

Session Notes

by Paul Bergsteinsson, Clerk of Session

February 2011

The Session held its regular monthly meeting on the evening of Tuesday, February 8th, moderated by Interim Pastor Dr. James Carter and held in Congregational Hall.

Mary Ledwith and Bob Overhiser gave a report to the Session on the congregational study and steps that were being taken to share this study with the Committee on Ministry (COM) of the Philadelphia Presbytery. Such review by the COM of a congregational study is a key step in obtaining the COM's concurrence that a church is ready to begin its search for a new Senior Pastor. Recent discussions with the Reverend James Lappen, the COM liaison to BMPC, were reported as being fruitful in identifying additional information from our study that would be helpful to the COM.

The Session discussed steps to share results of the congregational study with the congregation. The Session accepted a draft plan for this communications and requested that the Listening and Self Study Team (LSST) and Communications Committee work together to iron out plan details.

The Session also considered recommendations for creating plans that are responsive to future directions contained in the congregational study. The Session approved the creation of an action group to develop such plans. This action group would also look at other recent work, including that of a group called the "Strategic Education Task Force" (SETF), in developing action plans. It was agreed that this action group would give an initial report to the Session at its next regular meeting.

This regular meeting included a Treasurer's report given by Trustee Vice President Nancy Wolcott. In her report she noted that still preliminary financial results for 2010 show that there was an operating budget surplus of \$21,000. This surplus was in addition to a provision in this budget for recovering in 2010 the \$192,000 deficit that the church experienced in 2009.

Bill Black, who is the leader of a team that is responsible for the project to replace aging and antiquated HVAC systems that serve a major portion of church facilities, spoke to the Session on plans to replace these systems. Given continuing issues of whether we can or should rely on these systems, it is regarded to be imperative that we move forward at this time on this project.

Mr. Black indicated that the goal was to complete substantially all of the HVAC conversion over the next year, with those elements supporting heating systems completed before they are needed in the fall. Detailed design work that began several months ago is nearing completion and we are now ready to initiate contractor selection. Actual construction work is expected to begin in May.

Completing these renovations will require careful coordination and communication to minimize the impact on church programs. Mr. Black indicated that church staff had received a briefing on the HVAC conversion very recently and that making this process “livable” was a high priority.

It was noted also that the Trustees were doing work on funding the HVAC project. A major gifts campaign, a plan for which was approved by the Session in November, will be the permanent funding source. Borrowing by the church will, however, be necessary to bridge the gap between making outlays for the HVAC project and receiving funds under the campaign.

The Trustees also reported that the approval by the Philadelphia Presbytery of our plan to sell the church manse at 129 Fishers Road will be on the docket of the Presbytery’s meeting on March 22nd. In the meantime, steps are being taken to prepare the property for sale.

In other business, Elder Bob Overhiser, Chair of the Nominating Committee, shared with the Session the Nominating Committee’s thoughts on the Pastor Nominating Committee (PNC) that is soon to be elected by the congregation to search for a Pastor – Head of Staff who may come to serve at BMPC. He described the Nominating Committee’s thinking on the size of the PNC and the criteria for selecting nominees. Elder Lindsay Johnson gave a report for the Personnel Committee, Deacon Kep Kephart reported on work of the Board of Deacons, and Elder Susan Joseph reported on the January meeting of the Philadelphia Presbytery.

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 Anita Iyengar.

The Session also met on Sunday, February 15th before the 10:00 a.m. worship service to meet prospective new members. These new members were accepted into membership at the 10:00 a.m. worship service in the Sanctuary that same day. There were 17 persons in this new membership class.