

Covenant Presbyterian Church, Athens, GA
Stated Session Meeting
December 2, 2025

A Stated Session meeting, called according to the Book of Order, was held at Covenant Presbyterian Church on December 2, 2025. Moderator Tom Buchanan welcomed everyone, declared a quorum present, and called the meeting to order at 6:16 p.m.

Elders present: Bob Brewster, Dennis Calbos, Kathryn Fowler, Brian Herndon, Caly DePalma, and Pam Thompson

Elders present on Zoom: Karl Barnett, Ansley Tweedell Land, and Rebecca Silver

Elders absent: Melissa Cobb, Warren Combs, and Rich Reaves

Also present: Tom Buchanan and Luanne Rigsby

Devotional

For his devotional, Dennis Calbos shared his thoughts on Ken Burns' PBS documentary series, *The American Revolution*. There were serious divisions in our country back when it was first founded, especially concerning slavery, and we survived it. Dennis encouraged us to think about and pray for our country to survive the divisions we are experiencing today. Dennis opened the meeting with prayer.

Review of Minutes

The minutes from the October 28, 2025, Stated Session Meeting were reviewed and accepted by consensus into the record as amended.

Approval of the Agenda

The agenda was accepted by consensus with the addition of Clerk's Report and Support of Partnership with Olomouc church.

Clerk's Report

Since this is her last meeting as Clerk of the Session, Luanne Rigsby recapped the six years she has served, including the Covid shut down, resignation of our pastor, and working with 5 different Moderators during the transition. She expressed her thanks to the Session for their trust and especially to Karen Wetherington for all her help.

Financial Report

Kathryn Fowler, co-chair of Finance Ministry Team, reviewed the Financial Summary and detailed financial report for October, 2025. She pointed out two corrections that need to be made in the Financial Summary: 1) under Anticipated Pledges Year to Date, the amount should be \$111,579.51 rather than \$74,386.34, and 2) Restricted Funds

Year to Date should read \$239,722.09, rather than 39,722.09. Kathryn will talk to Karen Wetherington to get these numbers corrected. Kathryn reported that income has been exceeding expectations, and spending has been conservative. The Financial Report was accepted into the official record.

Business:

Motion to Approve the Covenant Policy on Restricted Accounts

The Covenant Policy on Restricted Accounts was included in the Session packet. Kathryn reviewed the policy. Finance Ministry team has contacted donors and agents for donors to see how they wish funds in the restricted accounts to be used. For the most part, the donors want the money to be spent for meaningful ministries and not just sit in the accounts. Ministry teams were encouraged to request money from restricted accounts if they have a project that needs funding. The new policy sets processes for how restricted accounts will be managed in the future.

On behalf of the Finance Ministry Team, Kathryn moved that Session approve the Covenant Policy on Restricted Accounts. Though coming from a ministry team, the motion did not require a second, Dennis Calbos seconded the motion. Following discussion, the motion carried. This policy will be added to the Policy Manual along with the full Financial Policy and Procedures. Dennis expressed thanks that this has finally been accomplished.

Maintenance of the Fellowship Hall Floor and other Cleaning Services

Caly DePalma, chair of Building and Grounds Ministry Team, reported that the need to establish a care plan for our new floor in the fellowship hall is becoming urgent since nothing has been done to the new floor since it was installed last summer. Caly had the quote from Jan-Pro. Rich Reaves had gotten quotes from two other companies, but he was not present at the meeting due to travel weather delays. The other quotes will be sent to the Session electronically so that a decision can be made before the January meeting. The job description should read that as a contract employee, the cleaning service will be under the supervision of B&G rather than Personnel Committee.

Outdoor Security Issues Update

Caly reported that only one local security company, BOS Security, was willing to give a quote on driving through the church property. That quote was for \$28.00 per time. BOS said that driving through the property is "hit or miss", and that the addition of a few more outdoor security cameras that the company can monitor remotely might be a better value. If the security company sees something suspicious, they then call the police. The cost for BOS Security to monitor cameras is \$200.00/month. We will have to ask the Athens Clark Police department how they respond to calls from a security company who is monitoring cameras. (Does someone from the church or security company have to be present when the police arrive?) BOS recommended Transcend Security for installing

cameras. Mike Rayburn from that company will meet with Caly on December 3rd to walk through the building, assess our needs, and give a quote. Kathryn suggested asking our power company the cost of installing security lights at the back of the building that will automatically come on at night. We will need better lighting for security cameras to function properly.

Session Retreat – January 23-24, 2026, Rock Eagle 4-H Center, Eatonton, GA

Luanne stated that reservations have been made for the Founders Lodge at the 4-H center at Rock Eagle for the Session Retreat. We have paid a \$300.00 deposit, but the remaining amount due will depend upon how many people stay in the lodge Friday night, and eat dinner Friday night and breakfast and lunch on Saturday. Pam and Rebecca will not be able to attend, and Bob will not make dinner on Friday. Tom will check with the incoming elders on whether they will be able to attend the entire time.

Funding for the Olomouc Partnership

Bob read an email from Valerie Stone concerning Covenant's partnership with the ECCB church in Olomouc, Czech Republic. There will be a Church Partnership Network Conference with the PC (USA) and ECCB (Czech Republic) on May 3-7, 2026, in Pittsburgh. Several Covenant members are interested in attending the conference. Four of the members of the Olomouc church will be visiting Athens for a few days after the conference. Valerie asked if the church could offer support in these ways:

1. Financial help for members attending the conference
2. Daytime hosting of our Czech visitors including possibly a churchwide event
3. Nighttime hosts for the visitors
4. Transport from and back to the Atlanta airport

Session was in support of Valerie forming an ad hoc committee of interested persons to make plans. Money might be available through restricted funds to help with expenses.

General Announcements - Ministry Teams

Christian Education – Brian Herndon

The youth recently visited Bigger Vision and served dinner to the homeless. It was a good experience for them. In January CE will begin discussions of hiring a parttime ministry of Christian Education.

Congregational Care - Ansley Land

The company who is making our new directory has not responded to Ansley's multiple efforts to get in contact with them. The company received more than \$5000 in orders of photos and has not delivered the directories or the photos. It was suggested we ask one of the attorneys in the church to write the company a letter requesting a response.

Fellowship – Rebecca Silver

Fellowship MT decorated the fellowship hall Christmas tree and put up some wreaths. Because of rain and lack of help, they didn't get the big wreaths or the garlands put up yet. Christmas Progressive Dinner is December 5th and had a good response in sign-ups. There will be a cookies reception following the Christmas musical program. Fellowship MT is discussing ways to get "mid-streamers" and the elderly, who don't want to drive at night, more involved. Possibly we could solicit car poolers for events.

Finance – Kathryn Fowler

Finance MT has signed an agreement with Turner and Patat accounting firm to do a review of this year's finances. The cost was \$1800.00. A donor will contribute \$600.00 to make up the difference in the cost and the budgeted amount of \$1200.00.

Mission and Outreach – Bob Brewster

Next meeting is January 7th

Pastor's Report

Prior to the meeting, Tom emailed a handout on hosting Presbytery meetings to the Session. Tom said that Covenant has been asked to host the NEGA Presbytery meeting on February 28, 2026. The meeting will begin about 10:00 a.m. and last until around 2:00 p.m. and will include lunch. **Caly DePalma moved and Kathryn Fowler seconded that Covenant host the NEGA Presbytery meeting on February 28, 2026.** Following discussion, **motion carried.** The Session will oversee the planning.

Tom has completed two units of elder training. The next step is for the new elders to meet with him and the present chairs of the ministry teams. In the new year Deb Millwood will co-chair Mission and Outreach, Kirche Rogers will co-chair the Personnel Committee as well as serve as Clerk of the Session, Jack Pannecoucke will chair Building & Grounds MT, and Haley Nunn will co-chair Christian Education MT.

Tom expressed appreciation to outgoing elders, Warren Combs, Kathryn Fowler, Ansley Tweedell Land, and Rich Reaves, for everything they have done during their faithful service over the past three years. He also expressed thanks to Luanne Rigsby for six years of service as Clerk of the Session.

Motion to Adjourn & Closing Prayer

There being no further business, Dennis Calbos moved and Bob Brewster seconded that the meeting be adjourned. Following discussion, motion carried. Tom closed with prayer at 7:47 p.m.

Next Stated Meeting: Session Retreat January 23-24, 2026.

Tom Buchanan, Moderator

Luanne Rigsby, Clerk