

**FELLOWSHIP**

The Rev. Dr. Stephen D. McConnell welcomed the elders and staff members at 6:00 PM in the Chapel Reception Room for dinner and discussion about *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* through chapter 8. Reading for next month is to finish the book. The elders and staff remained in the Chapel Reception Room 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 Donald Browning, Marty Guice, Al Jeffrey, David MacMillan, John Mercier, Robin Segoe, Jane Delgado Semidei, and Sandy Snyder.

Clerk to the Session Linda Getzen, Executive Director of Operations Aimee McCullough, Executive Director of Ministries Laurie Haas, Music Director Genevieve Beauchamp, Equipping Director Carolyn Wilson, and Interim Student Ministry Director Tony Camp.

**EXCUSED:** Ruling Elders Bill Mallett and Marlene Petro.

**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.**

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

**STAFF REPORTS:**

**Executive Director of Ministries Laurie Haas:**

- The job search for the Student Ministry Director has been posted.
- Confirmation class has 11 students. The Session dinner to receive the confirmands is Friday April 15. This is Sherry Watts's final year leading the class.
- The interim Student Ministry Director Tony Camp is doing well with the students.
- Student Ministry Sunday was a success. Thank you to Dr. McConnell for graciously giving the students space to be leaders.

**Equipping Director Carolyn Wilson:**

- Focus on building the small group ministry in 2016. A volunteer group with experienced leaders has been formed to lead the effort.
- Good turnout for Dr. McConnell's class on Wednesday nights. He is helping the participants apply the Bible to everyday life. Sunday, February 27 will recognize the hospitality volunteers.

**Executive Director of Operations Aimee McCullough:**

- Kudos to Elder Baarson and the Generosity Team. The 2015 year-end appeal resulted in giving that exceeded expectations.

- For more detailed information, see page 21 of Session package for the Executive Director's Report to the Administration and Finance Committee.
- Staff job postings: Congregational care assistant/data base and front office coordinator.
- Financial policies for the Early Childhood Center have been developed (policy on pages 53-61 of Session meeting package).
- Continuing work providing support for the Open Palms campaign.

**Music Director Genevieve Beauchamp:**

- Memorial Service held for a Chancel Choir Member. Just one example of how very close the choir members have become. A wonderful family feeling.
- SILL events have been "packed."

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

- Thankful for 3 weeks of being at home with her family.
- Marjorie Thompson event – 116 people representing 10 churches attend the day long Saturday event.
- Thank you to the Nominating Committee for proposing 87 Shepherding Deacons – Class of 2019.

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

- Grateful for the church staff for taking on the redistribution of labor resulting from staff changes.

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

- Thank you to Ruling Elders Al Jeffrey and Sandy Snyder for agreeing to serve with Pat Kindt and Wayne Kindt as Commissioners to the Presbytery meeting.
- The Foundation annual distribution guideline for 2016 is \$181,218. Of this, \$20,000 has been committed to the multi-year staff theological fund grant [*year 3 of 4*]. This year, the Foundation will also be reviewing how best to pay its pledge to the church capital campaign, which may or may not affect the available funds for annual distribution guideline.

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

- See page 22 of the Session package for financial details.
- \$363,000 received in December. 2015 income exceeded expenses (including 8% mission funding formula) by \$71,129. Contributions of stocks increased.
- Referenced page 43 of the Session package, which shows a trend toward more non-pledged income vs. pledged income.
- January 2016 is on par with 2015.
- Referred to the ECC Financial Operations Manual. Beginning in 2016, ECC is now combined with operations for overall church finances. Director McCullough explained that the ECC is changing the type of accreditation it will have – to Christian based.
- Dr. McConnell mentioned that additional education is needed on Christian generosity. This is a year round effort that feels different to many.

**OMNIBUS MOTION:**

**MOTION MADE, SECONDED, and PASSED: To SET ASIDE FOR DISCUSSION OR CLARIFICATION, items B.5. and D.2. of the Omnibus Motion as presented in the Agenda.**

**MOTION MADE, SECONDED, and PASSED: To PASS the Omnibus Motion (Items A-F), less items B.5. and D.2. presented in the Agenda:**

**A. To APPROVE THE FOLLOWING MINUTES:**

1. Stated Session Meeting – December 21, 2015
2. Special Session Meeting to Receive New Members – January 24, 2016

**B. TO APPROVE THE CLERK’S REPORT:**

1. Assignments and Meetings:
  - a. Sunday Morning Prayers with the Pastors – Month of February – Al Jeffrey
  - c. Session Meeting Opening Prayer – February 22 – Jane Delgado Semidei
  - d. Deacons’ Diaconate Meeting – February 1 – Don Browning
  - e. Special Session Meeting to Receive New Members – Feb. 14 -Group 2 Elders
2. Membership Statistics (items 2-5 see attached Clerk’s Report)
3. Baptisms & Weddings
4. Home Communion
5. Quarterly Worship Service Attendance Report – *approved separately below with correction*
6. Appointment of Elder Commissioners to the quarterly Peace River Presbytery meeting (January 28). The Clerk is authorized to complete the appointment of elder commissioners in the event of a vacancy:
  1. Al Jeffrey      2. Sandy Snyder
  3. Pat Kindt      4. Wayne Kindt

**C. TO RECEIVE REPORTS FROM:**

1. Elder attending Deacons’ Diaconate meeting in January – John Mercier

**D. TO RECEIVE REPORTS FROM SESSION COMMITTEES:**

1. Administration and Finance Committee – Ch. John Mercier (includes Building and Grounds Committee (Ch. Paul Ross) and The Generosity Team (Ch. Bob Baarson))
2. Mission Committee – Ch. Jane Delgado Semidei – *received separately below*
3. Personnel Committee – Ch. Marlene Petro

**E. TO RECEIVE REPORTS FROM MINISTRY TEAMS:**

1. Equipping Ministry – Dir. Carolyn Wilson – *see Staff Reports*
2. Family & Student Ministries (includes Early Childhood Center) – Exec. Dir. Laurie Haas - *see Staff Reports*
3. The Garden Leadership
4. Legacy Giving – Ch. John Mercier – *no written report this month*
5. Presbyterian Women – *no written report this month*
6. Stephen Ministry Leadership
7. Worship Planning – *no written report this month*

**F. TO RECEIVE REPORTS FROM CONGREGATION COMMITTEES:**

1. Deacons’ Diaconate – Ch. Joan Emrich
2. Memorial Garden Board – Ch. Maxine Colgate
3. Nominating – Ch. David MacMillan – *no written report this month*

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

**Item B.5. – Quarterly Attendance Report.** It was noted by Elder Baarson that there appears to be an error in the attendance figure for the 2015 11AM Services (shown as 620). Figure will be reviewed by staff and corrected as needed on the January Clerk's Report [*NOTE FROM THE CLERK: Correct figure is 295*]. **MOTION MADE, SECONDED, and PASSED: To RECEIVE Omnibus Motion item B.5. with correction as needed.** [*NOTE FROM THE CLERK – After the meeting, a scrivener's error was found -- the spelling of the last name of deceased member Carl Goss Phillipps was corrected by the Clerk.*]

**Item D.2. – Mission Committee Report.** It was noted by Elder Mercier that funding for Agape in the 2016 Mission budget has been dropped. Chair of the Mission Committee Elder Semidei explained that this may be revisited and possibly funded through discretionary funds. **MOTION MADE, SECONDED, and PASSED: To RECEIVE Omnibus Motion item D.2.**

## **OLD BUSINESS:**

1. **Downs Property.** Elder Mercier explained the attached resolution regarding an offer to purchase the Downs property. **MOTION MADE, SECONDED, and PASSED TO APPROVE THE RESOLUTION.** Elder Mercier abstained due to conflict of interest as real estate agent for the church.
2. **Capital Campaign Update.** Dr. McConnell provided an update. The Influencers affinity gatherings are starting later in the week. He talked about the role of elders in the campaign. Discussion was had regarding the recent stock market tensions. All options will be considered if issues in the economy become a large concern. The Lead Gifts stage has been very positive. In the capital campaign as planned, \$100,000 will be set aside for 3 mission partners, including Beth-El, which is planning to build a warehouse facility. The timing of Beth-El funding needs differs from the church capital campaign financial flow. The church will wait until the end of the first quarter 2016 to review the cash flow in the capital campaign. Elder Semidei referred to page 68 of the Session meeting package, which is a letter from Beth-El giving a status update. She also mentioned that Beth-El will have an Open House on Sunday, April 17 – 2-5 PM.
3. **Facilities Master Plan Update.** Director McCullough reported that the Special Exception has been granted by Sarasota County. Next steps include an upcoming meeting with the architect and moving along the project timeline.
4. **Foundation Grant Request.** The Clerk reported that last month's grant request to the Foundation for Student Ministry Director search funding was withdrawn. Upon further review, the funds requested were determined to be for operating costs, which are beyond the scope of the Foundation to grant. Funds for the search were paid from church operating funds.

## **NEW BUSINESS:**

1. **Annual Congregational Meeting Preview.** Dr. McConnell announced that the Annual Meeting will be a celebration of 2015. The meeting will look a little different from prior years – more interaction with the congregation. There will be a Power Point narrative. The emphasis on giving will be explained. The meeting will be a public kickoff of the Open Palms Capital Campaign. Over the next few weeks, sermons will touch on the vision for Church of the Palms. Allen Walworth will preach on February 7.
2. **Memorial Garden Board.** Dr. McConnell recently met with the Memorial Garden Board ("MGB"). Dr. McConnell explained to the Session the relationship of the MGB to the congregation. He also talked about the changing idea in society about how an individual views

him/herself as a church “member,” and how that might affect who is eligible to be placed in the Memorial Garden. For information, a copy of the MGB bylaws and a draft of a proposed change was provided in the Session meeting package at pages 79-83. Elder Browning (a member of the MGB) brought the Session up to date on issues and challenges that arose in 2015. Elder Browning was thanked for taking on the difficult leadership task of dealing with engraving vendors and getting names added to the memorial wall in a timelier manner. Dr. McConnell hopes to encourage further open communication with the MGB.

- 3. Downs Property Offer.** Given the inspection timelines in the proposed offer to purchase, it may be necessary to hold a special Session meeting if the offer is accepted and inspections are completed. **MOTION MADE, SECONDED, and PASSED: TO CALL A SPECIAL MEETING of the Session for Monday, February 8 at 7:00 PM, for the purpose of addressing matters related to the purchase of the Downs property.**

**ANNOUNCEMENTS:** Elder Baarson commended George Jenkins for his work as the leader of the Emergency Preparedness Committee for the church; especially his leadership during the most recent tornado and storms. Appropriate thanks to George are much deserved and long overdue.

There being no further business to come before the Session, **MOTION MADE, SECONDED, and PASSED: TO ADJOURN the meeting** at approximately 8:55 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) as corrected above  
Resolution re Downs Property

**MINUTES**

A Special Meeting of the Session of Church of the Palms was held in the Chapel Reception Room at 6:30 PM on Monday February 8, 2016.

**CALLED PURPOSE:** To discuss and take action on the possible acquisition of real property adjacent to the church campus at 4065 Lockwood Ridge Road (“Downs property”).

**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, Donald Browning, Al Jeffrey, Marty Guice, David MacMillan, Bill Mallett, John Mercier, Marlene Petro, Robin Sego, Jane Delgado Semidei, and Sandy Snyder. Also present: Clerk to the Session Linda Getzen and Equipping Director Carolyn Wilson.

A quorum being present, Dr. McConnell served as Moderator and opened the meeting with prayer.

**ANNOUNCEMENT:** For information, Dr. McConnell noted that a request had been made by a church giving unit that the part of their financial giving representing their portion of the Per Capita be withheld from the Presbytery, Synod and General Assembly and not made up from other funds. The request was made due to the General Assembly position on divestment. A policy on this matter was established last year at the January 26, 2015 Session meeting [*see minutes for full text*], and allows that such requests may be made on a calendar basis and are renewable annually by the church member upon request.

**BUSINESS:** Dr. McConnell advised that the committee appointed to pursue a possible purchase of the Downs property has been meeting frequently. Real estate agent for the church John Mercier reminded the Session that the church has the right to cancel the current contract based on inspections. A lengthy independent inspection report has been received. Elder Mercier presented the inspection report to the Session. After discussion, **MOTION was MADE, SECONDED and PASSED: To invoke the right to cancel the contract to purchase the Downs property.** Elder Mercier abstained from voting due to his position as agent for the church.

Additional discussion was had regarding the inspection. **MOTION was MADE, SECONDED and PASSED: To make the inspection report available to the seller upon request.** Elder Mercier abstained from voting due to his position as agent for the church.

Additional discussion was had regarding possible alternative solutions. **MOTION was MADE, SECONDED and PASSED: Because the house in its present condition is not usable by the church, the church’s agent is directed to continue to pursue discussions with the seller related to a possible acquisition based on the value of the land alone.** Elder Mercier abstained from voting due to his position as agent for the church.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:24 PM. Dr. McConnell closed the meeting with prayer.

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

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

**MINUTES**

A Special Meeting of the Session of Church of the Palms was held in the Chapel at approximately 11: 15 AM on Sunday, February 14, 2016.

**PURPOSE:** To receive the February 2016 New Member Class into the membership of Church of the Palms.

**PRESENT:** Congregational Care Pastor The Reverend Dr. Lal Hmingliani Browne, Equipping Director Carolyn Wilson. Ruling Elders: Don Browning, Marlene Petro and Robin Segó. Excused: Elder Marty Guice.

A quorum being present, Dr. Browne served as Moderator and opened the meeting with prayer. In the absence of the Clerk to the Session, Elder Segó was appointed as Clerk Pro Tem for the meeting.

**BUSINESS:** Dr. Browne introduced the prospective members to the Elders present and asked the required questions. Affirmative answers were given. **MOTION WAS MADE, SECONDED, AND PASSED to receive the following persons into the membership of Church of the Palms:**

<u>Last Name:</u>	<u>First Name:</u>	<u>Received by:</u>	<u>From:</u>
Bailey	Susan Veeder	Certificate of Transfer	Peace Pres., Bradenton FL (Elder from a prior Pres. church)
Curtis	Donald E.	Certificate of Transfer	First Pres. Sarasota (Elder and Deacon from two prior Pres. churches)
Curtis	Diane B.	Certificate of Transfer	First Pres. Sarasota (Elder and Deacon from two prior Pres. churches)
Freeman	Lynn Noel	Certificate of Transfer	First Pres. of LeRoy, LeRoy, NY (Elder and Deacon from same)
Freeman	Gail S.	Certificate of Transfer	First Pres. of LeRoy, LeRoy, NY
Harris	Jana Lauren	Certificate of Transfer	Peachtree Rd UMC, Atlanta GA (past Church of the Palms member)
Smith	Anne Folsom	Certificate of Transfer	Siesta Key Chapel- Presbyterian, Sarasota, FL
Laws	Paul Raymond	Profession of Faith	
Chapdelain	Dana T.	Reaffirmation of Faith	
Dickinson	Roger Fisher	Reaffirmation of Faith	(Elder from a prior Pres. church)
Dickinson	Linelle	Reaffirmation of Faith	
Durst	Leigh M.	Reaffirmation of Faith	

Marsteller	Cheryl Ann	Reaffirmation of Faith	
Schweigaard-Olsen	Bert	Reaffirmation of Faith	
Schweigaard-Olsen	Eleanor	Reaffirmation of Faith	
Smith	Frank Folsom	Reaffirmation of Faith	(Elder and Deacon from two prior Pres. churches)
Todd	Carlene Marie	Reaffirmation of Faith	

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 11:20 AM. Dr. Browne closed the meeting with prayer, and the new members were greeted by the Elders.

By: \_\_\_\_\_  
The Rev. Dr. Lal Hmingliani Browne  
Moderator

By: \_\_\_\_\_  
Robin Segó  
Clerk Pro Tem