

Commission on Ministry
Addendum Report
Mission Presbytery Meeting
October 24, 2020

The Commission on Ministry has sustained the examination of

RE Mark Stoddard, to serve as Commissioned Pastor to First Presbyterian Church, Pleasanton. He will be examined at the Presbytery meeting.

Mark Stoddard Journey of Faith

I began life as a Presbyterian. My parents were active members of Oak Cliff Presbyterian Church in Dallas. My father was an elder and my mother an active Sunday School teacher (as attested to by Sallie Sampsell Watson, who was a couple of years behind me while at OCPC). We were faithful in attendance for Sunday School and worship, missing very few Sundays. We knew the facilities well and grew in learning from the rest of the church family. I went to Church camp at Argyle and Gilmont as a youth and saw the ministry of working in God's outdoors and with people my own age from throughout Grace Presbytery. Under the guidance of Ed Bayless, John Shute, and David Pittenger, I learned about the workings in the church and its mission. I worked one summer, while in junior high, a couple of days a week as a volunteer and expanded my horizons further. At OCPC, I also began to expand my musical and singing ability in the choir program with the Junior High Choir and then the Westminster Youth Choir, in High School, which sang at the Sunday night services. I was one of the few actual OCPC members of the youth choir and Bill Everitt, the director allowed me to sing with the Adult choir on Sunday mornings.

After my mother died, my father remarried and we moved the combined family to North Dallas, where I knew we needed a new church home and helped decide on John Calvin Presbyterian Church, where William Baine was pastor. I was active in the church choir, as well as an ecumenical youth group of three churches, ours with a Methodist and Episcopal Church nearby, since all of the churches had few youth members.

After graduation from high school, I followed my older siblings (a sister and brother) to Austin College to study Physics to become a high school teacher (with an NDEA loan that forgave partially for public teacher service for five years). I planned after that time to try Seminary, since I felt called to church service from my experience from OCPC times. I joined Grand Avenue Presbyterian Church soon after getting to Sherman while Robert Leslie was pastor. I was active in getting the Alpha Phi Omega National Service Fraternity going at AC and also was active in the Cooperative Campus Ministry program in the Chapel with J. Allen Smith. I joined the A Cappella choir, added a major in Music, and later was hired as a paid soloist at St. Stephens Episcopal Church in Sherman. This experience was life changing in many ways, being involved in different worship settings and theology, but also leading to providing transportation from AC to the church for other students, especially one who became my wife. The wedding was at St. Stephens and was officiated by Dr. Leslie, Allen Smith and Father James Garrard, the rector.

I stayed in Sherman and taught until 1980. During this interval, I spent time during the summer as a counselor and one year as camp director at Prairie Valley Camp for Grace Presbytery, again gaining new insights in living and teaching about God's gifts to youth.

We moved to Austin and I began work at Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary. We started attending First Southern Presbyterian Church (now Central) when Dean Thompson was pastor. We were welcomed by a loving, caring congregation. At APTS, I learned content as well as the practice of ministry by the mentoring and friendships of Prescott Williams, Gene March, George Stroup, John Jansen, Robert Shelton, and Cynthia Campbell. I spent an intern year as student pastor at Hyde Park Presbyterian Church in Denison Texas under the guidance of John Purcell.

In the fall of my senior year, I came under a great deal of personal stress and received a leave of absence from the seminary, moved from the seminary to other housing in Austin (with financial support of seminary friends for both housing and psychological therapy. I left the care of Grace Presbytery and joined Central as a member and began to work again in education at Hyde Park Baptist Schools in Austin, teaching Physics, Physical Science and Bible. This experience showed me the true meaning of

grace being extended to those that don't deserve it. The next year I returned to APTS to finish my degree but did not seek a call at that time.

During this time, my family had grown with two daughters in preschool and elementary school. We moved to our current location in Austin and changed membership to Trinity Presbyterian Church, which is in our neighborhood. The pastor, Mary Gaines was welcoming as was the congregation. Clarence Bassett, a retired minister, and his wife Katherine, the Robert Jones family, the Lee Jones, Annette Haslund, the Jenkins, the Cockrums, all provided a strong mission oriented, loving community for us and our children. Trinity Church merged with Wilshire Presbyterian Church, due to falling congregant numbers and resources, so a new set of loving and caring families joined together in fellowship and mission.

Later after our daughters graduated from Austin College, we felt a need to return to Central for its music, worship and mission work. So, we are again with old friends and new travelers in this journey of faith in Austin.

In 1995, I moved to Pleasanton as Assistant Principal at the High School. I traveled from Austin on Sunday afternoon and then back from Pleasanton on Friday nights after the last athletic event [for 25 years]. I had an apartment there for use during the week.

On the first Sunday in August of 1995, I visited the First Presbyterian Church in Pleasanton, while Dick Lavender was pastor. I joined as an affiliate, sang in the choir, met for bible study and fellowship, supplied the pulpit, officiated at funerals and have participated in church activities mostly during the weeks while I was working at the schools. But I would also make trips down for some activities as well. I have grown to love and appreciate the saints of the church there, some gone now: Larry Brown, Roy Crofford, Bill Dunn, and Bob Frere (whose wife was a member and he supplied after Dick left); those still there: the Greenes, the Starraks, and Gloria Smith; and those that have moved: the Simons (Janna, the lay commissioned supply and Bryan), the Inmans, and the Powells.

Through this long journey, I have felt called to continue to serve God in whatever way I can. I want to live my life trying, as well as I can, to follow the example of Jesus to love God and neighbor in gratitude for God's grace to us.

Mark Stoddard Statement of Faith

I believe in one God. God has made God's self manifest to humankind in numerous ways, but God relates to us through what we know as the Trinity (Parent/Creator, Jesus/Redeemer, and Spirit/Sustainer). God is creative, benevolent, ever faithful, always present, always searching, full of grace and mercy for all. The love of God knows no bounds.

God's loving kindness, God's grace, God's *hesed*, provides humans the ability of being able to live with God and be empowered to do God's work of reconciliation in the world. God sustains us and is with us in all our life experience – birth, death, sickness, health, school, play, work, eating, sleeping, sorrow, happiness, pain, joy, love.

The grace we receive is not a result of anything we do. Most of the time we forget the gifts we have received and act as if God did not exist or is away on a trip. We also try to hide from God, treat friends, family, and others as afterthoughts, worry about own selves and needs. We search for fulfillment through power, wealth, position, and “things”, without remembering the source of our own being. But God continues to pursue us, to give us the ability to be free, restored to true relationship and forgiven. No matter what we do, say, or think in our sinful ways, we will be forgiven by God.

God also gave us a perfect example of how to live and be reconcilers in the world by becoming human in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Jesus showed through his teaching, proclamation, prayers, suffering, empathy, and service to others, even to the extreme sacrifice for our sins, and resurrection, what God's purpose for our lives is. This is to love and worship God; to love and serve our neighbors; to look for God in all we do, all we say, all we think; and see God in all the things and people we meet, no matter the situation or unlikelihood involved.

This is the activity of God as Spirit, sustaining ourselves and being sustenance within others. The Spirit manifests itself in our actions, words, and deeds as we live in our world. We show our gratitude for these great gifts to us by living as God wants and doing God's work on earth with the Spirit's help.

Through these times of travail, we are also not alone. We are part of a great assembly of other believers from the past, the present, and the future that have chosen to follow the God we experience as Parent, Redeemer, and Sustainer. We join together in worship, singing, praise, prayer and service in gratitude for all the gifts given, but don't deserve. We follow the words of Scripture that tell us the story and purpose of the gifts and sacrifice, as well as showing us the way to live. We join together in the sacraments of baptism and communion as signs of our joy and remembrance that God, through the Spirit, is present with us. We are called to live this life of giving and service, to show and tell everyone by our words and action, of the gift of grace received that becomes a joyous gift for the world.



Report to Presbytery

John Knox Ranch

Report to Mission Presbytery

October 2020

John Knox Ranch has recently embarked on a long-range planning process, which is designed to seek God's will for the future of the ministry through a corporate spiritual discernment. The process includes prayer, worship, data analysis, thoughtful deliberation, and commitment to a particular course of action.

Members of the planning team include the John Knox Ranch committee plus additional persons who have a deep commitment to the future of the ministry. Under the guidance of experienced consultants, the team is engaged in an in-depth examination and exploration of mission, program, organizational development, and site & facilities.

The process was delayed by the pandemic, with the hope that in-person gatherings might be possible this fall. When it became apparent that was not going to be possible, the process started on-line.

In the time of waiting to see what might be possible this fall, an extraordinary prospect emerged for John Knox Ranch and Mission Presbytery of a conservation easement on a significant portion of the property. This easement offers a significant opportunity for securing the future of John Knox Ranch, both missionally and fiscally.

It is not uncommon in a planning process that there is a question or situation that needs to be addressed before the process will be completed. Sometimes, as in the case of John Knox Ranch, there is an immediate opportunity, or sometimes there is a critical situation. While the process is not designed to

make immediate decisions, it does establish a holistic framework in which to consider a more imminent question.

Thus, the work of creating a Master Plan for John Knox Ranch started with concurrent conversations: 1) the extended process which will result in a comprehensive strategic plan in the coming months, and 2) the immediate exploration of a conservation easement.

The planning process begins with an examination of and immersion in the mission of the organization. In addition to reviewing the mission statement, the process explores the mission from the stories of the organization and the ways in which those stories connect the ministry to the larger story of God's people in the Scripture.

From the outset, it is apparent that the mission of John Knox Ranch is uncommonly strong and clear. Often, a camp struggles with mission statements that are vague or nondescript. John Knox Ranch is clear and purposeful in fostering "experiences of Christian community in the beauty of God's creation." The team explored in some detail how John Knox Ranch currently accomplishes its mission and how it might do so in the future.

In addition to this early focus on mission, the planning team has been asked to peer down the road far enough to enable John Knox Ranch to move forward with the opportunity of an easement. That included anticipating possible facilities, activities, and features that would enable John Knox Ranch to be fiscally sustainable and missionally viable into the future.

We expect that the committee will seriously consider some new structures and features that will enable John Knox Ranch to continue growing and deepen its impact. The easement, as it is now proposed, should not negatively affect the ability of John Knox Ranch to pursue those options, and there is much about the easement that will enhance its ability to accomplish its mission.

One of the most promising aspects is the future relationship between HCC and John Knox Ranch. The missions of the two organizations are in close alignment, and it is clear that each can benefit the other. Frank Davis, the Chief Conservation Officer from the Hill Country Conservancy met with the planning team to answer any questions and more fully explain the partnership that would ensue between HCC and John Knox Ranch. Such missionally aligned partnerships are a significant way that organizations amplify their ability to make a significant difference in the world. One aspect of a strategic planning process is identifying such potential key partnerships.

This easement is an incredible opportunity to secure meaningful engagement with creation as an essential part of spiritual formation for all ages. One of the important tenets of these initial strategic planning conversations is the essential contribution that camp and retreat ministry makes to the church. Our conviction is that we cannot be the church God is

calling us to be without the experiences that happen at places like John Knox Ranch. While there are many facets to that, one central one is that we need profound experiences of Creation in order to live lives of faith.

In summary:

- John Knox Ranch has a strong and deep sense of mission to under-gird its future.
- Consideration of the easement is coming from that deep sense of mission.
- The proposed easement supports the mission and strengthens the ability of John Knox Ranch to accomplish its mission.
- The planning team has begun to do the work of potentially identifying any uses of the proposed easement space that would need to be taken into consideration.
- Other site features and structures that are likely to be necessary for the future will most likely be able to be located in the area near existing structures.

We are honored to be a part of this journey. We pray for your deliberations and decisions as you move forward.

The Run River team:

Pam Harris

Garrie Stevens

Gary Batty

Elise Bates Russell

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DISASTER PREPARATION AND ASSISTANCE COMMITTEE (DPAC) REPORT TO MISSION PRESBYTERY
October 2020

MISSION PRESBYTERY DISASTER PREPAREDNESS GUIDELINES This comprehensive document has been developed by DPAC and sent to all congregations in Mission Presbytery. Each congregation is encouraged to make this part of their Manual of Operations.

THANK YOU TO HOPE PRESBYTERIAN-AUSTIN We thank Hope Presbyterian for their donation of two generators, chain saws and other tools to be used for disaster recovery. Several individuals have donated funds and equipment and we are grateful. Our tools and equipment are being stored at our new storage facility at Moranch.

COVID-19 RESPONSE Churches are encouraged to follow the pandemic guidelines at the Mission Presbytery website. All congregations are encouraged to share best practices during this pandemic. The Mission Presbytery Reopening Worship Panel videoconference on September 19, was well received.

FIREARMS POLICY FOR MISSION PRESBYTERY EVENTS The Committee has proposed a Firearms Policy for Mission Presbytery events. The proposed policy is with General Council for approval.

DPAC DISPLAY TABLE AT EACH PRESBYTERY MEETING As soon as we are meeting in person again, we plan to have a display table at Presbytery meetings to provide information about the work of DPAC.

DPAC HANDBOOK We plan to have ready for approval by General Council, the DPAC handbook for the Mission Presbytery Manual of Operations.

CONGRATULATIONS TO MISSION PRESBYTERY'S DIRECTOR OF RECOVERY COORDINATOR, ED SACKETT Ed is officially Mission Presbytery's newly ordained as Minister of Word and Sacrament! We are grateful for Ed and for Presbyterian Disaster Assistance which has funded this position for nearly three years.

RESPONSE TO WESTERN LOUISIANA STORM DAMAGE Ed and volunteers hauled 420 box fans, 200 hygiene kits and clean-up buckets to Lake Charles, LA. Our two generators are in Bell City, LA.

HYGIENE KITS AND CLEAN-UP BUCKETS All congregations are encouraged to build a supply of hygiene kits and clean-up buckets to keep in storage for future disasters. Ed is setting up a Google Doc at the Presbytery website. Congregations will be able to update the supplies they have so that we can know at a glance who has what.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS INVITED If interested in being a part of this Committee, please go to the Presbytery website and find the Committee on Representation and Participation (CORP) Nomination Form, fill it out and email to the office. We are looking to form sub-committees: Grant Writing, Communication, Equipment (Maintenance, Monitor, and Moving)

ON THE WISHLIST - FORD F-350 TRUCK! We would like to find a donation of a truck to haul our shower and flatbed trailers.

NEXT DPAC MEETING November 2, Monday, Noon, via ZOOM videoconference. Join us!

DPAC Members: Jennifer Rektorik-Chair, Robert Serrata-Vice Chair, Ben Henderson-Treasurer, Sandy Pinaire-Secretary, Alan Ford, Kathy Kerr Kubatzky (PDA trainer), Rev. Babs Miller (PDA trainer), Danita Nelson (PDA trainer), Ed Sackett, MP Disaster Recovery Coordinator.