Minutes of the Stated Session Meeting

Faith Presbyterian Church

Tallahassee, Florida

October 24, 2021

1. Call to Order/Opening Prayer/Devotion

The Stated Session Meeting of Faith Presbyterian Church was called to order in the Fellowship Hall by the Moderator Dr. Brad Clayton and opened with a devotion by Ruth Bedell at 11:45 a.m. Joys and concerns were shared and the Moderator offered an opening prayer.

The Ruling Elders (16) present were Aggie Bell,, Courtney Atkins, Ruth Bedell, Leon Corbett, Neal Evans, Pat Farrell, Andee Harrison, Laura Ketcham, Karen Linville, Lee Marsh, Wayne McDaniel, Linda Shelley, Frank Walker III, Robert Volpe, Jason Welty and Roy Youngblood. **A quorum of at least one-third of the members of the Session was present.**

The Ruling Elders (4) absent were Bob Apgar, Amanda Bevis, Mary Keyt and Matt Sirmans.

Barney Ray (Clerk of Session), Allison Hankinson (Diaconate Representative) and Stephanie Humphries (church member and preschool parent) were present.

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 **September 26, 2021 Stated Session Meeting.** Hearing none, **a motion to approve was made by Linda Shelley and seconded by Andee Harrison. The minutes were unanimously approved as submitted.**
2. Commissioners Report from Presbytery Meeting – Leon Corbett and Roy Youngblood attended and reported to the Session. Leon reported that they are looking to request a program director to support the part time Dogwood Acres director with reserve funds. Financial report was positive as some churches who had not given in the past gave this year and some churches such as Faith give more than their per capita giving. The 2022 budget was approved. Presbytery still needs volunteers to serve on committees. Glenn Hodges was presented for approval as an Inquirer for Ministry. The Moderator also reported that the annual reading of the necrology report of elders who passed away during the past year was read aloud and included three elders from Faith (Peter Ray, Lance Scalf and Larry Wood).

4. Pastor’s Report

1. Faith Worship by the Numbers – The numbers were in the packet but the October 17th worship had 275 people due to Jubilee afterward and Shannon Guse’s last Sunday. He said that if we were to have this number of attendees on a regular basis, we may need to discuss how to accommodate this many people with the current roped off rows in-between.
2. Feedback from Preschool Parents – The Moderator shared responses from preschool parents. Ten parents who were disappointed in the Session’s decision to require masks for all children two years old and above sent communications requesting that their responses be shared with the Session. The Moderator had printed copies available for members to read but said he would email them to all elders. One family told Preschool Director Allison Lee they were happy with the decision.

Courtney Akins asked what the protocol was for funerals in the sanctuary like one she recently attended. The Moderator said that the funeral was attended by people of the community and the funeral home many of whom did not where a mask although the family did wear masks. He said that he could only announce that masks were required but he did not want to stop the service until all present complied. Wayne McDaniel asked if the COVD-19 task force advising the Moderator had provided any specific guidance about relaxing the mask policy under specific conditions. The Moderator said that the task force which includes members of the medical community tend to be conservative in their guidance to continue wearing masks but have stated they will support whatever decision is made by the Session.

1. Session Study “Naked Spirituality” by Brian D. McLaren – The Moderator said that he had order a book for the Session to read once it is delivered by October 28th and to discuss at the next Session meeting.

5. Financial Report – Robert Volpe expressed his appreciation for the patience of the Session given the difficulties in the unusual financial trends due to the pandemic. He expressed thanks for the letter sent by the Moderator to the church and that receipts have rebounded and exceed expenses. He highlighted the new $50,000 Tree of Life endowment account that was approved at last month’s Session meeting. He said Finance Committee is meeting with a member of the Presbyterian Foundation and will meet with other financial advisers regarding investments. He highlighted that non-pledged contributions are only at 54% of budgeted receipts and they may decide to lower this budgeted revenue line item for 2022. Ruth Bedell asked about the purpose of the Columbarium account. It was explained it was funded by the people who have purchased a niche and it is used only to use for the maintenance of the Columbarium. Robert said that he recently learned only 14 families currently have signed up for monthly automatic drafting for payment of their pledgers. The Moderator mentioned the giving app to give as well.

6. Diaconate Report – Allison Hankinson reported that the Fall Jubilee last Sunday went very well and expressed appreciation to Allen McConnaughhay who coordinated the event. She mentioned that the backpack blessing program does need more people to sign up to provide food for their backpacks. Sealey Elementary teacher appreciation luncheon is November 17th and Olive Garden is providing soup and salad. Leon County Schools are allowing volunteers and pending the principal’s decision to allow volunteers, people will need to fill out volunteer forms to participate.

7. Consent Agenda – The Moderator asked if anyone wanted to pull anything from the consent agenda for discussion. Hearing no such request, the Moderator asked if there was a motion to approve the consent agenda. **Jason Welty moved approval and Neil Evans seconded the motion**. **The consent agenda was unanimously approved.**

1. **Membership Report**  requested that the Session approve the membership report which included the following changes to the church rolls:

Deceased: Doris Stauffer. The total membership is now 813 members.

1. **Congregational Meeting** requested on December 12th to elect nominating committee for 2022 and new officers.
2. **Worship & Music Committee** requested approval for the baptism of Helen Brinson, daughter of Nick and Katie Brinson on November 21st.

8. Action Agenda

a. **Buildings & Grounds Committee** requested approval to use $13,950 from reserve funds to cover the cost of sidewalk repairs in the front of the church sanctuary. Under discussion, Wayne McDaniel said that they had obtained three quotes and said the committee does not have money in their budget which is why they were requesting reserve funds. Leon Corbett asked if any other solutions were elevated such as grinding the sidewalks to level them out. Wayne explained that the issue is caused by the growth of roots under the sidewalk which will continue to push up and the consensus from vendors and members of the committee was that removing the roots was the recommended solution. Leon asked if an arborist had been consulted about whether this would harm the trees. Linda Shelley said that while no arborist was consulted, removing roots from one side of trees should not impact tree health. Nell Evans called the question. **The** **motion was approved with one dissenting vote.**

b. **Worship & Music Committee** requested approval of protocol for Christmas Carol Choir. After discussion about possibility of vaccine approval for children under 12 years of age and distancing of the audience from the performers, Neil Evans called the question. **The** **motion was approved unanimously.**

c. **Preschool Medical Exemption request per at least two members of the Session requesting to discuss.** Linda Shelley made a **motion to amend the church’s COVID-19 policy to allow a medical exemption from a licensed physician and/or psychologist signed on a form to be created by the preschool** and Laura Ketcham **seconded the motion**.

Wayne McDaniel said he wanted the safety committee and preschool board to provide input to this change in policy. Frank Walker said that the Session had removed the preschool board from the decision previously. After discussion, the **motion was unanimously approved.**

d. **Congregational Meeting** requested for November 14th to elect search **committee for Associate Pastor for Youth and Young Adult.** The Moderator explained that he and Associate Pastor Trinity Whitley had discussed the possibility of considering an ordained minister for this position which would require a search committee approved by the congregation. He said that would not bind the church to hiring an ordained person but would provide flexibility to do so. He said that the Personnel Committee has worked it into the budget if the position were ordained. He said Nominating Committee is working to identify and present a search committee. The current plan is to include two members from the Youth & Families Committee, one parent of a youth, one member from the Personnel Committee, one youth and both pastors. Linda Shelley suggested a teacher be included as well. Trinity Whitley said that she believes this can be accomplished with the current proposal as a teacher would be from one of these groups. Nell Evans moved approval and Linda Shelley seconded. **The motion was unanimously approved.**

9. Items Not In Agenda – The Moderator asked if there were any items anyone wanted have considered adding by a 2/3’s vote.

Wayne McDaniel asked for the Session to consider changing the robed off sections of the sanctuary. More than 2/3s of the members of the Session voted to consider.

Wayne moved and Jason seconded opening the middle half of the closed pews.

Robert Volpe, Lee Marsh and Laura Ketcham voice support to opening all rows. **Wayne McDaniel asked to amend his original motion to remove all ropes and Jason seconded his requested change**. **The motion was unanimously approved**.

10. Information items – Wayne McDaniel said that the full time custodian has turned in his resignation so we are looking for someone to hire.

Communion was observed with a closing prayer to conclude the meeting at 1:24 p.m.

**Summary of Motions Approved by the Session**

* **Approval of the minutes from Stated Meeting on September 26, 2021.**
* **Approval of the membership report.**
* **Approval of request for baptism for Helen Brinson (daughter of Nick and Katie Brinson) on November 21st.**
* **Approval of Congregational Meeting to elect Nominating Committee for 2022 and new officers.**
* **Approval of Congregational Meeting to elect Search Committee for Associate Pastor for Youth and Young Adults.**
* **Approval for medical exemption process from requiring a mask during preschool activities.**
* **Approval for Christmas Carol chorus protocols.**
* **Approval for sidewalk repairs in front of the Sanctuary.**
* **Approval to remove all ropes from pews in the Sanctuary**

**Actions of Session Approved by Email between September 26, 2021 & October 24, 2021:** The moderator sent an email on September 29th asking if at least two members of the Session wanted to consider a medical opt out from families of the preschool. At least two members of the Session replied stating they wanted the Session to consider the request.

Respectfully submitted by

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Barney Ray, Clerk of Session

Approved by Moderator

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Dr. Brad Clayton, Senior Pastor