

**Covenant Presbyterian Church, Athens, Ga.**

**Called Session Meeting**

**October 4, 2022**

A called Session meeting was held at Covenant Presbyterian Church and via Zoom on October 4, 2022. Moderator Dana Waters welcomed everyone, called the meeting to order with prayer at 7:02 p.m.

Elders present: Bert Ballard-Myer, Kay Brooks, Abby Horvath, Linda Koehler, Brian Striggow, Valerie Stone and Chris Wilson.

Elders on Zoom: Don Bower, Jennifer Frey

Elders absent: Clayton Adams, Katy Arora

Others present: Alex Clark, Carolyn Hatfield, Rich Reaves, Luanne Rigsby, and Dana Waters

Dana reminded us that visitors are welcome to attend Session meetings and listen but have to be given permission to speak. He stated that we will continue on with the agenda set at the September 11, 2022, meeting and briefly recapped the progress made at that meeting. The core question we are trying to answer with these discussions is: "Is it Covenant's mission to support the homeless neighbors by allowing them to physically stay on the property?"

Brian Striggow's report:

- Recently the number of guests spending the night outside the building averages 1-3 per night.
- The new signage posted and 24-hour video camera have had a positive effect
- The clean-up crews report that it takes them an average of one hour to clean up the grounds. They estimate it would take one half hour if homeless weren't staying on the grounds
- The homeless guests feel safe and relaxed here. The church is a sanctuary.

Chris Wilson stated, and Rich Reaves concurred, that that we need a group of people who will monitor the grounds every day or everything will go off the rails.

Abby asked what is needed to sustain that once Brian and Chris (who are doing it now) roll off the session in January. She feels that allowing this church to be a safe haven honors God.

Linda believes that the Session is the only group who supports having the homeless stay on the grounds at night. All others she has heard speak about it are opposed.

Dana stated that the homeless hanging around and camping around the building is the congregation's #1 complaint. He asked if we changed "mission" to "priority" in our core question, what would the answer be?

Dana asked the Session, "Is there a solution that the majority of the congregation can get behind?"

Valerie Stone moved we adopt the amended Homeless Rules, as modified by Brian Striggow and Rich Reaves, as our current policy. Chris Wilson seconded the motion and after discussion, the **motion carried**.

In order to find out what the majority of the church would support, the Session will ask the congregation to participate in a survey. The current homeless policy will be shared and then the congregation will be asked to anonymously answer the following three questions:

1. Do you support this policy? Yes or No
2. If you voted yes, would you be willing to help? Yes or No
3. Explanation or additional comments.

Dana will announce and explain the survey in morning worship on Sunday, October 16, 2022. The survey will be emailed out on October 17, 2022. There will be paper surveys available for those who would prefer that method of completing the survey. The surveys are to be completed and turned in by October 31, 2022. Dana will tabulate the results.

With no further business, the meeting be adjourned with prayer at 9:01 p.m.

**NEXT CALLED MEETING:** November 7, 2022 at 700 p.m.

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Dana Waters, Moderator

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Luanne Rigsby, Clerk