

Westminster Presbyterian Church
Akron, Ohio
Sunday, September 26, 2021
Minutes of the 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 7:01 p.m. on September 26, 2021.

Elders (+ present, * excused, - absent)

Class of 2021	Class of 2022	Class of 2023
+ Nancy Keogh	+ Rob Gilbert	+ Ellen Daugherty
+ Phil Fry	+ James Gray	+ Shelley Koutnik, Treasurer
+ Rebecca Pool	+ Sandy Gruneich	+ Brian Rodabaugh
* Don Rearick	* Ginny Melver	+ Alec Works, Clerk of Session

Also present: Pastor Jon Hauerwas, Moderator, and guests The Revs. Cathy Ulrich, Eastminster's General Presbyter and Stated Clerk, and Carolyn Griffeth, Moderator of Eastminster's Committee on Ministry (COM). [Note: Rob Gilbert participated via Zoom.]

New Business

Pastor Hauerwas sent an email to Session members at 12:26 p.m. on Sunday, September 26, 2021, calling a special Session meeting for 7:00 p.m. that evening to address a personnel matter. He called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m. on September 21, 2021, opening with prayer and introduction of the guests.

Pastor Hauerwas distributed copies of a letter to all present and provided time for it to be read. The letter is to be sent to members of the congregation on Monday, September 27, 2021. The letter reported that the members of Skidaway Community Church (PCUSA) in Savannah, Georgia voted to call him as their next installed pastor at a congregational meeting earlier that day. His last day with Westminster will be Sunday, November 7, 2021.

After a brief period, Revs. Cathy Ulrich and Carolyn Griffeth explained some of the forthcoming processes and decisions to be made. Session members also expressed their feelings throughout the ensuing discussions.

Rev. Laura Kelly, Eastminster Presbytery's COM liaison with our church, will meet with Session soon (date to be determined). Cathy said that this is the time to ensure a nice "closure". Presbytery will provide a checklist of key items to address. She will also fill the pulpit on Sunday, November 14. COM will have an exit interview with Session, and also with Pastor Hauerwas.

A person or group will need to be assigned responsibility for pulpit supply beginning on Sunday, November 21. A decision will also be needed on the type of transition leadership desired – interim pastor or other arrangement. Cathy noted that the pool of ministers available to serve as an interim is limited. Responsibilities for preaching, pastoral care, and serving as head of staff need to be decided. Pastor Hauerwas suggested some names of individuals who might serve in certain capacities. The COM will provide a Session Moderator.

Session is responsible for selecting an interim pastor or making other arrangements. Normally, the church Nominating Committee will present a slate of nominees to serve on the Pastoral Nominating Committee for the congregation to vote on. The congregation will later vote on a new pastor.

The most recent pastoral transition was discussed. All agreed a shorter period than the two years last experienced is critical. Various problems encountered during the last transition were discussed. Cathy suggested that the Pastoral Nominating Committee contact Presbytery for reference and background checks early in the decision-making process. She was hopeful regarding the search for a new pastor.

The special Session meeting was closed with prayer and adjourned at 8:03 p.m.

[Note: Pastor Hauerwas provided copies of the letter via email to Ginny Melver and Don Rearick on Monday morning, noting that draft minutes would also be provided. He also reached out to other church leaders and potential supply pastors.]

Alec Works, Clerk of Session

Pastor Jon Hauerwas, Moderator