

MONDAY, APRIL 19, 2021
REGULAR MEETING OF SESSION

On Monday, April 19, 2021, the 627th regular meeting of Session was held by Zoom video due to ongoing developments with the Coronavirus pandemic. Dr. Forrest opened the meeting with prayer at 7:03 p.m.

Session members attending were Dr. Forrest, Rev. Rogers, and Elders Baculik, Burgess, Canose, Castelli, Conley, Davis, Exley, Galbreath, Heilman, Jenkins, LeBeau, Lee, Ludwig, Marsh, McGee, Myers, Paul, Rex, Rost, Schmitt, Sheap, Wagner, Walker, Weber, Widmar and Williams, constituting a quorum.

Elders absent: Fraser

REPORT OF THE CLERK – Motion to approve the minutes from the 626th (March 15, 2021) regular meeting (as reviewed and corrected) and to take action with respect to the members set forth below were approved.

Deaths

Alice Smith, March 31

Sally Johnson, April 6

Sacraments

At worship services on Sunday, April 4, 2021, the sacrament of the Lord's Supper was administered to communicants attending in-person and via live streaming.

Commissioners to Pittsburgh Presbytery Meetings

Elder Baculik has volunteered to be Westminster's commissioner to the Thursday, December 9, 2021 meeting of Pittsburgh Presbytery which will be held at Parkwood United Presbyterian Church at 1:00 p.m.

BUSINESS ITEMS

Church Safe Policy. The Westminster Presbyterian Church Safe Church Advisory Board has propounded a policy manual titled Westminster Presbyterian Church Safe Church Policy which is designed to address and prevent interactions between youth and adults that are recognized by law as abusive or recognized by both law and policy as inappropriate, and to establish procedures for handling all interpersonal abuse, including physical, sexual, mental and emotional abuse. The manual was circulated for Session members prior to the meeting for review and approval. Elder Walker, as a representative of the Children's and Youth Ministries Commission, presented a motion to approve the Safe Church Policy manual. Upon receipt of a second to the motion, a thoughtful discussion ensued which revealed the need to further research and confirm the following:

(1) That WECEP, LLC has its own separate written safety policy governed by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania under which it conducts its nursery, day care and kindergarten operations, and therefore this Church Safe Policy will refer to activities and operations within Westminster Presbyterian Church alone;

(2) Whether written clarification is needed that references to the word “campus” in the Safe Church Policy manual relate solely to Westminster Presbyterian Church, and not to WECEP, LLC and its operations as well; and

(3) Whether the “Rule of 3” pertaining to the ratio of leaders to children in off campus events is appropriate or should be further scrutinized.

The Moderator, the Clerk and Session determined it to be appropriate to table further discussion of the Safe Church Policy and to postpone action on the motion to approve it until its regular meeting in order to allow sufficient time to address the aforesaid issues.

Update on Pending Legal Proceedings. The Reverend Rogers provided worshippers with an update on legal proceedings regarding David Reiter at services conducted on April 18, 2021. Session members were provided with a copy of her remarks in advance of the meeting, and the Reverend Rogers offered to answer any questions Session members might have relating to Mr. Reiter. The Clerk provided a verbal update of litigation proceedings with Brotherhood Mutual Insurance Company relating to the claim filed on behalf of WECEP, LLC.

Submission and Review Practices for Future Session Meetings. It has been suggested that the business of Session will be enhanced if commission monthly activity reports and matters requiring Session action are submitted and circulated to Session members in advance of meetings. Dr. Forrest noted that the Church’s current communications capabilities will be substantially improved in the near future in order to facilitate circulation of meeting materials within a secure network. To that end, Dr. Forrest encouraged preparation and submission of commission reports as our capabilities to share and circulate information improve.

Approval of Request by Endowment for Funding. Elder Rex of the Endowment and Special Gifts Commission presented the Commission’s proposal for distribution of funds in 2021 in the following amounts:

1. \$91,000 to Westminster Church to fund four communications/IT projects designed to improve Church management software, new branding, website overhaul and social media analysis; upgrades to core IT structure, including WIFI speed/coverage; a new physical server, video conferencing licenses, security firewall and cloud-based services; upgrades to piano and choir microphones, signal quality, digital function, studio capacity and digital cohesion between the two services.
2. \$10,500 to Bridge worship upgrades including outside signage, carpeting and backdrop replacement, new lighting, new communion table, new podium, improved decor and new tablecloths.

3. \$16,000 to India (Sangli Technical School) to finish two-year project to rebuild a school that trains over 100 students for careers including welding and electrical and auto mechanics. The school had sustained massive flood damages.
4. \$10,000 to Homewood Oasis Pre-School campaign to establish a critical early learning center in the Bible Center Church building in Homewood.
5. \$5,500 to fund grants to 36 women-owned small businesses who work cooperatively under Westminster's mission partner, Hawassa Hope, in Ethiopia.

Elder Rex made a motion for Session approval of these distributions. The motion received a second, and after a short discussion, Session voted to approve the said distributions.

Elder Rex also announced the receipt of a significant gift from our Special Gifts funds to benefit the property of the church. The P.J. Dick family has authorized the gift of \$85,000 from the P.J. Dick Bequest fund which will completely pay for extensive renovations of the South Courtyard area. The project will include renovation of masonry walls, replacement of two doorways leading into the courtyard, handicapped accessibility for one of these doorways, and two new post lights. The Commission is extremely grateful for this gift as it allowed us to accomplish so much more in this round of funding.

Finally, Elder Rex announced that the McClintock family has directed that half of the Dorothy McClintock Memorial Library Fund, approximately \$18,700, be re-directed to the WPC operating account for the church to determine how best to use these funds. The Commission is likewise deeply grateful for this gift as it allows us to accomplish even more in this round of funding.

COMMISSION & COMMITTEE REPORTS AND ACTIONS

Adult Spiritual Development. Elder Myers highlighted recent and future events in "Walking in the Spirit" around the Gilfillan Trail. All interested persons are invited to join in the next walks which will occur on April 22 at 3:00 p.m. and on April 26, at 10:30 a.m.

Children's & Family Ministry. Elder Williams reported that the search continues for a new fulltime director of Children and Family Ministry. Children in 2nd grade and older are invited to Sacrament education classes on Baptism and Communion beginning on April 25. Barefoot School 2021 registration opens on April 28 for Westminster members and May 1 for the general public. Barefoot School will run from June 21-25. COVID-19 precautions will be in place. Finally joint initiatives with Gilfillan Farm are being planned, one such initiative being planning flowers.

Finance. Elder Lee reviewed a Finance Commission Report for the period ending March 2021 a copy of which had been circulated to Session members prior to the meeting. General contributions were relatively soft for the month, bolstered by a one-time bequest. Expenses for the month were below budget leaving the Church in a surplus position. The Commission continues to make progress on internal audit key findings. The report was received without question or comment.

Membership. A copy of the Membership Commission's March 2021 meeting minutes had been circulated to Session members prior to the meeting. Elder LeBeau commented specifically on Commission planning to reach out to new members with eye catching permanent displays in the Church Narthex and WROC Bridge worship entrance containing information about opportunities to engage in the life of the Church. The Commission is also looking into providing easily accessible information for visitors on the Westminster website.

Outreach. Elder Conley reviewed an Outreach Commission Report copies of which had been circulated to Session members prior to the meeting. Beginning in May, the Commission will provide "Mission on the Move" articles outlining stories from and about mission partners of Westminster to be published in the Spire. The "Peace and Justice Summer Sunday Seminar Series will re-convene on July 11, 18 and 25 from 9:45 to 10:30 a.m. either in person or via Zoom to explore PC (USA)'s denominational effort called Matthew 25, which encourages each church to consider becoming identified as a Matthew 25 congregation within the larger connectional church. Ralph Lowe, Pittsburgh Presbytery's Director of Justice Ministries will be the lead speaker in the series. Pastor Evans Salomon of La Croix New Testament Mission in Haiti will visit the Pittsburgh area from August 27 through October 4. Opportunities to have him preach or attend a Wednesday night dinner in Fellowship Hall, or host him in a member's home are being investigated. At its next meeting, the Commission will allocate \$39,000 to various mission partners in the second quarter of 2021.

Personnel. Elder Marsh reviewed a Personnel Commission Report copies of which had been circulated to Session members prior to the meeting. An updated Church Personnel Manual has been approved and reviewed with staff. An amended Personnel Budget has been approved. UPMC informed Westminster that it would not renew the current health insurance plan. After consulting with two insurance brokers, two options have been identified. The intent is to provide the best option for employees of the Church and WECEP with coverage and pricing as similar as possible to the UPMC program. Finally, the Commission created a Staff care and Prayer program that identifies staff members for each month that the Commission will pray for as well as pairing each staff member with a Commission member to provide encouragement and support.

Property. Elder Galbreath reviewed a Personnel Commission Report copies of which had been circulated to Session members prior to the meeting. Industrial Appraisal Services has been hired to document our Church's contents and the building's structure for insurance purposes. North cupola water leaks have been repaired and the ceiling below has been repaired and repainted. The Commission contacted Miller Dodson Company, which specializes in development of capital reserves for religious institutions to explore establishing and maintaining robust capital reserves to guard against deferring routine maintenance to the extent in recent years. New carpeting is being installed in Room 176 (Founders Room). Purchase of new equipment to upgrade the Sanctuary and WROC

sound systems has been delayed. Two sets of exterior doors, the columbarium doors closest to the shop and those entering the childcare area will be replaced.

Stewardship. Elder Heilman reviewed a Stewardship Commission Report copies of which had been circulated to Session members prior to the meeting. The potential theme for the next stewardship campaign will be “Rebuilding the Temple”. Current campaign planning includes development of a segmentation strategy to allow for targeted letters/emails to specific demographic sectors of the congregation, a campaign sermon series, an adult education speaker series on stewardship during the campaign, development of a YouTube video series on pledging and stewardship, and formation of a small group to meet with Dr. Forrest to develop a strategy for focused calls.

Youth Ministry. Elder Walker reported that Veritas is back to meeting weekly in-person. Future directional planning has been initiated.

PASTORS’ REPORTS

The Reverend Rogers reported that the deacons continue to provide congregational care with their every member telephone canvassing. She looks forward to resuming visitation when it is once again safe to do so, and reiterated the necessity for Church members to reach out and support one another in these times of loss and suffering.

CONCERNS AND JOYS

Meeting participants engaged in the exchange of individual joys and concerns for Church members and their families, recent contacts with former members and mission partners abroad.

ADJOURNMENT WITH PRAYER

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned with prayer at 8:25 p.m. The next regular meeting of Session will be held on May 17, 2021.

Respectfully submitted,

H. Brian Peck
Clerk of Session

Date approved: May 17, 2021