

HOMESTEAD PRESBYTERY

Steve Piper, Moderator

November 16, 2023

If you are more comfortable wearing a mask, please bring one. We will also provide masks.

All times are approximate and are NOT orders of the day.

- 9:30 a.m. ORIENTATION.....Erica Nelson
- 10:00 a.m. PRESBYTERY CONVENES
Call to Order
Opening Prayer
Adoption of Docket
Seating of Corresponding Members
Welcome of first-time commissioners and pastors
- 10:10 a.m. WELCOME FROM HOST.....Melodie Jones Pointon
- 10:15 a.m. OPENING DEVOTION.....Terri Sherman
- 10:30 a.m. TABLE TALK.....Implementation Team
- 11:30 a.m. CELEBRATIONS
- 11:40 a.m. PASTORAL LEADERSHIP REVITALIZATION.....Tricia Dillon Thomas
- 11:50 a.m. NEBRASKA PRESBYTERIAN FOUNDATION.....Audrey Richert
- 11:55 a.m. UPDATE FROM CAMP CALVIN CREST.....Craig Huffman
- 12:00 p.m. LUNCH
- OFFICERS AND STAFF REPORTS
- 1:00 p.m. Presbytery Moderator.....Steve Piper
Steering the Ship Moderator.....Terri Sherman
Leadership Team.....Steve Piper
Implementation Team.....Terri Sherman
Treasurer.....Ed McClymont
Stated Clerk.....Erica Nelson
Synod Commissioners.....Duane Westing and Maggie Horak
- STANDING TEAM REPORTS
- 2:10 p.m. Companions for the Journey.....Charity Potter
Presbyterian Women.....Joan Berglund

CONTINUING BUSINESS

2:30 p.m. WORSHIP AND INSTALLATION OF NEW MODERATORS

The offering is designated to the Synod of Lakes and Prairies for Indigenous American aid.

3:30 p.m. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Stewardship Kaleidoscope

Future Missionary Visit

3:40 p.m. CLOSING PRAYER AND ADJOURNMENT

November 1, 2023

Dear Members and Friends of Homestead Presbytery,

Welcome to Eastridge Presbyterian Church! What began as a mission congregation on the edge of Lincoln, Nebraska in the early 1950s is now in the geographical heart of the city. We are a neighborhood church, with a vibrant presence in our immediate community. As we celebrated 70 years of ministry this year, we began sharing "why I love Eastridge Presbyterian Church" with each other. We give thanks for all the many stories that were shared, all of which point back to our beginnings. Words like home, relationships, the people, the mission and belonging continue to be the foundation of who we are as a Body of Christ.

Our parking lot is on 56th Street between A Street and Randolph. We would love to have the closest spaces to the building reserved for those who look for close parking. Please note that the parking lot doors are the only doors that will be open. (If you park on the street, you'll still need to come around to those doors.) We will be meeting downstairs in the Fellowship Hall and will have hosts to help you find your way!

Our building is busy! There will be lots of folks here, including daycare children, seniors attending tai chi and yoga classes, and the stocking crew for the Eastridge Community Food Pantry. We are excited to also be hosting the Homestead community!

In Christ,

Rev. Dr. Melodie Jones Pointon

Recommendation

The Presbytery of Genesee Valley respectfully overtures the 226th General Assembly (2024) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to:

Direct the Stated Clerk to send the following proposed amendment to the *Book of Order* to the presbyteries for their affirmative or negative votes:

Shall D-7.0501 in the *Book of Order* be amended as follows:

Text to be deleted is ~~struck through~~. Text to be added is in brackets and is [underlined].

“When a clerk of session or the stated clerk of a presbytery receives an allegation, without undertaking further inquiry, that clerk shall then report to the council only that an offense has been alleged without naming the [person] accused or the nature of the alleged offense~~].~~ In a case in which the person identified as having been harmed is a minor or an adult who lacks mental capacity, the clerk shall disclose to the council the nature of the alleged offense and the name of the person accused.] ~~[and The council shall]~~ refer the statement of allegation promptly to an investigating committee, which shall conduct an inquiry as defined below.”

The full text of D-7.0501, if the proposed amendment is approved, will read:

“When a clerk of session or the stated clerk of a presbytery receives an allegation, without undertaking further inquiry, that clerk shall then report to the council only that an offense has been alleged without naming the person accused or the nature of the alleged offense. In a case in which the person identified as having been harmed is a minor or an adult who lacks mental capacity, the clerk shall disclose to the council the nature of the alleged offense and the name of the person accused. The council shall refer the statement of allegation promptly to an investigating committee, which shall conduct an inquiry as defined below.”

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Rationale

1. The context for D-7.0501 is the procedure by which submission of a formal accusation of a disciplinary offense prompts the council of a church or presbytery to form an investigating committee and commence the disciplinary process of the *Book of Order*.
2. In a case which alleges that the person harmed was a minor or an adult who lacks mental capacity, D-7.0501 presently requires the clerk to withhold this critically relevant demographic information. The possible negative consequences are serious. Withholding relevant information is an omission which prevents the council from exercising its ability to act, e.g., temporarily suspending a volunteer leader of a youth group, warning parents whose children may be at risk, informing legal authorities of potential statutory violations, or simply seeking consultation. If the case has possible civil or criminal law implications, failure to initiate reasonable risk management actions at this stage may expose the council to legal liability.¹
3. By knowing the nature of the alleged offense and the name of the person accused, a council would be able to exercise its power of discernment and appoint members to an investigating committee who do not have personal ties to people involved in the case or who are able to bring specialized knowledge, expertise, or skills to a sensitive matter. Without knowledge of the relevant information, the council has an incomplete baseline from which to decide whether its investigating committee appointees are well-qualified or will face conflicts of interest.
4. A two-part moral and polity framework in the *Book of Order* supports this overture. The first part originates in G-4.03, the dedicated confidentiality section. G-4.0301 unequivocally declares: “Confidentiality should not be an excuse to hold secret the knowledge or risk of harm, especially when related to the physical abuse, neglect, sexual abuse of a minor or an adult who lacks mental capacity.” We regard preserving confidentiality as secondary, and prioritize protecting vulnerable people.

Disclosing relevant information as our primary moral obligation follows in G-4.0302, the Mandatory Reporting provision. Here is the explicit mandate to take positive action to protect vulnerable people by disclosing information to authorities. It reiterates the primary moral value which prioritizes protecting people at risk. G-4.0302 makes clear

¹ In Ezekiel 33:6, the community’s sentinel is held accountable for failing to sound the trumpet and warn the people of imminent danger.

the substantive basis for disclosing: "...knowledge of harm, or the risk of harm, related to the physical abuse, neglect, and/or sexual molestation or abuse of a minor or an adult who lacks mental capacity." Knowledge is essential to being able to act preventively.

The second part of the moral and polity framework is our obligation which is implicit in Chapter 7 of the *Book of Order* Disciplinary Process. D-7.0201a. and D-7.1501b. both address accountability in circumstances when a person "knew, or reasonably should have known of the reasonable risk of sexual abuse of another... [and] failed to take reasonable steps to minimize the risk." The moral commitment in Chapter 7 is that we are responsible for recognizing a risk and that once we know, we are obligated to act to reduce the possibility of harm.

5. The unconditional language of D-7.0501 contradicts the letter and spirit of both G-4.0301 and G-4.0302, provisions which affirm that preserving confidentiality is not an absolute when withholding the truth enables the commission of abuse, neglect, or harm. By prohibiting disclosure, D-7.0501 devalues protecting vulnerable people and perpetuates their risk for sake of a secondary priority. Our Church's compelling interest to safeguard people engaged in our mission and ministry justifies overriding D-7.0501's imposition of concealment. This overture ensures that our moral responsibility and positive duty embodied in existing provisions of G-4 and D-7 are honored and upheld by the procedure of D-7.0501.
6. Since the 1990s when the offense of "sexual abuse of another person" was added to the disciplinary section of the *Book of Order*, experience throughout the PC(U.S.A.) teaches us that it is very difficult to maintain the high degree of confidentiality required by D-7.0501. It's not realistic to think that confidential information about the alleged harm of a child or a person without mental capacity will be long-contained in a congregation. Anecdotal evidence teaches us that it is more realistic to expect that a council's ignorance of available but concealed facts regarding a risk to vulnerable people will be experienced as leaders' failure to fulfill their core responsibilities and a betrayal of trust. ²
7. This overture utilizes the phrase, "adult who lacks mental capacity." This is a consistent application of the wording used in both G-4.0301 regarding confidentiality and in G-4.0302 regarding mandatory reporting. - end -

² In Ezekiel 34:10, the shepherds are held accountable for the well-being of God's sheep.



MOTION SHEET

From: Steering the Ship

Subject: Motion from Nominating Sub-Group

Date: Presbytery Assembly- November 16, 2023

Recommendation: The Nominating Sub-Group presents the following persons for Homestead Presbytery leadership and team positions:

Vice Moderator Charity Potter Thurston John Hus

Reconciliation and Trust Team Members

Alan Brehm	Hickman
Kathy Rohwedder	Westminster Lincoln

Congregational Network Team Members

Joan Berglund	Lincoln First
Karen Richardson	Pawnee City
Peg Mueller	Good Shepherd Lincoln
Cindy Loyd	Lincoln First

Ministries for Extraordinary Times Moderator

Chris Peters	Westminster Lincoln
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Companions for the Journey Co-Moderators

Edward Yang	Federated Columbus
Thomas Dummermuth	Eastridge Lincoln

Steering the Ship

At-Large	Teresa Bartlett	Norfolk First
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Permanent Judicial Commission

Jane Holtzclaw

Christy Abraham

At-Large

Lincoln First

GA Representatives

Alan Brehm

Sue Coller - TE Alternate

Terri Sherman

Hickman

Lincoln First

Lincoln First