



November 16, 2022 Session Meeting Highlights

The following are the highlights from the November 16, 2022 Session meeting:

- Session divided the Lombard final report proposals into four groups: those that work should start on now, those that can be worked on later, those where work is already in progress, and those that are not doable (Attachment A).
- An Elder volunteered to be the leader for each of the seven congregational proposals that Session agreed work should commence on now as noted in Attachment A. It is anticipated that the lead Elder for each of these congregational proposals will reach out to some congregational members (including members that participated in the September 17, 2022 problem solving group that came up with the specific proposal they are working on) asking them to join their team or a member could contact the Elder leading work on the proposal they are interested in.
- There will be a Town Hall meeting between services on Sunday, December 4, 2022 at 9:50 a.m. in the sanctuary to review Attachment A with the congregation and answer any congregational questions.
- With Pastor Stephen's upcoming retirement, Session approved formation of a search team for an interim pastoral care pastor that consists of Andy Baranek (chair), Ann Lalik, Pat Lisetski and Afaf Khoury. Once a new, installed lead pastor is on board, a decision can be made as to how many pastors FPCA needs.
- Hubert Huang, Director of Children & Families, announced his resignation effective December 31, 2022.
- The second Program Summit was held on Monday, November 7. Coming out of this summit are several all-Church events planned in January through May.
- The financials as of the end of September 2022 showed that year-to-date General Fund revenues are about \$39,000 above year-to-date budgeted revenues. Year-to-date expenditures are about \$65,000 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 \$105,000.
- The interim lead pastor search team has reviewed some 40 potential applicants. So far, they have found three that they are interested in talking with.
- Session approved a celebration for Pastor's Stephen's retirement at the end of January 2023 on Sunday, January 22, 2023. Session is also asking Presbytery to approve bestowing on Pastor Stephen the honorary title of Pastor Emeritus once he retires.
- Similar to the last two years and in consideration of the challenges presented during 2022, the church office and building will be closed between Christmas and New Year's (December 26-30).
- Use of the curriculum called "Follow Me" was approved for use by children, youth, adult and small groups for Advent 2022.
- FPCA has agreed to recharter Boy Scout Troop 12, Cub Scout Pack 12, and BSA Troop 519 for 2023. Bill Townsend will be the Institutional Head and Chartered Partner Representative for the troops and pack.
- Based on a favorable review of the church's finances, Session decided to make a 4% voluntary FPCA contribution to our 403(b) retirement plan for each of the qualifying "full-time" non-pastoral employees for 2022.

- For the reasons of safety and work efficiency for the Administrative Assistant, it was decided to install a bell, camera, microphone/speaker, and remote door unlocking system on the exterior building entrance door across from the Office entrance door.
- Session approved the following worship/communion schedule for Christmas and New Years:

Christmas Eve – Saturday, December 24

12noon with celebration of the Lord’s Supper

4:00 p.m. Family Service

6:00 p.m. Arabic Language Service

7:00 p.m. Candlelight Service

9:00 p.m. Candlelight Service

Christmas Day – Sunday, December 25

10:00 a.m. One English Language Service

New Year’s Day – Sunday, January 1

10:00 a.m. One English Language Service with the celebration of the Lord’s Supper

- An all-church Christmas Celebration is planned for December 16, 2022 from 6:30-9:00 pm.

If you have any questions/concerns that you want to ask/convey to Session, please email them to session@fpcallentown.org.

Attachment A

Congregational Proposals from September 17, 2022 Problem Solving Session

Session approved separating the congregational proposals from the September 17, 2022 Lombard Problem Solving Process into the following groups. Work will start on the Group 1 proposals right away. The Elder leading each proposal area has been identified. It is expected that they each will build a small working team which will include members of our Congregation.

Group 1: Proposals that work will start on now

- 1. Mission/Identity/Theology** (*Elder Deb Palmer leading*)
 - a. Communicate and implement a Mission Study to educate the congregation about PCUSA theology, PCUSA standards for communications and civil discourse. The study will need regular opportunities for town hall gatherings and listening sessions.
 - b. Develop an up-to-date mission or identity statement.
 - c. Document and benchmark what were key successes of the past to determine what is relevant in our community today.
- 2. Membership/Belonging/Community** (*Elders Kevin Heier and Bill White co-leads*)
 - a. Session will organize a temporary membership study team to execute a census of members and attendees to determine: Membership status and number, how each member is engaged, and interests for future engagement.
- 3. Worship/Education/Spiritual Formation** (*Elder Bruce Gunn leading*)
 - a. Worship Schedule - Monthly—one combined service with a mixture or other style - Spiritual formation time—to be determined
- 4. Transition/Leadership/Communication** (*Elder Rick Ensley leading*)
 - a. Develop and implement a communication plan that includes one person in charge with designated responsibility.
 - b. Increase the congregation's understanding of the PNC process.
- 5. History/Reputation** (*Elder Sara Lakatos leading*)
 - a. Create a committee to compose a living history of the congregation
- 6. Conflict/Change/Disruption/Discomfort/COVID** (*Elder Trish Brown leading*)
 - a. A Session member host a monthly gathering after/before worship as a listening session (Town Hall) with the input and questions of congregants getting documented and processed appropriately. This is to include online participants
 - b. Revisit Conflict Management training in six months to ensure we approach in a healthy manner (if necessary, reengage with Lombard).
 - c. Adopt a process to constructively address disagreements
 - d. Work with the congregation to ensure they understand what is acceptable behavior and how unacceptable behavior can impact our church staff, congregation, and particularly the pastors, past, present, and future as part of our Lombard process [added by Session].
- 7. Diversity/Friendliness/Welcoming** (will be included under Worship/Education/Spiritual Formation)
 - a. Have regular greeters and ushers.

Group 2: Proposals that can be addressed later

- 8. Membership/Belonging/Community**
 - a. Form team to assist forming and supporting an active and vibrant small group ministry.
- 9. Children/Youth/Families**

- a. Extend childcare for weekday FPCA preschool children for continued church presence

10. Transition/Leadership/Communication

- a. Re-establish methods of communication for volunteer opportunities and develop job descriptions for volunteers.

11. Finances/Stewardship/Campus/Physical Plant

- a. To enable the congregation to make an informed choice regarding future use of the sanctuary as a worship space that is able to accommodate diverse forms of worship, have the sanctuary assessed and evaluated by a professional firm.
- b. Capital Campaign / Special Project Funding - Develop a long-term plan by January 2023 and embark on a capital campaign/special project campaign to address improvements, major repairs, and mission projects
- c. Open seating options (pews, balcony) to prepare for increase in COVID occurrence/possibility
- d. Repurpose Church to generate income, facilitate the church's mission, and ensure ongoing viability for future generations.

Group 3: Proposals where work is already underway

12. Worship/Education/Spiritual Formation

- a. Worship Schedule - Weekly—two distinct services/two distinct styles. - Spiritual formation—dedicated hour between services

13. Children/Youth/Families

- a. Provide nursery care on Sunday mornings Designate 8:45 service for family friendly emphasis on activities for children—
- b. Support intergenerational learning hour (9:50-10:50am)-make it meaningful:

14. Transition/Leadership/Communication

- a. Leadership needs to insure good respectful utilization of resources and volunteers.

15. Finances/Stewardship/Campus/Physical Plant

- a. Have staff develop a stewardship education program to educate the congregation on the spiritual discipline and fiscal responsibility of stewardship.

16. Diversity/Friendliness/Welcoming

- a. Members be encouraged to participate in fellowship opportunities.

17. Staffing/Volunteers

- a. Support efforts to hire new staff.

Group 4: Proposals that are not doable

18. Worship/Education/Spiritual Formation

- a. Regular singular worship service with an all-church fellowship time following this service.
- b. Two services running concurrently with each other. One in sanctuary and one in the fellowship hall.
- c. Provide suggestions to PNC regarding preaching in guidance for interviewing candidates for new pastor.
- d. Recognize the desire of the congregation to have sermons using the lectionary as a starting point that are anchored in scripture and then connected to our daily lives and broader social issues.
- e. Shift focus from political sermons to more inclusive messages that are Bible based.

19. Transition/Leadership/Communication

- a. Streamline the PNC process and improve its effectiveness.