

# MINUTES OF TENTH CALLED MEETING OF ATHANASIUS PRESBYTERY, CREC

April 23, 2013

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Pastor Rich Lusk and the Session of Trinity Presbyterian Church, Birmingham, Alabama, graciously hosted the spring meeting of Athanasius Presbytery.

Pastor Galen L. Sorey, Christ Presbyterian Church, Baton Rouge, Louisiana, continued to serve as Minister of Presbytery. His term ends at our November Presbytery meeting at which time we will elect a new Minister.

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**Invocation:** Minister of Presbytery Pastor Galen Sorey called presbytery to order at 8:42 AM and opened with prayer

**Psalm/Hymn:** Uri Brito led the singing of “Christ the Lord is Risen Today”

**Scriptural Exhortation:** Pastor Galen Sorey led in reading of Psalm 80

**Roll Call and Establishment of a Quorum:** All nine Athanasius Presbytery churches all had at least one representative present. A quorum was therefore established.

1. Christ Church, Branchville AL
2. Christ Presbyterian Church, Baton Rouge LA
3. Holy Trinity Reformed Evangelical Church, Greenville SC
4. Immanuel Presbyterian Church, Clinton MS
5. Providence Church, Pensacola FL
6. Salem Reformed Church, Rome GA
7. St. Mark Reformed Church, Nashville TN
8. Trinity Presbyterian Church, Birmingham AL
9. Trinity Presbyterian Church, Valparaiso, FL

**Pastor Mickey Schneider announced the death of Elder Jonathon Sutton and offered a brief statement of Jonathon’s life and service to the Church and presbytery (first Stated Clerk)**

**Introduction of Guests and Visitors:** Men from several churches were introduced and welcomed:

Mike Lassley, Immanuel Presbyterian

Deacon Chris King and son, Christ Church, Branchville (won a gold star for getting us much needed coffee!)

Pastor Rob Haddington, Pace, Florida, and Jim Hunter, Providence Church

Pastor Jimmy Gill (new Asst Pastor), TPC-Birmingham

Elders Kirk Downey and Joel Presley, Church of the Good Shepherd, N. Augusta, South Carolina

Herman Gunter, Live Oak, Florida

Pastor Eric Venable (PCA, but would like to be in CREC; open to call from CREC church)

Pastor Brendon Warr, Troy Misner, Chipley, Florida

**Acceptance of agenda** – motion made, seconded, and passed to accept the published agenda

**Approval of minutes from November 2012 Presbytery Meeting** – motion made, seconded, and passed to accept last meeting minutes.

**Update of ministerial registry** – Pastor Galen Sorey discussed having CREC presbytery registers of pastors within each member church, and circulated a sheet of names from each church of those pastors in each church. Copies were made and distributed (see Attachment 1, page 9).

### **Church reports**

#### **Christ Presbyterian Church, Baton Rouge LA**

Pastor Galen Sorey gave a brief report that everything was going well

#### **Christ Church, Branchville AL**

Ted Phillips reporting

- 130 members now with steady growth
- 13 baptisms in families who joined
- 12 children adopted including international; Ted mentioned Ukrainian orphanage and the needs there.
- Works supported are:
- Boy Scouts support may be ending due to homosexual influence and attempt to change past policy; corporate pressure and liberal churches have worked to influence BSA to make them comply with political correctness; part of cultural war
- Peru Missions includes support to Caleb and Cassie Sutton
- Richard Vest (third Branchville elder/pastor) recovered, not 100% but getting much better

Steve Wedgeworth led in prayer for Christ Church

#### **Holy Trinity Reformed Evangelical Church, Greenville SC**

Craig Beaton (now completing 5 years as pastor) reporting

- Craig characterized church status as 'maintaining' - 75 in worship on avg; several solid younger families active and are a real blessing
- Focus is community rooted in worship and discipleship ; mission
- Launched small group studies
- Looking for ways to be more intentionally rooted in Greer, SC (in between Greenville and Spartanburg, NE of Greenville, a lot of growth in this area; beginning process of looking for better meeting place; exploring contacts including mayor of Greer
- Potential new deacon
- Missions: Blake Purcell visited; now supporting SRS
- Update on Bob Cornaroli; now returned with Rebecca; session has met with; thankful.  
Note: Presbytery sends greetings

Joe Thacker prayed for Holy Trinity

#### **Immanuel Presbyterian Church, Clinton MS**

Mickey Schneider reporting

- Mickey installed as pastor for one year, perhaps with yearly extensions
- Officer retreat to discuss aspirations, background, where they thought would be in future

- Consensus was almost all members there for the long haul
    - Open nominations for elder/deacon for 2013,14,15
  - Teaching potential new officers using 'Reformed Confessions Harmonized'
  - MS to have Sermon series 'Marks of Healthy Church'
  - Elders are Bill Grete and Mickey; meeting monthly and taking minutes which are shared with congregation; Steve Wilkins on session but not attending session meetings
  - Mickey met with Lonn Oswalt; recounted situation; now back, attending at times; one son a deacon at Immanuel; Mickey helping Lonn work through some issues
  - Steve Wedgeworth nominated as elder; currently serves as Asst Pastor
  - Big question is what happens at end of year with Mickey?
- Steve Wedgeworth reporting:
- Steady growth
    - Adult convert baptized; has now left to live with family in Illinois
    - Family with five children; all children baptized by Steven
  - Building situation:
    - Old building needed repairs; congregation told to leave; congregational meeting with angst apparent among members
    - Found space at nearby RTS; 4K sq ft; lease signed; set to move in two weeks
  - Mike Lassley:
    - Interested in pastoral call
    - Finishing RTS
    - RTS Bookstore Director
    - Has been with IPC for 2 years
  - Thankful for Mickey and his work

Craig Beaton prayed for Immanuel Presbyterian Church

Note: All other churches will report at our fall presbytery meeting

### **Galen question about Constitution and ByLaws for Athanasius member churches**

- Galen and others discussion about why well-written constitution and by-laws are needed and potential problems when they contain 'unique' features, especially where discipline is involved.
- Galen says they used Rich Lusk's TPC documents as guideline
- Rich Lusk comments: CREC allows writing your own constitution; recommends committee devise constitution to be used by majority of churches—a standardized constitution
- SW comments: urges common understanding of when/how someone can leave and that presbytery be involved if a church intends to discipline someone for leaving;
- Galen: recommended churches relook at church constitutions;
- Committee appointed by presbytery to draft a recommended constitution; members are: Craig Beaton; Mike Mosley; Galen Sorey ; Rich Lusk; Erik Stoer

### **Proposal to receive into Presbytery, Church of the Good Shepherd, North Augusta, South Carolina**

- Introduction/background given by Craig Beaton

- Kirk Downey and Joel Presley and Mark \_\_\_ (unable to attend today)
- Craig visited every couple months; conference call monthly
- Craig account of Godly nature and desire to serve Christ
- Craig ordained all three in Jan; congregation holds all three in high esteem and unanimously elected/voted to approve; 9 families and 3 visiting families
- Galen reviewed requirements of BoP; all had been met by account of Craig and men from church
- Rich L asked about plan to call pastor; saving to support and intend to call
- New recent growth; diverse family background (RC, Mennonite, Presby)
- 39 Articles are the Doctrinal Standard (Westminster Standards are a secondary standard)
- Galen question about liturgy; 'Anglitarian' –(combination of Anglican and Presbyterian)
- Own their own building (deed/mortgage)
- Galen: "Do you have an action plan for searching out and finding a pastor?" Joel: "Sort of but hindered by finances." Joel asked for input from other churches with brief discussion following
- Motion to receive church into CREC, Athanasius Presbytery made, seconded, and approved unanimously
- Galen led presbytery in asking Kirk and Joel vow questions found in CREC Article III BoP (see Attachment 2 at end of minutes)
- Presbytery then gave Kirk and Joel right hand of fellowship; On behalf of Athanasius Presbytery, Galen then led in asking God's blessing for Church of the Good Shepherd

### **Rich Lusk discussion regarding Trinity House Study Center**

Pastor Rich Lusk reported on the intention of Peter Leithart to move to Birmingham and teach, retaining his membership in PCA, Northeast Presbytery. Jim Jordan to also be on staff. Erik Stoer pointed out that normally the PCA requires someone to seek the permission of the presbytery in which they will be working to request that presbytery's permission to 'labor outside the bounds of their own presbytery'.

### **Updates on current candidate and mission churches**

Galen stressed the need and importance of knowing and using CREC methodology for planting new churches. He then introduced **Herman Gunter** from Live Oak, Florida

- Bought PCUSA church in Live Oak, Florida
- Herman graduated from RTS in 1975; does preaching; holding service in church building at 6PM on Sunday evenings.
- Currently serving as Ruling elder in local PCA church
- Herman wants to be in church that serves weekly communion
- Galen: Asked what does Herman want from Athanasius Presbytery?
- Herman answer: Wants authorization from someone to serve communion.
- Craig B: How would being constituted as church change the dynamics of your situation?
- Galen: How do you see your work continuing as a church?
- Steven Wedgworth: Offered definition of 'sodality' as potentially representing Herman's situation
- SW: Suggested AP become member of particular congregation in AP and then commission Herman as evangelist/missionary.

- Path forward: Steven Wedgeworth, Craig Beaton, Ben Rossell, Galen Sorey to work on 'Live Oak Committee'.
- Galen: Required Herman to write up one-page plan and give it to presbytery

**Chipley, FL Church, Christ Bible Fellowship;** Brendon Warr and Troy Misner introduced by Ben Rossell; Pastor Warr desires to be in CREC.

Brandon gave summary of his background:

- Assembly of God background
- In last semester of Bachelor of Ministry program
- Planning on enrolling in North American Reformed Seminary
- Ordained by Nat'l Assoc of Christian Ministers
- June 10 2012 was first service at Christ Bible Fellowship there in Chipley
- Brandon introduced Troy Misner, who joined recently and along with wife, has been great blessing
- Main focus of CBF ministry is to singles, inter-racial couples, in general those who most other churches don't particularly want.
- Wants benefit of brotherly association in Athanasius Presbytery

Galen asked for prayer for church and continued association.

**Eric Venable:** Assistant Pastor at Riverwood Presbyterian, 30yrs old, licensed for six years, graduate of Beeson and Stamford, looking for pastoral call, 'send me somewhere', prefers to stay in southeast, has Christian Classical School.

**Mike Lassley:** RTS student in Jackson; practices covenant communion until at RTS ergo CREC seems like good fit. Desires to be pastor. Member at Immanuel Presbytery for last two years. Tried PCA churches. From Kansas. Has seven children. Engineering background.

### Old Business

**Recommended language to be placed in the BoP of the Athanasius Presbytery** from the motion passed at our November 2012 meeting:

"That Athanasius Presbytery amend our Book of Procedures to state that:

Local churches wishing to call previously unordained men to serve as pastors in their churches shall ordinarily have these candidates successfully complete the presbytery ordination exam process (see the CREC BoP Art. XI.2 and Appendix B) before having them move to the area and assume pastoral duties."

Without objection from any presbyters to the above wording, Galen ordered it included in our Athanasius Presbytery Book of Procedures

### **Examination of Mr. Ben Rossell, Trinity Presbyterian Church, Valparaiso, FL**

- Rich Lusk commended Ben for his conduct through a grueling process
- Background given by Rich; November long exam; Feb committee exam and passing with high marks by committee  
(Committee then begins questions)

- Uri Brito: How does Christ exercise office of Prophet Priest and King? Ben answered
- Craig Beaton: - What are OT and NT qualifications for office of elder? Ben answered
  - Scenario: Homosexual strikes up conversation, finds you're a pastor, and asks if he'll go to hell. Ben answered
- Steve Wedgeworth: What does it mean to be 'Presbyterian'? Ben answered
- Rich Lusk: Define the doctrine of the Trinity from Scripture. Ben answered (Galen opens questioning from the floor)
- Mike Mosley: "What were the biggest benefits for you in going through this process?" Answer- Strengthened congregational support and unity; added study time was helpful
- Mike: What did you learn as you went through the examination process?
- Galen Sorey: What psalms reflect the kingship of Christ? Answer- Psalm 2, Psalm 3, Psalm 110, Psalm 45
- Galen: "How does the kingship of Christ relate to your pastoral ministry?" Answer- Community events for engaging kingdom ministry, gospel proclamation

Rich Lusk moved that Ben's examination be approved by Presbytery; seconded and unanimously approved.

### **Examination of Mr. Jimmy Gill, Trinity Presbyterian Church, Birmingham, AL**

Rich Lusk introduced Jimmy Gill and gave an overview of his background: ordained in Baptist church, hired in Aug '12 as pastoral intern. Rich commends him for work he's already done at TPC. Plans to serve as Assoc Pastor at TPC. Craig Beaton gave a summary of Committee examination and written exam which was done very well; if given a grade, would be a solid 'A'.

- Craig B: Explain your sense of call to labor among us in CREC. Jimmy answered. Gave account of his conversion to Reformed perspective having started in Baptist faith.
- Craig: Give us a summary of your family life. Jimmy answered with emphasis on pastoral care of family and not just church.
- Craig: How does your wife feel about your move into Presbyterian? Jimmy: Wife supports
- Craig: What is your view of Christian education? Jimmy answered. Important, not neutral, plans to home school
- Craig: What version of Bible do you use? JG answer: ESV due to reliance on better manuscripts
- Craig: Describe your hermeneutics: Jimmy answered. Canonical; Christological; Eschatological
- Craig: Describe your understanding of the doctrine of 'sola Scriptura'. Jimmy answered. Everything must be based on God's word only, but other things like tradition, church councils, etc.
- Steven Wedgeworth: Returned to hermeneutic question. Speak to Grammatical historical. Jimmy answered.
- Steven: What about 'historical intent'? Jimmy answered with affirmation of importance.

Break for lunch- 12:01PM

Resume questioning - 12:44PM-

- Steven. What is justification? How do you get it? Jimmy answered

- Steven: Which confession does your church subscribe to and are you in accord with it?  
Jimmy: WCF; yes
- Steven: What is difference between justification and sanctification? Jimmy answered.
- Steven: How do sacraments become effectual? Jimmy answered
- Steven: In answer to your exam regarding to 'emergency baptism'? Jimmy answer: Christ commands, not a sin not to, but important; also contributes to parental assurance.
- SW: What does it mean to be 'reformed' and are you? Jimmy answered. Reformers were trying to reform Catholic faith while trying to preserve the catholicity of the faith.
- Joe Thacker: What are 3 tests of true church? Jimmy answered
- Joe Thacker: What is meant by priesthood of all believers? Is there any difference between NT and OT usage? Jimmy: in NT now all of God's people have where in OT it was mediated; has been transformed by Christ;
- JT: What is your approach to counseling women? Jimmy answered, plus: Won't counsel woman alone
- JT: What about children? Jimmy; other elders in room or in conjunction with family
- JT: How do you plan to use psalms? Jimmy; use in counseling; plan to use because so important
- JT: Scenario: Young girl in church doubting salvation; Jimmy: would want to talk to parents which would likely shape my answer. Also, would find other women who could mentor/encourage her. I would need to know what all is involved.

Floor opened for questions by non-exam committee members

- Ted Phillips: Describe relationship between objectivity of Covenant and God's eternal decree. Jimmy answered.
- Greg Parry: What are your gifts as pastor and how do you overcome your relatively young age in counseling? Jimmy answered. Gifts with relating to people/ past experience in the church/ administration and leadership gifts/ teach high school/ boys Sunday School/ Small groups settings are strength
- Mickey Schneider: "Quote Psalm 23" Jimmy answered, then asked 'Did I do it?' Mickey: Almost, but a few missteps
- George Crocker: How would you counsel a non-Christian couple who'd just lost an infant? Jimmy answer: Very difficult... Evangelize them... Explain that the hope is in Christ through His resurrection
- Galen : "Would you take exception to the popular definitions of the Five Points of Calvinism? If so, where?" Jimmy answered. No exception, but... it's not the summary of the Reformed faith. I accept "all the points"
- Galen follow up regarding the 'P' and do you see it as in opposition to Perseverance of the Saints? Jimmy answered. Sees it as election ultimately. (Galen remark about 'FV stuff exceptions?' to which Jimmy answered: 'No exception, but... it's not the summary of the Reformed faith. I accept "all the points"'.)
- Mickey comment: 'Election to the community of God.' Jimmy answered.
- Galen: What is an Evangelical? Jimmy answer: Certain common elements eg person who believes in fundamentals of faith but Jimmy gave popular definition of those who believe in salvation by and through Christ.
- Mike Mosley: What are things that are positive about your journey from the Baptist Church to the CREC? Jimmy answer: There is a good emphasis in Baptist churches on evangelizing

outsiders; But there is not much lacking in the CREC that should be filled from the Baptist tradition

Motion to close questioning and that Jimmy Gill's examination be sustained was approved unanimously.

**New Business:** No new business came before Presbytery

**Budget issues:**

Galen: November '12 Presbytery incurred expenses for Bubu. Motion made and seconded to have each church send \$50 to Galen Sorey to repay still outstanding/unpaid expenses (\$400).

**Summit report:** Given by Pastor Galen Sorey but with comments/discussion by others:

Attendees were: Galen Sorey, Steven Wedgeworth, Rich Lusk

- Issues of potential division; Moscow and Birmingham are two poles - BH and non-BH;
- Doug Wilson discussion. Doug wants agreement on being Reformed and Evangelical; "those who don't want that should talk to us".
- Rich Lusk: Doug says there's three(?) areas for potential disagreement:
- Liturgy—high and lower
- Theology—definition of regeneration
- Humanism—
- Polity—2 office vs 3 office
- Wants recognition that unity is important and it doesn't just happen
- Discipline: Committee formed (Jack Phelps and Rich Lusk, et al)
- Ministerial Training
- Work and Authority of Minister; Steve Wedgeworth read from and discussed CREC Constitution, Article 4 C.
- Rich: Suggested that Athanasius Presbytery define what we want role of Minister of Presbytery to be; Mickey: Depends on qualities and personality of the man serving as MoP
- Galen: Next MoP to be nominated 30 days prior to presbytery meeting.
- Motion made and seconded to approve Registry of Ministers of Presbytery (see Attachment 1 at end of minutes)

**Motion to adjourn presbytery made and seconded** 3:04PM

**Closing prayer by Craig Beaton**

**Addendum:** Next Presbytery location will be at Sandestin, Florida on 6 Nov '13, for a meal, then presbytery meeting on 7 Nov. Hosting church is TPC, Valparaiso.

(Two attachments follow)

Respectfully submitted,

Erik H. Stoer (for Al Stout who was unable to attend)



# Ministerial Registry

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Uri Brito uribesou@gmail.com 850.377.3049  
PROVIDENCE CHURCH PENSACOLA, FL

George Crocker george@georgecrocker.com 706-767-5125  
Salem Reformed Church, Rome, GA

Ben Russell br@trinvalp.com 850 357 1435  
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Rich Wisk rwlisk@bellsouth.net 205 980 5739  
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Christ Presbyterian Church Baton Rouge, LA 264-6620

## Attachment 1. Athanasius Presbytery Ministerial Registry

## Attachment 2. Receiving New Member Churches into Presbytery

### Article III Procedure for Receiving New Members into Presbytery

1. The voting status of new member churches shall begin the next presbytery meeting following their acceptance into membership. The delegates can make motions but cannot vote.
2. Delegates about to become new members shall normally provide to the presbytery a one-page summary of their church (membership, elders, confessional standards, other useful descriptions, etc.).
3. When admitting a new church into membership in the CREC, the Minister will ask the following questions of the church's delegation:

CREC Council Book of Procedures - 4 - October, 2011

- a. Do you, with all the officers of your church, commit yourselves in the sight of God and before Christ Jesus to fight the good fight of faith, to lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed the good confession before many witnesses?
  - b. Do you, with all the officers of your church, sincerely receive and adopt the Doctrinal Standards of this Confederation, subscribing to those standards with honesty and in full submission to the Word of God, which is the only infallible rule of faith and practice?
  - c. Do you, with all the officers of your church, take heed unto yourself, and to all the flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath made you presbyter, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood?
  - d. Do you, with all the officers of your church, commit yourselves in faithfulness to the churches in this Confederation: to keep with them the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, to pray for them, to comfort them, to encourage them, to admonish them, and to rule with them in accordance with the Constitution of this Confederation and in full submission to the Word of God?
4. When affirmative answers have been given, the Minister will then read the following statement, and then ask the delegates of all member churches to signify their agreement with a corporate "amen."
- "Together with all the officers of our churches, we receive you and welcome you, our brethren, into membership in this confederation. To you we commit our blessings, our prayers, and the right hand of fellowship as you join with us in the rule of the church."