

Session Notes

by Paul Bergsteinsson, Clerk of Session

October 2011

The Session held its regular monthly meeting in Congregational Hall on the evening of October 11th, moderated by Associate Pastor Sherri Hausser. Reverend Hausser acted as Moderator of this meeting at the request of Dr. Carter, who was unable to attend the meeting.

Trustee and church Treasurer Keith Brinks gave a financial report. He indicated that expense and income trends continue to be favorably, suggesting that the church may finish 2011 with a surplus in its operating budget. As a part of continuing updates on property matters, Keith indicated that the Property Committee is looking in more depth at building renovation needs related to the exterior of all of our church buildings. Utilizing detailed analysis completed earlier in the year by an independent firm, the Trustees are developing a plan that will set priorities on which renovation projects are undertaken and when. Keith indicated certain of these projects require attention soon to avoid future problems. More will come to the Session on these topics in early 2012.

Given input provided by the Trustees on the status of church finances, the Session voted to release \$19,500 in funding to mission and outreach. These funds, which represented a portion of the surplus in the church's operating budget in 2010, will be equally split between projects of the Outreach Council and Worldwide Ministries Council.

Elders Laura Getty and Bob Overhiser gave a report for the Joint Budget Management Committee (JBMC). This report summarized the current status of budget work and requested guidance from the Session on the direction that it wished to take in developing budgets and plans for 2012 and beyond. The Session, through a motion proposed by the JBMC, affirmed a Session goal that we continue research, analysis and other efforts to assure we have staffing plans and budget levels that are sustainable over the longer term and that we continue to make progress in this work in the coming months.

Elders Pam Fernley and Steve Udicious reported to the Session on the Forward in Faith Capital Campaign and the 2012 Stewardship Campaign, respectively. With respect to church officers, the solicitation for both the stewardship and capital campaigns will be completed in October into mid-November. Elder Udicious outlined the many ways the

2012 Stewardship Campaign is working to make a connection with groups and people throughout the church.

The Session received a summary report from two new groups that were formed based on action recommendations following completion of the congregational study at the beginning of this year. One group has been addressing ways that we might foster more member engagement in the life of the church. The second group has been concerned with spiritual formation – those things we do that may lead to spiritual transformation and a closer relationship to God. The Session concurred with a recommendation from the two groups that they be combined into one committee. Much overlap has been found as they have shared information on their respective activities. As another part of this report, Director of Communications and Membership Donna Barrickman and Elder Sue Gibbons performed several humorous skits that were designed to help demonstrate the importance of hospitality and of being engaged with fellow church members.

Pastoral Associate Jacqui Van Vliet shared observations from her initial period at BMPC and on the beginning of the new program year. She spoke of her delight at what she had found in the many areas under her guidance and leadership. She noted the strong start for Church School, and the time she had given to getting to know all of the children and their families. She remarked on the loving environment of the Weekday School and expressed appreciation to those who had helped her in beginning her ministry here.

Deacon “Kep” Kephart reported on the program of the Deacons to call all members of the church. Of over 1300 calling surveys that had been planned, nearly 60 percent had been completed and turned in. Many church records have been updated and situations in which pastoral calls are needed have been identified. Kep indicated that the Session would get further reporting on this effort to reach out to members.

Elder Susan Joseph, who served as one of BMPC’s Commissioners at the September 27th meeting of the Philadelphia Presbytery, reported on that meeting. Cynthia Bolbach, Moderator of the General Assembly of the PC(USA), spoke to the Presbytery at this meeting. Jacqui Van Vliet read her statement of faith to the Presbytery and was examined by the Presbytery at this meeting. Susan Joseph shared the joy felt that Jacqui was approved for ordination at this meeting.

Elder Lindsay Johnson reported very briefly on the work of the Personnel Committee, including its efforts on budgeting and staffing matters as well as on the Presbytery of Philadelphia’s Policy on Sexual Misconduct. Recognizing that October has been

designated as Clergy Appreciation Month, the Session passed a resolution of appreciation and thankfulness for the service of our pastors.

Elder Bob Holmes reported on the Session Priorities Committee, which is a committee that will provide support to the Session in setting key Session priorities looking into next year and beyond. The members of this committee, in addition to Bob Holmes as its chair, are current Session members Dave Callans, Pam Fernley, Bob Guthrie, and John Frazier as well as Joan Bergsteinsson, John Schneider, and Courtenay Willcox. Elder Holmes described early work of the committee, which has included data gathering as well as more conceptual work. The Session will receive regular reports in the coming months from this committee.

This October 11th Session meeting concluded with comments about the all-day leadership retreat that was to be held the following Saturday. This retreat included members of the Deacons, Trustees, Session, and BMPC Foundation as well as pastoral and senior staff in the church. The retreat covered much ground regarding leadership in a church, including an emphasis on understanding our behavior, sustaining healthy relationships, and paying attention to what makes for healthy processes. Much of this retreat was facilitated and led by Dr. Stephen Treat, former Director and CEO of Council for Relationships, the country's largest and oldest counseling agency.

The Session held a special meeting on Sunday, October 30th to meet with prospective new church members and approve them for admission into membership in the church. This meeting took place in Congregational Hall starting at 9:00 a.m. Later that morning at the 10:00 a.m. worship service the congregation received these new members, with a reception following in the Court of the Ministries Center.