

Covenant Presbyterian Church, Athens, GA

Stated Session Meeting

April 22, 2025

A Stated Session meeting, called according to the Book of Order, was held at Covenant Presbyterian Church on April 22, 2025. Moderator Tom Buchanan welcomed everyone, especially incoming Elder, Rich Reaves, declared a quorum present, and called the meeting to order at 6:16 p.m.

Elders present: Karl Barnett, Bob Brewster, Dennis Calbos, Melissa Cobb, Caly DePalma, Kathryn Fowler, Brian Herndon, Ansley Tweedell Land, Rich Reaves, Rebecca Silver, and Pam Thompson

Elders absent: Warren Combs

Others present: Tom Buchanan and Luanne Rigsby

Devotional

Kathryn Fowler presented a devotional on the communion of saints as written about in Romans 12. Being dependent after her recent surgery reinforced to Kathryn how interconnected we are. According to Romans, in Christ, we, though many, form one body with many different parts, and each member belongs to Jesus as well as to each other. In our work as a Session and with our ministry teams, we should be devoted to one another and honor one another. Kathryn opened the meeting with prayer.

Review of Minutes

The minutes from the March 25, 2025, Stated Session meeting and the March 30, 2025, Called Congregational were reviewed. Dennis Calbos moved and Caly DePalma seconded that both sets of minutes be approved as written. Following discussion, motion carried.

Approval of the Agenda

Dennis Calbos moved and Kathryn Fowler seconded that the agenda be approved as presented. Following discussion, motion carried.

Clerk's Report – Luanne Rigsby

Luanne Rigsby reported that following the passing of Larry Hatfield, our total membership is 217. Covenant received a thank you letter from Family Promise of Athens for our donation of \$650.00.

Financial Report

Kathryn Fowler, co-chair of Finance Ministry Team, reviewed the Financial Summary and the detailed financial report for March. As of the end of March, we are 75% through the fiscal year. Pledges and non-pledged income both exceeded the anticipated

amounts, and expenditures were lower than expected by \$26,000. Kathryn encouraged ministry teams to submit expenses for reimbursement. As they mature, certificates of deposit are being reinvested at the best available rates rather than automatically rolling over at lower interest rates. The Financial Report was accepted into the official record.

Business:

Stewardship Campaign Update

Kathryn Fowler reported that the second stewardship letter was sent out by email on April 22nd. Of the 121 pledge packets mailed out, 31 have been received. Hopefully, most pledges will be turned in by Giving Sunday, April 27th. Finance Ministry Team will evaluate the amount pledged and will revise the proposed budget, if necessary. The goal is to have the final budget ready for Session approval by the May 27th meeting.

Update on New Flooring – B&G

Caly DePalma reported that the Building and Grounds Ministry Team has selected Lewis Company Floors to replace the tile flooring in the fellowship hall, kitchen, and hall in front of the food pantry, pending available funds. Finance Ministry Team will discuss funding for the flooring at their May 1st meeting. Lewis has ordered two colors of tiles for the team to evaluate. Particular attention will be paid to the adhesive used as that seems to be the main problem with our current floor. Because the company has many projects scheduled at UGA this summer, Caly suggested we schedule the job as soon as possible. In a straw poll, Session agreed that once the funding information is available, the decision to approve the purchase for around \$25,000 may be made by an email vote rather than waiting for the May 27th Session meeting.

Reducing Trash on the Property

Volunteer teams, who clean the grounds every week, have spoken to Tom about excessive trash being left on the property by passers through. Additional fencing could possibly cut down on the amount of trash. Brian Herndon will follow up on getting a security assessment done for the church grounds.

1075 Gaines School Road Property

The Athens Clarke Planning Commission has recommended that the property next door to Covenant be rezoned from Commercial-Office to Commercial-Neighborhood. The meeting at which the County Commission will consider the re-zoning meeting is May 6th. Tom Buchanan and Kathryn Fowler will try to meet later this week with District 8 County Commissioner, Carol Myers, to discuss the rezoning.

Session and Church Policies Update

Tom and Karen Wetherington are reviewing the 2019 Session Manual to establish what is in it, what should be updated, and what procedures and policies have already been updated and should be added to the revised manual. After that is established, the Session Manual Update Task Force, Warren Combs, Dennis Calbos, and Caly DePalma, will be called in to assist. Goal is for the manual to be completed by June 30.

Visioning for Ministry Teams and Session

At the March Session meeting, ministry teams were asked to conduct a visioning exercise at their next meeting reflecting on the ministry team's vision, mission, accomplishments, what the team does and it is working on, and ways of doing things better or more creatively. Worship MT and Personnel have provided examples of what they used. This exercise will help with the description of the ministry teams in the new Session Manual and with preparation for each team's highlight month. Ministry Teams were asked to identify a month for their team to be highlighted through minutes for mission, articles in The Covenanter, etc., encouraging the congregation to become more involved. So far, teams have chosen the following months to be highlighted:

March - Finance (Stewardship season)

August - Christian Education (Beginning of the academic & program year)

September - Worship

October - Building and Grounds

November - Congregational Care

December - Fellowship

"Big Picture" visioning for Fall 2025 will follow.

Communion Servers for May 4th

Elders Caly DePalma, Kathryn Fowler, Brian Herndon, Pam Thompson, and Rebecca Silver will serve communion on May 4th, meeting in the narthex at 10:40 a.m.

Commissioners to Presbytery Meeting

Karl Barnett and Kathryn Fowler will be Covenant's commissioners to the NEGA Stated Presbytery meeting at First Presbyterian Church in Greensboro, GA, on Tuesday, May 20, 2025, from 2:00 – 5:00 p.m. One item on the agenda will be an antiracism policy. There will be two hybrid town hall meetings for discussion of the policy at Oconee Presbyterian Church on May 1st at 4:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m.

General Announcements - Ministry Teams

Building and Grounds - There will be a B & G workday on May 17th. Help needed!

Christian Education - CE meeting next month. Brian Herndon will visit adult church school classes for feedback. Five youth, Tom Buchanan, Hank and Dee Tweedell will attend Montreat Youth Conference June 1-7, joining the youth from Milledgeville Presbyterian and staying at the Bowden house. Rally Day is August 17, 2025.

Rich Reaves moved and Karl Barnett seconded that we begin our summer schedule on June 1, 2025, with worship beginning at 10:00 a.m., and that we revert to the 11:00 a.m. worship time on Rally Day, August 17, 2025. Following discussion, motion carried.

Congregational Care - The High School and College Graduate Reception will be May 11th after worship. High school graduates are Delaney Braswell and George McMaster. College graduates are Carrie Tweedell and Micah Shannon.

Fellowship - Rebecca Silver reported that the Easter breakfast went very well with many people helping with setup and clean up and lots of delicious breakfast food.

Upcoming Dates:

May 4 - Spring Picnic/Strawberry Festival from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m. Youth will judge the strawberry desserts. New members will be hosted and introduced by "old" members.

June 1 - July 27 – Cookies and punch after worship

June 8 - Pentecost cake and punch reception

July 9 - Coffeehouse (tentatively, depending on floor installation)

August 17 - Rally Day

Mission & Outreach - M&O is planning a diaper drive for August. This year Pride and Pride Fest will be a combined event held on June 7th from 3:00 – 10:00 p.m. with the parade at 5:00. Covenant may have a float.

Personnel - Annual Activities/Timeline was included in the Session packet.

Worship – Worship MT's visioning exercise results were condensed into 4 categories and the report was included in the Session packet. Rebecca Silver mentioned that to prevent confusion, Worship and Fellowship Ministry Teams should to meet together to coordinate joint activities such as the Worldwide Communion Sunday in October.

Pastor's Report

Tom reflected that his first memorial service and his first Easter as Covenant's pastor were in the same week. He felt that the Easter Sunday service and feeling of warmth far exceeded his anticipation. Tom is planning a summer sermon series entitled "Summer Saints" June 22nd through July 27th. **Kathryn Fowler moved and Bob Brewster seconded the Session approve Tom's time off request of May 23-26, 2025. Following discussion, motion passed.** Rev. Ron Gilreath will be guest preacher.

Motion to Adjourn & Closing Prayer

There being no further business, Dennis Calbos moved and Caly DePalma seconded that the meeting be adjourned. Following discussion, motion carried. Tom closed with prayer at 8:08 p.m.

Next Stated Meeting: Tuesday, May 27, 2025, at 6:15 p.m. Rebecca Silver will present the devotional.

Tom Buchanan, Moderator

Luanne Rigsby, Clerk