

Covenant Presbyterian Church, Athens, GA

Stated Session Meeting

July 22, 2025

A Stated Session meeting, called according to the Book of Order, was held at Covenant Presbyterian Church on July 22, 2025. Moderator Tom Buchanan welcomed everyone, declared a quorum present, and opened the meeting with prayer at 6:15 p.m.

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

Elders absent: Brian Herndon and Rich Reaves

Others present: Tom Buchanan and Luanne Rigsby

Review of Minutes

The minutes from the June 24, 2025, Stated Session meeting and the July 11, 2025, email vote were reviewed. The Session approved both sets of minutes be entered into the official record by consensus.

Approval of the Agenda

By consensus, Session approved the agenda as written.

Financial Report

Kathryn Fowler, co-chair of Finance Ministry Team, reviewed the June 2025 End of Fiscal Year Financial Summary and reported that we ended the fiscal year with a surplus of \$47,901.67. This was mainly because we used restricted funds for the fellowship hall flooring project. The Financial Report was accepted into the official record.

Business:

Visioning Process Update

- All Session Manual ministry team page updates are now complete. Policies will also be included in the manual. Warren, Caly, and Dennis will meet with Karen Wetherington and Tom next week to assess what remains to be added. The goal is for the Session manual to be fully updated in time for the August Session meeting (August 26).
- Visioning exercises have been completed for the Finance, Mission & Outreach, and Worship teams. Building and Grounds is scheduled for next week and Personnel for August 12. Still need to schedule Christian Education, Congregational Care, and Fellowship.

- Some major ideas arising from Session's June visioning exercise in process:
 - To work with chairs of Congregational Care and Worship on developing a clear process/pathway from visitor cards to visitors' luncheon and beyond.
 - Working with Amy Baer on a publicity protocol for marketing of events.
 - Discussion with Worship and Mission & Outreach chairs concerning outreach to AA with Sunday morning reception and worship livestream in the library.
- Completion of visioning exercises and draft documents are on track to be sent to the Session a week ahead of the August Session meeting (August 26)

Appointment of Elders to Serve Communion on August 3

Elders Karl Barnett, Bob Brewster, Caly DePalma, Ansley Tweedell Land, and Pam Thompson will serve communion on August 3rd, meeting in the narthex at 9:45 a.m. Tom encouraged all elders to be present on Communion Sundays.

Presbytery "Gathering" at Madison Presbyterian Church on Saturday, August 16

Rather than a meeting, the Northeast Georgia Presbytery will have a lay leader educational event and fellowship on August 16th. There will be five workshops with one of them led by Rev. Tom Buchanan on Christian Nationalism. Tom also reported that he has been asked to serve as moderator of the Northeast Georgia Presbytery for the year 2027. He will be in training during 2026 for that position. Session offered their congratulations to Tom on this honor.

Sign-up to Stand with Pastor Tom and Greet Visitors after Worship

Warren passed out a sheet with instructions for elders who stand with Tom after worship on Sundays to greet visitors. He asked each elder to sign up three times for the remaining Sundays of 2025 or to indicate if they are unable to serve in that capacity. There will be an online sign-up sent out for those dates (August 3 and December 28th).

Brief Ministry Team Announcements

Caly DePalma, co-chair of Building and Grounds, reported that the new flooring in the Fellowship Hall will have to be re-installed due to bumps and dips, which were the result of the floor not being leveled properly prior to the installation of the tiles. Lewis Flooring will do the replacement at their expense and has promised proper supervision of the job this time. They plan to install the new tiles on top of the existing tiles after proper leveling. Hopefully, the installation will happen during the first week of August.

Karl Barnett updated that the family we helped with a donation to the UGA Immigration Law Support Fund has ongoing financial needs and asked Session to consider whether we can offer additional financial help. He will send out more information on their expenses.

Pastor's Report

Prior to the meeting, Tom had sent the Session copies of emails between him and Green Acres neighbor, Jennifer Frum, concerning the homeless people who congregate around the church building. Tom asked for specific feedback from the Session or suggestions of someone to talk with. We have video evidence of illegal activities happening on our property and plan to proceed with a security assessment immediately. Tom and Caly will meet with Carol Myers, District 8 Athens Clarke commissioner, to see if she can help us encourage police to do more active patrolling of our grounds at night.

Motion to Adjourn & Closing Prayer

There being no further business, Tom closed the business meeting with prayer at 6:57 p.m., and the Session adjourned for Session fellowship dinner at Cali 'N Tito's.

Next Stated Meeting: Tuesday, August 26, 2025, at 6:15 p.m. Bob Brewster will present the devotional.

Tom Buchanan, Moderator

Luanne Rigsby, Clerk