

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 based on *Let Your Life Speak* by Parker Palmer. 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, Family Life Pastor The Rev. Laurie Haas, and Executive Pastor The Rev. Sarah Soboleski. Ruling Elders: Jeanne Asakura, Lesley Conzelman, Diane Curtis, Andrea Jackson, Andrew McFall, Maxine Perry, Steve Rowe, Dimitrios Vafeas, and Pam Williams. Also present: Clerk to the Session Linda Getzen and Music Director Genevieve Beauchamp.

EXCUSED: Ruling Elders Darrel Jordan, Marlene Petro, and Sandi Stewart.

GUESTS: Director of Finance Terry Lamberson.

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 prayer. **Approved without objection: The Agenda for the Meeting.**

STORYTELLER: Diane Curtis told her story – “Young Life.” 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:

- For information: Draft Minutes of 11/27/2022 Congregational Meeting to Call Associate Pastors.
- **Approved without objection: To receive into membership Douglas MacKenzie and Gwen M. MacKenzie.** They recently met with Pastor Steve about joining the church.
- The Clerk will provide an updated Storyteller list for the Session.

STAFF REPORTS:

Family Life Pastor The Rev. Laurie Haas:

- Live-streaming of the Contemporary Service is temporarily suspended while re-designs are made.
- The 1st Volunteer Appreciation Christmas luncheon was attended by 140+.
- Christmas Under the Stars was held last Wednesday for the Palms Preschool children and their families – about 200+ enjoyed a night under the lighted oak tree.
- About 12 volunteers visited Light of the World Church’s Christmas party and distributed presents and gift cards from Church of the Palms. A great event.
- Pastor Laurie gave the Session a short tour of the new Care Giver room.
- The winning entry from Sunday’s Conversation Challenge was drawn – Pat Brennan is the lucky winner of lunch with Pastor Steve.

Executive Pastor The Rev. Sarah Soboleski:

- Her ordination and installation service on 12/4/ was beautiful.
- Working on the 2023 budget and year-end matters.

- Global Mission Partners Committee determined the mission partners for 2023.
- Volunteers visited Wilkinson School and served a meal. Director of Tutoring Corinne Boot-Handford is working with the leadership team about opportunities to serve at the school.
- Executive Assistant Cathie Lloyd will be moving to part-time status at the end of January and will continue to work with Pastor Steve, the Session, Foundation, and the database. There is a search for an additional part-time assistant for Pastor Hmingi.
- The Facilities Team has two new members, Megan Beadin and Don-Walker Petinaud.

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

- Participated in the Volunteer Appreciation Christmas luncheon.
- 78 women came to Presbyterian Women's Christmas tea with Pastor Steve as speaker.
- A few hundred people ate about 80 dozen Christmas cookies on Sunday, 12/18. About 40 people provided cookies.
- All members who do not have Shepherding Deacons received a card from Pastor Hmingi created by Cathie Lloyd.
- Greeting cards were sent out to those who lost loved ones since last November.
- Wednesday night Life lectures by Pastor Steve are going well. So are the Small Groups discussing the questions created by Pastor Steve. There are 16 active groups now.
- Stephen Ministry is going well with 51 Stephen ministers. Because two leaders were lost, two new people will go to Leadership Training in February.
- Visitation pastors Melvin and Stu are very helpful in visiting the sick.

Music Director Genevieve Beauchamp:

- Messiah performed on 12/3 after a three-year hiatus due to the Covid outbreak.
- The Cantori Choir, under the long-time direction of Judy Lutz, is doing its seasonal performances in the community.
- Sarasota Young Voices performed a holiday concert at St. Boniface church and will travel to Scotland this summer.
- Long-time choir member George Jenkins passed away.
- Honored to attend Rev. Sarah Soboleski's ordination and installation on 12/4 and looking forward to her own on 1/8!
- Media Specialist Greg Lee has made impressive updates to the sound systems.

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

- Church membership is rising for various reasons – bucking a national downward trend. Hopefully, new members will translate into increased worship attendance.
- Hurricane Ian relief efforts – Praying Pelican is a partner. COP is hosting a college work group from Santa Cruz, CA, this week. A team has been formed to work on the disbursement of the \$200K relief funds. COP continues to provide support to Wintergarden Church with funds and strategic planning. The team will look into the current needs of other damaged churches. The Food scarcity fund provided \$20K to Mision Peniel for food shipments.

FINANCIAL UPDATE: Administration and Finance Chair Andrea Jackson reported: There should be a small year-end surplus that will most likely be allocated to replenish the capital reserve fund.

OMNIBUS MOTION:

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

- A. TO APPROVE THE FOLLOWING MINUTES:**
1. Stated Session Meeting: 11/28/2022
 2. Special Session Meeting to Receive New Members: 12/13/2022
- B. TO APPROVE THE CLERK'S REPORT:**
1. Assignments and Meetings:
 - a. Sunday Morning Prayers for the Pastors: Month of January: Diane Curtis
 - b. Deacons' Exec. Comm. Meeting on Monday, January 9 @ 5:30(Pastor Hmingi's house): Andrea Jackson
 - c. Storyteller for January Session meeting: Sarah Soboleski
 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 December: Lesley Conzelman
- D. TO RECEIVE REPORTS FROM SESSION COMMITTEES:**
1. Administration and Finance: Ch. Andrea Jackson (includes Building and Grounds Team)
 2. Global Mission Partners: Ch. Lesley Conzelman
 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 *No written report this month*
- 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 *No written report this month*

OLD BUSINESS: NONE

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Call of Annual Meeting. **Motion made, seconded, and passed unanimously: To call the annual combined meeting of the Church Corporation and Congregation for Sunday, January 29, 2023, at approximately 9:45 AM, in the Sanctuary, and to direct that notice of the meeting be announced from the pulpit on consecutive Sundays and placed in churchwide communications.** Note: The start time for the meeting is approximate and will be finalized by the Leadership Team in the coming weeks.
2. Foundation Grant Request – Faith and Society Speaker Series. Dr. McConnell reported on this request from the Leadership Team and presented a list of potential speakers for Fall-Spring 2023-24. **Motion made, seconded, and passed unanimously: To approve submission to the Foundation of the Grant Request for \$75,000 for the Faith and Society Speaker Series.**
3. Session-elected Foundation Directors. **Motion made, seconded, and passed unanimously: To elect Dimitrios Vafeas and Kitty Cranor as directors (Class of 2026) of The Foundation for the Church of the Palms – Presbyterian (USA), Inc.**
4. Contract with Visitation Pastor. Personnel Committee Chair Elder Diane Curtis reported on the proposed \$21,099 contract (salary with cell phone/travel allocation) with The Rev. Melvin Christian for 2023 for his part-time services as a visitation pastor. **Motion coming from the**

Personnel Committee and passed unanimously: To approve the 2023 contract with Visitation Pastor The Rev. Melvin Christian.

5. 2022 Operating Budget. Administration and Finance Chair Andrea Jackson reported on the 2023 Operating Budget as presented (see December Session package for details). The budget projects a 5% increase in giving. The Palms Preschool is running a surplus in 2022 but is very understaffed. A 15% increase in teacher salaries is planned for January. Elder Jackson noted that the Administration and Finance Committee is mindful of the growth in personnel expenses – inflation is a leading cause of significant increases. She also noted that there is an intentional “using up” of funds that have been accumulating in several designated accounts and need to be put expended in various departments – designated funds to be used in place of operating funds in some instances. After completing the motions in item 6 below about compensation matters for the called pastors, the Session returned to this item 5 to vote on the budget. **Motion coming from the Administration and Finance Committee and passed unanimously: To adopt the 2023 operating budget, including figures for the 2023 terms of call for the pastors.**
6. Compensation Matters for Called Pastors. The pastors excused themselves from the meeting. The Clerk to the Session chaired the remainder of the meeting. Personnel Committee Chair Diane Curtis presented the Personnel committee recommendations for the 2023 Terms of Call for the called pastors, Stephen D. McConnell, Lal Hmingliani Browne, Laurie Haas, Sarah Soboleski, and Genevieve Beauchamp, as those terms pertain to the 2023 operating budget.
 - a. 2023 Terms of Call. **Motion coming from the Personnel Committee and passed unanimously: To approve for the 2023 operating budget the Terms of Call for the installed pastors, including the following: A 4% increase in the combined salary and housing allocation for Dr. McConnell, a 4% increase in the combined salary and housing allocation for Dr. Browne, and a 4% increase in the combined salary and housing allocation for Rev. Haas.** Note: The 2023 Terms of Call for new pastors Rev. Soboleski and Rev. Beauchamp were approved by the congregation on 11/27/2022.
 - b. 2023 Housing Allowance Allocations. **Motion coming from the Personnel Committee and passed unanimously: To accept the 2023 housing allowance allocations made by each called pastor.** For information, housing allowance figures provided by the pastors to the Personnel Committee Chair are as follows: Dr. McConnell \$80,000, Dr. Browne \$53,560, Rev. Haas \$47,174, Rev. Soboleski \$38,000, and Rev. Beauchamp \$38,000.

ANNOUNCEMENTS: Continue reading *Let Your Life Speak* by Parker Palmer.

There was no further business to come before the Session. **Motion made, seconded, and passed unanimously: To adjourn the meeting** at approximately 8:30 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)
Foundation Grant Request - Faith & Society Speaker Series
2023 Pastors’ Terms of Call