

MONTCLAIR PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Session Minutes

Sept. 2, 2025

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

Elders Absent: Tara Flanagan

Others Present: Suzanne Jones, Susan ten-bosch Paull, Art Paull

Staff Present: Rev. Ben Daniel; Katie Kilby

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

Session meets again on Tuesday, Oct. 7, 2025. Presbytery meets Sat., Nov. 15 at Alameda PC. Presbytery Day will be Saturday, Sept. 27 at First PC Berkeley, 9:30 - 2:00 (Susanne passed out flyers).

- **MSP** to approve minutes of the August 5, 2025 stated session meeting.
- **MSP** to approve minutes of the August 5, 2025 closed executive session.
- **MSP** to approve the minutes of the August 17 congregational meeting.
- **MSP** to hold a congregational meeting on Sunday, October 5, 2025 for the purpose of presenting the declarations to the congregation for discussion and adoption.

Membership and Outreach: Membership and Outreach co-chair Steve McKiernan presented a revised proposal for auditing and revamping our website and providing ongoing support. Katie and Ben will be tasked with making informed decisions about proposed changes. Steve proposed a six month engagement at \$500/month. (See attached proposal.)

- **MSP** to approve engaging Aaron Hughes for 6 months at \$500/month for the above work.

Earthcare Committee: Suzanne Jones reported that with rebates and state assistance, we will be on the hook for only \$4,000 (approximate cost) to switch out hot water heaters for heat pumps for the manse and rental property. The pumps use new refrigerants with no global warming impact. They will be installed in the next couple weeks.

Democracy Team: Members of the Democracy Team - Art Paull, Susan ten-Bosch Paull and Jean Roggenkamp - brought forth the attached Declarations and Draft MPC Actions for Democracy.

- **MSP** to receive and approve the Declarations (with minor changes) and approve Ben discussing them in Contact, noting that they will be brought to a congregational meeting along with the Actions for Democracy.

Closed Session: Session segued to a closed session for discussion of a personal matter.

Beacons: Karen Gibson relayed that she and May Tong have been coordinating the Beacons program for five years. Originally the program focussed on social gatherings.

Now, Beacons report that it is “too much work, too much trouble,” and folks do not want to go out at night. Of note, Claire Kelly has organized a number of social events that have been open to everyone. For the most part people do not turn to the Beacons when they are in need, instead turning to other affinity groups. The question now is this: Should Beacons continue, or should they be unleashed to serve in other capacities? If the Beacons decide their work is done, we should publicly recognize and applaud their ministry. These issues will be raised at the next Beacons meeting.

Celebration Suggestion: Margaretha Derasary shared Carol Ekberg’s suggestion that there be a “quiet time” after the benediction so people can reflect in silence and listen to the closing music. Karen, liaison to the Celebration Committee, will bring this suggestion to the committee.

Confirmation Class: Katie Kilby reported that two MPC 7th graders and four youth from St. John’s Episcopal Church are engaged in the confirmation curriculum “Confirm not Conform.” Designed by St. John’s, the curriculum consists of 15 sessions and three field trips. The youth meet twice a month over the school year. This weekend will feature a retreat at Bishop’s Ranch. Margaretha is serving as a mentor for the youth. There will be a service with St. John’s in May celebrating the completion of the confirmation class. The youth will recite and reflect on a passage from Scripture.

Leadership Retreat: Westminster Woods is available for our retreat Nov. 14-16. The terms are reasonable: five meals, meeting space, standard rooms (\$190/person) and guest house (\$270/person). The retreat is open to all.

Personnel Decision-making Group: This body has met once. The assignment is to discern the cost differential between bringing Katie on as an ordained pastor, versus not bringing her on.

Staff Reports: Ben will be in Europe for two weeks starting September 8. Katie will be taking two ordination exams at the end of the month.

Ben closed with prayer at 9:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Susanne Lea, Clerk of Session