johnson

License for Peter Ek – Second by Linnea Ek; Tom Ek

License for Rachel Gough – Second by Debbie Montzingo

License for Polly Inestroza – Second by John Jacobi

License for Richard Lee – Second by Linda Williams

License for Marlon Simpkins- Second by Linda Williams

License for Megan Herrold Sinchi – Second by Gregory Mesimore

License for Linda Stone – Second by Linnea Ek; Tom Ek

License for Paulita Todhunter – Second by Joel Johnson

License for Emily Wickstrom – Second by Paul de Neui

Agenda 23b. Transfer of Ordination

Vote: 453 (100%) Abstain: 2

VOTE: APPROVED

Mark J. Won (Presbyterian Church in America) - Second by Frank Riley

Karen Potter Munn (United Church of Christ) – Second by Linda Williams

Ieisha D. Hawley (Higher Praise Fellowship of Churches) – Second by Debbie Montzingo; Jane Spriggs; Linda Williams

Agenda 23c. Commissioning

Vote: For: 448 (100%) Abstain: 2

VOTE: APPROVED

Lynne J. McLaughlin – Second by Andrew Vanover

Agenda 23d. Ordination to Word and Service

Vote: For: 445 (100%) Abstain: 2

VOTE: APPROVED

Jason M. Baehr – Second by Eric Landin; Josh Rude

Diane M. Borden – Second by Kim Crawford, Paul de Neui; Linda Williams; Tammy Swanson-Draheim

John E. Chapman

David J. Chatel – Second by Joe Muzzi

Tanya C. Constanza – Second by Kim Crawford; Jonathan M. Wilson; Greg Yee

Nancy A. De Jong

Troy A. Nichols

Christine M. Olfelt – Second by Paul de Neui; Douglas M. Thorpe; Linda Williams

Charles D. Potts – Second by Linnea Ek; Tom Ek; Eric Landin; Richard Lindholtz; Stacey Littlefield; Kristin Devine Mueller; Tom Slechta; Lars Stromberg; Jonathan M. Wilson

Grace H. Shim – Second by Kim Crawford, Paul de Neui; Greg Yee; Tammy Swanson-Draheim

Chanda L. Winkels – Second by Jonathan M. Wilson

Cindy M. Wu – Second by Dennis Carlson; Tom Sharkey; Jonathan M. Wilson; Greg Yee; Tammy Swanson-Draheim

Agenda 23e. Ordination to Word and Sacrament

Vote: For: 467 (100%) Abstain: 2

VOTE: APPROVED

Nathan A. Alley – Second by Catherine Gilliard; Tammy Swanson-Draheim

Michael D. Baker

Robert A. Benavides

Marty R. Boeschling – Second by Brian Johnson; Tammy Swanson-Draheim

Josiah J. Cheng

Justin Hyoung Jun Choi – Second by Dave Swaim

Rose M. Cornelious – Second by Catherine Gilliard

Carla M. Cortez – Second by Tammy Swanson-Draheim

Oscar A. Cortez – Second by Tammy Swanson-Draheim

Nathan J. Daniels

Kanyere F. Eaton – Second by Catherine Gilliard

Tiffany A. Flanagan – Second by Tammy Swanson-Draheim

J. Chad Glazneer – Second by Kim Crawford; Greg Yee

Walter O. Gomez – Second by Greg Yee

Michael D. Hill

Ihn Joon Hur – Second by Eric Landin

Gregory D. Johnson

Sarah M. Keough

Taylor J. Kim

Mark C. Knight – Second by Greg Yee

Evan L. Kolding – Second by Joel Johnson; Josh Rude; Jonathan M. Wilson

Grace H. Lin – Second by Dennis Carlson; Greg Yee

R. Scott Lisea – Second by Kim Crawford

Nicole C. McClurg – Second by Kristin Devine Mueller; Jonathan M. Wilson

William C. Miller – Second by Tom Sharkey

Gregory M. Millings – Second by Linda Williams

Marie Bernadette Moore – Second by Dennis Carlson

Kurt R.A. Morrill – Second by Frank Riley; Jonathan M. Wilson

Kenneth C. Oliver - Second by Donn Engebretson; Gregory Mesimore; Kristin Devine Mueller

Olivia Polanco

Nicholas A. Pringle – Second by Eric Landin; Richard Mylander; Jan Spriggs; Greg Yee

Philip J. D. Rushton – Second by Doreen L. Olson; Mark S. Olson; Greg Yee

Daniel J. Schmitz

Julio C. Sical

Rici A. Skei – Second by Daniel Palomino; Greg Yee; Tammy Swanson-Draheim

Benjamin P.B. Wickstrom – Second by Paul de Neui; Linnea Ek; Eric Landin; Kristin Devine Mueller; Daniel Palomino

Theodore Williams Jr. – Second by Linnea Ek

Stephen S. Wong – Second by Greg Yee

Michael S. Yi – Second by Jonathan M. Wilson

Rev. Win Houwen from the Board of Ordered Ministry prayed over all the candidates for credentials, and offered a benediction from Colossians 3.

Agenda 24. Recommendation for Change in Standing

Agenda 24a. Active to Inactive

Vote: For: 416 (99.05%) Against: 4 (.95%) Abstain: 8

VOTE: REPORT APPROVED

David Chambers (OWSa)

Paul Corner (OWSa)

Eva Cudmore (OWSa)

Neal Herr (OWSa)

Kenton Johnson (OWSa)

Catherine Kaminski (OWSa)

Agenda 24b. Leave of Absence to Inactive

Vote: For: 451 (99.56%) Against: 2 (.44%) Abstain: 9

VOTE: REPORT APPROVED

Jennifer Lowe (OWSa)

Agenda 24c. Inactive to Active

Vote: For: 467 (99.15%) Against: 4 (.85%) Abstain: 3

VOTE: REPORT APPROVED

E. Kirsten Burdick (OWSa)

Craig L. Smith (OWSa/R)

Agenda 24d. Transfer of Credential

Vote: For: 472 (98.95%) Against: 5 (1.05%) Abstain: 2

VOTE: REPORT APPROVED

John Bangs (OWSa) to the PCUSA.

Michaile Broadnax (OWSa) to ECO: A Covenant Order of Evangelical Presbyterians.

Velda Love (OWSe) to the United Church of Christ.

Sharon McQueary (OWSa) to The Coalition of Spirit-Filled Churches.

Agenda 24e. Resignation of Credential

Vote: For: 451 (92.42%) Against: 37 (7.58%) Abstain: 13

VOTE: REPORT APPROVED

John G. Anderson (OWSa)

Scott Austin (OWSa)

Todd Bratulich (OWSa)

Gavin Dluhosh (OWSa)

Matthew Dymant (OWSa)

J. Casey Franklin (OWSa)

Peter Hawkinson (OWSa)

G. Peyton Johnson (OWSa)

Phillip Ladd (OWSa)

Daniel G. Larson (OWSa)

Jason Mach (OWSa)

Bethann Rohlfing (OWSa)

Nathaniel Sutton (OWSa)

Agenda 24f. Reinstatement of Credential

Vote: For: 431 (99.54%) Against: 2 (.46%) Abstain: 18

VOTE: REPORT APPROVED

James Keil (OWSa)

Agenda 24g. Removal from standing, uncontested

Vote: For: 389 (92.18%) Against: 33 (7.82%) Abstain: 40

VOTE: APPROVED

Gideon Tsang (OWSa)

Following all voting on the category of Change in Standing Report, Rev. Dr. David Kersten offered a prayer over all individuals included in this report, who have experienced major life and ministry transitions.

President Burgoyne invited the meeting into a 5-minute “stand at ease” break.

Agenda 24h. Removal from standing, contested

Micah Witham (OWSa)

Agenda 25. Contested Credentials Hearing

Agenda 25a. President Burgoyne gave an overview of the process that would take place related to the Contested Credential Hearing to follow. He called the Ministerium to “do all things in love” and reminded us that conviction and gentleness are not mutually exclusive.

Secretary Cornell offered a prayer for God’s Spirit to guide during Rev. Witham’s Hearing, and for the Ministerium community to listen well to God and one another.

President Burgoyne then gave specific instructions about various components of the process. He described how to communicate during the hearing related to a point of order or an urgent procedural matter. All communication was directed through email. He addressed the question of what we will be voting on. He noted that we were not voting on removal of Rev. Witham. He read the motion: *“To concur with the recommendation from the Board of Ordered Ministry for the removal of ministerial standing for Micah Witham, and that this*

recommendation be forwarded to the 136th Annual Meeting for action by the delegates.”

He clarified that the Constitution and Bylaws of the Covenant Ministerium do not explicitly delineate the basis upon which each member would make a decision about this case, so he encouraged careful discernment and suggested three questions for reflection, including: “Did Rev. Witham violate his Ordination vows?” “If so, does that warrant recommending the removal of credentials to the Covenant Annual Meeting?” “Was Rev. Witham treated fairly and appropriately by the Board of Ordered Ministry?” President Burgoyne also described the relationship between the Ministerium and the Covenant Annual Meeting, reviewing that the Covenant Annual Meeting is the highest governing body, in which theology and policy are debated, discerned and voted upon.

President Burgoyne then described the hearing process, as follows: Both parties would have equal time in each part of the hearing. The Board would present first. The only place available for someone to present directly relevant testimony that may affect how we would understand this case, would be in the space designated for the witness testimony. Therefore, no one may offer such information during the hearing, unless he/she already has been chosen as a witness. The threshold for the vote on this matter is 2/3 majority.

Agenda 25b. The Time Frame Motion which would govern this hearing was presented and summarized. The Bylaws required that this motion be presented to both parties at least 30 days in advance, and that requirement had been met. Both parties were in agreement and both parties have prepared with these time frames in mind:

Opening Statements: 15 minutes each

Witness Statements: 5 minutes each

Closing Statements: 5 minutes each

Debate: 30 minutes with one potential extension for 15 minutes

There was no discussion on the time frame motion.

Vote: For: 503 (98.43%) Against: 8 (1.57%) Abstain: 3

VOTE: TIME FRAME MOTION APPROVED

Agenda 25c. Opening Statements were offered.

The Board of Ordered Ministry Opening Statement was presented by Chair, Sharon Anderson and Vice Chair, Randall Friesen. Chairperson Anderson communicated that the Board serves under the direction of the ECC and under any currently adopted theological positions. The Board is accountable to uphold the ethical guidelines for all clergy. They did their work with as much excellence, care and rigor as possible, while acknowledging that no work is ever done perfectly. She lamented the loss of trust which happened in the 2019

Ministerium and ECC Annual Meetings. She spoke of communal discernment on any matter as an ongoing process. She noted that at this point in history, the Board cannot take action outside the current statement on Human Sexuality which has been voted upon by the ECC Annual Meeting.

Vice Chair Friesen recounted the history of conversations with Rev. Witham over the past four years. He noted appreciation for Rev. Witham's honesty and forthright manner in the process, yet, also described a growing inconsistency between his verbal commitments and actions taken. Over the course of the process, Rev. Witham's credential was suspended; then reinstated; and then suspended again, after performing a same-sex wedding. Finally, Rev. Witham stated that he could not, with integrity, live within the ethical guidelines of the ECC Clergy on this matter. He was informed that the Board was then required to recommend removal of his credential. The Board then chose to recommend to the Ministerium, the removal of Rev. Witham's credential, being charged with the categories of "unethical behavior" and "disloyalty to the ECC."

Rev. Witham then communicated his Opening Statement, first live via online connection and then, through a prerecorded video, since he was traveling internationally, taking part in a Peacemaking and Reconciliation study cohort in Ireland. He acknowledged that he did break the rule of officiating at a same-sex wedding. He told the story of his great respect for Rev. Dick Lucco as a mentor and guide throughout his process, until Rev. Lucco's very recent death. Rev. Lucco had facilitated a congregational meeting at Awaken West Seventh Church, held to explain why Rev. Witham's credential was suspended after he prayed at the wedding of a gay couple from the church. With permission from the Lucco family, Rev. Witham reported Rev. Lucco's recent acknowledgement that he had grown to believe that we, as the ECC, had gotten this situation "wrong" - both in terms of the consequences for any Covenant pastor who chooses to violate the current guidelines related to officiating at a same-sex wedding; and also in terms of our current position statement on Human Sexuality, itself.

Rev. Witham spoke of Julian of Norwich as a mystic who served the church from her "cell" which was her room. One of her three windows opened to the church; a second opened to the garden, where her own needs were met; and a third, opened to the world. She was connected to the church and to the world outside the church. The two windows into the church and out to the world have served as a metaphor for where Rev. Witham holds his own call and ministry. Rev. Witham closed with a deep appreciation for our Covenant heritage, ethos and core affirmations; and for the spiritual home of the Covenant in his own life.

Agenda 25d. Witness Statements

The Board chose not to offer a Witness in this case.

The Witness Statement for Rev. Witham was given by Rev. Gail Song Bantum. She spoke of her lament that pastors who are in theological dissent related to the position statement on Human Sexuality, which is not an essential, core affirmation in the Covenant Church, have been disciplined as if that statement was an essential of our faith. She spoke with respect for Rev. Witham and Awaken Church, which she believes is faithfully living out the ECC mission to see more disciples, among more populations, in a more caring and just world. Rev. Song Bantum noted other justice issues which our ECC community declares we are championing, such as racial righteousness and the full empowerment of women. She then suggested that pastors who are not actively committed to embracing these issues, have not faced the same rigor of evaluation or “policing” as those pastors who are in a position of dissent related to human sexuality. She asked that we confront the glaring inconsistencies and lack of integrity in our life together.

Agenda 25e. Closing Statements were offered by both parties.

The Board reiterated respect for Rev. Witham and his witness as colleagues. Chairperson Anderson reminded us that Rev. Witham is not on trial. He is being held accountable to common vows that are made by all who are credentialed clergy. She also named that we as Covenant Clergy do not make our own decisions about theology and policy. We entrust the ECC Annual Meeting with that final work and vote. Vice Chair Friesen offered concluding words about respect for Rev. Witham, speaking of the sober spirit and posture of humility of the Board in this required discernment process and ultimate recommendation.

Rev. Micah Witham gave his closing statement through video. He spoke of respect for the work of the Board of Ordered Ministry. He then stated the core questions before us as a Ministerium. “Is this the path we want to take this year, and in following years, if and when other colleagues choose the same course of action as he has, related to the care of the LGBTQ members of a Covenant church congregation? Do we believe that this guideline which prevents a credentialed Covenant pastor from officiating at a gay wedding, is the path we want to continue to take?”

He offered three possible options going forward as a Ministerium. The first would be to continue down our current path, with the guidelines in place. Option two would invite us to remember our heritage, which allows for Freedom in Christ on nonessential theological issues, and invites us to trust one another in our different theological conclusions. Option three might be to put a pause on this current process of disciplining pastors who cannot in good conscious follow the guideline that prevents the officiating at a gay wedding, and work together to create an “affiliation” within the Covenant denomination, that provides space for “open and affirming churches and pastors.”

Agenda 25f. President Burgoyne then referenced our Bylaws, asking both Rev. Witham and representatives from the Board of Ordered Ministry to leave the room in anticipation of the debate to follow. He invited us to two minutes of silent prayer.

President Burgoyne reminded us that we had 30 minutes of debate. Each person was allotted two minutes to speak. Debate began and included voices both in favor of and against the recommendation for removal of standing for Rev. Witham.

Comments included the following:

an observation that there is no example in the Scriptures of a same-sex married couple;

congregational polity requires that our vote at the Ministerium meeting be focused only on whether or not the Board did their work well – otherwise we have become a presbyterian body rather than congregational in polity;

until today we have not allowed dissenting voices to speak publicly on this topic, citing fear of a denominational split - and noting that nothing good is born of fear;

a call to unity, rather than this potential path of forcing a colleague out of the Covenant on this or another nonessential theological matter;

encouragement to listen to these dissenting voices as a call to a new path;

hope for the Ministerium to embrace a non-anxious space of honoring our position statement while allowing for theological dissent and communal trust in one another;

concern about the lack of integrity in this situation, observing that Rev. Witham broke his vows, acted with arrogance, and did not submit to the authority of the Board – therefore concluding that it would be appropriate for this recommendation to be forwarded to the ECC Annual Meeting, otherwise, functionally, the Ministerium would be making a statement on theology; we are companions of all who fear God, and spoke of God declaring that it is not good that any person “be alone” - observing that this was the very first thing God said is “not good” – and, therefore, encouraging us not to conclude that every gay person must live alone in order to be faithful to God’s call for his/her life;

when the rules themselves are wrong, the only course of action is to break the rules, which Jesus did in his life on several occasions;

a call to put our trust in the Board’s decision, since we entrusted them with this difficult work. It was stated that it is clear that the Covenant Church will not be able to “agree to disagree” on this topic. One person observed that we held Rev. Song Bantum to her time limit, while allowing Rev. Witham to show a video that clearly was “sped up” in order to keep within the five-minute time limit. Strong concern was communicated about the potential of not forwarding this recommendation, when the Board already has been in conversation for

four years. Additional concerns were raised about the Ministerium providing “space” to break a commitment or vow, when the Board has been charged with the responsibility of working on this process and recommendation - we should not second guess or disrupt that careful process.

A member read from the document on ethical guidelines for Covenant clergy, observing that we commit to many areas of life and theology, along with upholding the position statement on human sexuality. Other commitments include: holistic discipleship, soul care, nondiscrimination, healthy boundaries in life, not using pornographic material, financial integrity, and others – concluding that all guidelines need to be honored and “disciplined” in equal ways. Another colleague spoke of the work of pastors who care for students, observing that students often believe that they cannot tell their pastors or church community that they are queer, unless they are ready to be forced to leave the church. This pastor noted that young students may attempt suicide in their despair and fear about being part of the LGBTQ community, naming that when we, as Covenant Pastors, state that we will not officiate at the wedding of a gay couple, students experience this decision as a sign that God’s love and our love, are conditional, based on a person’s sexual orientation. Respect for Rev. Witham’s integrity was affirmed.

Additionally, there was acknowledgement that our affirmations include the Centrality of the Word of God, and it seems impossible to make a solid biblical case for same-sex marriage. It was observed that civil disobedience is one of the only ways to express dissent when one believes a rule is unjust. Finally, fear and concern were expressed related to our urgent call to work on many justice issues, as it appears that we are moving toward a place of no resolution on this divide, which will impact our work together on other weighty matters.

The 30 minutes of debate concluded, and President Burgoyne noted the possibility of one additional segment of 15 minutes of debate. A motion was made and seconded that debate be extended for 15 minutes.

Vote: For: 263 (54%) Against: 224 (46%) Abstain: 5

VOTE: MOTION TO EXTEND DEBATE NOT APPROVED.

President Burgoyne called us to two minutes of silent prayer. He then confirmed that we are not in “Executive Session” on this agenda item. He described the process that would follow. Once the vote results were announced, we would observe one minute of silence, out of respect for the significance of this vote. He also communicated that the Officers had made prior arrangements to contact Rev. Witham with the results before anyone else delivered the news. So, he asked for all to honor one hour following the adjournment of the meeting, before the news of the vote would be shared publicly by anyone.

Agenda 25g. Vote to concur with the recommendation from the Board of Ordered Ministry related to Rev. Witham's removal of standing.

Vote: For: 314 (59.92%) Against: 210 (40.08) Abstain: 7

VOTE: MOTION NOT APPROVED.

Agenda 26. Closing Prayer and Benediction were offered by Vice Secretary Varghese, naming the deep and significant events we had experienced and enacted, and calling us to be the presence of God in all spaces of our lives.

Agenda 27. The motion to adjourn was presented by President Burgoyne.

Vote: For: 377 (98.18) Against: 7 (1.82%) Abstain: 3

VOTE: COVENANT MINISTERIUM ANNUAL MEETING 2022 WAS ADJOURNED at 6:42 pm (CST).

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Laurie A. D. Cornell

Secretary, Evangelical Covenant Church Ministerium