

**FELLOWSHIP**

The Rev. Dr. Stephen D. McConnell welcomed the elders and staff members at 6:00 PM in the Campus Center for dinner and discussion about Christmas. The elders and staff then moved to Room 206 of the Education Building for the Session meeting that began at 7:00 PM.

**MINUTES**

**PRESENT:** Teaching Elders: Senior Pastor The Rev. Dr. Stephen D. McConnell (Moderator) and Congregational Care Pastor The Rev. Dr. Lal Hmingliani Browne.

Ruling Elders: Bob Baarson, Marty Guice, Al Jeffrey, David MacMillan, Bill Mallett, Marlene Petro, Bill Reynolds, Robin Segó, Sandy Snyder, and Tom Taylor.

Clerk to the Session Linda Getzen, Executive Director of Operations Kevin Kenny, Executive Director of Ministries Laurie Haas, and Equipping Director Carolyn Wilson.

**EXCUSED:** Ruling Elders Donald Browning and Jane Delgado Semidei, and Music Director Genevieve Beauchamp.

**QUORUM AND CALL TO ORDER:** A quorum was established. Dr. McConnell served as Moderator and called the meeting to order. **MOTION MADE, SECONDED, and PASSED: To approve the Agenda for the Meeting with the deletion of item 2 under New Business.** [Clerk's note: Samaritan Lease vote postponed until after Administration and Finance review in January].

**OPENING PRAYER:** Elder Segó opened the meeting with prayer.

**STAFF REPORTS:**

**Equipping Director Carolyn Wilson:**

- The Advent adult education series led by Dale Vollrath was very well received.
- Director Wilson is working with a leadership development coach. Interviews with staff.
- The *Re-Ignite* retreat is on schedule for March 24-25. Registration begins January 15.
- Under the new Sunday schedule, adult classes on Sundays will be at 9:00 and 10:15 AM.
- On Wednesdays at 6:30 PM, January 4- February 22, Dr. McConnell will be leading a series entitled *Finding Freedom*, based on the writings of some of the great Christian leaders who have spent time in prison.

**Executive Director of Ministries Laurie Haas:**

- Linda Evans is the new Tutoring Ministry director. There was a nice send-off for retiring director Judy Armitage.
- The Early Childhood Center children shared a Family Chapel experience with their parents– members of the staff reenacted the Christmas story. Real baby. No camels.
- The Garden had a nice Advent season. Families shared prayer concerns. The new 10 AM worship time has been announced. Elders Mallett and Jeffrey explained that it has been a difficult change for some families to initially embrace. Discussion was had about the need for a sustainable model of worship that our church can live into, the importance

for the church family of having a single voice from all pulpits each Sunday, and the limitations imposed by the resources the church must work with. The concerns of the Deacons about the time (10:00 rather than 10:15) were discussed. Sunday scheduling of worship, children, youth and adult classes is overlapping and complex, and unfortunately cannot not be perfect for all. **MOTION MADE, SECONDED, and PASSED: To approve the rescheduling of The Garden worship service on Sundays to 10:00 AM.**

- Presbyterian Women have two new moderators – Susy Welsh and Linda Evans.

**Congregational Care Pastor The Rev. Dr. Lal Hmingliani Browne:**

- 103+ Deacons gathered for Christmas fun two weeks ago.
- 38 Shepherding Deacons are on the 2017 slate.
- The Stephen Ministers will have a Christmas party on December 21. Still a need for more for the incoming class.
- On December 30, new church members have been invited to Dr. Browne’s home.

**Executive Director of Operations Kevin Kenny:**

- Part time staff accountant position has been filled. Welcome to Missy Hammen.
- Working on segregation of accounting duties – fulfilling the auditor’s requirement.
- The 2017 budget has been presented to the Administration and Finance Committee.
- The 2016 audit will be conducted by Kenneth Kandefer CPAs. Director Kenny will work closely with them this year.
- Payroll will be outsourced to ADP in 2017. ADP will also automate time and attendance for the staff. With outsourcing, combined with the part time staff accountant position, the 2017 budget will realize an \$18-\$20K cost savings.
- An ad hoc committee of Cathie Silbaugh, Ann McColgan, Bob Baarson and Steve Rowe has been formed to address the issues with the outdated computer server and to consider a cloud based system. The current provider has been consulted and 3 RFPs will be solicited. Steve Rowe has been an invaluable resource for the committee.

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

- A memo regarding the December New Member Class. A Moderator was not able to be present at the new member meeting, so a vote was not taken. Prospective members were met by three Ruling Elders. The new members affirmatively answered the required questions for membership. **MOTION MADE, SECONDED and PASSED: To receive the following persons into the membership of Church of the Palms, effective December 19, 2016 [See names listed on Clerk’s Report attached to the official minutes].**

**FINANCIAL UPDATE:** Administration and Finance Committee Chair Elder Taylor reported:

- Distributed the Administration and Finance Committee Financial Recap for November. There are challenges on the revenue side as the year winds down. November receipts lagged projections. Christmas falling on a Sunday usually means lighter attendance and lighter giving that day. The staff continues to manage expenses within budget. The Early Childhood Center is near or at capacity and generated a profit in November. 2016 overages were caused primarily by unanticipated staff related expenses for ECC, and normal, but costly building and ground expenses.
- The 2017 budget uses 2016 assumptions and those assumptions will be reviewed after the 2016 year closes.

**OMNIBUS MOTION:**

**MOTION MADE, SECONDED, and PASSED: To SET ASIDE FOR DISCUSSION OR CLARIFICATION, items F.1., F.2. and F.3. of the Omnibus Motion as presented in the Agenda.**

**MOTION MADE, SECONDED, and PASSED: To PASS the Omnibus Motion (Items A-F), less items F.1., F.2. and F.3., presented in the Agenda.**

- A. To APPROVE THE FOLLOWING MINUTES:**
1. Stated Session Meeting – November 28, 2016
- B. TO APPROVE THE CLERK’S REPORT:**
1. Assignments and Meetings:
    - a. Sunday Morning Prayers with the Pastors – Month of January – Marty Guice
    - c. Session Meeting Opening Prayer – January 23 – Al Jeffrey
    - d. Diaconate Meeting – January 9 – Bill Reynolds
    - e. Special Session Meeting to Receive New Members – NO MEETING IN JANUARY
  2. Membership Statistics (items 2-4 see attached Clerk’s Report)
  3. Baptisms & Weddings
  4. Home Communion
- C. TO RECEIVE REPORTS FROM:**
1. Elder attending Diaconate meeting in December – Bob Baarson
- D. TO RECEIVE REPORTS FROM SESSION COMMITTEES:**
1. Administration and Finance – Ch. Tom Taylor (includes Building and Grounds - Ch. Paul Ross and The Generosity Team - Ch. Bob Baarson)
  2. Global Partners – Ch. Jane Delgado Semidei – *no written report this month*
  3. Personnel – Ch. Marlene Petro
- E. TO RECEIVE REPORTS FROM MINISTRY TEAMS:**
1. Equipping Ministry – Dir. Carolyn Wilson – *see staff report above*
  2. Family & Student Ministries (includes Early Childhood Center) – Exec. Dir. Laurie Haas – *see staff report above*
  3. The Garden Leadership
  4. Legacy Giving– *no written report this month*
  5. Presbyterian Women– *no written report this month*
  6. Stephen Ministry Leadership – *no written report this month*
  7. Worship Planning – *no written report this month*
- F. TO RECEIVE REPORTS FROM CONGREGATION COMMITTEES: See separate motions below**
1. Diaconate Executive Committee– Ch. Don Schalekamp
  2. Memorial Garden – Ch. Sue Angle
  3. Nominating – Ch. David MacMillan

**ITEMS FROM OMNIBUS SET ASIDE FOR CLARIFICATION OR DISCUSSION:**

**Item F.1. Diaconate Report.** Elder Baarson, who attended the December Diaconate meeting, noted the Deacons’ request for a new pictorial directory. After discussion about use of staff resources, **MOTION MADE, SECONDED, and PASSED: To direct the church staff to present to the Session a feasibility report regarding producing a pictorial directory in-house.** Elder Baarson volunteered to meet with Deacon Jason Morton on this matter.

**Item F.2. Memorial Garden Report.** Discussion concerning some points contained in the Memorial Garden Report. The financial position is unclear. A budgeting analysis should be done. The request for a

second memorial wall needs more detail. **MOTION MADE, SECONDED, and PASSED: To receive Omnibus Motion item F.2., including the bylaws contained therein, as a first reading, to be re-addressed by the Session in January after additional information is obtained.**

**Item F.3. Nominating Committee Report.** Elder MacMillan, chair of the Nominating Committee, provided the slate of elders, all deacons, and nominating committee representatives that will be presented at the Annual Meeting in January. The slate lacks nominees for the Memorial Garden and the customary input has been requested from that group.

During this discussion, it was also noted that it can be difficult to find enough elders and deacons to serve communion “up front” in the Sanctuary due to the steepness of the stairs leading to the communion table and the “lack of youth” of many servers and their knees, etc. There can be similar stair issues in the balcony. Maybe there is another way of serving. Dr. McConnell promised to take this under advisement.

**MOTION MADE, SECONDED, and PASSED: To receive Omnibus Motion items F.1 and F.3. (See above for qualified motion on item F.2.).**

#### **OLD BUSINESS:**

1. **Building Committee** – Bill Reynolds. All action on the Palms Center Project is with Jon F. Swift Construction (developing the Guaranteed Maximum Price proposal) and Sarasota County permitting authorities (reviewing our applications for a Site Permit and a Building Permit). Action on the Site Permit application has been slower than desired due to the large volume of such applications under consideration. Kimley Horn, who prepared the application and has an ongoing relationship with county authorities, has contacted the county weekly to gently expedite our application. Our schedule shows that we need this permit by late January and we are hopeful that that will be the case. **MOTION MADE, SECONDED, and PASSED: To call a Special Session Meeting for Sunday, January 8, 2017, at 12:00 PM in the Chapel Reception Room, for the purpose of receiving the Report of the Building Committee and voting upon the price for the Palms Center building project.**
2. **Approval of 2017 Budget** – Tom Taylor. Additional discussion was held on the 2017 budget and the effect of lagging year-end receipts for 2016. Elder Taylor noted that the 2017 budget is extremely realistic. **MOTION MADE, SECONDED, and PASSED: To adopt the 2017 budget as presented, which approval is given with the understanding that the 2017 budget is based on 2016 assumptions as to receipts and some adjustments may need to be made after the close of 2016.** Note: The budget includes the Terms of Call for the pastors approved at the November and their housing allocations set forth in the next paragraph.
3. **2017 Terms of Call - Allocation of Housing Allowances**. Pastors McConnell and Browne were consulted as to their preferences for the allocation of their housing allowances under their Terms of Call. Dr. McConnell preferred that his housing allowance dollar amount remain the same as in the 2016 budget. Dr. Browne preferred that her housing allowance dollar amount be changed. **MOTION MADE, SECONDED, and PASSED: To approve the following allocation of 2017 housing allowances in the 2017 terms of call for the called pastors, subject to approval of such terms of call by the congregation at its annual meeting on January 29, 2017.**

**Dr. McConnell: \$50,743.98**

**Dr. Browne: \$50,933.74.**

**NEW BUSINESS:**

1. **Annual Meeting**. MOTION MADE, SECONDED, and PASSED: To call the Annual Meeting of the Church Corporation and Congregation for Sunday, January 29, 2017 at 12:00 PM, in the Sanctuary, and to direct that notice of the meeting be announced from the pulpit on two consecutive Sundays in January and placed in the churchwide communications. Note: The annual report of the Foundation will also be presented.
2. **Contract with Visitation Pastor**. MOTION MADE, SECONDED, and PASSED: To approve the 2017 contract with Visitation Pastor Alan Rodda, which includes a 3% increase.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

Reading for January Session dinner is *The Most Loving Place in Town*.

There being no further business to come before the Session, **MOTION MADE, SECONDED, and PASSED: To adjourn the meeting** at approximately 8:37 PM to a Circle of Prayer.

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

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

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