

Eighth Stated Meeting of the Lowcountry Presbytery

November 2, 2017

The Eighth Stated Meeting of the Lowcountry Presbytery was held at 9:00 a.m., Nov 2, 2017 at Hilton Head Presbyterian Church in Hilton Head, SC.

Worship Service 9:00am	TE Bill McCutchen led the worship service by leading a responsive Call to Worship from Psalm 33. The Presbyters sang, <i>Praise to the Lord, the Almighty and His Mercy is More</i> . TE Pitzer led us in a responsive Litany of Praise. The presbyters sang the Doxology and an offering was taken. TE Bill McCutchen read Isaiah 54:1-17 and then preached a message entitled "Thriving As A Church". TE Pitzer led in a prayer of purification and called for a time of silent confession. TE McCutchen gave the Assurance of Pardon, properly fenced the table and we celebrated the Lord's Table being served by elders from Hilton Head PCA. Presbyters stood and sang, <i>I Will Glory in My Redeemer</i> . TE Bill McCutchen pronounced the benediction.
Break 10am Call to Order 10:15am	The Eighth stated meeting of the Lowcountry Presbytery was called to order by the moderator, TE Ross Hodges at 10:17AM in the sanctuary of Hilton Head Presbyterian Church in Hilton Head, SC. The Moderator, TE Ross Hodges, opened the meeting with prayer.
Quorum	TE Ross Hodges asked the Stated Clerk if there was a quorum. The Stated Clerk declared that a quorum was present.
Docket Approval	M/S/C: The Stated clerk moved that the docket submitted by the Administration Committee and posted on the website and electronically distributed to presbyters be approved as presented. The moderator appointed TE Mark Alex & TE Phil Stogner to form a Committee of Thanks.
Introduction of Guests	Guests & first-time commissioners were introduced.
Presentation of Memorials	The Moderator asked if there were any memorials. TE McCutchen stood and remembered RE Bob Steinmeyer who was recently called home to be with the Lord. The minutes of the Seventh Stated meeting of the Lowcountry Presbytery were posted on the website for review. M/S/C: to approve the minutes from the Seventh Stated Meeting of Lowcountry Presbytery held July 22, 2017 as presented and distributed to presbyters.
Administrative Committee	TE Chris Bennett opened the Admin report in prayer.

He reminded presbyters of the information contained in the docket under Administration Committee.

TE Turner noted that we are still in need of invitations for the 10th – 12th stated meetings: Location and dates for upcoming meetings were announced:

8th – Thu, Nov 2nd, 2017 – Hilton Head Presbyterian, Hilton Head

9th – Sat, Jan 27th, 2018 – Redeemer Presbyterian, Charleston

10th – Tue, Apr 24th, 2018 – Grace Coastal, Okatie

11th – Sat, Jul 28th, 2018 – Church Creek, Charleston

12th – Thu, Nov 1st, 2018 – Hilton Head PCA, Hilton Head

Floor turned over to Stated Clerk. TE Bennett gave the Stated Clerk (see report).

M/S/C: that TE David Donovan be granted an excused absence for today's presbytery.

TREASURER'S REPORT:

Treasurer, TE Chris Bennett gave a report on the Presbytery finances. See treasurer's report.

He reported on the finances from the Reformation service.

Order of the Day: Prayer

TE Ron Steel led the members and commissioners of Presbytery to break into small groups to pray.

Ministry Time:

TE Ron Steel led the presbyters in a discussion, review and debrief of our Reformation Worship Service held on October 29, 2017 at Redeemer Presbyterian in downtown Charleston.

TE Steel reviewed what went well on the service.

TE Steel gave a report from the Shepherding Committee on what they felt they could do better for the future.

Recommendations:

TE Bennett suggested that we use this event to allow us to setup for the January meeting during our ministry equipping time a panel to discuss and learn from.

M/S/C: TE Bailey moved that we form a panel of 4 brothers to work together in anticipation for the January and following meetings to work through the issue concerning how we as a presbytery can extend the gospel more effectively to the various populations represented within our presbytery boundaries.

TE Sam Joyner moved that we add to New Business a discussion of Race Relations under the New Business .

Parliamentarian – simply add it to new business no motion needed.

TE Steel closed the Ministry equipping time in prayer.

BUSINESS
11:00am

TE Ross Hodges called the presbyters back to order to conduct the business of the presbytery.

Administration
Committee
Report
continued

From Treasurer's Report:

TE Bennett gave an outline of the proposed budget.

We will entertain motions from the floor to approve the BALANCED budget for 2018.

M/S/C: to accept the budget for 2018 as presented see Proposed Budget 2018 in the appendix.

Elections per our Standing Rules:

We will need to elect men to replace the Class of 2017 at this November 2, 2017 Presbytery meeting so that they will be ready to serve in 2018.

Here is a list of the class of 2017:

- TE Mark Turner – Administration
- RE Chris Jarvis – Campus Ministries
- RE Kurt Brewer – Church Planting & Outreach
- TE Phil Stogner – Church Planting & Outreach
- TE Howard Cole – Leadership Development
- TE Tim Pitzer – Leadership Development
- TE Ron Steel – Shepherding & Church Vitality
- RE David Walters, Sr. -- Shepherding & Church Vitality
- TE Michael Walters -- Shepherding & Church Vitality
- RE Nate Arnold – Trustee

Election of Moderator – Nominations:

RE Rich Wylly from Eastbridge PCA, Mt. Pleasant

RE David Walters, Sr. from Church Creek Presbyterian, Charleston

TE Michael Walters made this motion:

M/S/C: That nominations for moderator for 2018 be closed.

Ballots were distributed.

Rich Wylly received the majority of votes and so he will serve as moderator for the Lowcountry Presbytery in 2018.

Vice Moderator: Our Standing Rules 3.2.1 state: Vice Moderator shall ordinarily be the immediate past Moderator and shall serve at the request of the Moderator, or when the Moderator is unable to serve.

M/S/C: Elect TE Ross Hodges to serve as vice-moderator of Lowcountry Presbytery for 2018. MSP.

Election of Trustees –

RE Nate Arnold (Class of 2017)

RE Matt King (Class of 2019)

RE Jim Rowland (Class of 2018)

RE David Walters, Sr. (Class of 2019)

M/S/C: Re-elect RE Nate Arnold to serve as a Lowcountry Presbytery Trustee in the Class of 2020. Motion Passed.

COMMITTEE POSITIONS:

Committee Positions which are expiring:

TE Mark Turner – Administrative Committee (2017)

RE Kurt Brewer – Church Planting & Outreach (2017)

TE Phil Stogner – Church Planting & Outreach (2017)

RE Yates Jarvis – Campus ministries (2017)

TE Howard Cole – Leadership Development (2017)
TE Tim Pitzer – Leadership Development (2017)
TE Ron Steel – Shepherding & Church Vitality (2017)
RE David Walters, Sr. - Shepherding & Church Vitality (2017)
TE Michael Walters - Shepherding & Church Vitality (2017)

TE Payne made a motion: M/S/C that we elect all men suggested as an omnibus.

M/S/C: Re-elect **TE Mark Turner** to serve on the **Administrative Committee** in the Class of 2020.

M/S/C: Re-elect **RE Yates (Chris) Jarvis** to serve on the **Campus Ministries Committee** in the Class of 2020.

M/S/C: Re-elect **RE Kurt Brewer** to serve on the **Church Planting and Outreach Committee** in the Class of 2020.

M/S/C: Re-elect **TE Phil Stogner** to serve on the **Church Planting and Outreach Committee** in the Class of 2020.

M/S/C: Re-elect **TE Howard Cole** to serve on the **Leadership Development Committee** in the Class of 2020.

M/S/C: Re-elect **TE Tim Pitzer** to serve on the **Leadership Development Committee** in the Class of 2020.

M/S/C: Re-elect **TE Ron Steel** to serve on the **Shepherding and Church Vitality Committee** in the Class of 2020.

M/S/C: Re-elect **RE David Walters, Sr.** to serve on the **Shepherding and Church Vitality Committee** in the Class of 2020

M/S/C: Re-elect **TE Michael Walters** to serve on the **Shepherding and Church Vitality Committee** in the Class of 2020

Administrative
Committee

M/S/C: to accept the report of the Administration Committee and the budget report as a whole.

TE Turner closed the report of the Administration Committee in prayer.

Church
Planting and
Outreach
Committee

TE Craig Bailey, Chairman, Redeemer PCA, Charleston [craig@redeemer-charleston.org]

TE Bailey opened in prayer.

MNA/MTW – TE Baily told us he was excited about 2018.

2017 was the year of particularization of several works. Goal to recruit 3 church planters for Lowcountry Presbytery. Cane Bay neighborhood is one of the top 10 selling neighborhoods in the United States!

Question of MNA disaster response for funds – committee was looking a church who already has a relationship.

M/S/C: TE Steel made a motion that \$400 that today’s offering & the surplus from the Reformation Service be directed to through Pastor Ronnie Garcia of Trinity Church in Puerto Rico.

TE Stogner & TE Bailey will be going to Dallas for the PCA Missions Conference.

TE Payne and TE Mark closed the report in prayer and asked for God’s working through the working of this committee to cultivate the spread of the Gospel here locally and throughout the world.

Campus
Ministries
Committee

TE Sam Joyner, Chairman, Grace Coastal PCA, Okatie
[sam@gracecoastalchurch.org]

TE Joyner opened the report in prayer.

TE Danny Clark gave a report of his ministry at the College of Charleston.

TE Joyner closed the report in prayer.

Order of the
Day - Lunch

TE McCutchen gave instructions about lunch and led in prayer for our lunch.

The Committee of Thanks presented the following resolution which was read at lunch and passed unanimously!

To the Family of Hilton Head Presbyterian Church in beautiful Hilton Head, South Carolina, lesser known suburb of Okatie and Beaufort,

We thank you for hosting this 8th stated meeting of Lowcountry Presbytery. Your warm hospitality brought joy to our souls and nourishment to our bodies. We have been presented a banquet! We feasted on worship by your worship team, feasted on God's Word (Sola Scriptura!), feasted at the Lord's table, feasted at the BBQ table, and feasted on the fellowship of the saints. Oh! We have been fed till we want no more! Now we are ready to go to work again in the fields of the Lord. Thank you!

Let it be resolved, therefore, that Lowcountry Presbytery offers praise to our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ for these rich blessings, and we commend you to God with these words: "Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and from Jesus Christ, the Father's Son, in truth and love" (II John 3).

Afternoon
Session 1:00
Leadership
Development
Committee

TE Ross Hodges called the presbytery back to order by opening in prayer.

TE Jon Payne, Chairman, Christ Church PCA, [jdpchristchurch#@icloud.com]
Report.

TE Payne opened the report in prayer.

He informed presbyters that Alex Mark is now Chairman of the Leadership Development Committee.

TE Payne closed the report in prayer.

Shepherding &
Church Vitality
Committee

TE Ron Steel, Chairman, Eastbridge PCA, Mt. Pleasant [ron.steel48@gmail.com].

TE Ron Steel opened the report in prayer.

M/S/C: Having received their LOB reports, that Lowcountry Presbytery affirm that the ministries of TE Chris Brown and TE Bill Schweitzer are approved and they may continue to labor out of bounds per the terms of BCO 13-2.

TE Steel closed the report of the Shepherding & Church Vitality Committee in prayer.

M/S/C: that the report of the Shepherding Committee be received as presented.

New Business

Discussion of who will serve on panel at January meeting.

TE JP Sibley, RE Mark Senn, RE John Johns, TE Stogner were appointed by the moderator.

M/S/C: TE Joyner moved that we take 30 minutes to discuss the overall impression of the Reformation Service so that we can use it to grow in the future.

Time allotted: 1:15pm – 1:45pm

Discussion followed.

M/S/C: TE Bennett moved a motion of thanks praising the Lord for TE Ross' faithfulness as moderator during this past year.

Adjournment

M/S/C: that the Eighth meeting of Lowcountry Presbytery be adjourned with prayer.

TE Ross Hodges closed the meeting in prayer at 1:38pm.

Respectfully submitted,

TE Chris Bennett
Stated Clerk

TE Ross Hodges
Moderator

Appendixes:

1. Attendance Roster – Teaching Elders
2. Attendance Roster – Ruling Elders
3. Guest List for 8th Stated Meeting of Lowcountry Presbytery
4. Stated Clerk's Report
5. Treasurer's Report
6. 2018 Budget Input
7. LOB Reports from Chris Brown & Bill Schwietzer

Appendix #1:

Teaching Elder Attendance for November 2, 2017 Stated Meeting of Lowcountry Presbytery:

Bailey, Crag	Redeemer Church, Charleston	P
Bennett, Christopher	HR, Charleston	P
Brown, Christopher	LOB, Chaplain, MUSC, Charleston	P
Clark, Danny	RUF, College of Charleston	P
Cole, Howard	Metro North Church, Goose Creek	P
Donovan, David	Church Creek Church, Charleston	X
Hodges, W. Ross	Christ Church Plant, Charleston	P
Joyner, Sam	Grace Coastal Church, Okatie	P
Konopa, Ben	HR, Eastbridge, Mt. Pleasant	HR
Mark, Alex	Beaufort Church Plant, Beaufort	P
McCutchen, William	Hilton Head Church, Hilton Head	P
Olson, John	Church Creek Church, Charleston	P

Patrick, John Mark	Trinity Church, Orangeburg	P
Payne, Jon	Christ Church Plant, Charleston	P
Pitzer, Tim	Hilton Head Church, Hilton Head	P
Schley, John	Metro North Church, Goose Creek	P
Schweitzer, Bill	MTW, England	ME
Sibley, J.P.	Orangeburg Church Plant	P
Steel, Ron	Eastbridge Church, Mt. Pleasant	P
Stogner, Phil	Two Rivers Church, North Charleston	P
Turner, Mark	Oakbrook Church, Summerville	P
Walters, Michael	Without Call, Charleston	P

Appendix #2:

Ruling Elder Attendance for November 2, 2017 Stated Meeting of Lowcountry Presbytery:

Don	Barrett		Hilton Head PCA
Larry	Decker		Grace Coastal
Ron	Hemingway		Eastbridge Presbyterian
Don	Hinton		First Scots, Beaufort
Chris	Jarvis		Redeemer PCA
Charles	Rehlin		Hilton Head PCA
Mark	Senn		First Scots, Beaufort
Maury	Tepper		Hilton Head PCA
John	Thomas		Hilton Head PCA
David	Walters, Jr.		Church Creek Presbyterian
Ralph	Woodie		Hilton Head PCA

Church Delegate Summary Report:

Church Creek Presbyterian	TE & RE
Eastbridge Presbyterian	TE & RE
Grace Coastal Church	TE & RE
Hilton Head Presbyterian	TE & RE
Metro North PCA	TE
Oakbrook Community Church	TE
Redeemer Presbyterian Church	TE & RE
Trinity Presbyterian	TE
Two Rivers Presbyterian	TE

Appendix #3:

Registered Guests for November 2, 2017 Stated Meeting of Lowcountry Presbytery:

Charles DeAntonio, CEP, harlesdeantonio@gmail.com

Stated Clerk's Report
for the November 2, 2017 meeting of
Lowcountry Presbytery

1. Correspondence:

- a. Sent the results of the Presbytery's BCO 25-3 amendment vote to the Stated Clerk's Office.
- b. Received an email from TE Chris Brown regarding the Presbytery's timing regarding voting on BCO amendments. TE Mark Turner proposed a mechanism for delaying a vote when there is controversy about the amendment which there was not in this case.
- c. Signed and sent to the Stated Clerk's Office the completed Official Change of Presbytery Rolls – Minister report on TE Harritt's transfer into the Presbytery.
- d. Received and forwarded to the presbyters an email from PCA MNA Disaster Relief.
- e. Responded to an inquiry from TE Ron Steel about churches hosting Presbytery meetings.
- f. Received signed Ministerial Obligation Forms from several members of the Presbytery.
- g. Received and forwarded to the presbyters an email from TE Kent Suits seeking a pastoral position in our Presbytery.
- h. Forwarded to the presbyters an offer of free folding tables from Eastbridge Presbyterian Church.
- i. Provided TE Ron Steel with the Form for a Commission to Ordain & Install a pastor, at his request.
- j. Received the report of the Commission to Install TE William Harritt III.
- k. Received and forwarded to the presbyters an email from Christianity Explored USA on training opportunities.
- l. Received an email from the Stated Clerk of Pacific NW Presbytery arguing in favor of the BCO 25-3 amendment.
- m. Received the Annual Report of TE Chris Brown.
- n. Forwarded to the presbyters a notification from the PCA Stated Clerk Yahoo Group of an upcoming survey they may receive.
- o. Advised TE McCutchen on the procedure to follow in hiring a new TE for the staff of Hilton Head Presbyterian Church.
- p. Responded to an inquiry from MNA Second Career Facilitator, Barbara Campbell, requesting contact information on our church planter.

- q. Passed on to TE Payne some information from the PCA Stated Clerk Yahoo Group regarding receiving men from other denominations.
 - r. Forwarded to the presbyters an email about training opportunities from Evangelize Today.
 - s. Sent out worksheets to the chairmen of Presbytery committees soliciting inputs to the 2018 Budget, together with information of committee members whose terms expire at the end of this year.
 - t. Gave logistical input to TE McCutchen leading up to Hilton Head Presbyterian hosting the November meeting.
 - u. Received nomination information from committee chairmen.
 - v. Forwarded to the presbyters an email from Reformed Theological Seminary.
 - w. Provided input to TE Ron Steel regarding honorarium and travel reimbursement for TE Howard Brown for our October 29 Reformation Joint Service.
 - x. Received and forwarded to the presbyters an email from Evangelize Today on a local training opportunity. Responded to one RE's question about it.
2. **Administration:**
- a. Entered TE Harritt into the PCA Stated Clerk's database for Lowcountry Presbytery.
 - b. Created updated sign-in sheets for the November stated meeting.
 - c. Worked with TE Mark Turner on some IT matters regarding the Presbytery website. d. Added RE Ken
3. **Excused absence requests.** I have received an excused absence request from TE David Donovan (doctor's appointment). I have received an excused absence request Oakbrook Community which is unable to send any ruling elders (work demands and a funeral).
4. **Recommendation:** That an excused absence be granted to TE David Donovan and to Oakbrook Community Church.

Respectfully submitted,
TE Chris Bennett
Stated Clerk

Appendix #5: Treasurer's Report

Treasurer's Report

Lowcountry Presbytery PCA
P.O. Box 31775
Charleston, SC 29417-1775

Updated: 11/1/17

Treasurer's Report November 1, 2017

Year to Date Income

Member church contributions	\$36,504.37
Designated church contributions	\$4,900.00
Other receipts	\$3,318.00
Presbytery offerings	\$1,322.00
Individual offerings	\$0.00
Interest income	\$52.63
Total Income	\$46,097.06

Year to Date Income by Committee

Administration Committee	\$4,661.33
Campus Ministries Committee	\$13,825.76
Church Planting & Outreach Committee	\$23,576.32
Judicial Committee	\$0.00
Leadership Development Committee	\$186.98
Shepherding & Church Vitality Committee	\$1,316.99
Presbytery Designated Offering	\$1,163.00
Total	\$44,730.38

Year to Date Expenditures

Administration Committee	\$4,206.82
Campus Ministries Committee	\$18,140.00
Church Planting & Outreach Committee	\$11,126.38
Judicial Committee	\$0.00
Leadership Development Committee	\$0.00
Shepherding & Church Vitality Committee	\$550.00
Designated Gift	\$1,163.00
Total	\$35,186.20

Cash Flow

	\$454.51
	-\$4,314.24
	\$12,449.94
	\$0.00
	\$186.98
	\$766.99
	\$0.00
Total	\$9,544.18

Unrestricted Fund Balances

Administration Fund	\$14,300.33
Campus Ministries Fund	\$1,000.13
Church Planting & Outreach Fund	\$48,976.72
Judicial Fund	\$0.00
Leadership Development Fund	\$186.98
Shepherding & Church Vitality Fund	\$1,174.80
Total Unrestricted Funds	\$65,638.96

Restricted Fund Balances

Disaster Relief Fund (MNA)	\$432.88
MNA Expansion (5:10) Fund	\$5,067.87
Pastor Relief Fund	\$6,116.01
Total Loan Funds	\$11,616.76

Current Bank Balances

Checking	\$18,508.61
Money Market	\$58,747.11
Total	\$77,255.72

Comments:

1. The overall Presbytery finances are all experiencing a positive cash flow. However Campus Ministries and Shepherding have negative cash flows.

2. Three of our churches have already exceeded the askings for 2017. Most of the rest of the churches are well on the way to fulfilling their commitment to the askings.

3. I will be sending out emails to the senior pastor of the churches that still have a balance left on the askings to advise them of what remains to be paid of their commitment figure for 2017.

4. The offering from the Reformation Service was \$1,001.00.

Respectfully submitted,
TE Chris Bennett
Treasurer

2018 Budget Input

2018 Budget Input

Lowcountry Presbytery PCA
P.O. Box 31775
Charleston, SC 29417-1775

Updated: 10/31/17

EXPENSES

<u>Committee</u>	<u>2017 Budget</u>	<u>2018 Budget</u>	<u>% Change</u>
Administration	\$5,010	\$5,265	4.8%
Campus Ministries	\$18,140	\$18,890	4.0%
Church Planting & Outreach	\$24,500	\$33,875	27.7%
Judicial	\$0	\$0	0.0%
Leadership Development	\$250	\$250	0.0%
Shepherding & Church Vitality	\$200	\$200	0.0%
Total	\$48,100	\$58,480	17.7%

INCOME

Total Annual 2016 Tithes	\$5,074,367.01
1% Askings	\$50,743.67
1.2% Askings	\$60,892.40
Percentage of Askings to meet budget	1.15%

<u>Church</u>	<u>2017 Commitment</u>	<u>Given to Date</u>	<u>Outstanding</u>
Christ Church	\$10,000.00	\$0.00	\$10,000.00
Church Creek	\$3,600.00	\$3,400.00	\$200.00
Eastbridge	\$4,800.00	\$4,800.10	-\$0.10
First Scots	Not Provided	\$0.00	Unknown
Grace Coastal	\$4,000.00	\$3,000.00	\$1,000.00
Hilton Head	\$11,000.00	\$16,537.00	-\$5,537.00
Metro North	\$4,000.00	\$3,333.31	\$666.69
Oakbrook Community	\$1,500.00	\$1,125.00	\$375.00
Redeemer	\$4,594.00	\$1,563.92	\$3,030.08
Trinity	\$3,500.00	\$2,625.00	\$875.00
Two Rivers	\$3,505.00	\$4,323.00	-\$818.00
Total	\$50,499.00	\$40,707.33	\$9,791.67

2017 Budget Total	\$48,100.00
Needed to meet 2017 Budget	\$7,392.67

<u>Church</u>	<u>2016 GF Offerings</u>
Christ Church	\$719,684.65
Church Creek	\$359,651.15
Eastbridge	\$423,000.00
First Scots	\$250,000.00
Grace Coastal	\$411,000.00
Hilton Head	\$1,376,728.00
Metro North	\$400,000.00
Oakbrook Community	\$162,153.00
Redeemer	\$439,954.21
Trinity	\$298,490.00
Two Rivers	\$233,706.00
Total	\$5,074,367.01

7. LOB Report: TE Chris Brown

2017 Report to Lowcountry Presbytery (BCO 8-7)

TE Christopher (Chris) Brown, LOB

I currently serve as a chaplain at MUSC Hospital in Charleston, a position I've held since 2007. I am free to maintain the Reformed faith and MUSC places no restrictions on my ministry. I provide spiritual support and counsel to patients, families, and staff at the hospital. Hospital ministry is very much a counseling ministry, and I have many opportunities to teach and proclaim the Word and the Reformed faith.

Praises and positives

- It is a great blessing to bring the Word of God and the hope of Christ to the sick and suffering at the hospital. For most of my life I've had a bent toward "mercy ministry"; that is, ministry to the "least of these". I am privileged to visit the sick each day and bring them true hope.
- Hospital ministry has forced me to sharpen my counseling skills—a good thing!
- After 10 years it seems that God has called and gifted me to serve as a hospital chaplain, and it's hard to see myself doing any other kind of ministry (though of course I must always submit to God's sovereign will and providence!)
- I enjoy working around doctors and nurses in the hospital's "culture".
- I receive good benefits as an employee of MUSC—salary, health insurance, vacation, and retirement.

Significant challenges

- Long hours—I work 12 hour shifts which can be physically tiring.
- Stress—I work in a high stress environment and I see death and suffering every day. I have to carefully watch myself to make sure I'm resting well. I also must watch my personal devotional time with God so I don't burn out. This is more challenging than it sounds!
- Changes in healthcare at the state and national level are altering how hospitals get paid. This indirectly affects staffing levels and whether or not I have a job at MUSC. MUSC has had to tighten its belt the last few years but thankfully no staff have been laid off.

I am blessed to serve as a hospital chaplain at MUSC. I request that Lowcountry Presbytery approve me to labor out of bounds for 2018 in my current call.

Respectfully submitted,
TE Chris Brown

7. LOB Report: TE Bill Schweitzer

GPC Pastoral Letter May 2017

“For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope.” (Jer 29:11)

Dearly beloved,

I want to write to you regarding my plans for the next year. I and the session love you, and we think it important that you understand as much as possible the several factors which have led to these plans.

As some of you may be aware, there are immigration regulations requiring citizens of other nations living here to periodically to reset their connection to their homeland. In addition, our missionary sending agency has a requirement for home deputation that equates roughly to the same pattern of six months after every four years abroad. This is only reasonable; the numerous gospel partnerships we have with American churches—partnerships which allow us to pursue Kingdom opportunities far disproportionate to our congregation’s size—come with the natural but costly expectation of ongoing personal visitation.

We were last away for six months in 2014 so we are due to be away again in 2018. Even last time, it was no easy task to carry on the children’s schooling over this awkward (too long to complete the school year here, too short to be established there) period of time. However, the complexity involved in the older children being away for half the year has grown greatly since then. For this reason we had initially considered using an aspect of my situation as a reserve military chaplain to solve the problem: any time that I serve on active duty technically counts as if the entire family were with me in America. The idea would have been that I would go alone for the six months, enabling Pam and the children to remain here.

I thus circulated my name looking for suitable short-term assignments. However, three things soon became clear:

- a) Six-month active duty positions, if they exist at all, are exceedingly rare.
- b) My month at the chaplain school reminded us that, whilst there may be good reasons for families to be separated for long periods, such separations are not to be chosen lightly if there are other viable options.
- c) Finally, and most importantly, our parents miss us more than we were aware. With no time difference to complicate things, I ended up speaking to my mother on a near daily basis. I found myself sympathizing more with her situation (she is in her 80s and in poor health) and thinking in terms of the Golden Rule: what would I wish were our positions reversed? More broadly, I considered what example we are setting for our children regarding our Fifth Commandment duties. Although we were careful not to say that we would return after the completion of our commitment, we did tell our parents that we were officially committed to eight years of church planting work. Those eight years expired in February, and our families have harboured some implicit expectations related to it.

As these things began to dawn on me, two opportunities were laid before me. One was a return to permanent active duty, *which I declined*. The other was a one-year situation with MARSOC. The Marine Corps has recently established a special operations branch akin to the SAS or Navy SEALs called Marine Special Operations Command (MARSOC). Marines are sent to the Raider Training Center in North Carolina, where they are put through a grueling selection process and, if chosen, are given

advanced weapons, tactics, survival, delivery (jumping, diving, etc.), language and communications training. The Training Center lacks a permanent active duty chaplain but has established a recurring one-year position for reserve chaplains.

Hypothetically, were some private person to approach the session asking us to send me to preach the Word and administer the sacraments at MARSOC chapel services, to be the official representative of the Christian faith to the Marine Raider Training Center, to share that faith privately whenever opportunity presents, to pray publically at various command ceremonies and before dangerous training exercises, to shepherd those going through the most demanding school in the US military and to teach ethics (right and wrong) to those who are perhaps most in need of this, we would surely have considered it. As it is, the organisation itself has made the approach on official terms. Given this, and in light of the other factors already involved, I brought the matter to the session. Thereafter, I approached the men of the regional group of EPCEW churches that meet periodically for advice and counsel and finally, the leadership of MTW. There has been unanimity of affirmation at every point. On this basis, I have accepted the position in conjunction with a year away in America.

No doubt some questions come to your mind, as they did to me. The most important of these would surely be pastoral provision for the church whilst I am away. I think it fair to say that, were this ever to happen, this coming year would be the best time for it. We have not one but two highly gifted ministerial assistants in Nathan and Florian. By adjusting their seminary schedules they will be able to cover three full services out of every four in the autumn and summer terms. The remaining services will be filled either by one of the three former ministers in the congregation or by one of the many fine (EPCEW and Banner of Truth) guest preachers we have come to know. In the spring term, our well-beloved Revd Maurice Roberts will come to minister for twelve Sundays.

Some may also wonder how we will manage the children's education. Mark, who turns 18 in June, will remain to complete his final year of A-levels at Emmanuel College. He will continue to live in our house, joined for this time by Benjamin Mitchell. The other children would come with Pam and me to the States. Bethany, having just finished her GCSEs at Emmanuel, is at a natural break point and will continue her studies online with the objective of taking the SAT entrance exams accepted at UK as well as US universities. As for Mary, Anna, James and Rebecca, there is a half-time Christian school very much like NCS, numerous home school cooperatives and a plethora of online providers to chose from.

Concerning dates, I was already returning to America to finish the chaplain school on the 4th of July, 2017 and I will now simply stay on from that point. The family will join me on 25th July, and we would all return in August, 2018.

I should acknowledge that the same factors that led to this decision might possibly lead to a similar stint in the future. But as to any thought that this year might morph into my permanent departure, let me put such fears to rest. The position is inherently temporary. My secondary calling to be a reserve military chaplain is just that: a calling to be fulfilled on a minority basis compared to my full-time calling to the ministry. More importantly, neither Pam nor I feel any pull to return permanently to America. I already have the ideal job, serving in the perfect situation for me. Indeed, I consider that the things I have discussed are the best way to prolong our relationship and safeguard our church in the long-term.

Please let me know of any questions, and may the Lord richly bless you.

His servant and yours,
Pastor Bill