

Covenant Presbyterian Church, Athens, GA
Stated Session Meeting
August 18, 2024 1:15 p.m.

A Stated Session meeting, called according to the Book of Order, was held at Covenant Presbyterian Church on August 18, 2024. Moderator Tom Buchanan welcomed everyone, declared a quorum present, and called the meeting to order at 1:17 p.m.

Elders present: Katy McGill Arora, Bob Brewster, Dennis Calbos, Kathryn Fowler, Ansley Tweedell Land, and Valerie Stone

Elders present on Zoom: Bert Ballard-Myer, Abby Horvath, and Dick Zimdars

Elders absent: Carolyn Hatfield, Brian Herndon, and Rebecca Silver

Others present: Tom Buchanan, Pam Knox, and Luanne Rigsby

Devotional

Abby Horvath said that when two people are in disagreement, we need to keep in mind that it is not the two individuals versus each other but the issue on which they disagree. This is true for working things out in Session meetings, Ministry Teams meetings and in other instances in daily life. Abby read Galatians 5:22-23. "By contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against such things." We should approach all disagreements using these fruits of the spirit. Tom opened the meeting with prayer.

Review of Minutes

The minutes from the June 23, 2024, Stated Session meeting, the July 11, 2024, Email vote, and the July 21, 2024, Called Congregational Meeting were reviewed. Kathryn Fowler moved and Dennis Calbos seconded that the minutes be accepted into the official record with a small correction in the June 23rd Stated Session meeting minutes.

Motion carried.

Approval of the Agenda

The Session approved the agenda with the addition of a discussion on the process for serving Communion under I. Motion from Worship Ministry Team.

Financial Report

Kathryn Fowler, Finance Ministry Term chair, and Pam Knox, Treasurer, reviewed the Financial Summary as well as detailed financial reports for June and July, 2024. We ended the 2023-2024 fiscal year in the black with a surplus of \$12,167.91. This was more like what was typical pre-Covid.

Pam reviewed the Fiscal Summary Statement for the 2023-2024 Fiscal Year, which was published in *The Covenanter* this week. Pledges received were a little lower than expected (~96%). Expenses were also lower, even though we spent quite a bit of money on building improvements, and we ended about \$12,000 in the black. Pledges for the 2024-2025 fiscal year are higher than last year. We're doing OK – not a lot of extra money, but we have income from other sources such as restricted accounts, rent and the Central/Covenant fund. Brian Striggow has agreed to take over as Treasurer, if elected, at the end of 2024. Finance Ministry Team will be watching how pledges come in this year and will send out reminders towards the end of the fiscal year.

Kathryn said Finance Ministry Team will be addressing writing a policy for the spending of money in restricted accounts. This activity was begun in 2021 but inadvertently dropped during personnel changeover. Finance MT will check with families to see if they have preferences for the spending of the money in the restricted accounts donated in memory of loved ones.

There is money which was designated for moving expenses for the new pastor that was not spent. The money is in Temporary Restricted account #009300 under Session - Pastor Hunt 2023. **Dennis Calbos moved that the remaining \$8536.67 in Temporary Restricted account #009300 Session - Pastor Hunt 2023 be moved to the general fund. Bob Brewster seconded the motion.** Following discussion, **motion carried.**

Kathryn reviewed the revised budget for 2024-2025 now has the accurate figure for the new pastor's salary and comes in at \$465,219, a little less than \$469,809, which was approved in May. The financial report was accepted into the minutes.

Pastor's Report

Tom Buchanan has requested leave for October 4-8 to fulfill a commitment to teach a weekend course on Dietrich Bonhoeffer through Savannah Presbytery's School of the Laity at St. Simon's. Rev. Teresa Franklin has agreed to lead worship on Sunday, October 6th. **Kathryn Fowler moved and Katy Arora seconded Session approve Tom's request for leave October 4-8. Following discussion, motion carried.**

Report on Stated Presbytery Meeting

Luanne Rigsby reported on the NEGA Presbytery meeting held at Gainesville First Presbyterian Church on August 17, 2024. Donny Whitehead, Luanne and Bill Rigsby served as Covenant's commissioners to the meeting. Presbytery approved to dissolve the call of Rev. Hilary Shuford to Northeast Georgia Presbytery effective July 15, 2024. Rev. Ed Rees is serving as acting General Presbyter and Rev. Jacob Douylliez is acting Stated Clerk. Rev. Matt Henderson gave a report from General Assembly. Presbytery approved designating \$1,000,000.00 from the Trinity Fund for a student housing development by The Table Athens (former UGS Presbyterian Student Center). NEGA Presbytery examined Rev. Tom Buchanan and approved his terms of call to Covenant

Presbyterian Church in Athens, GA. Next NEGA Presbytery meeting is Tuesday, October 22, 2024, at 10:00 a.m. at First Presbyterian Church, Cleveland, GA.

Installation Service for Rev. Tom Buchanan

The installation service for Rev. Tom Buchanan as pastor of Covenant Presbyterian Church will be September 22, 2024 at 4:00 p.m. Leadership for the worship service will be from the NEGA Presbytery and Tom will invite several ministers to participate. Kathryn Fowler suggested that Session and members of the PNC take leadership in the celebration. Hopefully, we will be able to pair the service with our Fall Picnic/ BBC at 5:30 p.m. (pending availability of Phil Hale and Eli Stone to prepare the BBQ)

Motions from Worship Ministry Team

Dick Zimdars, co-chair of Worship Ministry Team, reported that the Worship Ministry Team and several others evaluated a hearing enhancement system that would greatly improve the ability of people with hearing difficulty to hear in the Worship Center. The system provides 10 units for use by individuals. The funds for its purchase (~\$3600.00) have been generously donated by an anonymous member of the congregation.

Worship Ministry Team moved Session approve the purchase and installation of a hearing enhancement system in the Worship Center. Coming from a Ministry Team the motion needed no second. Following discussion the **motion carried.**

Worship Ministry Team moved that the Christmas Musical Worship and Celebration Sunday be held December 15, 2024. Coming from a Ministry Team the motion needed no second. Following discussion the **motion carried.**

Procedure for Serving Communion

Bob Brewster delivered a message from Warren Combs, co-chair of Worship Ministry Team, concerning the way WMT would like for communion to be served. All active elders are asked to come forward to serve. Hopefully, there will be a minimum of five present. Ideally, if ten elders come forward, 5 are to serve the bread and the other 5 will serve the juice. Bob passed out a diagram for elders to follow for serving. WMT will decide whether to go back to using glass cups or continue using plastic cups.

Personnel Committee

Abby Horvath, co-chair of the Personnel Committee, reported that there had been an appropriate hand-off between Rev. Franklin and Rev. Buchanan concerning personnel matters. It was determined that personnel should talk to Tom first before they go to the Personnel Committee. Vacation approval will be granted by Tom as head of staff and not by the Personnel Committee. Tom will then communicate with the affected Ministry Teams. Personnel Committee is working on standardizing job descriptions and policies.

Discussion on Possible Pathways for Youth Programming

Tom reported that Christian Education Ministry Team is excited about bringing youth programming back to Covenant under the leadership team of Tom, Brian Herndon, DeLynda Tweedell and Bert Ballard-Myer. The intention is to revive the youth program and create a space where all youth feel welcome. The youth activities will begin Sunday, September 8th from 5:00 - 7:00 p.m. with recreation, dinner and a program. Session discussed specific challenges and opportunities surrounding the rebirth of Sunday night youth ministry at Covenant. More discussion to follow.

Dates and Times of Stated Session Meetings

Ansley Tweedell Land will work with Tom to send out a poll to determine revised dates for Stated Session meetings for the rest of the calendar year, choosing between the 4th Tuesday or Thursday of September and October. In the past, the November and December Session meetings have been combined and held the first week in December.

Announcements - Ministry Teams

Christian Education Ministry Team

Katy Arora reported that there will be two children's Sunday School classes this year, and they are grateful to be meeting in the WORM section of the building.

Fellowship Ministry Team

Valerie Stone thanked everyone for all their help in the recent Fellowship events.

Motion to Adjourn

There being no further business, Valerie Stone moved and Katy Arora seconded that the meeting be adjourned. Motion carried. Tom closed with prayer at 3:40 p.m.

Next Stated Meeting: TBD by poll. Dennis Calbos will present the devotional.

Tom Buchanan, Moderator

Luanne Rigsby, Clerk