

PRESBYTERY OF THE COASTLANDS MEETING ON ZOOM TUESDAY, OCTOBER 25, 2022

The Called meeting of the Presbytery of the Coastlands, held via Zoom, on Tuesday, October 25, 2022, was called to order at 6:30pm by the Moderator, Rev. Wendi Werner, who opened the meeting beginning with Evening Prayer as a time of worship.

The Presbytery was led in a time of worship adapted from the order for Evening Prayer in the Book of Common Worship © 1995. Worship leaders were Rev. Wendi Werner, Moderator of Presbytery, Rev. Sue Krummel, Presbytery Leader Consultant, and Rev. David Torrey, Acting Stated Clerk.

Following worship the meeting continued with the Moderator asking for and the Stated Clerk declaring the presence of a quorum.

ATTENDANCE ROLL OF PRESBYTERY'S COMMISSIONERS

The following were in attendance:

Ministers Present:

Kyle Anderson	PC of Lawrenceville	Chang Woo Lee	Lord of Hope PC
Ashley Bair	FPC of Metuchen	Jenny Lee	
David Bowman	Plumsted PC	Donna Lepsky	PC Lakehurst
Cindy Bowman		Marcia Lewis	FPC of Plainsboro
James Brumm	The Presbyterian Church at Peace Chapel	Hannah Lovaglio	FPC Cranbury
Rory Chambers	FPC of Dutch Neck	Emily Lueder	
Patricia Daley		Janet Macgregor-Williams	PC of Lawrenceville
Dave Davis	Nassau PC	Melissa Martin	Hopewell PC
Lisa Day	FPC Hightstown	Lauren McFeaters	Nassau PC
Miriam Diephouse-McMillan	Other	Nancy Mikoski	Pennington PC
Sharyl Dixon	Kingston PC	Gordon Mikoski	Pennington PC
Molly Dykstra		Kristie Miles	Brick PC
Gary W Filson	PC of Jamesburg	Lori Neff LaRue	Lawrence Road PC
Diane Ford	Lincroft PC	Alan Olson	FPC Freehold
Fred Garry	FPC of Metuchen	Jean Pinto	Pennington PC
Linda Goeddel	FPC Rumson	Paul Quevedo	Forked River PC
Katja Gruening	PC at Shrewsbury	Molly Ramsey	Point Pleasant PC
Nagy Hanna	Arabic Evangelical PC NWC	Nina Reeder	Other
Stephen Heinzl-Nelson	Allentown PC	Andrew Scales	Princeton
Karen Hernandez-Granzen	Westminster PC, Trenton	Len Scales	Presbyterians of Westminster
Linda Hora		Tom Sheffield	Princeton
Chris Houtz	FPC of Iselin	Jonathan Shenk	Presbyterians of Westminster
James Klotz	Slackwood PC	Sue Smith	
Jan Koczera	FPC of Hamilton Square	Lydia Tembo	
Larissa Kwong Abazia		Mark Terranova	Pierce Memorial PC
		Glory Thomas	Edison, Oak Tree PC

Ministers Present (cont'd):

Julie Thompson-Barrier	The Presbyterian Church on the Hill	Jan Willem Van Der Werff	FPC of Dutch Neck
	PC of Lawrenceville	Wendi Werner	FPC at Dayton
Jeffrey Vamos		John L. Williams	
Total:	58	Robbie Ytterberg	PC of Toms River

Commissioned Ruling Elders present:**Total: 0****Elder Commissioners present:**

Jeffrey McLaughlin	Allentown PC	Lee Herrick	FPC Trenton
Beth Rigby		Peter Godinez	Grace PC of South Brunswick
Nancy Tindall		Steven Buckley	Hope PC
Tom Fortier	Brick PC	Florence Perren-Diaz	Kingston PC
Christy Tompkins		Chris Earle	Lakewood Hope PC
Linda Van Melis	Cornerstone PC	Arthur Hui	Nassau PC
Will Olson	Ewing-Covenant PC	Carol Wehrheim	
Linda De Lotto	Forked River PC	Diana Chase	PC of Jamesburg
Howard Jones	FPC at Dayton	Bill Bowers	PC of Lawrenceville
Ginny Trent		Wendy Simpson	
Ken Gordon	FPC Cranbury	Gooitzen Van Der Wal	
Berwin Guttormsen	FPC Freehold	Suzanne Elliott	Pennington PC
Dilys Henninger	FPC Hightstown	Scott Reeder	
David Redman	FPC of Dutch Neck	Barbara Meyer	The Presbyterian Church at Peace Chapel
Margaret (Peggy) Redman		Ekpoanwan Onyile	
Greg Slonaker		Bob Carson	Trinity PC
Carl Stillwell		Paula Riepl	
Michael Meduski	FPC of Hamilton Square	Claude Heller	United PC of Millstone
Paul Neu		Barbara Truscinski	
Elizabeth Christensen	FPC of Iselin	David Byers	Westminster PC, Trenton
Andrea Harrison		Kevin Gift	Witherspoon PC
JoAnne Bedenek	FPC of Metuchen	Patty Williams	
Jim Krauszer		Carol Belles	Slackwood PC
Gary Ostermueller			
Michael Hora	FPC of Woodbridge		
Total:	48 - representing 29 congregations		

Other Elders (Officers, Trustees, Council members, and Former Moderators) present:

Jan Margolis	FPC of Metuchen	Council Member
Daniel Raisch	PC of Toms River	Council Member
Kathryn Starzer-Farrell	Trinity PC	Council Member
Cherry Oakley	Westminster PC, Trenton	Former Moderator
Barbara Flythe	Witherspoon PC	Former Moderator
Brad Clifton	Kingston PC	Officer
Walter Vincent	FPC Hightstown	Trustee
Jean Woodman	FPC of Hamilton Square	Trustee
Kurt Kaboth	The Presbyterian Church on the Hill	Trustee
Total:	9	

Also, in attendance were:

David Torrey	Acting Stated Clerk	
Ilene Black	Staff	
Rev. Sue Krummel	Presbytery Leader Consultant	
Marie Luthringer	Staff	
Hannah Donoghue	Staff - Tech Human	
Samuel Bonner	Ewing-Covenant PC	Non-commissioner Elder
Jean Bickal	FPC Trenton	Non-commissioner Elder
Ida B Malloy	FPC Trenton	Non-commissioner Elder
Benjamin J Moyer	FPC Trenton	Non-commissioner Elder
Linda Gilmore	Nassau PC	Non-commissioner Elder
Denyse Leslie	Witherspoon PC	Non-commissioner Elder
Tracy Eskridge	Witherspoon PC	Non-commissioner Elder
Jacqueline Murphy	Kingston PC	Non-commissioner Elder
Total:	13	

Total Attendance: 128

Moderator Werner then presented an orientation to the meeting which included:

- the stated purpose of the meeting:
The Gap Council has called a special meeting of the Coastlands Presbytery for Tuesday, October 25th at 6:30 pm over Zoom for the purpose of hearing reports from the Session of First Presbyterian Church Trenton and the presbytery's Board of Trustees regarding a proposed 65-year lease, and consideration of actions which may be taken by the presbytery that fall within the scope of those reports.
- the format of the meeting,
- the seating of Corresponding Members, and
- the Adoption of the Enabling Motion and Standing Rules for this Electronic Meeting.

Motion: (Alan Olson) *That the following members of the Session of First Presbyterian Church of Trenton be admitted to the floor to present their report: Elder Ben Moyer, Elder Jean Bickel, Elder Jane Malloy, Elder Ida Beth Malloy.*

Motion seconded.

Motion carried.

Motion: (James Klotz) *That the Rev. Sue Krummel (Great Rivers Presbytery), the Rev. David Torrey (Trinity Presbytery), the Rev. SanDawna Ashley – Synod Leader (Minnesota Valleys Presbytery), and the Rev. Nancy Talbot – Synod Stated Clerk (New York City Presbytery) be seated as Corresponding Members.*

Motion Seconded.

Motion Carried.

Arthur Hui asked for clarification concerning the available options for Presbytery action; are there other options available based on additional information.

Motion: (Alan Olson) *That Sam Bonner, member of the Special Administrative Review Commission, be given voice for the meeting.*

Motion Seconded.

Motion Carried.

Motion: *That Presbytery adopt the Enabling Motion and Standing Rules for an Electronic Meeting. (Appendix #1)*

Motion Carried.

Following the Adoption of the Enabling Motion and the Standing Rules for this Electronic Meeting, Rev. Rory Chambers, Vice Moderator of Presbytery, presented on behalf of the Gap Council the following motion:

Motion: *That Presbytery limit debate to 4 minutes per speaker.*

Motion carried by a 2/3 majority.

ADOPTION OF THE DOCKET

Following the adoption of the motion to limit debate to 4 minutes per speaker, Moderator Werner asked for a motion to approve the Agenda as presented.

Motion: (Karen Hernandez-Granzen) *That the updated Docket be adopted as presented. (Appendix #2)*

Motion Carried.

REPORT OF THE SESSION OF FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, TRENTON, NJ

After being admitted to the floor, the members of the Session of First Presbyterian Church of Trenton, along with their Elder Commissioner Lee Herrick, made a presentation (*Appendix #2*) about their request to enter into the proposed 65-year lease of their sanctuary building.

QUESTIONS ABOUT THE REPORT FROM THE SESSION

Questions from Presbyters followed with answers from the Session members.

REPORT OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Rev. Fred Garry, Moderator of the Board of Trustees presented the report of the Board (*Appendix #3*). Fred shared that for the last 10 months the Trustees have wrestled over the concerns related to the project. The concerns kept coming back around to the issue of the 65-year lease. Is a 65-year lease the best way to move forward with the proposed project? The project is not in the best interests of the Presbytery. The risks posed include the historic trust restrictions, encumbrance issue, and liabilities. The project does present an enormous benefit to the city of Trenton.

Questions the Trustees sought to answer in their consideration of the request:

Is it the mission of the Presbytery of the Coastlands to create a visitor's center in Trenton as a benefit to the township?

Information from the Office of the General Assembly indicated that the decision was the responsibility of the Presbytery, not the Board of Trustees. In essence, the Trustees do not believe it appropriate for the Trustees to exceed their role and responsibilities. The project calls the Trustees to go beyond their responsibilities, but the question of the lease doesn't do so.

Is the 65-year lease a transfer of assets held in trust by the congregation? Trustees believe so, and it is

not the only transfer of assets. There is also the transfer of the endowment funds.

For the better part of a year, the question has been, is the transfer of assets held in trust for and by the congregation? Basic issue is the transfer of assets (financial and real) from the congregation to the city of Trenton through the nonprofit entity. When everything is added together there is approximately a 7 million dollar transfer of assets to the city of Trenton. An appraisal is in the works, but has not yet been received. The issue is about much more than a lease.

Question for the Presbytery: Are you willing to transfer the assets to a newly formed nonprofit, from which they will be transferred to the city? Are you willing to encumber the Presbytery for the next 65 years?

Moderator Werner thanked Fred and the Trustees for their hard and diligent work.

QUESTIONS ABOUT THE REPORT FROM THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Questions from Presbyters followed with answers from the Board of Trustees.

Moderator Werner thanked Fred for sharing the report of the Trustees and for his time tonight.

REVIEW OF ACTIONS FOR PRESBYTERY TO CONSIDER

Moderator Werner, after presenting the actions available for Presbytery to consider, led the assembly in a moment of prayer, in preparation for entering debate.

CONSIDERATION OF THE REPORTS BY THE PRESBYTERY OF THE COASTLANDS

Motion: (Jeff Vamos) That Presbytery rescind the decision of the Trustees to deny the lease.

Motion seconded.

Debate followed.

Motion postponed until November 29 Stated Meeting of Presbytery (see below).

Nancy Mikoski (pro) spoke to the long history of work and mission of the congregation, to dispose of the work of the congregation in such a short, truncated period. This is Matthew 25 work.

Arthur Hui (con) spoke to the possibility of postponing until receipt of the appraisal. Surely the goals of the project are laudable, though there may be other means of approaching the project.

Jeff Vamos (pro) has been the COM liaison to FPCT for the last several years and spoke in favor of the motion and which promises to be transformative. COM has done very careful work over the years. Spoke to the process being broken and that the response was not “thank you” but immediate suspicion. Participated in the process and entered into negotiation for a MOU, but learned later that the Trustees abandoned the agreement.

Jim Krauszer (con) asked about the possibility of postponing until better information can be received.

Karen Hernandez-Granzen (pro) expressed concern about not taking advantage of such a funding stream while it's available. The support they are receiving from the community has not been mentioned.

Melissa Martin (con) She hears the work of the Holy Spirit in the work of the people and those supporting them. Shared about their experience with a similar process. Thinks the Spirit is hard at work in the

process of the congregation, and hard at work in the work of the Trustees. Wants to uphold the work of the Trustees, but doesn't hear their decision as cutting off the work of the congregation.

Sam Bonner (pro) spoke to the goal of adding to the healing of the work of the congregation. He sees FPCT not being respected in the process. There is nothing in polity about whether the lease is properly developed. The issue of whether the congregation can take on the project is critical to the whole presbytery.

Motion: (Lori Neff Larue) *To call the question.*

Motion seconded.

Motion failed.

Sue Smith asked a clarifying question: Confused about timing. NJ historic grant does not allow religious organizations to apply and receive funds. How has the nonprofit received funds at this point?

Nina Reeder spoke as the Moderator of the Session of FPCT, that the nonprofit was given permission to apply through the MOU. The concern that spawned the MOU was the tight timeline for the nonprofit to apply via a provisional lease.

Molly Dykstra (pro) spoke to the discussion that there are a lot of questions. Concerned that not all of the information has been shared or been available. Congregation encouraged to move quickly because of the deadline and the volatile political climate for which such grants are vulnerable. The why of the project is to do mission.

Motion: (Jim Krauszer) *To postpone the motion until the November 29 Stated Meeting of Presbytery.*

Motion seconded.

Debate followed.

Linda Goeddel asked for clarification about ramifications of holding off on the decision?

Nina Reeder responded that there probably was not a problem if the question is postponed. Further question, how would the meeting be structured so that debate could happen at the meeting? Wendi responded that further conversations and meetings would have to happen. FPCT would be happy to host a pre-Presbytery event to help provide additional information.

Cherry Oakley (pro) getting the sense that there is a fair amount of information for presbyters to be able to make an informed decision. To be able to provide additional information to help folks understand the complexity and be prepared to make an appropriate decision.

Lee Herrick (con) does not see where it would help to postpone the vote. There are churches that are vacant in Trenton, so that is a part of the reason the property can't be sold. Should ask whatever questions required and vote.

Steven Buckley (pro) to postpone and allow Trustees the opportunity to read congregation's pushback.

Janet Williams (con) need to move forward because money might be lost if we delay the decision.

Len Scales (pro) it would be consistent with the recommendations from OGA, because presbytery is being asked to discern the mission going forward for the presbytery.

Motion: (Lori Neff Larue) *To call the question (about postponement).*

Motion seconded.

Motion carried.

Previous Motion carried. (To postpone the motion until November 29 Stated Meeting of Presbytery)

Jane Malloy asked for clarification about whether the Session and 120 East State will provide more

information or if the presbytery will be processing what has been provided? Moderator Werner responded that she hopes for a time of discernment and possibly some additional options that may come up.

Nina Reeder shared there is a commercial real estate assessment for the property available in the additional documents available for this meeting.

Matt Rhodes asked about any policies regarding individuals who have a conflict of interest voting on matters before the body. Moderator Werner responded that she will gather with colleagues to assemble information about the issue.

Gordon Mikoski asked for clarification about what constitutes ‘conflict of interest’ in this instance. Moderator Werner responded that there would be a discussion in Council about the issue.

ADJOURNMENT

The Presbytery adjourned at 9:43 pm with prayer by Rev. Wendi Werner, to reconvene on November 29, 2022, at 6:30pm on Zoom.

Attested: Rev. David Torrey, Acting Stated Clerk