

Covenant Presbyterian Church, Athens, GA

Stated Session Meeting

August 24, 2021

A stated session meeting, called according to the Book of Order, was held via ZOOM on August 24, 2021. Moderator Mark Harper welcomed everyone, declared a quorum present and called the meeting to order at 6:38 p.m. Linda Koehler presented the devotional. She read Ecclesiastes 3:1-13, a timely scripture for us because it assures us that “there is a time for everything”. With everything going on in our lives, (Covid-19, births, deaths, members moving to Presbyterian Village, Mark breaking down his household and moving to another church) we should remember that God is with us through all the changes. Linda closed with prayer.

Elders present: Clayton Adams, Kathy Boardman, Don Bower, Kay Brooks, Paige Campbell, Jennifer Frey, Linda Koehler, Rich Reaves, Sarah Shannon, and Chris Wilson.

Elders absent: Steve Rathbun, Brian Striggow

Others present: Bert Ballard-Myer, Valerie Frey, Randy Parish, Katy Terry, Andie Bisceglia, Asher Hill, Travis Williams, Mark Harper, Tom Buchanan, Hilary Shuford, and Luanne Rigsby.

Greetings from NEGA Presbytery Representatives

General Presbyter, Hilary Shuford, counseled the session that during this time of transition, it is our time to build up.

At the last meeting, the Session voted that our Personnel Committee would serve as the search committee for an Interim Pastor. They will also engage a Bridge Pastor to serve until the Interim Pastor can begin. Rev. Shuford met with the committee on August 5th and gave them names of several potential candidates for both positions.

Rev Shuford encouraged the Session to serve in their roles as spiritual leaders of the congregation during this time of transition and to lead in establishing good boundaries and good relationships. She cautioned the Session to *not* call Mark after September 8th for pastoral duties or questions but rather to call her or the Bridge Pastor. Hilary emailed the Session a list of local pastors who will be available beginning September 9, 2021, to support the Session and the Bridge Pastor until an Interim Pastor is secured.

Hilary introduced Rev. Tom Buchanan, pastor at Friendship Presbyterian Church who serves on the Presbytery Committee on Ministry. Tom expressed that he is happy to be part of the team who will help during transition.

Transition Update from Personnel

Randy Parish, chair of the Interim Search Committee, reported that the committee will begin virtual interviews for the Interim Pastor on August 25, 2021. In the meantime, the committee recommends we invite Rev. Glenn Doak, former pastor of First Presbyterian Church in Athens, to serve as our Bridge Pastor until the Interim Pastor begins. Details are yet to be worked out by the Personnel Committee as to start date, salary and duties. The recommendation of Rev. Glenn Doak to serve as Bridge Pastor was unanimously approved by the Session.

Minutes and Financial Report

The minutes from the July 27, 2021, stated Session meeting were reviewed. Chris Wilson moved and Don Bower seconded that the minutes be accepted as presented. The motion was passed unanimously.

Mark Harper asked the Session to review the Financial Summary for July, 2021, and a detailed report for the month of July. He noted that pledges are coming in as anticipated. Sarah Shannon moved and Paige Campbell seconded to accept the financial report as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

Neighborhood Ministries Report and Proposals

Mark Harper thanked our Neighborhood Ministries Coordinator, Travis Williams, for his leadership in reaching out to those in need of food and housing. On average, we have been feeding 80 families per week through the food pantry.

Travis introduced Andie Bisceglia, UGA Campus Kitchen Program Manager. The Campus Kitchen is a nationwide program which provides hot meals and groceries for food insecure families. They have been providing fresh produce grown at the UGarden to the food pantry. The Campus Kitchen at UGA is one of only two in the country that have been able to keep operating during the pandemic. Prior to the pandemic, they used the kitchen at Talmadge Terrace, a local retirement home, to prepare meals for the homeless. Last year, they used the Georgia Center kitchen. Because the Georgia Center is opening back up, the Campus Kitchen needs temporary kitchen space from 6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m. on Sunday, Monday and Tuesday nights to prepare meals for delivery to the homeless. Andie stated that the student interns who prepare the food are trained in food safety and their goal is to leave the kitchen cleaner than they found it. All students are required to wear masks. Since they need 3-4 volunteers to help shift leaders, this could provide an opportunity for our youth to assist. Chris Wilson moved and Clayton Adams seconded we allow Campus Kitchen to use Covenant's kitchen on Sunday, Monday and Tuesday nights to cook meals to be delivered to the homeless. After discussion, the motion was unanimously approved.

Carol Wheeler Restricted Funds Proposal

Kathy Boardman previously emailed the Session a proposal for the use of some money from the Carol Wheeler Restricted Funds for the creation of an audio-visual lab. Kathy included a list of the equipment needed for the lab. Asher Hill said that the lab would have two purposes: 1) to create in-house videos to support the programs of the church and 2) to train youth and others who are interested in the techniques used to produce high quality videos, i.e., use of cameras, getting good quality sound, processing and editing of film, etc. Asher would be responsible for purchasing and storage of the equipment, as well as the education component. Paige Campbell moved and Kay Brooks seconded using up to \$10,000.00 from the Carol Wheeler Restricted Fund (acct. #9020) for creation of an audio-visual lab, purchasing the equipment on the list with the exception of buying three cameras rather than five. After discussion, the motion was approved.

WIFI Update Network

Asher Hill said that there are dead spaces for WIFI service in several areas of the church. He has gotten quotes for installation of updated WIFI from Athens Micro and other vendors which amounted to around \$10,000.00. Asher feels that he can purchase the equipment and that he and Hank Tweedell can install an all-inclusive WIFI network that is easily upgradable and maintained for around \$6,000.00. Paige Campbell moved and Chris Wilson seconded we move ahead with asking Asher to provide a detailed proposal and quote for the WIFI network, with Asher and Hank doing the installation, to the Finance Ministry Team. After discussion, the motion passed unanimously.

Worship Center Renovation Update

Rich Reaves from Building and Grounds reported that our new carpet arrived about a week ago. In order to get all the projects coordinated, painting of the Worship Center, removal of the old carpet and installation of the new carpet will hopefully begin the week of September 13th. The replacement of the fabric on the pew cushions with matching fabric will be on the Worship Ministry Team's agenda at their next meeting.

In-person Worship Update

Mark Harper reported that Covenant returned to a virtual worship service via live streaming on Sunday, August 22, 2021. We had received strong encouragement to do so from the Presbytery's Covid-19 Task Force due to the increase in occurrence of Covid-19, in the form of the Delta variant, and to the increase of ICU occupancy in the Athens area. Hopefully, we will be able to re-gather in person soon.

Other Business

Due to the sensitive nature of an ongoing church security issue to be discussed, Chris Wilson moved and Linda Koehler seconded the Session move into Executive Session.

Motion was approved. After discussion, Sarah Shannon moved and Paige Campbell seconded that regular Stated Session meeting be reconvened. Motion was approved.

Announcements

There will be a memorial service for Anna Holshouser at 2:00 p.m. on Saturday, August 28, 2021. Only immediate family and special care givers will be in attendance, but the service will be live streamed. Congregational Care will deliver a meal to the home afterwards.

Mark stated that there will hopefully be a Confirmation service on September 12, 2021, for the 4 young men who were in the most recent confirmation class.

There being no other business, a motion to adjourn was made by Don Bower and seconded by Jennifer Frey and passed unanimously. It was sadly noted that this was the last Session meeting at Covenant for the Moderator. The meeting was adjourned with prayer at 9:25 p.m.

NEXT MEETING: Tentatively September 28, 2021, 6:30 p.m. (to be confirmed by Bridge Pastor.)

Mark Harper, Moderator

Luanne Rigsby, Clerk