

Covenant Presbyterian Church, Athens, GA

Stated Session Meeting

February 25, 2025

A Stated Session meeting, called according to the Book of Order, was held at Covenant Presbyterian Church and by Zoom on February 25, 2025. Moderator Tom Buchanan welcomed everyone, declared a quorum present, and called the meeting to order at 6:20 p.m.

Elders present: Karl Barnett, Bob Brewster, Dennis Calbos, Melissa Cobb, Warren Combs, Caly DePalma, Kathryn Fowler, Brian Herndon, Rebecca Silver, and Pam Thompson

Elders present on Zoom: Ansley Tweedell Land

Others present: Tom Buchanan, Brian Striggow, and Luanne Rigsby

Devotional

Warren Combs presented a devotional based on I Corinthians 12:24-31, Paul's writings on the gifts of the spirit. Warren suggested that the Session is in a sacred partnership together. We are here to participate as a single body and should help each other by stepping up and offering to assist when we can. This also frees Tom up to do his job. We may not see our gifts as someone else can see them in us, and God often gives the gift after the call! Most important is to communicate and collaborate with one another. Warren led us in reading the opening prayer.

Review of Minutes

The minutes from the January 25, 2025, Stated Session meeting and the January 26, 2025, Called Session meeting were reviewed and received into the record as written by consensus.

Approval of the Agenda

The agenda was approved as written by consensus.

Clerk's Report – Luanne Rigsby

- With the addition of 7 new members on January 26, 2025, and the passing of Juergen Wiegel on February 23, 2025, the membership total is 218.
- Covenant received a thank you note from Thornwell for our contribution of \$3776.70.
- Session would like to have the 2026 planning meeting/retreat at Rock Eagle's Founder's Lodge. Dates preferred are January 30-31, 2026, with January 23-24, 2026, as alternate dates. Luanne will check on availability and make a deposit.

- Tom announced that Juergen Wiegel's memorial service will be held at the Presbyterian Village Chapel on Friday, April 11, 2025, at 2:00 p.m. with Rev. Christin Johnson Norman and Rev. Tom Buchanan co-officiating. A reception will be held in the auditorium after the service.

Financial Report

Brian Striggo, Treasurer, and Kathryn Fowler, co-chair of Finance Ministry Team, reviewed the Financial Summary for January, 2025, as well as the detailed financial report for the month. Brian pointed out that pledges received are slightly behind anticipated pledges and that ministry team spending is less than anticipated. Karen Wetherington will begin preparing quarterly reports to help keep contributors up-to-date on their pledges. Bob Brewster said that he found the annual pledge report confusing. Brian suggested an explanation might be enclosed with the reports. Finance Ministry Team is working on securing better interest rates for our CD's. The Financial Report was accepted into the minutes.

Business

Resignation of Carolyn Hatfield from the Session

Carolyn Hatfield has resigned from her position on the Session. **Rebecca Silver moved and Kathryn Fowler seconded we receive Carolyn's resignation with regret and with our sincere prayers for her and Larry.** Following discussion, **motion carried.** Session expressed its deep gratitude to Carolyn for the amazing job she has done on Building and Grounds Ministry Team. The nominating committee, consisting of Bob Brewster, chair, Gloria Pylant, and Stephanie Cahill, will seek a candidate for Elder to serve out Carolyn's term (through the end of 2025), serving on Buildings & Grounds.

Motion from Christian Education Ministry Team

In order to give more time between church school and the worship service, **Brian Herndon, on behalf of Christian Education Ministry Team, moved that beginning March 9, 2025, we change Church School starting time from 9:45 to 9:30 a.m. and that the ending time be 10:30 a.m.** Coming from a ministry team, the motion needed no second. Following discussion, **motion carried.** Announcements of this change will be made in *The Covenanter* and during worship.

Stewardship Drive

Kathryn Fowler said that the Finance Ministry Team would like to have the final budget for the July 1, 2025 - June 30, 2026, fiscal year ready by the May Session meeting. Ministry teams are requested to turn in their "dream" budgets by February 28, 2025. Finance will start off with a "dream budget", which will be revised if pledges don't meet the goal. Tom is planning three stewardship sermons with the theme "A New Beginning" emphasizing in March and April. Personal Involvement Forms will be included in the

pledge packets for members to indicate non-financial ways in which they would also like to contribute. Pledge Sunday will be April 27, 2025.

Personnel Committee

Dennis Calbos reported that Asher Hill has turned in his resignation as Technical Director since he has started a new full-time job with medical benefits at Oconee Civic Center. Asher proposed Austin Eades as a candidate for his replacement. Austin was interviewed by the Personnel Committee who found him to be an excellent candidate.

Dennis Calbos, on behalf of the Personnel Committee, moved Covenant hire Austin Eades as Technical Director starting March 9th or March 16th at the same salary as Asher has been making. Coming from a committee, the motion needed no second. Following discussion, **motion carried.** Asher will continue coming on Sundays for several weeks to train Austin. We will officially say goodbye to Asher in worship on March 30th. **Dennis Calbos moved and Bob Brewster seconded that we have a love offering for Asher to be presented to him at the March 30th service.** Following discussion, **motion carried.** Karen will send out emails about the love offering and put it in *The Covenant* (unknown to Asher).

Ministry Team Months

Warren Combs, co-chair of Worship Ministry Team, proposed to devote a month to each ministry team in which the team could present a description of the team, the team's mission, ministry, benefits, and a statement of its vision. Warren will send the Session an email so that each ministry team can sign up for the month it would prefer.

Co-sponsorship of Program with The Table

Rev. Will Norman, minister at The Table, approached Tom Buchanan to see if Covenant would be interested in joining with The Table in co-sponsoring an event entitled "Countering Christian Authoritarianism" with renowned Christian ethicist David Gushee, author and professor at Mercer University, as speaker. The program will be at the UGA Tate Theater on Thursday, April 10, 2025. Following the talk, there will be a dinner for clergy at The Table. The total cost for the event will be around \$4000.00. **Kathryn Fowler moved and Cally DePalma seconded that Covenant co-sponsor the event with support of up to \$2000.00 coming from the remaining funds from the 2024 CentralCovenant Endowment Fund, with the understanding that Rev. Norman will approach the other sponsoring denominations of The Table to see if they are also interested in co-sponsoring the event.** Following discussion, **motion carried.**

Preacher Green's Restaurant Offer

Paul Allen, co-owner of Preacher Green's Restaurant and former member of the youth group member, has offered to have a "Covenant Presbyterian Church Day" at his restaurant in which church attendees would bring their church bulletins and receive a discount on their food. Session gave an informal OK to accept this offer with thanks.

Follow-up on Visioning Retreat

Tom Buchanan led the Session in reviewing and discussing the document “Session Visioning Retreat 2025”, summary notes on visioning started at the Session retreat in January.

Session discussed where financing the partnership with the Olomouc congregation should be in the upcoming budget since there are no plans for a mission trip this summer. It was decided that it will remain as a line item under Fellowship Ministry Team for the present.

Next Steps for Session

Discussion on next steps on Session and church policies and the review of Session Manual was tabled until next month.

Report on February 22, 2025 NEGA Presbytery Meeting

Caly DePalma and Brian Herndon served as Covenant’s commissioners to the NEGA Presbytery meeting held February 22, 2025, at Reid Memorial Presbyterian Church in Augusta, GA. Caly and Brian reported on the highlights of the meeting which included an uplifting worship service, some first-meeting-of-the-year changes in leadership and policies, and a delicious lunch. Caly expressed that since this was her first time attending a Presbytery meeting, everything she experienced was new and she enjoyed the experience very much.

Announcements - Ministry Teams

Games Night - Rebecca Silver reminded everyone that the youth group will be hosting a Games Night on Sunday, March 2nd. It will be interactive, and there will be snacks served. Everyone is encouraged everyone to attend.

Easter Sunrise Service with breakfast afterward – April 20, 2025.

Motion to Adjourn

There being no further business, Dennis Calbos moved and Melissa Cobb seconded that the meeting be adjourned. **Motion carried.** Tom closed with prayer at 8:31 p.m.

Next Stated Meeting: Tuesday, March 25, 2025, at 6:15 p.m. Brian Herndon will present the devotional.

Tom Buchanan, Moderator

Luanne Rigsby, Clerk