

MONDAY, MAY 17, 2021
REGULAR MEETING OF SESSION

On Monday, May 17, 2021, the 628th 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 7:00 p.m.

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

Elders Absent: Baculik, LeBeau, McGee and Rex.

ORDER OF THE DAY

New Members – Prior to addressing the agenda for its regular meeting, Session met with members of the Inquirers' Class. New members able to join the Zoom meeting were introduced, examined and installed as new active members of Westminster Presbyterian Church. The following new members were received:

Chuck and Yvonne Bly
Hamish Forrest
Joe Podolinski

REPORT OF THE CLERK – Motion to approve the minutes from the 627th (April 19, 2021) regular meeting (as reviewed and corrected) were approved.

SERVICE OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

At worship services on Sunday, May 3, 2021, the sacrament of the Lord's Supper was administered to communicants.

BUSINESS ITEMS

Additional Session Meeting June 6th to meet Confirmands. Dr. Forrest advised that Ed Sutter has asked that a special meeting of Session be convened on June 6, 2021, after the 11:00 a.m. worship service to meet and examine Westminster Church's newest class of confirmands at a luncheon in Fellowship Hall. A motion was received and seconded, and Session voted to convene on June 6, 2021, after the 11:00 a.m. worship service to meet and examine Westminster Church's newest class of confirmands at a luncheon in Fellowship Hall.

Safe Church policy (tabled from April). Dr. Forrest advised Session that substantial good work had been performed by staff on the policy, but that the policy was not yet ready for Session review. The policy should be ready review and approval at Session's June 2021 regular meeting. The matter remains tabled and will be addressed at Session's June regular meeting.

Update on pending legal proceedings. The Clerk provided an update to Session members on the status of litigation initiated with Brotherhood Mutual Insurance Company in pursuit of recovery of a claim for theft of funds from WECEP, LLC by Westminster Church's former business administrator. The parties agreed to an independent evaluator's assessment of their respective positions, as set forth in the pleadings, and mediation of the dispute, as directed by the federal court judge assigned to the case. The evaluation/mediation proceedings are scheduled for June 2, 2021.

Worship Update with COVID protocols. Over the past month statistical data on new COVID cases and vaccination levels have improved considerably. Dr. Forrest suggested that in light of the new data, revisiting Westminster Church's COVID protocol is appropriate. The floor was opened for discussion of options now available relating to in-person worship. The earnest discussion that ensued confirmed that while there is a strong preference to return to unrestricted in-person worship, there are members and children of members of Westminster for which the risk of contracting COVID as a result of attending in-person worship and other Church activities with members and friends who remain unvaccinated will remain too high and therefore preclude their participation. Several Session members noted with regret that there seems to be no right answer to this conundrum.

A motion was made that the requirement to make reservations for worship attendance be removed, that Bibles and hymnals and pew pads be returned to the pews, and that worshipers be advised that those who have been vaccinated may refrain from wearing masks, that those who have not been vaccinated be encouraged to wear masks, and that children age 12 and under be required to wear masks. The motion received a second, and after further limited discussion, Session voted to approve the motion as set forth herein.

Use of SharePoint for Session reports. This meeting marked the first time that Session's meeting agenda and Commission reports were circulated to members of Session to review via the online medium of SharePoint. Dr. Forrest and numerous members of Session noted that this new method of circulating documents to support Session meetings worked efficiently and effectively. Dr. Forrest noted that additional features will be built into the process, including for instance, password access to and protection of the SharePoint site which will provide a secure location that Session members can access for Session documents.

COMMISSION & COMMITTEE REPORTS AND ACTIONS

Adult Spiritual Development. Elder Myers encouraged Session members to read the June Spire for summer programming.

Bridge Worship. Elder Wagner noted that thought should be given to creating safer spaces where possible for members and children still at risk of infection by the COVID virus.

Children & Family Ministry. A written report was submitted and circulated via SharePoint prior to the meeting. Elder Williams noted that volunteers are needed for Barefoot School.

Communication. A written report was submitted and circulated via SharePoint prior to the meeting. Elder Schmitt reviewed briefly the three active Communication projects underway relating to cybersecurity.

Finance. A Finance Commission Report for the period ending April 2021 was submitted and circulated via SharePoint prior to the meeting. Elder Lee also remarked on a document circulated to Session for first reading involving the terms under which the Endowment Fund provided the funds to pay the Church's and WECEP's IRS obligations related to Westminster Church's former business manager's theft of funds.

Membership. A written report was submitted and circulated via SharePoint prior to the meeting.

Personnel. Elder Marsh commented briefly on the Commission's work to engage a new healthcare provider for staff, and efforts to locate and hire a new director for the youth ministry programs

Stewardship. A written report was submitted and circulated via SharePoint prior to the meeting.

Worship. A written report was submitted and circulated via SharePoint prior to the meeting.

PASTORS' REPORTS

The Reverend Rogers invited Session members to attend a Zoom seminar she will be conducting on the Memorial Day weekend dealing with how to pray for a group. The Reverend Rogers also commented briefly on the work of the deacons regarding the Treasures for the Troops, Presbyterian Disaster Assistance, annual gala and congregational care programs.

CONCERNS AND JOYS

Meeting participants engaged in an exchange of individual joys and concerns for the Church, its members and their families and the community at large.

ADJOURNMENT WITH PRAYER

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned with prayer at 8:39 p.m. The next regular meeting of Session will be held on June 21, 2021.

Respectfully submitted,

H. Brian Peck
Clerk of Session

Date approved: June 21, 2021