

Due to the COVID-19 virus pandemic, the elders and staff met via a video conference Session meeting that began at 7:03 PM.

MINUTES

PRESENT: Teaching Elders: Senior Pastor The Rev. Dr. Stephen D. McConnell (Moderator) and Family Life Pastor The Rev. Laurie Haas. Ruling Elders: Jeanne Asakura, Marcia Baarson, Linda Calvert, Joan Emrich, Gerry Hailey, Andrea Jackson, Cliff McHenry, Jason Morton, Lou Stern, Sandi Stewart, Matthew Straeb, and Pam Williams. Also present, Clerk to the Session Linda Getzen, Executive Director of Operations Pam Gillespie, Director of Outreach & Families Sarah Soboleski, and Music Director Genevieve Beauchamp.
EXCUSED: Congregational Life Pastor The Rev. Dr. Lal Hmingliani Browne.

QUORUM, CALL TO ORDER, AND OPENING PRAYER: A quorum was established. Dr. McConnell served as Moderator. He called the meeting to order, opened with a devotion based on Matthew Chapter 5 and offered the prayer. **CONSENSUS: To approve the Agenda for the Meeting.**

CONFIRMATION CLASS: The first order of business was to receive the members of the 2020-21 Confirmation Class. 14 of the 16 confirmands were present and introduced themselves. Rev. Haas thanked and recognized the confirmation leaders and mentors. Rev. Haas asked the required questions of the confirmands and affirmative answers were given. **MOTION WAS MADE, SECONDED, AND PASSED: To receive the following confirmands into the membership of Church of the Palms by Profession of Faith:**

<u>Last Name:</u>	<u>First and Middle Names:</u>	<u>Last Name:</u>	<u>First and Middle Names:</u>
Buchmeier	Sophie Mae	Middleton	Jonathon Cooper
Emmrich	Claire Francesca	Pettingell	Max David
* Houghton	Jon Caleb	Romine	Samuel David
Hudson	Broc Allyn	Simos	Alexander J.
* Hume	Alex	Soderberg	Stig
Marrs	Maezi	Wilson	Morgan
Marrs	Sage	Wright	Sam

(* = Membership is subject to completion of baptism)

MOTION WAS MADE, SECONDED, AND PASSED: To approve the baptisms of confirmands Alex Hume and Caleb Houghton to be conducted later this week at the taping of the weekly worship service. Rev. Haas welcomed the new members and emphasized this significant step in their journey of faith and offered a prayer. The Session agreed by consensus that the two confirmands who could not attend this meeting would be received at a Special Session meeting to be conducted by video conference later this week – date and time to be determined by Rev. Haas. Ruling Elders Linda Calvert and Pam Williams and the Clerk volunteered to attend that 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.

- **MOTION MADE, SECONDED, and PASSED: To receive the following new members who attended Pastor Hmingi's January New Member Classes: Bonnie J. Geer, Dennis F. Geer, James Milligan, Leanna Patrice Robbins, and Derek Ronald Robbins.**
- Notice from the Foundation: The 2021 grant guideline is \$271,034 - a 9.4% increase over 2020.
- Request for Commissioners to attend February 25 Presbytery meeting.

STAFF REPORTS:

Congregational Life Pastor The Rev. Dr. Lal Hmingiani Browne: (on vacation – report relayed by The Clerk):

- One of our excellent Stephen Ministers, Carroll Esry, died of COVID-19 and the SM community is grieving deeply. Please pray for the Stephen Ministers and Leaders.
- 14 Small Groups are reading and discussing "The Good News for Anxious Christians by Phillip Cary. Pastor Steve created questions for each week.
- Wednesday Night Life on Zoom has been going well with Pastor Steve's lectures.
- All is well in Congregational Life.
- Enjoying vacation, staying at home, and mostly taking naps!

Executive Director of Operations Pam Gillespie:

- For details, see written report at page 17 of Session package.
- Re-roofing project is running ahead of schedule.

Director of Outreach & Families Sarah Soboleski

- Student Ministry: Offer has been accepted by a candidate for Youth Director position. He will start later in the year. News is confidential for now until he notifies his current employer. More information to follow.
- Communications: Thank you to Jackie Gomez and Matt Liddell or their work in producing the marvelous 2020 Annual Report.

Music Director Genevieve Beauchamp:

- Providing music for the many devotions, and services.
- Excited about the delivery of new instrument for the Chapel.
- Handbell groups restarting in February.
- Chancel choir is video conferencing.
- SYV small groups of duets and trios are performing.
- New semester of divinity school studies has begun.

Family Life Pastor The Rev. Laurie Haas:

- Ash Wednesday Service – Seminarian Genevieve Beauchamp will be preaching.
- Easter Sunrise Service is back at Lido Beach.
- Advising Eagle Scout Ryan on his project for the church property.
- The Second Drive-Thru will be held on Valentine's Day 3:00-4:30.

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

- The COVID pandemic situation continues to be monitored. Ensuring that social distancing precautions are taken, and adjustments are made. Continuing *Taking Care of Each Other*.

FINANCIAL UPDATE: Administration and Finance Chair Andrea Jackson reported. The 2020 budget year ended with a surplus of over \$400,000. We have so much to be thankful for. This figure results from an increase in giving by the congregation, a large bequest of \$98,000, and significant savings in expenses.

MOTION COMING FROM THE ADMINISTRATION AND FINANCE COMMITTEE and PASSED: To allocate \$400,000 from the surplus as follows:

\$250,000 to the Capital Reserve, which will bring the balance in that account to \$500,000.
\$100,000 to Mission, of which:
 \$50,000 to be designated by the Global Mission Partners Committee
 \$50,000 to be designated for use by Session recommendation
\$25,000 to Digital Ministry
\$10,000 to Music Ministry
\$15,000 to New Ministry Initiatives.

Discussion was held regarding the treatment of the PPP loan in light of the positive 2020 financial report. The Palms Preschool was closed or partially open for a large part of 2020. PPP was applied for to pay the Palms Preschool salaries normally paid through tuition and childcare fees. The Preschool operated at a loss for 2020. PPP has not been used. It was confirmed that the funds are not part of the 2020 budget surplus figure and continue to be identified as a loan on the books of the church. Elder Jackson stressed that financial uncertainties caused by the pandemic continue into 2021. The Administration and Finance Committee continues to monitor and has made no recommendation on the treatment of the PPP loan.

OMNIBUS MOTION: APPROVED WITH NO OBJECTION: To pass the following Omnibus Motion (Items A-F), as presented in the Agenda:

A. TO APPROVE THE FOLLOWING MINUTES:

1. Stated Session Meeting: 12/14/2020

B. TO APPROVE THE CLERK'S REPORT:

1. Assignments and Meetings:
 - a. Sunday Morning Prayers for the Pastors: Month of February (until further notice, please email prayers before Thursday's taping of service): **Andrea Jackson**
 - b. Session Meeting Storyteller Cancelled until further notice
 - c. Deacons' Exec. Comm. Meeting: Tentative Mon. Feb 1 at 7 PM: **Joan Emrich**
 - d. Special Session Meeting to Receive New Members: Tentative Sunday, Feb 14 at 11 AM (may be cancelled or date changed by Pastor Hmingi Browne or done via teleconference: **Group 2 Elders (J. Emrich, J. Morton, M. Straeb)**)
2. Membership Statistics, Baptisms & Weddings, and Home Communion (see attached Clerk's Report)
3. 2020 Annual Statistical Report - to be submitted to PCUSA by 02/02/2021. [*Note from the Clerk – She will transmit to the Stated Clerk concerns expressed by the Session regarding “guesstimates” asked for on member ethnicity and disability numbers – COP does not collect that information on its members.*]
4. Appointment of Elder Commissioners to the Peace River Presbytery stated meeting (**Thursday, February 25, 9:00 AM via ZOOM**). *The Clerk is authorized to complete the appointment of elder commissioners in the event of a vacancy:*
 1. **Linda Getzen**
 2. **Joan Emrich**
 3. **Matthew Straeb**
 4. _____

C. TO RECEIVE REPORTS FROM:

1. Elder attending Deacons' Exec. Comm. meeting in January: Cancelled. Committee members are sharing information by email.

D. TO RECEIVE REPORTS FROM SESSION COMMITTEES:

1. Administration and Finance: Ch. Andrea Jackson (includes Building and Grounds Team)
2. Global Partner Mission: Ch. Matthew Straeb *No written report this month*
3. Personnel: Ch. Joan Emrich

E. TO RECEIVE REPORTS FROM MINISTRY TEAMS:

1. Family & Student Ministries (includes Palms Preschool) *See staff reports below*
2. Contemporary Worship Service Leadership *No written report this month*
3. Presbyterian Women *No written report this month*
4. Stephen Ministry Leadership *No written report this month*

F. TO RECEIVE REPORTS FROM CONGREGATION COMMITTEES:

1. Deacons' Executive Committee: Ch. Carol Washchuk
2. Memorial Garden Board: Ch. Sue Angle
3. Nominating: Ch. Marcia Baarson

OLD BUSINESS:

1. **Annual Meeting of the Congregation and Corporation.** Dr. McConnell provided an overview of how the Annual Meeting of the Congregation/Corporation will be conducted live and via video conference on Sunday, January 31, 2001 at 9:30 AM. This week, several emails will be sent to the congregation with instructions on how to attend the meeting.
2. **Pastoral Statement.** Continuing the discussion began at the December Session meeting, Dr. McConnell, Dr. Browne, and Rev. Haas provided an additional written statement to the Session setting forth their views on LGBTQ matters and discussion was held. In 2014, the Session then in office had a lengthy period of discernment about these issues. The current Session agreed it would be helpful in their current discernment process if the pastors would provide reading materials that discussed the differing public views on these issues. The pastors agreed to do so.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. **Samaritan Counseling Services.** Dr. McConnell reported that Samaritan Counseling met 38 of 38 standards and has been nationally accredited by the Solihten Institute.
2. **Bylaw Change.** Dr. McConnell and the Clerk reported. Due the pandemic, as well as due to changing worship habits, meeting the quorum threshold of one-tenth of COP large membership needed to conduct business at a congregational meeting is becoming a little tenuous. Therefore, it was recommended that the congregation lower the quorum threshold to one-twentieth. Quorum would then be approximately 90 members at the current count. This change would not go into effect until after the January 31 meeting. **MOTION MADE, SECONDED, AND PASSED: To recommend to the Congregation that paragraph 11 of the bylaws of the Congregation/Corporation be amended as follows: A quorum shall consist of the moderator, secretary, and ~~one-tenth~~ one-twentieth of the current membership.**

ANNOUNCEMENTS: Reading: *Good News for Anxious Christians* by Phillip Cary (continue reading).

There being no further business to come before the Session, **MOTION MADE, SECONDED, AND PASSED: To adjourn the meeting** at approximately 9:03 PM with the sharing of prayer concerns and prayer by the Moderator.

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

By: _____
Linda R. Getzen
Clerk to the Session

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