

# Covenant Presbyterian Church, Athens, GA

## Stated Session Meeting

October 26, 2021

A stated session meeting, called according to the Book of Order, was held in person at Covenant Presbyterian church and by Zoom on October 26, 2021. Rev. Glenn Doak, Bridge Pastor, served as Moderator for the meeting. Moderator Doak welcomed everyone, declared a quorum present and called the meeting to order at 6:32 p.m. For the devotional, Don Bower read a passage from Barbara Brown Taylor's book, *Learning to Walk in the Dark in which she expressed that since we learn so much from the bad things that happen in our lives, we need them as much as we do the good happenings.*

Elders present: Clayton Adams, Kay Brooks, Jennifer Frey, Linda Koehler, Steve Rathbun, Rich Reaves, Sarah Shannon, and Chris Wilson.

Elders Present via Zoom: Kathy Boardman, Don Bower, Paige Campbell, and Brian Striggow

Others present: Asher Hill, Pam Knox, Bert Ballard-Myer, Katy McGill Arora, Valerie Stone, Randy Parish, Katy Terry, Bill Barstow, Rev. Dana Waters, Glenn Doak, and Luanne Rigsby.

### Introductions

Those in attendance introduced themselves to Rev. Dana Waters.

### Motion to allow non-session members to speak at the meeting

Rich Reaves moved and Chris Wilson seconded to allow Rev. Dana Waters, Randy Parish, Pam Knox and Valerie Stone, non-session members, the privilege of speaking during the meeting. With no discussion, the motion passed unanimously.

### Recommendation of Interim Pastor Search Committee

Randy Parish, Chair of the Interim Pastor Search Committee, thanked the committee which consisted of Bill Barstow, Charlie Hunnicutt, Gloria Pylant and Katy Terry for their hard work. The committee looked at ten candidates, had Zoom interviews with eight of those and in-person interviews with two. Randy expressed that God led the committee to choose Rev. Dana Waters as their candidate for Interim Pastor for Covenant.

## **Vote to Hire the Candidate**

Chris Wilson, on behalf of the Interim Pastor Search Committee, moved and Clayton Adams seconded that Covenant Presbyterian Church hire Rev. Dana Waters as Interim Pastor. The Moderator then asked Rev. Waters to tell the Session about himself. He related that he is a 3<sup>rd</sup> generation Presbyterian Minister, grew up in Birmingham, Alabama, graduated from Presbyterian College and Columbia Seminary. He is currently head pastor at McDonough Presbyterian Church. The Session members were given an opportunity to ask Rev. Waters questions. After the questions were completed, Rev. Waters was asked to leave the room so the Session could discuss the motion freely. After discussion, the Session approved the motion to hire Rev. Waters as the Interim Pastor for Covenant Presbyterian Church unanimously.

## **Interim Minister Contract**

Prior to the meeting, Randy sent the Session a copy of the Interim/Transitional Pastor Covenant and Contract between Covenant Presbyterian Church and Northeast Georgia Presbytery and Rev. Dana Waters for their review. It is the standard Presbytery contract for 12 months and is renewable. It specifies that Rev. Waters begin work on December 1, 2021, and gives two months' severance pay at the end of the contract. Rich Reaves moved and Chris Wilson seconded to approve the proposed contract between Rev. Dana Waters and Covenant Presbyterian Church. After discussion, the Session approved the motion unanimously.

## **Contract of Financial Terms**

Prior to the meeting, Randy sent the Session a copy of the Northeast Georgia Presbytery Interim Financial Contract between Covenant Presbyterian Church and Rev. Waters for their review. Randy reviewed the contract explaining that the total compensation proposed for Rev. Waters is \$120,721.00, which is virtually the exact compensation being paid to Rev. Mark Harper with a few adjustments of how the money was divided. Rich Reaves moved and Kathy Boardman seconded to accept the proposed financial contract between Rev. George Dana Waters and Covenant Presbyterian Church. After discussion, the Session approved the motion unanimously.

The Session welcomed Rev. Waters and expressed their sincere appreciation to the Interim Pastor Search Committee for their diligent work.

## **Minutes and Financial Report**

The minutes from the September 28, 2021, stated Session Meeting and the October 19, 2021, Called Session Meeting were reviewed. Jennifer Frey moved and Sarah Shannon seconded that the minutes be accepted as presented. There being no discussion, the motion was passed unanimously.

Pam Knox, Church Treasurer, reviewed the Financial Summary for September, 2021, and a detailed report for the month of September. She stated that pledges are coming in as expected and spending has been less than expected so that things are going along well financially. The Session received the report as presented.

## **Social Justice Action Team Report**

**Update on Our Homeless Neighbors**—Travis Williams, Neighborhood Ministries Coordinator, sent a letter to the Session with his recommendations on our unhoused neighbors. Sarah Shannon and Chris Wilson reported on their separate discussions with Travis concerning the homeless individuals who were photographed recently camping on Covenant's campus during the afternoon. Several of the individuals were there temporarily and are now in other locations. Travis is doing all he can to make our homeless neighbors' stays temporary, peaceful, and according to our policies, but he can't be expected to be there all the time. Sarah will ask Travis to post his working hours. Suggestions of possible approaches to the problem were made including training sessions with Travis for volunteers willing to patrol the campus and connecting with the School of Social Work about training interns on how to best help with the needs of those who come to our door. Rev. Doak stated that during this time of transition, members of the Session and church are going to have to step up to doing more. The Session needs to build teams with members of the congregation to patrol campus, pick up garbage. etc.

**Water Usage**—Building and Grounds will decide how to handle the usage of water by those staying around the building.

**Security System Update**- In July, John Chamblee volunteered to work on acquiring bids on installation of a security system and cameras. Since then, Asher Hill has been hired as our technical coordinator and is working on installing the WIFI network. The Session approved for Asher to get quotes on installation of a security system for the church. Chris Wilson will try and get the written report prepared by the Athens Clarke County Police on Covenant's church security sent out to the Session and available to Asher so he can make use of their recommendations.

**Update on Church Library**- Valerie Stone and Kathy Boardman have cleaned out and organized our library to make it more attractive and useable, donating 35 boxes of books. They need about \$100.00 to finish the project. Valerie also volunteered to serve as librarian. Don Bower moved and Rich Reaves seconded to allocate the money needed to finish the job and endorse Valerie Stone as our librarian. With no discussion, the motion passed unanimously. Thanks were expressed for their good job.

**Worship Center Renovation Update**-Rich Reaves reported that renovation of the Worship Center is almost complete. Painting and carpeting have been completed, and the pews have been reinstalled. Asher is installing the technical equipment for live streaming. Linda Koehler and Karen Foutz are heading a group that is refinishing any scratches to the wood on the pews and recovering the pew cushions. Rich suggested that we have the service on October 31<sup>st</sup> in the Fellowship Hall and target the 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday in November to resume worship in the Worship Center.

**NEGA Presbytery Meeting**-NEGA Presbytery Meeting was held at 9:30 a.m. on October 26, 2021, via Zoom. Kathy Boardman, Judie Capie and Jennifer Frey served as commissioners from Covenant. Kathy Boardman will submit a written report on the meeting. Jennifer reported that all motions passed and that witnessing the progression of a candidate for ministry through her journey, as well as another minister retiring, reminded her of the circle of life in the church and made her feel more connected to the greater Presbyterian Church.

**Discussion of Ministry Team Assignments**—Clayton Adams expressed concern that he hadn't received more training before being assigned as chair of Christian Education Ministry Team. He suggested that new Session members should have a year on Session to learn about their duties before being assigned the responsibility of chairing a Ministry Team. Kay Brooks stated that it works well if there is an experienced Ministry Team chairperson who can work with a new chairperson to bring them up to speed. Rev. Dana Waters will be doing the new Session member training once he arrives in December.

### **Ministry Team Reports**

**Worship Ministry Team**—In-person Worship services began on October 24, 2021. Worship Ministry Team sent a letter to the Session recommending we continue with the 10:00 a.m. worship time for the time being. Julie Bower will be rolling off as co-chair of Worship at the end of December. Judie Capie and Ellen Stoneburner will be taking her place and working with Jennifer Frey as co-chairs.

**Building and Grounds Ministry Team**- Rich Reaves reported that B & G met with Athens-Clarke County Solid Waste and decided to switch to their service. We will be using a trash dumpster and utilizing the entire area behind the fence for rolling cans for recycling.

### **Clerk of Session for 2022**

Luanne asked that members of the Session consider serving as clerk for the coming year.

### **Other Business**

**List of Motions Passed**—Rev Doak recommended that someone on the Session make a list of all the motions which were passed and recorded in the minutes over the past year for use by Rev. Waters when he arrives.

**November/December meeting**- Kay Brooks moved and Sarah Shannon seconded that the next Session meeting be a combination of November and December and be held on December 7, 2021 at 6:30 p.m. During discussion, it was agreed to hold the meeting in person and also available via Zoom. Rev. Dana Waters will be the Moderator. The motion passed unanimously.

The Session thanked Rev. Doak for his wonderful leadership as our Bridge Pastor.

Prayer requests were made for the family of Joshua Sampson, local teacher who recently died, for the people of India as they struggle with Covid-19, and for Bill Rigsby as he undergoes heart ablation. Rev. Doak closed the meeting with prayer, ending with the Lord's Prayer.