

Session – July 2023

A special meeting of session was requested for July 6 to discuss the performance of Pastor David Aber. Rev. Barry Chance, General Presbyter and Stated Clerk of Eastminster Presbytery moderated the meeting. To summarize, the “Expectations and Accountabilities from the Session” as stated in the Interim Pastor Covenant were reviewed. Rev. Chance said the document (covenant) from Presbytery can be modified by Session. That was not done. The Five Developmental Tasks of interim ministry were discussed next. Some felt that Pastor David should have either completed all of these tasks within the 6 months or not accepted the job. Copies of a letter prepared by staff members expressing their gratitude and support for Pastor David were distributed. Discussions turned to the interim job description. Some reported getting nothing out of Pastor David’s sermons; others reported being quite inspired. Training, pastoral care, membership, communion services, and participation in special activities were discussed, with varying opinions expressed. Barry noted that one job of an interim is to do things differently; that can prepare the congregation for changes with the new regular pastor. He added it is up to Session to clearly set expectations. For a half-time pastor, you should cross off half of your list of expectations. All need to work to meet the unique needs of Westminster and its congregation.

A motion was made and seconded to extend the contract for Pastor David as negotiated by Personnel. An amendment was approved to include clearer expectations for part-time work. The motion as presented read “to extend the contract for Pastor David as negotiated by Personnel, with clearer expectations for part-time work.” A motion was made and seconded for a secret ballot to be used; prepared ballots were passed them around. With a simple majority needed, there were not enough votes to pass the motion to renew the contract.

A Session member then reported that she already had a plan with which to proceed, including a part-time paid head of staff. Rev. Chance suggested sending this idea to Personnel. He said the Committee on Ministry will appoint a moderator.

The regular meeting of session was held on July 25. Eastminster Presbytery’s Committee on Ministry had appointed Rev. Chance as our moderator. Several letters were received addressed to Session; these were distributed to and/or read to session members. The first discussion dealt with mediation and conflict management education. Session voted to proceed to contract with one of the three recommended groups to mediate in conflict resolution. A Reconciliation Taskforce consisting of four church members will be appointed. Several members have expressed their desire to resign from various offices, committees and church membership. A letter will be drafted encouraging those individuals to engage in the mediation process, and asking them to hold off on their resignations until the remediation process is completed. The Pastoral Nominating Committee (PNC) was in discussions with a candidate; that candidate subsequently withdrew from consideration. Session decided to suspend the search process until such time as the COM, in consultation with the contracted mediator, advises such. These decisions will be presented to the congregation through a letter. Regarding pastoral care, the deacons currently have a befrienders team whose members contact designated members. Other pastors may be able to help with more concerning visits (e.g., serious health issues).

Session approved adding the duties of temporary staff coordinator to the Office Administrator’s duties until an interim or regular pastor is hired.

With Dr. Haake's resignation, the Worship committee has had to assume responsibilities for the music for worship services, in addition to pulpit supply. Both are being done on a week-to-week basis. Worship was given authority to schedule pulpit supply and to schedule communion based upon availability of accepted pastors Whether there is a choir this fall remains to be decided. All concerts by outside groups have been cancelled.

Preliminary unaudited data through June 30, 2023 shows actual revenues of \$285,015; budgeted \$252,124. Actual expenses were \$254,416; budget \$302,834. Although there is currently a surplus, this is in part due to budgeting for a full-time regular pastor. As such, personnel expenses are below budget but could rise. Finance will also be monitoring contributions.