**STATED SESSION MEETING MINUTES**

**TRINITY PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

**August 15, 2023**

**7:00 p.m.**

**CALL TO ORDER & DECLARATION OF QUORUM**             **Rebekah LeMon**

The stated Session meeting for Trinity Presbyterian Church on **August 15, 2023**, was called to order in Old Fellowship Hall at 7:05 PM by the moderator, Rebekah LeMon. The clerk, Bonnie Holliday, confirmed the presence of a quorum.

**DEVOTION         Allen Spetnagel**

Allen Spetnagel provided our devotion. He discussed his memories of growing up at Trinity and his experience of baptism and officially joining as a member, the blessing of remembering and forgetting as we age, and the benefit we receive by God’s promise to forget and forgive each of our sins. As we remember and express our love for God, he forgets all of our wrongdoings. It is a covenant with God that grows as we grow. As coined: “Holy remembering and forgetting.”

**OMNIBUS MOTION TO APPROVE CONSENT AGENDA RebekahLeMon**

Rebekah LeMon directed session members to the omnibus motion in the meeting packet which included the meeting agenda, the minutes from the Stated Session Meeting on June 20, 2023, the minutes from the Called Session Meeting on August 8, 2023 (via Zoom), the financial report, and the statistical reports for June and July 2023.  On a motion to approve the consent agenda, Allen Spetnagel voted nay, and noted an error in the Called Session Minutes which inadvertently identified Nick Leet as having been absent for the Called Session Meeting on August 8. The Moderator noted the requested amendment. The motion to approve the consent agenda as amended was unanimously approved.

**MODERATOR’S REPORT          RebekahLeMon**

Rebekah LeMon began her report with gratitude for all the staff and volunteers and members who have worked busily throughout the summer to make so many activities and celebrations possible and successful. Additionally, she expressed gratitude for all that is happening at Trinity at the present, including new construction at the Preschool, the completion of various infrastructure projects, and the hiring of the new preschool director, Erin Carey. Rebekah announced that the Cherub Choir will now have a dedicated space for their practice in the former weekday childcare room.

Rebekah made reference to the great presence of Trinity women (38) at Montreat over the weekend to hear Kate Bowler from the Duke Divinity School speak, and gave a shout out to Lucy for handling the logistics of that event. Rebekah also mentioned the success of, and congratulated Norman McKenzie on, the recent Summer Sunday evening music event which had 110 attendees. Related, Rebekah praised the Hymn Sing worship event, which she noted was hugely popular among those who attended. Jay Harris also commented that the event led to various points of connection among members as to their individual emotional connections to the hymns.

Rebekah reminded the session of upcoming events, including the following: (1) on the morning of Sunday, August 20th, Trinity will be hosting Brenda Smeaton from the Georgia Justice Project for an adult education presentation to discuss her work with our neighbors and allies who have suffered incarceration, and how we might be able to help them become reengaged in the community; (2) on the afternoon of Sunday, August 20th, Trinity is hosting the end of summer Fun Fest for kids of all ages, including a giant slip and slide and dunk tank; (3) on August 27th, we are hosting the engagement fair; (4) on September 10th, we are hosting our annual BBQ and bluegrass event; and (5) on September 23rd, we are hosting a record restriction event connected to our mission partner Georgia Justice Project.

In unpleasant news, Rebekah informed the session of the recent report that churches around the country were having their “children’s moment” during worship searched and watched by inappropriate people online. In light of this knowledge, we have informed all parents of children who were shown in online videos, and we have taken children’s moment videos down from the online space to avoid this inappropriate behavior. We will continue to have children’s moments during our services, but children will not be visible to the online audience any longer.

Rebekah announced that our Commitment Campaign will begin on October 8th. It will be led by Stan Tilley and Melissa Mosely with the theme of “Forward in Faith.” The program will start earlier than in past years so that the entire campaign will be complete by the end of the calendar year and we can adopt a budget prior to the end of the first quarter.

As to staffing, Rebekah informed the session that, in keeping with Andrew’s recent call, this would be Andrew Esqueda’s last meeting as a member of the session. Andrew then spoke to the session about his call to the First Presbyterian Church in West Chester, Pennsylvania. Rebekah discussed the need for us to launch a pastor search to identify a fitting replacement for Andrew. Related, Emily Beaver is finishing her last semester of seminary and we are hopeful that she will be able to step into a director position to cover the non-pastoral responsibilities that were under Andrew’s purview. She will also be eligible his pastoral role as a candidate in our larger search. As such, her role in communications will become open and we are looking to file this role with a full-time position. We are also searching for a coordinator for ministries and someone who can take on more of a full-time role for Kory Roddy, who is currently working more hours that she desires.

**CLERK’S REPORT** **Bonnie Holliday**

Bonnie began her report by offering gratitude to Ben and Stephanie Curran for hosting the recent pool party for 4th graders, and to Jean and Emily and Andrew and Elizabeth for always keep the kids of our church community involved and engaged. She expressed thanks to the pastors for getting us ready for our Fall events, and to all the parents of children who are returning to school for their presence at these meetings and other events. She also gave a small, but vocal nod to the Assistant Clerk, Drew Timmons, for his diligent notetaking. Bonnie reminded the session to register, and to encourage other members to register for upcoming events so we are prepared with food and other set-up. Bonnie reminded us of the upcoming Fall worship schedule and the start of adult education on September 17th, including the Presbyterian 101 class sponsored by Foundations, which will be hosted by pastors and will discuss theological questions about what it means to be a presbyterian. She also mentioned the upcoming presbytery meeting at North Decatur on Nov. 4th.

**OPEN FORUM Rebekah LeMon**

During open Forum, David Merritt, our ambassador of “hearing” for the church, discussed the recent upgrades to the church to accommodate those who are hearing impaired and to improve listening capabilities throughout the structure. These included:

1. New speakers have been installed in the Sanctuary and Williams Hall;
2. Hearing loops have been installed in the Sanctuary and Williams Hall. This involves imbedding wires in the carpet floor which allow for broadcast of whatever sounds comes through microphones into handheld receivers and earbuds. There are 24 of these t-coil for hearing aids; and
3. The whole church has been rewired for a new Wi-Fi network and Bluetooth, which will allow for listening through Air Pods, and live broadcast through app on your phone.

**SPECIAL ORDERS & REPORTS Rebekah LeMon**

*APPROVAL OF SESSION MEETING CALENDAR* **Rebekah LeMon**

The moderator moved for approval of the Session Meeting Calendar. Allen Spetnagel seconded the motion. It was approved unanimously by the session.

*APPROVAL OF CONTRACT SIGNING AUTHORITY* **Rebekah LeMon**

At issue was a motion to expand the signatory authority to bind Trinity Presbyterian Church to include Heather Edmiston and Rebekah LeMon for routine needs or contracts with monetary liability up to $20,000. At the current time, this authority only belongs to Bonnie Holliday and Walt Gillikin. The moderator moved for approval of the two additional signatories. Bonnie Holliday seconded the motion. It was approved unanimously by the session.

*REQUEST FROM TRINITY PRESBYTERIAN PRESCHOOL*

Trinity Presbyterian Preschool requested the session to allow it to serve wine and beer at the Sip N’ Shop event on Thursday, October 26th from 4-8 pm in the Loft. After thoughtful and purposeful discussion of the necessity of change, the need to approach such requests on a case-by-case basis, and the importance of the event to TPP, a motion to approve was made by the moderator. Bonnie Holliday seconded the motion. It was unanimously approved by the session.

*PRESBYTERY MEETING* **Jay Harris and Roxanna** **Erwin**

Jay Harris and Roxanna Erwin spoke on the Presbytery Meeting which took place at Shallowford Presbyterian Church earlier this morning. They discussed the countless others in our community who are making God’s love visible, and the sermon from the Head of Columbia theological seminary regarding the parable of the Sower. They also mentioned the official record of Lucy’s ordination. Finally, they referenced the discussion of the 7 characteristics of a vital congregation, i.e., ecclesial health. In essence, the message was that if you are a person who works with plants, you understand you need to sometimes prune, in addition to fertilize, water, feed – change is necessary for all things. Roxanna also mentioned the mission in South Sudan which included two Missionaries from our local school, Westminster – Reverend Shelvis and Nancy Smith-Mather.

Jon McRae also spoke about the hosting of a certification program this fall in stewardship by Buz Wilcoxon through Shallowford. He mentioned that this is a 3-day program in religious fundraising.

*COMMITTEE SPOTLIGHTS* **Lucy Strong**

**MEMBERSHIP & ENGAGEMENT: Lucy Strong**

**ENGAGEMENT FAIR AND CALL RESULTS**

Lucy spoke on the membership and engagement committee. She began by saying thank you to Wardlyn Bassler and Ginny Hobbs for the call campaign and all that went into it. All information has now been compiled and updated. Of the 818 homes contacted, we had 196 requested information changes, with 19 requests to be removed from the roles, and 9 requests that they be listed as inactive. Additionally, 13 requested to become more involved. 301 were unable to be reached. We received a lot of good feedback from these calls and that information will be taken to the committees for discussion.

**FINANCE Richard O’Donnell**

Richard O’Donnell began his update with a year-to-date summary. At the current time, the pledged income is showing unfavorable primarily due to timing of donations. As to other income – $72,000 – this is interest on money market accounts, which is > 4% interest. Year-to-date we have total income of $2 million and we are favorable relative to budget for the year through July. As of August, our expenses are favorable to budget for the year. Overall, our staff expenses are underbudget because we are budgeted for full staff and haven’t filled all those positions. Richard mentioned that we expect to have final signoff from accountants in September regarding recommendations for budget surplus and how to spend that money.  We intend to look at any available surplus and determine the areas of greatest need, without making any commitment on how to distribute.

**ADDITIONAL OPEN FORUM**

Kristin Hunter spoke on the Metro Reentry event which is scheduled for Sept 9th. This event involves incarcerated men who are close to their release date and who are given an opportunity to spend a day with their families, including carnival activities, face painting, etc. She encouraged volunteers for this event to help host and create a meaningful time for those who are close to their release dates. Volunteers will have until Sept 3rd to sign up.

Rebekah also spoke briefly on the removal of trees by our neighbors next to the Memorial Garden and the fact that we are continuing to work with them to discuss replanting some of the areas and otherwise addressing the impact on our property. Mary Kelly Speed and Rebekah also touched on the issue of broadcasting information to the congregation, and the current system of weekly emails.

Chris Suh brought up the upcoming basketball season and the use of the gymnasium. He asked the session to do what we can to market and requested that we coordinate any outside groups around Trinity’s own use of the gym. Rebekah communicated that with Andrew’s exit, we are hopeful that we will hire someone to fill the role of wellness and recreation ministry in his stead.

**LAYING ON OF HANDS & DEPARTING BLESSINGS FOR Rebekah LeMon**

**ANDREW ESQUEDA**

In closing, the session gathered in the center of the Old Fellowship Hall and laid hands on Andrew and spoke of our love for him. Rebekah prayed for Andrew and the church. He joined us in prayer, thanked the session and spoke of his many positive and memorable experiences with Trinity and its members.

A motion was made by Jon Balch and affirmed by Mary Kelly Speed to adjourn the meeting. Lucy Strong closed the meeting with prayer. The meeting adjourned at 8:51 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Bonnie Holliday Drew Timmons

Clerk                                                         Assistant Clerk

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| **UPCOMING DATES** | | |
| Communion | September 3 |  |
| Called Congregational Meeting | September 17 after 11:00 worship |  |
| Session Meeting | Sept 19, 2023 |  |

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| Guest preacher | September 24, 2023 | Rev. Aisha Brooks-Johnson, Executive Presbyter, Presbytery of Greater Atlanta |
| Presbytery Meeting | Nov. 4, 2023 | Attending commissioners: Richard O’Donnell, Trey Reese, Chris Suh, Dean Cleaveland, Rebekah Groover, Helen Slawson, Catherine Quillian. |
| Baptisms | September 10:   * Oliver Owens   Szyperski, son of Bobby and Heather Heinz Szyperski   * Benjamin Ellis Lukens, son of Catherine and Davis Lukens   October 8:   * Abigail Lucille   Hughes, daughter of Patrick and Lauren Stair Hughes   * Tye Christopher Johnson, son of Matthew and Erin Johnson |  |

Trinity Presbyterian Church Session In-person Attendance (In Bold), August 15, 2023:

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| **Name** | **Name** | **Name** |
| **Roxanna Erwin** | **Reid Willingham** | **Karen Bain** |
| **Ginny Hobbs** | **Kenny Kraft** | **Jon Balch** |
| **Bonnie Holiday –Clerk** | **Kristin Hunter** | **Dean Cleaveland** |
| **Richard O’Donnell** | **Tom Owens** | **Rebekah Groover** |
| Trey Reese | **Martha Craft** | **Jay Harris** |
| **Lane Rhoden** | **Drew Timmons -Asst. Clerk** | Paige Keller |
| **Allen Spetnagel** | **Meredith Daniel** | Nick Leet |
| Cindy Stancil | Allen Moseley | **Jon McRae** |
| **Adair White** | **Chris Suh** | **Mary Kelly Speed** |
| Neal Williams | Lindsey Greene | **Catherine Warren** |
|  |  | **Catherine Quillian (youth)** |
|  |  | **Helen Slawson (youth)** |
| **Staff Attendees:** | **Other Attendees**: | **Guests** |
| **Rebekah LeMon-Moderator** | **Erin Carey – Director of Trinity Preschool** |  |
| **Elizabeth Davis** | **David Merritt** |  |
| **Andrew Esqueda** | **Jean Lapitan** |  |
| **Lucy Strong** |  |  |
| **Heather Edmiston** |  |  |

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