

CHURCH OF THE COVENANT
MINUTES OF THE SESSION MEETING: MONDAY, NOVEMBER 2, 2015

RULING ELDERS PRESENT: April Betzner, Pat Boyer, Joel Braun, Gordon Core, Jerry Davison, Sue Denmead, Cindy Garlisi, Terri Grantz, Linda Grimm, Jessica Hickman, Jackie Koman, Jim Little, Steve Marriner, Crystal Miles Dennis Myers, David Taylor, and Brian Teagarden

STAFF PRESENT: Rev. Dr. Stuart Broberg, Don Nixon

OPENING PRAYER AND DEVOTIONS

The regularly scheduled meeting of the Session of The Church of the Covenant was convened with prayer and devotions by the Rev. Dr. Stuart D. Broberg, on Monday, November 2, 2015 at 7:48 p.m. in the Dining Room.

APPROVAL OF THE DOCKET

After a motion was made by Pat Boyer and seconded by Linda Grimm, the docket for tonight's meeting was unanimously approved by the Session.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES FROM OCTOBER 2015

After a motion was made by April Betzner and seconded by Brian Teagarden, the minutes from the special Called Session meeting of October 14, 2015, and the regular Session Meeting minutes of October 5, 2015, were unanimously approved by the Session, with a minor change in the regular Session meeting minutes.

APPROVAL OF A TRANSFER

Carol Hissom requested a letter of transfer to Lowcountry Presbyterian Church, Bluffton, SC 29910. Sue Denmead moved and Linda Grimm seconded the motion, and the Session unanimously approved the motion.

APPROVAL OF BAPTISMS

Joseph and **Lauren (Barletta) Di Pietro** (member) request the baptism of their infant twin sons on Sunday, Nov. 29, 2015. This baptism complies with the church's baptism policy, so it did not require Session approval.

Tonight at the special Session meeting for New Members that preceded this regular monthly Session meeting, Kyle Avery advised Dr. Broberg that he has not been baptized. Kyle will be joining the church on Sunday, November 15, 2015 with the rest of the current New Members Class. So he will need to be baptized on November 15th as an adult. Pat Boyer moved to approve his baptism, Jessica Hickman seconded the motion, and the Session unanimously approved the motion.

CHANGE THE DATE OF THE REGULAR DECEMBER 2015 SESSION MEETING

Dr. Broberg requested that the regular December 2015 Session meeting be moved to Monday, December 14, 2015, at the same time and place. April Betzner moved to approve the new date for the Session meeting in December, David Taylor seconded the motion, and the Session unanimously approved the motion.

APPROVE MOVING PEOPLE TO THE ACTIVE ROLL

Alex Miller, Robert Hall, and Mr. and Mrs. King Weber requested that they be moved to the Active Roll. Alex Miller needs to become an active member, so that he can be placed "under care" of his present church, April Betzner moved to approve placing them on the Active Roll, Jackie Koman seconded the motion, and the Session unanimously approved the motion.

COMMUNICATINOS FROM THE CLERK

Baptisms

On Sunday, October 25, 2015, Garrett Daniel Griffith, born May 2, 2015, infant son of Daniel C. and Brenda Lucas Griffith was baptized at the 11:00 AM worship service. Dr. Stuart D. Broberg officiated.

Weddings

On Saturday, October 10, 2015, Brittany Crawford and Joshua Burkhart were married in the sanctuary with Dr. Stuart Broberg officiating.

On Saturday, October 17, 2015, Michael Spiegel and Lauren Tomsic were married in the sanctuary with Dr. Stuart Broberg officiating.

On Saturday, October 24, 2015, Danielle Lapcevic and Bryan Anderson married in our sanctuary with Dr. Stuart Broberg officiating.

Funerals

Ruth E. Voigt (member) died on Thursday, October 2, 2015, her 98th birthday. The funeral service was held on Thursday, October 8, 2015 at The Church of the Covenant with Rev. Dr. Clarejean Haury officiating. Interment followed.

Thomas O. Farabee died Wednesday, October 14, 2015. The funeral service was held on Saturday, October 17, 2015 with Rev. Stuart Broberg officiating. Interment followed at Prosperity Cemetery.

Florence G. Chambers (member) died on Thursday, October 15, 2105. The funeral service was held on Wednesday, October 21, 2015 with Rev. Stuart Broberg officiating. Interment followed at the West Alexander Cemetery.

Carol Jean Matz (member) died on Friday, October 16, 2015. The funeral service was held on Tuesday, October 20, 2015 at the Warco-Falvo Funeral Home, Inc. Interment followed at the Washington Cemetery.

APPROVAL OF RESIGNATION OF DON FAUST AS A DEACON

This morning, November 2, 2015, Don Faust told Dr. Broberg that he must resign as a deacon due to job conflicts which Don feels keep him from fulfilling his responsibilities as a deacon. Jackie Koman moved to approve Don's resignation, and Terri Grantz seconded the motion. After some discussion, Pat Boyer called the question to vote on the motion. Her call to question was approved by a 14 (Yes) to 3 (No) vote. The Session voted on the motion to approve Don Faust's resignation as a deacon by a 14 (Yes) to 3 (No) vote.

SPECIAL CONSIDERATION CALENDAR

Discussion of Communication Plan related to Nominating/ Election of Officer Issues.

Dr. Broberg reviewed a letter (please see Attachment 1) to the Session that explained his views on the continuing nominating process.

Concerning Don Faust's resignation as a deacon, Dr. Broberg noted that, historically in his time at The Church of the Covenant, our Church has not rushed to fill empty slots. It was noted that before Dr. Broberg arrived (i.e., before seven years ago), the Nominating Committee got someone to agree to run for a vacant position and then a special congregational meeting was held to elect a person to fill the vacant position. Since Dr. Broberg arrived, such a vacancy has been left open until the next regular Nominating Committee cycle and regular congregational meeting for elections of officers (normally held in November).

The Nominating Committee will be meeting on Tuesday evening, November 3, 2015 to consider this resignation. Dr. Broberg noted that neither our Bylaws nor the Book of Order are clear on how quickly an open position needs to be filled or how to do that. He recommended that the Nominating Committee seek legal counsel on the best, correct way to replace Don. The Nominating Committee will try to get Sam Foreman to talk to them that evening.

After considerable discussion, it was agreed that the Session will trust the Nominating Committee to deal with this matter and report back to the Session after the Nominating Committee talks with legal counsel regarding the best, correct way to address the Don Faust resignation. All agreed that we need to continue our course of being wide open and always seeking the best, correct way to proceed through these matters. Dr. Broberg asked the Session to continue to pray for the Nominating Committee, and that the Session members should continue being spiritual leaders for our church and to be forth-right disciples.

Dr. Broberg pointed out that the November 22, 2015, date for the congregational meeting will be announced in the Bulletin and from the pulpit starting on Sunday, November 8, 2015. The slate of nominees will be published one week before that congregational meeting.

At this time, Gordon Core moved and Crystal Miles seconded a motion to hold a special called Session meeting starting at 7:00 p.m. on Monday November 9, 2015, to hear a report from the Nominating Committee regarding their November 3, 2015 meeting and discussions with counsel. At that called special Session meeting, the Session will consider how to report out this information to the Congregation. The motion passed unanimously.

SESSION COMMITTEE REPORTS

Finance Committee – Brian Teagarden, Chairperson – Brian Teagarden noted that the Finance Committee is closely watching our budget, and will meet later this month to determine how to proceed and stay within our budget requirements. They are especially watching Unpledged Income, which has lagged behind expectations. Giving (especially Unpledged Income) needs to improve in November and December to make sure our budget objectives are met.

Personnel Committee – Sue Denmead, Chairperson – Sue noted that the Committee will be reviewing new Board of Pensions information to determine the budgetary impact.

OAR Committee – Linda Grimm, Chairperson – Linda referred the Session to the Committee’s minutes.

Stewardship Committee – Terri Grantz, Chairperson - it was noted that Consecration Sunday will be held on November 15, 2015.

Mission Committee – David Taylor, Chairperson – David said that his Committee is working to help provide some funding for the City Mission, and for the Pine Springs Camp. David said that the Committee moves to provide a \$5,000 gift to Pine Springs every year for three years using funds from the Esther Hart Mission Endowment Fund. Since the motion came from Committee, no second was needed. The Session voted unanimously to approve the motion.

Worship and Music Committee – Jackie Koman, Chairperson - Crystal Miles reported for Jackie Koman, who had to leave. Crystal referred the Session to the Committee’s minutes.

Christian Education Committee – Jessica Hickman, Chairperson – Jessica referred the Session to the Committee’s minutes. She also reviewed the recent Pumpkin Patch event with the Session.

Nominating Committee – Joel Braun, Chairperson – Joel noted that the slate of candidates is wonderful, and that people have given much thought and prayer about serving the Church.

Building and Grounds Committee – Jerry Davison, Chairperson – Jerry said that the Family Promise re-start has been going well. The roof there has been fixed.

The boiler in our 420 property was fixed; that was an unexpected expense and his Committee is reviewing our insurance policy to see if we are capped with our expenses, and if the policy references repair vs. replacement.

PASTORAL CARE

Dr. Broberg thanked those who helped with in-home communion earlier in November. 32 people were served communion. He also asked that the Session pray for Grace Roe.

DATES OF NOTE

The next Communion will be held on Sunday, December 6, 2015. The next regular Session meeting will be held on Monday, December 14, 2015, starting at 7:00 p.m. in the Dining Room.

The Next Stated Presbytery Meeting will be held on November 10, 2015 at Peters Creek United Presbyterian Church, McMurray. Charles Bowers and April Betzner are scheduled to attend.

ADJOURNING AND CLOSING PRAYER

After a motion by April Betzner and second by consensus of the entire Session, the Session unanimously approved the motion to adjourn. The meeting was closed with a prayer by Don Nixon at 9:58 p.m.

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Respectfully submitted,

Jonathan M. Pachter

Jonathan M. Pachter, Clerk of Session

Letter to Session --November 2, 2015

Dear Session Members:

Again, I thank you for your patience and forbearance in dealing with difficult and potentially divisive issues at The Church of the Covenant. I would hope in the midst of all of these concerns we would continue to focus together on the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. Our heart, our prayers and our actions need to be focused upon Him.

As Jesus notes about Himself: *"And I, if I am lifted up from the earth will draw all peoples to Myself."* (John 12: 32) If we lift up Jesus, then we will draw people unto Him. If we focus on other matters we will discover that people go the opposite direction and this will cause the dissolution of our wonderful church. We are already seeing the decline in worship attendance, receiving of new members, and potential decline in financial support. The antidote is for us as spiritual leaders to focus on Him.

"He Himself is our peace, who has made us both one, and has broken down the dividing wall of hostility." (Ephesians 2: 14) Issues that divide lead to factions in the church, an "us versus them" mentality, and factions lead to divisions which are hard to heal. People don't join issues or controversies, they join churches. But He, Jesus, can be our peace if we recommit ourselves to Him and are willing to set aside our own agendas for the greater good and the unity of Christ.

"In HIM all things hold together." (Colossians 1: 17) But apart from HIM all things will break down and fall apart. Whether or not the period we now enter as a church is about Kingdom building or dissolution will be how we, as the spiritual leaders of the church, choose to be.

There is another "Church of the Covenant" this one in Erie, Pennsylvania. We may even have been named for this church, whose name our then pastor, Bill Rusch, took when we merged together in 1960 and created The Church of the Covenant. It has a historic, beautiful sanctuary a lot like ours. It had significant divisions over these same issues over the past couple of years. In 2009 its budget was \$800,000 and in 2014 it was \$475,000. In 2009 its worship attendance was 300+ per Sunday and in 2014 it was 200. In 2009 its Christian Ed enrollment was 375 and in 2014 it was 120. I am told today that most of the membership is elderly, long time members, and they can see the end of their ministry in this large downtown church within the next decade.

I would hope we would not be a repeat of this sad story of division and decline. I would hope instead as spiritual leaders, we would seek to lift up Jesus and have Him be our peace and the spiritual "glue" which holds us together. God bless you. I am praying for you.

Faithfully,
Dr. Stu Broberg