

FELLOWSHIP

The Rev. Dr. Stephen D. McConnell welcomed the elders and staff members at 6:00 PM in the Chapel Reception Room for a Christmas dinner (thank you Kathy Robinett!) and fellowship. The elders and staff then moved to Room 206 of the Education Building for the Session meeting that began at 6:50 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, Matthew Straeb, and Pam Williams. Clerk to the Session Linda Getzen, Executive Director of Operations Pam Gillespie, Music Director Genevieve Beauchamp, and. **EXCUSED:** Ruling Elder Sandi Stewart and Director of Ministry & Mission 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 Christmas devotion and prayer.

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:

- FYI - Grant Request approved by the Foundation for "Back 40" improvements funding = \$170,000
- FYI - Clerk attended the annual Presbytery review of Session Records on 10/06/21. COP records approved without exception.
- FYI – Peace River Presbytery stated meetings for 2022 (in person): Thurs. Feb. 24 – Pine Shores PC, Sarasota, Thurs. May 26 – Venice PC, and Sat. Oct. 15 – Cypress Lake PC, Ft. Myers.
- Postponed: Appoint Session Liaison for COM Congregational Advocate.
- **MOTION MADE SECONDED AND PASSED: To receive into membership the following person who attended one of Pastor Hmingi's recent New Member Classes: Brenda Belsky.**

STAFF REPORTS:

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

- The job descriptions for the call positions of Executive Pastor and Associate Pastor for Worship & Music were approved by the Presbytery's Committee on Ministry. Because Church of the Palms has two identified candidates for these positions, he is anticipating that the need for the usual Associate Pastor Nominating Committee can be dispensed with.
- The rapidly emerging omicron variation of the COVID virus is being monitored by staff. No anticipated changes to activities at this time. The 7:00 Christmas Eve live service will also streamed on the church website.

Executive Director of Operations Pam Gillespie (also reporting for Director of Ministry & Mission Sarah Soboleski):

- For details, see Executive Director's Report in the Session package.
- Revenue for 2021 is within \$26K of goals.

- A part-time media specialist has been hired, primarily to oversee the 10 AM worship service. Specialist Kevin Smith will also train volunteers.
- The staff has a new on-line program to help set and monitor their goals. In the spring, there will also be a new program to build and manage the volunteer pool - Marlene Petro and Leslie Conzelman (incoming Elders) have agreed to help with this.
- Wilkinson School has been on hold - volunteers not allowed on campus due to the pandemic

Music Director Genevieve Beauchamp:

- Thank you for the vote of confidence for the Associate Pastor of Worship & Music position! One semester left of school!
- Doing more congregational care activities. Working as a chaplain at Doctors Hospital has been rewarding. She also hears good things about COP there!
- Sarasota Young Voices – the quality has been coming back. Re-growing from the pandemic shutdown.
- The Chancel Choir loved being challenged by The Magnificat last Sunday.
- Noontime Concert Series has been successful.
- Monthly preludes with the young musicians have been well received.

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

- Wednesday Night Life classes - good metrics for attendance. Average viewership is 305 per week. 18 small groups have formed. A new program will start in January.
- Christmas gatherings – Stephen Ministers, Presbyterian Women, Shepherding Deacons.
- Working with a group on the labyrinth for the “Back 40.”
- 68 new COP members in 2021!

Family Life Pastor The Rev. Laurie Haas:

- Sabbatical plans for the summer of 2023. Rev. Haas has formed a team to collaborate with her on a proposal for a grant from the Lilly Endowment Clergy Renewal Program.
- Gearing up for all of the Christmas Services – Longest Night 12/21, Christmas Eve Eve on Siesta Beach 12/23, Christmas Eve 12/24 (4 services!), and Sunday services 12/26 (3!)

OMNIBUS MOTION:

MOTION MADE, SECONDED, and PASSED: To set aside for discussion or clarification, item F.2. (Memorial Garden Board Report) of the Omnibus Motion as presented in the Agenda.

MOTION MADE, SECONDED, and PASSED: To pass the following Omnibus Motion (Items A-F), less item F.2., as presented in the Agenda:

A. TO APPROVE THE FOLLOWING MINUTES:

1. Special Session Meeting to Receive New Members: 10/10/2021 (omitted last month)
2. Stated Session Meeting: 10/25/2021
3. Special Session Meeting to Receive New Member: 10/31/2021
4. Called Session Meeting re Associate Pastors’ Job Descriptions: 11/08/2021
5. Special Session Meeting to Receive New Members: 11/12/2021
6. Special Session Meeting to Receive New Members: 12/07/2021

B. TO APPROVE THE CLERK’S REPORT:

1. Assignments and Meetings:
 - a. Sunday Morning Prayers with the Pastors at 8:20 AM in Sr. Pastor’s office: Month of December: **Maxine Perry**
 - b. Sunday Morning Prayers with the Pastors at 8:20 AM in Sr. Pastor’s office: Month of January: **Diane Curtis**
 - c. Deacons’ Exec. Comm. Meeting: Dec. 6 at 7 PM: **Marcia Baarson**

- d. Deacons' Exec. Comm. Meeting: Jan. 3 at 7 PM: **Gerry Hailey**
- e. Storyteller for January Session meeting: **Matthew Straeb**
- 2. **Communion Dates for 2022: 1/2, 2/6, 3/6, 4/3, 4/14 (Maundy Thursday), 5/1, 6/5, 7/3, 8/7, 9/4, 10/2, 11/6, 12/4, and 12/24 (11 PM Xmas Eve Service)**
- 3. Membership Statistics, Baptisms & Weddings, and Home Communion (see attached Clerk's Report)
- C. TO RECEIVE REPORTS FROM:**
 - 1. Elder attending Deacons' Exec. Comm. meeting in November: **Sandi Stewart**
 - 2. Elder attending Deacons' Exec. Comm. meeting in December: **Marcia Baarson**
- D. TO RECEIVE REPORTS FROM SESSION COMMITTEES:**
 - 1. Administration & Finance (includes Building & Grounds): Ch. Andrea Jackson
 - 2. Global Mission Partners: Ch. Matthew Straeb
 - 3. Personnel: Ch. Diane Curtis
- E. TO RECEIVE REPORTS FROM MINISTRY TEAMS:**
 - 1. Family & Student Ministries (includes Palms Preschool)
 - 2. Contemporary Worship Service Leadership – *See staff reports*
 - 3. Presbyterian Women - *No written report this month*
 - 4. Stephen Ministry Leadership
- F. TO RECEIVE REPORTS FROM CONGREGATION COMMITTEES:**
 - 1. Deacons' Exec. Committee: Ch. Elizabeth Dexter
 - 2. Memorial Garden Board: Ch. Paul Nielsen
 - 3. Nominating: Ch. Marcia Baarson

ITEMS FROM OMNIBUS SET ASIDE FOR CLARIFICATION OR DISCUSSION:

Item F.2. – Memorial Garden Board Report. Clarification was requested about MGB plans to remove a window in a meeting room in the Chapel Building to accommodate additional Memorial Garden wall space outside. Elder Steve Rowe of the Buildings & Grounds Committee reported that a proposal has been requested from the MGB by his committee. Regular committee channels through Building & Grounds and Administration & Finance will be followed to address this matter. **MOTION MADE, SECONDED, and PASSED: To receive item F.2. of the Omnibus Motion.**

OLD BUSINESS:

- 1. Race and the Church Team. Dr. McConnell and Rev. Haas reported and provided an overview of the activities of the Race and the Church Team from September 2019 to date, including a timeline and their reading list. They also presented a proposal for Church of the Palms to become a member congregation of SURE – Sarasota United for Responsibility and Equity. The SURE faith-based justice ministry has been working since 1997. The consensus of the Session was that additional information was needed before action could be taken. Dr. McConnell will reach out to the director of SURE to see if he/she might attend a future Session meeting.

NEW BUSINESS:

- 1. **MOTION MADE, SECONDED, and PASSED: To call the annual combined meeting of the Church Corporation and Congregation for Sunday, January 30, 2022, at 12:00 PM, in the Sanctuary, and to direct that notice of the meeting be announced from the pulpit on consecutive Sundays and placed in churchwide communications.**
- 2. **MOTION MADE, SECONDED, and PASSED: To elect Wendy Cox as a director (Class of 2025) of The Foundation for the Church of the Palms – Presbyterian (USA), Inc.**

3. **MOTION MADE, SECONDED, and PASSED: To approve the Amended and Restated Bylaws of The Foundation for the Church of the Palms – Presbyterian (USA), Inc.**
4. 2022 Operating Budget. Administration and Finance Chair Andrea Jackson reported on the 2022 Operating Budget as presented (see December Session package for details). She also explained the large estimated 2021 surplus, which was primarily caused by lower operating expenses (some due to pandemic curtailed activities) and receiving the PPE funds into income (used for pre-school teachers' salaries). Of the surplus funds, \$110K will be re-allocated to Global Mission Partners (\$50K), New Ministry Initiatives (\$50K), and Peace River Presbytery (\$10K), with the remaining funds to be retained. After completing the motions in item 5 below pertaining to compensation matters for the called pastors, the Session returned to this item 4. **MOTION FROM THE ADMINISTRATION AND FINANCE COMMITTEE and PASSED: To adopt the 2022 operating budget and recommendations regarding the allocation of the 2021 surplus as presented.**
5. Compensation Matters for Called Pastors. The pastors and staff excused themselves from the meeting. The Clerk to the Session chaired the remainder of the meeting. Personnel Committee Chair Diane Curtis presented the Personnel committee recommendations for the 2022 Terms of Call for the called pastors, Stephen D. McConnell, Lal Hmingliani Browne, and Laurie Haas, as those terms pertain to the 2022 operating budget. She explained that figures from other large churches in the presbytery for similar pastor positions had been reviewed.
 - a. 2022 Terms of Call. **MOTION FROM THE PERSONNEL COMMITTEE and PASSED: To approve for the 2022 operating budget the Terms of Call for the pastors, including the following: A 3% increase in the combined salary and housing allocation for Dr. McConnell, a 3% increase in the combined salary and housing allocation for Dr. Browne, and a 5% increase in the combined salary and housing allocation for Rev. Haas.**
 - b. 2022 Housing Allowance Allocations. **MOTION FROM THE PERSONNEL COMMITTEE and PASSED: To accept the 2022 housing allowance allocations made by each called pastor.** For information, allowance figures provided by the pastors to the Personnel Committee Chair are as follows: Dr. McConnell \$80,000, Dr. Browne \$51,500, and Rev. Haas \$45,360.

ANNOUNCEMENTS: Please read *Falling Upward* by Richard Rohr (entire book).

There being no further business to come before the Session, **CONSENSUS: To adjourn the meeting** at approximately 9:00 PM with closing prayer by the Clerk.

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

By: _____
 Linda R. Getzen
 Clerk to the Session

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