

Rev. Dr. Stephen D. McConnell welcomed the elders and staff members to the video conference meeting that began at 6:30 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, Linda Calvert, Diane Curtis, Andrea Jackson, Maxine Perry, Steve Rowe, and Sandi Stewart. Clerk to the Session Linda Getzen, Executive Director of Operations Pam Gillespie, Music Director Genevieve Beauchamp, and Director of Ministry & Mission Sarah Soboleski.
EXCUSED: Ruling Elders: Marcia Baarson Gerry Hailey, Matthew Straeb, and Pam Williams.

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 Psalm 29 as the devotion and prayer.

MOTION MADE, SECONDED, and PASSED: To approve the Agenda for the Meeting.

STORYTELLER: Linda Calvert told her faith story. Prayers were given for the storyteller.

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:

- The 2022 Grant Guideline for the Foundation is \$293,046.
- Draft Minutes of the January 30 Congregation/Corporation meeting were provided for review.
- **MOTION MADE, SECONDED, AND PASSED: To receive into membership as of February 28, the persons listed in the Clerk's Report who attended Pastor Hmingi's recent New Member Classes.**
- Ruling Elder Maxine Perry, who attended the recent Peace River Presbytery meeting, provided a short summary of the highlights.

STAFF REPORTS:

Director of Ministry & Mission Sarah Soboleski:

- The dashboard of metrics for January is on page 14 of the Session packet. She also reported on a significant increase in in-person worship attendance for February.
- She is working with Marlene Petro and Pam Gillespie on the rollout of the Volunteer Accelerator program. More to come on this.
- She has received a certification in church administration.

Executive Director of Operations Pam Gillespie:

- See page 15 of Session package for more details. February financials are projected to be good and in line with projections.
- Reverse Offering envelopes are still available in the church office.
- Tutoring Ministry has restarted in-person.
- Pandemic masks are now voluntary at the Food Pantry and Palms Preschool.
- Visit the second floor of the Education Building and see Carol Homeister's warm and inviting updates!

- “Back 40” walking trail – Sarasota County is requiring a new survey to show existing trees. There will be a delay of 8 weeks or so.
- Working on her retirement transition plan with Sarah Soboleski and Dr. McConnell.

Music Director Genevieve Beauchamp:

- More choir members are returning as the pandemic eases.
- Noontime concerts continue to be successful.
- Worship music in February highlighted Black History Month.
- Sarasota Music Conservatory students return to perform at Sunday worships
- Upcoming Stephen Hamilton organ concert on March 6. She reported that the Sanctuary organ needs repairs or replacement. Due to the age of the organ, repair parts may be difficult to find. She is investigating options. More to come in this matter.

Family Life Pastor The Rev. Laurie Haas:

- Ash Wednesday Service is March 2 at 6:30 PM via in-person or live streaming.
- Trivia Night at the Palms Center – 51 participants tonight!
- Pickleball is a great success. Players are finding COP friendly and welcoming.
- Jemar Tisby book discussion on March 7 has 25 or so in the group.
- Newtown Trolley Tour signup has been advertised to the congregation.

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

- Pandemic transitions. As restrictions ease, the church is trying to get back to regular familiar features, such as greetings and passed offering plates.
- Pledge cards are coming in.
- Reverse Offering – looking for stories on what families did with their offerings.
- Faith and Society Speaker Series continues to offer different and sometimes provocative perspectives to engage the community – Jemar Tisby and Peter Wehner are examples.

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

- Training incoming Deacons and Shepherding Deacons
- Quarterly meeting of the Shepherding Deacons is set for March.
- 10 Stephen Ministers in training. Many people need Stephen Minister care.
- The visitation pastors have been busy. They have been able to enter the hospitals now. So grateful for their work.

FINANCIAL UPDATE: Administration and Finance Chair Andrea Jackson reported that it is too early in the year for a report on any trends.

OMNIBUS MOTION:

MOTION MADE, SECONDED, and PASSED: To set aside for discussion or clarification, item D.2. 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 D.2., as presented in the Agenda.

A. TO APPROVE THE FOLLOWING MINUTES:

1. Stated Session Meeting: 01/24/2022
2. Special Session Meeting to Receive New Members: 02/08/2022

B. TO APPROVE THE CLERK’S REPORT:

1. Assignments and Meetings:
 - a. Sunday Morning Prayers for the Pastors: Month of March: Marcia Baarson

- b. Deacons' Exec. Comm. Meeting on Monday 03/07 @ 7 PM: Pam Williams
 - c. Storyteller for March Session meeting: Gerry Hailey
- 2. 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 January: Gerry Hailey
 - 2. Commissioner attending the Presbytery Meeting on 02/17/2022: Maxine Perry
- D. TO RECEIVE REPORTS FROM SESSION COMMITTEES:**
 - 1. Administration and Finance: Ch. Andrea Jackson (includes Building and Grounds Team)
 - 2. Global Mission Partners: Ch. Matthew Straeb – *Received under separate motion below*
 - 3. Personnel: Ch. Diane Curtis
- E. TO RECEIVE REPORTS FROM MINISTRY TEAMS:**
 - 1. Family & Student Ministries (includes Palms Preschool) *See staff reports above*
 - 2. Contemporary Worship Service Leadership
 - 3. Presbyterian Women *No written report this month*
 - 4. Stephen Ministry Leadership
- F. TO RECEIVE REPORTS FROM CONGREGATION COMMITTEES:**
 - 1. Deacons' Executive Committee: Ch. Elizabeth Dexter
 - 2. Memorial Garden Board: Ch. Paul Nielsen
 - 3. Nominating: Ch. Marcia Baarson *No written report this month*

ITEMS FROM OMNIBUS SET ASIDE FOR CLARIFICATION OR DISCUSSION: Item D.2. – Global Mission Partners. Elder Andrea Jackson asked for clarification about (i) the table in those minutes (lacking column headings), and (ii) the allocation of \$120K in paragraph III.B. **MOTION MADE, SECONDED, and PASSED: To receive Omnibus Motion item D.2.**

OLD BUSINESS:

- 1. **SURE proposal.** No action at this time to have a representative from SURE come to a Session meeting. SURE is in a leadership transition.

NEW BUSINESS:

- 1. **Foundation Grant Request – Faith and Society Speaker Series.** Dr. McConnell reported on this request from the Leadership Team. The Faith and Society Speaker Series has been conducted for four years (formerly known as the Community Speaker Series). Funds remaining from last year will be applied to this year. A lengthy discussion was held about the proposal for New Testament scholar Amy Jill-Levine to speak at both COP and Temple Sinai. As indicated in the grant request, Temple Sinai is a smaller congregation, but can provide some funding for this speaker. Opinions were expressed about the desire to bring the two congregations together in one facility for one event, but also recognizing the spirit of collegiality generated by having Dr. Jill-Levine meet with the Temple Sinai congregation and guests at their place of worship. Elder Andrea Jackson is a director of the Foundation, and she will make these concerns known to the Foundation members for their deliberations. **MOTION MADE, SECONDED, AND PASSED: To approve submission to the Foundation of the Grant Request for \$59,600 for the Faith and Society Speaker Series.**
- 2. **Foundation Grant Request – Summer Interns for Youth Ministry.** Rev. Haas reported on this request from Family Ministry. Funds are available from a Foundation restricted account for

scholarships, and have been used for summer interns prior to the pandemic. ED Pam Gillespie noted that the word “compensation” is not accurate and should be struck from the request. The Clerk will make that correction. The scholarship payments will be made to the students’ colleges to assist with their fall tuition. It is anticipated that this will be an annual request. **MOTION MADE, SECONDED, AND PASSED: To approve submission to the Foundation of the Grant Request, as corrected, for \$8000 for scholarships for two summer interns.**

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

1. Reading: *Falling Upward* by Richard Rohr
2. Invitation for incoming Elders to attend March 28 Session meeting.
3. Dates of orientation and training of incoming Elders and Deacons: Elders – Saturday, March 6 at 9 AM in the Chapel Reception Room. Deacons – there will be many training days during the month of March.
4. Date for ordination and installation of incoming Elders and Deacons: Sunday, April 3 in the Sanctuary at the 9 AM service.
5. Samaritan Counseling has its annual luncheon on March 18 in the Palms Center.

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 prayer concerns and a closing prayer by Dr. Browne.

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

By: _____
Linda R. Getzen
Clerk to the Session

Attachment to official minutes:

- Clerk’s Report (statistics)
- Foundation Grant Request for Faith and Society Speaker Series
- Foundation Grant Request for Summer Interns