Minutes of the Stated Session Meeting

Faith Presbyterian Church

Tallahassee, Florida

August 23, 2020

1. Call to Order/Opening Prayer/Devotion

As was approved at the Called Session Meeting of March 25, 2020, the meeting was conducted via teleconferencing.

The Stated Session Meeting of Faith Presbyterian Church was called to order and opened with a prayer by the Moderator, Senior Pastor Brad Clayton, at 11:30 a.m. Jason Taylor provided the devotion.

The Ruling Elders (18) present were Bob Apgar, Lee Andre, Aggie Bell, Alice Bonn, Leon Corbett, Neal Evans, Andee Harrison, Cory Hill, Mary Keyt, Laura Ketcham, Lee Marsh, Tracy Morales, Linda Shelley, Jason Taylor , Robert Volpe, Frank Walker III, Malikah Woody and Roy Youngblood. **A quorum of at least one-third of the members of the Session was present.**

The Ruling Elders (3) absent were Amanda Bevis, Ginny Dailey and Bill Holliman.

Associate Pastor Trinity Whitley (Teaching Elder), Barney Ray (Clerk of Session), Will Armstead (Diaconate Rep), Vicki Weber (Personnel Committee) and Randy Zepp (Church Administrator) were also present.

2. Sharing of Joys and Concerns – The Moderator asked if anyone had any joys or concerns to share.

Prayers were requested for Trinity Whitley’s father, Linda Shelley’s friend Lou Logan, Len Turner’s sister, Barney Ray’s sister-in-law Haley, Frank Walker’s colleagues Marian and Larry Johnson and for the parents, teachers and students as the begin school this month.

Joys were shared for Melissa and Theo Strauss on the birth of their daughter Pepper Josephine Strauss on August 21, 2020.

3. Clerk’s Report

1. Approval of the Minutes - The Moderator asked if there were any discussion or recommended revisions to the minutes from the **July 26, 2020 Stated Session Meeting.**

Hearing no corrections, the Moderator asked if there was a motion to approve the minutes as submitted. Bob Apgar so moved and Neal Evans seconded the motion. **The motion to approve the** **minutes as submitted was approved.**

4. Pastor’s Report –

1. Session Retreat in the Fall – The Moderator said that he was still would like to conduct a Session Retreat in September but one option he was considering was either a longer virtual meeting on the September 26th only or a small in-person with others attending virtually. He said that right now it is planned as a virtual meeting. He said he had planned to have Charles Ranson provide a report from the Long Range Planning team on the results of their surveys of the congregation. He mentioned that the one common consensus was for updates and repairs to the Fellowship Hall and Kitchen. He also said that one of his charges from when he was hired by Faith was to focus on the Circle of Faith Endowment initiative. He said that this was also his doctoral thesis that he is planning to complete within the next year. He said while we are still not holding worship services in the Sanctuary at this time, he believed in moving forward with these two initiatives. He also said that he could postpone the Session Retreat until sometime in early 2021 if needed. He asked for the Session for their input. The general response from Session members was to move forward with planning for Retreat in September. Neal Evans stated support for an in-person meeting but mentioned offering the use of Zoom to those who would not want to meet in person.
2. 2021 Budget Planning and Nominating Committee – The Moderator said that it was time for committees to start preparing their budget requests for the 2021 budget. He also requested two volunteers from the Session to serve as the Moderator and Vice Moderator for the 2021 Nominating Committee. Linda Shelley volunteered to serve as Moderator and Roy Youngblood volunteered to serve as Vice Moderator. The Moderator said he would recruit a member from the Diaconate. At large members from the congregation will have to be approved by the congregation.
3. Faith Online By the Numbers – The numbers for viewing the on-line worship are still declining or down from the spring. He said that we will need to see what impact the start of school has on numbers if any.
4. Reopening Phased Plan – The Moderator said that the plan approved by the Session is posted on our website. He said we are in Phase I and II of the plan with the church office open and for people seeking pastoral care and for some small group connection meetings either in the Parlor or outside on the church grounds. He said that committees with 10 or few members can meet in person at the church. He said that while the church office is open, he requested that members make appointments with any specific staff they wish to meet with ahead of time to make sure that they are in the office. Some work by office staff can still be done at home so they may not be in the office the entire time.

He said he has received feedback from some church members who are ready to come back for worship and other in person church activities but he also hears from people who are not ready yet. He asked for elders for an informal, non-binding vote of who was ready to come back. Six members indicated they were ready and eight members said they were not. Leon Corbett said that an in-person meeting of the Session at the retreat would exceed the maximum of ten in the Reopening Plan. The Moderator said that he will consult with his task force of members from the healthcare profession before making any final decisions. Lee Marsh mentioned that meeting in the Fellowship Hall for an in-person retreat would be a better location than the Sanctuary to support both in-person and virtual attendance.

The Moderator then shared that he had to terminate Tony Tannahill, the new custodian, as he was stealing audio/visual equipment from the church after hours. He expressed disappointment that he had to take this action and appreciation for the Tallahassee Police Department for their efforts in finding most of the equipment. He encouraged prayers for Tony and the church as we look for a full-time custodian.

5. Financial Report – Cory Hill reported updated numbers from the financial report in the Session packets through July. He said that as of 2/3s of the way through August, Budgeted Receipts were $820,000 and Actual receipts were $738,000. Budgeted Expenditures were $843,000 and Actual Expenditures were $753,000. *(Clerk’s note: Subsequent to the meeting, the Senior Pastor clarified that receipts from pledges, offerings and gifts exceed our expenses).*  The Church Administrator and Senior Pastor said the PPP loan has been used for both the Faith Preschool and Faith Churchto cover payroll as required in the terms of the loan.Randy Zepp added that on-line giving is not received until the end of the month and is about $11,000 for August to date. He also mentioned that prepaid pledges are not recognized until the month they were due so that will also increase the Actual Revenues for the final August report.

6. Diaconate Report – Will Armstead said the Diaconate had been reaching out to members at Westminster Oaks to check on them. Their next meeting is on September 13th. He said that deacons would normally be planning for various monthly luncheons and Jubilee but due to no in person worship or large group meetings, there is not a lot to do.

7. Consent Agenda – No items on the consent agenda.

8. Action Agenda –

a. The **Witness Committee recommended the Session’s approval** for the following action item:

i. **Community Corner in Faith Communications** -

That our weekly and monthly communications have an area for community concerns: announcements, meetings, educational opportunities dealing with social justice issues can be noted: environment, criminal justice, crime prevention, civil rights, race, LGBT, access to equal education, affordable housing, food insecurity, access to good health care.

Lee Marsh (Witness Committee Moderator) sent by email a procedure approved by this committee related to the Session’s request for clarification for whom and how items would be approved for church communications related to the motion.

Community Corner Procedure Draft

1. Social justice issues are defined as:
   1. Criminal justice reform
   2. Crime prevention
   3. Civil rights
   4. Race relations
   5. LGBTQ+ concerns
   6. Access to equal education
   7. Affordable housing and transportation
   8. Food insecurity
   9. Access to quality healthcare
   10. Environmental issues
   11. Human trafficking
   12. Gun violence
2. Announcements are restricted to:
   1. Meetings
   2. Educational opportunities
   3. Protests/demonstrations
   4. Pending legislation
3. Submissions shall be sent to: 2 Witness Committee members appointed by the Moderator of the Witness Committee
4. Coordinators (named in 3 above) shall approve or disapprove (disapproval will note where there was deviation from 1 & 2 above) and send to Cheri Harkema
5. Upon request, denial of submissions can be brought before the entire Witness Committee for consideration

Under discussion of the motion, Neal Evans recommended that the procedure should be changed to identify the title of office staff such as Director of Communications instead of the staff member’s name such as Cheri Harkema. He also recommended that the form and frequency of the communications should be specified in the procedure. The motion identified them as weekly and monthly. The Moderator said that it would be in the This week at Faith and Monthly Newsletter communications. Neal also he did not see any length of term for the two Witness Committee members charged with review and approval or disapproval of items submitted Lee Marsh said that he would prefer to not specify a term and allow the Moderator of the Witness Committee to make the determination.

Leon Corbett expressed his concerns with putting the church in a position of appearing to endorse issues or community groups by communicating these events. He asked Lee how the committee identified these specific issues. Lee said that the Witness Committee and the church had hosted events and speakers with many of these subjects and from communications received from our missionaries on topics they are seeing and dealing with. He said the policy provides an objective list of what types of events and subjects are eligible for communications.

Tracy Morales said her concern was that we will get submissions from a few people on the same issues all of the time. She said that we should name it what is and not call it Community Corner but Social Justice events.

Robert Volpe said that he recommended removing pending legislation from the list of announcements allowed since pending legislation is subject to interpretation.

Laura Ketcham said she supported the motion and would like to see disability awareness as one of the items under social justice items definitions. She said that to address some of the concerns express that the name of the submitter be included along with a disclaimer.

Linda Shelley said that she supported the comments from Tracy, Robert and Laura though not about adding the names of submitters. Frank Walker spoke in favor of the comments from Linda and Robert.

Roy Youngblood suggested adding elder affairs to the social justice items definitions.

The Moderator said that based upon the discussion, the options for moving forward include referring back to the Witness Committee which he did not really want to do or voting on each recommendation as an amendment to the motion and procedures one at a time. Lee Marsh said that he also did not prefer referring it back to the Witness Committee and that this is Sessions ultimate decision.

The Moderator said that he would advise that changing the procedure to refer to the Director of Communications rather than Cheri Harkema was a technical change that does not change the nature of the motion or procedures.

**Amendment #1 -** The Moderator said that he would take Neal’s recommendation to specify the form and frequency of the communications to be a motion to amend the procedures from the Witness Committee to state weekly and monthly communications as stated in the motion. He asked if there was a second to this motion. Jason Taylor seconded the motion. The Moderator called for the vote of the motion to amend the procedures. **The motion to amend the motion was approved**.

**Amendment #2 -** The Moderator said that he would take Neal’s recommendation to specify the terms of the Witness Committee members assigned in the procedure as a motion to amend the motion from Witness Committee and asked if there was a second. Cory Hill seconded the motion. The Moderator called for the vote of the motion to amend the motion. **The motion to amend the motion was not approved by a vote of six (6) in favor and nine (9) against**.

**Amendment #3 -** The Moderator said that he would take Robert’s recommendation to remove pending legislation from the list of announcements allowed in the procedures as a motion to amend the motion from Witness Committee. Linda seconded the motion. The Moderator called for the vote of the motion to amend the motion. **The motion to amend the motion was approved**.

**Amendment #4 -** The Moderator said that he would take Roy’s recommendation to add elder affairs to the definition of social justice issues in the motion and procedures as a motion to amend the motion from Witness Committee. Tracy seconded the motion. The Moderator called for the vote of the motion to amend the motion. **The motion to amend the motion was approved**.

**Amendment #5 -** The Moderator said that he would take Tracy’s recommendation to change the name of the section in the weekly and monthly communications from Community Corner to Social Justice Issues. Roy seconded the motion. The Moderator called for the vote of the motion to amend the motion. **The motion to amend the motion was approved**.

**Amendment #6 -** The Moderator said that he would take Laura’s recommendation to add disability awareness to the definition of social justice issues in the motion and procedures as a motion to amend the motion from Witness Committee. Linda seconded the motion. The Moderator called for the vote of the motion to amend the motion. **The motion to amend the motion was approved**.

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Leon Corbett stated that he was still concerned about putting this type of authority in the hands of two people but he also said he did not support having to approve items by email vote of the Session. Mary Keyt said that racial injustice has been around for over 200 years and won’t go away for some time so those items will tend to be in every communication.

The Moderator then called for a vote of the motion from Witness with the approved amendments.

**The motion with all approved amendments was approved by a vote of 10 to 4.**

b. The **Personnel Committee recommended the Session’s approval** for revised Sabbatical Policy for full time clergy and program staff.

*CHAPTER V, PERSONNEL, POLICY MANUAL—PROPOSED SABBATICAL POLICY*

***SABBATICAL LEAVE POLICY FOR FULL—TIME CLERGY AND PROGRAM STAFF***

***Purpose:***

*As stated in the recommended policy of the Presbytery of Florida, “[t]he purpose of a sabbatical leave is to provide an opportunity for ministers/educators serving churches full time within the Presbytery of Florida to spend three months free from the demands of the parish engaged in a time of reflection, prayer and meditation, and/or study in order to gain deeper insight toward spiritual life and ministry.” Sabbatical leave is an extension of the biblical concept of the Sabbath.*

***Candidates:***

*The Faith Sabbatical program shall apply to ministers, educators and the director of worship, who are employed full time. A candidate shall become eligible for a sabbatical once they have served Faith for seven years in full time employment.*

***Sabbatical:***

*The sabbatical term shall be three (3) consecutive months, including the two weeks of study leave already granted annually. Annual vacation leave shall not be impacted by the sabbatical and, with the permission of the Senior Minister and the Session, may be added to extend the sabbatical term. The candidate will continue to receive full salary and benefits during the sabbatical and there will be no change to a candidate’s terms of call. Continuing education funds budgeted for the candidate in the year of the sabbatical may be used to defray costs incurred during the leave period.*

***Process:***

*A candidate for sabbatical shall agree to continue to serve Faith for a minimum of one additional year after completion of the sabbatical leave. A proposal for sabbatical leave will be submitted in writing for approval by the Senior Minister, the Session and the Presbytery’s Committee on Ministry at least six (6) months prior to the proposed sabbatical start. Proposals shall include a request for leave and its intended purpose. The Session shall have the authority to approve a candidate’s leave. Upon completion of the sabbatical, the candidate shall provide a written report to the Session sharing details of the leave as well as reflections upon its value.*

***Ad Hoc Sabbatical Committee:***

*A candidate shall develop his or her sabbatical proposal in consultation with an Ad Hoc Sabbatical Committee appointed by the Session. The Ad Hoc Committee shall include the Senior Pastor (unless that person is the candidate) and members of relevant Committees such as Personnel, Children & Families, Youth & Families, Adults & Families and Worship & Music, as recommended by the Senior Pastor and appointed by the Session. The Candidate and Ad Hoc Committee shall be responsible for developing a proposal that addresses coverage of the candidate’s responsibilities during the sabbatical leave.*

Discussion included a history and context of the development of the policy by Vicki Weber. She said that this has been discussed for at least five years. She expressed appreciation for Thomas Whitley’s research and contributions that he provided before his wife Trinity Whitley was hired as Associate Pastor. Linda Shelley expressed her appreciation to the Personnel Committee for bringing this policy to the Session. She said that she believe it was the right thing to do. Neal Evans expressed his support for the policy but expressed some concern for the cost estimate to implement it and how to continue the programs, activities and functions performed by staff during their sabbatical. Vicki said that the policy establishes an ad hoc committee that will plan how to fill the gaps. Mary Keyt said that this policy is a way to help retain and value our staff. Frank Walker asked a question about whether there were any consequences if staff did not complete a year of service after the sabbatical. Vicki said that there was no penalty but that Frank asked if the policy was for only one sabbatical during the entire employment or once every seven years. Vicki said one every seven years. It was mentioned that Shannon Guse is immediately eligible for the policy but that it has to be approved by the Senior Pastor and Personnel before it is granted and they would work to try and schedule the Sabbatical with the staff member.

Roy Youngblood **called the question.** The Moderator called for a vote of the motion. **The motion was approved.**

9. Items Not In Agenda – The Moderator asked if there were any items anyone wanted have considered to add by a 2/3’s vote. None were offered.

10. Informational Items/Committee Reports –

The Moderator asked if there was anything to share from the committees as informational items. Trinity Whitley said that Manna on Meridian normally services 150 bags of food each month but provided 180 bags in July. She said that we are in need of volunteers next month who can lift bags to place into the car trunks for people seeking food. She said volunteers should contact Shellie Camp. The next distribution is Saturday, September 26thand they are normally done by 9:30am.

The Moderator said that Faith Preschool had been open for two weeks and that things are going well so far. He asked to keep the director and teachers in our prayers.

Linda Shelley said that Buildings & Grounds Committee is obtaining estimates for three different options to provide covered outdoor space for meeting and gatherings. They have included the committees requested for inclusion in this process.

Trinity said that she had sent an email with a list to Session members with contacts to make to check on members of the congregation and to let her know if you did not receive the email or would be unable to assist with making contacts.

11. Closing prayer - to conclude the meeting at 1:17 p.m.

**Actions of Session Approved by Email between July 26th and August 23rd**

As discussed at the July 26th Stated Session Meeting, an email request for approval of the revised Reopening Plan attached to the email was sent on July 29th**. All votes were for approval of the revised plan**. The revised plan approved was as follows:

*Faith Presbyterian Building Re-opening Plan*

*This plan has been developed to prepare Faith Presbyterian Church to reopen the building for use. In order to complete each phase, a Covid-19 Task Force will be formed to advise the staff about reopening. The task force will be guided by best practices and advice offered by local officials, the CDC and our insurance company. The task force consists of the following church members: Cory Hill, Andee Harrison, Kevin Peters, Jill David, Marilyn Capps, and Brad Clayton.*

***Phase 1-*** *Office Re-opening Plan*

*Phase 1 will begin when our full staff is in place, volunteers are secured, and the church staff and task force advise that we are ready to open.*

* *All doors will remained locked with the exception of the main office door. Electronic Locks will be disabled.*
* *Volunteer must be seated at main office to welcome visitors.*
* *Anyone entering the office will be required to wear a mask, sanitize hands, and have a temperature check.*
* *Doors will be posted with entrance requirements: masks must be worn, temperature must be checked to enter the building during normal business hours.*
* *If their temperature ranges below 99 degrees he/she will be admitted and can meet with staff either in the conference room on in their office. If it is above 99 degrees he/she must remain in the office foyer.*
* *Staff will be able to work from home and may not have regular office hours. Appointments are highly recommended*
* *All other parts of the building remain closed (for Faith preschool, please see their separate reopening plan.)*

***Phase 2****- Small group re-opening plan*

*Phase 2 will begin when staff and the task force advise that we are ready to move to the next phase.*

* *Doors remained locked and electronic locks disabled.*
* *Small groups will be organized at three locations: Gazebo, Fire pit, and in the parlor.*
* *Small groups will be limited to 10 people per CDC advise.*
* *Doors will be posted with requirements for entry: Mask, temperature check, and hand sanitizer.*
* *For Parlor groups: All those entering the building must come to the office. They will be required to wear a mask, sanitize hands, and have a temperature check.* 
  + *Group leaders are expected to come early and wipe down door knobs, light switches, remote controls in the parlor. They will also be asked to wipe down these items after the meeting is over. Cleaning supplies will be provided at the office.*
  + *Group leaders must take attendance at each meeting. They must turn in attendance sheets at the office after the meeting is over.*
  + *Chairs will be set up six feet apart. No tables will be available.*
* *Bathrooms will be available in the office area. The rest of the building will remain closed.*
* *No sharing of food and the church will not provide food at group meetings.*

***-Outside Mission Partners***

***-****Under phase 2, only two outside mission partners will be allowed use of the building-* ***NA Groups,*** *and* ***The Boy Scouts****. The NA groups typically have less than 10 people and the Boy Scouts meet outdoors near the fire pit. These groups will be required to sign a new* ***Facility Use Agreement Form*** *that includes new requirements for COVID-19 safety. They will not be required to turn in attendance sheets, but they will be required to notify Senior Administrator, Randy Zepp, if any attendee tests positive for Covid-19.*

*Phase 3- Sanctuary Open for Prayer—We will move to phase three when staff and the task force advise us to do so.*

* *We will provide three opportunities per week for prayer in the sanctuary. These sessions will be 30 minutes each. A staff member or volunteer must be present to make sure all attendees follow safety measures.*
* *Sanctuary doors will be posted with requirements for entry: Masks must be worn and hands sanitized.*
* *Members must sign up to attend in order to ensure space for social distancing. The balcony will be closed, and those entering will be expected to socially distance throughout the main floor. The number will be capped at 20 people, following the best practices of other churches in our area.*
* *Attendees must use the main sanctuary doors or the handicapped entrance. All other entrances will remain closed.*
* *Each prayer session will include time for silent prayer and may offer recorded music. The session leader will close the time in prayer and ask attendees to leave for cleaning.*

***Phase 4****—Sanctuary Re-opened for Sunday Worship—We will move to phase four when advised to do so by staff and task force, and* ***when approved by the session.***

* *There will be two identical worship services at 8:30am and 10:30am. The 10:30am service will be streamed live on Youtube so members can continue to worship from home. Livestreams are recorded and will continue to be available after the service is over.*
* *Requirements for entry will be posted at main sanctuary doors. Congregants will be required to use hand-sanitizer and wear masks to enter the sanctuary.*
* *Alternate Rows will be roped off to provide space between members and space will be clearly marked for each family. Once the sanctuary is “full,” others will be asked to worship online from home.*
* *All words will be projected and bulletins, bibles and hymnbooks will be available upon request. They will need to be cleaned after worship has concluded.*
* *Offering plates will be at each door and not passed during the service.*
* *Communion will not be served.*
* *Passing of the peace will be verbal only.*
* *There will be no congregational singing and no choir. Soloists and instrumental music will be provided.*
* *We will ask congregants to maintain social distancing throughout the worship service and as they exit. If necessary ushers will dismiss after the service to ensure social distancing is followed.*
* *Between services, volunteers will wipe down pews, and disinfect the sanctuary as much as possible. We will need at least 8 volunteers to help with cleaning each week.*
* *We will also need volunteers to run audio/video equipment for live streaming.*
* *The restrooms will be available in the narthex and behind the sanctuary. The rest of the building will be closed.*
* ***Childcare will be provided for children 3 and under****. Parents will drop off children at the blue breezeway and children will be taken by staff to the nursery. Parents will not be allowed to enter the nursery. Each child will have their temperature checked before entry and will be signed in/out by parents. Child-care staff will wear masks and be trained to keep space clean. Children 4 and older will be expected to worship in the sanctuary.*

***WHAT TO DO IF COVID-19 IS DETECTED***

*(Please see Preschool reopening plan for preschool procedure.)*

*If it is determined that someone has tested positive for COVID-19 and has entered the building:*

1. *The building will be closed for two weeks for cleaning.*
2. *The congregation will be notified that the building is closed.*
3. *If the person attended a small group event, each person who attended that event will be notified that they may have been exposed to COVID-19. Every effort will be made to maintain confidentiality for the individual.*

The next Stated Session Meeting is on Saturday, September 26, 2020.

Respectfully submitted by

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Barney Ray, Clerk of Session

Approved by Moderator

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Brad Clayton, Senior Pastor