

**CHURCH OF THE PALMS - PRESBYTERIAN (USA)  
SPECIAL SESSION MEETING**

**SARASOTA, FLORIDA  
JULY 8, 2020**

A Special Meeting of the Session of Church of the Palms was properly called by the Session at its June meeting, and due to the COVID-19 virus pandemic, the elders and staff met via a video-conference Session meeting that began at 7:00 PM.

**CALLED PURPOSES:** (1) To discuss and vote upon a Grant Request to the Foundation regarding enhancements to the digital ministry, and (2) to conduct other church business that may be related to the COVID-19 pandemic, such as the receiving of new members and plans for re-opening.

**MINUTES**

**PRESENT:** Teaching Elders: Senior Pastor The Rev. Dr. Stephen D. McConnell (Moderator), and Congregational Life Pastor The Rev. Dr. Lal Hmingliani Browne. Ruling Elders: Jeanne Asakura, Marcia Baarson, Linda Calvert, 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, and Director of Outreach & Families Sarah Soboleski. **EXCUSED:** Family Life Pastor The Rev. Laurie Haas, Ruling Elder Joan Emrich, and Music Director Genevieve Beauchamp.

**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.

**BUSINESS:**

1. **Grant Request to Foundation for Digital Ministry.** Dr. McConnell and Director of Outreach and Families Sarah Soboleski reported for the Worship and Communications Committees. They provided the background on this project designed to enhance and expand the ability to produce engaging and varied digital worship, adult education, and youth programming content for the church's online community. The grant request focuses on equipment enhancements to the audiovisual capabilities of the Campus Center and a mobile studio that can be used throughout the church. Of the \$75,000 total funds needed, partial funding of \$25,000 will come from funds designated in the Extra Mile Open Palms Campaign for use in the Campus Center. The Session was provided with an explanation of the bidding process and reference checking. Specifications were given in the winning bid by Pro Audio Services. For additional grant details, see Grant Request attached to the official minutes. In anticipation that such a grant might be approved by the Foundation, the Session was reminded that the Foundation is close to reaching its 2020 annual distribution guideline [*Note from the Clerk – that amount is \$247,699*]. Once the Foundation reaches the 2020 annual distribution guideline, consent by 75% of Foundation board members and 75% of Session members who are present at their respective meetings and voting in separate actions will be required for additional distributions. **MOTION MADE, SECONDED, and PASSED UNANIMOUSLY: To approve submission to the Foundation of the Grant Request for \$50,000 for the Digital Ministry project, and to consent to the distribution of funds that may be granted although a portion of such distribution may cause the Foundation to exceed its 2020 annual distribution guideline.** Note: To be effective, a similar motion needs to be passed by at least 75% of the Foundation board members present at its meeting.

2. **New Members.** The Clerk provided a short Clerk's Report and announced that Pastor Hmingi has held more new member classes in June and July by conference calls, during which six prospective members were asked the required questions and affirmative answers were given. During the COVID-19 pandemic, which has caused the cancellation of regular Sunday new member classes with designated Elder groups in attendance to receive the members, the Session as a whole has been voting upon new members at each meeting. **MOTION MADE, SECONDED, and PASSED: To receive the following as Members of Church of the Palms as set forth in the attached Clerk's Report:**

**Donald G. Brubaker  
Linda K. Brubaker  
Rachel A. Ferguson  
Rose H. Hentemann  
Sandra L. Murphy  
Linda R. Thoresen**

3. **Discussion Regarding Re-Opening.** Discussion continued regarding plans for re-opening of the church campus for in-person worship and other activities. Given the recent accelerated rise in COVID-19 cases in Florida, the consensus of the Session was to continue cautious contemplation. The ability to meet and keep healthy social distancing guidelines with the large church congregation is problematic. The pandemic threats will continue to be monitored.

**SAVE THE DATE:** Reminder that a Session meeting has been called for Monday, July 27, 2020, at 7 PM via video-conferencing. If the meeting is not needed to conduct business, it will be cancelled by the Moderator.

There being no further business to come before the Session, **MOTION MADE, SECONDED, and PASSED: To adjourn the meeting** at approximately 7:50 PM with prayer by Pastor Hmingi Browne.

By: \_\_\_\_\_  
The Rev. Dr. Stephen D. McConnell  
Moderator

By: \_\_\_\_\_  
Linda R. Getzen  
Clerk to the Session

Attachment to official minutes:  
Clerk's Report for July 8, 2020 (statistics)  
Foundation Grant Request for Digital Ministry