



FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF ALLENTOWN, PENNSYLVANIA

Minutes - Regular Session Meeting – Wednesday April 23, 2008

I OPENING

The Session of the First Presbyterian Church of Allentown, PA met on April 23, 2008 in room 115 at the church. A quorum was present. The meeting was called to order at 7:11 p.m.

During the time of Fellowship preceding the start of the meeting, the Elders enjoyed a cake to recognize that this was the last Session meeting before the start of Mike Drake's sabbatical and to celebrate Harry Freebairn's upcoming birthday.

II THE SESSION AT WORSHIP

The Rev. Cynthia Simmons led an Evening Prayer Worship Service with a reading from Matthew 28:1-7 followed by a reflection on this scripture.

III THE CONSIDERATION OF THE CONSENT DOCKET

Session **voted** to approve the items under the Consent Docket as presented.

A. Administrative Business

1. Approval of the Docket
2. The Roll Call and excuses will be determined by previous notification.
3. Approval of Minutes
 - i. - March 26, 2008 - Regular Meeting
 - ii. - March 16, 2008 - Special Session
4. Clerk of Session Correspondence Report (APPENDIX A)

B. Roll Call -

Moderator:	Rev. Harry Freebairn
Clerk of Session:	Linda Kirner
Ordained Staff Present:	Rev. Dr. Michael Drake, Rev. Stephen Emick, Rev. Kathleen Jamhoury and Rev. Cynthia Simmons
Ordained Staff Excused:	
Elders Present:	Jack Adams, Jami Cooper, Alyson Cox, Kathleen Dent, Paul Ferrera, Dorrie Graul, Leni Harriott, Lois Henseler, Paul Holler. Carol Landes, Michael Lentz, Millie Miller, Salma Moussa, Dan Paci, Fred Preuninger, Robert Rutman, Roseann Sandt, Barbara Showalter, John Tacca, Joseph Thurston,

Gay Tuttle, Bill White, Marilyn Wright and Kathy Yott.

Elders Excused:

Bert Harries, Rich Laliberte, Tom Wasser,

Elders Absent:

IV FINANCIAL REPORT – The following report was given by Elder, Paul Holler. *Pledge payments from prior year exceeded our annual budget by nearly \$6,000. (\$10,838 vs \$5,000 forecast) – Notably we did not send out inquiries as to whether folks were planning to fulfill their prior year commitment.*

- *No pledge contributions have exceeded plan in all 3 months of this year to date. Both Jan. & Feb. were ~ \$8,000 against forecasts of \$8,000 and \$7,000. March resulted in 13,000, likely due to the 5 week month and Easter. Worth noting that anticipated “no pledge contributions” were lower in March contributing to a monthly positive variation of almost \$7,000. For the year we are about 37% ahead of plan, but just slightly ahead of 2007 yet Easter was in April. At this point, I think this variation is more about forecast than any positive trend.*
- *In all, Receipts were positive to plan by ~\$37,500 and positive compared with last year by nearly \$76,000.*
- *All areas are contributing to expense control by either meeting or exceeding the control targets.*
- *As a result, we currently have an actual net position YTD of ~\$34,000. Compared to budget we are ahead by ~\$59,000 and are ~\$131,000 better than at this point last year.*

V MISSION STUDY TASK FORCE – The following report was given by Elder, Jami Cooper. *The Mission Study Task Force has been working with enthusiasm and dedication and we are “full speed ahead.” We have met every week, except Holy Week, since our first meeting on February 17, 2008.*

At our most recent meeting, on April 21, 2008, we put together a simple schedule for preparing the mission study report so that, by May 28, 2008, we will be prepared to make a complete presentation to the Session. The schedule will be demanding but we feel that we are up to the challenge.

As we have begun to visualize the final report, we are anticipating that we will provide the facts – the story of First Presbyterian, both historical and current. We’re working on a profile of the congregation, studying our financial needs, and looking beyond our doors to the larger community beyond – locally, nationally, and globally.

We are discerning our congregation’s core values, strengths, and challenges so that we will be prepared to make recommendations for the future direction of the congregation and the functional staff areas that will be needed to achieve our vision.

What we have found to date has been reassuring in many ways. We are a stable and well-grounded worshipping community of people who care about, and care for, each other. Some of our programs are so well grounded that all we can say about them is, "keep on going, you're doing a great job." We have found a church that is looking forward eagerly, and somewhat anxiously, but grateful for and pleased with the transitional period we are experiencing. There has been strong affirmation of the pastoral staff that is leading us during the interim period.

At the same time, we have found challenges that we will identify. The future direction of this congregation will be dependent on how we meet today's challenges.

We are looking forward to meeting with the Session, Trustees, and Deacons at the end of May. We ask for your prayers as we seek to discern God's will for First Presbyterian Church.

VI PRESBYTERY REPORT – The report was given by Elder, Leni Harriot. *Lehigh Presbytery met at East Stroudsburg Presbyterian Church on Tuesday April 22, 2008.*

- *The Presbytery Council authorized the Stated Clerk to correct the imbalance between Clergy and elders by inviting 25 churches to elect an additional Commissioner, including First Presbyterian Church of Allentown.*
- *The Committee on Ministry recommended that the Presbytery approve the 2008 continuation of the Parish Associates at First Presbyterian Allentown that includes: Rev. Harvey Johnson, Rev. Dianne Kareha, Rev. George Landes, Rev. Greg Palmer and Rev. Rich Smith. Also, the COM voted to continue to validate the non-parish ministries of Dianne Kareha, at Luther Crest Diakon and Steve Simmons at Moravian Theological Seminary and First Allentown. Both passed.*
- *Board of Trustees Report for:*
2007 Mission Income and Expenditures Report: Total Mission Expenditures over budget -\$44,924.91.
Administrative Expenditures and Income: Total Expenditures over budget -\$7,273.77.
Designated Funds Balance: Lehigh Presbytery \$740,623.87. Brainerd Presbyterian Center \$44,532.84.
- *Committee on Ministry Report: United Presbyterian Church of Pottsville, PA voted to hire Manuela Kauer as their interim pastor effective 7/1/08 and recommended that Lehigh Presbytery concur. Motion passed.*
- *Committee on Preparation for Ministry Report: The committee moved that Denise Williams be accepted as an Inquirer under care of the Lehigh Presbytery. Motion passed.*

- *Report of Nominating Committee: Wilson Chen was elected to the Nominating Committee. An elder is needed for COM and also an elder is needed for nominating.*
- *Rev. Steve Shussett encouraged churches to support Lehigh Presbytery-Mission Challenge '08. One-hundred fifty-one people giving \$1.00 per day each will support one missionary.*

VI REPORTS FROM PASTORS AND OTHER BOARDS

- 1 Rev. Dr. Michael Drake** – Expressed his thanks for the recognition of his upcoming Sabbatical. The Trustees held a fire drill last Sunday. The Trustees are putting the final touches on an investment policy that will allow us to have a certain amount of money available each year so the budget can be more stable. The CD's we own have been given over to the KNBT bank. The audit has been postponed due to a death in our accountant's firm.
- 2 Rev. Stephen Emick** – The second annual Graduating Senior Retreat was last weekend. This retreat helps transition the youth for what they have ahead of them upon graduating. The youth choir participated in an interfaith concert at Temple Beth El and this was very successful. There are 27 youth who are in confirmation class and Confirmation Sunday will be May 11. Youth Choir Tour Program is this weekend. Baccalaureate is May 18. The 4 summer interns and Summer Youth Ministry Program Director have all accepted and so we looking forward to their arrival in May.
- 3 Rev. Cynthia Simmons** – The annual Country Fair is coming in June 7 and the deacons are busy with planning for it. Cindy has been busy getting the worship schedule together for the summer. Reverend Baker and Reverend John Stoner will be preaching during the summer. The summer worship task force will start meeting soon to plan for the change to one service only for the summer months. We will receive our last Inquirers Class on May 18.
- 4 Rev. Kathy Jamhoury** – Recently has had one week of vacation and has returned refreshed and ready for the summer when Mike will be on Sabbatical. Mission Study Task Force has been an exciting group to work with and she has enjoyed her work with this hardworking group. With Mike leaving on Sabbatical next month, the associates have met and his responsibilities have been divided up among them for the summer months.

VII OLD BUSINESS

VIII NEW BUSINESS

Kathy Yott moved for the Mission Committee that Session approve commissioning volunteers from the Arabic community to serve on an Arabic Ministries Support Team. This Arabic Ministries Support Team will help Moufid Khoury in the social services part of his ministry and may also help with the

leadership in the Arabic language worship services. Moufid will train and supervise the activities of this group. **MOTION PASSED** unanimously.

Alyson Cox moved for the Congregational Nominating Committee that Session approve holding a Congregational Meeting on May 4, 2008 at the conclusion of the 8:30 AM Worship Service for the purpose of the election of one at large member of the 2008 Nominating Committee to fill an unexpired term. **MOTION PASSED** unanimously.

IX THE SESSION AT STUDY AND DISCERNMENT

The Session spent time having an “open mic” time so the elders could bring up any topics they wanted to discuss or ask about. Some of the topics discussed were:

- Who will write the job description for a new pastor
- How will we afford a new pastor
- Need a traditional service and a biblical scholar and great preacher
- Enthusiasm will be generated by new leaders

Then Session engaged in a discussion on the various pastoral help wanted advertisements that they submitted as homework. This exercise was a follow up to the discussion from last month.

In a sense of the Session motion, Session voted to begin the position description with the words, "The Pastor/Head of Staff shall be ..." .

X COMMITTEE REPORTS:

In order to have more time for discussion purposes, Committee reports were sent by email to all Session members for review before the meeting and are copied below as received. Questions regarding the reports were received for clarification.

1. Christian Education – Lois Henseler reported for the Christian Education Committee.

Weekday Preschool

Preschool registration for 2008-2009 is doing very well at this time. The three-year olds have 17 registered for 20 places; four-year olds have 49 registered for 42 places; five-year olds have 26 registered for 36 places. Barbara Culp, Director, will contact the parents of the six oldest in the four-year-old class to see if parents would like their child to attend a fourth day and be in the five-year-old class.

Children's Ministry

Children's Church School Closing Program '08: Linda Holliday will present the closing program based on the story of Noah's Ark and Promises on Sunday, June 1, in the Sanctuary, 9:45-10:35 a.m. At this program, teachers who are not returning in the fall will be recognized.

Friday Night Family Game Night

The CMC is committed to promoting multi-generational fellowship by sponsoring the first of a series of Friday Night Family Game Nights, open to the entire congregation. This is intended to be a night where anyone can drop in and spend time with our church family playing games, doing puzzles, having dessert, and a time for fellowship. Proposed Fridays for the 2008/09 program year are: Sept. 19, Oct. 17, Nov. 21, Jan. 23 or 30, Feb. 20, March 20, April 17, and May 15.

Youth Ministry

A Summer Youth Ministry Program Director has been hired along with 2 Summer Youth Ministry Interns. Offers have been extended to two additional Summer Youth Ministry Interns.

2. **Communication** – Bill White reported for the Communications Committee. Among the things we've been discussing, in addition to the usual work on organizing our Web team and enhancing the appearance of the site, are:

- How to obtain feedback from members regarding *Tidings* coming out every other week. We'll be gathering that input in late August-early September. No conclusions have been reached about how to do it.
- A marketing relaunch of the Web site in conjunction with the *Fall Festival of Faith*. By then, our organizational problems should be resolved and we should be updating content more regularly.
- How the one service over the summer will affect our advertising in newspapers, the Yellow Pages and elsewhere. We can fix the newspaper listings, but the more permanent publications will have inaccurate information.

3. **Membership** – Marilyn Wright reported for the Membership Committee. The next Special Session Meeting with the Inquirers' Class will be May 18, 2008 at 10:00 AM in Room 220.

4. **Mission** – Leni Harriott reported for the Mission Committee.

Special Offerings

The Ash Wednesday offering of \$665.03 was given to the church in Amar, Syria; The Maundy Thursday offering of \$1,400 was given to the Allentown Ecumenical Food Bank; One Great Hour of Sharing was given \$17,751.

Special Benevolence:

It was agreed to give \$700 to Bread for the World, \$8,000 to Westminster Village, \$19,300 to the Lehigh Valley Conference of Churches for a total of \$28,000.

The Mission Committee approved a Sunday service prayer schedule presented by Kathy Jamhoury. The groups to be prayed for include: our covenant churches, our missionaries, First Presbyterian Church Session, Trustees and Deacons, the PC(USA) Governing Bodies and various mission groups we support at FPC.

The Mission Committee approved procedures for requesting Minute for Mission and Ministry, and procedures for soliciting funds. These

instructions will be given to the office so that the office knows what to do when someone requests to have a fundraiser or to have a Minute for Mission and Ministry. The co-chairs of the Mission Committee will review and approve routine requests. Any unusual/controversial requests will be brought before the whole committee.

Pentecost Offering: Paul Ferrara agreed to lead this offering.

Covenant Churches: The church in Cupar, Scotland is interested in a shared Bible study and hopes for a youth exchange in the summer of 2009.

Arabic Ministry: Moufid requested help with some of the social service needs. The mission committee will present a face sheet to Session to Commission people for service.

Cradle of Our Faith: Rev. Dr. Fahed Abu-Akel, former moderator of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (USA), will be at our church the weekend of April 12-13. There will be program on Saturday with lunch and a dinner at the Yott house. He will be preaching at both services on Sunday with a class between the services.

Missionaries: Doug Baker from Northern Ireland will be at our church in June and will preach either 6/29 or 7/6.

Peace and Justice Committee: Bread for the World offering this year will be for the relief of poverty worldwide. We are giving \$700. There will also be an offering of letters. This offering will be in May.

International and Local mission subcommittees continue to meet and discuss options. International is considering the Heifer project, working with one of our missionaries or helping Cupar with their homeless project in Peru. The local mission subcommittee participated in the first Interfaith Day of Caring and 12 people worked at the 6th St. Shelter while the Youth held a Hawaiian Luau party at the Salvation Army Shelter and the 5th grade Church School class collected food for the Allentown Area Ecumenical Food Bank. The local group is working on a project for the food bank in June.

- 5. Nominating** – Bert Harries reported for the Nominating Committee. The 2008 Church Nominating Committee met on April 13th to begin the process of selecting nominees for the 2009 Church Officers, the Pastor Nominating Committee and to fill a vacated at-large position on the Church Nominating Committee. The attached Face Sheet addresses the vacancy on the Church Nominating Committee and the committee's nomination of Susan Rogers to fill that vacancy. That action requires the requested Congregational Meeting for election of the new Church Nominating Committee member.

A Minute for Mission and Ministry has been scheduled for May 4th, and *Tidings* and bulletin inserts are being written, all dealing with the process of nominations for the various positions.

The main selection meeting will be scheduled for the second half of May.

- 6. Staff** – No Report

7. **Stewardship** – Paul Holler reported for the Stewardship Committee. Pam Weiss visited the Stewardship Committee and discussed Stewardship focusing on two aspects: Christian & Fundraising. We as a church need to focus on both. She described Christian Stewardship as using resources to provide opportunities for change (and growth). This happens when we build relationships, connections, trust, and make ourselves vulnerable. At that point giving will truly come from the heart. Until then we need to look at financial stewardship as fundraising.

We settled on a few objectives for the next year or so.

- Traditional stewardship committee responsibilities like budgeting
- Education – work with Christian Education to develop a series: Christian/Financial/budgeting
- One-on-one or small group discussions on Stewardship
- Communication plan – how to educate without classes or small groups. Website/mailings/tidings, etc.
- Pledge Sunday – will be handled by Stewardship Committee
- Investigate Service Auction as a way to share time/talents.
- Mike Drake will look to see how we can model/budget line 2401 (Pledge Payments-Current Year) better.
- Finally we need to recruit at large members for the committee.

8. **Worship** – Dorrie Graul reported for the Worship Committee. Worship Committee met on April 7th. Overall positive review of Lenten and Easter worship although there was disappointment in lower attendance figures at Ash Wednesday and Maundy Thursday services. Some slight changes have been made to Communion serving procedures to streamline things a bit. More changes (and additional review) will occur with the Sunday morning serving in June. For uniformity, Communion servers should NOT wear nametags. Concerns for summer worship plans were recorded for the Summer Worship Task Force. The Worship Committee is next scheduled to meet on June 2nd.

XI THE SESSION AT WORK IN THE WORLD

Harry Freebairn closed with a prayer of dismissal and adjourned this Session Meeting at 9:40 PM.

The next Session meeting will be May 28, 2008 at 7:00 PM in Fellowship Hall.

Attested,

Linda Kirner
Clerk of Session