

**MONDAY, JANUARY 18, 2021
REGULAR MEETING OF SESSION**

On Monday, January 18, 2021, the 624th 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 7:02 p.m.

Session members attending were Dr. Forrest, the Reverend Rogers, and Elders Bacik, Baculik, Burgess, Canose, Castelli, Conley, Davis, Dilly, Exley, Fraser, Galbreath, Heilman, Jenkins, LeBeau, Lee, Ludwig, Marsh, McClintock-Comeaux, Myers, Null, O'Brien, Paul, Rex, Rost, Sheap, Singleton, Wagner, Walker, Weber, Widmar and Williams, constituting a quorum.

REPORT OF THE CLERK – Motion to approve the minutes from the 623rd (November 16, 2020) regular meeting (as reviewed and corrected) and to take action with respect to the members set forth below were approved.

DEATHS

Joan Jessen, December 21
Nancy Park, January 5
Elizabeth Plotner, January 7

DELETE BY REQUEST

L. Cheryl Thomas	Living out of area
Jessica P. Gabler	Living out of area
Robert B. Gabler	Living out of area

TRANSFER

Abigail Gary	Southminster Presbyterian Church
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SERVICE OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

On Sunday, December 6, 2020, and Sunday, January 3, 2021, the sacrament of the Lord's Supper was celebrated during worship services.

Upon motion made by the Clerk and duly seconded, Session (1) approved the 2021 liturgical calendar and celebration of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper on the first Sunday of each month and other dates listed in the liturgical calendar and the Church's calendar, and (2) authorized pastors to admit to Baptism children of believers in accordance with applicable provisions of the Book of Order as such children are presented for Baptism in the course of the year.

BUSINESS ITEMS

Update on WECEP Insurance Claim. Prior to this meeting, the Clerk provided Session members with a written update on negotiations and actions taken in pursuit of the insurance claim filed on behalf of WECEP, LLC. The Clerk briefly reviewed substantive portions of the memo with Session and advised Session that the Session-appointed committee working with legal counsel on these claims will advise legal counsel to proceed with filing a complaint in the litigation initiated to pursue a separate claim on behalf of WECEP, LLC.

2021 Budget. Elder Lee, Chair of the Finance Commission, reviewed a draft of the 2021 Westminster Budget which had been distributed to members of Session prior to the meeting, and answered numerous questions raised by Session members. A copy of the 2021 Westminster Budget document is attached to these minutes. Upon motion made by the Finance Commission Chair to adopt the 2021 Budget and a second to the motion duly received, Session voted to adopt the 2021 Budget.

2020 Annual Report and Annual Meeting January 31, 2021. The Reverend Rogers advised Session members that the 2020 Annual Report is being compiled. Copies of the Annual Report will be available electronically and in print on January 29, 2021. Business of the meeting will include approval of the Church's 2020 Annual Report, review of an itemized proposed budget for 2021 adopted by Session on January 18, 2021, and action by the congregation on each pastor's terms of call. Discussion ensued regarding voting on matters requiring a vote of the congregation during this meeting which will occur virtually on YouTube, and a determination was made that voting can be accomplished using the Mentimeter secure online voting procedure recently utilized in the last meeting of the congregation that occurred on November 1, 2020.

Review of Current COVID-19 Pandemic Situation. The Reverend Rogers advised Session that Church staff is constantly tracking local COVID-19 pandemic health statistics. Current Allegheny County statistics relating to numbers of daily new cases and positivity rates are substantially in excess of the standards and conditions established by Session to resume in person worship and programming. Therefore, the Church will continue on its present course of operation.

COMMISSION & COMMITTEE REPORTS AND ACTIONS

Adult Spiritual Development. Elder Myers invited Session members to participate in a twenty-four hour prayer vigil on January 21 and January 22 during the annual Week of Prayer for Christian Unity presently being observed by congregations from all Christian denominations. Participants may register on the Westminster website. Prayer suggestions are also provided on the website.

Children's & Family Ministry. Elder Williams advised that Natalie Brown, Director of Children's & Family Ministry, has accepted employment in the Upper St. Clair School District. While Natalie remains involved in Children's & Family Ministry, her hours will be substantially reduced. Assistant Director Deb Egli as agreed to provide additional hours of service and oversight as staffing determinations are made going forward. Elder Williams also reported that WECEP has hired a new Executive Director, Denise Burke, who started in her new position on January 13. Nursery School enrollment is also going so well that additional staff is needed. Elder Williams encouraged Session members to refer any persons interested in working in the Nursery School to contact the Nursery School.

Endowment & Special Gifts. Elder Rex provided Session with a short summary of the financial condition of the Endowment Fund. Total Fund assets, excluding the \$1.259 million loan made to the Church to pay the IRS obligation left in the wake of the theft of assets by the Church's former business administrator, are \$2.75 million. The blended rate of return on investment over the past year is approximately 12%. During 2020, Elder Rex also noted that the Endowment Fund received several generous contributions.

Finance. A Summary Analysis of Revenues & Expenses for the period ending December 2020 was circulated to Session members prior to the meeting. This report was received without question or comment. Elder Lee noted that the Church ended this past year with a cash surplus, due in large part to receipt of insurance claim proceeds, unanticipated gifts and participation in the first federal paycheck protection program. The Church anticipates but has not yet received confirmation of forgiveness of the paycheck protection loan. The Church has received no response to date from the IRS on penalties or interest still owed on the aforesaid IRS obligation.

Membership. Elder LeBeau noted that membership zoom meetings with numerous persons interested in joining the Church are planned for next week.

Outreach. Elder Conley expressed her Commission's appreciation for Elders Lee's and Rex's efforts in meeting with the Commission to discuss recent Finance Commission actions to remove unrecoverable obligations from the Church's financial records relating to outreach operations.

Personnel. Elder McClintock-Comeaux likewise expressed the Personnel Commission's appreciation for Elders Lee's and Rex's efforts in meeting with the Commission to discuss recent Finance Commission actions to remove unrecoverable obligations from the Church's financial records that affect or could affect personnel staffing. He also introduced Elder Andrew Marsh as the new chair of the Personnel Commission.

Property. Elder Galbreath briefly reviewed plans and costs for repair of Church box gutters and a roof leak. He also noted that planning is proceeding for outdoor painting which should start when the weather breaks this spring.

Stewardship. A written report on the 2021 Stewardship Campaign was circulated to Session members prior to the meeting. To date, the total number of pledging units are 15% below those pledged and paid for 2020. Total pledges to date for 2021 are 10% below total paid pledges for 2020 adjusted for the same membership base. Elder Heilman attributed the ongoing pandemic and concerns related to the theft of funds by the Church's former business administrator as causes contributing to this downturn in pledging, but expressed optimism that this trend can and will be reversed in 2021.

PASTORS' REPORTS

Dr. Forrest expressed her heartfelt appreciation for the warm and gracious welcome she and her husband, Hamish, have received in moving to Pittsburgh and Westminster Church. She noted how impressed she has been in discerning the talent and wisdom of those who have kept the Church's financial situation at bay. Finding new ways to meet and engage with Church and community members and reversing the present trend in stewardship are primary matters on her personal agenda. Dr. Forrest is eager to explore and apply any and all best practices to emerge as quickly as possible from life in the face of the pandemic.

The Reverend Rogers also expressed her eagerness to look for creative ways to connect with one another. She noted that the Deacons are dedicated to finding new and better ways to stay connected in this pandemic environment, and noted, as an example, that on January 31, 2021 Deacons and Church volunteers will set up and serve a meal at St. Catherine of Siena Church in Beechview. Additional information on how to participate can be found on the Church website.

The Reverend Rogers also took this opportunity to express her appreciation, the appreciation of Session and of the Church at large to elders in the Class of 2020, namely Bonnie Bacik, Harriett Dilly, Jay Galbreath, Pat McClintock-Comeaux, John Null, Ann O'Brien, Lois Singleton, Helen Watson and Karen Williams, for their commitment and contributions as leaders over the past three years.

CONCERNS AND JOYS

The Reverend Rogers expressed her increased concern that more and more members of Westminster Church are now infected with or impacted by the COVID-19 virus, and asked for prayers for all those either sick or caring for sick persons at this time. She also expressed concern and asked for prayers for those affected by prolonged isolation during this pandemic.

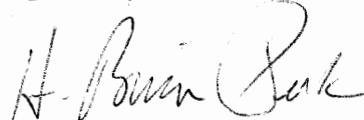
Elder Davis noted that his son, Allen, has been diagnosed with cancer and is facing a new round of medical examinations and tests, and asked Session for prayers for Allen and his family in this time of fear and uncertainty.

In her prayer to adjourn the meeting, the Reverend Rogers prayed for our country and for the peaceful transfer of power in the days to come.

ADJOURNMENT WITH PRAYER

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned with prayer at 8:24 p.m. The next regular meeting of Session will be held on February 15, 2021.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "H. Brian Peck". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped initial "H".

H. Brian Peck
Clerk of Session

Date approved: February 15, 2021