

## SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

192<sup>nd</sup> General Assembly

Cumberland Presbyterian Church

Meeting June 19-23, 2023

Denton, Texas

Michael Sharpe, Stated Clerk

*The following summary is NOT the authoritative document for guiding the Church's action. Only the General Assembly Minutes can serve that purpose.*

### ORGANIZATION

1. Elected the Reverend Mitch Boulton, Cornerstone Presbytery, as the Moderator.
2. Elected the Reverend Judy Madden, Red River Presbytery, as the Vice Moderator.
3. Elected thirty-five people to serve on denominational boards and entities.
4. The Reverend Joe Howard III, moderator of Brazos River Presbytery (CPCA), Texas Synod, brought greetings on behalf of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church in America.

### WORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

5. The opening worship/communion service was held on Monday evening. Retiring Moderator Reverend Mike Wilkinson, Presbytery of East Tennessee, delivered a sermon entitled, "*Grace Happens Here*" based on John 8:6. The Reverends Mike Wilkinson and Judy Madden (GA Worship Director, Red River Presbytery) served as co-celebrants of the Sacrament of Holy Communion. A brief service of installation of the newly elected moderator and vice moderator was part of the worship service.
6. Youth Advisory Delegates, Ms. Sara Mearns, from Red River Presbytery and Mr. Josh Malloy

from Nashville Presbytery, brought the devotionals on Thursday morning.

7. Reverend Judy Madden, worship director for General Assembly, provided a closing devotional entitled "*Our Testimony*," based on Matthew 9:35-38 & John 3:16-17.

### OUR UNITED OUTREACH

8. Encouraged all congregations to provide financial support to Our United Outreach, as they are able.
9. Approved a goal of \$2,500,000 for Our United Outreach (OUO) for 2024.

10. Held an *OUO Lunch and Learn* meal during GA week. The Reverend Jeff McMichael, Interim Coordinator for OUO, served as master of ceremonies. In his opening comments he announced the purpose of the luncheon: to educate, promote, and encourage those in attendance "to be part of something bigger than themselves."

### MINISTRY COUNCIL

11. Encouraged all churches to participate in celebrating the Christian Education season (August – September) in their congregations and use the theme of "Light the Path!" utilizing CP resources as a way of beginning a new year of Sunday school and other Christian Education ministries.
12. Encouraged all Cumberland Presbyterians to participate in the connectional nature of our denomination by attending and supporting Children's Fest (July 15, 2023), CPYC (July 2 – 7, 2023), and "A Day in the Park" (October 10, 2023).
13. Encouraged presbyteries to pray for, be in support of, and seek opportunities to experience the ENGAGE process in local congregations.
14. Strongly urged all churches to use Encounter curriculum for Sunday school classes or special studies, especially the summer 2023 quarter as it focuses on the Confession of Faith and the Fall 2023 and Summer 2024 quarters as they present perspectives from our CP Churches outside the U.S.
15. Designated the third Sunday in January as "Call Sunday" in the Cumberland Presbyterian Church and include it as an annual observance on the denominational calendar.
16. Requested the Missions Ministry Team of the Ministry Council, establish an endowment for the purpose of assisting international commissioners, elders, ministers, and youth delegates to offset the expense of attending General Assembly. This endowment will be named the John and Joyce

Lovelace, Boyce and Beth Wallace, and Bill and Katherine Wood Endowment Fund.

17. Encouraged the Missions Ministry Team to promote this endowment across all presbyteries.

18. Gratefully acknowledged the ministry of the Reverend Dr. Lynndon L. Thomas with honor and gratitude for a job well done. Thanks to Reverend Thomas, Cumberland Presbyterians have missionaries working faithfully on every inhabited continent in the world.

#### **COMMISSION ON FEDERAL CHAPLAINS**

19. Instructed presbyteries in the United States to encourage each congregation to receive an offering on the last Sunday of May, or another special day, to support our ministry through Presbyterian Council for Federal Chaplains.

20. Encouraged Clergy and Presbytery Committees on Probationer Care to include in their discussions of a call with a ministerial candidate, the call to chaplaincy as a call to pastoral ministry.

21. Encouraged congregations of both the CPC and the CPCA to encourage their individual churches and members to designate special days through the year to engage in prayer to hold up the chaplains and their families in the service to which they have been endorsed.

22. Recognized the Reverend Dennis Hysom as the Executive Director of the Presbyterian Federal Chaplaincies (formerly Presbyterian Council on Chaplains and Military Personnel).

#### **MEMPHIS THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY**

23. Approved that the third Sunday in August (August 20, 2023, and August 18, 2024) be observed as Seminary/PAS Sunday. And that all churches be encouraged to share information about Memphis Theological Seminary (MTS) and the Program of Alternate Studies (PAS) and receive an offering on that day, or on a more convenient day of the session's choosing. MTS leadership has committed to focusing these annual funds on growing the Baird-Buck Endowment of CP Studies until the chair in CP studies is fully funded.

24. Expressed gratitude to Karen Patten, longstanding assistant to Reverend Dr. Michael Qualls, for her contribution to The Program of Alternate Studies at MTS and the Cumberland Presbyterian Church.

25. Expressed its gratitude to trustee Reverend Dr. Anne Hames for her faithful service to Memphis Theological Seminary and the Cumberland Presbyterian Church.

26. Called on all Cumberland Presbyterians to pray that God will continue to call men and women to the office of ministry, and that they will be well prepared through our educational institutions to lead growing and vibrant congregations in the ministry of Jesus Christ to the world.

#### **BETHEL UNIVERSITY**

27. Called on Cumberland Presbyterians worldwide to support Bethel University in prayers, financial support and in recommending students.

#### **CUMBERLAND PRESBYTERIAN YOUTH AND FAMILY SERVICES**

28. Commended Cumberland Youth and Family Services and the staff for their continued work in transforming the lives of some of our most vulnerable children.

29. Cumberland Youth and Family Services hosted campus tours for the Commissioners and guests from 5:00-7:00 p.m. Following the campus tour, Cumberland Youth and Family Services provided a Texas barbeque to those in attendance. The event also included fellowship and storytelling. Commissioners and guests were appreciative of the opportunity to visit the campus and for the gracious hospitality.

#### **HISTORICAL FOUNDATION**

30. Expressed appreciation for the dedication and passion of our Historical Foundation Team for the ongoing work of archiving our church history.

#### **JUDICIARY COMMITTEE**

31. Instructed the Permanent Judiciary Committee to compile all existing constitutional steps required for a congregation to change presbyterial affiliation, form a new presbytery, or in the extreme circumstance, leave the Cumberland Presbyterian Church denomination, and make this compilation available to Cumberland Presbyterian churches and presbyteries. Additionally, the Permanent Judiciary Committee will, in cooperation with representatives from the Ministry Council and from the Board of Stewardship, Foundations, and Benefits, develop additional guidance for congregations who may desire to disaffiliate either with its presbytery, or the denomination, or affiliate with another presbytery within the Cumberland Presbyterian Church denomination if a congregation so chooses. The Permanent Judiciary Committee is to present a detailed report on Guidance for Congregations and Presbyteries Considering Separation to the 193rd

General Assembly of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church.

**32.** Adopted the following resolution: *The Cumberland Presbyterian Church encourages all members, congregations, and affiliated institutions, to commit to practicing non-violence in their own lives, and to speak out against speech endorsing or advocating violent actions directed at any individual or group of individuals, and to share this Resolution with all congregations, affiliated institutions, and denominational bodies, and promote its adoption.*

#### **JOINT COMMITTEE ON AMENDMENTS**

**33.** Approved sending the following proposed changes to the Constitution to the Presbyteries for vote:

1. That the Constitution be amended by adding the following Paragraph 2.92 and renumbering subsequent sections as appropriate:

*2.92 When a person is in a sexual relationship that is outside the boundaries of marriage as described in the Confession of Faith 6.17, then such a situation makes that person ineligible to be ordained to the office of elder.*

2. That the Constitution be amended by adding the following sentence at the end of the current Paragraph 2.73:

*When a person is in a sexual relationship that is outside the boundaries of marriage as described in the Confession of Faith 6.17, then such a situation makes that person ineligible to serve as an elder on the session of a church.*

3. That the Constitution be amended by adding the following Paragraph 6.35 and renumbering subsequent sections as appropriate:

*6.35 No licentiate shall be ordained who is in a sexual relationship that is outside the boundaries of marriage as described in the Confession of Faith 6.17. Such a situation makes that person ineligible to be ordained as a minister in the Cumberland Presbyterian Church.*

4. That the Constitution be amended by adding the following new Paragraph 7.02 and renumbering subsequent sections as appropriate:

*7.02 When a person is in a sexual relationship that is outside the boundaries of marriage as described in the Confession of Faith 6.17, then such a situation makes that person ineligible to serve a church in any of the relationships stated in 7.01.*

**NOTE:** The 146th Cumberland Presbyterian Church in America (CPCA) General Assembly voted to return the Proposed Arkansas Memorial Constitution Amendment changes to the CPC/CPCA Joint Committee on Amendments with a “**Non-Concurrence**” Vote. - *Excerpt from the 146<sup>th</sup> CPCA General Assembly Summary of Actions.*

#### **OFFICE OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

**34.** Approved the Church Calendar dates for 2023-2024.

**35.** Referred the memorial from Arkansas Presbytery regarding “Cumberland Presbyterian” branding be referred to the Office of the General Assembly to investigate the pros, cons, cost, and benefits, legal ramifications, and effects on the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, including the global church, if this were enacted. The Office of the General Assembly is to prepare this study for presentation to the 193rd General Assembly.

**36.** Adopted the following changes to the GA Bylaws:

*11.07 Place of Meeting. The committee shall consist of the Moderator and the Stated Clerk.*

*11.08 Program Committee. The committee shall consist of the Moderator, Stated Clerk, Director of Ministries, Assistant to the Stated Clerk who serves as secretary, the pastor of the host church, and one representative designated by each of the following: Bethel University, Board of Stewardship, Foundation, and Benefits, Cumberland Youth and Family Services, Historical Foundation, Memphis Theological Seminary, and the Ministry Council. The committee will begin planning for two years prior to the meeting of a particular General Assembly.*

**37.** Adopted the proposed Vision of Ministry and Strategy Action Plan for the Cumberland Presbyterian Church.

**38.** Directed the Office of the General Assembly to immediately and permanently include the following statement on the home page of the CPC denominational website: *“The website [cumberland.org](http://cumberland.org) is the ONLY official web page of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church denomination, and the content included herein represents the official position(s) of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church.”*

#### **THEOLOGY AND SOCIAL CONCERNS**

**39.** Encouraged Cumberland Presbyterians to make use of the Critical Situation Response Plan for Presbyteries and Church (developed by the Ministry Council) and approved by the Cumberland Presbyterian Church General Assembly in 2020. Furthermore, that the General Assembly task the

Ministry Council and its Teams with developing a list of resources specifically addressing counseling for post-event trauma, whether that be suicide, domestic violence, or other gun-related violence.

40. Affirmed the principles stated in the communication/resolution “*We Oppose Any Way to Get a Way As One Likes Through Violence*”, submitted from Japan Presbytery (see pages 122-123 in the Preliminary Minutes).

#### STEWARDSHIP

41. Expressed gratitude for the careful work of the Board of Stewardship, Foundation and Benefits.

#### MISCELLANEOUS

42. A Joint Banquet and Program, sponsored by the Cumberland Youth and Family Services, Bethel University and Memphis Theological Seminary was held on Wednesday evening. Ms. Courtney Banatoski, Cumberland Youth and Family Services President and Chief Executive Officer, Dr. Walter Butler, Bethel University President, Reverend Dr. Jody Hill, Memphis Theological Seminary President, brought greetings, presentations on their respective institutions, and their continuing appreciation for the prayers and mission support given by Cumberland Presbyterians. Reverend Dr. Michael Qualls, Director of the Program of Alternate Studies (PAS) spoke briefly about the origins and continued mission of PAS. He shared remarks about the Reverend Dr. Thomas D. Campbell who served as the third director of PAS (1994-2010). Dr. Campbell was invited to the podium to share his experiences as the former PAS Director.

43. The Women in Ministry Reception was held on Wednesday evening, hosted by MTS/PAS CPWM and the Ministry Council’s Pastoral Development Ministry Team. Two ministers were honored with the Legacy of Ministry: The Reverend Shelia O’Mara (40 yrs. of ordained ministry) and The Reverend Mary Kathryn Kirkpatrick (12 yrs. of ordained ministry). Clergy Women of the Year recipients were announced. The international award was presented to the Reverend Maria del Socorro Delgado (missionary to Guatemala) and the USA award was presented to the Reverend Dr. Pam Phillips-Burk (Robert Donnell Presbytery).

44. The Cumberland Presbyterian Women’s Convention Luncheon was held on Thursday. Ms. Rachel Graham was awarded the Bethel University Scholarship and Ms. Gwen Warren received the MTS Scholarship. Reverend Kim Moore, new

Missionary to Haiti made a presentation on her call and the work in Haiti. Ms. Debbie Beals, 2023-2024 CPWM President, gave the benediction.

45. The General Assembly Adopted a *Resolution of Thanks* presented by the Reverend Robert Truitt, Nashville Presbytery.

#### NEXT MEETING

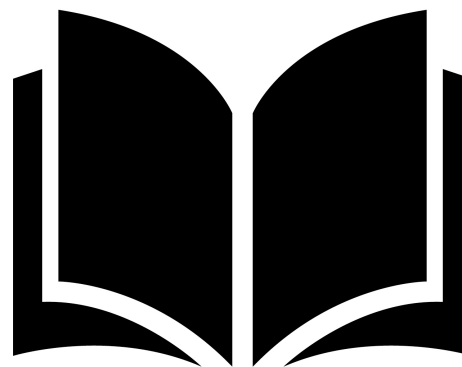
46. The General Assembly adjourned to meet in Evansville, Indiana on June 17-21, 2024

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*Copies of the General Assembly Minutes when completed will be made available in the following formats:*

- Online: [www.cumberland.org/gao](http://www.cumberland.org/gao)
- A limited supply of printed copies will be made available through the Cumberland Presbyterian Resource Center (901-276-4581).
- Copies of the Minutes on jump drive format will also be available from the General Assembly Office. Contact Elizabeth Vaughn at: 901-276-4572, extension 226 or [eav@cumberland.org](mailto:eav@cumberland.org)

*General Assembly & CPWM Theme & Logo:*



**THIS IS OUR STORY**

Psalm 107:2a