

Covenant Presbyterian Church, Athens, GA
Stated Session Meeting
October 28, 2025

A Stated Session meeting, called according to the Book of Order, was held at Covenant Presbyterian Church on October 28, 2025. Moderator Tom Buchanan welcomed everyone, declared a quorum present, and called the meeting to order at 6:23 p.m.

Elders present: Dennis Calbos, Caly DePalma, Ansley Tweedell Land, Rich Reaves, and Pam Thompson

Elders present on Zoom: Kathryn Fowler

Elders absent: Karl Barnett, Bob Brewster, Melissa Cobb, Warren Combs, Brian Herndon and Rebecca Silver

Also present: Tom Buchanan and Luanne Rigsby

Devotional

Rich Reaves presented a devotional based on 2 Samuel 9:1-13, a story in which King David expresses kindness to Merib-baal, Saul's grandson who was lame in both feet. Rich read a quote from Frederick Buechner's novel, *Brendan*, "To lend each other a hand when we're falling. Perhaps that's the only work that matters in the end." Rich led the Session in a closing prayer, singing together hymn "O Sing a New Song to the Lord".

Review of Minutes

The minutes from the September 13, 2025, email vote. September 23, 2025, Stated Session Meeting, September 28, 2025, Called Congregational Meeting, October 5, 2025, Called Session Meeting, October 19, 2025, Called Session Meeting were reviewed. Dennis Calbos moved and Caly DePalma seconded that all sets of minutes be approved as written. Following discussion, the motion carried.

Approval of the Agenda

Rich Reaves moved and Pam Thompson seconded that the agenda be approved as presented. Following discussion, motion carried.

Clerk's Report

Luanne Rigsby reported that the 2024 Stated Session and Congregational Meeting minutes had been officially reviewed and approved by the Stated Clerk of the Presbytery at the NEGA Presbytery meeting on October 21st. Following the joining of 13 new members and the passing and moving of several members this year, the total membership of Covenant Presbyterian Church is 226.

Financial Report

Kathryn Fowler, co-chair of Finance Ministry Team, reviewed the Financial Summary and detailed financial report for September. Kathryn reported that at one fourth of the way through the year, our finances are looking good. Pledges are coming in above what is anticipated, and spending has been conservative. We are reinvesting mature CD's at higher interest rates rather than letting them roll over at lower rates. The earned interest is placed into accounts so it can be used. Finance Ministry Team is developing a policy on restricted accounts. They have engaged Turner and Patat accounting firm to audit our books. The Financial Report was accepted into the official record.

Business:

Maintenance of the Fellowship Hall Floor and other Cleaning Services

Caly DePalma, chair of Building and Grounds Ministry Team, reported that B&G has received a quote from Jan-Pro for weekly mopping, periodic spray buffing, and yearly stripping and waxing of the fellowship hall floor. Jan-Pro has given a quote for other cleaning tasks in the building which could be refined to include only the services we would like to have done. **Caly moved we seek two more bids for cleaning services for the church, based on Jan-Pro's list of jobs and the frequency that they are to be performed and that we invite our current contracted custodian, Evelyn Barnett, to submit a bid for the same services.** Rich Reaves seconded the motion. Following discussion, **motion carried.** The goal is to make the final choice for cleaning services at next month's meeting.

Outdoor Security Issues

Tom and Caly reported that number of unhoused persons taking up residence on our grounds has increased. There have been cars blocking the driveway at night, vandalism with graffiti written on the walls of the back portico, receptacle lock boxes forcibly removed, and a fire started in the stairwell. It is very important that our campus be safe to come to and leave from at night. Police have been driving through the property but can't really do anything unless they catch someone in the act of committing a crime. In order for the police to charge someone with trespassing, someone from the church would have to be present to meet with the police and identify that person. This is not practical in the middle of the night. Tom suggested that we might look into hiring a private security company to oversee our property at night and be authorized by the Session to call the police, if needed, and be present when they arrive. **Kathryn Fowler moved that Building and Grounds Ministry Team get bids from three security companies for grounds security and that we also pursue a coalition of churches on the eastside, Bigger Vision, Athens Homeless Coalition, and our two eastside county commissioners to support and advocate for a homeless shelter being built on the eastside of Athens.** Rich Reaves seconded the motion. Following discussion, **the motion carried.**

Caly suggested that we should also consider pruning trees and obtaining better outside lighting in the back of the church. B&G will check into the cost of installing brighter lights in the back of the church and report back to the Session.

General Announcements - Ministry Teams

Congregational Care

Ansley Land reported that Congregational Care Ministry Team does a fantastic job with setting up meal trains for people who need meals, hosting receptions, sending cards and gift cards to college students, shut ins and the sick, etc. However, as our congregation ages and people need more services, CC can't do it all. An answer might be to recruit other church members, who are not on the CC Ministry Team, to help with some of the "one-off" requests such as rides to medical appointments or other unexpected events. Tom suggested formulating a list of volunteers from the congregation (the EEK Squad!) who would be willing to receive text messages and respond if they can help with situations such as those mentioned. The point person could be rotated monthly. Ansley and Tom will work on the EEK Squad idea together.

Caly mentioned having an activity fair to provide opportunities for congregants to volunteer with all the ministry teams.

Fellowship

Caly reported that the Fall Picnic was a big success! Phil Hale provided delicious BBQ and others brought side dishes.

Dec 5th - The Christmas Progressive Dinner. Volunteer homes are needed to host 8-10 people for the appetizer and entrée courses. The church will provide ham and rolls for the entrée, and participants will provide an appetizer, side for the entrée course, or a dessert. The dessert course will be held at the church

Mission and Outreach

Prior to the meeting, Rev. Amy Baer, Mission Outreach and CE Coordinator, sent the Session an update on the Bigger Vision Mobile Day Center using our parking lot from 12:00 - 3:00 p.m. each Tuesday. Tom reported that so far it has been a success. After 4 weeks of operation, the number of guests coming to receive lunches, hygiene kits, socks/ underwear and connections to other resources has gradually increased. The event requires no resources or volunteers from Covenant. There has been no noticeable increase in trash, loitering or camping on the property before or after the Mobile Day Center. The day center provides an opportunity for people to get connected to mental health and other services. Covenant is the first church on the eastside of Athens to intentionally partner with Bigger Vision, Advantage Behavioral Health, and the

Athens Homeless Coalition, though Green Acres Baptist and Tuckston United Methodist have expressed interest in becoming involved.

Worship – Pam Thompson

Pam reported that 5 elders have committed to serve communion on November 2nd.

Prior to the meeting, Worship MT sent Session a summary report. Three upcoming outreach concerts are scheduled: the UGA New Horizon Christmas Concert on December 7th, an evening with the Voices of Gullah, and the summer Coffee House. Greater effort is being made at advertising these events. The Advent and Christmas Musical Worship service will be December 14th. **Rich Reaves moved and Pam Thompson seconded that Session approve collecting a love offering at the New Horizon Christmas concert with the proceeds going to Project Safe.** Following discussion, **motion carried.**

Report from October 21st NEGA Presbytery Meeting

Tom reported that he and Luanne Rigsby attended the NEGA Presbytery meeting held October 21, 2025, at Nacoochee Presbyterian Church. The big item for discussion was the *per capita* assigned to the churches for Presbytery financial support. Although the presbytery proposed \$61/member, a slight increase from the current \$21/member to \$25/member was approved. Rev. CeCe Armstrong, Co-Moderator of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church and former member at Belle Terrace Presbyterian Church in Augusta, preached a stirring and inspirational sermon.

Pastor's Report

Tom asked the Session to be considering a different day for stated Session meetings next year - not the 4th Tuesday.

Tom reported that former member, John Pendrak, passed away recently. Tom knew the family when he served in Villa Rica, GA, and participated in the memorial service.

Motion to Adjourn & Closing Prayer

There being no further business, Pam Thompson moved and Caly DePalma seconded that the meeting be adjourned. Following discussion, motion carried. Tom closed with prayer at 8:25 p.m.

Next Stated Meeting: Tuesday, December 2, 2025, at 6:15 p.m. Dennis Calbos has the devotional.

Tom Buchanan, Moderator

Luanne Rigsby, Clerk