

**Due to the COVID-19 virus pandemic, the elders and staff met via a video conference Session meeting that began at 7:04 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 and Music Director Genevieve Beauchamp. **EXCUSED:** Congregational Life Pastor The Rev. Dr. Lal Hmingliani Browne, Executive Director of Operations Pam Gillespie, and Director of Outreach & Families Sarah Soboleski.

**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 a devotion based on Exodus 16:1-8 – God’s faithfulness to his children in the wilderness – and prayer. **MOTION MADE, SECONDED, and PASSED: To approve the Agenda for the 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 November New Member Classes: Susan Baker, Angela M. Galestro, and Jonathan L. Smith.**
- Resignations were received from the following members: Paul and Jo Ross, and Suzanne Diamond. *[Note: Accepted via Clerk’s Report in Omnibus Motion below]*
- **MOTION MADE, SECONDED, and PASSED: To call the annual combined meeting of the Church Corporation and Congregation for Sunday, 1/31/2021, in the Sanctuary, and to direct that notice of the meeting be announced from the pulpit on consecutive Sundays and placed in churchwide communications.**
- Due to the uptick in the COVID pandemic and social distancing requirements, preliminary discussion was held on how to achieve a quorum for the annual corporation/congregation meeting on January 31. One possibility is to convene the meeting at the end of the 9:00 AM in-person worship service and include participation of additional members by video-conferencing. Dr. McConnell will report further.

### STAFF REPORTS:

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

The Clerk reported for Dr. Browne in her absence:

- All is well.
- Life Together Small Groups laughed as they discussed *Hidden Christmas* by Timothy Keller -- 11 groups are meeting.
- Table of Six fellowships are re-starting slowly.
- Dr. McConnell’s God & Hollywood series on Wednesday evenings are going well.
- Dr. Browne is enjoying reading books during her study leave this week.

**Music Director Genevieve Beauchamp:**

- Finishing the taping of the Taizé services.
- The Chancel Choir is taking a break from Zoom rehearsals, but continuing to do much needed fellowship through Zoom.
- Co-hosting the Wednesday Advent series.
- Will enjoy a change by playing Christmas music for the Daily Devotionals
- Pre-taping the annual Thanksgiving Eve service with Temple Sinai this week
- Handbell choir is meeting in two separate groups – social distancing.

**Family Life Pastor The Rev. Laurie Haas:**

- Back from vacation and study leave,
- Ministry during the COVID pandemic has been challenging. Most activities require new and creative thinking.
- Reported as chair of the Presbytery Nominating Committee that Linda Getzen was elected Vice Moderator for 2021 and Dr McConnell was elected to the Committee on Ministry for a 3-year term.
- Event: Christmas Under the Stars on December 9 at 5:30 PM for the preschool children.

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

- The beautiful Advent Devotional has been printed and is available. Also, the beautiful Connect Magazine.
- New staff member: Matthew Liddell is the new Digital Ministry director.
- Sadly, prayers are needed for the families of two young members of the church family who died recently: Will Hedgepeth (30), son of Bruce and Cindy Hedgepeth, of cancer; and Blake Bennett (22), a promising trumpet player, grandson of Ben and Jayne Jacobson, killed by a hit and run driver in Tallahassee.

**FINANCIAL UPDATE:** Chair of the Administration & Finance Committee Elder Andrea Jackson reported:

- Finances are still doing well, and she is cautiously optimistic. *See Session package for budget figures.* The current surplus is primarily due to the receipt of a bequest and controlled expenses.
- Student Ministry Funds collected but not used due to the COVID pandemic will be moved from the operating budget to a Designated Fund - to be available for use next year.
- If there is a year-end surplus, she anticipates that the Capital Reserve (that was not funded this year) may be replenished, and that funds may be set aside for Mission.

**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: 10/26/2020

**B. TO APPROVE THE CLERK'S REPORT:**

1. Assignments and Meetings:
  - a. Sunday Morning Prayers for the Pastors: Month of December (until further notice, please email prayers before Thursday's taping of service): **Cliff McHenry**
  - b. Session Meeting Storyteller for December: ~~Postponed Tentative~~: **Joan Emrich**
  - c. Deacons' Exec. Comm. Meeting: Tentative Mon. Dec 7 at 7 PM: **Marcia Baarson**
  - d. Special Session Meeting to Receive New Members: Tentative Sunday, Dec 13 at 11 AM (subject to change by Pastor Hmingi Browne to different dates and via teleconference: **Group 4 Elders (J. Asakura, L. Calvert, & L. Stern)**

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 November: Cancelled.
  2. Elder Commissioner attending Stated Presbytery meeting in November: Marcia Baarson
- 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
- 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:** None

**NEW BUSINESS:** Dr. McConnell reported and led the discussions:

1. **Survey Results:** Remarkably, there were 660 replies to the congregation-wide survey that was sent out. Dr. McConnell summarized noteworthy highlights from the survey responses, which are being analyzed by the staff. A full report of the survey responses will be made available.
2. **Analytics:** A recent look at analytics shows that the Daily Devotionals are still popular, with an average 250 "open" rate per devotional. High school fellowship in various forms is averaging 15-25 students. Middle school fellowship is less well attended with 6-8 students. The search for a Youth Director is still a few months from resolution. Sarah Soboleski is doing a wonderful job of keeping the youth ministry afloat. In-person Sunday worship attendance is averaging 200-300 across the three services. When all methods of attending (in-person, live stream, YouTube, etc., but not including the Comcast televised service) are combined, Sunday attendance is averaging around 1092 each week. A particularly good number, especially during the pandemic.
3. **Christmas Eve Services:** A lot of thought is going into how to present these services during the COVID pandemic, and consideration has been given to preferences received from the survey.
  - a. Christmas Eve service at Siesta Beach on December 23.
  - b. A full Christmas Eve service will be pre-recorded for streaming. No Comcast broadcast.
  - c. An indoor service at 3:00 PM in the Sanctuary on Christmas Eve. A daylight option. No singing and more meditative in nature. Registration, masks, and social distancing will be required.
  - d. Services at 5:00, 7:00, and 9:00 PM Christmas Eve will be outdoors in the courtyard. There will be singing, but masks and social distancing between families will be required. As usual, the 5:00 service will be more child-centered. No 11 PM service this year.

- e. In-person Sunday services will continue for the present time unless worsening pandemic conditions warrant a change. Sunday services on December 27 and January 3 will be live streamed, but there will be no pre-recording of those services. Allen Walworth will be preaching on January 3.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

- 1. Reminder that the December Session meeting is two weeks earlier – the 14<sup>th</sup> via video conference. Wear something festive to be seen and enjoyed by all on Zoom!
- 2. Session reading is the churchwide reading: *Hidden Christmas* by Timothy Keller.

There being no further business to come before the Session, **MOVED BY CONSENSUS: To adjourn the meeting** at approximately 8:19 PM with the sharing of prayer concerns and prayer by The Rev. Laurie Haas.

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

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

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