

Minutes from July 11, 2017 meeting

In attendance: Mary Pat Brennan, Jill Feasley, Sam Kalibala, Vicki Warren, Scott Ward, Ferd Hoefner, JC Cadwallader, Stephen Smith-Cobbs, Karen Chamis, Jessica Fisher

Devotion

Rev. JC Cadwallader opened the meeting with a devotion from Isaiah 43 about God doing a new thing in our midst. Elder reflections noted:

- The image of muddy water
- Fire will not consume you. It's hard to not be overwhelmed by constant noise
- Do not forget the things of old; I am about to do a new thing

Agenda and Minutes

Session reviewed the agenda and approved it unanimously. The last meeting's minutes were approved unanimously.

Financial Review

Vicki reported that while pledges and loose plate collections are down, most costs are running under budget. In the first week of August, Finance Committee members will be sending updates to members about fulfilling their pledges.

Several members have given gifts, including two very generous gifts, to cover building improvements, for which the Session is grateful.

Session approved the following motion: Session offers deep thanks to donors to who are enabling the fulfillment of CAT Scan goals to care for the building.

This news and thanksgiving will be shared through multiple channels: What's What, pulpit announcement, bulletin. The Finance and Property committees will draft an announcement.

It was requested that Vicki bring historical info about YTD progress for the past few years to the next meeting.

Recap of Discussion and Motion: The Leadership of the Session – Part 3

JC recapped past discussions:

- Session has engaged in hard, prayerful work and conversation over the last month and a half, which has been a blessing for her to witness.
- JC came to TPPC with understanding of conflict in the system, from the interim search committee. She has not spoken to Mark or Presbytery folks, but encouraged congregation members to share in order to hear directly from elders and members first.
- At the last meeting, there was a lot of conversation about the congregation's role in this decision-making process. It is the Session's responsibility, as elected leaders, to make the decision and to present it to the congregation, to communicate and guide them through the

process. It is similar to a pastor researching and writing a sermon during the week and then guiding the congregation through it in a sermon. The Pastor's role, in this process, is to provide pastoral information and context from individual conversations in order to equip Session with information, without breaching confidentiality.

- JC's interest in the conversation and process is to seek out the health and well-being of the congregation.
- A new piece of information: JC has been extended and has accepted a Call to First Presbyterian Church of New Haven, CT. So, her role now is to help the congregation find their best way forward through a pastoral transition.

Stephen noted that the Session still has the opportunity to make the decision for this reconciliation process, no matter who is in the interim role. Presbytery is still here to provide support in choosing the path and walking with TPPC along the way. The path chosen may impact the skills sought for in the next interim. The work of TPPC continues no matter who is in pastoral leadership. As a connectional church, we come together to do all we can to provide resources to meet opportunities like this.

Karen echoed this, noting that this process is still Session's responsibility. Staff is here to provide support.

Elders offered reflections based on this new information. There was general joy and excitement for JC and her new call, along with gratitude for her work of spiritual nourishment and study at TPPC, and sadness in her leaving. It was also expressed that adding a pastoral transition does impact the reconciliation process. Session resigning during a pastoral change would be too much. Pastoral continuity must take priority. In addition, it was noted again that summer would not be the best time to undertake two big changes in church leadership.

It was also noted that the reconciliation process can't be lost. One elder noted never being a part of such an open and honest conversation in Session. As we change pastoral leadership, this important work must continue and be expanded out to include the whole congregation.

The question was raised about the best type of pastoral relationship to engage in: interim, designated, or stated supply. Scott, chair of the last Interim Pastoral Search Committee, noted frustration in the last search and recommended looking at designated pastors instead. An interim role is not allowed to become a permanent position, whereas a designated or stated supply role would have potential to become permanent.

Karen noted that she has three candidates in mind, but doesn't know of their preference for job type. The three candidates would all need at least one month to give notice at their current positions.

Stephen noted that it is important that Session not limit themselves to just this region for the pool of pastors to choose from.

- In the case of a designated pastor, COM would bring a field of candidates to Session, based on congregational fit and plans for the future, and it is Session's decision on who to hire.
- An interim search would be conducted by a congregational committee, and hired by the congregation.
- Stated supply can be full time, and can become Interim or Designated later.

Stephen is not aware of any rules requiring a broader, public search, as other presbyteries may require. (NCP's policy applies to intra-congregational changes, ie. moving from associate pastor to senior pastor.) The difference of interim or designated depends on pastor's and Session's desire for long term options.

Through this transition, Session can serve as a point of stability.

JC asked for a motion to name the priorities Session will set for the pastoral search and transition. The type of pastoral leadership needed would be decided based on these priorities.

This initial motion was moved and seconded:

Session's priorities:

1. Focus on reconciliation with support of an outside consultant
2. Suspend non-essential activities to be freed to focus on reconciliation
3. Partnering with COM more closely to that end

An amendment was proposed (additions are in italics, deletions are stroked through):

Session's priorities:

1. Focus on reconciliation *and re-visioning* with support of outside consultant
2. ~~Suspend non-essential activities to be freed to focus on reconciliation~~
Focus committee work on reconciliation and building community towards right relationship
3. Partnering with COM more closely

Discussion raised the questions of: Who decides what is non-essential? Session? Does deciding this add more burden to Session? This amendment changes priority #2 to focus on relationship building, instead of suspending non-essential work. This speaks to the desire to develop discipline and right relationship, as named in the listening sessions.

Part of the process of reconciliation and healing will need to answer or re-vision how we are church together. Moving from unreconciled to reconciled forces transformation and re-envisioning.

Can consultant be replaced with COM? They are separate roles: Consultant will work with reconciliation in congregation while COM works with session in pastoral transition and to find the consultant

Concern was raised on whether the term "re-visioning" evokes a particular process? Is that what Session wants? The addition was proposed because it was felt that the last interim did listening and healing, but no visioning. It is too important to be missed again. The question was raised, was there no revisioning because the healing did not go deep enough?

The amendment was approved unanimously.

Another amendment was proposed (addition in italics):

Session's priorities:

1. Focus on reconciliation and re-visioning with support of *professional support*
2. Focus committee work on reconciliation and building community towards right relationship
3. Partnering with COM more closely

It was felt that this change broadens the possibilities of support.

Karen noted she spoke with the Lombard Mennonite Center. They ask for a member of the church to contact them to establish contractual relationship, rather than someone from presbytery. They would recommend timeline and process.

The amendment was approved.

The amended motion was approved unanimously, with God's help:

Session's priorities:

- 1. Focus on reconciliation and re-visioning with support of professional support**
- 2. Focus committee work on reconciliation and building community towards right relationship**
- 3. Partnering with COM more closely**

Another motion was moved, seconded, and approved with thanks to COM:

Session asks COM to come back to the August 8 Session meeting with a list of pastoral candidates and structure (interim, designated, stated supply) recommendations, and recommendations for filling in the gap in the pulpit until the new pastor is hired.

It was noted that TPPC is open to any structure possibility.

Other business

JC noted that with this high goal, Session is in need of a clerk. Ferd commits to clerk for the remainder of 2017. If someone could take over Properties, Jill would take it on for 2018. Other candidates can be explored. Clerk does not need to be on Session, but does need to be an ordained Ruling Elder.

When Mariette Asare is available, we will call for a congregational meeting to elect her to the role of ruling elder – suggested date: July 30.

A plan for announcing JC's resignation was discussed:

- JC to email the rest of Session and to Personnel this week
- Congregational letter to go out by the end of the week. JC circulated a draft letter and noted she will add more about tonight's decisions, speaking to the Session's commitment to the work of reconciliation.
- An announcement will be made this Sunday in worship

JC encouraged Session to carry the weight to support the Ministry of Worship, in consultation with COM, to ensure the worship leadership is in place during the time of transition.

Dine with Nine should continue and Session should continue to have an elder at each one (and host if they like). Mary Pat can attend this Friday's. Sam and Dan will attend the dinner at Ruth Noel's house.

Session adjourned with prayer at 9:40 p.m.

Minutes taken by Jessica Fisher