

**Presbytery of Yellowstone
Special Meeting – August 8, 2017**

The Presbytery of Yellowstone met in a Special Meeting, via conference call, on Tuesday August 8, 2017 at 2:00 p.m.

17-056 – Call to Order -- CRE Jack Bell, Moderator, called the meeting to order and offered the opening prayer.

17-057 - Purpose of the Meeting –Moderator Jack announced the purpose of the meeting as it was stated in the Call for the meeting as follows:

A special meeting of Yellowstone Presbytery has been called by the Stated Clerk, Debbie Blackburn, for Tuesday, August 8, 2017. The meeting will be held by conference call and will convene at 2:00 p.m. The call-in number is 888-387-8686. The room number is 406-586-7706 followed by the # sign.

The purpose of the meeting is to hear from the Administrative Commission for the Geyser Community Church and to take action on their recommendations. The AC has proposed two motions which may be seen in the attached document. The only business to be transacted at this meeting will be concerning the Geyser Community Church.

17 - 058 - Roll Call – Stated Clerk Debbie Blackburn read the names of those who had announced themselves on the call:

Commissioned Ruling Elders Present:

Jim Tarr (Billings St Andrew)
Chris Erickson (Billings First)
Dan Holland (Bozeman)
Suzanne Bratsky (Bozeman)
Gary Helming (Butte)
Tom Cotton (Deer Lodge)
Paul Helland (Miles City)
Bob Kelsey (Poplar)
Betty Kelsey (Poplar)

Teaching Elders Present:

Susan Barnes (Billings St Andrew)
Rusty Craig (HR)
Susi Ennis (Poplar)
George Goodrich (Co-GP)
Kathy Goodrich (Co-GP)
Teresa Kendall (Deer Lodge)
Dan Krebill (Bozeman)
Jody McDevitt (Bozeman)
Neva Rathbun (HR)
Dave Thompson (Billings First)
Steve Weber (Dillon)

Other voting members present:

Jack Bell (CRE Stanford)

Debbie Blackburn (Stated Clerk)

17-059 – Quorum – Stated Clerk Debbie Blackburn announced that a quorum was present.

17-060 – Report from Administrative Commission - TE Susi Ennis, Moderator of the Geyser Administrative Commission, reviewed the recent history of the Geyser Church (Attachment A). In addition to the information in the written report Susi also reported new information that had only been available in the last day. It appears that Glacier Presbytery (TE Tom Lanham) has an interest in re-activating the Geyser Church. There are no details at this point but Glacier Presbytery would like to look into this option.

√ Motion passed that the Community Church in Geyser, Montana be closed with an effective date of July 13, 2017.

There was a time of discussion and comments regarding the interest of Glacier Presbytery in pursuing a church in Geyser. It was pointed out that the AC is only recommending exploration with Geyser (with no decisions at this point). The question was called.

√ Motion passed to call the question.

√ Motion passed to allow Yellowstone Presbytery to explore a partnership with Glacier Presbytery for the revitalization of a PC(USA) ministry in Geyser.

√ Motion passed that Yellowstone Presbytery will maintain the current Administrative Commission (for the Geyser Church corporation) consisting of TE Susi Ennis, Moderator, and Ruling Elders Jim Tarr and Charlie Brown along with TE George Goodrich (Staff person). The AC will work with community representative Fern Kaiser. The AC will continue with all responsibilities previously assigned (including maintenance of the building and paying bills).

17-061 – Adjournment - CRE Jack Bell adjourned the meeting at 3:10 p.m. following a prayer by TE Kathy Goodrich.

Debbie Blackburn
Stated Clerk

Background for the requested action on Community Presbyterian Church in Geyser, MT

This journey with the Community Presbyterian Church in Geyser began in the Fall of 2014 when their sister congregation on Stanford began dialogs concerning actions taken by the General Assembly of the PC(USA). First Presbyterian Church in Stanford and Community Presbyterian Church in Geyser were at that time yoked congregations sharing a Commissioned Ruling Elder (CRE) pastor Editha McKay. The Stanford congregation, and to some extent Geyser congregation as well, were struggling with remaining in the PC(USA).

In November 2014 the Pastoral Ministry Team (PMT) established a Pastoral Team of TE Susi Ennis, Elder Jim Tarr, and staff George Goodrich to work with the Sessions of both congregations as they worked to address these struggles and whether one or both congregations would enter into the discernment process. As the Pastoral Team met with members of both churches and both Sessions it became obvious that Geyser was not struggling as much with the issues as the Stanford congregation. There were a number of listening meetings held during the early months of 2015 during which the Stanford congregation aired their questions and struggles. The Pastoral Team provided answers to their questions and addressed their concerns. Members of the Geyser congregation were invited to and attended these meetings.

In April 2015 Editha McKay sent correspondence to the Presbytery indicating her desire to withdraw her membership from the PC(USA) and specifically from the Community Presbyterian Church in Geyser. Editha felt that she was not in agreement with some decisions of the PC(USA) that she was no longer comfortable remaining in the church. Since a CRE is commissioned by the Presbytery to a specific ministry in a particular place and a CRE must be a member of a PC(USA) congregation; this meant that she was also resigning from her position as pastor to these two congregations. In the following months the Pastoral Team of the PMT worked extensively with Editha and both Sessions to determine future actions. At a meeting in May 2015 the PMT discerned that due to Editha's desire to leave the PC(USA) she would no longer be able to serve as CRE for these two churches. June 7, 2015 was Editha's last day as the pastor for these congregations.

In July 2015 Fern Kaiser, Clerk of Session at the Geyser church, attended the Pastoral Ministry team meeting. She told us that there was much weariness on the part of the members in Geyser. They had made the decision to take a break from worship for the summer and re-evaluate for the fall. PMT informed Fern that Jack Bell, CRE, was being called to Stanford and that he was happy to work with the Geyser church as well. Fern told us that she would pass the information on and they would pray on it.

By October 2015 the Session had met with Jack and decided that there was still no desire to hold worship services in Geyser. Many people were now attending at other churches. Subsequently, the Pastoral Ministry team received a letter from the Session dated November 30, 2015 asking to be dissolved as a congregation. The letter indicated that this request was from the Session. When asked, Fern said that the

congregation had not be a part of this decision but that due to their small size it was a significant number of the members.

At the February 2016 meeting of the PMT it was decided that the Pastoral Team would continue to work with the Session in Geysers to determine what the future would look like for them. Again it was recommended that they contact Jack Bell in Stanford to see how he could be a part of their ministry.

As 2016 proceeded it became clear that at this time there is no energy in Geysers for the PC(USA). It was at the November 2016 meeting that a Presbytery Administrative Commission was established to work with the Session of the Community Presbyterian Church. The members of the Administrative Commission are TE Susi Ennis, Elder Jim Tarr, Elder Charlie Brown, Elder Fern Kaiser (Geysers contact, non-voting member) and staff George Goodrich.

During their work with the Session in Geysers the Administrative Commission found that there continues to be a lack of energy around the PC(USA) in the Geysers community. In April 2017 a letter was sent to each of the 11 member on the rolls of Community Presbyterian Church in Geysers asking their desire; either to remain a congregation and have the Presbytery work with them to find a pastor or to close the church. Of the 11 members; 9 indicated they would like the church to close, 1 was divided on the issue, and 1 did not respond.

At the same time Fern Kaiser contacted an appraiser who came out to Geysers. The appraisal report places a value of \$40,000-\$60,000 on the property with the caveat that it is difficult to appraise churches.

The Administrative Commission met by conference call on July 3, 2017 and determined that the only possible actions at this point are to close the church and to list the property for sale. Therefore the Administrative Commission would like to make the following two motions for the Presbytery to take action.

Motion 1

The Geysers Administrative Commission moves that the Community Church in Geysers MT be closed with an effective date of July 13, 2017.

Motion 2

The Geysers Administrative Commission moves that the property known as the Community Church in Geysers MT be listed for sale as soon as possible. That the Administrative Commission be given permission to negotiate the sale price with any potential buyer keeping in mind the appraised value of the property.

07.25.17