

## SESSION HIGHLIGHTS: MAY - JULY 2020

- Session has continued meeting every two weeks during this time, in large part due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the challenges and frequently changing requirements as a result of it.
- Considerable time has been spent during Session meetings working on our responses to the green, yellow and red phases of COVID.
- A Building Reopening Task Force was formed to advise Session on issues with COVID-19 and to make recommendations going forward. The task force is headed by Belle Marks and includes Rich Hjorth, Elizabeth Conard, Dr. Robert Hunsicker, Sue Farber, JC Austin and Rebecca Angione. Most of the task force members have medical or public health experience.
- Session approved the election of the current Clerk of Session, Susan Farber, to a one year term through May 2021.
- Session approved George Campbell as Treasurer to replace Melinda Stitt who has accepted a position on the Board of Trustees. It should be noted that the Treasurer cannot be a member of Session or the Board of Trustees in accordance with our bylaws.
- Session, on behalf of the Congregation, expresses its gratitude for Melinda's service as Treasurer going back to the early days with the Steering Committee. Both Melinda and Phil Clauser (Assistant Treasurer) have worked tirelessly, often in challenging circumstances, on our behalf. Their willingness to commit many hours to their positions is greatly appreciated by all.
- Under the direction of JC Austin, Moderator, the need to standardize/modify the committee structure including that committee assignments will be done by the Moderator each April and limiting Session membership on each committee to two individuals.
- Current committee assignments are as follows:

<b>Engagement:</b>	Chair, Polly Beste	Vice-Chair, Kristen Benway
<b>Discipleship:</b>	Chair, Gail Watts	Vice-Chair, Elizabeth Conard
<b>Worship:</b>	Chair, Rich Hjorth	Vice-Chair, Lindsey Chadbourn
<b>Congregational Life:</b>	Chair, Phyllis Walker	Vice-Chair, vacant
<b>Mission:</b>	Chair, vacant	Vice-Chair, vacant
<b>Personnel:</b>	Chair, Al Philpotts	Vice-Chair, Terrance DeFranco
<b>Joint Finance:</b>	Chair, Joanne Kelhart	Vice-Chair, Phil Clauser
<b>Property:</b>	Chair, Don Masters	(see below)

- Don Masters will continue as Chair of Property in the first year as it transitions to the Board of Trustees.
- The Finance committee is a joint committee of Session and the Board of Trustees.
- Anyone wishing to serve on any of the committees should contact the Clerk of Session at [susanbfarber@gmail.com](mailto:susanbfarber@gmail.com).
- The Deacon's Board is continuing its Phone Ministry that began in April, to reach all members during these challenging times. They are currently in their fifth round of phone calls.
- The Deacons are also continuing their meal ministry for those in need at this time. **Anyone who would like to volunteer to make a meal or is willing to deliver a meal should contact Jeanne Hunsicker at [sheepeehollow@msn.com](mailto:sheepeehollow@msn.com).**
- The Deacons are partnering with First Presbyterian Church of Allentown to participate in a virtual Lehigh Valley Pride Day on Sunday, Aug. 16.
- Driveway Sunday School and Zoom Sunday School are continuing under the guidance of Joanne Turcotte and Ted Rewak.
- Session approved requests from the Endowment Committee to approve the below grants for education as follows:
  - Blaine Sheppard*: \$8,000 for college tuition from Barry Brandt fund
  - Jansiel Martinez-Ossio* (medical student in Colombia): \$6,466 (approximated due to fluctuations in the exchange rate) for medical school tuition from Dimmick International Scholarship Fund
  - Levi Wolf*: up to \$6,000 for graduate school tuition from Barry Brandt fund
- Session, on the recommendation of the Endowment committee, accepted a \$10,000 bequest from a life insurance policy from Eunice Mackie to be deposited in the Endow Your Pledge fund.
- FPCB has received a bequest from Lydia Beaumont in the amount of \$20,786 for organ maintenance. Session will determine which of the two music funds it will be placed in at the upcoming Session meeting.
- A task force focused on Racial Justice was formed with JC as Chair and members Elena Helmuth, Phyllis Walker, Kristen Benway, Joanne Kelhart, Chips Arend and youth representative Sophia Pedrosa.
- During May the Discipleship committee offered four electronic educational/discussion sessions:
  - May 27: The Social Gospel in Hymns (Rev. Dr. Steve Simmons)
  - May 20: Slave Quilts and Their Symbols (Rev. Dr. Steve Simmons)
  - May 12: FPCB Book Club – “Devotions” by Mary Oliver (Anne Taylor)

May 6: Listening for God (Jan Bickford)

Session and the Congregation appreciate the volunteers, Steve Simmons, Anne Taylor and Jan Bickford, for their time and effort in presenting these programs.

- In June Rev. Austin offered a three part series, “Faith in Living Color: Race, Racism, and Christian Discipleship”.
- During the month of June, JC also presented a Sermon series “Sermons in Extraordinary Times” recognizing that this is not the Ordinary Time of the Church calendar.
- Starting July 1, Rev. Austin led an intensive “21 Day Racial Justice Immersion Project” that included daily actions for participants.
- All of these programs are available on our web site for viewing at <https://www.fpc-bethlehem.org/2020/04/04/classes/>
- The Personnel Committee is in the final stages of hiring a business manager who will shortly begin as a part time employee.
- Through the generosity of three members, the ice machine off Fellowship Hall has been replaced. Everyone is most appreciative for their generosity.
- In our intention to be an experimental church, the worship committee has planned a combined outdoor service on Sunday, August 30. Additional information, including appropriate protocols, is available through the newsletter.
- The Congregational Life Committee held a Trivia Night on Thursday, July 9, in the parking lot with two more planned for August 13 and September 10 (see newsletter).
- The Associate Pastor Nominating Committee is meeting weekly, chaired by Kristen Benway. They have made incredible progress in a short time and are currently evaluating responses.
- Session approved a request from the Preschool Task Force to open their “Summer Splash” program, essentially summer daycare, in the beginning of July. Session also approved detailed protocols to be followed by staff and attendees.
- The Preschool Task Force is currently working on various options for opening the Preschool in the fall including in-person, a virtual option and a blended option.
- The card ministry led by Kate Arrington continues.
- Personnel recommended that we convert the bookkeeper we currently employ through a temp agency to a part-time employee in mid-August. Session concurred.
- The CommUNITY Garden project was continued this year. Volunteers are practicing physical distancing and wearing masks.

