

Session Notes

by Paul Bergsteinsson, Clerk of Session

April 2011

The Session held its regular monthly meeting in Congregational Hall on the evening of Tuesday, April 12th, moderated by Interim Pastor Dr. James Carter. This meeting was the last one for Elders in the Class of 2011. Thankfulness for the service of these Elders was expressed at the beginning of the meeting.

Persons who were elected to serve as Deacons or Elders for a first term were invited to join this meeting to complete a step in preparation to be ordained and serve as officers of the church. This step is the examination by the Session of these prospective Elders and Deacons with respect to faith and preparedness to serve. Discussions with new officers, who had completed a training program over prior weeks, were held in small groups followed by Session action to approve these persons for ordination.

Elder Mary Ledwith presented a report on behalf of the Action Group, a small team commissioned by the Session to make recommendations regarding initiatives coming from the congregational study as well as other key projects on a church-wide basis. The Action Group recommendations were developed with an eye toward prioritizing and staging projects by identifying those that need attention and effort now and those that might appropriately be addressed later.

The Session then received another in a series of presentations from Deacon Kep Kephart regarding church finances. Kep's work has taken a longer term view of finances by projecting results out over several years using assumptions about stewardship, Foundation support to the church budget, and spending across all areas. As a follow-up to this presentation the Session will be given specific options with respect to the 2012 budget at its regular May meeting.

Trustees John Schneider and George Henisee brought recommendations to the Session regarding a Major Gifts Campaign (MGC) and with respect to borrowing by the church to provide bridge financing for the HVAC project until the MGC generates necessary funds to pay for it.

Trustee Henisee gave the Session an update on the estimated costs of needed renovations of church properties including the HVAC system, stained glass repair and preservation, exterior building repair (including roof and exterior stonework), repairs for manses, and other related property projects. These estimates gave rise to a

recommendation that the goal of the MGC be increased to \$15 million from an initial goal of \$10 million set in November, 2010, with 10 percent or \$1.5 million of the \$15 million being devoted to benevolences. The Session approved this recommendation.

Trustee John Schneider explained the need for a borrowing facility for the church to finance the current HVAC project, building on prior discussions with the Session on this topic. The status of work in discussion with banks was summarized. The credit facility for which the Trustees have been in negotiations is a 3 year revolving credit agreement of up to \$6.0 million. The loans under this credit agreement would be repaid by the first proceeds that come from the Major Gifts Campaign. In order to obtain favorable terms on this loan, the financing plan calls for the BMPC Foundation to provide the bank collateral by assigning during the term of the loan certain assets from the BMPC Foundation. The Session approved this recommendation that the church borrow up to \$6.0 million to finance the HVAC project until funds are received from the Major Gifts Campaign.

Both the Major Gifts Campaign and the church borrowing require congregational approval. This approval will be requested at the Annual Meeting on May 1st. The Clerk of Session noted that work had been ongoing to obtain needed approvals from the Presbytery of Philadelphia as well.

Paul Burgmayer, Chair of the Middleton Center Advisory Board, and Reverend Joyce Krajian, Director of the Middleton Center, gave a report on the programs and activities of the Center and on proposed revisions to the By Laws of the Advisory Board. The Session approved the By Law changes, approved the election of members of the Advisory Board, and designated Elder Anita Iyengar to act as liaison between the Middleton Center and the Session.

David Van Houten, Transition into Ministry Program Director, gave a report on behalf of a Residency Review Committee that had conducted an extensive review of our Residency Program. The committee's work included considerations of the perspectives of the congregation and the benefits that the program provides as well as in depth interviews with current and past Pastoral Residents and with Pastoral staff. It was also necessary to consider the expectations of the Lilly Endowments, which provides funding to BMPC for this program.

The Session accepted a recommendation coming from the Residency Review Committee that the church not apply for another five year cycle of grant funding from the Lilly Endowment. The existing five year grant will provide funding to complete the programs of our current residents. The Review Committee expressed a hope that the

church will in the not-too-distant future be able to commit necessary resources to resume the Residency program. It also commended David Van Houten for his leadership of the program.

The Session approved a recommendation that the church re-establish a position dedicated to stewardship and foundation development. Partly funded by the BMPC Foundation, this new position of Director of Stewardship and Development will have responsibilities that include annual stewardship and congregational giving, funds development for the BMPC Foundation, and support to the Major Gifts Campaign.

Dr. Carter finished the meeting with a Moderator's report, followed by a sharing of joys and concerns and a closing prayer given by Elder Bob Overhiser.

If you have questions on the Session Notes or on the work of the Session, please contact Dr. Carter (JimCarter@bmpc.org) or Paul Bergsteinsson, Clerk of Session (bergies@comcast.net).