

Session – September 2023

The regular meeting of Session was on Tuesday, September 26, 2023.

Rev. William Meyer noted that the atmosphere at Westminster appears to be calming. He led his first service on September 17, after officiating over communion on September 10. Session approved the job description for Acting Director of Music and Organist, and agreed to hire Robert Carlyon under those terms. Pay for Choral Scholars was also approved.

Among the committee items approved, Session authorize Properties to decide on how to proceed with the repair of the stairwell wall going to the Christian Education basement.

As parts of the transition and reconciliation process, Session agreed to appoint a three person pastoral relations team, consisting of Dr. Kate Clark, Dr. Cathy Mever, and William Bramley. Dottie Erb, Marta Morrison, and Margo Works (selected by the Board of Deacons to represent them) were appointed as a three member Reconciliation Task force, empowered to select and coordinate with the contracted group for the duration of the process. Finally, Session affirmed the following three principles:

1. It is the policy and practice of Westminster Presbyterian Church of Akron that Committees will understand their function as being advisors to the Session. Committees themselves will not set policies for the church. The Session – which always has the broadest view of all the church's programs and needs -- is the church's policy-setting body. Committees, when requested to do so by the Session, will then carry out those policies set by the Session.
2. It is the policy and practice of Westminster Presbyterian Church of Akron that Session members will not "caucus" with other Session members, outside of properly called Session meetings, about business or concerns coming before the Session or likely to come before the Session. Nor will Session members "poll" other Session members outside of properly called Session meetings. This is because such informal meetings potentially deprive other Session members of the opportunity to hear all the deliberations and facts behind a "caucus" decision. And such informal meetings potentially create distrust and a party spirit within the church.
3. It is the policy and practice of Westminster Presbyterian Church of Akron that Session members and other church leaders should avoid unhealthy triangulation. Session members and other church leaders will also seek to model and recommend healthy non-triangular communication for the rest of the congregation. This means direct, respectful, humble and honest communication -- with the person involved -- about any emerging issues or misunderstandings, at the earliest time and lowest level practical, in the spirit of Matthew 18: 15-20.

Discussions turned to various resignations which have been received by Session. Some time has passed since Rev. Aber and Dr. Haake have left. We need to move on; that includes having functioning committees. Session initially acted to not accept those resignations. However, those who resigned have not participated since. The Nominating Committee also needs to start filling not only expiring terms but any other vacancies. Discussions included whether we should still have 12 elders, given the current size and active participation of our membership. The church bylaws would need to be changed to reduce the number of elders. If so, we may want to also change the bylaws to address the number of elders required for a quorum. Session agreed to propose reducing the number of active elders from 12 to 9, with 50% of the Session required to be present to establish a quorum. This would need to be approved by the congregation. Session then decided to regretfully accept the resignations from Session, deacons and committees as previously received, and to accept previously received resignations from church membership upon proper notification of anyone having joined another church. Finally, Don Rearick

offered to serve as new Properties Moderator, with Marta Morrison agreeing to take over as Finance Moderator.

Preliminary unaudited data through August 31, 2023: actual revenues \$333,748; budgeted \$309,047. Actual expenses \$326,087; budget \$397,410. Net (actual revenues less actual expenses) is a surplus of \$7,661. Contributions have been falling; interest income is above budget. Personnel expenses are approximately \$61,000 below budget. The stewardship campaign is currently being planned for November.

The next Session meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, October 24 at 7 pm.