

To: Ministers of the Word and Sacrament, Member Churches of the Presbytery
of the Miami Valley, and Ruling Elder Members of Presbytery

From: Ruling Elder Bruce Saunders, Moderator
Ruling Elder Larry Hollar, Stated Clerk

Date: March 9, 2020

CALL OF SPECIAL MEETING OF THE PRESBYTERY OF THE MIAMI VALLEY

**Thursday, March 19, 2020
11:00 am
(registration begins at 10:30 am)**

**Memorial Presbyterian Church
1541 South Smithville Road
Dayton OH 45410**

In accordance with Section 4.02 of the Bylaws of the Presbytery of the Miami Valley, a special meeting of the Presbytery of the Miami Valley has been called for the purposes listed in the docket that follows on page 2. Motions and appendices pertaining to those purposes are on subsequent pages.

This meeting is called at the request of the Committee on Ministry by actions that committee took related to Motions 1 and 2 on February 25, 2020 and subsequently, and at the request of the Committee on Preparation for Ministry by action that committee took related to Motion 2 on January 16, 2020.

DOCKET FOR THE SPECIAL MEETING OF THE PRESBYTERY OF THE MIAMI VALLEY

Thursday, March 19, 2020

Memorial Presbyterian Church, Dayton, Ohio
1541 South Smithville Road, Dayton OH 45410

10:30 am Registration

11:00 am CONVENING PRAYER – Ruling Elder Alice McCollum, Vice Moderator

PRELIMINARY BUSINESS - Ruling Elder Larry Hollar, Stated Clerk

- o Statement of Quorum & Formation of the Roll
- o Attestation to call of the meeting
- o Clarification of process for special meeting of presbytery
- o Motion to seat those who are granted voice at this meeting

FOR ACTION: FROM THE COMMITTEE ON MINISTRY

- o Motion 1: That the presbytery authorize appointment of an Administrative Commission, if the way be clear after session and congregational votes, to assist the Presbyterian Church of New Paris to close the church and dissolve it as a congregation.

FOR ACTION: FROM THE COMMITTEE ON PREPARATION FOR MINISTRY AND THE COMMITTEE ON MINISTRY

- o Motion 2: That the presbytery:
 - o Examine Ruling Elder Cheryl (Gidget) Collins on her statements of faith, call, and motive to seek a commission under G-2.1002 (Appendix A), and on her fitness for receiving a commission;
 - o Following this examination, by vote declare itself satisfied as to her qualifications and confirm the action of the Committee on Ministry in finding the proposed commission with the Seven Mile United Presbyterian Church a suitable one (Appendix B); and
 - o Following a presbytery vote in the affirmative on (2) above, immediately proceed to hold a commissioning service pursuant to G-2.1003.

COMMISSIONING SERVICE

CLOSING PRAYER

ADJOURNMENT

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Rationale and detailed motions to be offered at this meeting, as well as related Appendices, follow.

COMMITTEE ON MINISTRY

March 19, 2020

Motion 1: The Committee on Ministry moves that the presbytery agree to the following request:

- **New Paris**—Pending a session and congregational vote at the Presbyterian Church of New Paris to request the presbytery to assist in dissolving the church, the Committee on Ministry recommends that the presbytery:
 - a. authorize the presbytery Moderator to appoint an Administrative Commission pursuant to G-3.0109b of the *Book of Order* and Sec. 5.05 of the *Presbytery of the Miami Valley Policy and Practice*, to take any necessary actions, in consultation with the session and congregation, to close and dissolve the church and, in collaboration with the Presbytery Trustees, appropriately care for and dispose of its property; and
 - b. adopt the following specific authorities and responsibilities for the Administrative Commission to carry out its mandate:

The Administrative Commission to assist the Presbyterian Church of New Paris (the “AC”), in consultation with the church’s session and congregation, shall:

- i. Arrange for all liabilities of the church to be paid in full;
 - ii. Determine the care and distribution of the real property and contents of the church, with the authority to dispose of such property granted to the Trustees of the Presbytery of Miami Valley. The Administrative Commission shall determine the amount of reserve funds to be retained to offset anticipated presbytery expenses for the continued maintenance of the vacant building;
 - iii. Determine the use of undesignated mission funds;
 - iv. Arrange for ways to address the pastoral care of the congregation and transfer of membership upon dissolution of the congregation;
 - v. Arrange for transfer of session and financial records to the presbytery;
 - vi. Determine an appropriate schedule for the congregation’s last worship service and celebration;
 - vii. Dissolve the congregation after the last worship service;
 - viii. Prepare minutes of its proceedings and a final report upon completion of its actions that will be reported at stated meetings of the presbytery.
- c. Should additional authority not specified above be necessary to implement the AC’s mandate, the AC, in consultation with the congregation, may request the presbytery’s Leadership Council to approve and grant the AC additional or clarifying authority. The Leadership Council shall report on any such authority granted to the AC to the next stated presbytery meeting.

Rationale for Motion 1: The Presbyterian Church of New Paris is a congregation of 9 members on the western edge of Preble County. Because of their size, they have been unable to afford continuing pastoral leadership for many years.

Last month, their clerk of session reported that the church is “just existing” and that they have run out of people, energy and money. They fear that they will be unable to continue to pay the utility bills and that their utilities will be shut off.

The COM is in the process of arranging a meeting with them to discuss their situation. In the event the session/congregation members ask to be dissolved, the COM would like to act in a timely and pastoral manner, which this requested authority for creation of an AC would allow them to do.

Motion 2: The Committee on Preparation for Ministry and the Committee on Ministry move that the presbytery agree to the following requests:

1. That the presbytery examine Ruling Elder Cheryl (Gidget) Collins on her statements of faith, call, and motive to seek a commission under G-2.1002 (**Appendix A**), and on her fitness for receiving a commission;
2. That following this examination, by vote the presbytery declare itself satisfied as to her qualifications and confirm the action of the Committee on Ministry in finding the proposed commission with the Seven Mile United Presbyterian Church a suitable one (**Appendix B**); and
3. That following a presbytery vote in the affirmative on (2) above, the presbytery immediately proceed to hold a commissioning service pursuant to G-2.1003. In doing so the presbytery notes an invitation to join the Seven Mile congregation in celebrating the commissioning at an event at the Seven Mile church on Sunday, April 19, 2020, at 3:00 p.m.

APPENDIX A

COMMITTEE ON PREPARATION FOR MINISTRY

March 19, 2020

Statement of Faith – Ruling Elder Gidget Collins

I am a child of God. I believe God created everything in the universe, and we are commanded to be responsible stewards of this creation. I believe in the sovereignty of God and that the Bible is the Word of God. The authority of scripture guides us, along with the powerful statements in the Book of Confessions, to uphold each other, and work for reconciliation and justice in our world. I believe in the reformed tradition of the holiness and providence of God who creates, sustains, rules, and redeems the world in love. Regardless of race, gender, sexuality, social or economic status, all are equal in God's house. Our personal relationship with God, and the gift of salvation from God, is through grace which is not earned but freely given.

I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, fully human and fully God. Jesus was born from Mary, a virgin, to live, walk, and work among God's people. Jesus was the Messiah, foretold by prophecy in the Old Testament, led a sinless life and performed miracles. I believe Jesus died for our sins according to the Scriptures; was buried, resurrected, and is with God. Jesus will come again. I believe in the work of Jesus: to proclaim the reign of God, call disciples, serve and be a blessing to all people, and continuously confront evil in the church today. A relationship with Jesus carries us through rough times, keeps us steady, and centers us with grace. Jesus is always faithful and is our best friend.

I believe we are the Easter People and will spend eternity with the Lord in heaven. We are created as unique individuals and the Holy Spirit dwells among us as was promised by Jesus.

I believe we experience Christ's spirit and presence in the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper which are traditions within the worshiping community that connect us intimately with Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. Baptism with water is a public declaration of accepting Jesus Christ as our personal Savior, and a reminder that we are all beloved children of God. I believe that Holy Communion, the Lord's Supper, was first done by Jesus in the upper room sitting with the disciples. We do this in remembrance, and as a sign of our covenant with Jesus Christ. Communion is not a means of salvation or forgiveness, rather, it is a testament of faith in the atoning work of the cross. I believe everyone is welcome to the table and there is room for each one regardless if they have been to the table many times, if it has been a long time, or they have never come at all.

I believe the church is there to help cure the ill, feed the hungry, help those in need, and spread the good news of the gospel. We, as the church, are a spirit-empowered community of disciples being the hands and feet of Jesus in the world. Each day we continue to build our faith with the Triune God.

Statement of Call – Ruling Elder Gidget Collins

The Holy Spirit puts calls on our hearts and directs us in how we are to serve. I first realized a call to serve when I began teaching Sunday School in 1982. I found this to be rewarding, challenging, and a great learning experience. My volunteer years of working with remedial students, along with leading my Girl Scout Troop and working in the "I'm Thumbbody" program, continued to show me I had a gift for teaching.

I like things organized and love to write. These gifts were put to use when I answered the call to serve as clerk of session at church. I felt at home with the polity and procedures of our Book of Order. Work on presbytery committees soon followed which enabled me to see the wider church at work, and continue to see how we are all connected.

The years added more depth to my call as I agreed to serve as Vice Moderator and then Moderator of the Presbytery after discernment and support of family and friends. During this time I was asked to pulpit supply by a few pastors. It was a new door that opened and

proved to be the one call that brought my heart overwhelming joy. It was a peace I had never experienced before. I felt called to go on the pulpit supply list. The privilege of bringing God's word to different churches and meeting more people was wonderful. Having grown up military and marrying military I have always enjoyed meeting new people, which is a gift I appreciate.

Serving as pulpit supply felt like a surprising gift I had been waiting to do for a long time. This quickly led me to pray and discern the possibility of going to seminary to become a CRE. Having a personal relationship with God brings peace and structure to my life. Looking to God for direction has always been a priority for me. I felt confident to fully rely on my gifts and the years of preparation and experience that fed into the decision for the CRE program.

Putting together worship services to praise God is such an honor, privilege, and joy. I was blessed to preach on Palm Sunday, Easter Sunday, through Advent, and in fact almost every Sunday. Therefore what I was learning at Dubuque Theological Seminary was used right away. Going from sitting in the pew to standing at the pulpit has been educational, exciting, and grace-filled. I love pastoral work and getting to preach God's word within our Reformed theology.

I trust in the Triune God and where I am being called. My gifts of pastoral care, relationships, teaching, writing, organization, love, and compassion for people will serve me as I lead a small church. I learn about God from scripture, but there is still a mystery that remains. Continuously I am in awe of God and how the Creator uses me to serve the church. I serve a mighty God who has been preparing me in these numerous ways over decades to serve a small congregation. I take my Ruling Elder ordination vows seriously and am very confident in the call to become a Commissioned Ruling Elder.

Statement of Motive for Seeking a Commission – Ruling Elder Gidget Collins

I know God's guiding hand was in all the Presbytery and church work I have done through the years. From church committees, clerk of session, presbytery committees and offices, and General Assembly commissioner I was being guided by the Holy Spirit centering me in the autumn of my life.

It was while serving as moderator of our Presbytery that I noticed my heart was always drawn to the small churches and the mission work they were faithfully doing. Shortly after going on the pulpit supply list I began to discern the idea of seminary classes to become a CRE. I prayed for guidance and sought advice from trusted friends in the presbytery. I continued to feel pulled to seminary classes so I approached the Committee on Preparation for Ministry.

Comradery and covenant between us all is essential. We are called to be bridge builders! I feel called and dedicated to lead a small church as lay pastor. I enjoy writing so preparing sermons has been a joy-filled activity. I am a people-person and love spending

time with congregations to preach, teach, care for, and facilitate spiritual growth. I would be privileged to officiate at weddings and services of witness to the resurrection, as well as Baptisms and serving Holy Communion. Pastoral care comes easy to me and I would provide care to include visiting shut-ins and hospitalizations. My time as clerk of session and moderator of presbytery would provide good background for administrative work. I am an organized person and would provide effective leadership with the session, and for committees of the church.

Many years ago I began the “I’m Thumbbody” program in elementary schools in Dade County, Florida. The idea is that we all have individual thumbprints from God that make each of us unique and loved. It’s easy to use the same core ideas with congregations in small churches. Each is unique in their way, no two are the same, and all are “thumbbody” special.

I have been blessed to use the material presented and taught through Dubuque Theological Seminary in churches while serving as pulpit supply. Although I feel competent and ready to lead a small church I still look forward to continuing education classes in the future.

This covenant commission would be between me, God, the congregation, and the presbytery. I will not have all the answers, but being in covenant means I am connected and can ask questions of colleagues. I am accountable yet many others will enable me to keep growing; and God will always continue to lead me along this journey.

APPENDIX B

COMMITTEE ON MINISTRY

March 19, 2020

Rationale for the Candidate’s Fitness for the Commission with the Seven Mile United Presbyterian Church: The Seven Mile United Presbyterian Church is a church of 30 members located in the center of Butler County. For 12 years, they were served by Commissioned Ruling Elder Lee Ault, who retired in December 2018. Although they are a small congregation, they are active in their local community and the greater Edgewood school district providing critical clothing and food ministries.

The congregation is financially stable and their building is in excellent repair but they are unable to provide a compensation package that would support a minister of the Word and Sacrament on even a very part-time basis.

When CRE Ault retired, the Rev. John Lewis was appointed their moderator and he has worked with them during the past year. As the COM was unable to identify an appropriate PCUSA minister of the Word and Sacrament to serve them, they have been engaging pulpit supply on a weekly basis. Many of these preachers were not from the PCUSA. The church engaged Ruling Elder Gidget Collins as pulpit supply and repeatedly expressed

interest in having her serve them. When RE Collins completed her preparation to become a Commissioned Ruling Elder under the guidance of the presbytery's Committee on Preparation for Ministry, and COM permitted her to discuss the possibility of service at Seven Mile, the session immediately proceeded to invite her.

COM's judgment is that it is in the best interest of all parties that RE Collins be commissioned to the Seven Mile Church. We believe that the church will be blessed by having consistent leadership from an individual with a solid Reformed theology and a loving pastoral heart. We believe that the presbytery will be blessed by having this congregation become more fully engaged with the presbytery through a CRE who is deeply committed to our covenant community. And we believe that RE Collins will be blessed by having an opportunity to use the gifts for ministry that God has so clearly given to her.

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