

**Covenant Presbyterian Church, Athens, GA**

**Stated Session Meeting**

**December 3, 2024 6:00 p.m.**

A Stated Session meeting, called according to the Book of Order, was held at Covenant Presbyterian Church on December 3, 2024. Moderator Tom Buchanan welcomed everyone, declared a quorum present, and opened the meeting with prayer at 6:07 p.m.

Elders present: Bert Ballard-Myer, Dennis Calbos, Kathryn Fowler, Carolyn Hatfield, Brian Herndon, Abby Horvath, Rebecca Silver, and Valerie Stone

Elders absent: Bob Brewster, Ansley Tweedell Land, and Katy McGill

Others present: Tom Buchanan, Warren Combs, and Luanne Rigsby

**Devotional**

Dennis Calbos presented a devotional based on his summer trip to Normandy, France, during which he visited all the Allied beaches. This year was the 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of D-Day landing in which 2500 American soldiers were killed. Dennis passed around photos of the cemetery which overlooks Omaha Beach and contains 9000 graves with both crosses and stars of David. Dennis read John 15:13 about sacrificial love and closed with a prayer that we cherish our freedom and appreciate the ultimate sacrifice of love that was made on D-Day for us.

**Review of Minutes**

The minutes from the October 22, 2024, Stated Session meeting and the November 17, 2024, Annual Congregational Meeting were reviewed and approved to be accepted into the official record.

**Approval of the Agenda**

The Session approved the agenda as amended with Pastor's Report to be added as L1.

**Clerk's Report**

Luanne Rigsby, Clerk, read thank you notes to the church from Presbyterian Women in NEGA Presbytery and the UGA Presbyterian Student Center. She reminded the every one of the Session retreat and planning meeting to be held January 24-25, 2025, at Rock Eagle Conference Center in Eatonton, Georgia. Covenant paid a deposit to reserve the Founder's Lodge last February, and the final numbers of rooms and meals needed is due 30 days in advance of the reservation. She will send out an email asking who will be attending and what meals they will be there for. Session voted last year for the church to pay for the retreat. The January stated Session meeting will be held at

the retreat. There will be tentatively be a called Session meeting January 12<sup>th</sup> to examine the new elders.

### **Financial Report**

Kathryn Fowler, Finance Ministry Term chair, reviewed the Financial Summary, as well as detailed financial reports for October, 2024. She stated that we are running about \$3000 behind in pledged income but will likely catch up by the end of the calendar year. Kathryn said that questions from the October Session meeting have been addressed and that ( ) on the financial report indicates there is extra money in the accounts. Finance Ministry Team will have final updated policies by February or March. The policy for Temporary Restricted Funds has already been written. Finance MT will contact donors and ask them how funds are to be used. At their next meeting, the team will be discuss sending out end-of-fiscal year statements to let the congregation know if they are up to date on their pledges. The financial report was accepted into the minutes.

### **Finance Ministry Team Motion**

**Kathryn Fowler, on behalf of the Finance Ministry Team, moved that Brian Striggow be elected Church Treasurer for one year beginning January 1, 2025.**

Since the motion comes from a ministry team, no second was needed. Brian has been understudying current Treasurer, Pam Knox, since August. Following discussion, **motion carried.** Session expressed its deep gratitude to Pam Knox for her 10 years of dedicated service as Church Treasurer.

### **Worship Team Motion**

**Tom Buchanan, on behalf of the Worship Ministry Team moved that some money from the Carol Wheeler Fund be used to award Donnie Lindsey a stipend to succeed Anna Murphy in working with the choir. The estimated cost over a year is about \$1800.** Since the motion comes from a ministry team, no second was needed. Following discussion, **motion passed.**

### **Update - Setting a policy for discussion and approval of personal or group requests to leave flyers/information at the church**

Bert Ballard-Myer reported that Mission Outreach hasn't discussed the policy update yet. They only have the initial draft so far.

**Discussion - Church security and possibility of hiring outside consultant to provide a building/ property safety assessment.** In light of recent incidents of broken windows in the church building, which cost \$400-\$600 to replace, and other vandalism several years ago, Brian Herndon asked whether there might be a company we could hire to assess our vulnerabilities and possible solutions. It was thought that any alarm company might be willing to do a free assessment. Session agreed by consensus that we should proceed with finding a security company to assess our building security.

Brian will work with Building & Grounds Ministry Team and with Asher Hill on getting this done. Carolyn Hatfield shared that a fence around the playground and attached to the building would eliminate traffic across the back or the building. She felt that lighting, more cameras and signage would also be helpful.

### **Discussion - Child Care for Session Meetings**

Since child care isn't an issue with the incoming Session, this discussion was tabled until late summer or early next fall. The possibility of child care for Session meetings might help the Nominating Committee with recruiting potential elders in the future.

### **Announcements - Ministry Teams**

#### Personnel – Abby Horvath

Personnel MT will treat staff with lunch and gift cards for Christmas on December 12<sup>th</sup>. Personnel has finished writing policies and job descriptions. There will be digital copies and also folders with written policies in the office. Personnel is discussing hiring a second child care worker since Lily has asked to work half the time she has been working. This will not affect the budget.

#### Fellowship – Valerie Stone

The Christmas Progressive Dinner is Friday, December 6<sup>th</sup>. Valerie asked Session to be supportive of Fellowship Ministry Team and of Rebecca Silver and her co-chair as it is very labor-intensive team and requires many volunteers.

#### Congregational Care -Tom Buchanan

Tom Buchanan and Ansley Land have been discussing having a Friends of the Congregation/Visitors luncheon on January 12<sup>th</sup> after church. At the lunch, there will be a discussion of Covenant's various ministries and the attendees will be encouraged to consider joining the church if they feel so led. Congregational Care will be updating the church directories next year. Valerie will also be helping with this project.

#### Mission Outreach – Bert Ballard-Myer

The Holiday Benevolence Market will be December 8<sup>th</sup> in the fellowship hall from 12 - 3. Eight or nine churches are helping put it on and 30 non-profits will be participating.

#### Worship - Warren Combs

Warren passed around a sign-up sheet for Session to serve Communion by intinction at the December 24<sup>th</sup> Christmas Eve service at 5:30. It was noted that we did not have enough cups of juice for Communion on December 1<sup>st</sup>. We also need to print a few more bulletins for worship services. These are good problems to have!

### Christian Education/Youth – Brian Herndon

CE is are trying to build the youth program as we go. We have 8 regular youth and some others coming in and out. It is going well. They have plans to attend the Montreat Youth Conference in June (the Bowdens have offered use of their house) and for a summer mission trip to Charlotte, NC, organized by the NEGA Presbytery.

### **Pastor's Report -Tom Buchanan**

Training for the incoming 2027 class of Elders, Karl Barnett, Melissa Cobb, Caly DaPalma, and Pam Thompson, and Warren Combs, class of 2025, has been scheduled in early January with several Sunday afternoon sessions and homework. Ordination will be scheduled to happen before the Session retreat and planning meeting. Tom and the Session offered deep gratitude to the four Elders who are rotating off the Session, Bert Ballard-Myer, Abby Horvath, Katy McGill, and Valerie Stone. They stepped up during the time of the pandemic and the transition of pastors, and we can see the effects of their work and their legacy in this church. Tom offered a prayer of thanks to God for their service and for all they have given of their time and dedication.

### **Motion to Adjourn**

There being no further business, Rebecca Silver moved and Bert Ballard-Myer seconded that the meeting be adjourned. Motion carried. Tom closed with prayer at 7:45 p.m.

***Next Stated Meeting: Session Retreat and Planning Meeting January 24-25, 2025.***

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Tom Buchanan, Moderator

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Luanne Rigsby, Clerk