Minutes of the Stated Session Meeting

Faith Presbyterian Church

Tallahassee, Florida

September 25, 2020

1. Call to Order/Opening Prayer/Devotion

The Stated Session Meeting of Faith Presbyterian Church was called to order in the Sanctuary following the officer retreat with teleconference for those elders not physically present and opened with a prayer by the Moderator, Senior Pastor Brad Clayton, at 11:09 a.m. Leon Corbett provided the devotion.

The Ruling Elders (19) present. Physically present (13) were Lee Andre, Amanda Bevis, Leon Corbett, Ginny Dailey, Neal Evans, Andee Harrison, Cory Hill, Laura Ketcham, Tracy Morales, Linda Shelley, Robert Volpe, Frank Walker III and Malikah Woody. Present (6) via teleconferencing with Zoom were Bob Apgar, Aggie Bell, Alice Bonn, Mary Keyt, Jason Taylor and Roy Youngblood... **A quorum of at least one-third of the members of the Session was present.**

The Ruling Elders (2) absent were Bill Holliman and Lee Marsh.

Associate Pastor Trinity Whitley (Teaching Elder), Barney Ray (Clerk of Session), Susie Clemons (Deacon) 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 Brad’s Uncle Steve, Linda’s Aunt Rosie, Leon’s Uncle Rob, Aggie’s sister Nancy, Susie’s mother Liz Clemons, local teen age girls involved in a crash and their families, local 12 year old victim of random gun violence and school teachers.

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 **August 23, 2020 Stated Session Meeting.** Randy Zepp stated that the church had used the Payroll Protection Plan (PPP) loan to cover church payroll expenses. With this correction noted, Neal Evans moved to approve the minutes and Andee Harrison seconded the motion. **The minutes as revised were unanimously approved.**
2. Communications – Letter received from Ruling Elder Amanda Bevis regarding the Session’s decision to approve a Social Justice Corner in church communications.

Amanda Bevis addressed the Session with her concerns. She said she did not intend to create controversy but to strike a balance, stay unified and move forward together. Linda Shelley and Laura Ketcham thanked Amanda for her letter. Leon Corbett expressed that he still had the same concerns he expressed at the last meeting about this decision. Robert Volpe thanked her for letter and said he also would not want this Social Justice Corner to create division in the church. Mary Keyt spoke in favor of the Session’s decision. Tracy Morales said she believed the Session made the wrong decision. Frank Walker said he also believed this was the wrong decision although he felt it was well intentioned. He asked the Moderator what if anything he had heard from members about this decision. The Moderator said he had heard from four families who expressed concerns but he also had heard from several families who think we should be saying more. The Moderator said he had asked Amanda as Moderator of the Communications Committee to talk to Lee Marsh of the Witness Committee to discuss the issue to through the committee process and to come back to the Session.

4. Pastor’s Report –

1. Session Orientation – the Moderator stated that he had planned to conduct the orientation at the March Stated Meeting but due to the pandemic outbreak in March and the cancellation of that meeting, it was delayed until today.

He said that since we have a large Session, we put our faith in our committees to thoroughly discuss and make recommendations to the Session for action. This also means that committees need to collaborate with other committees that could be affected by motions from their committee head of time to ensure the motion has support from affected committees. Committee moderators need to set their agendas and ensure that minutes are kept as discussed in the officer training classes. Committees need to continue working in-between meetings in order to have productive meetings.

1. Reopening Phased Plan – The Moderator shared that he had heard from many members that they were ready to resume some in person worship and small group meetings. He also said he had heard from members that they are not ready to resume in-person worship or meetings due to health concerns. He said that based upon authority granted to him by the Session, he and the church staff had made the decision to move to Phase 3 of the Church Building Reopening Plan approved by the Session. He said that he still wanted the Session to approve moving to Phase 4 of the plan for restarting in-person worship services. He said that he would like four weeks to communicate to the church and prepare for the first worship service.

**Linda Shelley made a motion to move to Phase 4 for in-person worship beginning on Sunday, October 25th. Ginny Daily seconded the motion.**

Discussion of the motion started with Cory Hill recommending that some guidance is set up to delay Phase 4 based upon specific data. Jason Taylor recommended not tying it to only one or two measures so that some discretion could be applied. Frank Walker said he agree with Jason’s comments. A couple of possible sources of data mentioned were local COVID-19 infection rates and hospitalization rates. Since staff had not met to start planning for in-person worship, Peter Pursino asked if staff count meet and discuss and have the lead way to delay until we can be ready. Linda Shelley said she was okay with have the task force advising the Senior Pastor to have the authority and to postpone if factors were to deteriorate. Neal Evans said he thought there was a huge need to volunteers to clean and prepare the building for worship and for recruitment to begin. He Called the Question.

The Moderator asked for those in favor of the motion to state their approval and for those not in favor to state their disapproval. **The motion was unanimously approved.**

1. Faith Online by the Numbers - The Moderator referred the Session to the on-line worship numbers in the meeting packet for specific information but that generally the trend for viewing on-line worship continues a downward trend and people are viewing later in the week than before.

5. Financial Report – Cory Hill said that the Payroll Protection Plan (PPP) funds were spent and waiting to submit the paperwork in the next one to two weeks. He said there is a ninety day window to hear back on whether the loan is forgiven. The loan amount was $130,000. The up to date financial report was that actual receipts of $886,000 plus expected on-line giving available at the end of the month of $18,000 to $20,000 would total about $904,000 which is about $20,000 behind the budgeted receipts for the year. However actual expenses are only $835,000 which is less than receipts.

6. Diaconate Report – Susie Clemons said that there is no monthly lunches or Jubilee to plan for at this time. She did say that Pumpkin Patch would open next month. She mentioned that the next Diaconate meeting might be in-person. She said they are still setting up committee liaisons with local agencies.

7. Consent Agenda – The Moderator asked if anyone wanted to pull anything from the consent agenda for discussion. Hearing no such request, the Moderator called for a vote of the consent agenda. **The consent agenda was unanimously approved.**

The Adults & Families Committee requests the approval of two books for a church wide book study that will begin in October and will be studied consecutively:

**Holy Disunity by Layton E Williams**

These days, there’s no dirtier word than “divisive,” especially in religious and political circles. Claiming a controversial opinion, talking about our differences, even sharing our doubts can be seen as threatening to the goal of unity. But what if unity shouldn’t be our goal? In *Holy Disunity: How What Separates Us Can Save Us*, Layton E. Williams proposes that our primary calling as humans is not to create unity but rather to seek authentic relationship with God, ourselves, one another, and the world around us. And that means actively engaging those with whom we disagree. Our religious, political, social, and cultural differences can create doubt and tension, but disunity also provides surprising gifts of perspective and grace. By analyzing conflict and rifts in both modern culture and Scripture, Williams explores how our disagreements and differences—our disunity—can ultimately redeem us.

**The Color of Compromise: The Truth About the American Church's Complicity in Racism** **by Jemar Tisby**

This book is *not* a call to shame or a platform to blame white Christians. It *is* a call from a place of love and desire to fight for a more racially unified church that no longer compromises what the Bible teaches about human dignity and equality. A call that challenges black and white Christians alike to standup *now* and begin implementing the concrete ways Tisby outlines, all for a more equitable and inclusive environment among God's people.

8. Action Agenda –

a. The **Building & Grounds Committee** requested that Session decide whether to proceed with the outside covered area project and if so, to choose how to fund the project.

Options include:

(1) finding the money in the current budget or in designated funds (to move forward fastest),

(2) allocating year-end excess funds, if any, for the project,

(3) including the project in B&G’s budget for next year, or

(4) allowing a separate fundraising effort for the project.

Discussion of the motion included Linda Shelley providing estimates of costs of about $120,000 to cover the basketball court and about $27,000 to cover the patio next to the Fellowship Hall. She said the Preschool loves the idea of covering the patio to provide shade outdoors. She said they had one quote for $27,000 but had requested two other bids per the church policy due to the threshold of cost and that the cost could be less depending upon those other bids.

**Robert Volpe moved approval of Option 1. The Moderator asked for a vote of Option 1. The motion to approve Option 1 was approved unanimously.**

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. Amanda Bevis said that Evangelism Committee has a request for members to email her a picture of members smiling without wearing a mask to build a collage for a sign saying “Welcome to Faith” “Behind every mask is a friend face”. Neal Evans said that pumpkins arrive October 7th and we need volunteers for uploading and working the patch.

11. Closing prayer - to conclude the meeting at 12:46 p.m.

The next Stated Session Meeting is on Sunday, October 25, 2020.

**Summary of Motions Approved by the Session**

**Approved the Minutes from the August 23, 2020 Stated Session Meeting with revision to indicate that the church had used the Payroll Protection Plan (PPP) loan to cover church payroll expenses.**

**Approved the Adults & Families Committee request of two books (Holy Disunity by Layton E Williams and The Color of Compromise: The Truth About the American Church's Complicity in Racism by Jemar Tisby for a church wide book study that will begin in October and will be studied consecutively.**

**Approved move to Phase 4 for in-person worship beginning on Sunday, October 25th.**

**Approved Buildings & Grounds request find the money in the current budget or in designated funds to construct covering of the patio outside the Fellowship Hall at not more than $27,000.**

Respectfully submitted by

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Barney Ray, Clerk of Session

Approved by Moderator

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Brad Clayton, Senior Pastor