

FELLOWSHIP

The Rev. Dr. Stephen D. McConnell welcomed the elders and staff members at 6:00 PM in the Campus Center for dinner and discussion about personal calls from God and using our gifts. The elders and staff then moved to Room 206 of the Education Building for the Session meeting that began at 6:50 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, Lesley Conzelman, Andrea Jackson, Darrel Jordan, Andrew McFall, Maxine Perry, Marlene Petro, Steve Rowe, Sandi Stewart, Dimitrios Vafeas, and Pam Williams. Also present: Clerk to the Session Linda Getzen and Director of Ministry & Mission Sarah Soboleski.

EXCUSED: Ruling Elder Diane Curtis and Music Director Genevieve Beauchamp (both in rehearsal for Messiah to be performed 12/3!)

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 prayer. **Motion, made, seconded, and passed unanimously: To approve the Agenda for the Meeting.**

STORYTELLER: Jeanne Asakura spoke about her family and the journey to reach her happy place in life and at Church of the Palms. 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:

1. Status of Foundation Grant Request – Hurricane Ian Relief – granted.
2. Status of Foundation Grant Request – Montreat Capital Campaign – granted.
3. Status of Foundation Grant Request – Samaritan Counseling – granted.
4. Per their bylaws, the Foundation unanimously approved the funding of authorized grant requests that may exceed the 2022 guidelines. *[Note from the Clerk: Similar action taken by the Session at its October meeting].*
5. Clerk's email sent to Session regarding the baptismal status of two new members. All resolved.
6. Ruling Elder Jeanne Asakura reported on the Presbytery meeting held at Cypress Lake Presbyterian Church on 11/15/22. The big highlight: Our beloved candidates, Sarah Soboleski and Genevieve Beauchamp, were approved for ordination, and their terms of call were approved!

STAFF REPORTS:

Family Life Pastor The Rev. Laurie Haas:

- The Jen Hatmaker event was well attended and raised \$2280 for Samaritan Counseling.
- Director of Student and Family Ministries Conor Peters is in seminary. He is a leader in the contemporary worship service. Very positive remarks about Conor.
- Health & Well-Being Director Brandy Gray is off to a good start at the Palms Center.
- The Caregivers Pathway ministry will have a resource room and library in the Education Building (room 202). A monthly lecture series to assist caregivers will begin in 2023.
- The Advent Dinner benefiting Samaritan Counseling is this Friday, 12/2.

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

- Congregational Life has been busy and productive.
- Wednesday Night Life lectures by Pastor Steve are well received. We paused for two weeks and will resume this Wednesday.
- 45 names of those who agreed to serve as Shepherding Deacons have been submitted to Nominating Committee Chair Marlene Petro.
- Hosted New Members Welcome Dinner. Pastors Steve and Laurie also came to welcome the new members.
- We have 24 new members this month.
- Many visits to the sick, old, and dying, and follow-up with families.
- Visitation Pastors Melvin and Stu have been very helpful with the visits. They are fun guys!
- 51 Stephen are also busy caring for those in need.
- Lots of pastoral care to Stephen Ministers and leaders as Stephen Ministry Leader Eric Jason died unexpectedly, and they are mourning his loss.
- It is fun working with Pastor Laurie and Connor Peter planning the All Volunteers Christmas Luncheon for 12/10.

Director of Ministry & Mission Sarah Soboleski:

- Communications: Connect Magazine and Advent Devotionals are in circulation.
- Communications Coordinator Jackie Gomez is beginning her creative work on the 2022 Annual Report. It is a storytelling piece – not just a report.
- Operations Director James Thompson is determined to have all the men’s restrooms up and running soon!
- Development of the “Back 40” project will resume after the holidays.
- New hire Office & Hospitality Coordinator Heather Ronald is off to a good start in the front office.
- New hires in the facilities department to fill vacancies.
- Staff Christmas festivities begin Monday, 12/5, starting with the always competitive office door decorating contest. Will Family Ministry pull out another win? Rumor has it that Pastor Steve is considered a “dark horse” in this contest.
- A visit to mission partner Mision Peniel went well.
- The trip to Honduras is planned for February.
- A great Sunday yesterday! Sarah and Genevieve received approval from the congregation for their calls to ministry! Sarah’s ordination and installation will be on Sunday, 12/4, at 4:00 PM. The Session told Sarah of the many compliments from the congregation she and Genevieve received on their sermons.

FINANCIAL UPDATE: Administration and Finance Chair Andrea Jackson reported:

- The Administration and Finance Committee is confident of a small year-end surplus. They will determine the allocation as of year-end.
- The Administration and Finance Committee has looked at the proposed 2023 budget. It appears to be solidly achievable.
- Designated Funds for various departments or projects carry balances that will be drawn down.
- The Administration and Finance Committee approved the 2021 Audit. Receipt of the audit by the Session is included in the Omnibus Motion below.

OMNIBUS MOTION:

Motion, made, seconded, and passed unanimously: To pass the following Omnibus Motion (Items A-F), as presented in the Agenda as updated.

A. TO APPROVE THE FOLLOWING MINUTES:

1. Stated Session Meeting: 10/24/2022.
2. Special Session Meeting to Receive New Members: 11/13/2022.

B. TO APPROVE THE CLERK'S REPORT:

1. Assignments and Meetings:
 - a. Sunday Morning Prayers for the Pastors: Month of December: Maxine Perry.
 - b. Deacons' Exec. Comm. Meeting on Monday, December 5 @ 7 PM: Lesley Conzelman.
 - c. Storyteller for December Session meeting: Diane Curtis.
2. Membership Statistics, Baptisms & Weddings, and Home Communion (see attached Clerk's Report).
3. Communion in the Contemporary Service: Weekly on Sunday through 2023.
4. Communion in the Sanctuary in 2023: January 1, February 5, March 5, April 2, April 6 (Maundy Thursday), May 7, June 4, July 2, August 6, September 3, October 1, November 5, December 3, and December 24 (11:00 PM Christmas Eve).

C. TO RECEIVE REPORTS FROM:

1. Elder attending Deacons' Exec. Comm. meeting in November.
2. Commissioners attending the Presbytery Meeting on 10/15/2022: Maxine Perry, Marlene Petro, and Jeanne Asakura (oral report by Jeanne Asakura).

D. TO RECEIVE REPORTS FROM SESSION COMMITTEES:

1. Administration and Finance: Ch. Andrea Jackson (includes Building and Grounds Team), **INCLUDES RECEIPT OF THE 2021 FINANCIAL AUDIT FROM THE INDEPENDENT AUDITOR AT KENNETH F. KANDEFER CPA:**
2. Global Mission Partners: Ch. Lesley Conzelman *No written report this month*
3. Personnel: Ch. Diane Curtis *No written report this month*

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. Judy Armitage
3. Nominating: Ch. Marlene Petro

OLD BUSINESS:

1. Pastor Laurie Haas provided the Session with an update on her sabbatical plans scheduled for May-mid-August 2023. She has been awarded a \$48,570 grant from the Eli Lily Foundation!

NEW BUSINESS:

1. 2023 Budget. See Financial Update above.

2. Hurricane Ian Relief Update: Dr. McConnell reported.
 - A small committee has been gathered to make recommendations to the Session regarding the use of hurricane relief funds received from the congregation and the Foundation (approximately \$225K).
 - Church of the Palms has been actively assisting Wintergarden Presbyterian Church in North Port and their pastor Devon Andrews, with repair efforts and with their Food Pantry, a crucial ministry in that community.
 - St. Paul’s Presbyterian Church in North Port was devastated by the hurricane and will be closing its facilities and selling the property. An Administrative Commission has been appointed to the Presbytery to assist them in looking at their future.
 - The Church of the Palms Food Scarcity ministry has provided funds for migrant families in Immokalee and for Mision Peniel - 8 weeks of perishable food for \$20K.
 - Hurricane relief efforts are ongoing. Over the next several months, it is anticipated that the Praying Pelican Mission will send workers who will need housing on our campus.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

1. Reading: *Let Your Life Speak* by Parker Palmer.
2. December Session meeting is one week early: December 19.
3. Sunday Christmas Day: One service at 9 AM.
4. Sarah Soboleski’s ordination and installation service is this Sunday, 12/4, at 4 PM. Genevieve Beauchamp’s ordination and installation service is Sunday, 1/8, at 4 PM.
5. Ruling Elder Jeanne Asakura relayed questions from new members – name tags, etc.
6. Further supportive discussion about Conor Peters and his ministry.
7. The Session provided feedback from the congregation to the pastors about how the switch to two 9 AM Sunday services was going. Change is different—some concerns about how the preaching pastors are doing. Pastor Laurie, for one, loves having “free time” between 10 and 11 AM. The pastors will let the congregation know that they are doing fine. The Gather and Grow programs between the services are well attended.
8. Men’s breakfast is on 12/3. Expecting at least 75 attendees.

There was no further business to come before the Session. **Motion made, seconded, and passed unanimously: To adjourn the meeting** at approximately 8:25 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)