**Trinity Presbyterian Church**

**Stated Session Meeting (In-Person)**

**July 21, 2024**

**We Assemble in God’s Name**

**Members Present:** Stephanie Sorge, Moderator; Linda Bradley, Clerk of Session; Jason Brown; David Carothers; Rick Comstock; Mark Dewey; Kandy Grant; Amy Lemmons; Mary Lou McMillin; Bob Schminkey; Ginnie Reinhold; and Kim Shank, Associate for Pastoral Care.

**Excused/Absent**: Virginia Healy, Susie Phend. Approved. A quorum was present.

**Call to Order:** Stephanie called the meeting to order at 4:00pm.

**Opening Devotion**: Jason shared a devotion on thoughts about Larry Barber’s passing, the frailty of our physical bodies, but the impact we still have on others, based on attending Saturday’s prayer service.

**Sharing Joys and Concerns:** Stephanie and Session members shared prayer concerns and joys for members and friends of the Trinity congregation. We shared special memories of Larry and his impact on our lives. Other pastoral concern items are contained on the Session website. Stephanie led a moment of prayer.

**Consent Agenda**: Today’s docket, the minutes from the Stated Session Meeting on June 16, 2024 and the Called Congregational Meeting on July 21, 2024, and the excused absences from today’s meeting were approved.

**Clerk’s Report:**

1. Communion was observed during online and in-person worship on Sunday, July 7, as previously approved.
2. Yogi Gillette was elected to complete Dane Byer’s term as Elder in the class of 2025 at this morning’s called congregational meeting. He will be examined and installed at a later date.
3. Larry Barber, a beloved member of, Trinity, passed away on Saturday, July 20. A celebration of his life will be held at Trinity at 6:00pm on Thursday, August 8.
4. Linda shared a verbal thank you from Rocktown Wellness, which meets here every Friday morning.

**Finance Team:**  Linda

For Information and Discussion

**Treasurer’s Reports**

1. The Operating Budget Report shows that we had a total general year-to-date income of $171,622.77 as of the end of June 2024 – which is approximately 131% of the general income anticipated year-to-date. This figure includes pledges, loose offering, building use, and interest.  Our actual expenses were $151,298.61 – which is 98% of our anticipated year-to-date expense. The Fund Activity Report shows a current balance of $175,394. Note that some of the figures in these two reports are approximations since development of the new balance sheet is still in progress.
2. Our Edward Jones Investments are now merged into three accounts – 1) capital reserves/undesignated bequests and gifts, 2) special funds, and 3) Skip Whitmore endowment. The total Edward Jones balance as of July 11 was $532,186.74. This includes approximately $319,803.84 in our capital reserves and the majority of two bequests from Bolling Nalle and Vivian Hevener; $141,860.70 in a managed account for the remaining bequests, plus the music, parish nurse, and memorial garden funds. There also was $70,522.16 in the Skip Whitmore Fund.
3. In addition, the account with Raymond James as part of the bequest from Vivian Hevener has a balance of $107,224.51 as of June 30. We will meet with the Raymond James representative to close out the Raymond James account and arrange transfer of these funds to our Edward Jones account.

**Other Finance Items**

1. We met over Zoom with Janet Morris on Friday to set a timeline for Trinity to assume responsibility for the new balance sheet.
2. Semi-annual Giving Statements will be distributed next week. We will put an announcement about this in the Friday update once the statements are distributed.
3. We have sent out $1,000 scholarship checks for Lizzy Healy, Carolyn Hinshaw, Allen Awiti, Bethany Hinshaw, and Echo Striebig. Over the next year we will revise the scholarship application to better reflect each applicant’s journey and anticipated path forward. The new 2025 applications will be due on May 31, not June 30, to disburse these funds to institutions in accordance with their financial deadlines.
4. We are recommending t to Session that other teams or task forces explore the opportunities provided by Church Green Energy Project Funding through Inflation Reduction Accountability and apply for these funds as appropriate.
5. We will address the Board of Pensions Changes for 2025 for our staff and implications for budget planning at our next Finance Team meeting.
6. Our next meeting date will be rescheduled so that it won’t conflict with Larry Barber’s memorial service.

**Pastoral Care Associate’s Report**

1. Kim will complete a unit of Clinical Pastoral Education, required by Shenandoah Presbytery for ordination, on August 2, and then will slowly ease into seeing clients here. She is investigating alternatives for serving communion to persons at retirement communities or who otherwise are unable to attend Trinity in person.

**Pastor’s Report:**

For Discussion and/or Action:

1. Yogi Gillette will attend the August 18 Session meeting. We will examine him then and install him as an Elder, Class of 2025, sometime after that. He’s able to be House Steward that Sunday. Bob will be House Steward on August 4, Mary Lou on August 11, and Amy on August 25. Amy will share a devotional on August 18.
2. Stephanie shared some observations regarding her service at General Assembly, including a narrative report, highlights from the consent agenda, the narrative unified budget, and a report for distribution throughout the church – “More Than Knowledge.” She expressed thanks for Trinity’s support of Lizzy and her as they participated at GA. It was suggested that discussion of the GA documents be scheduled for the August Session meeting.
3. In response to a request from Sue Johnson that Session actions and decisions be communicated more clearly to the congregation – and especially to those who cannot attend worship in person – it was decided that: 1)  Kim will bring Sunday bulletins and the Friday update for distribution in retirement community mail boxes weekly. 2) The Friday update will include a note from the Session describing significant actions and discussions monthly. Identification of these topics will be added to the “Processing the Meeting” section of the Session agenda. These topics will also be added to the online scroll before the worship service. 3) It was also decided that announcements about pot luck events include a statement saying that all persons are welcome to attend, whether they bring a dish to share or not.
4. The Personnel Committee has interviewed two candidates who they feel would be appropriate for Kelsea’s position, and has made an offer to one. They expect to hear from her on Monday, and if she declines, they will extend an offer to the other. It is hoped to get someone started and in training this week or next week, with the plan for her to start regular hours on Monday, August 5, if not sooner. Kelsea will be with us through this Thursday, and then Victoria will be here Friday. Kelsea has arranged office coverage for previously approved vacation time next week: Monday, July 29 - Linda, Tuesday, July 30 - Victoria, Wednesday, July 31 - Janet Slough, Thursday-Friday, Aug 1-2 – Victoria

For Information

1. Stephanie expressed appreciation for the love and prayers for her family, especially leading up to and following the boys’ surgery last week.
2. She acknowledged that many are carrying great emotional, psychological, and spiritual weight leading up to the election. Centering Space has been having some conversations around this, but she welcomed any suggestions for ways we can rally, too, within the confines of laws and best faithful practices.
3. Kim will be on call during Stephanie’s vacation and continuing education, July 22-August 11.

Calendar Dates:

1. 2024 Vacation (subject to change) - June 7-15, July 22-August 4, November 22-30
2. 2024 Continuing Education - May 6-12 for a conference in Montreat and August 5-11 - Youth Mental Health First Aid training, watching videos from the Festival of Homiletics, and gathering with clergy friends for a short retreat

Animal Farm Question from the Session Retreat in January:

Dinosaurs: what is extinct or needs to die in order to move forward? What are we clinging to from the past that is keeping us from moving forward? Ensuing discussion focused on an awareness that church will not entirely return to pre-Covid days. Despite a fear of change and a lack of awareness of our privileged status for some, we are exploring what church looks like now. Although many churches haven’t begun to grapple with this new reality, we feel we have made many changes that are helping us to “do church” in many new ways and that we are seeking ways to reach out to our community.

Next month we will look at the Squirrel: what distractions are keeping us from our tasks?

**Task Forces**

Misconduct Policy Task Force Bob

1. Bob shared two policies: *Harrassment Prevention Policy* and *Medical or Family Leave Policy* that Presbytery has distributed for consideration and adoption by churches. He requested that Session discuss these policies at the next Session meeting.

Grounds for Hope Task Force Mary Lou

1. A detailed report on task force current reflections from its last meeting may be found on the Session website. A major topic of discussion was how to begin to share with congregation and broaden the conversation. An important conversation would need to concern the parking lot.  Do we patch, repair, restore, or redesign? There would be very different dollar figures for each of those choices, but the exact amounts are TBD. This is an area in which more information is needed, and some clearer sense of what costs and feasibility issues we need to consider.  This will be the largest cost of anything we do.  Unfortunately, it's also the most pressing.  The task force has agreed that we need to do something and the sooner the better.

The primary conversation, however, may well be how might the changes in the church campus reflect our Christian presence in our community.  This line of thought led to some profound considerations of how we nourish ourselves and others.

**Marks Groups and House Churches**

Reaching Out Kim

No report

Sanctuary Ginnie

1. The group is working on a worship service for August 1.

Backpack Stephanie

1. The Backpack Program will need a new Session liaison/communicator.

Centering Space Mary Lou

1. Seven people are registered for the Sacred Threads event at the Quilt Museum on July 24.
2. An email went out on Wednesday, July 17 related to the march to Washington and next weekend's gathering.  This email includes resource links.
3. Victoria and Teresa are working on updates to the Centering Space website.  Given the many resources that we are identifying, we will create a special section dedicated to Peace in Palestine where those resources can be housed and referenced.
4. The following dates: Sunday, September 1, 8, and 22 at 3:00 are being explored for a dessert/ice cream social to be held for the purpose of storytelling among Christian, Muslim, and Jewish peoples and congregations interested in building support for peace both here in Harrisonburg and in the Middle East.
5. Resources mentioned in the You Tube video,  *Jesus in the Rubble: The Bible, Palestine, Liberation and Peace* a seminar with Sylvia Keesmaat and Paul Pynkoski at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zSXmulHUMbQ&t=178s> , are available in the Comments section below the video and will also be posted as a separate document on our website
6. We celebrate the beautiful video created by Mike Strawderman on Guns to Gardens which can be accessed here: <https://youtu.be/T_KtVDyiA9Q>

Clothes Closet Susie

No report

Hearts and Hands Linda

1. The group met over Zoom this month because of the uptick in Covid cases locally. We continue to share shawls and lap robes and welcome recommendations for persons who would appreciate receiving them.

Turning Tables Kim

No report

Valley Interfaith Action Bob

No report

**Seasonal Teams**

Pentecost Amy

1. The team is in need of help with feeding Open Doors.

Harvest Stephanie

1. The Harvest Team has started meeting, and good plans are underway.

**Other Teams**

Benevolences Kandy

No report

Building and Grounds Dane

1. Deep Cleaning: Shannon Combs has begun “deep cleaning the Common’s bathrooms and kitchen (especially floors and inside freezer and refrigerator), cleaning windows, folding chairs, Nursery room (walls too), and dusting the fans in the Sanctuary and Commons. Her hourly rate is $55/hour; the team has approved 10 hours and will ask for additional hours if needed to complete. The team agrees with her recommendation that we consider periodic deep cleaning, perhaps quarterly.
2. Session has indicated a need to clean the carpets again and we may choose to clean this summer or later. Areas include the Commons carpets, stairs going up, and all upstairs rooms that have carpet. We used Spotless Specialty Cleaning; we will set this up at Session’s choosing.
3. Painting: Thr area will be painted for $3800 by Black Bros painting. The job will likely be done this fall. The work includes paint on the upper story to the back where the AC units are and towards the church office entrance. In addition, we have asked for power washing the sidewalks on the northside of the Commons entrance outside the nursery.
4. Landscaping: Frances Sale and Kathy Gillette have been working on contracting with Fine Earth and Shreckhise. Both companies have not followed up as promised. The last estimate for work was to be about $10,000. The idea is to cut back all the shrubs on the Commons’ side, take out some old bushes along the Sanctuary side and several trees on the Maryland Avenue side, and put native plants in their stead. We have identified another very good and more affordable company that specializes in putting in plants already purchased and other landscaping jobs. We’d have to buy the native plants ourselves and get an estimate. We could look into that option if Session would like.

1. Mower**:** Mowing now is done by Danny Stone at 540.560.5768. He’s sending invoices for cutting every two weeks. Of course, the heat and drought has required only one cutting since the Session’s decision to not purchase a new mower.
2. Vector Security (540.434-2428): Will meet with the team next Wednesday morning and create a “key” that will allow us to identify the specific area that needs battery changes which are causing the alarm system to cause problems.
3. Note: It has been a privilege to serve Trinity with Building and Grounds and other service projects. I regret that I am unable to continue that work at this time on Session. I’ll continue to recover and help Yogi Gillette in ways I’m able. Yours in Christ, Dane

Matthew 25 Kandy

No report

Nominating Jason

1. Yogi Gillette was elected to serve out the remaining term for Dane Byers, for the Class of 2025, at this morning’s called congregational meeting.

Outreach Mark D.

No report

Pastoral Care Mary Lou

For Information:

1. The Pastoral Care Committee met on July 1, 2023. We reviewed the pastoral care concerns of the congregation. We have several members facing or recovering from surgery this month. We reviewed and added to our prayer list.
2. Kim is working on at-home Communion for several at Sunnyside and will ask Roxana to accompany her. She will also coordinate taking Communion to Bill Sanders.
3. We talked about creating a prayer card that we as a committee could send each month to members/friends of the congregation. It was suggested that we send it to folks in their birthday month. Kim is asking Victoria to create a card for us to look at and choose from several samples.
4. A slide will be added to the weekly announcements requesting the congregation to update their information in the Church Directory as necessary. Also, a Photo Op Sunday will be designated to take pictures of those not pictured in the Directory.
5. Our next meeting is August 5th: 1-3:00pm in the Yoke Room

For Action:

1. Ginnie and Mary Lou reported on the review of the Church Directory. The Pastoral Care Committee recommends that we leave those listed in the Digital Online Church Directory in alphabetical order, but we identify one’s relationship to the congregation with a code system that is clearly explained at the beginning of the directory. Categories would include: Members, Friends, Clergy, Out of Town, Staff (with some people falling into more than one category). After discussion, it was agreed that we create group filters for Members, Friends, Clergy, and Staff that would list persons in those categories instead of having a coding system. Approved.

Personnel Susie

No report

Processing the Meeting

1. The following items were identified to include in the Friday Update Session Notes:
2. Introducing new communication process for those who can’t attend worship in person or who don’t have Internet
3. Updating Church Directory
4. Open Doors dinner
5. Animal Farm discussion on Dinosaurs

Next Meeting: Sunday, August 18, 4-6pm, in person. Amy will have the devotional.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned with prayer at 6:05pm.

Respectfully submitted,

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Linda Bradley, Clerk of Session Stephanie Sorge, Moderator