

MONTCLAIR PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Session Minutes

June 3, 2025

Elders Present: Linda Benson; Margaretha Derasary; Rob Elia; Tara Flanagan; Eloise Gilland; Rick Heller; Sari Kulberg; Pat Schwinn; Allen Spore; Brenda Steinmetz-Vallenas; Jerry White

Elders Absent: Karen Ray Gibson

Others Present: Suzanne Jones; Janet Mulshine

Staff Present: Rev. Ben Daniel; Katie Kilby

Clerks Report: Rev. Ben Daniel called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.; Allen Spore gave the opening reflection.

Clerk of session Susanne Lea noted that we intend to rent out the Ed. Building every Saturday from Sept. 2025 - May 2026 to the Farsi School if no conflicts are identified. No conflicts were raised to this proposal.

Session meets again on Tuesday, June 1, 2025. Presbytery meets in person on August 12.

- **MSP** to approve minutes of the May 6, 2025 stated session meeting.
- **MSP** to approve transferring Robert Zdenek's membership to 1st Pres. San Luis Obispo
- **MSP** to extend the 2024-2025 budget, as well as the new salary package for Katherine Porter Collins effective 7/1/2025, until session adopts the 2025-2026 budget.

Electrification and Plant Sale/Auction Updates: Suzanne Jones presented the attached update on electrification projects and an allocation request for the plant sale/auction funds. She indicated that proposed next steps include replacing two more gas water heaters, or upgrading one of MPC's gas furnaces with a heat pump HVAC system.

- **MSP** to allocate \$11,600 in earnings from the plant sale/auction to Earth Care Committee to be used to replace two gas water heater or replace a gas furnace with a heat pump HVAC system, the Electrification Team to obtain bids on these options and return to session with a recommendation

Buildings and Grounds and Sound Crew Vacancies: Janet Mulshine, co-chair of B & G, informed session that Allen Todd, has stepped down as the other co-chair, but will remain on the committee. The committee is small and needs folks with some suitable experience.

Suggestions included contacting Lisa Thorgeson (architect), Frank Dauby, Mark Smith, folks on the electrification team. Sari Kulberg, chair of Nominations Committee, urged session members to wrack their brains. She noted that Allen also stepped down from leading the Sound Crew, and we need new crew members as well. Deborah Brooks was identified as someone to take on Allen's role. Ben will contact Alex, who is currently on the sound crew, to see if she can take on more Sundays, and will bring the need to Celebration Committee.

All Things Presbyterian:

1. **Presbytery Resolution on Israel/Palestinian Hostility:** Eloise Gilland introduced the attached Presbytery Resolution on Israel/Palestinian Hostility.

- **By consensus** session expressed support for the P & JC to determine how to engage the congregation with the resolution through some type of educational process.

2. **Commissioner's Report:** Susanne shared highlights from the enclosed Commissioner's Report on the May 13 Presbytery meeting at Newark Presbyterian Church.
3. **Special Offerings:** Pat Schwinn related that currently 25% of MPC donations to the PCUSA Peace Offering are allocated to the P & JC, and 40% of funds from the Pentecost offering go to the Children & Youth Committee.
 - **MSP** to preserve these allocations until PCUSA changes the rules regarding special offerings.

Mission for the Homeless: Allen Spore reported that we have hired a grant writer to research and follow through on grant possibilities for Mission for the Homeless, using \$2,000 from the Food and Shelter budget. The first grant has been submitted. Jerry White said he would try to set up a speaking engagement for Vinnie with San Leandro Kiwanis.

Peace & Justice Updates: Eloise Gilland, Chair of P & JC, announced that there will be a presentation on the Apartheid Free Pledge on August 31 in the Thornhill Room. Eloise further noted that she would complete and submit the Pledge for Accompaniment and Sanctuary 2025 (attached). Per the pledge, Session has endorsed that MPC is (1) an immigrant welcoming or sanctuary supporting congregation; (2) preparing for rapid response in case of raids or deportation; and (3) interested in sister congregation relationship with impacted communities.

Faith in Action provides rapid response training. Eloise will notify the P & JC and session about training opportunities. Training should be widely advertised, e.g., to Beacons.

Sustainability Task Force; Personnel Decisionmaking Team: Rick Heller reported we are running a mild structural deficit. There are three levers affecting the deficit: revenue, B & G expense and personnel. We need a personnel strategy. The decisionmaking team would be charged with assessing MPC's staffing going forward, in particular what we need and do not need, and what we can and cannot afford in an Associate Pastor (AP) position. What are the consequences if we cannot go the AP route, but the identified AP functions have to continue? Session expressed unanimous consent for Ben to pull together a stakeholder group to explore these questions, including folks from Children & Youth; Pastoral Care; and Family Life. Note that **if** we proceed down a path to call Katie, COM will have input on whether she can be called, given that Katie is a member of our church and under our care. Further, we will have to do a mission study.

Ben closed with prayer at 9:15 p.m.

session members **Fundraising Report:** Suzanne Jones delivered the report on our recent plant sale and auction (see attached). We netted \$24,000!!

The plan is to allocate \$10,000 to the General Fund, tithe 10% to immigrant rights and democracy/climate advocacy groups, and defer the remaining \$11,600 to the Earthcare Committee's ongoing effort to complete electrification and efficiency upgrades to MPC's facilities.

Allen Spore of the Finance Committee asked that we defer a decision on the \$11,600 reserved for electrification and efficiency upgrades until we are finished with the budget process.

- **MSP** to allocate \$10,000 to the General Fund, and tithe \$2,400 to immigrants' rights and democracy/climate advocacy groups. We will revisit the deferred amount pending completion of the budget process.

Children & Youth: Katie Kilby went over her letter to session members (attached), as context for the proposal from C & Y to increase the work of Katherine Palmer-Collins. Katie left the meeting as Cindy Gullikson, C & Y chair, went over the proposal (attached) calling for expanding Palmer-Collins' hours and hourly rate for FY 2025-2026, with a view to expanding programs for middle grade/middle school youth in collaboration with neighbor churches, and creating opportunities for connection among our families with children of all ages.

- **MSP** to approve expanding Katherine Palmer-Collins' hours to 10-12 per week, at an hourly rate of \$28.50, plus an additional \$1,000 to cover MPC@Tahoe 2026 children and youth programming, for a total of \$16,000 for FY 2025-2026. This model will be evaluated in the Spring of 2026. The source of funds for this model are as set forth in the proposal, with a net cost to MPC of only \$2,450.
- **MSP** to change the name of the Youth Mission Trip Fund account to Children and Youth Activities Fund.

Strategic Planning: Ben observed that Katie will be ordainable next spring and we need to start the strategic planning process - can you say **MISSION STUDY?**— in anticipation of that event. This includes probing the financial feasibility of adding an ordained staff member to MPC. Additionally, there is no guarantee that Presbytery will approve ordaining Katie to MPC because she has been under our care through the ordination process. Discussion to continue.

Finance Committee: Our third quarter shows us over budget on revenue by \$30,000 and below budget on expenses. Noel is doing a great job bringing in rentals, plus our contributions are above the mark. Expenses are lower in part because we have not hired a nursery coordinator.

Ben closed with prayer at 9:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Susanne Lea
Clerk of Session