

Session Meeting Summary
September 21, 2023

Beginning at 6:30 p.m., George Johnston (Ruling Elder) opened the meeting with prayer.

Building Report on Fire Recovery: Ellen Ritz

A fire report was distributed providing current activity of recovery. (See Building & Grounds Committee report for more details) There is a possibility of being back in the building by Christmas, but it is not known yet as we are waiting for the delivery of product. Ellen announced the organ has been installed in the choir loft. Tom Henderson shared that there might be a separate endorsement for \$25,000 computer coverage which could free up more Contents coverage. Additionally, maybe some of Katie's personal property can go under her homeowner's policy.

Interim Pastor Candidate Interview – Rev. Paula R. Comper

A few highlights - The interview began with Paula giving background of her journey to becoming an interim pastor through the United Church of Christ. She gave her top three passions as justice, witness, and Matthew 25. She wants to help congregations to move outside their walls and stresses that it takes the congregation to grow the church rather than members following a pastor.

Clerk's Report:

- **ACTION:** Approved Minutes of the August 17, 2023, Stated Session Meeting, and the Congregational Meeting on August 27, 2023, voting to dissolve the pastoral relationship that exists between Reverend Katie Orth and the First Presbyterian Church.

Membership: No Change

Treasurer and Finance Committee Report:

Financial Review -

Tom Henderson went over the financial reports. Overall, the financials are mostly comparable to last year. There is a difference in income of the Schopmeyer donation from \$37,500 in 2022 to \$32,000 in 2023 and a PW donation from \$6,000 in 2022 to \$0 in 2023. Our income is within 3% of last year. There needs to be a check signature change to remove Pastor Katie. The new signatures will be Tom Henderson and Matt Cekander as Treasurers, Debbie Nolan as Administrative Assistant and Theresa Harner as Session Clerk. Theresa will ask Debbie to get a new signature card for everyone to sign.

ACTION: Accepted the financial statements after review.

Pastor Search – A new Ministry Information Form (MIF) will need to be completed when a Pastor Search Committee is formed. There is a new form since we last completed one and a copy can be obtained through Rebecca Blair (Lead Presbyter for Transformation and Stated Clerk). Theresa will check into it further.

Committee Reports

Deacons Report -

There have been no in-home communions given since the last report.

Presbyterian Women – Nancy Joslyn

ACTION - It was approved for PW to collect a Thank Offering November 19 during worship. Information of what the Thank Offering is used for will be shared during worship the Sunday before by someone from PW.

Administrative & Worship – Chair Sharon Macklin – Liaison Roger Stevenson

Communion was on September 10, 2023. Next Communion is October 1, 2023 (World Communion Sunday).

Summary of Meeting Notes:

- Guests Rachele Cekander and Stephanie Shafer voiced their concerns about the future of our church. Suggested that our church should have an ad hoc committee that focused entirely on public church events to gain new members. We referred them to the Faith Formation Committee who plans events for our church. Administrative Worship committee acknowledged that this was a real concern for our church and Tom Henderson proposed that Sharon Macklin should contact Kristen Schoonover to ask Faith Formation committee their opinion about inviting the public to all church events planned by the Faith Formation committee. Roger Stevenson presented the idea of also doing fundraisers for community charities and individuals in need. Our committee agreed that this was a wonderful idea.
- Rachele also asked us to start thinking about Christmas Eve services. Christmas Eve is on Sunday this year. How many services should we have that day and what time these services will be. Our interim pastor will be included in this discussion.
- The Mission committee asked that we have a service planned at New Harmony playground on October 22, instead of October 29, because of the Halloween Parade. This day would consist of a shortened church service, raking leaves for members who are unable to rake their own leaves and then returning to New Harmony for lunch. The Administrative Worship committee agreed to this change of date.

Additional Session Discussion: A draft Manual of Operations was distributed to present elders to review and discuss at the October Session meeting. The Fire/Safety, Wedding, Funeral Policies and Appendix are still being worked on and the committee hopes to have ready for the October Session meeting. This manual is working toward compliance with the Presbytery recently announcing that all councils shall adopt and implement the following policies: a sexual misconduct policy, a harassment policy, a child and youth protection policy and an antiracism policy.

ACTION – Session approved:

- Permission to pass out forms to the congregation on October 15 and 22 for ordering poinsettias for Christmas season.

Faith Formation – Kristen Schoonover

Summary of Meeting Notes:

Youth Education:

Missy is contacting parents of younger children to see what might work in schedules that are best for these families. We will be selling the block of tickets for the EPC Polar Express on Dec. 9th show very soon. Kristen will be posting to notify everyone first to be sure they know when tickets go on sale. It is first come, first serve.

The youth group has begun meeting for the year. The meal at the park and water games at the Church on the 10th were a lot of fun.

Adult Education & Activities:

The Gathering Group: College Age/Young adult (18 to Twenties) Laurel is planning a **bowling** night during a weeknight. Will notify Kristen of the date and time. We are planning a **dinner club** in October at El Rancharito with two different night options. Kristen contacted Nancy Joslyn about having the Progressive Dinner in December again. She is looking at her calendar. More information to come on that event. **Chicks on Lit** (Ladies Book Club)- Reading Hannah Swenson book of choice for September 18th meeting at Laurel's. **JOY** (Just Older Youth 55+)- Going to Vahling's Winery on Saturday September 23rd. Leaving the church at 11:30. It is \$15.00 per person. The Winery has their Twilight Nights Fall fest going on. **Xenials:** Discussing more regarding this age group. Looking at stages of life small groups. Will discuss more at future meetings. Will plan an event when back in the church and we can have daycare available as well. Many of these events have not gone over well, due to scheduling and family obligations. **"Stages Not Ages"** (All Adults)- Looking for group activities for everyone. Branson Christmas Show block of tickets for November 18th 7:30 pm show. Kristen will post when tickets will be on sale shortly. It will be first come, first serve.

Sunday School

Kristen is directing Stellar Christmas. Program will be Sunday, December 17th. I have discussed with the Junior and Senior High youth to see if they would assist if they are available. We will be starting practice in October. More information to come to parents soon.

List of Activities coming soon:

Book club is starting Monday September 18th. We will meet monthly.

Youth Group began meeting September 10th We will meet weekly.

JOY Vahling Winery trip is scheduled for September 23rd.

We are discussing the best time to meet for the younger kids.

We have the November 18th Branson show at EPC....info coming soon.

We have the Dec. 9th Polar Express ticket block...info coming soon.

Stellar Christmas program will begin rehearsal in October.

October dinner club at El Rancharito (there will be 2 date options) TBA.

Progressive Dinner in December

Glow Party January 27th

Sunday School will start when back in Church.

Kristen added this information for the meeting: If an activity is on our Facebook page, it is open to the public. They are waiting on some things until we get back in our building. Xenials are trying to find what works for them as their ages are spread out and in different stages of life. Confirmation is being planned. Dan Kingery is working with the Youth Group.

ACTION: Session approved

- October Dinner Club at El Rancharito...details TBA
- Progressive Dinner in December or January if needed.

Mission – Theresa Harner – Amy Hoffmeister Session Liaison

Summary of Meeting Notes

- Manna Closet - September collection is canned soup/stews. We will consider socks/hats for October and blankets for November. Theresa will take inventory of what is currently available for further discussion of needs. The future of the Manna Closet was discussed due to Pastor Katie's resignation. Elizabeth Hartke has requested to manage distribution as her work involves

people in need or low income. It was discussed that Property Committee is concerned that break-ins at the church were the homeless trying to get items from the Manna Closet. We don't know if they were looking for Manna items or seeking shelter. Comments were made that securing the building could be in order instead of cancelling the Manna Closet. We will determine the long-term future after we get back in our building. If we continue with the Manna Closet, everyone agrees a better inventory/rotation system is needed.

- Nursing Home Visit – September 10 at Lakeland Rehab & Healthcare – meet at Lakeland at noon.
- El Shaddai Maternity Home –There is an Open House on September 9 and 10 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Behind the home is a collection box for monetary and donated books for residents. It was mentioned that we need to remember that our church will also be collecting donated books for our library once we are back in our building.
- Halloween Walk – We have decided to cancel the Halloween Walk this year and resume next year when our facilities are better.
- Church on the Go – We will join with the Worship Committee in planning a short worship service on October 22 at Harmony Playground and proceed with Church on the Go to complete community service work. We will return to Evergreen Park for pizza.
- Back in the Building – A Pictorial Directory will take place when we are back and have a location to take pictures. We will continue to explore additional activities for January and/or February when we are back in our building and the busy holidays are over.
- Grief Support – Due to Heather Latta's father's death, this has been cancelled for the time being.

No Requests of Action by Session

Buildings and Grounds – Ellen Ritz

Summary of Meeting Notes:

Work moving along on the interior of the church. Painting/insulation/cabling for streaming and electrical either completed or will be soon. Fire & security system being installed. Drywall finished in office area. Suspended ceiling & lights to go up soon. Old organ has been removed & new one will be installed after carpeting completed in the loft. Outside lights are on in west wing and on/off in circle drive until internet bored into the office. Continuing issues with homeless camping on property & also trying to break into the church. Committee addressing this. City to work on culvert on Maple Street in a few weeks.

Ellen added this additional information for the meeting: Quite a bit of ceiling gridwork has been completed. Had to slow down as they ran out of fire rated material. Will finish when material arrives. The carpet is being laid. Choir loft is completed. Working on the sanctuary. JoAnn Wear/Karen Schmitz/Terry Stevenson working on the ceiling & wall sconce lights in the sanctuary. Terry will be getting them ordered. Electricians are on hold until ceilings are installed. The City of Effingham will do a walk through when the lighting is installed in the west wing of the church. Front doors and the door from the foyer into the narthex are installed. Other doors that need replaced (scorched doors in sanctuary etc.) are ordered, but will take six weeks to come in. Organ is ready to be installed this week or next. Wiring and speakers are installed. Internet fiber has been bored into the building. We may be able to be back in the church before everything is ready. There is no time frame for this. We are hoping

by Christmas but no guarantees. Please remember to be patient with this process. Dan's Glass has fixed the window that people have been trying to get in.

Additional Discussion with Session – We want to consider wheelchair allowance in pew placement. One suggestion was 1/2 pews at the back of church. **ACTION** – A motion passed to delegate the Building & Grounds Committee to decide on pew replacement as needed.

No Requests of Action by Session

OLD BUSINESS - None

NEW BUSINESS

- Kristen Schoonover requested Session's support in her journey to become a Commissioned Ruling Elder (CRE). CRE's are trained to provide specific pastoral care functions, often for a small congregation at a specific location for a specific amount of time. **ACTION** – Motion passed to endorse Kristen Schoonover in her journey to become a Commissioned Ruling Elder and we wish her well.
- Nominating Committee – Committee will consist of two elders appointed from the Session, one of whom shall be designated chairperson, along with one deacon, President of Presbyterian Women, and five members of the committee which were elected by the congregation at the annual congregational meeting. Those elected in Dec. 2022 were Darlene Logue, Sandy Stevenson, Joe Freimuth, Eric Light, teenager Jessica Larsen.
 - Nominating Committee meets in October/November
 - Present nominations to Session during November 16 meeting.
 - Present nominations to Congregation during December 3 meeting.

ACTION – JoAnn Wear accepted the chair position and Kristen Schoonover accepted the second position.

- Nomination Committee Nominees will include:
 - Deacons – Need 4 (3-year terms)
 - Session – Need 4 + Youth (total 5) – 3-year terms except for youth which is 1 year.
 - Personnel – Need 1 (2-year term) – Barb Quick goes off and Eric Light stays on.
- Staff Reviews coming up – Dan Kingery, Rachelle Cekander, Debbie Nolan, Donna Stevenson and Judy Wiethop. Personnel Committee members – Tom Henderson (Session), Barb Quick (class of 2023) and Eric Light (class of 2024). If anyone has any concerns or comments they have regarding each personnel, please let a committee member know soon.
- Personnel Committee – Session will need to elect a new chair for the 2024 Personnel Committee which includes two at-large members, one to be elected by the congregation in December to serve a 2-year term. It was agreed that Roger Stevenson could be asked to serve as chair.

Stated meeting adjourned at 8:40 p.m. with closing prayer by George Johnston

Next meeting is October 19, 2023, 6:30 p.m.