

FELLOWSHIP

The Rev. Dr. Stephen D. McConnell welcomed the Session at 6:00 PM in the Campus Center for dinner and discussion around the Parable of the Yeast. The Session then moved to Room 206 of the Education Building for the Session meeting that began at 6:53 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, Executive Pastor The Rev. Sarah Soboleski, and Pastor of Music and Worship The Rev. Genevieve Beauchamp. Ruling Elders: Al Jeffrey, Keith Maddox, Andrew McFall, Fee Mercer, Maxine Perry, Marlene Petro, Steve Rowe, and Dimitrios Vafeas. Also present: Clerk to the Session Linda Getzen.

EXCUSED: Ruling Elders Linda Calvert, Leslie Conzelman, and Diane Curtis.

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: Rev. Laurie Haas was welcomed back from her sabbatical. She shared her story of the first leg of her spiritual and physical journey that began in Ireland. 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:

- One addition to the Clerk's Report to be approved under the Omnibus Motion: Removal request from member Douglas Soles, who has moved to North Carolina.

STAFF REPORTS:

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

- All is well in the Congregational Life ministry.
- New members continue to join the church each month.
- Happily getting ready for the fall programs.

Pastor of Music and Worship The Rev. Genevieve Beauchamp:

- Excited for the fall programs to begin.
- Largest ever summer choir – particularly at the 11 AM service.
- Attended her writing seminar.
- Wonderful trip to Scotland with SYV this summer. She has stepped down as the artistic director for Sarasota Young Voices.
- Alums of SYV from years past held a surprise party for her!

Executive Pastor The Rev. Sarah Soboleski:

- Reported on various staff changes and searches.
- New hire Robert Land will start as Property Director next week.
- Kudos to Facilities Director Rick Dolega for all his hard work during this transition.
- Care packages were sent to the 3 Family Ministry interns who served this past season.
- Performance conversations held with staff.

- COP has been assisting Bethel AME Church in Punta Gorda. Their church campus was severely damaged by Hurricane Ivan last year. They recently mourned the death of a dear church member, Sister Luella. The Session is sending a sympathy card and donation in her honor.

Family Life Pastor The Rev. Laurie Haas:

- Jumping back to life post-sabbatical.
- Brandy Gray has resigned as Palms Center Director, but she will still be active at church.

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

- COP had a good summer. Away trips by the various youth groups were great experiences. Hats off to Director of Student & Family Ministries Conor Peters.
- Hurricane Idalia is upon us. The office will close early on Tuesday and reopen on Thursday this week. Pastor Laurie's sabbatical dinner and talk will be moved to September 6. The Book of Matthew lecture series will begin on September 13.
- Pastor Steve will be out of the country at the end of September.

FINANCIAL UPDATE: Administration and Finance Chair Dimitrios Vafeas reported:

- July 2023 figures show strong liquidity. The operating surplus exceeds revenues, and there are good expense controls.
- Provided a review of the status of various restricted accounts.
- \$255,000 in government refunds received.
- Administration & Finance will seek RFPs for a new auditor. The Foundation is aware of this pending change and may or may not do the same.
- The 2022 Audit should be finalized by the end of September.
- Ruling Elder Keith Maddox for Building & Grounds provided:
 - Updates on the status of new windows (soliciting bids), playground shade structure (problems with vendor response), and the street sign (problem with vendor response).
 - He is drafting policies to establish better procurement terms, how projects are approved, and shared responsibilities for approval beyond office staff.

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: 06/26/2023
2. Special Session Meeting to Receive New Members: 07/22/2023
3. Special Session Meeting to Receive New Members: 08/13/2023

B. TO APPROVE THE CLERK'S REPORT:

1. Assignments and Meetings:
 - a. Sunday Morning Prayers for the Pastors @ 8:15 AM: Month of September: None (vacancy)
 - b. Deacons' Exec. Comm. Meeting on Monday 09/05/2023@ 7 PM: Linda Calvert
 - c. Storyteller for September Session meeting: Hmingi Browne
2. Membership Statistics, Baptisms & Weddings, and Home Communion (see attached Clerk's Report as revised)

C. TO RECEIVE REPORTS FROM:

1. Elder attending Deacons' Exec. Comm. meeting in August: Dimitrios Vafeas

- D. TO RECEIVE REPORTS FROM SESSION COMMITTEES:**
1. Administration & Finance: Ch. Dimitrios Vafeas (includes Building & 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 *See staff reports above*
 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. Foundation Grant Request – Technology. Rev. Soboleski reported on this request from Operations and Communications Ministries to upgrade various software and hardware providers and improve internet stability. *See attached.* **Motion made, seconded, and passed unanimously: To approve submission to the Foundation of the Grant Request for \$62,600 for technology upgrades.**
2. Strategic Priorities. Dr. McConnell presented the Strategic Priorities for 2023-2024 and the associated goals. He also provided a draft of strategic initiatives projected over 2024-2026. With additional information provided by all of the Pastors, the Session discussed the Priorities and goals. **Motion made, seconded, and passed unanimously: To adopt the Strategic Priorities for 2023-2024.** *Clerk's note: For text of the finalized Priorities, see attached.*

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

1. Reading for September dinner: The Pearl of Great Price (Matthew 13:45-46).
2. Palms Men's Group: Elder Andrew McFall reported on a new season of programs.
3. Day of Hope in July – Shout out to Chair Marlene Petro for a great event!

There was no further business to come before the Session. **Motion made, seconded, and passed unanimously: To adjourn the meeting** at approximately 8:50 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)
 Grant Request to Foundation for technology upgrades
 Strategic Priorities 2023-2024