

## **Covenant Presbyterian Church, Athens, GA**

### **Stated Session Meeting**

**September 23, 2025**

A Stated Session meeting, called according to the Book of Order, was held at Covenant Presbyterian Church on September 23, 2025. Moderator Tom Buchanan welcomed everyone, declared a quorum present, and called the meeting to order at 6:15 p.m.

Elders present: Karl Barnett, Bob Brewster, Melissa Cobb, Caly DePalma, Kathryn Fowler, Brian Herndon, Ansley Tweedell Land, Rich Reaves, Rebecca Silver, and Pam Thompson

Elders present on Zoom: Warren Combs

Elders absent: Dennis Calbos

Others present: Tom Buchanan

### **Devotional**

Caly DePalma presented a devotion on the Chinese symbol 'dow' or 'way' and how that relates to faith. He is the way, the truth, and the light. Natural cycles, acting in harmony with the proper time, and wisdom in discerning when to act and when to be still. Trust in deeper wisdom in our lives and align with it instead of struggling against it. Caly opened the meeting with prayer.

### **Review of Minutes**

The minutes from the August 26th, 2025, Stated Session Meeting were reviewed. Karl Barnett moved and Bob Brewster seconded that the minutes be approved as written. Following discussion, the motion carried.

### **Approval of the Agenda**

Caly DePalma moved and Rebecca Silver seconded that the agenda be approved as written. Following discussion, motion carried.

### **Clerk's Report**

Ansley Land reported for Luanne Rigsby that Covenant received thank you letters from Jubilee Partners for our gift of \$150.00, from Presbyterian Church USA Office of Stewardship Funds & Development for our contributions of \$247.50 for the Peace & Global Witness Offering and \$2830.00 for the One Great Hour of Sharing Offering.

### **Financial Report**

Kathryn Fowler, co-chair of Finance Ministry Team, reviewed the Financial Summary and detailed financial report for August. Kathryn reported that we are due for an audit – Jim Newland helped find someone who Finance MT thinks they will use to do it. General budget is healthy and there is no need to liquidate anything. We are 11k\$ ahead on pledges. The Financial Report was accepted into the official record.

## **Business:**

### **Discussion: Mission & Outreach Proposal, with special guest Rev. Laura Patterson of Bigger Vision - Bob Brewster**

- Request to use the parking lot 12 pm-3 pm on Tuesday afternoons. They'd park their 12-passenger van to distribute lunch and supplies to people experiencing unsheltered homelessness. There are very few resources on the east side, and many people make the half day walk downtown to get resources and then race to walk back to their place on the east side before dark.
  - They will ensure that trash is picked up and enforce our boundaries surrounding loitering and camping
  - People want to protect their access to resources, so allowing this would not only be a great opportunity to recalibrate our relationship with this part of our community, but it may also be a way to lessen the trash and mistreatment of our grounds. When peoples' needs are met, they are less likely to commit crimes.

Bob Brewster, on behalf of Mission and Outreach Ministry Team, **moved we approve for Bigger Vision to set up on the front edge of the parking lot Tuesdays 12-3 beginning Oct 7<sup>th</sup> to distribute lunch and supplies to the homeless.** Since the motion came from a ministry team, no second was needed. Following discussion, **motion passed.** Provision to change mind after 6 weeks and have check-ins.

### **Church Security Assessment Report Follow Up – Caly DePalma**

- Outside electrical outlets – Recommended placing a plate over them so that when we need electrical access, we can remove it (get the key from inside).
- Install solar powered charging station at the bus stop
  - This allows people to charge their phones without being right up against our building
  - There is an easement just behind the bus stop, so the county couldn't control whether or not we do it
    - Could also reach out to the county commissioner to see if they'd like to partner with us

**Kathryn Fowler moved and Pam Thompson seconded that we put keyed plates on all outside electrical outlets of the building.** After discussion, **motion passed.**

### **Session Visioning – Priorities & Feedback / Synthesis & Next Steps Follow Up – Tom Buchanan**

- Potential for a sermon series!!!
  - Start Oct 5th - have vision summary printed for congregants as a bulletin insert
- Eager to invite people to the conversation
- These are not separate silos, but rather mutually reinforcing structures:

- Pillars
  - Worship
  - Christian Education
  - Community
  - Justice and Service
  
- Cross-Beams
  - Publicity
  - Volunteer
  - Facilities
  - Finance and Personnel

We aren't just building programs - We are building God's house.

**Rich Reeves moved that we approve the availability of the vision (large document digitally) and the 'cliff-notes' (in bulletin) for congregants. Oct 5 - Nov 23 sermon series concluding on Christ the King Sunday.** Motion seconded by Pam Thompson. Following discussion, **motion passed unanimously.**

### **Communion Servers for October 5th**

Elders: Kathryn Fowler, Warren Combs, Melissa Cobb, Brian Herndon, and Rich Reaves will serve communion on October 5th, meeting in the narthex at 10:45 a.m.

If you are here that Sunday and are not helping with the World Communion Sunday reception, please come up to sit with other elders.

### **Nominating Team Report – Warren Combs**

Deb Milwood, Kirche Rogers, Haley Nunn, Jack Pannecoucke have committed to be part of the next class of elders. There will be a three-sentence description of each person in the bulletin next week.

### **Announcements - Ministry Teams**

#### Worship - Warren Combs

- World Communion Sunday is October 5th
- We've had over 100 people in attendance the past 5 Sundays
  - Parking has been quite full - parking on other side may need more paint and gravel, and steps may need a new rail

#### Fellowship – Rebecca Silver

- Saturday October 4<sup>th</sup> – Blessing of the animals event

- October 26th - Fall Picnic - headed up by Caly DePalma
- November 30th - hanging of the greens
- December 6 – Christmas Progressive Dinner
- December 14 - Choral Christmas Worship Service
- January 4 - taking down the greens

#### Building & Grounds – Caly DePalma

- We need to budget money for care of the new floor in the fellowship hall and update the cleaning budget in general – to be discussed in depth at the next meeting
- Put signs outside for worship and fellowship time ~ 2 ft by 8 inches, metal with laminate coating - signs would go on the bottom of the big sign out front on either side of the address number. Quote does not include summer time signs:
  - AKO quoted \$384 for 4 signs
  - Fast Signs quoted \$330 for 4 signs

#### Christian Education – Brian Herndon

- On October 19<sup>th</sup> there will be Child Protection Training at The Cottage for all who work with children.

#### Congregational Care – Ansley Land

- Directory - find out when they need our make-up/virtually submitted photos for people who did not make it to an appointment

#### **Pastor's Report**

- March against mass deportation - quoted in several newspapers. Big thanks to Ellen Stoneburner who galvanized support.
- In October we have confirmed 14 people joining the church next month - Bruner family (4), Roberts family (4), Robert Meyer, Doug and Mindy Hill, Tim and Suzie Mersman, Cathy Lancaster. There are also at least two other potential new joins.
- Midstream had a great turnout for the organizational meeting and has a few things on the calendar.
- October 11th - Charlie Martin's Memorial Service at 11:00 a.m.

#### **Motion to Adjourn & Closing Prayer**

There being no further business, Rebecca Silver moved and Kathryn Fowler seconded that the meeting be adjourned. Following discussion, motion carried. Tom closed with prayer at 8:10p.m.

***Next Stated Meeting: Tuesday, October 28, 2025, at 6:15 p.m. Rich Reaves has the devotional.***

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Tom Buchanan, Moderator

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Ansley Land, Acting Clerk