Session update: November, 2025

Opening Meditation and Prayer
Karen led us in a brief devotion on gratitude, as this is Thanksgiving week. Phil4:4-7 (NIV) *4 Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! 5 Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. 6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, from *Letters and Papers from Prison*:
"In normal life we hardly realize how much more we receive than we give, and life cannot be rich without such gratitude. It is so easy to overestimate the importance of our own achievements compared with what we owe to the help of others."

Clerk's Report
Communion was celebrated on November 2.

Hazel Waters Shoemaker, child of Meggie and Kyle Shoemaker, was baptized on November 2.

Liam James Kulikowski, child of Julia and Justin Kulikowski, was baptized on November 9.

Julia Newton and Princeton Newton were baptized on November 12.

The Rev. Dr. Helen Cochrane, who was known to many of the congregation, passed away on November 1.

Marilyn Bell passed away on October 28.

Pastor's Report
Karen reported on progress made on transition efforts around the Preschool, staff and governance restructuring, and the Manual of Operations team and on work to be undertaken in 2026.

The Preschool Governance Committee has been meeting monthly since its formation in the summer. The committee has approved the 2026 Preschool budget and recommended tuition rates for 2026. A new system of budget creation was put into place with Phil Clauser, JoAnne Turcotte, and Lisa Todd meeting directly with David Crook to build the budget.

The Personnel Committee has worked on staff restructuring, staff bonus payments for 2025, and revising the Personnel policies for church staff. They will be working with Lisa Todd to revise policies for the Preschool staff as well.

The Session-appointed Governance Restructuring Team of Ted Masthay, Rich Gorton and Joanne Kelhart are working diligently on restructuring our governance including writing new bylaws that combine corporate and congregational bylaws.

The Manual of Operations Team has been working steadily to collect necessary documents and identify gaps. We expect that by January/February 2026, we can come to Session with a draft manual.

In order to take the next steps of determining pastoral leadership needs, we must do a Mission Study. In early 2026, we will need to be in contact with the Committee on Church Orders (formerly the Committee on Ministry) to keep them informed of this work. Ultimately that committee will need to approve whatever Mission Study we develop. A mission study is the telling of the congregation's story. It takes into account its history, the lives of its members, the community in which it is located, and the hopes for the future. The power of a good study is in narrative.

Finance Committee Report
Second read of the 2026 budget with the vote ---Kim
We reviewed again the budget proposed for 2026. The Finance Committee motion to approve the budget carried.

Continuing Business
Our membership database has not been updated in many years, making the production of a membership directory impossible. Session voted to remove from the rolls 791 names.

Donna reported that the Steering Committee is fine-tuning the collaborative vision with prospective partners. There is still much work to be done before any proposal will be ready for congregational vote. Knowing that people are anxious for information, Lindsey will update the congregation.

New Business
Kim explained the staff bonuses that the Personnel Committee proposes. The Committee motion was approved.

Kim also reviewed the Personnel Committee's motion to approve updates for the Staff Handbook. The committee motion passed, with Kim abstaining.

Donna spoke of the Hispanic Center Lehigh Valley, 520 E 4th St. in Bethlehem, and their efforts to provide food for families, especially as customary benefits are cut off. A motion to designate the Hispanic Center as the recipient of our Thanksgiving offering was seconded and approved.

Rich and Jennifer reported briefly on the November 8 Presbytery meeting at Faith Church in Emmaus, especially the small group discussions on how each church encourages and validates leaders.

JoAnne reviewed the proposed preschool tuition increases for August 2026. The Preschool Governance Committee motion for tuition increases passed.

The meeting was adjourned in prayer.