

Due to the COVID-19 virus pandemic, the elders and staff met via a video-conference Session meeting that began at 7:00 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, Joan Emrich, Gerry Hailey, Andrea Jackson, Cliff McHenry, Jason Morton, Lou Stern, 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 prayer and a devotion inspired by 1 Corinthians 13:7-8 and 1 John 4:18: We are assured that love endures all things and there is no fear in love; so let us immerse ourselves in the love of God. Dr. McConnell welcomed new Ruling Elders to the Session: Jeanne Asakura, Jason Morton, and Pam Williams. He hopes to be able to meet with them in person to continue their new Elder training. **MOTION MADE, SECONDED, and PASSED: To approve the Agenda for the Meeting.**

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

- **NEW ELDER TRAINING:** The Clerk has been emailing Session information to the new Ruling Elders both as part of their training and to help her in putting together parts for the Session manual she is compiling.
- **REMINDER:** May Session meeting is one week early on Monday, May 18.
- **DATE CHANGE:** Stated Meeting of Peace River Presbytery rescheduled from May to Saturday, September 12 at Venice Presbyterian Church.
- **NEW MEMBERS:** Pastor Hmingi has held three new member classes by tele-conference, resulting in four new members who wish to join. They were asked the required questions and affirmative answers were given. The Clerk emailed the Session their biographical information.

MOTION MADE, SECONDED, and PASSED: To receive the following persons into the membership of Church of the Palms: Carol S. Cohen, Mary Louise Weed, David John West, and Deborah C. West.

STAFF REPORTS:

Director of Outreach & Families Sarah Soboleski:

- **Family Ministry:** Carol Homeister and Ethan Howell have continued Family Ministry through creative means of remote access for Sunday School and youth group activities. Vacation Bible School has been cancelled. The annual youth trip to Montreat in July is pending.
- **Communications:** Sarah shared a video of the reworked website. She also shared analytics about increased viewings via the church's Live Streaming, YouTube page, Facebook. There is worldwide viewing! Opportunities to reach people!

Family Life Pastor The Rev. Laurie Haas:

- All staff has been busy. Pastor Laurie is leading small groups via video-conferences. The 2020 Confirmation Class (13 youth) meets remotely.
- Contemporary Service: Working on setting up a space in the Sanctuary to record services for airing on Sundays.

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

- Congregational Care is busy. Stephen Ministers and Deacons have been calling households. Most over the age of 80 have been called. A lot of communication! Supporting loved ones of those who are hospitalized and cannot be visited.
- Pastor Hmingi's tele-conference membership classes are a success! 4 new members in March and April.

Music Director Genevieve Beauchamp:

- Singers and musicians for video services are funded through a special music account. The Chancel Choir meets weekly via video-conference and are sent the music for the Sunday service so they can sing along at home. The Handbell Choir also meets via video-conference.
- Sarasota Young Voices awards ceremony next week.
- Jonathan Spivey and Yoko Kita and other staff members continue to tirelessly work the Food Pantry drive through.
- Genevieve and Sarah are finishing this semester of seminary in a few weeks.

Executive Director of Operations Pam Gillespie:

- The generosity of the congregation has been amazing. Extra Mile projects are continuing with funds that have been dedicated for those purposes. She shared pictures of the renovations to the Chapel, kitchen, Sanctuary lift, Education building and Preschool.
- Food Pantry: 200+ families are served each weekday via drive through. The assistance of volunteers who are in good health and between ages 18-64 is welcome.

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

- See concluding remarks below.

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: 03/23/2020

B. TO APPROVE THE CLERK'S REPORT:

1. Assignments and Meetings:
 - a. Sunday Morning Prayers for the Pastors: Month of May at 8:20 AM, Sr. Pastor's office: **Jason Morton**
 - b. Session Meeting Storyteller: May: **Gerry Hailey Tentative**
 - c. Deacons' Exec. Comm. Meeting: May 4 at 7 PM: **Matthew Straeb Tentative**
 - d. Special Session Meeting to Receive New Members: Tentative Sunday, May 17 at 11 AM, Chapel: **Group 1 Elders (M. Baarson, A. Jackson, C. McHenry)**
2. Membership Statistics, Baptisms & Weddings, Home Communion, and Quarterly Worship Service Attendance Report (see attached Clerk's Report)
3. Appointment of Cathie Lloyd as Reader to assist the Clerk with the Annual Review of Session Records by the Presbytery. Such appointment to be automatically renewed on an annual basis, terminable at the discretion of the Session
4. Dates for 2020/21 Stated Meetings of the Session: May 18, June 22, July (no meeting),

August 24, September 28, October 26, November 23, December 14 (2 weeks early),
January 18, February 22, March 22, April 26.

C. TO RECEIVE REPORTS FROM:

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

D. TO RECEIVE REPORTS FROM SESSION COMMITTEES:

1. Administration and Finance: Ch. Andrea Jackson (includes Building and Grounds Team)
2. Global Partner Mission: Ch. Matthew Straeb *No written report this month*
3. Personnel: Ch. Joan Emrich *No written report this month*

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

F. TO RECEIVE REPORTS FROM CONGREGATION COMMITTEES:

1. Deacons' Executive Committee: Ch. Carol Washchuk *No written report this month*
2. Memorial Garden Board: Ch. Sue Angle *No written report this month*
3. Nominating: Ch. Marcia Baarson *No written report this month*

OLD BUSINESS:

1. Emergency plan updates:

- a. Food Pantry: Pam Gillespie reported (see also her staff report above). Volunteers are packing food. Set up so that families can pack food together. The community is dropping off supplies and fresh vegetables - truckers, grocery stores, et al.
- b. Palms Preschool: Pam Gillespie reported. A report of Possible Procedures for Palms Preschool Re-opening was distributed as part of the Session package for discussion. Teachers are sending out activities and keeping in touch with their children. Dr. McConnell reported that the Administration and Finance Committee has been involved in planning for the Preschool re-opening. Because the pandemic circumstances remain tricky and fluid, flexibility in the timing of re-opening is important. Question about what it will look like to be *re-opened*.
- c. Worship: Dr. McConnell reported. Gathering as much input from as many sources as possible – government, other churches, health department, et al. We are considering different scenarios about how to bring people back to the church campus.

2. Financial plan updates:

- a. Ratification of the following resolution that was previously addressed by the Session by email: **RESOLVED, that the President of the Corporation, Andrea Jackson, is authorized and directed to execute documents and take all steps necessary, in the name of and on behalf of the Corporation, in connection with making application under the CARES Act Payroll Protection Program. To be effective April 5, 2020.**
- b. Finance update: Administration and Finance Committee Chair Andrea Jackson reported. Contributions are ahead of budget. However, the Administration and Finance Committee is aware that some donors have prepaid their 2020 pledges, which increases current giving, but might depress giving later in the year. No income is being received from the Palms Preschool, but teachers are still being paid. This will negatively affect the

overall church budget. The Payroll Protection Program funds (PPP) have been received and deposited to a separate account. These funds are a safety net for payroll. Pam is working through the complicated Small Business Administration rules and interpretations of the PPP funding and loan forgiveness. Andrea will review for accuracy. Andrea noted that, in addition, the church has a budgeted capital reserve that can be accessed at the direction of the Session for other unexpected expenses.

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 Secretary/Clerk to the Session – Linda Getzen

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND CONCLUDING REMARKS:

- 1. Dr. McConnell: The Session retreat has been postponed. A new date to be determined. Please participate in the *Peace Be With You* videos that air during the Sunday service. Send yours to Jackie Gomez in the office. There has been a great response to the Daily Devotions via YouTube. The staff is working hard to keep the congregation engaged. We are so grateful to all of them as we experience this new reality.
- 2. Reading for discussion at the May Session meeting. Please purchase *The Good and Beautiful Community* by James Bryan Smith and read at your own pace.

There being no further business to come before the Session, **MOTION MADE, SECONDED, and PASSED: To adjourn the meeting** at approximately 8:45 PM with prayer by Dr. McConnell.

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

By: _____
Linda R. Getzen
Clerk to the Session

Attachment to official minutes:
Clerk’s Report (statistics)