

FELLOWSHIP

Due to the COVID-19 virus pandemic, the elders and staff met via a video conference Session meeting that began at 7:03 PM.

MINUTES

PRESENT: Teaching Elders: Senior Pastor The Rev. Dr. Stephen D. McConnell (Moderator), Congregational Life Pastor The Rev. Dr. Lal Hmingliani Browne, and Family Life Pastor The Rev. Laurie Haas. Ruling Elders: Jeanne Asakura, Marcia Baarson, Linda Calvert, Diane Curtis, Gerry Hailey, Andrea Jackson, Maxine Perry, Steve Rowe, Sandi Stewart, Matthew Straeb, and Pam Williams. Clerk to the Session Linda Getzen, Executive Director of Operations Pam Gillespie, Music Director Genevieve Beauchamp, and Director of Outreach & Families Sarah Soboleski.

QUORUM, CALL TO ORDER, AND OPENING PRAYER: A quorum was established. Dr. McConnell served as Moderator. He called the meeting to order and opened with a devotion based on Psalm 16 and prayer. **MOTION MADE, SECONDED, and PASSED: To approve the Agenda for the Meeting, less item 2.d. under New Business.**

CORRESPONDENCE AND CLERK'S ANNOUNCEMENTS: *The Clerk to the Session emails to Staff and Elders pertinent correspondence received between Session Meetings.* The Clerk reported the following:

- **MOTION MADE, SECONDED, AND PASSED: To receive the following new members who attended one of Pastor Hmingi's recent New Member Classes: Jo Ann C. Stout, Alexander H. McCatty, Joseph Mets, and Patricia Mets.**
- Asked for Commissioners to attend 5/13 Presbytery meeting – see Omnibus motion below.
- Ruling Elder Jason Morton's resignation from the Session and from church membership was received by the Session with regret.
- Asked for volunteers to cover Jason Morton's May prayers for the Pastors – see Omnibus Motion below.
- Roster of 2021-22 Elders in Session package with attached memo from the Clerk explaining various duties. Mysterious phone shown for Pastor Laurie – do not use!

STAFF REPORTS:

Executive Director of Operations Pam Gillespie:

- See written report on page 16 of Session package.
- Food Pantry – Friday evening distribution hours have begun – 5-7 PM and are increasing in use. All Faith's Food Bank continues to provide food to the Food Pantry free of charge. The Food Pantry Fund Task Force has put to use some of the excess funds in the restricted account. This includes \$12,500 in food gift certificates for 250 Day of Hope students, \$5,000 to assist Sarasota Baptist Church with establishing a Food Pantry, and \$25,000 for each of two food assistance programs through All Faith's Food Bank. In addition, farmworker mission Mision Peniel may also be a recipient. Also, Northminster PC and Light of the World Church are considering establishing Food Banks and might welcome startup financial assistance.

Music Director Genevieve Beauchamp:

- Recordings of monthly Taizé services have been completed.
- Sarasota Young Voices will perform (limited audience) on May 8.
- Chancel Choir is gearing up for an August return.
- Working on a concert series for the Chapel.
- Sarasota Music Conservatory children will be performing at a future date.
- Seminary classes are done for the semester!

Director of Outreach & Families Sarah Soboleski:

- Conor Peters, incoming Director of Family and Student Ministries, was in town last weekend to meet the youth and parents. Well received.
- Communications – shared analytics on worship attendance - see separate email. Steady overall combined attendance in-person and across media.

Congregational Life Pastor The Rev. Dr. Lal Hmingliani Browne:

- 13 small groups have finished meeting around fruit of the spirit: gentleness.
- 32 Adults and 11 children have joined the church this year!
- Ready for her sabbatical!

Family Life Pastor The Rev. Laurie Haas:

- Will be assuming several of Pastor Hmingi's duties while she is on sabbatical.
- Women's Retreat on Saturday was very well attended.
- Outdoor worship space was dedicated on Sunday, April 25.
- Working with an Eagle Scout to develop a butterfly garden.

Senior Pastor The Rev. Dr. Stephen D. McConnell:

- The COVID journey continues, and reopening is moving along. No reservations are needed for Sunday worship services. More reopening steps will be evaluated after the second week of May. Congregational hymn singing may be re-introduced with masks. Return to the more traditional worship service will be considered. At some point, prerecorded worship services may be discontinued with a return to live streaming.

FINANCIAL UPDATE: Administration and Finance Chair Andrea reported:

- All is well. Good surplus heading into the summer months.

OMNIBUS MOTION: MOTION MADE, SECONDED, and PASSED: To pass the following Omnibus Motion (Items A-F), as presented in the Agenda:

A. TO APPROVE THE FOLLOWING MINUTES:

1. **Stated Session Meeting: 03/22/2021**

B. TO APPROVE THE CLERK'S REPORT:

1. **Assignments and Meetings:**

- a. **Sunday Morning Prayers for the Pastors: Month of May (email in by Thursday AM): M. Baarson = 4/29, P. Williams = 5/6, S. Rowe = 5/13, S. Stewart 5/20, and G. Hailey 5/27.**
- b. **Deacons' Exec. Comm. Meeting on Monday, May 3, 7 PM via Zoom: Matthew Straeb**
- c. **Special Session Meeting to Receive New Members: Cancelled for May.**

2. **Membership Statistics, Baptisms & Weddings, and Home Communion (see attached Clerk's Report)**

3. **Appointment of Elder Commissioners to the Peace River Presbytery stated meeting (Thurs. May 13 at 9:00 AM via Zoom). The Clerk is authorized to complete the**

appointment of elder commissioners in the event of a vacancy:

1. L. Getzen 2. P. Williams 3. J. Asakura 4. S. Rowe.

C. TO RECEIVE REPORTS FROM:

1. Elder attending Deacons' Exec. Comm. meeting in April: Andrea Jackson.

D. TO RECEIVE REPORTS FROM SESSION COMMITTEES:

1. Administration and Finance: Ch. Andrea Jackson (includes Building and Grounds Team)
2. Global Partners Mission: Ch. Matthew Straeb
3. Personnel: Ch. Diane Curtis

E. TO RECEIVE REPORTS FROM MINISTRY TEAMS:

1. Family & Student Ministries (includes Palms Preschool) *See staff reports above*
2. Contemporary Worship Service Leadership *No written report this month*
3. Presbyterian Women *No written report this month*
4. Stephen Ministry Leadership *No written report this month*

F. TO RECEIVE REPORTS FROM CONGREGATION COMMITTEES:

1. Deacons' Executive Committee: Ch. Elizabeth Dexter
2. Memorial Garden Board: Ch. Paul Nielsen
3. Nominating: Ch. Marcia Baarson *No written report this month*

OLD BUSINESS:

1. Strategic Plan update. Dr. McConnell provided a status report and discussion was held on the 2020-2021 Strategic Goals endorsed by the Session on 8/24/2020. For status details, see written report in Session package. Status will be amended to include 50-60 attending book discussions on *Race and the Church*.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Election of Church Officers. Being the first meeting of the new Session year, the meeting proceeded to the election of officers of the church and the corporation. **MOTION MADE, SECONDED, and PASSED: To elect the following church/corporate officers for a one-year term ending when successors are elected: President – Andrea Jackson, Vice President – Gerry Hailey, Treasurer – Fred Chamberlain, and Secretary/Clerk to the Session – Linda Getzen.**
2. Grant Requests to the Foundation: Dr. McConnell reported, and discussions were held on:
 - a. Community Speaker Series: Grant Request coming from the Leadership Team. The grant will pay the speaking fee and expenses for Peter Wehner to speak at the February 2022 Community Speaker Series event. Funds for two other speakers (Jen Hatmaker and Jemar Tisby) postponed from last year due to pandemic have already been allocated. **MOTION MADE, SECONDED, AND PASSED: To approve submission to the Foundation of the Grant Request for \$10,000.00 for the Community Speaker Series.**
 - b. Presbytery Emergency Capital Fund: Grant Request coming from the Senior Pastor. This grant will help establish an Emergency Capital Repair Fund to provide grants to assist congregations within the presbytery with necessary major capital repairs, thus allowing them to allocate limited resources to ministry needs. These Foundation funds will supplement the \$50,000 already allocated by the Session from the 2020 surplus to assist struggling congregations, for a total of \$100,000. **MOTION MADE, SECONDED, AND**

PASSED: To approve submission to the Foundation of the Grant Request for \$50,000.00 for Peace River Presbytery to establish an Emergency Capital Repair Fund.

- c. Samaritan Counseling School Program: Grant Request coming from mission partner Samaritan Counseling Services of the Gulf Coast, Inc. The 4-year grant will be used to initiate a School Based Emotional Health Screening Pilot Program. Other Samaritan Centers around the country have successfully implemented this program. Funds needed in 2021 (Year 1) are \$75,000. It is hoped that after the fourth year, the Sarasota school board will be prepared to fund and continue the screening program. **MOTION MADE, SECONDED, AND PASSED: To approve submission to the Foundation of the Grant Request for \$189,324 (to be allocated over 4 years) for the School Based Emotional Health Screening Pilot Program to be initiated by Samaritan Counseling Services of the Gulf Coast, Inc.**
- d. Item removed from Agenda – additional information needed.
- e. Memorial Garden Restricted Funds Transfer. Request submitted by the Memorial Garden Board to transfer \$14,600 from the Memorial Garden restricted funds managed by the Foundation to the Memorial Garden account at COP. Funds will be used to expand the Memorial Garden wall. **MOTION MADE, SECONDED and PASSED: To approve submission to the Foundation of request to transfer \$14,600 from Memorial Garden restricted funds to the Memorial Garden account at Church of the Palms.**

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

- 1. Pastor Hmingi's Sabbatical. Dr. Browne will be away from her pastoral duties and enjoying her sabbatical May 1 through August 15. One-year delayed due to the pandemic, so even more deserved! The Session wished her the best of times and presented her with a love offering that is to be used just for fun!
- 2. Session reading assignment. *How to Fight Racism* by Jemar Tisby. Mr. Tisby will be one of the Community Speakers this fall. Cathie Lloyd will order a hard copy of the book for each elder unless she is told that the elder has made other arrangements.

There being no further business to come before the Session, **MOTION MADE, SECONDED, and PASSED: To adjourn the meeting** at approximately 8:46 PM to a Circle of Prayer, including prayer concerns and with special blessings for Pastor Hmingi on her sabbatical.

By: _____
The Rev. Dr. Stephen D. McConnell
Moderator

By: _____
Linda R. Getzen
Clerk to the Session

Attachment to official minutes:
Clerk's Report (statistics)
Foundation Grant Requests (3)
Foundation Restricted Funds Request (1)