

SESSION HIGHLIGHTS AUGUST THROUGH OCTOBER 2020

- Session is continuing to meet twice a month via Zoom. The frequency of meetings is in part due to the ongoing challenges presented by Covid – changing requirements of Covid and meeting the needs of the congregation during a time when the building is closed. Session is particularly cognizant of a need for a sense of community and support during this time when we cannot be together in our usual ways.
- Session approved the front driveway for use by the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention to host a drive through event replacing their annual “Walk Out of Darkness” fund raiser.
- The Building Reopening Task Force continues to meet at least monthly. Considerable time was spent working with the Preschool Director to develop appropriate Covid restrictions and revising them as needed. Requirements include mask usage, physical distancing, a temperature check before admittance for the day and daily cleaning/disinfection protocols.
- The Task Force has evaluated requests from outside agencies for use of our facilities on an ongoing basis, including each group’s own Covid procedures. All groups must comply completely with our requirements. The Task Force then makes a recommendation for action by Session. Task Force and Session member Rich Hjorth participated in a panel sponsored by the Presbytery on Covid issues. We are fortunate to have a member with extensive experience/expertise in the viruses and grateful for his willingness to share both his knowledge and time so generously.
- Session approved the request of Ruth Dennison on behalf of Mask Force to again use the church building to distribute face mask kits, this time specifically for the hearing impaired and children.
- Session accepted with gratitude and on the recommendation of the Endowment Committee, proceeds from a \$10,000 life insurance policy in which long time member Eunice Mackie named FPCB as beneficiary. The proceeds were deposited in the Endow Your Pledge Fund.
- Session approved the recommendation of the Endowment Committee to award two grants in support of graduate studies:
 - From the Barry Brandt Scholarship Fund a grant of up to \$6,000 per semester to Levi Wolf for graduate studies. This is a first time grant.
 - From the Dimmick International Scholarship Fund a grant of up to approximately \$6,500 to Rafael Nunez of Colombia for continuing medical school education. This is a renewal of a grant given last year.
- An outdoor in-person combined service was held in front of the church building on August 30. It was well received and attended. Additional services were held September 27 and October 25. An additional service is planned for November 22.

- The Branding Task Force requested permission to reveal the new logo for the church at the combined outdoor service on August 30. A new banner was placed at the Center Street entrance to the church campus to many positive comments. Thank you to the Branding Task force for their hard work over many months developing the logo: Chair, Polly Beste and members Susan Yee, Carol Burns, Dan Wells, and JC.
- The Business Manager position was filled by Marianne Zarillo, and Cindy Matthews was transitioned from temporary bookkeeper to a permanent position. Both are parttime employees.
- Our long time Hi Neighbors program is also affected by Covid and will be meeting digitally but less frequently.
- Rev. Steve Simmons and Rev. Cindy Simmons served as guest preachers while JC was on vacation in August.
- The Deacons have continued their phone ministry, meal prep and meal delivery ministries. Several also participated in the virtual Pride Day with First Presbyterian Church of Allentown.
- The Optimism Group that met for several years under the volunteer leadership of Melody Engel has discontinued meeting. Session expressed their appreciation to Melody for her generosity in sharing both her knowledge and time to lead this program.
- Session approved our support of the Annual Crop Walk this year and going forward. Rev. Steve Simmons graciously volunteered to “captain” our group again this year. The FPCB team collected \$1910 in donations.
- A Congregational meeting was held September 20 at 10 a.m. to approve changes to Pastor Austin’s Terms of Call and elect an elder to fill Ben Coleman’s unexpired term.
- Elder Terrance DeFranco resigned from Session due to a significant increase in his work responsibilities. We are grateful for his contributions to FPCB and his willingness to be of help in other areas.
- Beginning in August, the Preschool Task Force in coordination with the Preschool Director recognized a need for childcare for school age children on their “virtual school” days. A significant effort and time commitment was extended to develop, staff and prepare facilities for the program. Unfortunately, shortly after the program began in late September, it was recognized that the low number of children attending did not make the program sustainable. Session, with regret, made the decision to discontinue the program at this time.
- Particular appreciation goes to Rebecca Gorton (Chair of Task Force), Elizabeth Conard (Task Force), Andie Barbehenn and Rebecca Angione for their hard work and commitment to this program.
- Theresa Kelly donated a glass replica of the PCUSA symbol that she created and crafted. Session accepted the same with our thanks for her generosity.
- Numerous new and “old” educational/discussion offerings are available including (but not limited to) a weekly Pastor’s Coffee Break via Zoom, Discipleship program taught by Steve Simmons, Hearts N Minds and Hi Neighbors. The successful children’s Sunday

School is continuing both as a Zoom gathering and a series of prerecorded videos. See the weekly newsletter for more details.

- Under the leadership of JC and the Worship Committee, Session approved their request for a special outdoor prayer service for national healing on November 4 and additional Vespers services on Tuesday evenings in November addressing peace and calm.
- A successful Blessing of the Animals was held October 4 with help from many volunteers. A collection was made of donated pet items for Meals on Wheels participants.
- Session approved a collection of donated personal care items for Northeast Ministries and Meals on Wheels participants.