**STATED SESSION MEETING MINUTES**

**TRINITY PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

**September 19, 2023**

**7:00 p.m.**

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

The stated Session meeting for Trinity Presbyterian Church on **September 19, 2023**, was called to order in Old Fellowship Hall at 7:01 PM by the moderator, Rebekah LeMon. The clerk, Bonnie Holliday, confirmed the presence of a quorum.

**DEVOTION         Martha Craft**

Martha Craft led the devotion by speaking about her lifelong friendship with her childhood classmate, Carmita Valdez. She spoke of how Carmita and her mother fled from Cuba when Carmita was 8 years old, while Carmita’s father was held in prison in Cuba for his calling as a Christian Preacher. Martha was asked by her parents to befriend Carmita. As two young girls who did not necessarily have much in common, and who did not speak the same language, this was a difficult task. Martha spoke of the discomfort and awkwardness of trying to be friendly to and comfort Carmita with absolutely no plan in place. Nonetheless, her clumsy efforts made an impact on Carmita, and both she and Martha gained a lifelong friend. God’s greatest gifts often come without grace and planning.

**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 August 15, 2023, the minutes from the Called Congregational Meeting on September 17, 2023, the financial report, and the statistical reports for August 2023. Rebekah held the vote open during the Moderator’s report, so that the session could review the congregational meeting minutes from September 17, 2023. After review, Rebekah made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda, and it was unanimously approved.

**MODERATOR’S REPORT          RebekahLeMon**

Rebekah LeMon began her report with gratitude for the August 20th Sunday School event with Brenda Smeaton from the Georgia Justice Project, who provided an adult education presentation to discuss her work with our neighbors and allies who have suffered incarceration. In the same vein, Rebekah noted the volunteer event coming up on August 23rd with the Georgia Justice Project to assist with restricting criminal records for those whose past arrests or convictions have impeded their ability to obtain employment. Rebekah also expressed her gratitude for the volunteers who assisted with the recent engagement fair on August 27th, and the BBQ and bluegrass event on September 10th, both of which were a huge success.

Rebekah noted the recent departure of Andrew Esqueda and reminded the session that this is an important time of transition for Trinity, but one which can lead to growth for this position in the church. The Associate Pastor Nominating Committee was elected on Sunday the 17th, and it will be performing the search for Andrew’s replacement. In other personnel news, Hannah Kershner was hired as our programs coordinator. We are still looking for various other positions, including sound tech and finance coordinator.

Rebekah offered her thanks to Stan Tilley and Melissa Mosely for spearheading the Commitment Campaign with the theme of “Forward in Faith.” The program will start a month 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.

Rebekah also provided information on Adult Education programs which will be starting on September 24th, including Presbyterianism 101, sponsored by Foundations, led by Rebekah and Lucy. This class will discuss theological questions about what it means to be a Presbyterian. There will also be a class on the Bible and race in America in Williams Hall.

Finally, Rebekah informed the session that we are continuing to consider how our children engage with us in worship, and that changes are coming. We will be placing children’s bibles in the pews, inviting kids up front for scripture in the main service, and providing alternative childcare for families who may prefer to have their children worship separately.

**CLERK’S REPORT           Bonnie Holliday**

Bonnie began her report by offering gratitude for the fun fest on the afternoon of Sunday, August 20th, and all those members who volunteer for our kids, making them feel at home. She mentioned that the data provided in the session packet as to baptisms and new members is from August only, and does not include September, but that it will be updated soon. She reminded the session that the next Presbytery meeting is Nov. 4th, and the next session meeting is Oct 17th, beginning at 6:00 p.m. with dinner for new members.

**OPEN FORUM Rebekah LeMon**

***SPECIAL ORDERS & REPORTS* Rebekah LeMon**

**2024 COMMITMENT CAMPAIGN Stan Tilley**

Stan Tilley spoke on the upcoming commitment campaign, “Forward in Faith.” He explained how the theme was developed from the story of Babylonian exile from Jeremiah, which relays the message to build a home, settle down, seek peace and prosperity. The dollar goal for the 2024 campaign is $3.75 million, which we believe is reachable, but also hopeful. He relayed the statistics of giving from prior years, including the increase in dollar amounts, but the reduction in pledging families. Stan encouraged the session to be the first to make their pledges and build the foundation for a successful campaign.

**TRUSTEES**  **Margaret Reiser**

Margaret Reiser appeared on behalf of the Trustees to discuss the following motions.

**Funding for New Church Development Fund**

The Trustees brought a motion to Session for approval of a distribution of up to $8,750 from the New Church Development trust fund to the New Church Development Commission (NCDC) in support of the Cohort of Pastors for New Worshipping Communities. This is requested to support NCDC’s new church development mission and to establish a relationship that will hopefully evolve over time between Trinity and the new worshipping communities themselves. The final amount to be distributed is to be determined by Rev. LeMon in conversation with Rev. Lindsay Armstrong, leader of the NCDC, to get a better feel for the cost and content of the cohort retreat.

Allen Moseley asked if any other churches were chipping in and for what programs it will be used. Rebekah confirmed that no other churches are contributing at this time, but this amount from the trust will fund a 1-year grant. She also confirmed that this distribution is nothing more than the annual disbursement of the trust funds, so it is not a special disbursement. We have not used any money from the trust in several years, so the most pressing need is to build this leadership cohort. Rebekah explained that next year we could have a conversation about next steps and how the money from the trust could be used in different ways.

Rebekah presented the Trustees’ motion. A second was not required. After the discussion above, the motion passed unanimously.

**Election of Bill Jordan**

The Trustees brought a motion to Session for approval of the election of Bill Jordan to serve a seven-year term as Trustee beginning January 1, 2024.

Rebekah presented the Trustees’ motion. A second was not required. No discussion took place. This motion passed unanimously.

**Creation of the Jennifer and David Kahn Family Fund for Employee Development**

The Trustees brought a motion to Session for approval the creation of the “Jennifer and David Kahn Family Fund for Employee Development and Well-Being,” in the amount of $125,000 to be held as part of the Trinity Trust Fund.

The Statement of Intent was included in the September Session packet, but was explained by Margaret and Rebekah as a new trust fund for Trinity’s employees to assist where typical compensation and other benefits do not. The annual disbursement would not exceed $25,000 or 10% of the fund balance.

Allen Spetnagel asked if it would be available for all staff members top to bottom. Rebekah confirmed that it was. Allen Moseley asked about the annual disbursement of potentially $25,000, which he expressed concern was a lot of money for the size of the fund. Rebekah and Margaret explained that $25,000 was a maximum; nonetheless, the fund is intended to be drawn down and to have contributions from others. It is not intended to sit and grow with interest, but to be used and to be added to by others. If it is spent in 5-10 years, this is not a problem and is consistent with its intent. The fund is not to be used for compensation, but rather for employee families in need. We discussed that we would not contribute to it directly through budgeting or surplus since it is not to be used for direct compensation.

Rebekah presented the Trustees’ motion. A second was not required. This motion passed unanimously.

 **2024 CONFIRMATION PROCESS/MEMBERS Rebekah LeMon**

Rebekah announced that Emily Beaver, our director of family ministries, will oversee confirmation this year. She also noted that this year Trinity will be bring back the role of confirmation mentor. The mentor will be less focused on institutional church membership, and more on encouragement of the confirmands’ understanding of God’s work in the world. A handout was given regarding mentorship, including in person meetings, attending activities outside of church, and working with the confirmands on their faith statement.

Lane Rhoden and Allen Moseley asked about matching the confirmands with mentors. Rebekah noted that Emily will ask the confirmands about their choices, and if they have meaningful relationships, then that is where we will start. However, we will not give complete control to the confirmand.

Catherine Quillian commented on her experience during the confirmation process and expressed the need for patience with the confirmands who do not feel comfortable with the process.

Sunday, September 24th is the kickoff of the confirmation process.

**FINANCE**  **Richard O’Donnell and Heather Edmiston**

Richard O’Donnell began his update with a year-to-date summary. He noted that we received high marks from our outside auditing consultant. He also began the discussion of surplus allocation, which includes funds of $604,690, mostly due to the generosity of our congregation and underspent personnel funds due to understaffing. He indicated that the finance committee would like to make a recommendation to session next month on how to use that amount. The surplus figure comes after allocation to 3 months of operating expenses, mission reserve fund, and property reserve fund.

Richard also noted that we have $436,025 available as part of our forgiven PPP loan. As a result, the Finance Committee made a recommendation to session to create a new personnel operating reserve fund with this money for the “non-renewable needs of the staff of Trinity.” Richard and Rebekah explained that this fund would have a different intended use from the Kahn fund, and would not be treated like a trust, but rather as an operating reserve account for personnel. The use would be less restrictive than the Kahn fund and could be used for direct compensation of employees, including a discretionary bonus pool, moving expenses, recruiting fund costs, and staff development. The personnel committee would have control over the fund. The funds would be invested at a standard 4.25% return and would be expected to have a 3-year horizon, maybe longer.

Many session members, including Lane Rhoden and Allen Spetnagel, asked about how this fund would impact the potential use of surplus funds for personnel compensation. Richard and Rebekah explained that the issue of surplus funds would be addressed separately; this designated amount is not a surplus but is merely a forgiven loan.

Allen Moseley asked about how this fund would impact budgeting for personnel. It was explained that we still need to budget appropriately for personnel needs and use this fund for items we don’t expect.

The motion from finance was amended to better phrase its purpose as going to a personnel operating reserve fund rather than trust fund.

Richard presented the motion. A second was not required. The motion was unanimously approved.

**OPEN FORUM**

During open forum, Heather Edmiston discussed the neighbor’s construction work and its impact on the Memorial Garden. We are in the process of getting a survey of the property lines, but it appears that they are doing everything the right way and not infringing on our property lines. When all construction is completed, we believe it will be a satisfactory result, as the neighboring church will be installing 20-ft Holly screening on the property line.

Lane Rhoden made note of an upcoming “studypalooza” being organized and hosted by Emily Beaver and Jean Lapitan for the youth.

Lucy mentioned the great need for AV volunteers for our services.

**PRAYER AND DEPARTING BLESSINGS**  **Lucy Strong**

A motion was made by Martha Craft and seconded by Jay Harris to adjourn the meeting. Lucy Strong closed the meeting with prayer. The meeting adjourned at 8:54 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

 

Bonnie Holliday Drew Timmons

Clerk                                                         Assistant Clerk

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| **UPCOMING DATES** |

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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  | October 8, 2023 | Abigail Lucille Hughes, daughter of Patrick and Lauren Stair HughesTye Christopher Johnson, son of Matthew and Erin Johnson |
| Commitment Campaign | Oct. 8, 2023 - KickoffOct. 29, 2023 - Commitment Sunday |  |
| Session Meeting | October 17, 2023 |  |
| Churchwide BINGO | October 27, 2023 |  |
| Presbytery Meeting | November 4, 2023 | Attending commissioners: Richard O’Donnell, Trey Reese, Chris Suh, Dean Cleaveland, Rebekah Groover, Helen Slawson, Catherine Quillian.  |
| Communion | November 5, 2023 |  |
| Baptisms | November 12, 2023 | Rex Newell Stewart, son of Catherine and Peter Stewart |
| Session Meeting | November 21, 2023 |  |
| Baptisms | November 26, 2023 | Wesley James White, son of Michael and Ali White |

Trinity Presbyterian Church Session In-person Attendance (In Bold), September 19, 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** | **Margaret Reiser** |  |
| **Elizabeth Davis** | **Emily Avant** |  |
| **Heather Edmiston** | **Stan Tilley** |  |
| **Lucy Strong** |  |  |
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