

Stated Session Meeting Minutes
Covenant Presbyterian Church, Athens, GA
May 19, 2026, 6:15 pm

The May Stated Session meeting was held at Covenant Presbyterian Church on May 19, 2026. Moderator Tom Buchanan declared a quorum present and called the meeting to order at 6:15 p.m.

Elders present: Bob Brewster, Dennis Calbos, Brian Herndon, Caly DePalma, Kirche Rogers, Deb Millwood, and Melissa Cobb

Elders present on Zoom: Karl Barnett

Elders absent: Jack Pannecoucke and Haylee Nunn

Devotional – Deb Millwood

For her devotional, Deb read an excerpt taken from the May 2026 Presbytery newsletter. The message, provided by Transitional General Presbyter Rev. Ed Rees, centered on who we are as Christians. He referenced the Beatles song, “All You Need Is Love,” and the old hymn with the line, “And they’ll know we are Christians by our love, yes they’ll know we are Christians by our love.”

Review of Minutes

The minutes from the April 26 Stated Session Meeting and the Called Congregational Meeting on May 17 were reviewed and accepted by consensus into the record.

Approval of the Agenda

The agenda was reviewed and accepted by consensus into the record.

Clerk’s Report

Kirche Rogers shared correspondence from the Table and Athens Community Council on Aging.

Financial Report

Finance Ministry Team Chair Karl Barnett reviewed the latest financial report and continued to encourage Session chairs to spend down their funds.

Business

Finance

Motion regarding signatories for CDs and savings account

Finance Ministry Team Chair Karl Barnett **moved that Judy Capie and Brian Striggow (church treasurer) be allowed to act as signatories when managing CDs and the savings account.** No second was needed for this vote. There was no opposition, and **the motion carried.**

2025-2026 Budget

Karl Barnett reported that there will likely be an 8%-10% budget surplus for 2025-2026. He **moved that the budget surplus be carried over to next year's budget.** No second was needed for this vote. There was no opposition, and **the motion carried.**

Karl asked that if Session chairs need to spend a specific amount that the money come from restricted funds. If there are not enough funds, another source can be used to fill the gap.

Dennis Calbos asked Karl the process that should be followed when spending restricted funds that are not related to a donor's wishes. Karl stated that some funds, usually just a donation, are not required to be spent on certain items. Some donors, however, have specified that their contributions fund a particular ministry in particular but do not specify how the funds should be used. The final group of donors ask how the money is spent.

Karl reported that the Finance Ministry Team considered pursuing a United Way grant but could not meet the mid-May auditing deadline. Consideration will be tabled until June 2027. Finance Ministry Team member Katherine Fowler will investigate further, but her initial analysis is that the grant would be advantageous for Covenant.

2026-2027 Budget

The 2026-2027 budget is expected to have a shortfall of \$60,000, likely due to new staffing and additional maintenance and cleaning expenses. Karl Barnett shared that he is not concerned because of the availability of some restricted funds that can be used, unbudgeted revenue (usually, \$10,000-\$15,000 per year), CDs, savings, etc. Pledged amounts are expected to increase as new members join and current member pledges that have not been made to date.

Report on May 2026 Presbytery Meeting

Deb Millwood and Bob Brewster attended the May 2026 NE Georgia Presbytery meeting along with Pastor Tom and shared their reflections from the experience. Bob Brewster and Deb Millwood agreed that the members were in good spirits, and it was an interesting meeting. Pastor Tom noted that several positions will change. Pastor Tom will be the

Moderator of the Presbytery in 2027, the Clerk and Presbyter positions will be combined, and Anita Green will be retiring. Also, it was announced that two congregations will be combined, partially due to their low memberships (under 50 each).

Pastor's Report

Motion to Approve Absence on May 31

Pastor Tom will be absent from worship on May 31 due to his and Lisa's vow renewals in Atlanta. Rev. Bonnie Osei-Frimpong will fill in. **Deb Millwood moved to approve Pastor Tom's absence, and Caly DePalma seconded.** There was no further discussion, and **the motion carried.**

Nominating Committee Search Update

Pastor Tom reported that Nominating Committee Chair Haylee Nunn will convene a committee meeting to discuss the search for a new Worship Ministry Team Chair.

New Member Reception

Pastor Tom shared that a new member reception will be held on June 14 during the cookies and punch gathering after worship. Five new members will be introduced to the congregation, including Marge Striggow, John Knox, Ela Nichols, and Charles and Linda Jean Jay.

Karen Menke in Hospice

Pastor Tom has been visiting Karen Menke who is in hospice. He is planning her Memorial Service.

General Announcements – Ministry Teams

Christian Education: Finalization of the details of a part-time Christian Education Director position is in progress. Finances for the salary and benefits of the position are being discussed, with the goal of making a final decision in time for the search to officially begin in July. The hope is for the new person to start in September or October.

Youth Group and Covenant Connection are paused in the summer.

Congregational Care: The reception for high school and college graduates went really well. Team Chair Melissa Cobb expressed appreciation for the help of Susan Parish and DeLynda and Hank Tweedell.

Fellowship: The Pentecost picnic will be held this Sunday. Sandwiches, pasta salad, drinks, and chips will be served. Punch and cookie gatherings held after worship will begin on June 7. The Coffee House will be held on July 22, and Rally Day will be held on August 16.

Mission and Outreach: Team member Kay Brooks has expressed interest in having a free medical clinic in the summer. Covenant will participate in the Athens Pride parade on June 6, and volunteers are needed.

Personnel: Lily McKay will no longer serve as nursery worker. Nancy Alilah will replace her. A candidate for the Assistant Director of Music was interviewed earlier in the day, and it went well. A fair evaluation of resumes and cover letters will be guaranteed by May 31.

Worship: Team member Warren Combs attended to give the team report. He noted that attendance has averaged in the upper 80s. He expressed that involving congregants in worship helps attendance and would like to increase participation. The team is preparing for the Summer Saints Series.

Motion to Adjourn and Closing Prayer

There being no further business, **Dennis Calbos moved and Bob Brewster seconded that the meeting be adjourned.** Following discussion, the **motion carried.** Pastor Tom closed with prayer at 7:22 p.m.

Next Stated Meeting: Sunday, June 28, 2026, immediately following the Annual Congregational Meeting and the cookies and punch gathering. Haylee Nunn has the devotional.

Tom Buchanan, Moderator

Kirche Rogers, Clerk