



## August 24, 2022 Session Meeting Highlights

The following are the highlights from the August 24, 2022 Session meeting:

- The Q & A from August 14, 2022 Town Hall is being finalized and should be sent out to the congregation as part of an eblast shortly.
- Pam Weiss, Gay Tuttle, Bryan Groff and Lois Henseler will be the planning team for Pastor Stephen's retirement celebration in January 2023.
- Starting in September Pastors Stephen and Taylor will be co-head pastors. In the unlikely event they are unable to make a required decision, the Clerk of Session will help them make the needed decision.
- The financials as of the end of July 2022 showed that year-to-date General Fund revenues are about \$38,000 below year-to-date budgeted revenues while year-to-date expenditures are about \$99,000 below year-to-date budgeted expenditures primarily due to unfilled staff positions. This results in a year-to-date surplus relative to year-to-date budget of about \$61,000.
- The bridge pastor search team has completed the required Mission Information Form ("MIF") for the bridge pastor and Session endorsed it. It has been sent to Presbytery's Committee on Ministry (COM) for their endorsement. Once Presbytery's COM endorses it, we can begin searching for the bridge pastor.
- Tom Dressler, our Traditional Music Director, submitted his resignation prior to the Session meeting. Tom has accepted a new position. He begins his new position on the first Sunday of October. His last Sunday with FPCA will be Sunday, September 29, 2022. We are sorry to see Tom leave FPCA and are thankful for his service. Matt Wehr has agreed to serve as the temporary part-time Organist and Choir Director from October 1 through January 31.
- The Worship Task Force was asked by Session to develop a recommendation on how to best replace Tom Dressler (e.g., one full time position covering both the traditional and contemporary service music or a part-time position for the traditional service music and a part-time position for the contemporary service music).
- Pastor Jan gave some parting remarks to Session in which she observed that there is an overarching lack of understanding within the congregation of what our task together is during transition process because there is a lack of willingness to accept that transitional tasks involve change and working together. She highlighted the following items to Session (most of which are gray and complex):

- A church is a Christian community that lives the Gospel. It is not as some members apparently feel a vendor of religious services for them to pick and choose from when they are in need of a particular service. FPCA can no longer attempt to be all things to all people because that creates silo and “camps”.
- Some in our congregation have a large sense of entitlement. They want (and may threaten to take some action if they don’t get) their way rather than God’s way on some items. Jesus certainly does not want his church to be about catering to customers looking for religious goods and services.
- There is no power behind the curtain (the “Wizard of Oz Syndrome”). If members want to have a say they need to show up by attending worship and engage in the life and work of the FPCA community as together we try our best to follow the ways of Jesus and work to build relationship with the current church leadership and pastors. Unfortunately, there are several small groups within FPCA that when taken together unknowingly contribute to fracturing our church by some of the actions they take. These actions can attempt to influence decisions outside the established structures for decision-making in our church.
- Session needs to more fully live into its role under Presbyterian Polity. This means listening to many voices and multiple perspectives on issues our church is facing, discerning the direction that best addresses each issue, and then leading the congregations on the discerned path with integrity, not simply doing what members want. Once a decision has been made, all of Session needs to get behind it whether or not they agree with it.
- Session (and the congregation) needs to better support our pastors by being in conversation with them periodically to ask them what they might need help with (and to develop relationships with them) at that particular in time and then see how we might be able to provide that support.
- Realities and perceptions are important. A pastor is a pastor whether they are male, female, or LGBTQ+. Currently two of our pastors are “firsts” for FPCA. To thrive, our congregation needs to trust and respect women and LGBTQ+ persons as the leaders they are. We need to fully support all our clergy and staff and accept that their identities shape their way of looking at the world and hence the voice they offer the congregation.
- Members say they want to include and embrace our youth and young adults so they see FPCA as relevant to them and want to be active here. Unfortunately, that is not what many in our congregation are willing to do. For example, embracing and including might mean actively discussing issues that are important to youth and young adults today.
- There is no going back in time for FPCA. Change is ahead of us. Change involves conflict, chaos, uncertainty, risk, and vulnerability. Session will need to make key choices about whether to bring about Beloved

Community or be a vendor of religious goods and services. Who will Session listen to: keeping the loudest voices happy or a clear strong voice that pulls FPCA's community together with a clear invitation for all to be part of God's Beloved Community? This may mean being honest and transparent as well as engaging Lombard to help with more of an ongoing project to better ensure the long-term health of FPCA's congregation.