

**First Presbyterian Church
The Work and Worship of the Session
Monday, December 16, 2019**

The stated meeting of the Session of First Presbyterian Church (Greensboro) was held on Monday, December 16, 2019 starting at 5:30 p.m. in the Garden Room. Neil Dunnivant, Executive Pastor, served as meeting moderator. Dolly Jacobs attended the meeting as a called ordained staff member.

The Elders first sang the hymn “Joy to the World” accompanied on the piano by Elder Jill Hare, and then read Psalm 100.

Guests: Nancy Abrams, Marshall Brown, Christine Ciaccio, Keith Dove, Myles Fish, Erwin Fuller, Matt Logan, Danny Massie, Alexandra Mauney, and Tim Millisor.

Upon a motion made and seconded, the Consent Agenda was approved as distributed.

- From the Clerk: Minutes of the November 18 stated Session meeting. [attached]
- From the Discipleship’s office: November 2019 attendance, membership and visitor reports. [attached]
- Committee Report: Discipleship, Hospitality. [attached]

Session members identified their prayer partners for the next month.

What’s Going Well – Where Have We Seen God’s Movement of Spirit at FPC and Where Are We Fulfilling Our Commitment to Be a Matthew 25 Church?

- Neil reported that all but 7 Session members have turned in their 2020 pledges. Session pledges total approximately \$323,000 for an average pledge of \$6,000/Session member.
- Maria Hamlin, former head of Habitat, will be joining FPC’s pastoral care staff on a part time basis.
- Russell Sherrill is no longer serving on FPC’s pastoral care staff. Let’s organize a reception for him at WellSpring where he resides to celebrate his service.
- Highlights of December 15th services – Dolly’s sermon in the Sanctuary; Danny’s sermon in Rejoice; Alexandra’s singing in Rejoice; children’s choir performance; Keith’s conducting his first baptism; entire Lessons and Carols service; 650 people at 12/15 worship in all services.
- New website.
- Birth of Nate Sell’s baby girl.
- All that the pastoral care staff does!

Matthew 25 Follow up

Neil gave an update to the Session about our Matthew 25 efforts after our Session vote in November in which we committed to becoming a Matthew 25 church. As part of the Matthew 25 movement, FPC intends to focus on revitalization efforts within our congregation; dismantling racism; and eradicating systemic poverty. These efforts will be key initiatives for our future.

Neil acknowledged that the November vote to become a Matthew 25 church wasn't unanimous, but he believes that a church where votes aren't unanimous is indicative of a healthy, vibrant, thoughtful congregation. He spoke to our decision to become a Matthew 25 church, and asked and answered the question as follows of why we are doing this in conjunction with the PCUSA community:

1. It's a chance for us to share within the PCUSA community what's working and what's not.
2. Our church doesn't have to embrace all three initiatives at once; we can focus on one, two or all three at different times.
3. We may have different ideas and opinions as to how to implement becoming a Mathew 25 church. The goal is peace and unity within our congregation, and in no way does the staff want this effort to cause division within our church.

PNC Update

Marshall Brown updated the Session on the Pastor Nominating Committee's efforts to date. Over the course of 37 weeks, the Committee has met 28 times for an average time of 2.5-3 hours each meeting. During those 28 meetings, the Committee has reviewed 150 candidates. Approximately 50% of the candidates had been referred to our church, and the other 50% came from the Presbytery or submitted their names directly to the PNC themselves.

The Committee has conducted 13 interviews by Skype or Zoom and is excited about the quality of the candidates. The next step is for the Committee to narrow the list to approximately 6 or so leading candidates and conduct second interviews. Once second interviews are completed, the Committee will narrow its selection to 3 or 4 candidates, visit further with them at their home churches, and invite them to visit Greensboro and FPC. With all this said, the Committee is still open to new candidates who may present themselves along the way.

Marshall emphasized the importance of discerning who God is calling to become the twelfth senior pastor at FPC. He asked the thoughtful questions "what is discernment?" and "how will we know whom to call?" The Committee recognizes that this is a once in a generation transition. On behalf of the Committee, Marshall conveyed that when the church and the candidate both realize and discern God's Will to move forward and commit to each other, the decision will be the right one.

Marshall thanked the Transition Team, Mission Study Team, and the others involved to date in this important process.

Prayers of the People

Session members named those to be remembered in prayers of need, healing, thanksgiving, and celebration, and Alexandra offered prayers for those people and the life of the church.

Finance Committee

Rosa McNairy, Chairperson of the Finance Committee, presented the report on the November 2019 finances.

Revenues

Our revenues through November were \$3,641,091, which is \$93,332 less than budgeted and \$9,641 less than last year.

Expenses

Our expenses through November were \$4,058,347, which is \$89,045 less than budgeted and \$225,133 less than last year. We continue to be grateful to the staff because of how mindful they have been of expenses this year.

Expenses exceeded revenue through November by \$417,256, which is \$4,287 less than budgeted but \$215,492 better than last year.

As is consistent with our historical inflow of revenues, many church members are fulfilling their annual pledges in this last quarter of 2019.

The Stewardship Committee is working hard to collect non pledged gifts right now. Last year we were successful in bringing in outstanding pledges and non-pledged gifts during the last quarter of the year. Rosa called attention to the graph in the Session packet which shows visually trends of revenue spikes in December and described these trends as the miracles of December and Christmas. Myles plans to report more about these stewardship and collection efforts later in the Session meeting.

The finances of the church are especially relevant and important right now as we search for a new senior pastor. Oftentimes, one of the first questions a candidate asks is about the financial health of the church. All candidates feel comfortable with stewardship and appreciate the goal of a balanced budget. All recognize the importance of being involved with the finances and stewardship efforts of the church.

The Committee is beginning work on the 2020 budget with significant help from Joe Vartanian, Brantley White, and Rob Peddrick. We will continue to strive for a balance budget for 2020.

Scripture Reading

Jean Goodman read Luke 14: 7-14.

Faith Sharing

Elder Betsy Farmer shared her faith statement with the Session.

Stewardship

Myles Fish gave the Stewardship report to the Session. Myles acknowledged that this is his favorite time of the year. He and the Committee are focusing their efforts in three areas:

1. Ending the year with a balanced budget. Right now approximately \$500,000 is needed to balance the budget. Although this sounds like a lot to bring in as gifts, Myles and the Committee are committed to achieving success. Their recent efforts include mailing Danny's letter requesting year end gifts, sending November 2019 contributions statements, and inviting the approximately

783 families who are listed as active members but haven't given to FPC in the past 12 months to make end of year gifts. Also, the Stewardship Committee is focusing on talking with church members who didn't make 2019 pledges about making year-end 2019 gifts; and

2. Securing pledges for 2020. Myles and the Committee are trying new things – encouraging new families to pledge; implementing a phone-a-thon to church members about pledging for 2020; and combining the efforts of stewardship and discipleship campaigns. All in all, Myles feels like we are in a good position going into 2020; and

3. Building church's endowment. A major estate planning initiative will begin in early 2020.

Appointments Committee

Phyllis Parker reported to the Session about the Nominating Committee activities. She requested that each member of Session submit names of current Elders and At-large congregation members to serve on the 2020-2021 Nominating Committee. The deadline for nominations is January 5. Please return the form in the Elder December Session Packet to Phyllis, or email your nominations to Debby Foster or Phyllis Parker.

Green Team

Nancy Abrams and Keith Dove updated the Session on the Green Team's recent activities. Lots of success to report!

Glass recycling is going well. We pair with the City of Greensboro on this initiative. The City picks up the glass quickly and have given us another bin to collect glass. We have someone who is willing to keep the area clean and swept.

The Green Team is looking for a local place that will accept styrofoam.

Nancy and Keith hope to achieve certification as an Earth Care Congregation. What this signifies is that FPC is committed to caring for God's creation by working in 4 areas – worship, education, facilities, and community outreach. Although we fell short in a couple of the categories for 2019, we hope to achieve this certification for 2020. The application for this certification will be due in January or February of 2021 to receive the designation for 2020. The certification is good for a year.

Discipleship

Nancy Abrams and Matt Logan presented the report of the Discipleship Committee and focused their comments on a membership update project to be launched in the near future.

The goal of the project is to update the membership roster to reflect active members and families of the church. At the present time, there appear to be 2,900 members but many of those listed are not active. Restoring the roster will give us a more accurate accounting of our membership. This project will begin in January 2020.

New Business

Neil asked for Session members to comment on other New Business for the good of the Session. John Whisnant asked for volunteers to serve communion at the Christmas Eve 5:30 service. Louise Maulsby Bristol asked for feedback after the Christmas Eve 11:00 youth-led service.

Danny Massie offered a closing prayer.

The Session meeting was adjourned at 7:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Louise Maulsby Bristol
Clerk of Session