

Westminster Presbyterian Church  
Akron, Ohio  
Saturday, February 27, 2021  
Minutes of Special Session meeting - FINAL

*Be adaptive, engaging, generous, inclusive and relevant. Be faithful. Be Westminster!*

The special meeting of the Session of Westminster Presbyterian Church was called to order by the Moderator, the Reverend Jon Hauerwas at 10:01 a.m. on February 27.

Elders (+ present, \* excused, - absent)

Class of 2020	Class of 2021	Class of 2022
+ Brad Hall	+ Phil Fry	- Rob Gilbert
+ Shelley Koutnik, Treasurer	+ Nancy Keogh	+ James Gray
Vacant	+ Becky Pool	+ Sandy Gruneich
Vacant	+ Don Rearick	+ Ginny Melver

Also present: Pastor Jon Hauerwas, Moderator; Alec Works, Clerk of Session; Class of 2023 nominees Ellen Daugherty, Brian Rodabaugh.

**Notes:** Due to restrictions on gatherings ordered by the Governor of Ohio to slow the spread of the coronavirus, a virtual meeting was held. A congregational meeting to elect officers for the class of 2023 is scheduled for March 21, 2021.

**Opening, Declaration of Quorum, and Extension of Floor to Guests**

Pastor Jon called the meeting to order, welcomed the guests, and opened the Session meeting with prayer at 10:01 a.m. The presence of a quorum was confirmed and declared.

**New Business**

The purpose of this special meeting was to follow up on information that Pastor Jon received Tuesday and later discussed with the Personnel Committee. There have been some changes recently due to staffing and other changes definitely or potentially anticipated. Pastor Jon shared these with those present. These changes will require both short term and longer terms actions and decisions by Session. Pastor Jon shared a draft letter as a suggested method of sharing this information with the congregation.

The item of the most immediate concern was the announcement by Valerie Thorson, Director of Music and Organist, of her desire to retire effective June 1, 2021. This will require selecting a search committee to find a replacement. The ensuing discussion focused on how best to define the position, in particular as to whether a full-time or part-time position should be proposed. Complicating that decision is how to handle the education program positions. The hiring of anyone into a full-time position would require paying benefits, which could amount to an additional \$30-40,000 above salary. The proposed budget for 2021 already reflects a \$40,000 deficit.

Discussions noted there are several unknowns, e.g., how and when we might return to in person worship services, whether we would resume the Five at Five program and/or jazz vespers, whether 20 hours is enough for a less experienced person needing more practice time, whether any positions (e.g., handbell and/or choir director) could be included. The discussion included a realization that we need to look realistically at our priorities as a congregation. Do we want to offer a strong educational / discipleship program? A quality music program as part of our worship and outreach? Continued outreach into our community and beyond? Can we afford, financially and with commitments of time, to do these and more? Pastor Jon offered to schedule a visioning session to

begin considering these issues. The consensus was that a Music Director / Organist Search Committee should not be named until the position can be more clearly defined.

For more immediate actions, the following two motions were made, seconded and approved:

**2021-045 MOTION prevailed** to approve sending a letter, as proposed and amended, to the congregation informing them of various staffing concerns. [Clerk's note: Pastor Jon said that he had contacted all staff members mentioned in the letter and they approved of being included.]

**2021-046 MOTION prevailed** to give Pastor Hauerwas the authority to line up the music program for the summer. [Clerk's note: This would include interim organists / pianists and guest musicians.]

The special meeting was closed with the Lord's Prayer and adjourned by Pastor Hauerwas at 11:17 a.m. on February 27, 2021.

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Alec Works, Clerk of Session

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Pastor Jon Hauerwas, Moderator