CHURCH OF THE PALMS - PRESBYTERIAN (USA) **SARASOTA, FLORIDA**
STATED SESSION MEETING **AUGUST 24, 2026**

FELLOWSHIP

Dr. Clayton welcomed the Session at 6:00 PM in the Campus Center for dinner and discussion around Chapter 3 of *In the Name of Jesus: Reflections on Christian Leadership* by Henri Nouwen. The Session then moved to Room 206 of the Education Building for the Session meeting that began at 6:54 PM.

MINUTES

PRESENT: Teaching Elders: Senior Pastor The Rev. Dr. S. Bradley Clayton (Moderator), Congregational Life Pastor The Rev. Dr. Lal Hmingliani Browne, Executive Pastor The Rev. Sarah Soboleski, and Family Life Pastor The Rev. Conor Peters. Ruling Elders: Ken Asaskura, Dave Bossman, Lesley Conzelman, Darla Furst, John Kennedy, John McQueen, Andrew McFall, Marlene Petro, Sandy Snyder, Carl Watkins, and Sherry Watts. Also present: Clerk to the Session Linda Getzen.
EXCUSED: Ruling Elder Michael Good.

QUORUM, CALL TO ORDER, AND OPENING PRAYER: A quorum was present. Dr. Clayton 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: Linda Getzen told her story, *Jigsaw Puzzles 2.0*. A prayer was given for the storyteller.

CORRESPONDENCE AND CLERK'S ANNOUNCEMENTS: *The Clerk to the Session emails Staff and Elders pertinent correspondence received between Session Meetings*. The Clerk reported:

- Pastor Hmingi held a New Member Class on August 9, 2026. All prospective members answered the required questions affirmatively**. Motion made, seconded, and passed unanimously: To receive into membership as of 08/24/2026, the 6 members and 1 affiliate listed in the 08/24/2026 Clerk's Report.**
- **Motion made, seconded, and passed unanimously: To appoint Ruling Elder Sherry Watts as Session Liaison for Candidate Rachel Mallet.**
- **Motion made, seconded, and passed unanimously: To approve the serving of communion at the Family Ministry retreat at DaySpring Episcopal Camp & Conference Center on Sunday 09/27/2026.**

PASTORAL STAFF REPORTS:

Congregational Life Pastor The Rev. Dr. Lal Hmingliani Browne

- All is well in Congregational Life.
- Pastor Hmingi distributed the Congregational Life Offering catalog that will be available at the Fall Kickoff.
- Stephen Ministers have 45 active members with 5 leaders. They had a good meeting on mental health.
- Executive Board of Deacons: Five members will be part of the Fall Kickoff "Geek Squad" to help members with the OneChurch app (see Pastor Brad's report below).
- 154 Shepherding Deacons continue their good work.
- Presbyterian Women had 79 attend their Christmas in July party.
- 9 new members for July/August.

- Pastor Hmingi conducted 3 memorial services and 2 funerals since June.
- Candidate for Ordination: Rachel Mallet will be examined by the Presbytery at its meeting on October 17 at Vanderbilt PC – Elders are encouraged to attend this meeting to support Rachel.
- Barbara Ingram Rice is doing well leading the Senior Well-Being Ministry. Her written report is included in the Session packet.
- Pastor Norman continues to do well visiting the sick and homebound. Pastor Stu will return from Bolivia in October.

Executive Pastor The Rev. Sarah Soboleski:

- See also her written report in the Session packet.
- Sanctuary Renew Campaign: Great cash flow from pledges made by the congregation - over 69% already received. Line of credit is on standby - may or may not be used. Construction is ahead of schedule (so far!)
- Palms Center: Melissa Howdershelt has been hired as the Recreation Coordinator.
- Staff team members are setting individual goals.
- Youth Soccer League: Big thank-you to Robert Land for his leadership with this new ministry. 90+ children have been enrolled and are being sorted into teams.
- Financial: The 2025 audit is in progress and will be wrapped up soon.
- Pastor Sarah was honored to conduct a recent memorial service.

Family Life Pastor The Rev. Conor Peters:

- The Palms Preschool has received an Excellent rating!
- Men's Ministry has started its new season with great volunteer leadership.
- Tutoring has 54 tutors and 45 students thus far – registration is still open. Coordinator Andrea got married!
- Contemporary Service: Attendance is up 29%.
- Children's Ministry: Kickoff was earlier this month. Carol Homeister has started "Impact Next" – a program for 6th graders that will prepare them for worship in the larger church. It runs through Advent.
- Family Retreat at DaySpring on September 27.

Senior Pastor The Rev. Dr. S. Bradley Clayton:

- See also his written report in the Session packet.
- Worship & Music: The Children's Choir under the direction of Kari Hamada is off to a great start – 19 children have signed up!
- Communion: Elders were asked to sign up for dates to serve Communion.
- The theme for this church year is "Come & See." Three goals at the fall kickoff on August 30: (1) A OneChurch app has been developed. At the kickoff, church members can receive instructions on how to download and use the app. (2) Members will be encouraged to invite friends to church. (3) Members will be encouraged to be "connected" members and sign up for one more church activity. On August 30, those manning the tables need to follow up if someone signs up. Finally, on Sunday, bring joy and a positive attitude.

FINANCIAL UPDATE: Administration and Finance Chair Ken Asakura reported:

- See details in written financial reports in Session packet.

- The church is in a good cash position.
- Giving continues to lag behind the budget, but the gap is narrowing in August thus far.
- Expenses in some areas are over budget for a variety of reasons.

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

A. TO APPROVE THE FOLLOWING MINUTES:
1. Stated Session Meeting: 06/29/2026
2. Special Session Meeting to Receive New Members: 07/13/2026

B. TO APPROVE THE CLERK'S REPORT:
1. Assignments and Meetings:
   a. Sunday Morning Prayers for the Pastors @ 8:15 AM: Month of September: Lesley Conzelman
   b. Deacons' Exec. Comm. Meeting on Monday 09/07 @ 7 PM: Mike Good
   c. Storyteller for September Session meeting: Ken Asakura
2. Membership Statistics, Baptisms & Weddings, and Home Communion (see attached Clerk's Report)
3. Communion dates for 2027: 1/3, 2/7, 3/7, 3/25 (Maundy Thursday), 5/2, 6/6, 7/4, 8/8, 9/5, 10/3, 11/7, 12/5.

C. TO RECEIVE REPORTS FROM:
1. Elder attending Deacons' Exec. Comm. meeting in August: *No Elder available*.

D. TO RECEIVE REPORTS FROM SESSION COMMITTEES:
1. Administration & Finance: Ch. Ken Asakura
2. Global Mission Partners: Ch. John Kennedy
3. Personnel: Ch. Marlene Petro

E. TO RECEIVE REPORTS FROM MINISTRY TEAMS:
1. Worship & Music: Director Kari Hamada
2. Presbyterian Women: Moderator Janet Steenrod *No written report this month*
3. Stephen Ministry Leadership: Sec. Katherine Anderson
4. Senior Well-Being: Sec. Pat Gottman

F. TO RECEIVE REPORTS FROM CONGREGATION COMMITTEES:
1. Deacons' Executive Committee: Ch. Tony Catanach
2. Memorial Garden Board: Ch. Sue Angle *No written report this month*
3. Nominating: Ch. Sherry Watts *No written report this month*

OLD BUSINESS:
1. **Strategic Planning**: The Session broke into two teams and continued their work on assessment and action steps for the two Strategic Planning Goals: (1) Stronger Connections with God and Neighbor; and (2) Faithful Stewardship of People and Spaces – Optimizing Resources.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:
1. Reading for next Session dinner: Conclusion of *In the Name of Jesus: Reflections on Christian Leadership* by Henri Nouwen.
2. Elder Dave Bossman reported that several choir members have offered to assist with the Children's Choir.

There being no further business to come before the Session, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:35 PM to a Circle of Prayer.

By:_____
The Rev. Dr. S. Bradley Clayton
Moderator

By:_____
Linda R. Getzen
Clerk to the Session

Attachment to official minutes:
Clerk's Report (statistics)