

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, Marcia Baarson, Linda Calvert, Diane Curtis, Andrea Jackson, Maxine Perry, Steve Rowe, Sandi Stewart, Matthew Straeb, and Pam Williams. 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 Elder Gerry Hailey.

QUORUM, CALL TO ORDER, AND OPENING PRAYER: A quorum was established. Dr. McConnell served as Moderator and called the meeting to order at **6:30 PM**. He announced that, if the COVID pandemic continues to ease, the Session meeting in October may be preceded by the customary dinner in the Campus Center at 6:00 PM. At the dinner meeting, the book *The Color of Compromise* will be discussed, and members of the Race and the Church Team will participate

The Moderator then opened the meeting with a devotion based on Matthew 6:25-34 and observing the mission of the Least Bittern. He gave the opening 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 that:

- The Clerk explained Pastor Hmingi's "rolling admissions" plan for Elders to meet to receive new members. See also item B.1.c. of Omnibus below.
- **MOTION MADE SECONDED AND PASSED: To receive into membership the following who attended one of Pastor Hmingi's recent New Member Classes: Karen Camp, Judith Ellen Kiley, Marlo Joy King, Patricia Lee Rollins, and Kathleen Shinn.**
- The Clerk called on Ruling Leader Maxine Perry who attended and reported on the recent Deacons' Executive Committee meeting. The Deacons had asked about any plans for the church to sponsor Afghan refugee families who fled from the Taliban takeover of their country. The Moderator indicated that the Leadership Team is already looking into how the church might help, and will bring this back to the Session.

STAFF REPORTS:

Executive Director of Operations Pam Gillespie: See Old and New Business below.

- *See Old and New Business below.*

Director of Ministry & Mission Sarah Soboleski:

- Sarah and Genevieve have taken the first (very long) two parts of their Ordination exams. Prayers for passing!
- Attendance Statistics. Numbers are very conservative as IP addresses are counted and not individual viewers. Averages (in-person and on-line – website, YouTube, and Facebook) for Sunday worship in August were about 977, and in September about 904. The Devotions continue to have over 200 views. About 260 people responded to the inquiry about who is watching Sunday on cable Comcast.

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

- Congregational Life is going well
- Continuing to add new church members at a brisk pace.
- Wednesday night lectures are well attended in-person and on-line (about 150+). Small groups continue to form.
- Stephen Ministers met in person for the first time in 20 months!
- Working to find potential nominees to serve as Shepherding Deacons.

Music Director Genevieve Beauchamp:

- Music again! Sarasota Young Voices has restarted, the Chancel Choir starts rehearsals on Wednesday, and the Handbells are ringing.
- Children musicians playing during the prelude will continue each month.
- Genevieve and Sarah are now our “Bible Scholars” – passed their exam!

Family Life Pastor The Rev. Laurie Haas:

- Media part-time specialist Mike McCullough is ending his service at COP and will be joining his wife Amy at Bayside Church. Some of his duties will be assumed by others, but a replacement will be sought as well.
- Director of Student & Family Ministries Conor Peters is doing an amazing job. The update on Student & Family Ministries he presented during worship last Sunday will be a regular monthly feature.
- Ruling Elder Pam Williams provided an update from Susan Neisler and her team regarding the recent Senior Well-Being Tea and other get-togethers.
- The Palms Center has many well attended community activities - especially popular are pickleball, basketball, and ping pong. 640 attendees and \$3,000 revenue.
- The Race and the Church Team has begun a new reading.
- A Special Olympics group will be meeting on campus.

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

- The child baptism of Parker Rose Jackson (granddaughter of Elder Andrea Jackson) noted in the Clerk’s Report is scheduled for 10:00 AM, Saturday, October 23, in the newly renovated Chapel (thanks to the generosity of the Geyer and Jackson families). All baptisms are public events, and all are welcome to attend.
- The Leadership Team is focusing on what effect the pandemic will have on future church attendance. There is a need to communicate what is it that people are missing by not returning to church. He asked Session members to privately notice those who they have missed in church, reach out to those folks, and pray for them.
- November 14 will be Homecoming Sunday. Inviting all to return.

FINANCIAL UPDATE: Administration and Finance Chair Andrea Jackson reported:

- August receipts did not meet budget and September is tracking lower as well.
- But expenses are also lower.
- Thankful for the PPE funds procured last year – a safety net if needed.
- In a good cash position.
- Administration and Finance will meet in October and review more closely.

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: 08/23/2021
2. Special Session Meeting to Receive New Members: 08/30/2021
3. Special Session Meeting to Receive New Members: 09/05/2021
4. Special Session Meeting to Receive New Members: 09/08/2021

B. TO APPROVE THE CLERK'S REPORT:

1. Assignments and Meetings:
 - a. Sunday Morning Prayers for the Pastors: Month of October: **Sandi Stewart**
 - b. Deacons' Exec. Comm. Meeting on Monday, Oct. 4. at 7 PM: **Matthew Straeb**
 - c. Special Session Meetings to Receive New Members are to be scheduled by Pastor Hmingi on an as-needed basis. Until further notice during the pandemic, the Ruling Elders appointed to serve in-person and/or via teleconferences at such meetings moderated by Pastor Hmingi shall be: **M. Baarson, L. Calvert, G. Hailey, M. Perry**. Quorum of Ruling Elders for such meetings remains at 2, per established policy. Any other Ruling Elders are welcome to attend and vote.
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 September: **Maxine Perry**

D. TO RECEIVE REPORTS FROM SESSION COMMITTEES:

1. Administration and Finance: Ch. Andrea Jackson (includes Building and Grounds Team)
2. Global Partners Mission: Ch. Matthew Straeb
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 *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. Elizabeth Dexter
2. Memorial Garden Board: Ch. Paul Nielsen *No written report this month*
3. Nominating: Ch. Marcia Baarson

OLD BUSINESS:

1. Master Plan. Dr. McConnell and Executive Director Pam Gillespie provide the Session with a summary of the status of the Master Plan approved in 2014. Discussion was held about the Master Plan, changes to the priorities in the Plan due to the pandemic, current capital repair needs that have been identified, and the proposal for outdoor development of the vacant acreage known as the "Back 40." The Leadership Team will be bringing back to the Session in October a more detailed plan and a priority list of expenditures. In the meantime, the Session consented to have the Leadership Team proceed with obtaining county permitting for the Back 40 proposal because permitting takes several months to procure and the proposal is not required to be implemented.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Campus Security. Executive Director Pam Gillespie reported on this for the information of the Session. There have been some issues with unruly guests at the Food Pantry and the church office. Staff safety is a concern. In addition, the armed Sheriff's officers on Sunday mornings have been a little difficult to schedule, particularly if a marked patrol car is desired. She is investigating private security firms to provide unarmed but uniformed security at the Food Pantry during hours of operation, as well as armed security for Sunday mornings.

ANNOUNCEMENTS: The November Community Speaker Series event featuring Jen Hatmaker has been postponed due to pandemic concerns. Ticket holders will be notified.

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 sharing of prayer concerns and 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)