

Presbytery of the Miami Valley
Called Special Meeting
Minutes to be approved February 2024
Tuesday, January 30, 2024 at 4:00 p.m.
At Fairborn First Presbyterian Church

A Convening Prayer and Welcome was offered by RE Michael Seewer, Moderator. A quorum was declared by the moderator. The attestation to call of the meeting was in accordance with Section 4.02 of the Bylaws of the Presbytery of the Miami Valley. This special meeting of the Presbytery of the Miami Valley has been called for the purpose of declaring a schism and authorizing the Administrative Commission for College Hill Community Church (Presbyterian Church U.S.A.) to determine the true church as defined in the motion per the Book of Order G-4.0207.

Stated Clerk, MWS Lynn Bova, began the formation of the roll. There were eight MWS, one CRE, three RE, and one retired MWS excused.

A MOTION PREVAILED to accept the formation of the roll. Attendance can be found in Appendix A. (Appendix A)

A MOTION PREVAILED to give voice to RE Donna Courtney, member of the AC of College Hill.

The Moderator recognized the Administrative Commission of College Hill Community Church (Presbyterian, U.S.A.), moderated by MWS Lucinda Isaacs. This Administrative Commission/Session includes three (3) Ministers of Word and Sacrament and three (3) Ruling Elders from different churches. They offered a report on various aspects of their work. These statements can be found in the appendix. (Appendix B)

Moderator, Michael Seewer asked if there were any questions or comments to the report given by the Administrative Commission. There were none.

RE Donna Courtney presented the first motion from the Administrative Commission with rationale and support.

+ **ON MOTION:** To declare schism within the College Hill Community Church (Presbyterian U.S.A.).

Rationale and Support:

The Administrative Commission (hereafter called AC), acting as the session for College Hill Community Church (Presbyterian Church U.S.A.), received a petition signed by forty-one members of College Hill Community Church (Presbyterian Church U.S.A.) requesting a congregational vote on whether to leave the denomination. This petition indicates a continuing significant division within the church.

The AC has diligently worked to address the disorder within the congregation by conducting listening sessions with College Hill Community Church

(Presbyterian Church U.S.A.) members. These sessions were in-person over three Saturdays, with some held over Zoom. These sessions aimed to understand the members' concerns and perspectives and seek a path toward healing and reconciliation.

After carefully considering the feedback received during the listening sessions, the AC determined that mediation would be the most effective approach to achieve reconciliation. The services of an outside mediator were engaged, and mediation was scheduled to include those elders who were not participating in the life of College Hill Community Church (Presbyterian Church U.S.A.). Unfortunately, these elders have refused to participate, rendering mediation impossible. As the mediator stated, "Mediation cannot occur when only one side is willing to participate."

Furthermore, church members were invited to participate in a day of elder training focusing on ruling elders. However, only two of the currently elected ruling elders for College Hill Community Church (Presbyterian Church U.S.A.) chose to participate in this training. Ruling elders must be well-versed in presbyterian polity to lead the congregation effectively. In addition, elder training was given at every session meeting. Therefore, the AC respectfully requests the Presbytery of the Miami Valley grant this motion. It is evident that a schism exists at College Hill Community Church (Presbyterian Church U.S.A.), and the AC's efforts to pursue reconciliation and healing are hindered by the unwillingness of certain individuals to engage in the process. The Presbytery of the Miami Valley must acknowledge and address this schism for the well-being and unity of College Hill Community Church (Presbyterian Church U.S.A.).

With no one rising to speak or debate the motion, the Moderator explained that three tellers, (MWS Joe Hinds, RE Sue Seiler, and RE Marge Morgan) would collect and count the ballots. He also reiterated what the Yes or No vote meant.

A MOTION PREVAILED unanimously to declare schism within the College Hill Community Church (Presbyterian U.S.A.). (Ballot vote: 70 votes Yes and 0 votes No)

MWS Lucinda Isaacs presented the second motion from the Administrative Commission with rationale and support.

+ ON MOTION: To authorize the College Hill Community Church (Presbyterian U.S.A.) Administrative Commission to declare the members who will remain a Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) congregation at College Hill Community Church (Presbyterian U.S.A.) under the jurisdiction of the Presbyterian Church (USA) to be the true church entitled to all property and assets utilizing the criteria listed:

1. Formally survey each member if their intent is to remain a member, transfer to another Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) or Reformed congregation or withdraw their membership and renounce any jurisdiction of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

2. Review the Book of Order G-1.0304, The Ministry of Members, with anyone who intends to remain so they can affirm their membership. This can be done in worship, at a congregational gathering, or individually. Highlight what membership means particularly in regard to taking part in the common life including worship, lifting one another up in mutual concern, supporting the ministry through generosity of time, talent and finances, and all other actions included in G-1.0304.

3. The AC affirms the importance of the Holy Spirit led discernment process in determining the true church, as stated in the Book of Order, and commits to upholding the principles of fairness, justice, and love in all matters related to the schism and the ongoing ministry of College Hill Community Church (Presbyterian U.S.A.)

Rationale and Support:

All members of the College Hill Community Church (Presbyterian U.S.A.) have been duly notified and asked to declare their desire to remain as members, of the College Hill Community Church (Presbyterian U.S.A.) and to remain under the jurisdiction of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), including the Synod of the Covenant, and the Presbytery of the Miami Valley.

Those members who remain at College Hill Community Church (Presbyterian U.S.A.) will be committed to maintaining, and desire to be a reformed, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) presence as a multicultural, and multi-ethnic congregation in west Dayton. The AC believes they should be declared the true church in order to continue the important worship, ministry and mission already happening even though they may be a minority. The Book of Order (G-4.0207) affirms that the determination of the true church is not based on a majority decision.

By this action, the Presbytery of the Miami Valley shows their encouragement and supports these members in their continued worship, ministry, and mission work in the west Dayton area, as they seek to embody the teaching and values of Jesus Christ as a Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) congregation within a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic context. The Presbytery of the Miami Valley indicates that it is committed to providing pastoral support, resources, and guidance to these members as they navigate the challenges of schism and continue the important work being done in the community. Those who will remain members shall be recognized as the true church entitled to all property and assets of College Hill Community Church (Presbyterian U.S.A.)

The Presbytery of the Miami Valley affirms the importance of the Holy Spirit led discernment process in determining the true church, as stated in the Book of Order, and commits to upholding the principles of fairness, justice, and love in all matters related to the schism and the ongoing ministry of College Hill Community Church (Presbyterian U.S.A.)

Moderator Michael Seewer called for questions or debate. Questions were answered by members of the Administrative Commission. An amendment was proposed to the wording of the motion.

+ **ON MOTION** – Amended to read (words added are italicized): **To authorize the College Hill Community Church (Presbyterian U.S.A.) Administrative Commission to declare the members who will remain a Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) congregation at College Hill**

Community Church (Presbyterian U.S.A.) under the jurisdiction of the Presbyterian Church (USA) to be the true church *within the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)* entitled to all property and assets utilizing the criteria listed: (see above – no changes were made to the criteria.)

Debate was held.

Moderator Michael Seewer restated the amendment with the additional words in the motion.

A MOTION PREVAILED to amend the motion as noted above (standing vote: 36 votes yes, 29 votes no).

Moderator Michael Seewer explained what a Yes vote would mean and what the No vote would mean and asked everyone to cast their ballots. The tellers collected the ballots and went into another room to count them.

A MOTION PREVAILED to approve the amended motion. (ballot vote: 69 votes yes, 1 vote no)

During the counting of the ballots, Moderator Michael Seewer recognized RE Larry Hollar, Corresponding member and member at College Hill Community Church. Words of gratitude and appreciation to the Administrative Commission, Committee on Ministry, along with the staff and officers of the Presbytery for their hard work and prayers for the church and members of College Hill Community Church were offered.

The Moderator recognized MWS Lisa Hess, (Validated Ministry), who offered a lament.

Moderator Michael Seewer prayed for the actions taken this day, for the Administrative Commission, and for College Hill Community Church. The Moderator led the Presbytery in a Litany of Healing and Reconciliation.

The Moderator closed the meeting in prayer at 5:17 pm. Our next stated presbytery meeting will be Saturday, February 10, 2024 at 9:00 am on Zoom and Sidney Presbyterian Church will act as host.

Recorded by:

MWS Lynette H Bova, Stated Clerk

Appendices

A – Attendance

B – AC reports

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Appendix A

Presbytery of the Miami Valley

APPENDIX A

LEGEND:

P – Present E – Excused Blank – Absent *Italics* – attendance recorded in more than one category
MWS – Minister of Word and Sacrament RE – Ruling Elder

OFFICERS OF THE PRESBYTERY OF THE MIAMI VALLEY

RE Michael Seewer, Moderator
RE Janet Miller, Vice Moderator
MWS John Lewis, Leadership Council Chair
MWS Lynette Bova, Stated Clerk
RE Kathleen Seewer, Recording Clerk

MINISTERS OF THE WORD AND SACRAMENT ON ACTIVE ROLL

Adams, Garth	Hess, Lisa	P	
Bain, Marciana	Hinds, Kathryn Blocher	P	Noble, Jody
Baker, Richard	Hodgkins, Nancy	P	Pelaez-Diaz, Francisco
Bartel, Lawrence	Holder-Rich, Cynthia	P	Pierson, Carol
Beres, Benjamin	Ingram, Steven	E	Ramsey, Thomas
Birdsong, Nancy	Isaacs, Lucinda	P	Rodriguez, Joshua
Bova, Lynette	Kukuk, Terry	P	Rupnik, Frank
Brasier, Susan	Lawler, Kevin		Schumm, Steven
Burslem, Kathleen	Lee, Joungnam		Shin, Kelley Wehmeyer
Dennis, Ted	Lewis, John	E	Soards, Marion
Deyerle, Caitlin	Locke, Ken	P	Sparks-Franklin, Sarah
Duiker, Amy	Maguire, Brian	P	van Bulck, Marcel
Garrigan, Carmen	Martin, Christopher	E	Wakeland, Michael
Haddox, Clifford	Melick, Ann	P	Wiley, Shelley
Haddox, Emily	Merrin, Steven	P	Ziegler, Diane
Hardwick, Charles	Miller, Bruce	P	
Helling, Michael	Neely, John	P	

TEMPORARY MINISTER MEMBERS FROM OTHER DENOMINATIONS

Copeland, Steve
Gockel, Stan P
Schaffnit, Daria E
Williamson, Julia P
Whitt, Joe

HONORABLY RETIRED MINISTERS OF THE WORD AND SACRAMENT (Excused unless attendance indicated)

Amidon, C. Forrest	Hinds, Joe. M III	P	Sheldon, Jocelyn J.	E
Barr, Judith Dunlap	Horrigan, Kevin		Sherman, Donald	P
Brakemeyer, Randall	Howard, Kenneth		Smith, Robert B., Jr.	
Cassedy, Karen	Kester, Gordon L.		Stewart, Donald M.	
Conn, Arbuth	Kim, Soo Kwang		Swaim, Gerald G.	
Davis-Dudding, Kay	Linville, Deborah		Thornton, Jesse	
Dozeman, Thomas	McConnel, George H.		Wade, Robert	P
Evans, Michael	McNulty, Edward		Wall, Evan	
Foubert, David	Meyers, JoAnne		Walthour, William	
Fulton, Robert	Niece, Linda	P	Warren, Patrick	
Godfrey, Norman	Nowak, Jacqueline	P	Weaver, Denise	
Graham, James	Philips, William		Young, Darryll	
Hamilton, Susan	Schenck, Angela	P	Zuercher, John	

Presbytery of the Miami Valley

ROLL OF CHURCHES (RULING ELDERS PRESENT)

BELLBROOK		DAYTON: WESTMINSTER		PIQUA: GOOD SHEPHERD	
1 –		1 – Saunders, Gene	P	1 – Kerns, Sandra	P
BELLE CENTER		2 –		PIQUA: WESTMINSTER	
1 – Classen, Deb	E	EATON: FIRST		1 –	
BELLEFONTAINE		1 – Clayton, William	P	REILY	
1 –		2 – Moore, Michelle	P	1 –	
BLUE BALL		FAIRBORN: FIRST		RUSHSVLVANIA	
1 –		1 – Jenkins, Dixie	P	1 –	
BRADFORD		FARMERSVILLE: SLIFERS		SEVEN MILE	
1 –Buker, Mike (CRE)		1 –		1 – Collins, C. (CRE)	P
2 –		HAMILTON: THE P. C.		2 – Sumpter, Jennifer	P
COVINGTON		1 –		SIDNEY: FIRST	
1 –		2 –		1 – Milligan, Tom	P
DAYTON: BATH		HUBER HEIGHTS: FAITH		SPRINGBORO: COVENANT	
1 – Drake, Verna	P	1 – Niece, Don	P	1 –Gardner, Mike	P
DAYTON: CENTRAL		HUNTSVILLE		SPRINGFIELD: COVENANT	
1 – Troxell, James	P	1 –		1 – Calland, Phil	P
DAYTON: COLLEGE HILL		JAMESTOWN		2 – Miracle, Carol	P
1 – Young, Ivy	P	1 –		SPRINGFIELD: NORTHMINSTER	
DAYTON: CORINTH		MIDDLETOWN: FIRST		1 – Shroyer, Lois	P
1 –		1 –		TROY: FIRST	
DAYTON: FAIRMONT		2 –		1 –	
1 – Akers, Terry	P	MIDDLETOWN: ST. LUKE		URBANA: FIRST	
2 –		1 –		1 –	
DAYTON: IMMANUEL KOREAN		MONROE		WEST LIBERTY	
1 –		1 –		1 –	
DAYTON: SOUTHMINSTER		NEW CARLISLE: HONEY CREEK		WILMINGTON	
1 –		1 – Cook, Cindi		1 –	
2 –		OXFORD		XENIA: UNITED	
DAYTON: SUGAR CREEK		1 –		1 –	
1 – Hatfield, Michelle	P	2 – Moeckel, Nancy	P	YELLOW SPRINGS: FIRST	
DAYTON: TRINITY				1 –	
1 – Blackmon, Mary Jean	P				

RULING ELDER MEMBERS OF PRESBYTERY

Wantz, David (NS&G)	P	Peters, Brenda (COM)	P	Corresponding Members:	
McCollum, Alice (LC)	P	Risner, Scott (COM)		Kathleen Seewer - Rec Sec	E
Morgan, Marge (NOM)	P	Wilson, Galen (COM)	P	Larry Hollar (Mod)	P
Seewer, Michael (Mod, LC)	P	Bruce Saunders (CPM)	P	Guests:	
DeWine, Robin (LC)	P	Brienza, Anne (CPM)		Courtney, Donna	P
Welborn, Diane (CoRD)		Creager, Kevin (CPM)		Peters, Daniel	P
Woessner, Georgie (Trustees)	P	Griffin, Jim (COM)	P	Miller, Carlyn	P
Slone, Michele (COM)	E	Jim Gillette (LC)	P	McCray, Judy	P
Seiler, Sue (COM)	P	Wakeland, Cindy (CCE/RE)		Estelle, Carole	P
Hawkins, Bridget (COM)	P			Brown, Brenda	P

CORRESPONDING MEMBERS AND THOSE GRANTED VOICE (not otherwise registered): MWS Luke Choi (Great Western)

The confirmed attendance consisted of thirty-six (36) ministers of the Word and Sacrament, two (2) minister members from other denominations, twenty (20) ruling elder commissioners (representing seventeen (17) congregations), thirteen (13) ruling elder members of presbytery, and zero (0) Certified Christian Educator Ruling Elder: total of seventy-one (71) voting members. Also present was 1 corresponding member, 1 guest with voice, 6 other guests.

Count –

Pastors – 27	RE Church – 20	Total Voting – 71
MOAD – 2	RE Committee – 13	
HR – 9	RE CCE – 0	Total in attendance – 78
	Others present – 7	

Appendix B

REPORT for PMV

Lucinda Isaacs:

Last February, the Committee on Ministry recommended to this body to form an Administrative Commission because of “reports of serious, unresolved conflicts within College Hill Community Presbyterian Church that may be endangering the life and ministry of the congregation.”

After investigating those reports of disorder, and AC determined that disorder was present. The AC spent three Saturdays holding individual listening sessions, attended Session meetings, reviewed minutes and annual reports, attended worship online and in-person, and prayed for the congregation. During this time, we also asked COM to approve a different session moderator different from the stated supply pastor as we worked through the conflict.

We reported serious, unresolved conflict with Session on April 25, 2023. The report was shared without the stated supply pastor in the meeting.

The report concluded with recommendations. Here is one:

We would like to immediately bring in a mediator approved by the AC. We will recommend the presbytery to subsidize this cost. We are compiling recommendations of potential mediators.

Session approved that recommendation on April 25.

Three days later, the Clerk of Session informs the AC that Session is calling “a congregational listening session” of their own. We had advised against this earlier because we were preparing a report based on our listening sessions. These elders calling this meeting was a surprise the session moderator as it was called without her, and thus out of order.

On May 2, the AC responded:

The work you describe in your request for a listening session is best done as a part of the larger mediation process, and you should not proceed...

...The AC was impressed by the progress you were making on Tuesday night. As we shared with you, your cooperation in the larger process, including the work of an outside mediator, is essential for the mission and ministry of College Hill Community Church.

We wondered, “What changed?” On May 5, we learned what had changed. We received a letter from the stated supply pastor. The letter was signed by the satiated supply and an inactive elder—both who were serving as committee of counsel on a separate remedial case.

We have recently been informed that the AC has recommended mediation for the session to help resolve some of the issues that have been raised by some members of the session

and congregation. While mediation can often be a powerful and productive tool for conflict resolution, there are various concerns that arise from such a proposal.

If the complainants from the remedial case would like to withdraw or ask for a pause in their remedial case to allow for mediation under terms that are amenable to all parties, then we could discuss this possibility with the respondents we represent. However, without such an agreement, we have advised the five session elders (respondents) whom we represent not to engage in further conversation with the AC about mediation or details of this case.

Stated Clerk Lynn Bova had already offered clarity about this matter: The Administrative Commission is not involved with and has no authority for the remedial case.

This was just one example of meaning when the work of the AC was confused with the word of Permanent Judicial Commission—which we believe further exemplifies the disordered ministry and the disruptive patterns. (However, we would become the respondents to that case once we claimed original jurisdiction.)

Back to the unauthorized listening session. The AC sent a message advising against the session holding their own listening session. The response stated:

The Administrative Commission advises against this listening session because:

1. This type of listening session is not in the spirit of cooperation and reconciliation;
2. It appears the purpose of the listening session is to air grievances and to further exacerbate the disorder that exists at College Hill and not to provide information about the role of the Administrative Commission and their recommendations.
3. The listening session will cause harm and further division within the congregation.

Holding this listening session with the congregation is not in the peace, unity, and purity of the church, which is something each ruling and teaching elder has vowed to uphold. The session agreed to pursue the mediation process and the AC believes participation in this process will help the church achieve peace, unity, and reconciliation.

Regardless, on May 7 following worship, several members of the session hosted their own unauthorized listening session after worship. The meeting ended in further disorder. Representatives from both the AC and COM were present.

At a May 23 session meeting, the AC received a letter signed by five of the seven elders. The letter contains the language for a motion made at the meeting to “decline mediation until the remedial case is resolved, paused or withdrawn; AND the concerns of all of the session members (including the complainant counsel) are resolved satisfactorily to insure their protection during this process.”

We will reaffirm that the AC had no part of the remedial complaint at this time.

At the same May 23 meeting, a second motion was recommended in the same memos to “cease further interaction with the AC until outside mediation is completed.” While that motion was rescinded as the moderator suggested that it would be out of order, the memo also stated that “if you choose to ignore our request, you may understand this memo to be the official notification of the decision of the majority of session.”

On May 30, the AC held a hearing on original jurisdiction. It was becoming clear to us that Session could no longer exercise its authority and that it was unwilling to wisely manage its affairs.

The motion for original jurisdiction mandated that mediation and elder training as essential for the AC to return jurisdiction.

The stated supply pastor contract expired on June 30.

On August 19, the AC held elder training. Five of the seven elected elders did not participate.

On September 5, the former clerk of session sent an email to EP Terry Kukuk. The leadership of the AC was copied. The email includes a petition that asks to call a congregational meeting to “discuss and decide leaving the Presbytery and the PCUSA altogether.”

The AC responded:

The AC has received your petition. We have read it together, and we hear your concerns. We would like to reaffirm our invitation to you to participate in mediation, as this is the appropriate way for all people to be heard. Are you planning to participate in mediation? The AC has reached out to you and others throughout the summer to meetings and trainings, and we have not observed your participation. [...] We will respond to the petition in an orderly fashion at the stated September Session meeting.

In a September 7 letter to the congregation, the AC wrote:

Mediation is the correct avenue for concerns to be heard and a necessary step towards reconciliation. The petitioners’ request does not meet the criteria for business proper to congregational meetings (G-1.0504), and this has been confirmed by ecclesial judicial cases.

About a week later, the AC’s letter was annotated and sent out to the congregation with responses from, quote, Leaders of the Diaspora of College Hill.

On Thursday, September 14, 2023, the AC scheduled a meeting with an outside mediator and the five elders and explained:

This is a first step in the mediation process, and we have identified you as an essential part of this work. We reaffirm our invitation to the holy work of reconciliation. Mediation is the correct avenue for concerns to be heard and a necessary step towards reconciliation.

I have scheduled you to meet on Zoom with Dr. Okokon Udo at 12:30 for about 75 minutes. If another time on Saturday works better, please let me know ASAP.

On September 15, one of those elders replied that mediation should have been offered earlier. Our first effort to offer mediation was at the April Session meeting, and their approval of that mediation was rescinded. None of those five elders came to the scheduled meeting with the mediator, nor did any ask to arrange another time.

On September 26, the AC acting as Session approved a cease and desist letters to the five elders who signed the petition. The letter stated:

If you fail to comply with this cease and desist request and continue to engage in unauthorized ministry, we will assume that you have renounced the jurisdiction of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and have withdrawn your membership from College Hill Community Church. Specifically, the following works are unauthorized and detrimental to the congregation: meeting and/or consulting with the former pastor about the ministry of College Hill Community Church; unauthorized communications with church membership about leaving the denomination; and any activity that falls outside of the Ethical Code of Conduct approved by the 2010 General Assembly.

The recipients of the letter replied. Here are three sentences that demonstrate a lack of interest in mediation:

1. Ultimately, we realized that when we worked with the AC in your so-called process and the more we cooperated, the more we found we were losing our rights and our dignity.
2. The AC took what was a manageable conflict with a minority group of members and escalated it into a full civil war with the presbytery leading the charge.
3. If you continue to deny our rights, we are obligated by God to act.

On November 2, the former clerk of session replied to the AC in regards to a called congregational meeting to elect a nominating committee :

There was no openness of the Moderator ... to consider questions or discussion from our members regarding our request for a congregational meeting to discuss and vote leaving the presbytery. There has also been no official "yes or no" communicated by the AC in writing regarding the requested congregational meeting, only a letter threatening to remove us from membership. Therefore, we see no value in meeting with a group which continues not to listen to our voices, to ignore our requests, and deny us our rights as members of College Hill Community Church, and the PCUSA. The behavior of the AC continually lacks the kindness, care, love or respect of Christians, which is what has pushed the members who signed the petition to consider leaving the presbytery.

Beginning in November, the former stated supply pastor has posted videos of worship services with members of College Hill.

A speaker at one of these services described that: One of the five elders secured a palace to worship City Dayon Community School . In September began worshipping there twice a month, By Nov., they were worshipping there every Sunday. In January, they were worshipping in a house owned by one of the five elders.

Videos of the services have included statements that they are forming a new church and writing bylaws.

As stated earlier, it is our conclusion that mediation cannot happen as there is only one party interested in mediation. Therefore this is the basis that we bring this motion today.

Cynthia Holder-Rich:

Meetings with members of College Hill Community Church starting in February 2023 and review of Session and Congregational Meeting Minutes made clear that an understanding of Presbyterian polity has been lacking for some time and that there have been many instances where PCUSA polity was not observed or was violated. These have led to disorder in the congregation's governance.

The AC has offered officer training, both regularly at Session meetings and on a Saturday in August 2023. 3-6 members of College Hill Community Church have taken part regularly in Session meetings.

In August 2023, 20 congregation members gathered for officer training. Sessions included education on the history and principles of PCUSA governance, and the roles each person or group play. From table discussions, it became clear that having been led for decades by a pastor who was ordained in the United Church of Christ, Presbyterian polity has not become familiar to members. Case studies discussed at tables generated discussion, debate, laughter, and understanding of some root causes of conflict in the church and how conflict could be addressed in healthy and fruitful ways. Participants noted the need for more training with more members taking part.

The AC has discussed the need for continuing officer training, and we expect training to continue to be offered in 2024.

Bridget Hawkins:

Before my appointment to the Administrative Commission for College Hill Community Church, I had the opportunity to serve on the Investigative Commission and participate in a roundtable discussion with members of College Hill and the Committee on Ministry. During the discussion, it became clear that there was already disorder within the congregation, and the seeds of an "us vs. them" mentality began taking root.

The Administrative Commission (AC) can no longer ignore the disorder and division that plague the congregation. The "us vs. them" mentality has taken root, as evidenced by the fact that five of the seven ruling elders for College Hill refuse to participate in the reconciliation process. Their lack of participation exacerbates the church's disorder and hinders progress towards unity.

This toxic environment of division and exclusion is unacceptable. It categorizes individuals into opposing factions and neglects the diverse perspectives and opinions within the congregation. The lack of engagement perpetuates the disorder and prevents the church from moving towards a place of unity and understanding.

The "us vs. them" mentality within College Hill has created a toxic environment where division and exclusion prevail. Instead of embracing the diverse perspectives and opinions within the congregation, there is a tendency to categorize individuals into opposing factions.

Furthermore, the disorder within the church is exacerbated by disregard for the reconciliation process. Instead of actively participating in efforts to bridge the gaps and heal the divisions, forty-one members of College Hill have chosen to create another spiritual community instead of trying to address the issues surrounding College Hill. This lack of participation perpetuates the disorder cycle and prevents the church from moving towards a place of unity and understanding.

Amidst this disorder, it is disheartening to see that those College Hill members committed to doing God's work feel neglected and held hostage by the actions of those who continue to sow discord. These dedicated individuals who strive to live out the teachings of love, compassion, and unity are left feeling marginalized and unsupported.

In conclusion, the disorder at College Hill continues to persist, marked by an entrenched "us vs. them" mentality, members participating in a spiritual community outside of College Hill, and a lack of willingness to engage in the reconciliation process. This division creates a toxic environment where unity and love are overshadowed by discord and exclusion.

Considering the church's ongoing challenges and the deep-rooted divisions that have hindered progress toward peace and unity, the presbytery must declare that College Hill is in schism. This declaration would recognize the severity of the situation and the need for decisive action to address the underlying issues.

Acknowledging the schism, the presbytery can guide the congregation in navigating the path toward healing and restoration. It would be an opportunity for all members, regardless of their stance, to come together and find a way to bridge the divides, rebuild trust, and foster a spirit of unity and inclusivity.

Through the presbytery's interventions and the AC's collective efforts, the members of College Hill can rise above the disorder and reclaim their identity as a place of love, acceptance, and spiritual growth. Only by acknowledging the schism and committing to the challenging work of reconciliation can the church move toward a brighter and more harmonious future.

Gene Saunders:

CHCC exhibited general disorder manifest in their minutes and membership rolls:

Examples of disorder in the Minutes:

- Minutes reflective of disorder in running of meetings. Elders in conflict with one another, and being removed from committees. Conflict and discussion became so conflict oriented, that the minutes also show elders having to be given time limits to speak.
- Disorder with membership: Conflicts with receiving of and recording membership. Minutes would discuss new members being scheduled to take a membership class, or receive baptism and then received as new members without any records of votes/formal receiving into membership. We received reports of meetings after service to accept members, but no records/minutes of the meeting were located.
- There was a general lack of vital statistical reporting and other items necessary for compliance with the BOO. For example, serving of the lord's supper, and financial reviews or audits.
- Minutes reflected that much of the committee work had stopped. Most of the motions were made through old or new business categories rather than being brought forward as a motion via the work of a committee. There were several examples of the stated supply pastor directly chairing certain committees.

Examples of disorder in the Membership:

Multiple sources of rolls - appear both in electronic, and on paper, but no singular source is up to date.

- Membership roll book not maintained and updated. names appearing in multiple places or sometimes listed under an alias.
- Rolls were instead maintained in an excel spreadsheet, printed out and placed in the role book.
- Names of new members not added to the roll book, but instead listed on a piece of photocopied notebook paper and included with the minutes.
- Membership certificates were not provided to new members
- General record keeping of Elders and Deacons- confusion around the years/classes of elder and Deacon exist in the rolls.

Angie Schenck:

The report you have just heard bears witness to what a long and difficult process this has been. It has been very painful for the Administrative Commission, and for the members of the College Hill Community Church. It has been hard work. Every time we felt we were making progress toward reconciliation we would receive another letter that revealed yet again that one party to the conflict would not participate in mediation. Much time and energy were expended dealing with the negative reactions to all our attempts to bring healing to the congregation.

Still, the AC can see signs of hope in those who continue to participate in the worship and mission of College Hill. Nearly every day there are posts on Facebook about the joy they find in worshipping God together and examples of the congregation's outreach and ministry among the people of the community. Those who have been part of College Hill's Sunday worship, as guest musicians and pulpit supply, have shared their excitement about the way they can feel the

Holy Spirit moving within the congregation. It is the hope and joy of those who wish to remain a multi-racial, multi-cultural, Presbyterian presence in the College Hill community that has brought us to the point of bringing these motions to the Presbytery.

I recently read a quote by Socrates which says, “The secret of change is to focus all your energy, not on fighting the old, but on building the new.” Too much of our energy has already been spent fighting the old, and we have become convinced that God is now calling us to use our energy to work with God and those committed to College Hill remaining a Presbyterian congregation to build the new. We are heartbroken that it has come to this point, but keep hearing the words of Jesus, “If a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand.” (Mark 3:25) Therefore, putting our trust in God, who is always doing something new, we present this motion to the Presbytery.

Donna Courtney:

Presented the first motion.