

2013/Wycliffe Presbytery Minutes (9/17/2013)

The 2013 gathering of the Wycliffe Presbytery (CREC) was held at Grace Covenant Presbyterian Church in Nacogdoches, Texas. We gathered on the morning of Tuesday, September 17th, and began with songs and prayer.

The following delegates present from Wycliffe member churches:

Pastor John Barach, Covenant Presbyterian Church of Sulphur, LA

Pastor Steve Wilkins & Assistant Pastor Gabe Wetmore, Auburn Avenue Presbyterian Church of Monroe, LA

Pastor Ben House and Pastor Tom Lincoln, Grace Covenant Church, Texarkana, AR

Pastor Todd Davis, Christ Church, Searcy, AR

Pastor Faris Paxton, Grace Covenant Church, Fontaine, AR

Pastor Randy Booth, Elders David Alders & Lee Hill, Grace Covenant Presbyterian, Nacogdoches, TX

Pastor David Givler, Christ Covenant Church, San Antonio, TX

Pastor Gene Franklin, Saint David's Church, Hockley, TX

Pastor Jeff Niell, All Saints Presbyterian, Fort Worth, TX

8:55 a.m.

Pastor Jeff Niell (Wycliffe PM) called the meeting to order with a welcome to all the delegates and to those who were visiting, expressing gratitude for their labors. The agenda was noted by way of overview.

9:00 a.m.

It was noted that although two of our Wycliffe churches were not present (Heritage Covenant Church of Weatherford, Texas, and the Reformed Presbyterian Church of St. Petersburg, Russia), their reports were included in the folders. Pastor Booth reminded the delegates that Blake Purcell was going to be in the States in October and that he may be available to visit their churches.

9:04-10:25 a.m.

The floor was opened for the churches of the Wycliffe Presbytery to give overviews of their church reports, and this in the following order: Louisiana Churches—Covenant Presbyterian of Sulphur & Auburn Avenue Presbyterian Church of Monroe; Arkansas Churches—Grace Covenant of Texarkana, Christ Church of Searcy, and Grace Covenant Church of Fontaine; Texas Churches—Grace Covenant Presbyterian Church of Nacogdoches, Christ Covenant Church of San Antonio, the delegates noted the report of Heritage Covenant Church of Weatherford, Saint David's Church of Hockley, & All Saints Presbyterian Church of Fort Worth. We also viewed the report of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of St. Petersburg via slides, and showed the Prison Ministry Video (<http://youtu.be/GTxSJFrniqs>)

10:25-10:35 a.m.

Break

10:35-11:15 a.m.

Delegates presented and discussed “Influential Books” read over the past year. To see a listing of these books go to “The Heavy Laden Bookshelf” (www.benhouseblog.wordpress.com)

11:15 a.m.

Delegates from two visiting churches were present: Pastor Mark Balthrop of Redeemer Reformed Church of Oklahoma City, and Pastors Marq Toombs and Bo Cogbill of New Hope Church of Mesquite, Texas. They introduced themselves and their churches.

11:15-11:20 a.m.

PM Niell pointed out the report from Jack Phelps, the presiding minister of Council (included in the folders), as well as his own report (both are attached below). PM Niell also mentioned the inquiry of a minister in Uganda seeking affiliation.

11:20-11:40 a.m.

The member delegates and visiting delegates met for prayer for one another and for the churches.

11:50 a.m.

“Church Planting in our area...”

Pastor Randy Booth offered an invitation unto future considerations for the churches of the Wycliffe Presbytery to consider designating a percentage of their “Mission Budgets” to go toward church planting in the area of our presbytery. This is only a proposal at this time, but it could be a start to our being strategic for future works in certain key areas that may need some support. Questions were asked about whether or not other presbyteries were doing anything like this...

12:00 noon

PM Niell informed the delegates of the Presbytery meeting next year; that it will be held in Lake Tahoe, CA/October 6-10, 2014; that it will be combined with the meeting of Council, and that our present Wycliffe delegates to Council are Niell and Booth.

PM Niell offered a closing prayer was offered, as well as this Benediction:

“Let Your Work appear to You servants,
And Your glory to their children.
And let the beauty of the Lord be upon us,
And establish the work of our hands for us;
Yes, establish the work of our hands.”

Attached—

- Minister of Council Report to Presbyteries (J. Phelps)
- Presiding Minister of Wycliffe Report (J. Niell)

Communion of Reformed Evangelical Churches
Minister of Council – Report to Presbyteries
September, 2013

1. This report is intended for informational purposes as an interim report of Council activities. A more complete report, including any action items, will be presented for Council approval at the Church Council Meeting in October, 2014.
2. Document revisions
All official documents have been posted in their current versions on the CREC official website.
3. Travel on behalf of the CREC
 - a. Spring, 2012 – Traveled to St. Petersburg, Russia, to teach on pastoral theology at Biblical Seminary; then continued to Ukraine to visit the emerging CREC-friendly churches there. I spoke in Ivano-Frankivsk and Rivne.
 - b. July, 2012 – Traveled to Lower 48 for a week to help a troubled CREC church work through some problems. Travel costs were reimbursed by the church.
 - c. September, 2012 – Spent several days in Wroclaw, Poland, visiting with the elders of the church there and teaching, prior to attending the Anselm Presbytery meeting in Poznan.
 - d. Council Summit, Piney Woods, Texas – April 8-12, 2013 (See further comments below, in Item 4).
 - e. Eastern Europe Theological Conference, Budapest, Hungary – April 24-28, 2013
 - i. Speakers were Rev. Gregg Strawbridge and Rev. Jack Phelps
 - ii. Attendees came from Poland, Hungary and Ukraine
 - f. Visit to churches in Ukraine – April 29-May 6, 2013
 - i. Reformed Mission (CREC), Ivano-Frankivsk
 - ii. Reformed Evangelical Church Dunaevtsy
 1. Met with leaders for two days to discuss CREC membership
 2. Preached for the Good Friday service
 - iii. Rivne Biblical Church (CREC)
 1. Visited with officers and members
 2. Preached at the Easter Sunday morning service
4. Council Summit – Houston, April, 2013
 - a. As announced at the Council Meeting in 2011, each CREC presbytery sent four delegates to an informal gathering of the CREC Council at the approximate mid-point between triennial meetings of Council. This gathering was held at the Piney Woods Conference Center in Texas.
 - b. It must be emphasized that this was an *informal* gathering with no formal agenda and at which no action items were presented for debate. By inviting each presbytery to send two men in addition to its Council delegates, we were attempting to draw together a cross-section of ministers and elders from the CREC.
 - c. Items discussed during the two-day meeting included:
 - i. “Unity in the CREC” (factors promoting unity, despite our evident diversity).

- ii. Missions – How can we improve our mission outreach effectively, given our Constitutional prohibition against having any standing committee. Both “domestic” and “foreign” missions were considered. Two models currently in use among our churches, SRS and JEEP, were discussed.
 - iii. Intra-church and inter-denominational relations regarding, among other things, church discipline.
 - iv. Leadership preparation in CREC churches. What are people doing? What can we learn from each other? Greyfriars and the new Trinity Center were discussed.

- 5. Committee and Commission appointments and activities
 - a. Committee on Confidentiality Policy: Pastors Booth, Tuuri and Burrow. Appointed in October, 2011. Work is ongoing; no formal report at this time.
 - b. Appeals Court to hear an appeal arising from Augustine Presbytery in *Moormans v. St. Peter Presbyterian Church*. Appointed in January, 2012. Pastors Shade, Tuuri, Craw, Sorey and Stoos. A final decision document was released in January, 2013.
 - c. Committee to develop proposed revisions to CREC Constitution Article IV.D. Appointed in April, 2013. Pastors Strawbridge, Hemmeke and Burrow.
 - d. Appeals Court to hear an appeal arising from Augustine Presbytery in *Moormans v. St. Peter Presbyterian Church II*. The previous Appeals Court specifically informed appellant he had the right to refile an appeal, in that the Court never reached the merits of the case. A new appeal was filed in July, 2013, and a Court was appointed that same month, consisting of Pastors Hemmeke, Niell, Burrow, Wilson and Sorey. The case is ongoing.

- 6. Other activities
 - a. Since the last Council meeting, I have fielded approximately 55 inquiries from outside the CREC regarding the need for new church plants, help for existing churches both inside and outside the US, interest by pastors seeking a call, interest by men wanting to enter the military chaplaincy, interest from men finishing their seminary training, and others. Responses have been given in each case. In several cases, I have referred the inquiry to pastors in the affected area, or to the Presiding Minister of the affected region.
 - b. Several men from various parts of Africa have contacted me, wanting “affiliation” with or help from the CREC. These requests are exceedingly difficult to vet. In most cases, we cannot verify the ministry represented by the caller. In some cases, it appears that these men search the internet to find someone they can reach out to. Most of those cannot clearly articulate a theological position that we can recognize. They claim to be “Reformed” but cannot actually describe what that means. In other cases, there may be some genuine ministry flowing from the callers, but we have no way of verifying it. It is troubling to be unable to reach out to these men, but at present we clearly lack the resources to do so.
 - c. I have been in regular contact with a group of four small congregations in the Philippine Islands. These have split off from other, larger, churches who either are Arminian in doctrine or liberal (particularly Barthian). I have spent enough time talking with these folks to have a positive sense of their position. I have been helping them work through some Reformed confessions and they have a joint meeting planned for September (this month). I have tentative plans to go visit them this winter or early spring.

- d. I have fielded countless phone calls and emails from CREC ministers and elders, as well as Presiding Ministers, seeking counsel and advice on various church-related matters. I consider this a crucially important function of the PM of Council. It has been a great joy and privilege to talk through issues with these men and to hear how the matters are subsequently resolved. Sometimes we laugh together, sometime we weep together and pray. But the work of Christ's glorious Church is moving forward.

Respectfully Submitted,

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Rev. Jack E. Phelps, Presiding Minister of Council
Communion of Reformed Evangelical Churches

ALL SAINTS PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

September, 2013

Communion of Reformed Evangelical Churches Wycliffe Presbytery Presiding Minister's Report

This year I have had the privilege of interacting with a number of the churches in our Presbytery; and this either by phone, email, or by visit.

In December of 2012, Pastor Booth and I had the privilege of working with the Session of St. David's in Houston as they worked through various matters facing their congregation. I am most grateful for their labors in the Lord.

The Presiding Minister's Summit was held in East Texas in April, 2013. I was joined by Pastors Booth (presiding minister, *pro tem*), Barach, and Franklin. A summary of this meeting is found in Jack Phelps's *Council PM Report*.

April and May, 2013—some inquiry and extended discussion occurred about a church plant in the Houston area by some folks who left the St. David's congregation. This has not materialized into a Mission Church.

August, 2013—as one of the Presiding Ministers in the CREC, I have been appointed to serve a Council Court by Council PM, Jack Phelps. Term: ongoing.

Finally, it has been most helpful to receive funds from the various churches of our Presbytery. As I have been privileged to serve as Wycliffe's PM, these funds have been used over the past year in my duties. Thank you very much. In this regard, I ask that you remember to include Pastor Jack Phelps, the *Presiding Minister of Council* into your budget as well.

Thank you for the privilege of serving with you.

Jeff Niell
Presiding Minister