

# **MONTCLAIR PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

## **Session Minutes**

**Feb. 6, 2024**

**Elders Present:** Linda Benson, Margaretha Derasary, Mike Forbes, Gretchen Garlinghouse, Cindy Gullikson, Helen Hutchison, Sari Kulberg, Leslie Louie, Jean Roggenkamp, Linda Spencer, Allen Spore, May Tong.

**Staff Present:** Rev. Ben Daniel, Katie Kilby

**Others Present:** Suzanne Jones

**Clerks Report:** Rev. Ben Daniel called the meeting to order at 7 p.m. Mike Forbes offered the opening prayer. This was a hybrid ZOOM meeting.

The next regular session meeting is Tuesday, March 5, 2024. The next Presbytery meeting takes place online on Tuesday, Feb. 13, 2024. There will be a congregational meeting on Sunday, Feb. 25 immediately following Celebration to: (1) elect new session elders; (2) elect the church auditor; and (3) introduce Keith Geckeler as our new Parish Associate. March annual evaluations: Stewardship and Fundraising; Family Life; Buildings & Grounds.

- **MSP** to approve minutes of Jan. 2, 2024 stated Session meeting..
- **MSP** to approve minutes of Nov. 19, 2023, congregational meeting.

**Earthcare Committee:** Suzanne Jones gave an update on the electrical panels' upgrade for the rental house and the office. She received four bids and chose Don Merriman who came in \$100 lower than the other bids. He will install the two panels for \$8,300, and has already applied for the permits. Merriman will begin work in March.

**B&G update.** Ben reported from Noel that:

- She will be meeting with the Ordonez family to update their agreement for janitorial services, and is identifying other cleaning services to serve as backup when they are unavailable;
- We have a serious dry rot problem in the Ed Bldg., prompting the need for bids and analysis of impact on the 2023-2024 budget;
- We have passed Oakland Fire Dept. inspections for facilities and grounds - no repairs needed!!
- We will be updating key pad codes and discussing with our community the need for closing-up routines to mitigate security problems;
- The retaining wall behind the rental house appears compromised and will likely require repair in the future.

**Celebration Innovation:** The Celebration Innovation Task Force presented the attached report and update. Cindy Gullikson and Steve McKiernan have been leading this task force since April, 2023. They report that renewal has been happening, with an expanded approach to music and other aspects identified in the report. The recommendation is to move from a task force to a permanent committee that would emphasize Celebration innovation during its first year, but thereafter look more broadly at innovation and sustainability. This new committee

would have a session liaison who would be selected at the April session meeting. Art Paull's concerns as expressed in his letter to session (attached) were acknowledged.

- **MSP** to create a new, permanent Innovation Committee with a session liaison.

### **Annual Evaluations**

- **Beacons:** Margaretha presented the Beacon evaluation (attached). The process for maintaining each Beacon membership list needs to be streamlined. Susanne will ask Debbie Fallehy (she maintains our membership roster) to notify the Beacon co-chairs when someone moves, disengages, dies or joins the congregation.
- **Adult Ed:** May Tom delivered the Adult Ed evaluation (attached). Several years ago the committee developed an outstanding Purpose Statement that guides its work. This year's classes focussing on Oakland issues was very well received and attended.
- **Celebration Committee:** See attached report. Liaison Cindy Gullikson noted that the committee needs help from younger folks in decorating the church. As well, the "locking up the grounds" process is a "little loose" and needs to be formalized.
- **Children & Youth Committee:** This committee did not meet in 2023 and has not formally met since Talitha left. Now that Katie Kilby is on board to staff the committee, Liaison Linda Benson explained that it is expected that the committee will be reconstituted. 2023 Successes:
  1. We hired Katie, who oversees the Children & Youth program,.
  2. We recently hired Rashno Rszmkhah as Nursery Coordinator.
  3. Godly Play is an exceptionally strong program run by Katherine Palmer-Collins.
  4. Katie has introduced Echo the Story, a new program dedicated to late elementary and middle schools. The inaugural class on Jan. 7 went very well.
- **Nominating Committee:** Liaison Sari Kulberg set forth the mission of the committee and announced that we have four confirmed members to join the next session class!

**Personnel:** Liaison Leslie Louie proposed amendments to the Employee Handbook, per the attached memo.

- **MSP** to approve the proposed amendments to the Employee Handbook.

**Finance Committee:** Liaison Allen Spore presented the financial statements for the endowment trust fund, reporting that we received a 6% increase this year. The investments are handled by the Synod. Finance Committee Rob Elia will review the nature of the investments. As for the six months MPC financials, we are tracking pretty well on contributions. We are going to end up in a deficit situation with respect to B & G expenses for this fiscal year. The committee will review restricted funds to ascertain if any can be freed up for B & G.

- **MSP** to receive the financial reports.

**Auction:** Leslie asked session members to donate money or a good bottle of wine for an auction wine basket.

**Wildchoir Concert:** Wildchoir will be hosting a concert on March 1 to benefit the Palestinian people. Leslie inquired if the group could use or rent space at MPC. Following discussion,

- **By consensus**, it was agreed that we could offer to rent space to Wildchoir for this concert.

**Parish Associate:** Ben proposed that we confer on Rev. Keith Geckeler the title and role of Parish Associate, per the attached agreement.

- **MSP** to approve appointing Keith Geckeler as a Parish Associate.

**Health and Safety Team:** Ben raised the need for a Health and Safety Task Force to review safety protocols and provide training for ushers. Several potential members were suggested: Suzanne Frew (Leslie will contact); Shelly Stafford (Linda Spencer will contact); and Dave Henderson. Ben will be part of the team; Leslie volunteered as well.

- **MSP** to establish a Health and Safety Task Force.

**Staff Reports:** Ben is going to Iona in May for his study leave. Katie attended Godly Play training.

Ben closed with prayer at 9:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Susanne Lea  
Clerk of Session