

### FELLOWSHIP

The Rev. Laurie Haas welcomed the Session at 6:00 PM in the Campus Center for dinner and discussion around the Parable of the Pearl of Great Price. The Session then moved to Room 206 of the Education Building for the Session meeting that began at 6:48 PM.

### MINUTES

**PRESENT:** Teaching Elders: Family Life Pastor The Rev. Laurie Haas (Moderator), Congregational Life Pastor The Rev. Dr. Lal Hmingliani Browne, Executive Pastor The Rev. Sarah Soboleski, and Pastor of Music and Worship The Rev. Genevieve Beauchamp. Ruling Elders: Linda Calvert, Leslie Conzelman, 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:** Senior Pastor The Rev. Dr. Stephen D. McConnell and Ruling Elder Diane Curtis.

**QUORUM, CALL TO ORDER, AND OPENING PRAYER:** A quorum was established. Rev. Haas served as Moderator in the absence of the Senior Pastor. She called the meeting to order and opened with prayer.

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

**STORYTELLER:** Pastor Hmingi Browne shared her story: *Adapting my life*. The Session read aloud Psalm 23 in the Mizo language: *Lalpa, mi vêngtu*. 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:

- Status of Grant Request to Foundation for Technology Infrastructure and Efficiency Improvements: Approved by the Foundation.
- New Members: Pastor Hmingi held a new member class in September. She confirmed that prospective members were asked the required questions, and affirmative answers were given.  
**Motion made, seconded, and passed unanimously: To receive the following people into the membership of Church of the Palms: Martha Lynn Albritton, Carolyn C. Ellis, John Ellis, Jeanette Ellis Hale, and Taitym Ashley Stidham.**
- The Clerk asked for Elders to serve as Commissioners at the next Presbytery meeting. *See the Omnibus Motion below.*
- The Clerk shared that she is pleased to celebrate her 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary as Clerk to the Session.

### STAFF REPORTS:

Executive Pastor The Rev. Sarah Soboleski:

- Robert Land is off to a flying start as Property Director. He brings experience and is working well with Facilities Director Rick Dolega.
- Staff are setting goals based on the 2023-2024 Strategic Priorities approved by the Session.
- Meeting with ministry staff leaders regarding 2023 year-end expense oversight and the 2024 budget.

Pastor of Music and Worship The Rev. Genevieve Beauchamp:

- The Chancel Choir is growing. Handbell rehearsals have started.
- The new music education class has 12 members.

- The Chancel Committee has been re-formed.
- The partnership with the Sarasota Music Conservatory provides lovely music for sanctuary worship each month and has given gifted young performers a venue to perform in public.

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

- All is well and busy in Congregational Life ministries.
- Many sicknesses, hospitalizations, deaths of church family members, several memorial services, and internments of the ashes of members in the Memorial Garden.
- Working with Kathy Bannister and Janet Steenrod to find 50 Shepherding Deacons for the Class of 2027. So far, we have 20. Pray for 30 more.
- Wednesday Night Life lectures started again with 88 people attending in person to listen to Pastor Steve.
- Some Small Groups are getting too big and are being split. Tables of Six fellowship groups are still being formed.
- Chili cook-off is coming up on October 19<sup>th</sup>.
- Presbyterian Women is also growing in numbers.
- Grief Share/Support is growing in numbers with referrals from the community.

Family Life Pastor The Rev. Laurie Haas:

- Director of Student & Family Ministries Conor Peters had his largest group (78!) of middle and high schoolers at a regular get-together. 29 middle schoolers are going on a retreat this weekend. Prayers for Conor the seminarian as he takes his Hebrew exam!
- Director of the Palms Pre-School Sandy Schockley continues spreading Christ's love to her teachers and children. She has a full staff!
- The Senior Well-Being programs continue to expand. Volunteers Pat Gottman and Fee Mercer are trained facilitators.
- Will be searching for a Palms Center Director who can also work with the Well-Being Ministry.

**FINANCIAL UPDATE:** Administration and Finance Chair Dimitrios Vafeas reported:

- August 2023 figures show strong liquidity. *See the A&F written report in the Session package for additional statistics.* There is an operating surplus due to exceeding revenues and good budget controls.
- Work will ramp up on the 2024 budget.
- The 2022 Audit should be finalized by the end of September.
- Building & Grounds Chair Keith Maddox reported:
  - The Building & Grounds Committee will increase its membership from 4 to 7 and meet monthly rather than quarterly. Linelle Dickinson and Michael Tweed have agreed to serve.
  - The playground shade structure has been installed. The street sign is still pending due to weak vendor response but hopefully will be installed by the end of October.
  - Property Director Robert Land has ideas for improving the “curb appeal” of the church grounds, utility savings, and security, among others.
  - Building & Grounds is working on its policies.

**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: 08/28/2023

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

1. Assignments and Meetings:
  - a. Sunday Morning Prayers for the Pastors @ 8:15 AM: Month of October: Linda Calvert
  - b. Deacons' Exec. Comm. Meeting on Monday 09/05/2023@ 7 PM: None (vacancy)
  - c. Storyteller for October Session meeting: Steve McConnell
2. Membership Statistics, Baptisms & Weddings, and Home Communion (see attached Clerk's Report)
3. Appointment of Elder Commissioners to the Peace River Presbytery stated meeting (Saturday, October 21 at Siesta Key Chapel). *To serve until the next appointment of elder commissioners. The Clerk is authorized to complete the appointment of elder commissioners in the event of a vacancy:*
  1. Keith Maddox
  2. Steve Rowe
  3. Fee Mercer
  4. Marlene Petro

**C. TO RECEIVE REPORTS FROM:**

1. Elder attending Deacons' Exec. Comm. meeting in September: Linda Calvert

**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

**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. Elder Andrew McFall requested that the October Agenda for the Session include a discussion regarding funding aspects of the Strategic Priorities recently approved for 2023-2024 and the possible Strategic Initiatives for 2024-2026, including possible grants from the Foundation. Rev. Soboleski will follow up on this with Dr. McConnell.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

Presbyterian Foundation Grant Request. Rev. Beauchamp reported on a request by the Music Ministry to the Presbyterian Foundation for a grant from the Ginny Rustin Music and Arts Memorial Fund that was established in 2004. The monies would be used for a scholarship for a high school singer to train as a choral section leader and for Youth Worship Band equipment. The Fund has approximately \$8,000 in accumulated income. *See attached request.* **Motion made, seconded, and passed unanimously: To approve the recommendation from the Music Ministry that \$7,800 be distributed from the Ginny Rustin Music and Arts Memorial Fund at the Presbyterian Foundation as requested.**

**ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

1. Reading for October: The Mustard Seed (Matthew 13:31-32; Mark 4:30-32; and Luke 13:18-19. Chapter 5 of *Short Stories by Jesus* - Amy-Jill Levine.

2. Elder Andrew McFall reported that Young Life is thankful for its mission partnership with COP. They will be having a banquet on October 9.
3. Elder Maxine Perry is thankful for the prompt response from the Mission Committee in providing \$3,000 in funding for emergency A/C repairs at the Honduras hospital.

There was no further business to come before the Session. **Motion made, seconded, and passed unanimously: To adjourn the meeting** at approximately 8:02 PM to a Circle of Prayer.

By: \_\_\_\_\_  
The Rev. Laurie Haas  
Moderator

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

Attachment to official minutes:

Clerk's Report (statistics)

Presbyterian Foundation Grant Request from Music Ministry