

**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 around the first two chapters of the current reading, *Stories Jesus Tells – The Parables*, by John Claypool. 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) and Congregational Care Pastor The Rev. Dr. Lal Hmingliani Browne. Ruling Elders: Andrea Jackson, Bob Baarson, Marty Guice, Bill Mallett, John McQueen, Marlene Petro, Bill Reynolds, Robin Segó, Sandy Snyder, and Dotti Tyle. Clerk to the Session Linda Getzen, Executive Director of Operations Pam Gillespie, Executive Director of Ministries Laurie Haas, Music Director Genevieve Beauchamp, Equipping Director Carolyn Wilson, and Community Engagement Director Sarah Soboleski.

**EXCUSED:** Ruling Elders Jane Delgado Semidei and Tom Taylor.

**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. Community Engagement Director Sarah Soboleski was welcomed to the meeting. **MOTION MADE, SECONDED, and PASSED: To approve the Agenda for the Meeting as revised to move item 1 of New Business to the end of the meeting to allow the pastors and staff to leave early.**

**STORYTELLING** - Elder Guice opened the meeting with his story – *Marty Through His Ages* [Clerk's title!]. Prayers were said for the storyteller.

**STAFF REPORTS:**

**Equipping Director Carolyn Wilson:**

- *Music for Christmas* series has been held on three Wednesdays. Very special music and education provided by organist Jonathan Spivey. The hand bell ensemble was awesome – music combined with a history of hand bells. There will be a carol sing led by Judy Lutz on Wednesday 12/20/17.
- Presbyterian Women held a Christmas tea.
- Working on connecting ministry leaders with interested members.
- Upcoming series: *God in Hollywood*; also, a Lenten series featuring leader Elder Bob Baarson.

**Executive Director of Operations Pam Gillespie:**

- The 2018 budget is being worked on.
- Construction of Palms Center is still on target
- The parking lot surface will be finished in the spring, but there are plans for Christmas Eve park.
- Sanctuary roof replacement is coming along.

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

- Prayers for the families of those in congregational care.
- The Deacons delivered 109 poinsettias to shut-ins.
- 96 Shepherding Deacons had a Christmas party last Saturday.
- Nine spaces for new Stephen Ministers have been filled – one to go!
- The home communion team led by Elder Sandy Snyder is working well.
- Training for Stephen Ministers to make home and hospital visits.
- First annual Christmas Cookie Sampling was a smashing success!

**Music Director Genevieve Beauchamp:**

- December is very busy for music – caroling, Christmas music Wednesday series, etc.
- Full house attended *The Messiah*.
- January 14 - Westminster College Choir will perform at 9 & 11 Sunday services and a 4 PM concert.

**Executive Director of Ministries Laurie Haas:**

- Wonderful contemporary church service last Sunday.
- Steve Sipes is the new Student Ministry Director – January 8. He will continue as Contemporary Service worship leader.

**Community Engagement Director Sarah Soboleski:**

- Her work is in church communications.
- Talented local company is working with her and Jackie on the overhaul of the church website – target for completion by Easter.
- Working on signage and maps
- Every communication piece over time will speak with the same voice – more intentional on Facebook.

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

- Closing out a good year – 60th Anniversary celebration began, start of the Palms Center construction.
- Staff changes – staff members are rising to the occasion with enthusiasm and humility.
- Westminster College Choir needs hosts to house choir members the evening of January 13. Please sign up.

**CORRESPONDENCE AND CLERK'S ANNOUNCEMENTS:** *The Clerk to the Session emails to Staff and Elders pertinent correspondence received between Session Meetings.* The Clerk had no additional matters to report.

**FINANCIAL UPDATE:** Administration and Finance Committee Vice Chair Elder Jackson reported:

- See recap on page 16 of Session package.
- \$227,000 in receipts needed to reach budgeted figures.
- Administration & Finance continues to work on the 2018 budget. Their next meeting is January 10.
- **Dr. McConnell called a Special Session meeting for Tuesday, January 16 at 4 PM to receive the report of the Administration & Finance Committee and adopt a budget for 2018.** More information to follow.

**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 – 11/27/17
  2. Special Session Meeting to Receive New Members – 12/10/17
- 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 Storyteller – 01/22/18 – Laurie Haas [*correction by Clerk*]
    - d. Diaconate Exec. Comm. Meeting – 01/08/18 - & PM – Marlene Petro
    - e. *Note: No Special Session Meeting to Receive New Members 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 Deacons’ Diaconate meeting in December – Bob Baarson (for Jane Delgado Semidei)
- 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 Mission Partners – Co-Chs. Jane Delgado Semidei and Dotti Tyle
  3. Personnel – Ch. Marlene Petro
- E. TO RECEIVE REPORTS FROM MINISTRY TEAMS:**
1. Equipping Ministry – Dir. Carolyn Wilson
  2. Family & Student Ministries (includes Early Childhood Center) – Exec. Dir. Laurie Haas
  3. The Garden Leadership
  4. Legacy Giving
  5. Presbyterian Women
  6. Stephen Ministry Leadership
  7. Worship Planning
- F. TO RECEIVE REPORTS FROM CONGREGATION COMMITTEES:**
1. Diaconate Exec. Comm. - Ch. Barry Buchanan
  2. Memorial Garden Board – Ch. Sue Angle
  3. Nominating – Ch. Robin Segó

**OLD BUSINESS:**

1. **Building Committee.** Elder Reynolds reported. The Palms Center construction is coming along nicely. Check with James Thompson if you would like a tour. There is a workable strategy for the parking lot. Will be paved on a Monday, so it can be used on a Sunday – possibly in late January. For additional construction information, see written report in Session package.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

1. **Contract with Visitation Pastor.** Personnel Committee Chair Elder Petro reported. The proposed \$10,615.00 contract with Pastor Alan Rodda for 2018 is for his services 1 day per week, which will cover his visitations, usually on Fridays. His voluntary participation in church services on

Sunday morning is very much welcomed and is at his option. **MOTION MADE, SECONDED, and PASSED: To approve the 2018 contract with Visitation Pastor Alan Rodda.**

2. **Election of Foundation Director.** The Clerk to the Session reported. The Session is entitled to elect one director to the Foundation this year. **MOTION was MADE, SECONDED and PASSED: To elect Sonja Veal-Volino as a Class of 2021 Director for the Foundation for the Church of the Palms.** Sonja is being elected to her second term on the Foundation board. The Clerk will notify the Foundation president.
3. **Foundation Restricted Funds.** Clerk to the Session reported. Under the Foundation bylaws, a distribution from a restricted fund that exceeds the income of that fund requires a 75% vote of approval from both the Foundation and the Session. The Foundation has unanimously approved a \$20,000 distribution from the Food Pantry Restricted Fund, which exceed its income, and has asked for a vote on the same by the Session. **MOTION MADE, SECONDED, and UNANIMOUSLY PASSED: To approve a \$20,000 distribution from the Food Pantry Restricted Fund.**
4. **Call for Annual Meeting of the Congregation and Corporation.** Dr. McConnell reported. **MOTION MADE, SECONDED, and PASSED: To call the annual of the Church Corporation and Congregation for Sunday, January 28, 2018 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.** Note: The annual report of the Foundation will also be presented.

Brief discussion ensued about the TV ministry and the issues with the Comcast broadcast of the church service on Sundays.

#### **ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

1. Reading for January Session Dinner – *Stories Jesus Tells - The Parables* by John Claypool – Chapters 3-5.
2. The Westminster College Choir is coming - sign up to be hosts – see above.

#### **NEW BUSINESS CONTINUED:**

1. **2018 Terms of Call for Pastors.** The pastors and staff excused themselves from the meeting. The Clerk to the Session moderated the remainder of the meeting. The Ruling Elders discussed the terms of call for the called pastors, Stephen D. McConnell and Lal Hmingliani Browne, as those terms pertain to the 2018 budget. Chair of the Personnel Committee Elder Petro presented the committee recommendations, compared figures from other large churches in the presbytery for similar pastor positions, and explained the rationale for each pastor's combined salary and housing figures. Dr. McConnell has declined a salary increase for 2018. Elder Petro also discussed Dr. McConnell's professional expenses incurred through his service as a trustee for Westminster College – a PCUSA college in Pennsylvania. In prior years, the Session has assisted Dr. McConnell in his ordination vows to support the larger church by providing funds in his professional expense allowance to cover some of his travel costs to Westminster for meetings. For 2018, additional funds are needed in this regard. **MOTION COMING FROM THE PERSONNEL COMMITTEE and PASSED: To approve for the 2018 budget a \$500.00 increase in Dr. McConnell's professional expense allowance [note: that budget item will become \$6,700.00], with his combined salary and housing allocation to remain the same as 2017.** The terms of call for Dr. Browne were then discussed. **MOTION COMING FROM THE PERSONNEL COMMITTEE and PASSED: To approve for the 2018 budget a 4% increase in the combined salary and housing allocation for Dr. Browne.** This increase will bring her salary into closer alignment with similar positions at other large churches in the presbytery.

**2. 2018 Allocation of Housing Allowances for Pastors.** Pastors McConnell and Browne were consulted as to their preferences for the allocation of their housing allowances under their 2018 Terms of Call. Because the 2018 budget has not been finalized, there was a question about the exact figures. So, it was decided to phrase figures in the motion on a “not to exceed” basis, to be finalized at the January 16 Special Session Meeting regarding the 2018 budget. **MOTION MADE, SECONDED, and PASSED: To approve the following allocation of 2018 housing allowances in the 2018 terms of call for the called pastors, subject to finalization of the 2018 budget, and approval of such terms of call by the congregation at its annual meeting on January 28, 2018: Dr. McConnell - not to exceed \$52,266.00. Dr. Browne - not to exceed \$52,971.00.**

There being no further business to come before the Session, **MOTION MADE, SECONDED, and PASSED: To adjourn the meeting** at approximately 8:35 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)