

**MONDAY, FEBRUARY 15, 2021  
REGULAR MEETING OF SESSION**

On Monday, February 15, 2021, the 625th regular meeting of Session was held by Zoom video due to ongoing developments with the Coronavirous pandemic. Dr. Forrest opened the meeting with prayer at 7:00 p.m.

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

Elders absent: McGee

**REPORT OF THE CLERK** – Motion to approve the minutes from the 624th (January 18, 2021) regular meeting (as reviewed and corrected) and to take action with respect to the members set forth below were approved.

**BAPTISM**

February 14

Jaxon Andrew

Parents: Laura & Jerome Ecklin

**DELETE BY REQUEST**

James Bollman

Eddie Klavin

**DELETE BY SESSION**

Scott Backo	mail returned—no forwarding address, phone or email
Victoria Bringol	living in Texas
Caleb Carson	mail returned—no forwarding address, phone or email
Elizabeth Dick	mail returned—no forwarding address, phone or email
Don & Susan Frankenberry	living in Virginia
Robert & Amanda Frankhouser	living in Adah, PA
Mary Gracey	mail returned—no forwarding address, phone or email
Gregory Heilman	mail returned—no forwarding address, phone or email
Jon Kramer	mail returned—no forwarding address, phone or email
Scott Lacotti	mail returned—no forwarding address, phone or email
Katherine Monico	living in Tennessee
Louis Stamerra	mail returned—no forwarding address, phone or email
Amanda Tomlinson	mail returned—no forwarding address, phone or email
Sharon Valicenti	mail returned—no forwarding address or response to email or phone call

David & Connie Reiter

## **SERVICE OF THE LORD'S SUPPER**

At worship services on Sunday, February 7, 2021 the sacrament of the Lord's Supper was administered to communicants.

### **Approval of 2020 Church Statistical Report**

The Clerk presented the 2020 Church Statistical Report which is submitted annually to the Pittsburgh Presbytery. He noted that this year Pittsburgh Presbytery asked that each church provide an explanation as to how "Average Weekly Worship Attendance" was calculated over this past year of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Clerk informed Session that this past year's average weekly worship attendance figure of 481 is an average of the in-person and livestream worship experiences held in 2020. Upon motion made and seconded, Session approved the 2020 Church Statistical Report (a copy of which is attached to these minutes) which will be transmitted to Pittsburgh Presbytery forthwith.

## **BUSINESS ITEMS**

**Restore In-person Worship.** On numerous occasions since March of 2020, Session has addressed the parameters under which in-person worship at Westminster Church can safely take place. After in-person worship was terminated last March by state and local public health orders, in May of 2020, Session adopted guidelines for programs and usage of the Church, including worship, during the current pandemic. These guidelines as well baseline metrics measuring epidemiological prevalence of COVID-19 in the local community under which in-person worship could continue had been proposed by a Session appointed vision task force. Dr. Forrest shared with Session that she recently learned from the Pittsburgh EP that approximately 75% of churches in Pittsburgh Presbytery have resumed in-person worship, and suggested that Session readdress the conditions under which in-person worship at Westminster Church might be re-initiated. Upon receipt and second of a motion to resume in-person worship, Session engaged in a discussion as to whether in-person worship should be re-initiated, and if so, under what conditions and guidelines. General consensus was reached that published epidemiological indicators for Allegheny County are trending toward the baseline metrics earlier established by Session for re-opening, and that in-person worship should resume on Sunday, February 28, 2021, subject to the adopted guidelines for programs and usage of the Church. Consensus was also reached that live streaming of worship services should continue notwithstanding resumption of in-person worship. The motion before the Session was revised to reflect the aforesaid consensus; discussion was closed, and the motion was put to a vote. By vote, Session approved the following:

**RESOLVED** that in light of the fact that published epidemiological indicators for Allegheny County are trending toward the baseline metrics earlier established by Session for re-opening for in-person worship, that in-person worship at Westminster Church should resume effective Sunday, February 28, 2021, subject to and in accordance with Session

adopted guidelines for programs and usage of the Church during the COVID-19 pandemic. And it is **FURTHER RESOLVED** that live streaming of worship services should continue notwithstanding resumption of in-person worship, for those of the congregation choosing not to worship in-person.

**Update on Legal Action: Connie Reiter.** The Reverend Rogers summarized for Session a series of criminal and legal proceedings initiated against and on behalf of David Reiter's wife, Connie Reiter. In state court criminal proceedings initiated by the Allegheny County District Attorney, Connie Reiter was sentenced to, among other things, make restitution to Westminster Presbyterian Church for substantial sums of money stolen by David Reiter from Westminster Church and subsequently spent by David and Connie Reiter. Connie Reiter subsequently filed a Chapter 7 bankruptcy petition, and pursuant to those bankruptcy proceedings initiated a lawsuit seeking a discharge of her restitution obligation to Westminster Presbyterian Church. Westminster Church is the primary named defendant in a Complaint To Determine Dischargeability of Debt Under 11 U.S.C. 523. The Summons accompanying the Complaint provides that answers to the Complaint are due by March 1, 2021. Failure to file an answer may result in the court entering a default judgment (against non-responding defendants and in favor of Connie Reiter). The effect of the court discharging this obligation to make restitution would be that Connie Reiter would have no obligation whatsoever in the future to make restitution to the Church, even if she becomes financially capable of doing so.

In order to facilitate Session's assessment of a course of action to pursue as a named defendant in the bankruptcy litigation, the Clerk consulted with a bankruptcy specialist. Upon first impression the bankruptcy specialist noted that there appears to be legal precedent upon which the Church could rely to object to discharge of Connie Reiter's restitution obligation. A written summary of bankruptcy litigation and the bankruptcy specialist's initial observations had been circulated to Session members for their review in preparing for deliberations at this meeting. After the Clerk had reviewed the essential points set out in the summary, Elder Ludwig correctly noted that failing to object to discharge of the restitution obligation will likely negatively impact the Church's ongoing proceedings with Brotherhood Mutual Insurance Company which has by law a right of subrogation to restitution obligations upon payment of employee theft claims.

Upon receipt and second of a motion to retain counsel to represent the Church in the aforesaid bankruptcy litigation, Session engaged in a discussion as to whether to defend in the action or alternatively to concede to discharge of the restitution obligation by allowing judgment to be entered in favor of Connie Reiter by default. A consensus was reached in the discussion that the Clerk should reach out to the bankruptcy specialist previously consulted to conduct additional investigation and analysis sufficient to establish a reasonable probability that Westminster Church will prevail in objecting to discharge of the restitution obligation, and if reasonable probability is established, proceed to prepare to defend in the litigation. The motion before the Session was revised to reflect the aforesaid consensus; discussion was closed, and the motion was put to a vote. By vote, Session approved the following:

**RESOLVED** that the Clerk immediately reach out to the bankruptcy specialists consulted to conduct additional investigation and analysis sufficient to establish a reasonable probability that Westminster Church will prevail in objecting to discharge of the restitution obligation, and if reasonable probability is established, proceed to prepare to defend in the litigation.

**Forward Planning. Commission & Committee plans for 2021+.** Prior to and during the meeting, Dr. Forrest shared numerous thoughts and impressions gleaned in her first few weeks as Senior Pastor and Head of Staff at Westminster Church. She noted that over the past month, her sermons were focused on four questions aimed at framing future endeavors and inspired by Westminster's foundational call to serve as a Presbyterian Church in Pittsburgh's South Hills. The questions are (1) What is God calling us to do?; (2) How is our work unique in this community?; (3) How do we sustain this ministry?; and (4) How do we steward our resources today and into the future? Dr. Forrest noted that she first reached out to staff members for their answers to these questions relative to their ministry/program area. And she noted that after a month at Westminster, while she feels a palpable sense of possibility among those she has come to know, she has also witnessed silos between ministry areas creating duplicate work in some instances or blindness that hampers clarity.

With these observations in mind, Dr. Forrest reached out to Session members in the commissions to which they have been assigned to address and seek answers to these questions. The answers will inform our collective pursuit and reveal shortfalls or disconnects. As members meet in their respective commissions, Dr. Forrest encouraged each commission over the coming month to consider in addition to the aforesaid questions, the following questions. (1) What does your commission feel called to do in 2021+?; and (2) What is needed to sustain your work in 2021 and what is needed in the future?

## **COMMISSION & COMMITTEE REPORTS AND ACTIONS**

**Adult Spiritual Development.** Elder Myers expressed happiness that the commission has been able to accomplish and participate in numerous projects over the past year notwithstanding the pandemic, noting in particular Lenten Devotionals, the Black Lives Matter Vigil and Communion in the Courtyard.

**WECEP Update.** Elder Williams noted that WECEP registrations are going well. Additional teachers are being sought for children registered in the CDC programs.

**Finance.** Elder Lee reviewed a Finance Commission Report for the period ending January 2021 a copy of which had been circulated to Session members prior to the meeting. He noted in particular that the Church has been approved for a second Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loan in the amount of \$376,417, \$204,418 of which will be attributed to Westminster Church staff salaries and \$171,999 of which will be attributed to WECEP staff salaries. The report was received without question or comment.

**Membership.** Elder LeBeau reported that numerous individuals have indicated interest in pursuing becoming Church members and new volunteers have been identified to operate the Welcome Center. Commission meetings (via zoom) have been scheduled after Sunday services at the first each month through June. The commission is actively considering numerous projects including reviewing other church websites for successful membership related activities.

**Outreach.** Elder Conley reported that the commission is preparing to allocate the \$156,000 available for distribution in 2021. The commission is updating information on each of Westminster's mission partners and working on a methodical ranking process to prioritize mission giving. The commission has also modified its meeting agenda schedule to alternate between determining outreach distributions and exploring alternative spiritual and visionary topics or outreach each month.

**Personnel.** Elder Marsh reported that he and Dr. Forrest have engaged in meetings with Church staff to explore leader and staff expectations. The commission will be meeting soon to address specific issues relating to part-time staff.

**Property.** Elder Galbreath reported on repairs to the ceiling of the sanctuary and custodial rooms and plans to install an ADA bathroom facility adjacent to Room 107. He asked for clarification on application deadlines for Endowment Funds. Elder Rex indicated that application deadlines will be posted soon in the Church bulletin and Spire.

**Stewardship.** Elder Heilman reported that the commission is meeting regularly and recently completed outreach calls to members yet to pledge in 2021, which has resulted in receipt of \$102,000 in pledges and gifts. The commission also plans to engage in a targeted outreach project to people who have not pledged in the past two years and a strategic giving project.

**Youth Ministry.** Elder Walker reported that weekly youth meetings are alternating between in-person outside and zoom meetings. Summer youth mission opportunities within the state are being investigated in light of pandemic-induced limitations on travel between states.

## **PASTORS' REPORTS**

Dr. Forrest reiterated her request that members earnestly engage in answering the questions posed earlier to Session and its commissions. She also noted her enjoyment in the fresh air/fresh faces Sunday afternoon walks that have occurred weather permitting, and her hope that walking and spiritual development gatherings such as these will continue going forward.

The Reverend Rogers reported on Season of Lent preparations including a livestream Ash Wednesday worship service and Lenten devotion series offered via the Church website and Facebook.

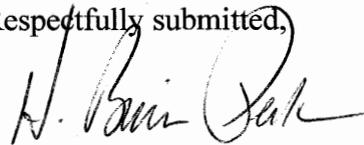
**CONCERNS AND JOYS**

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 8:23 p.m. The next regular meeting of Session will be held on March 15, 2021.

Respectfully submitted,



H. Brian Peck  
Clerk of Session

Attachment:  
2020 Church Statistical Report

Date approved: March 15, 2021

2020 Church Statistical Report  
Westminster Church  
Pittsburgh Presbytery

Prior Active Members	1681	Adjusted Membership	1681
<u>Gains</u>		<u>Losses</u>	
Certificate	2	Certificate	1
Youth Professions	14	Deaths	21
Professions and Reaffirmations	16	Deleted for any other reason	22
Total Gains	32	Total Losses	44
Total Ending Active Members	1669		
Baptisms		Ave. Weekly Worship Attend.	481
Presented by others	18	Female Members	942
At Confirmation	0	Friends of the congregation	38
All other	0	Ruling Elders on Session	27
		Deacons	Yes
Age Distribution of Active Members		People with Disabilities	
25 & Under	219	Hearing impairment	37
26-40	338	Sight impairment	32
41-55	397	Mobility impairment	21
56-70	343	Other impairment	0
Over 70	372		
Total Age Distribution	1669		
Christian Education			
Birth – 3	23	Grade 7	10
Age 4	10	Grade 8	10
Kindergarten	10	Grade 9	20
Grade 1	10	Grade 10	15
Grade 2	10	Grade 11	15
Grade 3	10	Grade 12	10
Grade 4	10	Young Adults	12
Grade 5	10	Over 25	142
Grade 6	10	Teachers/Officers	38
		Total Christian Education	375
Racial Ethnic			
Asian/Pacific Island/South Asian	3	Native American/Alaska	0
Black/African	1	White	1665
		Total Racial Ethnic	1669
Financial Data			
Annual Income	\$2,312,275	Mission Expenses	184,894
Annual Expenses	\$1,962,545	Personnel Expenses	\$1,173,037
		Facilities Expenses	\$267,444