

Covenant Presbyterian Church, Athens, GA

Stated Session Meeting

September 26, 2023

A stated Session meeting, called according to the Book of Order, was held at Covenant Presbyterian Church and by Zoom on September 26, 2023. Moderator Dana Waters welcomed everyone, declared a quorum present and called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m.

Elders present: Clayton Adams, Bert Ballard-Myer, Kathryn Fowler, Abby Horvath, Linda Koehler, Valerie Stone, Ansley Tweedell, Donny Whitehead and Dick Zimdars,

Elders absent: Katy Arora, Jennifer Frey and Carolyn Hatfield

Others present: Luanne Rigsby and Dana Waters

Devotional

Linda Koehler opened the meeting with prayer and presented a devotional from Rev. Rindy Trouteaud in which a quilt and quilting were used as metaphors for our lives. Quilts are pieced together into a whole from smaller bits of fabric and contain perfect and imperfect squares, varying sizes and shapes of cloth, different colors, etc. Quilting, as in life, requires forgiveness for imperfections. We all make mistakes in our choices, but God forgives us over and over and calls us to be a part of that forgiveness.

Review of Minutes

The minutes from the July 25, 2023, Stated Session Meeting, the August 9, 23, 26 and 31, 2023, Email votes and the September 17, 2023, Annual Congregational/ Corporation Meeting were reviewed. Dick Zimdars moved and Bert Ballard-Myer seconded that all sets of minutes be accepted as presented. **Motion carried.**

Approval of the Agenda

Dana noted that under Announcements, there will be reports from the PNC, Mission Outreach Ministry Team, Personnel Committee and a report from the Church Partners meeting in Olomouc from Valerie Stone. A motion was made by Linda Koehler and seconded by Valerie Stone to approve the agenda as updated. **Motion carried.**

Clerk's Report

Luanne Rigsby, Clerk, reported that following the passing of Dan Stoneburner on August 17th, our membership total is 206. Clerk's report was accepted into the minutes.

Financial Report

Session had previously received a written Financial Summary for August, 2023, as well as the detailed financial report for August. According to the report, everything looks to

be on track. Kathryn Fowler, co-chair of Finance Ministry Team, stated that at the end of the 2022-2023 fiscal year, we had a surplus of funds of about \$60,000. On behalf of the Finance Ministry Team, Kathryn moved that we allocate \$12,000 of those surplus funds from 2022-2023 to the capital reserve fund, thereby restoring the amount that had been cut from capital reserves in the original budget. Donny Whitehead seconded the motion. Following discussion, the **motion carried**. Dana will inform Karen Wetherington so she can make that change. The Financial Report was received into the minutes.

Updates from Pastor Dana

Dana expressed his gratitude to the Session and Covenant and for the gift of being able to spend four weeks with his newborn daughter. He commended the Session for the good work that was done in his absence through several email votes.

Dana asked elders to be thinking ahead about the end-of-year transition of chairs for the ministry teams. First year elders should be preparing to take over as ministry team chairs in their second year. Dana recommended they might lead a meeting before their co-chair leaves the Session. Second year elders will have a new elder coming on their ministry team as co-chair and will be teaching them the ropes. Third year elders should be thinking about how to best hand off their ministry team duties as they roll off the Session. Dana offered to help in any way. He noted the dates on the agenda for the rest of 2023 early 2024, which include a called meeting on Sunday, October 8th, stated meeting on October 24th, combined Nov/Dec stated meeting on December 5th and the Session retreat on January 26-27, 2024. New elder training will begin on October 8th.

Dana asked the Session to consider lowering the quorum for called meetings to receive new members. This is a typical practice in many churches since it can be hard to get a majority of the Session together on Sunday mornings. Linda Koehler moved we lower the quorum from 7 to 4 specifically for called meetings for welcoming new members. Bert Ballard-Myer seconded the motion. Following discussion, the **motion carried**.

Presbytery Meetings Report

Linda Koehler, Clayton Adams and Katy Terry served as Covenant's commissioners to the NEGA Presbytery ZOOM meeting on August 26, 2023. Linda gave a summary of the meeting. There were 94 participants. A vote clarified that ministers have access to a full 12 weeks of family leave per year. The new minister for the Presbyterian Church in Blairsville was examined and welcomed. A motion to waive the 6-year limit for serving on Session was passed. The NEGA Presbytery added Wilkinson County to their area. There was an update on the Backyard Ministries.

Announcements - Ministry Teams

Pastor Nominating Committee (PNC)

Kathryn Fowler reported that the PNC is meeting weekly and bonding with one another. They are in the midst of writing the summaries on who we are, our history and growth

as a church, where we want to be going and what we are looking for in our next pastor. They are writing this based on the Holy Cow (CAT) Survey and work already done by the Mission Study Task Force. Their goal is to provide a final draft to the Session for approval by November 21st. Once the document has been approved by Session, it will go to the NEGA Presbytery Committee on Ministry for its vote of approval. Then it will go online. We will begin to receive applicants and start the review process.

Mission Outreach Ministry Team

Bert- Ballard Myer reported that Mission Outreach Ministry Team and Amy Baer have been busy with the following projects:

- Legal Aid Pop-up Clinic - Covenant will be providing space and volunteers to help with a pop-up clinic held by The Athens Access to Legal Justice organization. They will offer free legal advice to those in need similar to the medical pop-up clinic.
- Holiday Benevolence Market - Covenant will be hosting this “market” which was first begun by First Presbyterian Church. Different local aid organizations, i.e., Habitat for Humanity, The Ark, Project Safe, etc., will have booths where attendees can donate money. Covenant will provide space, tables and chairs, and volunteers.
- AmeriCorps Food Fellows Partnership - AmeriCorps volunteers, who are focused on food insecurity, will be volunteering in our food pantry.

Report on Conference with Czech Churches

Valerie Stone gave the Session an interesting and inspiring report on the Church Partnership Conference that Eli, Joan Prittie and she attended in Olomouc last July.

Personnel Committee

Abby Horvath, chair of the Personnel Committee, shared that Personnel and Dana had performed music director Aaron’s Carter-Enyi’s 90-day review and would be checking in with the rest of the staff in the coming weeks.

Motion to Adjourn

There being no further business, Valerie Stone moved and Donny Whitehead seconded that the meeting be adjourned. **Motion carried.** Dana closed with prayer at 8:10 p.m.

Next Called Meeting: 10:30 a.m. Sunday, October 8, 2023 to receive new members

Next Stated Meeting: Tuesday, October 24, 2023 at 7:00 p.m. Ansley Tweedell will present the devotional.

Dana Waters, Moderator

Luanne Rigsby, Clerk